

# INTRODUCTION TO SOCIOLOGY

**COURSE CODE: B21SO01GE**

Generic Elective Course  
For Undergraduate Programmes  
Self Learning Material



SREENARAYANAGURU  
OPEN UNIVERSITY

## SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY

The State University for Education, Training and Research in Blended Format, Kerala

# SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY

## Vision

*To increase access of potential learners of all categories to higher education, research and training, and ensure equity through delivery of high quality processes and outcomes fostering inclusive educational empowerment for social advancement.*

## Mission

To be benchmarked as a model for conservation and dissemination of knowledge and skill on blended and virtual mode in education, training and research for normal, continuing, and adult learners.

## Pathway

Access and Quality define Equity.

# Introduction to Sociology

Course Code: B21SO01GE

Semester - VI

**Generic Elective Course  
For Undergraduate Programmes  
Self Learning Material  
(With Model Question Paper Sets)**



SREENARAYANAGURU  
OPEN UNIVERSITY

**SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY**

The State University for Education, Training and Research in Blended Format, Kerala



SREENARAYANAGURU  
OPEN UNIVERSITY

# INTRODUCTION TO SOCIOLOGY

Course Code: B21SO01GE

Semester- VI

Generic Elective Course

For Undergraduate Programmes

## Academic Committee

Rakhi N.  
Dr. N.K. Sunil Kumar  
Dr. M.S. Jayakumar  
Dr. Sarita R.  
Dr. Sindhu C.A.  
Dr. Rekhasree K.R.  
Dr. Uthara Soman  
Dr. Suba Lekshmi G.S.  
Dr. Leela P.U.  
Dr. Jyothi S. Nair

## Development of the Content

Dr. Abdul Razak Kunnathodi  
Dr. Sreelekha Rajagopalan Nair  
Nikhil Mathew  
Arunima Anil  
Ammu B. Nair  
Santhosh Mathew John

## Review and Edit

Dr. Abraham Vijayan

## Linguistics

Dr. C. Ajayan

## Scrutiny

Dr. Jan Elizabeth Joseph  
Dr. Abdul Razak Kunnathodi  
Fousia Shukoor  
Dr. Ahammadu Zirajuddeen  
Dr. Maya Raveendran

## Design Control

Azeem Babu T.A.

## Cover Design

Jobin J.

## Co-ordination

Director, MDDC :

Dr. I.G. Shibi

Asst. Director, MDDC :

Dr. Sajeevkumar G.

Coordinator, Development:

Dr. Anfal M.

Coordinator, Distribution:

Dr. Sanitha K.K.



Scan this QR Code for reading the SLM  
on a digital device.

Revised Edition

April 2025

Copyright

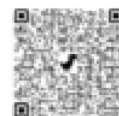
© Sreenarayanaguru Open University

ISBN 978-81-986991-0-7



All rights reserved. No part of this work may be reproduced in any form, by mimeograph or any other means, without permission in writing from Sreenarayanaguru Open University. Printed and published on behalf of Sreenarayanaguru Open University by Registrar, SGOU, Kollam.

[www.sgou.ac.m](http://www.sgou.ac.m)



Visit and Subscribe our Social Media Platforms

# MESSAGE FROM VICE CHANCELLOR

Dear learner,

I extend my heartfelt greetings and profound enthusiasm as I warmly welcome you to Sreenarayanaguru Open University. Established in September 2020 as a state-led endeavour to promote higher education through open and distance learning modes, our institution was shaped by the guiding principle that access and quality are the cornerstones of equity. We have firmly resolved to uphold the highest standards of education, setting the benchmark and charting the course.

The courses offered by the Sreenarayanaguru Open University aim to strike a quality balance, ensuring students are equipped for both personal growth and professional excellence. The University embraces the widely acclaimed "blended format," a practical framework that harmoniously integrates Self-Learning Materials, Classroom Counseling, and Virtual modes, fostering a dynamic and enriching experience for both learners and instructors.

The University aims to offer you an engaging and thought-provoking educational journey. The Generic Elective course "Introduction to Sociology" is a well-structured entry point into the fascinating world of social sciences. This course encourages learners to explore how society functions, how individuals relate to one another, and how social structures and institutions shape our everyday lives. Rooted in historical and intellectual developments, the course covers foundational sociological concepts such as society, community, roles, norms, and institutions. The Self-Learning Material has been meticulously crafted, incorporating relevant examples to facilitate better comprehension.

Rest assured, the university's student support services will be at your disposal throughout your academic journey, readily available to address any concerns or grievances you may encounter. We encourage you to reach out to us freely regarding any matter about your academic programme. It is our sincere wish that you achieve the utmost success.



Regards,  
Dr. Jagathy Raj V. P.

26-05-2025

## Contents

<b>Block 01</b>	<b>Understanding Sociology</b>	<b>1</b>
Unit 1	Emergence of Sociology	2
Unit 2	Sociology – Definition, Nature and Scope	19
Unit 3	Sociological Imagination, Sociology and Common Sense	34
<b>Block 02</b>	<b>Basic Concepts in Sociology</b>	<b>44</b>
Unit 1	Society, Community, Association and Organisation	45
Unit 2	Social Institutions – Family, Marriage and Religion	75
Unit 3	Social Groups, Role and Status	98
	<b>Model Question Paper (Set 1)</b>	<b>113</b>
	<b>Model Question Paper (Set 2)</b>	<b>116</b>

**BLOCK**

**1**

**Understanding  
Sociology**



# UNIT

# 1

## Emergence of Sociology

### Learning Outcomes

After reading this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ◆ recognise the socio-political and intellectual forces behind the emergence of Sociology
- ◆ familiarise themselves with the commonly accepted definitions of Sociology
- ◆ discover the possibilities and boundaries of Sociology as a discipline in relation to other social sciences
- ◆ examine the significance of sociological understanding of society

### Prerequisites

Let us start our lesson on the bank of a river. You might have noticed the pebbles and rocks of various sizes and shapes along the bank. These pebbles were once big rocks. So how did the pebbles take shape? Originally they may have belonged to a mountain, just a rudimentary stone; its crude rough edges would have gotten smoothed overtime due to the constant interaction with the heavy flow of the river, thus the pebble would have taken its form, as we now see it. Likewise, each subject that we learn, including Sociology, got transformed into what it is today after centuries of engagement with its social and political environments. And it is still in evolution! A theorist or a philosopher shapes and streamlines the knowledge developed in decades into a science. Most often, it is the new political developments or/and social unrest that leads to the emergence of new ideas.

A pebble, the beautiful Tanjore sculpture that is carved out of a single rock might have come into the minds of some of you! Yes, a sculpture that is created out of a big rock was once imaginative effort of an artist. Similarly, when sufficient information regarding a subject gets into the hands of an appropriate theorist, he may give it a name and an outline. Then, depending on what part of the sculpture/subject is being worked on, specific parts/specializations are added, depending on what part of the sculpture/subject is being worked at and so on and so forth! Only

when the sculpture falls within the standard design does it get the endorsement of others in the field. Thus formalities like endorsement by experts are inevitable in the development of a discipline.

The very well-known 'Fall of Constantinople' that signified the surrender of European political supremacy to the Turks in 1453 AD is when Sociology's history begins. The restoration of ancient knowledge after the middle age at this point was the most significant point in European social history and in the development of Sciences. The ensuing political and social developments paved the way for organised forms of knowledge to emerge. Let us discuss these environmental impacts on our beautiful sculpture called 'Sociology'. Further in the module we will look at the nature and the scope of the subject and then subsequently discuss certain sociological tools and concepts. It is a long and interesting journey with beautiful halts to take in what we learn on the way. Are you ready to start the journey?

## Keywords

Political supremacy, Knowledge, Critical approach, Capitalism, Working class, Social physics, Humanitarianism

## Discussion

### 1.1.1 Socio-Political Background of the Emergence of Sociology

Have you ever thought about how particular branches of knowledge or science develop? We always associate discoveries, innovations, and knowledge with a geographic location: For example Geometry with Greece, silk making and gunpowder with China, decimal system with India and writing with Mesopotamia. Haven't we heard of Europe as the birthplace of many sciences and social science subjects? If this is so, it will be interesting to learn about the emergence of Sociology.

It is important to understand that knowledge is always scattered in society. It has to take a definite form and outline before it is called a science or a discipline. Also, to

qualify itself to be called a science, it has to have methods of collecting and organising the scattered information. Many political and social developments led to the birth of sociology in European society. We are going to learn about the emergence of our subject in the various sections below. They include the socio-political environment of Europe during Renaissance, Enlightenment, events like Scientific Revolution, French Revolution and Industrial Revolution. Some other significant factors like growth of science and technology and positive influence of scientific temper also impacted the birth and growth of Sociology.

What we have to keep in our mind is that the effects of all these major events lasted even after they reached their peak. All these events impacted society, the main ideologies of the time and the way



knowledge was created and approached. This meant that reason and rationalism got priority over the ideas that were prominent earlier – theological or religious with a high moral undertone or pitch. Cause and effect and reasoning; seeking proof with senses and other scientific tools, objectivity in dealing with a subject and a rise in the scientific outlook of the population meant that the social world also was subjected to scientific examination and application of rules. Don't you feel that we need to look at the background of all these in detail? Let us have a look at that in the sections below:

### a. Scientific Revolution

As the name suggests, the scientific revolution was all about science! But if you ask the question: Was it a revolution? Then we must pause for a minute there, for sure! Yes! You are right: This was not a revolution in the strict sense of the term, but is referred to as such because of the significant role it played in reconstructing the idea of knowledge and the method to acquiring it. Scientific revolution was not just one event; it was a series of events and episodes of discoveries and inventions that replaced many superstitions with scientific facts. In short, this event helped in the development of the scientific spirit.

What was the time period of these series of events? Scientific revolution took place in Europe from the fourteenth century to the seventeenth century (1400 AD-1700 AD), and continued through the late eighteenth century. A number of transformative scientific developments that replaced the then existing, predominantly illogical thinking about nature and society are popularly known as the scientific revolution. Through these new developments, scientists working in various disciplines like Mathematics, Physics, Astronomy, Biology and Chemistry transformed the time-honoured views of society about Mother Nature. How to acquire

scientific knowledge was the dominant question in the minds of the theorists.

Various kinds of scientific breakthroughs influenced almost all dimensions of knowledge during the period known as the scientific revolution. You know about telescopes, don't you? Scientific tools like that were invented during this time, which could be used to observe objects that could not be seen with naked eyes. Thus scientists like Nicholas Copernicus and Galileo Galilee invented and utilised instruments that helped them understand, for example, that the Sun and not the Earth was the centre of the universe.

Some important scientific facts that placed the longstanding beliefs on their head during the scientific revolution are:

1. Earth revolves around the Sun and not the other way (replacing Sun circling the earth and thus moving from the East to the West that we even now use for some rituals!).
2. Earth as round (replacing the idea of the Earth as flat)
3. Lightning understood scientifically as having electric charge (not as a message from an angry God)

This shift of focus of the astronomical studies from geocentric theories to heliocentric (Sun as the centre) had consequences for the natural sciences. Do you know what geocentric theory is? In that theory earth is depicted as the centre of the universe! The new heliocentric theory, that is, sun as the centre, replaced the geocentric theory! Imagine that! That changed everything, didn't that? This discovery impacted the social world in unforeseen ways. But do you think

change is that easy? Such was the resistance to change that those who propounded these new theories were thought to be working against the existing law and society and needed to be punished.

Those who supported the new opinion and those who opposed formed opposing groups and fought with each other. What did that mean? This created social divisions. Sometimes these divisions sided with existing rulers and sometimes they were opposed to them. What happened to them in the long run? Yes; slowly, and steadily though, these fresh points of view based on logic and rationality helped in a better understanding of the natural world around human beings. Gradual additions and corrections over the preceding theories led to further scientific developments. This also provided sciences with the direction to gain power over nature and brought in progress.

I am sure you have heard about Isaac Newton! Even he was involved in the process called scientific revolution. The range of scientists from Copernicus to Newton formed the important contributors of the development called scientific revolution. Now you can imagine the significance of this process.

### **b. Growth of Science and Technology**

Do you know that when sociological theory was being developed, science was given more importance than before? This was true not only in academic institutions and universities but in the larger society as well. The technical yields of science were filtered through to all segments of society, and as a result science was given immense status and standing. Exceedingly flourishing sciences like physics, biology, and chemistry were given privileged positions in society. Early Sociologists like Auguste Comte, Emile Durkheim and Herbert Spencer were thinking about science when they thought about studying society. They wanted to model

sociology after the thriving physical sciences.

But you must note one thing! There was a dialogue, rather a debate, on whether the science of society should accept a scientific model without any question. Do you know that such a discussion happened at that time between those who unconditionally accepted the scientific model and those who thought that uncritical adoption of a scientific model would be taxing and unwise. This matter regarding the correlation between sociology and science, however, remains unsolved to everyone's satisfaction until this day.

### **c. Development of Scientific Spirit**

What do you understand about the scientific spirit? You might have already heard about scientific temper, haven't you? That is a relevant concept even in the present-day society. Because scientific temper helps us to tide over superstitions that we encounter in our daily lives. Many misconceptions based on traditional beliefs are uncritically accepted by us but when science enters our lives, we become more matter of fact to face situations like sickness in the family. This scientific temperament was a feature developed in the enlightenment period which was remarkable in intellectual development and philosophical transformation. A number of long standing beliefs and practices about social life were driven out during this period. As alternatives, philosophy and science were developed.

Don't you understand the significance of it when even common people think of reason and empiricism as having the power to help human beings? For what? To understand and manage their world. The notion that since the physical world could be explained by natural laws, the social world also could be explained by general laws. Thus it was left with the Philosophers now to discover laws that could explain the societal events using reason and research.



## 1.1.2 Twin Revolutions: French Revolution and Industrial Revolution

### a. The French Revolution

Do you know what is meant by the twin revolution? The very well-known French revolution and the first industrial revolution in Britain are jointly known as the twin revolution. Importance of the twin revolution should not be underestimated in the emergence of sociology. The French revolution signified changes in the political and social lives of people. Similarly industrial revolution transformed the economic fabric of the society and subsequently the outlook of the people. The significance of these two events not only in the history of sociology but also of the entire world was their capacity

to transform the ways of life and the mind-set of the masses.

Let us have a look at the French revolution below: Haven't you heard of the French revolution? Probably the word revolution must have been learnt by us for the first time when we read about this one! France, under the rule of Louis XVI of the Bourbon dynasty, was undergoing many crises like social discontentment and unrest. Common people were distressed by high taxes, unemployment and poverty (remember the much talked about question, real or imagined, by the queen Mary Antoinette when she heard about the shortage of food among commoners: "If they don't have bread why don't they eat cakes?"). But the luxuries of the royal family continued without any hesitation.

#### French Revolution

The French Revolution, which unfolded between 1789 and 1799, was not a single event but a series of transformative developments that culminated in the rise of Napoleon Bonaparte. Triggered by France's looming bankruptcy—caused by its involvement in the American Revolution and King Louis XVI's lavish spending—the revolution began as a revolt against social inequality, royal corruption, and economic hardship. It officially commenced on 20 June 1789, when members of the Third Estate broke from the Estates-General to form the National Assembly, challenging the king's authority. This was followed by the storming of the Bastille on 14 July 1789, a defining moment that signaled the collapse of royal control in Paris. As revolutionary momentum built, the monarchy was abolished, and on 22 September 1792, the French Republic was declared. King Louis XVI was executed in January 1793, setting the stage for the Reign of Terror—a year-long period beginning in June 1793 during which thousands of suspected enemies of the revolution were executed under the radical Montagnards. In 1795, the Directory assumed control amid ongoing instability, relying heavily on military power, including that of rising general Napoleon Bonaparte. However, the Directory's ineffectiveness led to Bonaparte's coup d'état on 9 November 1799, ending the revolution and ushering in the Napoleonic era.



Fig. 1.1.1 Reign of terror- an execution by Guillotine

The Catholic Church was the predominant religious authority in France. The ruling elite enjoyed the already amassed wealth and did not pay any attention to the suffering of the common people. Did you know that even the Aristocratic elite were unhappy with the situation? Enlightenment ideas that supported skepticism- critical approach- towards the existing political and social system finally led to the outbreak of what is popularly known as the French revolution in the summer of 1789 AD. The intellectual climate was favourable for raising demands for remedying their problems. So what did they ask for? Many demanded a more efficient monarchy and some even asked for an absolute democracy.

Curtailing the power of the supreme rulers was argued by the theorists who propounded the social contract theory. This theory had great influence on the revolting French population. Prominent proponents of this theory were Thomas Hobbes, John Locke and so on. John Locke argued that human beings were originally social and cooperative. Therefore the rights of the individual need to be protected, even from the rulers' excesses. These were deeply inspiring to the revolutionaries during the French revolution. It is natural that the main

demands of the participants of the revolution were many.

Greater religious and cultural freedom, introduction of some form of Parliamentary body to represent the common people, and greater equality under the law were some such demands. Enlightenment writings were widely spread, especially among the urban population in Europe including France. Wars, high taxes and unpopular financial policies made the people angry and fuming. What did they do? They rose in revolt! Impact of the French revolution was long lasting though its immediate impact was total destruction and dis-organisation. Even then there were some positive outcomes. We will be surprised to learn that the French revolution paved the way for the supremacy of the parliament; a big achievement for that era which had great implications for the common people. The system of constitutional monarchy restricted the power of the rulers, compelling the latter to listen more openly to the new ideas floating in society. Ideas like the recognition of individual rights of the enlightenment thinkers, sovereignty of the people, and the universal applicability of these ideas were the long lasting impacts of the French revolution.

The French revolution was not an isolated political event; rather a prolonged sequence of political upheaval started with the French revolution in 1789 and continued through the nineteenth century. There was a huge impact of these revolutions on many societies and many positive changes took place. Nonetheless the attention of many early thinkers was not attracted to the constructive consequences; on the other hand, the negative effects of such changes were the focus of the thinkers. This turned out to be the most immediate factor in the rise of sociological theorizing. These thinkers, on the whole, were distressed by the resulting anarchy and confusion. This was especially true about France. They were united in their objective to re-establish order in society. What do we do when we see that changes in our lives are painful or stressful? We want to go back to the previous state. The same thing happened in this case also. A few of the more extreme thinkers of this period expressed their desire to go back to the more peaceful and relatively orderly days of the middle ages. Those who were more refined acknowledged that many social changes had occurred and such a return was impracticable. Are you familiar with such people?

Having faced such a dead-end, who would try to find solutions? Similarly the second group of thinkers wanted to find ways to restore peace for those societies that had been upturned by the political revolutions of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This issue of social order was one of the major concerns of classical sociologists like Emile Durkheim and even his predecessor, Auguste Comte.

## **b. The Industrial Revolution**

The Industrial Revolution was another fundamental event in the development of Sociology. How? It sounds too far-fetched, isn't it? But the relation between the Industrial revolution and the birth of Sociology is closer than what we would generally imagine. It was not, however, a single event. Rather, numerous interconnected episodes by which European society transformed itself from a largely agricultural to an industrial system are collectively called the Industrial revolution. These developments affected not just the urban areas but rural regions as well. Do you know how? Massive number of people gave up agricultural work to engage themselves in the industrial employment offered in the factories that were mushrooming.

### **Industrial Revolution**

The Industrial revolution was a period of significant technological, economic, and social change that began in Britain in the late 18th century and spread to other parts of the world during the 19th century. It marked the transition from agrarian and handcraft-based economies to industrial and machine-based production, driven by innovations such as the steam engine, mechanized textile manufacturing, and improved transportation networks like railways and canals. This era led to rapid urbanization, increased productivity, and the rise of factory systems, but also brought about harsh working conditions, child labor, and environmental pollution, ultimately transforming societies and laying the foundations for the modern industrialized world.



Fig. 1.1.2 Coal mining and gathering

Are you familiar with this kind of situation of massive flow of people to join factories? This, as we know, also leads to migration and urbanisation on a large scale. Changes in such situations lead to transformation of urban areas too, isn't it? Extensive sequences of technological enhancements changed the factory settings. That is natural, isn't it? Services required for the rising entrepreneurs and the industry were supplied by the huge financial and administrative machinery. Manufactured goods of the industrial system could be bartered for others in the free market place. Is that all? No. What about humans and their labour? All these changes need human labour, no? Masses worked for long hours for low wages while a few made a huge profit. Don't we recognise this as Capitalism? Yes this was a transformative period to a capitalist society. Naturally a reaction against the exploitation of the industrial system and capitalism in general ensued. This led to the labour movement and a number of other radical movements trying to get rid of the capitalist structure.

The Industrial revolution was important due to its social impacts. Machinery took over from individual as the producing agent. What was its implication? Large

scale production happened. But didn't they need human labour to run the machines? Definitely, they needed many of them. Cities were crowded with migrant workers from villages. Thus the processes involved in the Industrial revolution initiated the flow of migrants to factories in the city for work, leading to urbanisation and migration. The uprooted villagers had suffered tremendously as is evident in English literature depicting that period. The period also witnessed tumultuous changes in European societies. The Industrial revolution, Capitalism and the reaction against them all involved an enormous upheaval in western society. This upheaval influenced the social thinkers. Some major figures in the early history of sociological theory spent their time studying the effects of the industrial revolution. They were interested in devising programmes, in finding solutions to their societies' problems. Thus Sociological theories were born in Europe.

### 1.1.3 Enlightenment

Enlightenment is one of those rarest time periods in human history that is named after the most significant development of the human mind. European intellectual

movement is what we are referring to right now. This movement has been one of the most significant influences on human intellect and therefore on human societies because it highlighted reason and science rather than tradition. At this stage of development of our minds and society, we may not fully understand the exact significance of the rupture it had created in the development of European society. But haven't you gone through examples of the damage a malicious mix of tradition and superstition can bring to individuals and collectives? Thinking about that time period in human history, what were the crucial points we have to learn? First of all, the period of enlightenment was marked by progress in rational education and scientific understanding.

Enlightenment thinkers were forced to examine their society and social relations in detail due to social turmoil and a desire for order and stability. The widespread ideas of the time were influenced by the 17th-century philosophers such as Descartes, Locke, and Newton. Prominent figures included Kant, Goethe, Voltaire, Rousseau, and Adam Smith. What a range of prominent thinkers! Their goal was to attain the right kind of society 'here and now'. They did not want that to happen in some 'heavenly future'. Advancements in rationality, spread of idealism and humanitarianism far and wide made scientific understanding of self and society look indispensable and achievable at the same time. Did this mean that the prominent thinkers of the time were optimistic in their attitude? Yes because they were hopeful that the kind of advancement of society they were looking for seemed to be guaranteed. Because all human beings had the power of reason, they argued, they could attain progress for themselves and their societies.

### Key philosophers of the Enlightenment

- ◆ Thomas Hobbes
- ◆ René Descartes
- ◆ John Locke
- ◆ Montesquieu
- ◆ David Hume
- ◆ Jean-Jacques Rousseau
- ◆ Denis Diderot
- ◆ Adam Smith
- ◆ Immanuel Kant
- ◆ Edmund Burke
- ◆ Thomas Paine
- ◆ Mary Wollstonecraft

No subjective factor— tradition, religion or any other kinds of authority claiming supremacy- could limit this progress. What do you think was the basis of their assertion? The premise behind such a position was that reason required no more than the right kind of education and exercise. Education meant facts and scientifically proven truths and would lead to rational thinking. Rational thinking was the path to human and social advancement. This would help humans achieve three objectives -knowledge, freedom, and happiness-for themselves and for society. Enlightenment social and political thought led to ground-breaking changes in customary social relations. European societies had already started gaining modern character from the period of Renaissance onwards. However stress on reason and individualism by the Enlightenment ideas along with the American, French and Industrial revolutions brought in the ultimate features of a modern capitalist society. The immeasurable misery during the French revolution drew the attention of some of the enlightenment

thinkers. How did that impact sociology? In fact, the problems and issues of that time became the issues of sociology, the new science, at the commencement of the nineteenth century.

With the diffusion of the thoughts of thinkers like Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, Charles Montesquieu, Jean-Jacques Rousseau and so on, opposition to traditional authority happened to be more achievable. Thomas Hobbes stated, without any room for doubt, that the social order could be changed by human beings because it was created by them. Thus all the divine theories on the creation of society were thrown away and the makeover- of humans- from subjects into citizens began with this confidence in the power of humans. John Locke is the other important thinker who prepared the theory about the nature of human beings in the original state of nature. Initially, based on the right of individuals and the need to curtail the powers of the sovereign, Locke deemed that human beings were first and foremost social and supportive creatures.

The social contract theories of Hobbes and Locke were highly influential in American and French revolutions. Montesquieu argued that all human beings are social creatures. He stated that the origin of society should be searched for in the pre-social dispositions of human beings. In order to understand society, he pointed out; facts about this entity should be investigated just as the way natural scientists observe facts about the physical world. What does that mean for the methods of studying society? What do you think? He stated, as an answer, that similar to the way natural scientists discover cause and effect relations in their subjects, social scientists could find the patterns about social relations through observation.

Rousseau was another thinker who contributed towards the understanding of social relations during this era. He said

that contract among individuals led to the formation of society. Rousseau focused his attention on chances of sweeping social change. According to him, a human being was originally virtuous. This good human being was corrupted by the collective called society. Now how to restore the virtuosity of the human being? He suggested that the only way to regain the moral nature of the individual is to completely transform society. He claimed that private property is the cause for all conflicts and wars. Even the civil state was formed to supervise private property. The state and a social contract are necessary to regulate private property. In the original state of nature, he stated, there was hardly any disparity because each had a natural right.

Another most prominent social thinker of the time was Saint Simon. He was one of the earliest known utopian socialists. He was a social dreamer. He believed that the problems of the society of his times could be resolved by the reorganisation of economic production. He wrote about two classes: Industrial Class or working class and the Idling Class. Those engaged in all sorts of productive work, not simply manual labour, are called working class. He suggested that the second class is the idling class who live on the fruits of others. Saint Simon was of the opinion that the working class needed to be recognised and rewarded so that an efficient economy could be created. He considered morals and politics as 'positive' sciences. He elevated science to the level of the original sacred authority. With all these thinkers and debates and discussions involving them, the subject matter of philosophy bloomed to its best shape. Philosophy encompassed all such subject matter which was then divided into many disciplines. Was there any other social science? History was the other discipline of social science. We will learn the transition of our subject Sociology from social philosophy later in this unit.



## 1.1.4 Renaissance

Renaissance is a beautiful word and it denotes hope. What does it mean? Do you know? It is originally a French word meaning rebirth. We all learnt about renaissance in our schools. Anyone who is even remotely interested in European History or World History cannot skip a discussion on this event. Rebirth of what? Definitely it refers to the rebirth of something. Here it is the rebirth of ideas or knowledge; in other words, because of the restoration of importance to ancient knowledge by Europeans this period is known as the age of the renaissance.

The period of the renaissance started in the fourteenth century (1400 AD) and moves upto the seventeenth century. The beginning of this event marks the transition from the medieval to the modern world. This was a time of the great revival of art, literature, and learning in Europe. Do you know that there was a political reason behind this kind of a revival? The conquest of the capital of Byzantine Empire-Constantinople- by the Turks in 1453 led to the retreat of Europeans. Many great artists and scholars fled back to Italy and other European nations, leading to a flurry of activity in those places around what was in existence earlier- like art, music ancient knowledge and so on. This added great strength to the efforts to search for classical texts on various subjects, to focus on traditions of art and music.

Some questions may come to your mind at this point of our discussion: But how did Sociology or the broader spectrum of Social Sciences benefit from this rebirth? Restoration of ancient knowledge also meant that rationality started gaining more importance. Evidence became important for everything. Prior to this period, that is, in the Middle Ages everything was explained in terms of religion and divine intervention. With the arrival of the Renaissance, an older establishment based on religious ideals came

into conflict with scholars in different fields of study with the so-called rationalist learning. The rationalist approach places human reason and logical connections above faith. What we should not forget is that faith and religious explanation did not need to prove anything! They wanted people to accept things as they were. Renaissance made rationalism replace religion as the organising principle of knowledge.

Scientific subjects like natural and physical sciences, which already had a beginning some time ago, were making some progress. Logical explanations based on observation using naked eye and instruments like telescopes started becoming acceptable. Use of new methodologies and inventions helped scientists to expand the scope of their subjects and some moved on to study other objects. Outside the natural and physical sciences took place the birth of Philosophy- the first discipline that studied matters other than natural and physical objects.

At this point of time, an explanation regarding the reason- why something happened? - was asked in the subject Philosophy. Thus almost all of the social science subjects owe their origin to Philosophy. Then how did Philosophy differ from the other prominent forms of knowledge? Answer to the question, 'can you prove it?' made all the difference! Also methods of enquiry differentiated Natural Sciences and Philosophy. Philosophy was getting nurtured in this process which eventually would play the most significant part in the emergence of Sociology. This will become clear to you when we discuss the transition from Social Philosophy to Sociology in this unit later on.

## 1.1.5 Intellectual Forces

We have observed the importance of intellectual forces in our society at various junctures. Can you name a few intellectual

forces that are at work in our society? They appear sometimes as ideologies. Sometimes waves of ideas that have the potential to influence us direct our activities towards a certain way of living. These forces contribute to the character of each era of the society.

Are you aware of the way in which ideas become dominant and influence the development of society? In the emergence of organised forms of knowledge like our subject Sociology, some ideas played a major role. The following is a brief description of the major intellectual forces in the foundation of sociology and other social sciences. We will learn crucial points about them here.

#### **a. Rationalism**

We have referred to reason and rationalism in many places in our discussion already. What is rationalism? The principle or practice of firm dependence on reason as the basis of one's thoughts and actions is called rationalism. A rationalist does not believe in religious or emotional explanations. Rationalism was believed to be embedded firmly in the power of the human mind.

According to rationalists humans were reasonable animals. Just like an individual could get out of his problems and find solutions by thinking through them, society could get out of its difficult times by applying logical thinking insightfully. Therefore societal life is explainable using reason. Troubles of the society could be overcome, and serenity achieved by using the logical quality of the individual and collective mind.

#### **b. Empiricism**

How do you define empiricism? It may be defined as the theory that all knowledge is based on experience derived from the senses. Every theory demands evidence that can be observed. Since evidence is there, it is possible to repeat the phenomena. Empiricists of that time period held, therefore, that

the reality could be understood by using science. By means of empiricism which was a superstructure for most sciences, it was believed, complex layers of reality could be explained. Answers to social problems could be achieved through this and human life and society could be improved using empiricism. It suited the needs of the time, didn't it?

#### **c. Humanitarianism**

Haven't you seen or read about humanitarians? What do you understand by humanitarianism? How does it work in society? This is an ideology that became dominant within the social framework whereby humans consider themselves responsible for the welfare of their less fortunate fellow humans. It bases itself on a view that all human beings are worthy of respect and should be treated with dignity. Therefore, humanitarians work towards advancing the well-being of humanity as a whole. Many of the humanitarians that we see in our times are influenced by this ideology which also had an impact on Sociology- that is, the need to improve society so that all humans live harmoniously.

Humanitarianism, when it influenced the birth of a science of society, stood for the mounting understanding of the life of the less fortunate, the less capable and the underprivileged in general. This denoted the growing sensitivity within the social consciousness towards the diverse human conditions. This newfound wisdom compelled the Philosophers to look for solutions to the ills and afflictions of individuals and society.

#### **d. Idealism**

Haven't we heard about it several times in our life- Idealism of the Youth, idealism of political worker and so on? But there may not be clarity regarding what is idealism. Envisioning things in an ideal form is what idealism is. This can be a principle or a



practice for many. Sometimes idealism may turn impractical in the real practice of it. However when one pursues one's ideas or ideals without considering the practical result, he is an idealist.

This meant that one's own ideas are taken as the dominant and the right one. Therefore this takes the character of a dogma. Whenever an individual thinks and takes his or her ideas seriously, idealism is in existence.

The intellectual forces mentioned above were dominant during the period culminating in forcing the thinkers to work towards the betterment of their societies. That ultimately led to the search for a science of society and subsequently resulted in the birth of Sociology.

### 1.1.6 Comte and the Development of Sociology

Nineteenth century Europe was going through a lot of transformation. Among the nations of Europe, France was especially important in our analysis. We have already learnt that France was undergoing transformation after, and as a result of, the French Revolution. We saw the problems that the nation was facing immediately before and after that event in an earlier section, didn't we? There was disorder and confusion in social and political arenas. Post-revolution era was the Napoleonic time when the actual nation building in accordance with the Republican principles was taking place. At the same time ideals from the Revolution were spreading far and wide wherever Napoleon made inroads. In fact, they went even beyond those regions if we go by what we had learnt in our world history classes, isn't it?

In any case social cohesion and harmony were absent in the post-revolution France. However, despite all such problems, the French intellectual climate was very active and vibrant during the early 19th century.

Achievements of Mathematics and other Physical sciences were immense and the French openly exhibited their pride in it! Intellectuals firmly believed in the methods followed by Natural Sciences. As far as society was concerned, there were discussions on finding a theory in order to solve the problems existing there. To put it in simple terms, they were looking for ways to establish the Law of Progress of Society or social laws similar to the natural laws. Do you know that even early thinkers like Blaise Pascal and Charles Montesquieu had contributed towards the development of such a law?

Have you heard of the French thinker Jacques Turgot? He had already prepared the setting for one such law. Similarly Marquis de Condorcet came forward with a hypothesis: the progress of humans could be predicted if a law exists in that field. This law could be established if history ceases to be the history of individuals but becomes the history of masses. He said that most of these laws were unknown but depending on the transformation of the human stages- anthropomorphic, metaphysical and scientific explanations of Nature- progress is necessary and uninterrupted. He had considerable influence on the founding figure of Sociology- Auguste Comte- and other thinkers like Saint Simon. Thus the stage was set in the nineteenth century France for a social law and the emergence of a scientific study of society. In short, social problems which were perceived as the aftereffects of the French revolution disheartened thinkers and they wanted to produce explanations and solutions. Similarly, the industrial revolution also dislocated masses and created social issues. Enlightenment ideals had already made inroads into social consciousness all over Europe.

Sensing the demand for a science to understand society and taking advantage of the favourable intellectual climate in Europe for this purpose, some intellectuals

like Herbert Spencer in Britain, Henri de Saint-Simon and Auguste Comte in France set out to establish a science of society. Auguste Comte and Henri de Saint-Simon collaborated to create “Plan of the Scientific Operations Necessary for the Reorganisation of Society” in 1822. In this they named the science of society as Social Physics. All knowledge, according to them, would pass through three stages- the theological, the metaphysical and the positive. This Law is the centre of Auguste Comte’s social theory. According to him, not only knowledge but individuals and society also pass through the three stages given in this Law. He later changed the proposed name for the science of society to Sociology in his book Positive Philosophy (1838).

Comte regarded Sociology as the last of the Sciences to develop. He considered Sociology to have reached the positive stage after passing through theological and metaphysical stages. He defined it as the “abstract, theoretical science of social phenomena” that is at the pinnacle of all sciences. In brief, acceptance of rationalism and skepticism during Renaissance and Enlightenment, Social Contract theories that asserted the place of the individual, influence of the French revolution, growth of science and technology, development of scientific outlook, social changes due to Industrialisation, urbanisation and revolutions along with the persuading intellectual forces like idealism, empiricism, humanitarianism and rationalism stimulated thinkers in Europe to create the science of society- Sociology.

## Recap

- ◆ Economic distress and irresponsible rulers led to the French revolution in 1789.
- ◆ Social contract theory emphasized on the individual right and equality.
- ◆ Disorder and turmoil prevailed in the post -revolutionary French society.
- ◆ Industrial revolution led to a change in the mode of production.
- ◆ European society changed itself to an industrial capitalist system.
- ◆ Masses working for low wages were in great misery.
- ◆ Twin revolutions led to the emergence of Sociological theories.
- ◆ Enlightenment literally means the state of having knowledge.
- ◆ Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, Montesquieu and Rousseau were the prominent thinkers.
- ◆ The enlightenment ideas encouraged inquisitiveness and questioning of the conventional way of life, system and regime.
- ◆ Renaissance means rebirth.
- ◆ The birth of Sociology was influenced by a number of intellectual forces.
- ◆ Predominant forces were rationalism, empiricism, humanitarianism, and idealism.

- ◆ Complex layers of reality could be explained using empiricism.
- ◆ Humanitarianism as an informal ideology spread sensitivity.
- ◆ Idealism also was an important intellectual force in the emergence of Sociology.
- ◆ Sociology evolved from social philosophy.
- ◆ Philosophy is an attempt to explain reality in its totality.
- ◆ Birth of the study of society-Sociology- occurred in France, Europe.
- ◆ Change starting from the renaissance period were caused by, and in turn favoured, rationality and inquisitiveness.
- ◆ Social Philosophers were keen on an understanding of these and on a solution for a better society.
- ◆ Progress in the natural sciences had established the value of science and its methods.
- ◆ Some of the Philosophers tried to apply the scientific method adopted by the Natural Sciences to the study of society.
- ◆ Prominent among them are Herbert Spencer, Saint Simon and Auguste Comte.

## Objective Questions

1. When did the scientific revolution happen?
2. Which planet is considered as the centre of the universe in geocentric theory?
3. What is the centre of the universe according to heliocentric theory?
4. What was the science on which early sociologists modeled sociology?
5. What is meant by the practice of firm dependence on reason as the basis of one's thoughts and actions?
6. Which is the process of gaining knowledge only through senses?
7. Which is the birthplace of philosophy?
8. Who is the author of the book 'Positive Philosophy'?
9. What are the primary causes for the origin of the French Revolution?

10. What is the etymological meaning of the concept Renaissance?

## Answers

1. 1400 AD-1700AD
2. Earth
3. Sun
4. Social Physics
5. Rationalism
6. Empiricism
7. Greece
8. Auguste Comte
9. Economic distress and Irresponsible ruling
10. Re-birth

## Assignments

1. Discuss about the significance of Scientific Revolution including the theoretical and practical dimensions in the emergence of Sociology.
2. Explain the Twin Revolution in Britain and how these bring changes in the social and political lives of the people.
3. Examine the Socio-Political and Intellectual forces behind the emergence of Sociology.
4. Discuss the key ideas and thinkers of enlightenment.
5. Examine the role of Auguste Comte in the development of Sociology.



## Reference

1. Beteille, A. (2002). *Sociology-Essays on Approach and Methods*, USA: Oxford University press.
2. Harlambos, M. (1980). *Sociology: Themes and Perspectives*, New York: Oxford University Press.
3. Mac Iver and Page. (1959). *Society: An Introductory Analysis*, Europe: Mac Millan.
4. Sujata Patel et al. (2002). (ed). *Thinking Social Science in India*, New Delhi: Sage.
5. Jayaram N. (1988). *Introductory Sociology*, Madras: Macmillan.

## Suggested Reading

1. Abraham, M.F, & Morgan, J.H. (1989). *Sociological Thought from Comte to Sorokin; Marx, Spencer, Pareto, Durkheim, Simmel, Weber, Mannheim*, Bristol: Wyndham Hall Press.
2. Ballantine, J.H, & Roberts, K.A. (2010). The Development of Sociology as a Discipline, pp.29-30, *Our Social World Condensed Version*, New Delhi: Sage.
3. Giddens, A. (2006). *Sociology*, Cambridge: Polity Press.
4. Hunt E. F, & Colander, D.C. (2012). *Social Science: An Introduction to the Study of Society*, New Delhi: Pearson.
5. Perry, J & Perry, E. (ed) (2010). Through the lens of science, pp 28-29, *Contemporary Society: An Introduction to Social Science*, Noida: Dorling Kindersley.
6. Ritzer, G. (1975). *Sociology: A Multiple Paradigm Science*, Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
7. Timasheff, N. S., ( 1955). *Sociological Theory, Its Nature and Growth*, Garden City, New York: Double Day.

# UNIT 2

## Sociology – Definition, Nature and Scope

### Learning Outcomes

After reading this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ◆ describe the definition, nature and the scope of Sociology
- ◆ explore the subject matter of sociology in different dimensions
- ◆ compare Sociology with other social sciences

### Prerequisites

Do you remember the story in which the ants were looking at an elephant? Being small beings, they were getting only a partial view of the big animal. To get a full view they all described what they saw to each other. Thus one ant went through the legs of the elephant and thought that an elephant is like a big pillar. And another one through the tail and thought an elephant to be like a broom. This description of an elephant by a group of ants among themselves provided them with an understanding of how big an animal the elephant was. Finally they put all of these together and understood the size and nature of the animal they were trying to view.

It took us back to our childhood for a moment. Very similar to the ants in this story, we do have a number of definitions given by prominent Sociologists. It is not feasible to study each of them at this point. Moreover, when we learn about the social thinkers in their respective sections later, we will come across their approach and the way each of them labeled the subject. We will mention a few of them here just to familiarise you with the diverse ways in which Sociology was approached.

### Keywords

Independent science, Pure science, Empirical science, Abstract science, Formalistic and Synthetic school, Social relationship



## Discussion

### 1.2.1 Sociology-Definition, Nature and Scope

We learnt about the socio-political dynamics along with some other factors that contributed to the emergence of Sociology in the previous unit. For a deep understanding of the subject we must know the definition, the subject matter, the scope and so on. You might have already noted that there are a number of definitions for Sociology. That shows the broader ways of understanding the subject and its different dimensions.

We learnt already that Sociology arose out of the social and political turbulence that happened in Europe over centuries. Changes in the economic spheres of life due to industrial revolutions also impacted the emergence of sociology as a scientific study of society. This period was politically, socially and intellectually important and lasted from about 1400 AD until the mid-nineteenth century. Historical events in Europe-- Renaissance, Scientific Revolution, Enlightenment, Industrial Revolution, and French Revolution-- impacted the way society was changing in different nations within the European continent and subsequently in their colonies across the world. Knowledge was structured and organised accordingly.

Natural and physical sciences emerged and flourished following the drastic changes in Europe due to the scientific revolution. Widespread rise in scientific temper, empiricism and rationality in European society led to a state where religious and theological doctrines were replaced by the scientific ideas. Challenging the dominant ideology was encouraged and this led to political and social unrest. Progress in the economic realm during the first Industrial revolution resulted in changes in the form and functioning of social institutions like

the family and education system in Britain. Subsequent revolutions occurred in other parts of Europe as well and social changes ensued. So also social problems!

Do you know that such problems did have some positive consequences? Developments like the above prompted thinkers and philosophers of the time to search for a science of society so that solutions to the existing social problems could be found. Emphasis on and popularity of empirical methods in natural and physical sciences motivated thinkers to look for similar methods to study society. This led to the formation of social sciences. We can understand now why all the disciplines of social sciences approach the issues from different angles; because they all surfaced from the same ancestors. And naturally because of this common origin, Sociology shares a relation with other social sciences. We will examine these in detail in the subsequent sections.

Coming back to the evolution of sociology, taking theoretical cues from social philosophy and methods from physical sciences, Sociology emerged as the youngest discipline within the family of social sciences. It qualifies all the standards of a science and its founders have clear-cut views about its jurisdiction and methods. These are reflected in its definition, nature and scope which are going to be discussed in this unit.

#### a. Definition of Sociology

Let us consider, therefore, what Sociology is! That is, we will go through the definition of the subject given by important theorists. You might have heard already that people consider it as the science of society; some define it as the study of social behaviour while some others call it as the study of social interaction, social life etc. As we all know Auguste Comte coined the term Sociology;

before that it was named Social Physics. He considered Sociology as the abstract theoretical science of Social Phenomena. Comte suggested that social phenomena should be studied in the same spirit as the study of astronomical, physical, chemical or physiological sciences. So Sociology was defined by classical theorists, keeping in mind the heavy responsibility it was carrying. Are you ready to examine some of the definitions of Sociology below?

Now let us consider defining the subject matter. What is Sociology? A commonly heard definition is: Sociology is the scientific study of society. We can arrive at this definition if we look at the etymological meaning of the term Sociology. The term Sociology is a combination of two terms: the Latin word 'socius' meaning companion/associate and the Greek word 'logos' meaning science/study. This term was first used by Auguste Comte in his book 'The Positive Philosophy' in 1838.

Have you noticed anything important in the term borrowed from Latin to name Sociology? Look at the term once again: socius meaning companion/associate. This indicates the crucial matter that Sociology is about companionship or association. In other words, it is a science to study human beings when they are in each other's company. Sociology is not meant to study humans in isolation. Do you see what is discussed here?

The above definition states beyond doubt that society- humans in association/ companionship- is being studied in Sociology. Nonetheless, as we all know, many thinkers and theorists worked towards the development of Sociology in its initial stages of development. They all approached the subject matter- society- from various angles and therefore have gone about defining Sociology differently. But that does not mean that they were studying different subjects. Rather they saw the same subject matter from

different viewpoints. Let us think further.

They range from the definition of sociology as the general science of society to the description of it as the study of human interactions and interrelations. Social life has been considered as the subject matter of sociology by some scholars whereas interpretative understanding of social action has been regarded as the theme by some others. Sociology has been seen as the science of social relationships as well as the study of social groups. Placing all of the above together gives an idea on what Sociology is trying to study.

We do, nevertheless, need to know how the founding father of Sociology defined the subject, don't we? We will confine ourselves to understand the definition given by Auguste Comte, who is known as the father of sociology. He defined Sociology as the study of social phenomena. We will learn more about the way he approached the subject and the background in which he came to this conclusion on the thematic content of the subject later in the course.

Glancing through the above section, we may realise that all the definitions point out the fact that a common thought underlies all these definitions. They are only different modes resorted by theorists to thematically arrange the material that Sociology is concerned with. All of them emphasise the 'social' aspect of human beings. Then, what do you think is the subject matter of Sociology? The subject matter is 'society' rather than the individual.

Sociology shares a reaction with other social sciences. We will examine these in detail in its definition, nature and scope which are going to be discussed in this unit.

## **b. Nature and Scope of Sociology**

From the history of evolution and definition of sociology it is clear that it has



been designed as a science. The founding fathers intended that as a science it should form its own theoretical propositions, collect data using its own methods and analyse them using techniques developed for that purpose. All these require exactness, reliability and facts that validate the findings. These findings should be generalised so that they can be made applicable in similar contexts.

Since sociology was modelled after sciences, a comparison with them is natural. But the thematic content of our subjects differs so much with that of the sciences which study the physical phenomena that an evaluation in those lines seems irrelevant at times. And yet, claiming the status of sciences demands that the principles of rationality cause- effect and generalisation are incorporated.

Going by the general understanding that a subject can attain scientific status if it can collect data, analyse them to discover a recurring pattern, and present the importance of that to the scientific community and the public. Do you know that sociology can do all these? Therefore it is accepted as a science. Even when it is established as a science, the nature of the discipline may differ from other sciences. Each science may have its own features and characteristics.

Its scope - all the possible areas that can be covered under the umbrella of its subject matter – need to be examined as well. This will enable us to differentiate sociology with other sciences Thus the nature and scope is a basic matter that we require to grasp before we go further into other areas of the subject.

So, what is sociology? What does it study? What are the dimensions of sociology? It studies the social aspects of human lives, isn't it? But don't you think that it is a very broad subject matter to study? Does it mean that the range of topics is vast? Does it mean that the discipline is very elastic and expandable? It has been pointed out by critics that it is

difficult to determine where the boundaries of sociology begin or end, or where sociological knowledge can be applied to understand human relations. Since society is growing more and more complex with new issues emerging all the time, the application of sociological knowledge is becoming more relevant day by day. Nevertheless, the founding fathers of Sociology did have a vision for the subject and wanted it to cover a broad spectrum of issues. They envisioned Sociology to be a general science of society which studies all aspects that other social sciences do not cover. That is, the scope has been designed on intent to be vast. Let us have a detailed discussion of the nature and scope of sociology in the following section.

- 1. An independent Science:** Sociology has its own subject matter and clear-cut methods. Therefore, its boundary is distinct from that of other subjects even when some other sciences study society. They study different aspects of society and are distinctively different from sociology. Sociology has its own theoretical formulation, knowledge, theorists and techniques to gain knowledge from its marked field of study.
- 2. A Pure Science:** Sociology is not an applied science. Rather it is a pure science. As a pure science, its direct task is to gain knowledge and it does not utilise and apply the existing knowledge in the field. Have you heard of engineering being referred to as applied knowledge? Just like Mathematics and Engineering may, respectively, be considered as the pure and applied part of the same knowledge, Sociology and Social Work may be considered as the pure and applied part of equivalent knowledge.

3. **An Empirical Science:** Like any other science Sociology relies on empiricism. What is empiricism? We have learnt that in the previous unit. Empiricism is the theoretical position that knowledge should be based on experience and evidence derived from senses. Therefore when we say that Sociology is empirical, it means that it depends on the data collected directly from the field to create Sociological knowledge. It bases itself on experimentation. Thus the facts and information collected through its methods are solid and firm. Since it is based on experimentation, it can be recurring and forms a pattern.
4. **Relies on Rationality:** The information collected through empirical methods are arranged logically and rationally in sociological theory. Thus, theories that are based on logical deduction are born by the use of reason. It means that both facts collected through strict methods and theoretical inference based on hard earned facts are important.
5. **A general Science:** Sociology deals with human life in general. To make this point clear let us take the example of other social sciences like Economics or Political Science.

Economics deals with the economic aspect of human life whereas Political Science looks at the political aspect. Sociology is not concerned with such specialised aspects of human life rather it studies human life in general.

6. **A generalizing Science:** Sociology generalises the findings based on the study of a number of events or social phenomena. In order to generalise, it does not, however, study all the events or phenomena. This is a very

important point since it is a solid proof that Sociology is a Science. With the use of its rigorous methods and theories, if we study some social events and the behaviour of some individuals, we can generalise the findings of others with similar characteristics.

7. **No Value Judgments:** Sociology as a discipline does not make any ethical, moral or value judgments. It categorically states 'what is' there in society and does not indicate 'what should be'. Thus it is not a normative science but is a categorical science. In simple words, this means that Sociology cannot suggest which direction a society should take even if it is seen as having a lot of problems within it! Moreover, it is free from any types of bias and it tries to be more objective.
8. **An Abstract Science:** Sociology is a conceptual science. What does it mean? It means that Sociology as a discipline is interested in social events in general to study its forms and patterns; it is not interested in one event. Take the example of suicide. Sociology looks at this act of individuals as a social phenomenon, to learn the general nature and not to learn why one individual or another takes his or her life. After analysis, a Sociologist will be able to understand the social determinants of suicides that happen in a particular society rather than why one individual took his life. Thus it theorizes the event so that the principles may be applied to other such events.
9. **A Social Science:** Sociology deals with the 'social universe'. Is it clear then that it distinguishes itself from Physical Sciences like



Physics, Astronomy and so on that deal with the ‘natural universe’? To put it in simpler words, Sociology studies human beings, their social relationships and their behaviour in groups. You must have heard about many Social Science disciplines, haven’t you? Sociology, itself a Social Science, has a close relationship with these Social Science disciplines. And yet they are distinct as well. We will learn these matters of similarity and differences with a number of Social Science disciplines in subsequent sections.

It is clear that Sociology is a pure, generalizing science based on empirical and rational methods of study. Do you understand by now that Sociology deals with a broad range of thematic contents? Naturally there are differences of opinion among scientists on the nature and scope of the subject. Such a discussion on Sociology’s scope- what subject matter it studies and what goes outside its purview- is mainly dominated by two schools of thought: (a) Formalistic or Specialistic School and (b) Synthetic School. Let us have a look at those two theoretical positions below about the scope of Sociology.

**a. Formalistic or Specialistic School:**

Have you heard of Georg Simmel, the German scholar? He is the leading theorist of this school of thought. According to the Formalistic Group Sociology is a pure and independent subject. They argue that as a discipline it studies only certain, and not all, aspects of human relationship. That is, it studies only the forms of these relationships and not its contents. In addition, Sociology should straighten out various social relationships apparent in various fields of society and study them only in abstract. And therefore it

has a limited scope. Though the scope is perceived as limited, it is not an easy task. Main proponents of this school include Max Weber, Ferdinand Tonnies, Albion Small, Leopold von Weise, Alfred Vierkandt and so on.

What do other theorists have to say about them? They are not kind and sympathetic with the Formalistic School. The latter is criticised to have narrowed the field of Sociology pointlessly. According to the critics, Sociology as a pure science is not a practical proposition. All subjects rely on others to understand more about social reality and the interdisciplinary approach is favoured currently. Moreover, Sociology cannot claim to be the only social science that studies forms of social relationships. Other Social Sciences like Political Science and Economics, for example, also study forms of these relationships. In addition, they differentiate between the form and content of the subject matter. However, the most important question here is; is it simple to differentiate between the two- form and content? Is that viable? In fact, there is no feasible way by which form and contents of social relationships can be differentiated. Now let us consider the second school of thought that outlines the scope of Sociology.

**b. The Synthetic School:**

This school views Sociology as a synthesis of the Social Sciences. And you did understand why this school got its name, didn’t you? This school does not want Sociology to be a specialist science; rather they consider Sociology to be a general Science. This school argues that all elements of social life are thoroughly inter-connected. Therefore, it is not possible to study only the forms or any aspect; but the entire social life should be studied by Sociology. And hence they advocate a systematic and general Sociology. Emile

Durkheim, Leonard Hobhouse, Morris Ginsberg and Pitirim Sorokin are the prominent figures of this school of thought.

Can you imagine how difficult it is for Sociologists to decide the boundaries of their discipline? First of all, the subject matter is broad. Take the case of the definition of sociology as the study of society; if we carry on with the understanding that Sociology's subject matter is society, then the concept itself is very abstract. Don't you feel challenged by the mere proposal of the entire society being studied by you? That is why some theorists resorted to studying specialised aspects of society. But then how do you distinguish them from others? If you look at the substance, there is too much to analyse. They decided, therefore, that only forms need to be examined by Sociologists. But then the problem is: how do you take out the form alone, leaving the content intact? Some theorists, therefore, thought that sociology should be a general science. Thus the debate continues. However that does not stop Sociology from continuing with its task of understanding human behaviour in its social context.

### **1.2.2. Sociology and Other Social Sciences**

Sociology is the youngest of the Social Sciences and emerged out of the necessity felt by thinkers and philosophers that societal problems were not adequately addressed by existing sciences. The etymological meaning in itself is indicative of the fact that Sociology should study social aspects. Social aspects of what?.

Essentially sociology as a science was designed to study social aspects of the association of human beings and their behaviour while associating with each other. Let us consider the example of unemployment in India. It has social, political and economic dimensions. Therefore we rely on other social

sciences to analyse the various aspects of the same issue. It is quite normal that the meaningful analysis of a social issue makes it mandatory to extract knowledge created by other disciplines.

It is important to point out another matter at this moment. Since the origin is from the same sources, Sociology and other Social sciences have many features in common. The central point of all of them is human beings; the difference is in the aspect or dimension of human behaviour. Therefore, a wholesome analysis of human behaviour in society contributes towards Social sciences. Sociology, like any other Social Science discipline, shares a relation with the others in the family. Let us consider this relationship of Sociology with other Social Sciences.

#### **a. Political Science and Sociology**

We all have heard of politics. Have you heard of the name of the subject related to that? Haven't you heard of Political science? What does it deal with? Political science is one of the Social Sciences dealing with the principle of administrative organisation and government. Different forms of government, law, state (can mean the government for our purpose here), election, democracy, all such matters get covered in the subject matter of Political Science. It has major theories on the political aspects of human life as well.

There is a two-way relation between Political science and Sociology. What does it mean to have a two-way or mutual relationship between two subjects? It indicates that there is interdependence between them. One needs the help of the other subjects to understand social phenomenon in its totality. Political Science requires some basic understanding of society in order to know about the working of political institutions. For example, without knowing the nature of various social groups and the factors that influence their behaviour, how can we arrive



at a conclusion on their voting pattern? Thus Political Science requires that the knowledge created by Sociological methods and theories are utilised.

Similarly Sociology also needs the resources produced by Political Science. Don't you think it important to learn about the political aspects of various groups to study society as a whole? Most of the founding fathers of Social Sciences were experts in many Social Science subjects, not just in one discipline. For example, early social theorists like Emile Durkheim, Herbert Spencer and Max Weber were well-versed in Political Science as well. Let us have a look at the features of Political science and sociology in a comparative perspective. This will help us not only in understanding what the subjects - Political science and Sociology- are all about but will also help us in achieving clarity on the scope of our own Sociology!

As a social science discipline, Sociology is comprehensive in nature whereas Political Science is a specialised subject dealing only with political and administrative behaviour. And therefore its range is limited to political institutions while Sociology is the study of the entire society and all social institutions. How humans act while they are politically conscious is the focus of Political Science while the social factors underlying the human behaviour gets the attention of sociology. In short, Political science studies the political being while sociology learns about the social person.

Both rely on empirical methods to conduct their studies. Information collected through various techniques like fieldwork and review

of literature are used to advance or to refute the already available theories. Empirical data are collected using fieldwork- surveys, interviews, focus group discussions, case studies, observation and so on- in both Political science and Sociology. To sum up, there are many similarities and differences between these two social science disciplines.

### **b. History and Sociology**

Can you name the oldest of the Social Sciences? It is said that History and Philosophy are the ancestors whose lineage may be claimed by every other member of the Social Science family! Therefore History is one of the oldest disciplines. History and Sociology share a special relationship. History records human life and its material manifestation, actions and ideas of humans, and the resultant changes in human societies. One feature of History is that it studies societies of the past. Sociology deals with different modes of living of human beings in current times. Their behaviour, customs, folkways, traditions and institutions evolved and developed on purpose by human beings are studied by Sociologists. Do you think that there is interdependence between History and Sociology? Sociologists' work necessitates a comparative picture of how a society was in the past and to what degree any kind of social change happened. This requires historical knowledge. Do you remember your history classes in school? Some chapters were very interesting, weren't they? Why was it so? Plain political and administrative history consisting of only the narrations of conquests of kings and their administrative follies did not capture our attention, did they? We needed, instead, social aspects of the era

Table. 1.2.1 Political Science vs Sociology

<b>Political Science</b>	<b>Sociology</b>
Specialised	Comprehensive
Scope is limited-political aspects of society	Scope is broad- Entire society
Studies the attitude of political authority, policy makers and executing authority	Studies humans' view in social interaction
Conscious acts of political man is studied	Unconscious behaviour and acts of people in their social context is the subject matter
Limited to the study of political institutions	Studies all social institutions
Political Science deals with political man	Sociology deals with social man

under that particular king's rule to learn the period's authentic history. This points out that History as a discipline calls for Sociological knowledge to make it worthwhile. Isn't the interdependence of these two disciplines very clear here?

Despite that, History and Sociology are dissimilar in more than one way. Sociology is an abstract science with a range of subjects to explore as its themes whereas History

is tangible as a discipline that studies only the past. Exactly because of the fact that History studies the past events, specificities in methods of data collection should be pointed out here. History uses content analysis, surveys, interviews of people who lived through certain episodes (like Indian independence movement, for example), Life History approach and so on. Let us look at these differences between these two social sciences in the box below.

Table. 1.2.2 History vs Sociology

<b>History</b>	<b>Sociology</b>
One of the oldest Social Sciences	Youngest Social Science
Scope- limited; studies past	Scope- vast; studies present, past and future
Studies entire aspects of the past events	Studies social dimensions of the events
Unique and peculiar events are the interests	Studies activities of humans influenced by social groups and incidents that happen frequently
Chronological description of events	Studies actions of humans in society, their causes and consequences
History is concrete	Sociology is abstract



### c. Economics and Sociology

Imagine that you have to buy a television (TV) for your home. Which one will you buy? There are many brands and many types of TV sets available in the market. How will you decide which one to buy? You will consider many things before arriving at a decision. Main factor to consider is the resource- that is money available with you for buying a TV. If you have a limited budget, you have to consider the amount that you can make available accordingly. Thus the kind of TV and the brand will be governed by the amount of money that you can spare for that purpose. So there is a possibility that you end up buying a budget TV. This is how we do most of our purchases and make most of our decisions involving money. Thus the social needs are largely satisfied by matching them with the economic background. Sociologists had noted that monetary events are always decided by social needs. In return they are constantly re-determining, creating, shaping and transforming social needs and activity of every kind. In short, the limited scope of Economics mandates that it deals with aspects regarding economic resources and methods of production at an individual and collective level. Sociology, on the other hand, would deal with individual and collective behaviour in groups, in relation to other

members of the society and therefore the scope is broader.

You have heard of economists doing research, haven't you? Why do they undertake that? Their main intention is to bring down the economic misery of mankind and also to make the welfare of common people possible. This economic dimension is studied using traditional econometric and quantitative methods. The ultimate aim of material well-being is the happiness of individuals which will have its repercussions in the social relationships around them. Studying these aspects require mutual assistance between these sciences and the use of knowledge acquired by each of them. Economics uses some methods (including study techniques and tools) similar to those of Sociology. In order to arrive at conclusions or generalizations, economists use a large quantity of data. Quantitative methods are used to collect and analyse these data. Surveys, census, interview schedules or questionnaires are the prominent tools used for this purpose. However in-depth analysis of economic behaviour demands that more detailed and specific data are needed. In such cases, like Sociology, data is obtained using participant observation, semi structured interviews, life histories, and so on.

Table. 1.2.3 Economics vs Sociology

<b>Economics</b>	<b>Sociology</b>
Older subject	Youngest subject
Scope is limited –human activities to obtain the material means to satisfy their wants	Scope is broad-Whole of society
Studies economic relationship and activities with economic viewpoint	Studies social relationships
Unit of study is individuals indulged in economic activity	Unit is individuals in groups and interaction in their background
Methods include traditionally arithmetical and quantitative	Methods can be qualitative, quantitative or a mixture of both
Material happiness of man	Social aspect of economic activity

#### d. Psychology and Sociology

Most often we get confused with the boundaries of Sociology and Psychology more than any other disciplines. Why is it so? Both disciplines deal with individuals. That is the reason! And yet, the difference is quite obvious to us, isn't it? Psychology studies the attitudes and values of an individual in the context of his behaviour while Sociology would study the group behaviour of individuals. A branch of Psychology called Social Psychology is quite close to Sociology and studies the psychological aspects of the collectives. Let us have a glimpse of the features of both Psychology and Sociology

in a tabular form below. Psychology while studying the individual uses observation, Survey, Case Study, Correlation Design, and Experimental method to collect data. Psychologists use these methods to describe different events, experiences, or behaviours and look for links between them. When it comes to Social Psychology, a branch of Psychology, the similarities with Sociology are very striking. Therefore critics point out that the boundaries between the two disciplines are not clear. However distinct hypothesis and methods of data collection apart from the manner in which the data are analysed make them very distinct sciences.

Table. 1.2.4 Psychology vs Sociology

Psychology	Sociology
Study individuals from a psychological viewpoint	Study society from a community viewpoint
Scope is limited- studies individual behaviour from the angle of psychological factors	Scope is broad- studies society
Studies mental processes of individuals	Studies social processes, social laws or values related to attitudes
Study of individual attitude towards cultural and social values and laws	Studies society, its structure, functions and its institutions, values

#### e. Sociology and Anthropology

What distinguishes Anthropology from other members of the Social Science family? Can you guess? Have you ever come across the subject matter of Anthropology? If you have, then you know that it studies early humans including their physical characteristics. What does that imply in terms of the methods of study? Because of this feature of the subject, it combines the methods of biological sciences with that of the social sciences. Its subject matter – society and culture in the past- necessitates this interdisciplinary approach.

While living in groups and mingling with other humans, they must have acquired some characteristics apart from those which were ascribed to them by nature. There is a relationship between these two features of humans. Anthropologists study those aspects of human life as well.

Anthropology tries to understand the acquired and inherited traits of human beings.

When a comparative study of pre-modern societies is needed, Anthropologists venture out for that. Quite similar to the Archeologists, Anthropologists also study the unearthed artifacts and remains of ancient civilisations in order to ascertain historical data or to find out the cultural characteristics of certain extinct civilisations. Physical Anthropology, Social Anthropology and Cultural Anthropology are the branches of



this Science. Do you know that the famous American Anthropologist A. L. Kroeber called Sociology and Anthropology as twin sisters? It means that both subjects are closely linked and are look-alike. Their interdependence starts there. Sociology studies present-day societies; nonetheless it needs Anthropological know-how the past to comprehend them better. Anthropology has lent many concepts to Sociology. Are you able to identify any of them? Concepts related to the theme 'culture' like cultural traits, cultural lag and so on are originally Anthropological ideas that Sociology has borrowed.

Anthropology relies on Sociology for a comprehensive understanding of its own subject matter. Thus sociological knowledge rooted in the present offers the former with possible patterns of human behaviour in societies of the past. Both use fieldwork but Anthropology uses excavations to validate its theories about past cultures and societies. One main method used by anthropology is ethnography. Through ethnography as a method, it can study the subject matter over a period of time and from different viewpoints. These may bring unexpected dimensions to their subjects, revealing new facts in their study.

Table. 1.2.5 Anthropology vs Sociology

<b>Anthropology</b>	<b>Sociology</b>
Studies society of pre- modern origin	Studies modern society
Studies culture that is past and static	Studies civilisation that is vast and dynamic
Studies man and his culture in the past	Studies the same phenomena as they exist at present
Studies biological characteristics of humans also	Studies social relationship
Uses excavations, skeletal remains, fieldwork and ethnography as methods	Uses documents, fieldwork, survey and interview (quantitative, qualitative and mixed method) as methods
No need to think of policies	Policies and solutions to the research problems are part of research

## Recap

- ◆ Sociology is generally defined as the scientific study of society.
- ◆ The subject was named Sociology by Auguste Comte in his book 'The Positive Philosophy'.
- ◆ 'Socius' means companion or associate and 'logos' mean science or study.
- ◆ Auguste Comte is known as the father of Sociology.
- ◆ Sociology is the study of social phenomena.
- ◆ Sociology is pure, independent, abstract, general and generalizing science.
- ◆ As an empirical science, it relies on rationality and does not venture into value judgements on its subject matter.
- ◆ The Formalistic School and the Synthetic School are prominent in the theoretical discourse.
- ◆ Formalistic school considers sociology as a pure science.
- ◆ The synthetic school considers it as a general science.
- ◆ Sociology has a clear-cut relation with other Social Sciences.
- ◆ Sociological analysis is incomplete without considering the knowledge created by other sciences.
- ◆ Social Psychology acts as a link between Sociology and Psychology.
- ◆ Sociologists are largely using historical data to interpret the present situation.
- ◆ Anthropology studies societies of the past and Sociologists benefit from its findings.

## Objective Questions

1. What did Sociology study according to Auguste Comte?
2. In which book was the term Sociology first used?
3. When was the science of society renamed as Sociology?
4. What were the two words from which the term Sociology was coined?
5. What is the etymological meaning of the term Sociology?
6. Which school of thought claims that Sociology is a pure and natural science?



7. Which school considers Sociology is a general Science?
8. Which is the Social Science that deals with the principle of administrative organisation and government?
9. Which is the Social Science that studies the societies' past?
10. Which is the most popular method used in Economics to collect primary data?

## Answers

1. Social phenomena
2. Positive Philosophy
3. 1838
4. Socius and logos
5. Companionship
6. Formalistic School
7. Synthetic School
8. Political Science
9. History
10. Quantitative methods

## Assignments

1. Discuss about the Nature and Scope of Sociology.
2. Examine the relationship between Sociology and Political Science.
3. Examine the relationship between Sociology and History.
4. Compare the differences and similarities of Sociology and Economics.
5. Distinguish Anthropology from Sociology.

## Reference

1. Kundu, A. (2009), *The Social Sciences; Methodology and Perspectives*, Delhi : Pearson.
2. Giddens, A. (2005) *Sociology*, Italy : Polity Press
3. Harlambos, M. (1980). *Sociology: Themes and Perspectives*, New York: Oxford University Press.
4. Abraham Francis, M. (2006). *Contemporary Sociology: An Introduction to Concepts and Theory*, USA : Oxford.
5. MacIver, R. M.& Page, C.H. (1959), *Society: An Introductory Analysis*, London : Macmillan.

## Suggested Reading

1. Gisbert, P., (2020). Sociology and the Social Sciences, pp.15-25, in Gisbert P., *Fundamentals of Sociology*, Hyderabad: Orient Blackswan.
2. Perry, J. & Perry,E. (ed) (2010). Through the Lens of Science, pp 9-22, in *Contemporary Society: An Introduction to Social Science*, New Delhi: Dorling Kindersley.
3. Rao, C.S.( 2004). *Sociology : Principles of Sociology with an Introduction to Social Thought*, New Delhi: S Chand.
4. Ritzer, G. (1975). *Sociology: A Multiple Paradigm Science*, Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
5. Timasheff, N.S. (1955). *Sociological Theory, Its Nature and Growth*, Garden City, New York: Double Day.

# UNIT 3

## Sociological Imagination, Sociology and Common Sense

### Learning Outcomes

After reading this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ◆ describe the relevance of sociological understanding in our everyday lives
- ◆ examine the significance of sociological imagination in analysing society
- ◆ compare sociological imagination with common sense

### Prerequisites

Common folks like us, anxious to get over day by day in the best possible manner, do not see anything beyond our own lives. We get deeply involved in routines and habitual practices and get away from many situations with practical knowledge peculiar to each social setting. We may not methodically scrutinise the process, causes and effects, or meaning of any events in our social world. We may not even be aware that others have similar experiences. Sometimes you may argue that in the present-day world, we do devour the private lives of a lot of people, especially celebrities. Television, internet and other communication networks forcefully bring much of it to our homes without even editing the contents. But that does not help us much in our lives, isn't it? How do we, then, manage to connect our lives with others in order to fill the larger picture? Most of us would agree that each of us forms part of a jigsaw puzzle: Something bigger than the sum total of each of us. We do try to connect with that larger context. Sometimes we succeed and sometimes we fail. Sociology, as a discipline, has some tools to deal with each situation.

### Keywords

Sociological understanding, Personal experience, Social issues, Scientific study, Collective experience

## Discussion

As we saw in the previous unit, Sociology is a science and follows logic and reason in formulating hypothesis, accumulating evidence, deducing logically and creating universally applicable conclusions. It has got scientifically accepted, competent methods of study to collect information and to analyse them systematically in comparison with other social sciences as well. And it does rely on other social sciences to learn about different aspects of the society and establish a relation with them.

Sociology, as a social science discipline, was mandated by its founding fathers to use its tools and techniques in order to understand problems of society and also to maintain order and stability. Harmony and progress in society imply similar conditions for individual components as well. Correspondingly, sociological understanding is not meant exclusively for social theorists but is expected to assist common people like us in our everyday lives as well. Then the question arises: how does learning Sociology help us in our everyday lives?

In such a situation it is important to realise the relevance of sociological understanding in our everyday lives. Does it help to make a better sense of the world outside? Do we find any frame or tool whereby we can get on with our lives more smoothly once we study sociology? Are the common beliefs and actions based on them synchronizing with the sociological understanding? Or don't they tally? Let us consider all these questions in the following unit.

### 1.3.1 Sociological Imagination

C. Wright Mills, a well-known sociologist tries to bring about a connection between individual lives and the realities of society at the same time. He uses the term 'Sociological Imagination' to denote that conceptual device.

Connecting private life events to the larger society is helpful to the common people in more than one. It helps them detach themselves from their personal troubles by making sense of it. It is a theoretical means for sociologists as well. They can develop their understanding of social life by combining the study of major changes in society and individual lives.

Have you ever gone through a personal crisis like failing an examination? Of course, you did feel very miserable and worthless. Didn't you feel better when you learnt that half of your classmates also failed in the examination? No, it was not because you were a jealous person or a person with a negative mind-set who wished bad things to happen for everyone. Rather, when you came to know that half of the class failed in that examination, it stopped being a mere personal problem for you. Now your failure can be connected to those of the class as well!

Now you are able to more confidently explain your failure in terms of the difficult questions in the examination and also those which were out of the given syllabus! See how the personal failure has been turned around to be a problem of the entire class or rather an issue beyond an individual, having wider ramifications. Similarly, all personal issues have roots in their environment and society. One can perceive this connection between the personal predicament and the wider social world if one possesses 'Sociological Imagination'. This idea could be traced in the writings of the German sociologist Max Weber and has been supported more recently in the works of Anthony Giddens. However, an American sociologist C. Wright Mills (1916-1962) put forward the clearest picture of the concept.



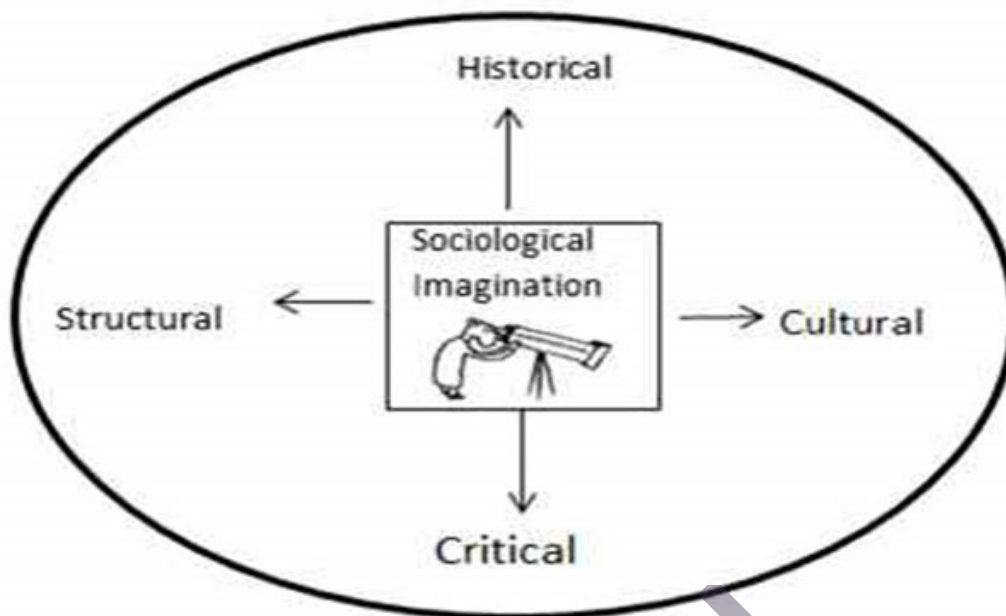


Fig. 1.3.1 Sociological Imagination

The sociologist who established this concept, Mills, named the personal challenges as “troubles” and larger social challenges as “issues”. These are called biography and history respectively. Have you heard of them before? Mills’ Sociological Imagination enables us to understand the relationships between events in our personal lives (biography), and events in our society (history). By doing that, this concept offers us a framework to understand the connection between personal problems and larger social issues.

Historical change and institutional contradictions in the wider society affect our individual lives. However most often people are not able to see these relations while they are busy navigating their lives through the turbulent environment around them. We cannot blame them if they cannot see beyond their immediate problems in these difficult times, Can we? We must not forget that they do not do it deliberately nor do they feel happy about it. On the other hand, most often they feel “trapped” in their private lives, as discussed by Mills in the opening paragraph of his book.

An unemployed person may see the situation as a private trouble and may not even be aware of the rate of unemployment and structural issues associated with it. He /She is too busy making both ends meet that they consider themselves as trapped in that situation and does not see a way to get away from trouble. Similarly, a teacher once told us about a studious student who lacked resources for higher studies in the subject of their choice. They perceived this situation as the result of their parents’ inability to fund the studies. They were emotional and felt quite constrained as their classmates were all going for higher studies in a preferred field. They did not see the wider picture and the class background. And the lack of any kind of student support system in our country especially at that point of time. They were unable to get part time employment either to sponsor their own studies unlike in some other countries. The systemic factors were not immediately visible to them and thus they were disheartened and inconsolable. We can, to some extent, be empathetic to their situation, can’t we?

That is the point: the systemic flaw is not instantly detectable when, in fact, the

root cause may be the broader social issues. That is why despite their hard work, many young people do not reach the heights that they think they are entitled to. What ordinary people can perceive and what they are capable of doing in response to that are determined by their 'private orbits'- their families, neighbourhood, close friends -in which they are living.

As a young person, you might have wanted to graduate in social sciences or humanities while your parent insisted on you taking a biology course so that you could appear for the NEET examination. This decision persuaded you to become an MBBS doctor was not directed by their limited ambition for the child; rather this was because they understood the higher possibilities for a doctor in a society like ours. The individual choice cannot be understood without understanding society's employment structure.

Remember that serious disagreement with your parents on spending money? And what about that particularly fierce drama you performed with the objective of making your mother your sole audience? That was regarding wearing that pair of low waist jeans, wasn't that? Of course you did have one of those scuffles in your life and probably are going to have more! That big picture may be the generational divide and changes in the outlook on fashion of the younger generation due to their wider exposure or the value attached to money in the current society in comparison to that in your parents' generation.

However, most of us do not realise – like the parents and the children in the above examples- the complex links between our lives and developments in the larger society. It is here that Sociological Imagination as a conceptual tool comes to our service. It enables us to best understand our personal position, experiences and problems by 'locating' ourselves within the period in society's evolution. This is done by examining our broader social context. This indicates that the big picture is visible to us and that finally the pieces of the jigsaw puzzle are put in their places.

You have to be particularly attentive here and now to understand an important point. In most cases, as described by C. Wright Mills in his book *Sociological Imagination* (1959), individual problems and private troubles are entrenched in the social milieu. And what happens outside in the social world is beyond one's personal control. Understanding this relationship between individual experiences and public issues is possible with the help of Sociological Imagination. According to Mills, personal experiences can and should be interpreted in the context of major public forces in the wider society. For example, very specific circumstances might lead to one person becoming a great, successful businessman, but when the number of business persons or successful entrepreneurs in society 'as a whole' rises, it is definitely a public feature that needs to be explained. Sociologists have to consider the economic and political institutions in society and not merely the personal situation.



## Sociological Imagination

Does the term ‘Sociological Imagination’ still sound tricky? Let us consider the case of X. X was born in a poor family, literally! The father was a rag picker who occupied that vacant land behind the private bus stand on the way to the mosque. It was only when X was in the 8th standard that they got a house of their own. X was not particularly a good student either. Many made loud remarks as if X was going to follow in their father’s footsteps for their livelihood. X went to college with not much consequence for anyone, everyone thought. When X started that small workshop to repair mixer-grinders and was efficient in it, only the homemakers of the small village were happy. Why? Because they did not have to go to the nearest town to get them repaired. When X began to sell mixer-grinders, some notice but no appreciation came their way. X developed themselves into a big-time entrepreneur when their factory flourished and started branches in two other villages nearby. Then the photograph appeared in the newspaper sharing a dais with the industries minister. And X remarked that all this was possible because of the favourable public (industrial) policy of the state. This connection with the wider environment made by X was the motivation for all those business-people who financed the small entrepreneurs, who made those hosiery items, sandal makers and even horticulturists. This ‘rags to riches’ story is a personal success story which is the apple of the eye of a TV show. But wait! We have to accept that the entire success was made possible not just due to the hard work put in by these entrepreneurs but they were at the “right intersections of history and biography within society”. Linkages of a great number of milieu came right for these individuals.

We did mention in the beginning of our discussion that the concept Sociological Imagination can help Sociologists, didn’t we? How? That is, sociological hypotheses may be formulated by including both troubles and issues, both biography and history and the variety of their intricate relations. The life of the individual and the making of societies occur around us and within that, the Sociological Imagination has its chance to make a difference in the quality of human life in our times. This triple focus on biography, history and structure is sociology’s heritage.

Sociology, thus, definitely acknowledges the importance of the individual situation; but the discipline does not endorse or celebrate individualism. Do you get the difference? This is an important difference. Individualism approves of social isolation and even encourages it. Nevertheless, Sociology, first and foremost, deals with

relational standpoint. We, human beings, are members of our society and that society already existed even before we were born. When we were born, we entered into certain social relations, whether we liked them or not. From then onwards our experiences are influenced by the nature of the social structure in which we live. The cultural particularity of that social structure colours our sight and insights.

Sociological Imagination is a good tool towards thinking sociologically. It presents itself as a beautiful shell that contains a relational way of understanding the social world around us. It is that magic wand which makes visible all the elements that constitute our everyday lives. The role of social forces in shaping individual lives is acknowledged by Sociological knowledge by using such concepts which, in turn, helps us to make sense of everyday life that we

fail to appreciate. Sociological Imagination is not just for the use of Sociologists; It is important to all members of society who want to understand, change and improve their lives.

### 1.3.2 Sociology and Common Sense

Can you give a definition of commonsense? Common sense means the ideas that are entirely taken for granted by society in such a way that they have never been critically viewed. One important feature of commonsensical beliefs, as we discussed before, is that they appear to be reasonable and logical to us. Common sense explanations derived from individual knowledge and collective experiences are vital for us in analyzing the information that is made available at present. This helps us in settling for the next step or finding solutions in various junctures of life. Universal presence of the ideas and statements that we call commonsense are no guarantee that they are correct. That is why we must think of relying on scientific studies for arriving at conclusions.

Human behaviour and social relationships can be studied scientifically as we discussed in the previous section- nature and scope of Sociology. Scientific methods to test the accuracy of commonsense beliefs and ideas about human behaviour and the social world are useful to us so that we are not completely misled. Then we need to understand one thing: If examined through the lens of scientifically gathered information, many commonsense notions, however useful, are going to be rejected as baseless. Let us consider this particular illustration on gender roles right out of the lives of many of us. It is often argued that it is common sense and natural that men are incapable of caring and women/wives are natural carers and therefore they are good at child-rearing and domestic tasks. Many kinds of arguments and examples- right from

economic to religious- are given to justify this commonly held belief. Such commonsensical understanding sometimes makes many men turn away from expressing their concern for their dear and near ones. The same belief prevents women from leading a dignified life by resorting to decent work. Once we observe closely, the commonsensical ideas about strict gender roles may not be entirely true even in traditional societies. We can find that there are women who engage in work outside home and men who do housework and caring duties with a lot of interest and efficiency. Such notions that are seen as common sense cannot be proved against the facts collected from society.

Gender roles may not work in stereotypical forms in real life. Can you cite one such example where the clichéd notions do not apply in real life situations? It will be found that many commonsense notions are contradictory and inconsistent. There are many truisms and proverbs that are passed on from generations to the next and are in vogue in all societies. We have already seen how they act as a guide to us at least in some situations in our lives. They can be true in some circumstances and in fact, may not hold true under all conditions. Thus it may be said that the commonsensical beliefs work 'in some places, for some people and some things'. Here the difference between commonsense and sociology becomes pertinent. The latter scientifically studies the conditions in which these beliefs hold and do not hold true. The difference, accordingly, between common sense and sociology is that sociologists assess the beliefs by collecting data and scrutinizing the proof. They do this in a premeditated, objective, methodical and, therefore, scientific way. Since it is based on experimentation, it can be replicated as well. The subject is studied to examine whether they can refute what they think is true. The scientist can quote the scientific body of evidence gathered from scientific observations.



Let us consider one example below: Some common sense statements in almost all societies indicate that boys have a natural aptitude for Mathematics and learn the subject more easily than girls. In contrast, scientific research based on observation of similar boys and girls discovered that girls are as intelligent as boys. Therefore the use of biological perspective by common sense to explain the differences in the preference of subjects by boys and women are not correct. Another example of a popular adage across the world is: “Boys do not cry”. And “women cry for silly reasons”. This type of common sense understanding has such firm and fixed images that result in great emotional problems for men. This is because society disapproves of men expressing their emotions, having passed on this commonsensical belief from one generation to the next. The common-sense analysis of differences in behaviour between men and women in our families assume that because there are physiological differences between men and women, the difference in their behaviour is ‘natural’. Social determinants of such behaviour are not taken into account at all in these explanations. That is, the role society plays in the construction of such behaviour is forgotten. Ordinary people are familiar with these kinds of common-sense perceptions in their everyday lives and sociological outlook does not apply. Believing commonsensical knowledge is comfortable to us also because it lightens our work. We are not expected to shoulder the responsibility to transform the situation. Thinking sociologically, on the other hand, is a challenge to us. Its process demands that we become more sensitive

to and tolerant of diverse thinking and practices. It exposes to us the world beyond our immediate lives.

We come across and familiarize ourselves with experiences that we may not even believe to be existing. It sharpens the possibilities to explore further and make sense of this novel knowledge. Sociology, with its heritage of idealism, rationalism and humanitarianism, offers knowledge that makes us understand that society is changeable. What we take for granted as natural and inevitable can be transformed through the exercise of the human mind. As a matter of fact the net result of this is that Sociological thinking can enable us to be more effective social actors. - in both individual and social lives.

The often-ignored connection between the action and the context, as we read in the previous section, become visible and open new avenues for transformation. Then we come to another question. Why is it important to look at the sociologically derived knowledge and common sense? Sociology deals with subjects that fall within the daily experiences of people; and commonsensical viewpoint and traditional wisdom often play an important role in that particular intersection of everyday living of events in one’s lives. Think about it. We all come to that meeting point of commonsensical knowledge and decision-making in our lives, don’t we? Commonsense can be cultural expressions and culture specific. Social location becomes important in the creation of commonsense. Therefore, commonsense of one region can be the nonsense of some other region.

## Recap

- ◆ The sociological imagination is a concept developed by the American sociologist C. Wright Mills.
- ◆ The book *The Sociological Imagination* was published in 1959.
- ◆ The term sociological imagination can be traced to the works of famous Sociologists Max Weber and Anthony Giddens.
- ◆ Sociological Imagination enables us to understand the relationships between events in our personal lives (biography), and the wider society (history).
- ◆ Sociological Imagination can be used as a conceptual tool.
- ◆ Common sense may be defined as the ideas that are believed, without any proof, as truth by society.
- ◆ Common sense may appear to be reasonable and help common people to navigate their daily life comfortably.
- ◆ Scientific disciplines like Sociology adhere to strict rules and methods in the formulation of propositions and accumulation of knowledge.

## Objective Questions

1. Who gave the concept 'Sociological Imagination'?
2. Which concept in Sociology can help us in understanding the relationship between individual experience and public issues?
3. What was the term used by C. Wright Mills to indicate private experiences of individuals in his book *Sociological Imagination*?
4. When did the concept of Sociological Imagination enter into academic sociology?
5. What is the term used to explain human behaviour in terms of reasonable and logical?
6. What is the prime difference between Sociological Imagination and Common sense?
7. Which is the concept that is believed, without any proof, as truth by society?
8. Which concept is traced to the works of famous Sociologists Max Weber and Anthony Giddens?

9. Which is the term that enables us to understand the relationships between events in our personal lives?
10. Which is the term that enables us to understand the relationships between events in wider society?

## Answers

1. C. Wright Mills
2. Sociological Imagination
3. Biography
4. 1959
5. Common sense
6. Methodology
7. Common sense
8. Sociological Imagination
9. Biography
10. History

## Assignments

1. Discuss about C Wright Mill's Sociological Imagination.
2. Examine the significance of Sociological imagination in understanding society.
3. Explain the major difference between Sociological imagination and Common sense.
4. Discuss about the historical background of the concept 'Sociological Imagination'.
5. Discuss about the difference between common sense and educated commonsense.

## Reference

1. Beteille, A. (2002). *Sociology-Essays on Approach and Methods*, USA: Oxford University press.
2. Harlambos, M. (1980). *Sociology: Themes and Perspectives*, New York: Oxford University Press.
3. Kundu, A. (2009), *The Social Sciences: Methodology and Perspectives*, Delhi: Pearson.
4. Giddens, A. (2005) *Sociology*, Italy: Polity Press.
5. MacIver, R. M.& Page, C.H. (1959), *Society: An Introductory Analysis*, London: Macmillan.

## Suggested Reading

1. Ballantine, J.H, & Roberts,K.A. (2010). The Development of Sociology as a Discipline, pp.29-30, in *Our Social World Condensed Version*, New Delhi: Sage.
2. Hunt E. F, & Colander, D.C. (2012). *Social Science: An Introduction to the Study of Society*, New Delhi: Pearson.
3. Bauman, Z., & May, T. (2014). *Thinking sociologically*, 3rd Edition, Oxford : John Wiley & Sons.
4. Mills, C.W, (1999). *The Sociological Imagination*, London: Oxford University Press.
5. Ritzer, G. (1975). *Sociology: A Multiple Paradigm Science*, Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

**BLOCK**

**2**

# **Basic Concepts in Sociology**

# UNIT

# 1

## Society, Community, Association and Organisation

### Learning Outcomes

After reading this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ◆ comprehend the core concepts of society, community, association, and organisation.
- ◆ expose the relationship between individuals and society.
- ◆ define and explain the characteristics of society, organisation, association, and community

### Prerequisites

With the rise of social media, people spend a lot of time on Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube, Twitter, etc. How do they interact and create social networks? Shared language, common interests, and ways of life bind them all together to some extent. This is the basic nature of human beings. They are forming relationships with people all over the world. Sociology's central premise is that human behaviour is influenced by the groups to which individuals belong and the social interactions in those groups. The group, rather than the individual, is the primary focus of Sociology. Social scientists are primarily concerned with human interaction, specifically with how individuals respond to and influence one another in their daily lives. Throughout the unit, you will understand what society is from a Sociological perspective and the factors that influence the formation of societies.

### Keywords

Interdependence, Mutual awareness, Cooperation, Gesellschaft, Gemeinschaft



# Discussion

## 2.1.1 Society

Allow us to begin by picking your brain as a complete beginner in Sociology by asking you a few straightforward questions regarding yourself. Allow yourself a few minutes to meditate on any intuitions you may have about the nature of society, and then write them down. Take a moment to reflect on why and how you came to have preconceived notions about the world in the first place. Keep that idea in your head or jot it down somewhere convenient. You can experiment with different ideas without worrying about whether they are true or false. It is common practice to understand a subject before attempting to understand it scientifically. If you have opinions about society, it is best to keep them until you have studied what Sociology has to say about them. After that, you'll have to decide whether you were correct or incorrect about the concept of society in the first place.

The knowledge gained in this module will help you understand better how Sociology conceptualises and thinks about society. Consider what the word society means to you before continuing with this discussion. What are your thoughts? In your mind's eye, what is the first image, sight, or idea that comes to mind when you hear the word "society"? Are you a part of any organisations or societies? Is it possible to exist without belonging to any organisation or society? This module's goal is to define the central concept of society, list the distinguishing characteristics of society, and bring together the most important defining characteristics of society through engaging and relatable illustration tactics. We will present various aspects of a society using critical examples to enable basic understanding.

We use words like society, community association, and social organisation daily

in our everyday conversations and writing. These terms may sound familiar, but they are concepts that you must grasp to be effective. In sociology, they have a variety of connotations attached to them. Words are used to describe various aspects of society, and each word has a specific meaning that we can deduce. Sociology students who wish to gain a comprehensive understanding of the multiple aspects of society will need to be familiar with these terminologies. As a result, it is critical to understand how to apply these notions to comprehend society. Following that, we'll go over all the fundamental terminologies associated with the Social Sciences in greater detail.

Throughout the discipline of Sociology, the term "society" refers to the most fundamental concept. However, even though it is the most fundamental concept in Sociology, it is frequently misinterpreted. Generally speaking, this is because the general public uses the word society in a broad sense. Some terms you may have come across include cooperative society, housing association, agricultural association, and other similar expressions. These instances raise concerns because the word "society" is being used incorrectly and misleadingly to refer to "associations".

Throughout our daily conversations, we use phrases such as 'I enjoy the society of dancers', 'They have moved up to high society' 'I cherish the time I spend in her society' and other variations. In this context, the term 'society' refers to friendship, companionship, and fellowship. In these contexts, the term 'society' is used casually. However, it does not correspond to socially acceptable usage. Returning to the disciplinary context of Sociology, we frequently hear sociologists refer to societies as 'rural society' or 'urban society', 'primitive

society', 'modern society', 'post-industrial society', 'liberal society', or 'conservative society', among other terms. You might be thinking about what we mean when we say 'society' at this point.

The term 'society' comes from the French word "societas" which has a Latin origin "socius" means "friendship" or "relationship". "The term 'companionship' refers to someone who is with you. To put it another way, 'companionship' is synonymous with 'sociability'. According to George Simmel, "It is the aspect of sociability that defines the concept of society". In other words, it implies that human beings always prefer to be in the company of other people rather than alone. Perhaps you'll be aware of the following wellknown quote: "Man is a social animal". That was stated hundreds of years ago by the Greek philosopher Aristotle. From caves to small villages to large cities, primitive people have always lived in small and large groups, in both small and large settlements. Based on this, we can conclude that they never lived alone but rather in groups of varying sizes throughout their entire lives. Thus, to meet the requirements of life, we humans need society or the companionship of many other human beings to function correctly. As a result, society is a necessary component of human being's ability to thrive, persist, and coexist.

The concept of society is defined by the sociological lexicon (vocabulary) as a collection of individuals and the complex system of social interaction based on certain norms that take place between them. As a system of relationships built on specific interactions, society produces patterns of behaviour and interaction that can be observed over time. When it comes to what constitutes a society, different people have different ideas about what does it means. Some sociologists believe that society can only exist if all the members are mutually aware of others' existence and share common interests and

materials. Since they are co-travelers, we cannot refer to ten people travelling on a long-distance bus for twelve hours as members of society. However, society's idea is conceived if they interact and get to know each other by interning at a rest stop when the bus stops for food and refreshments. An important concept called reciprocal awareness, coined by British sociologist Anthony Giddens, is summarised in the preceding example briefly and concisely. Societies, according to Giddens, are "a grouping of like-minded individuals who are aware of and enjoy their like-mindedness and are, as a result, able to work together for common ends".

Although society has a significant impact on everyone's personality, society cannot exist without people who make up its constituent parts. A society is a collection of people who live together as members of a community. All society's characteristics are gradually shaped and changed over successive generations due to innovations introduced by the people who live in it and contribute to it. The influence of a single individual may be insignificant. Still, the cumulative contributions of many individuals over a long time can be significant in magnitude.

### **a. Definitions of Society**

The purpose of this section is to provide the reader with a comprehensive overview of the prominent defining characteristics of society within the disciplinary purview of Sociology. In the field of sociology, there are countless definitions of society. All of them explain what society is; however, to develop a fundamental understanding of society, you should become acquainted with some of the essential definitions of society.

It may seem that this is a strange field that has difficulty describing its essential phrase concisely. Still, this word has a comprehensive range of connotations in this context. It may refer to the whole of human



interactions, which is both the broadest and least practical definition. More specifically, it relates to any self-reproducing human group that inhabits a reasonably limited area and has a cultural and social structure that is quite different from the rest of the world. Society is a term that is frequently used to refer to nation-states, such as India or Sri Lanka. However, we may also use the word to refer to a specific group of people inside a state, such as the Malayalees or the Assamese. It is also used to refer to separate communities that have managed to maintain some sense of collective identity via culture and social interaction despite the absence of a physical area.

People always live close to one another, and this is an unavoidable fact of life. We might live in a village, a town, or a city, depending on our circumstances. Human beings will encounter other human beings at some point during their daily lives. The other human beings may be related to them, or they may be known or unknown to them, depending on their circumstances. It can be said with certainty that no one lives by themselves in this world. Human beings rely on society to meet their most basic needs, including obtaining nutritious food, a safe place to live, clothing, finding work, and enjoying life. Society is necessary for the initiation and continuation of human existence. Cooperation is essential for the continuation of human life and society.

There were many kinds of societies on Earth. The hunter-gatherer societies that dominated prehistoric times were the most advanced. They made a living by hunting animals, catching fish from rivers and other bodies of water, and putting together plans for our future survival. People are constantly moving from one location to another as a result of geo-climatic and environmental changes. Nomadic societies are groups of people who move from one place to another. Around 12,000 years ago, pastoral societies

first appeared, as humans became dependent on agriculture and animal domestication. The development of feudal society was based on land ownership. Because of the growth of cities, industrial societies emerged, and we are now living in a post-industrial society that is heavily reliant on information technology.

According to the sociologist Peter L Berger, a society can be defined as “a human product, and nothing but a human product, that continues to act upon its producers even though it is a human product”. Humans, according to Berger, are the creators of the societies in which they live, and this creation influences, creates, and defines humans daily as well. The definition of society has been provided by a plethora of sociologists, social theorists, and philosophers. According to a significant number of them, society is a group of individuals united by specific relationships and behavioural attributes that distinguish them from others who are not a part of these relationship and behaviours. Society can also be thought of as a complex collection of organised human groups with specific goals and ties to one another. Alternative definitions include ‘society’ as the state of a union of human beings, containing forms, and possessing various types of formal and informal relationships among themselves.

Auguste Comte saw society as a social organism with a structure and function in harmony. Society for Durkheim was treated as a distinct reality by him. According to Talcott Parsons, society is a total complex of human relationships that emerge from action in intrinsic or symbolic means-end relationships. G.H. Mead envisioned society as a series of gestures involving the use of symbols. Ginsberg suggests that society is composed of people bound together by certain relationships or modes of behaviour, which separate those who don't participate from those who do. G. D. H. Cole defines society as a network of organised associations and institutions bound together by a sense

of community. According to MacIver and Page, society is a collection of customs and procedures governing authority and mutual assistance among numerous groups and divisions and a system of controls over human behaviour and liberties. Society is a web of social relationships that are constantly changing.

## **b. Characteristics of Society**

We shall discuss the essential characteristics of society. It would help if you kept in mind a couple of things while reading about different characteristic aspects of society in the following. Let us take the example of a rural village or urban town. Both arrangements are human settlements and, therefore, part of society. People in the village might know each other better than the people in town. They might be mutually aware of the other individual. They may like or dislike each other based on similarities and dissimilarities. People in a village and town have varying degrees of cooperation and division of labour. People in villages, towns are interdependent. The following factors will give the necessary clarity to understand society. Society is the canvas on which human life exists and thrives. Society creates a space for human beings to interact, know each other, be self-aware, and be aware of others. From birth, human beings are taught the ways of society by their parents. In school, they learn about being punctual, paying attention, and learning. At work, they also learn about cooperation and interdependence.

While living in an urban industrial society, large groups of people interact with one another only briefly and only for very narrow and specific tasks before moving on to their next task. A lot of relationships are built based on contracts. For example, someone will hire a plumber to repair the shower head and pay the agreed-upon sum. They may will never have to see the plumber

again; they will not contact the plumber even if they require assistance later. Compared to the pre-industrial village dweller, who dealt with the same 20 people their entire life, the typical city-dweller deals with 200 people every day, most of whom they see only briefly. Consider the concept of compulsion as a simple way of capturing the point. The modern city dweller can choose a plumber from among a hundred listed in a trade directory.

The society represents a resemblance to MacIver. Likeness has gone through numerous changes in modern society, whereas in traditional societies, blood or family ties defined it. Likeness has widened from being limited to contemporary society to being social. Though essential to society, we should not ignore differences. These are mutually unrelated concepts. Diversity will decrease, and so will interaction if everyone is similar. Contrasting or balancing relationships, the different varieties of diversity include gender, interests, and nature. Differences lead to diversity, which produces various aspects of society.

The foundation of society is everyone's interdependence. A single social institution will never be able to meet all of society's needs. Interdependence enables society to achieve its objective. Numerous countries are now interdependent. Coordination is required for a society to function effectively. Almost no society can exist in isolation. Humanity must efficiently work while preserving its harmony. Social relationships are the fabric of society. Civic organisations work to maintain order. Important characteristics of society are given below:

- 1. People form Society:** Human beings comprise society, without whom its meaning is null and void. For example, a village can continue to exist if people continue to reside there. Like this, a city or



a town is valid if human beings are living within its borders. You also understand that we can't call a school or college unless teachers and students are present. Everything else is entirely desolate here. As a result, we can conclude that society and human relationships cannot exist without human beings.

**2. Exchange of information and mutual awareness:** The continuous exchange of information and mutual understanding between human beings is the essence of society. For a group of people to be referred to as a society, there must be reciprocal contact between them. If there is a reaction between the individual and other members of society, the individual can be considered a member of society. In other words, individuals must be in constant communication with one another. Similarly, the limits of society are dependent on the limits of social interaction, which are the following: For example, the production of goods and services occurs as a result of people coming to an agreement and being aware of each other's wants and needs. A variety of people use the milk produced by farmers in a village. The farmer intends to use it for his purposes. If there is excess milk, he can sell it to a local shop or to a cooperative farmers group, which will collect milk from various producers and deliver it to a town daily. Every other consumer product, like milk, has a story that is like this one. This context consists of mutual interaction and awareness based on economic desires and the desire to meet basic human needs, which together form human relationship

**3. Mutual awareness enables social interaction to happen:** Society is a web of social interaction that connects people. However, we are unable to consider all interpersonal and social relationships. In the absence of mutual knowledge of each other's existence, social concerns do not manifest themselves. They should be aware of another's presence. Society exists due to the social behaviour that people exhibit in front of others to respond to their recognition. The absence of this recognition may indicate a lack of sociability and an absence of society. Social relationships necessitate mutual awareness.

**4. Society rests on likeness:** The concept of similarity is critical to the functioning of society. A feeling of closeness exists between people who are somewhat like one another in their minds and bodies. In other words, the term "likeness" refers to a similarity. All human beings share specific characteristics in terms of their life requirements, values, work, ideals, ethics, and life perspectives, among other things. This is referred to as "consciousness of kind" by the sociologist F H Giddings. As a result, to summarise, society exists among individuals who share a common goal.

**5. Responsibility:** A school nurtures young individuals and can provide an insight into society's composition. The similarity element, in this case, is the similarity that students have in common as young learners. As a social unit, the school has the responsibility of instilling in students the art of learning, the value of hard work, the importance of values and ideals, and morality and ethics. The

success of a school as a social unit is due to the similarity of its members.

**6. Society accommodates differences**

**too:** Society, on the other hand, is tolerant of differences. There are no perfect societies where all individuals are alike, and all individuals uniform in their behaviour. If everyone are same, there will be less sociability in the world. There will be a lack of mutual reliance and reciprocity in the relationship. If all human beings in a society are same, they will find it futile to contribute to the mutual fulfilment of their life's goals if they are all like each other. Societies that are monotonous do not survive. Society accepts and celebrates differences in the same way that it does to similarities. Every human being is incapable of performing the same task daily. Different people are required to do other things every day in our society. How can a society function if all its members are engaged in the same type of occupation? Society needs a diverse range of human beings to perform a variety of tasks to function well. Therefore, teachers, lawyers, doctors, drivers, business owners, farmers, mail carriers, bureaucrats, soldiers, police officers, firefighters, scientists, artists, poets, and writers are examples of human beings who work in various fields. These individuals, through their abilities, contribute to the functioning of society.

**7. Cooperation and division of labour:**

Similarity and difference lay the groundwork for labour division to occur. The division of work refers to the fact that every human being in society is assigned a specific task. It could

be assigned to each unit or group, depending on the circumstances. For example, in the production of rice, the responsibilities are divided among various groups of people. Rice cultivation begins with the labourers who toil in the paddy fields, who lay the groundwork for the crop. The farmers keep an eye on the progress of the cultivation process by engaging with the labourers proactively or passively. The harvesting machine and its crew carry out the harvesting. Rice is collected, sorted, and de-husked before being sold to a variety of agro-farming organisations. It is polished and packaged using machines and technology to transform it into a finished product. The manufacturer sells it to a distributor, who then sells it to a wholesaler, then sells it to a retailer. Similarly, if you look around your home, you will notice that the mother, father, and children share household chores. Specialisation is made possible by the division of labour, which is a defining feature of a modern, complex society

**8. Society involves interdependence**

**also:** Interdependence is necessary for the development of social relationships. As a society, we recognise that the most fundamental unit is the family. This mutual interdependence between man and woman is at the heart of the family's foundational structure. Human beings rely on one another to meet and satisfy their basic needs and wants. The interdependence factor will inevitably increase as society evolves from a simple to a complex society. The concept of interdependence has grown significantly in recent years. When individuals are dependent on one



another, they form interdependent networks, which rely on one another. It may happen among larger social organisations, such as towns and nations.

9. **Society is dynamic:** The ability to adapt and change is one of humanity's most enduring characteristics. Humanity is never static but is always in a state of flux. Change, as well as the ability to change, are fundamental characteristics of human civilisation. Throughout history, every society has transformed. Due to the replacement of old cultures by new ones, the world is perpetually in motion. New associations and social institutions replace and disband old ones. On the other hand, the changes may occur slowly and gradually or may occur suddenly and abruptly.
10. **Social control:** Throughout history, human society has exercised complete command over its members' behaviours. Today, cooperation is unquestionably present; however, there are other current aspects, such as conflict and tension, rebellion, competitiveness, and suppression. These occurrences can occur regularly or only on rare occasions, depending on the situation. It could be economic, political, religious, or regional in nature. Eg: The potential for harm to society exists if such events are left to their own devices and manifest themselves. Therefore, systems are put in place to regulate the behaviour and activities of the individuals who take part in these events regularly to keep them safe.
11. **Culture:** Every society has its own distinct culture. We can always distinguish one culture from another.

According to cultural anthropologists such as Ralph Linton, culture refers to the social heritage of humanity. Our morals and values, beliefs, judgments, attitudes, ideologies, ideas, and institutions such as the economic, legal, and political systems, as well as the philosophies and sciences of our society are all included in our culture. In other words, culture is how all members of society behave, think, live, and act towards one another. Keep in mind that culture is not the same as a society, but is rather an aspect of society.

12. **Gregarious nature of man:** Another essential characteristic of human society is cooperation. The word gregarious means that the ability to form groups. It is not the final characteristic of humanity, but we should remember it. According to Aristotle, "Man is a social animal", Furthermore, McDougall, a well-known psychologist indicated that man is a social being because the fundamental human tendency or instinct is gregarious (i.e., the desire to gather in groups). From the preceding sections, you should have gained a better understanding of what society is all about. As we have discussed, several sociological factors influence how society is defined. We have also talked about the various elements of modern societies, which is a separate topic. Nevertheless, many other aspects are still unaddressed, and it is essential to remember that the recommendations that follow are not required to fully comprehend society's fundamental concept. They have been excluded from the course because the material is too advanced for beginners in sociology.

On the other hand, some readers may be captivated by the subject and eager to learn more about it in greater detail. If you want to learn more about human societies throughout history, the present, and the future, the following section will serve as a guide to assist you in your quest for knowledge. To better understand society, you can inquire about hunter-gatherer societies, tribal societies, feudal societies, industrial societies, and post-industrial civilisations, to name a few examples of what you can learn. Aside from that, there are other types of virtual societies based on the internet and are constantly changing in nature. We have developed cyber societies in this digital age, primarily concerned with online communities and forums. You can gain a better understanding of such societies by participating in them.

### 2.1.2 Community

As previously discussed, Sociology defines society as a group of people who live in a society. We demonstrated how it differs from the point of view of the average person. We will introduce a similar concept to you in this section, the concept of community. After that, you will learn how to distinguish between a common perspective of community and the sociological definition of community

Before we discuss the characteristics of a community, let us try to imagine a community. What is the first image that comes into your mind when you think about the word community? Some of you might think about the community in a village, such as the farming community, or others may think about the urban community of IT employees working for a technology company in a technopark or Indian society in a Middle Eastern country as examples of community. Now, what demarcating words will you use to describe them physically? For that, you need to look at the identifying characteristics that make them unique.

When you visualise the word ‘community’, what do you imagine? Just like in society, the word community is used very loosely by everyone in day to day conversation. You might have encountered the phrase ‘community’ while filling forms for admission to school or college, applying for jobs or other occupational positions, etc. We can see that community is interpreted and used to make sense of different things. The word community is also used in casual conversation to denote caste community, religious community, national community, racial community, linguistic community, professional community, Asian community, etc. People even use it to refer to the entire humankind in a restricted sense. The word community casually means any social group or association and humanity in the broader sense.

While this is true, the term ‘community’ is descended from two Latin words, “Com” and “Munis,” which translate as “together” and “servicing” in English, respectively. It comprises a group of individuals who share numerous common interests and goals. However, the term ‘community’ is frequently misused in popular discourse, with terms such as ‘racial community’, ‘caste community’, and ‘religious community’ being used in the place of ‘community’.

In a narrow sense, the term ‘community’ refers to a Hindu or Muslim group, but the term ‘community’ can refer to a nation or the entire world in a broader sense. The term can also refer to a town, a village, or a tribal community. The idea of community is often misinterpreted in sociology. However, that happens because most people who use the word ‘community’ cannot differentiate between the three distinct ways the word ‘community’ is used in a sociological or social scientific sense. There are three major types of communities—the first one being the location-based way of identifying them. Eg: words like our neighbourhood, panchayat



village, town, or city; local community; South Indian, regional or national; or even the whole planet. These are called “communities based on place”. Identity-based communities include ethnic groups, religious groups, cultural groups, linguistic groups, etc. The third type is organisationally identified communities. They have professional groups, political associations, and economic enterprises located locally, nationally, and globally. From the three different types of community usage mentioned, you can imagine what aspects form the basis of your relationship with the word community. For example, do you have a location, identity, or organisation-based community membership? Now, let us explore deeper.

For example, people closely interact in a village because they share close family/kinship ties, and share similar occupations based on agriculture. However, in a town or city, the population seldom shares deep familial or kinship ties as many of them might have come from other places to settle there. In a city, we also find diverse types of occupations. As a result, people in the city do not form extensive social networks as we see in the village. Therefore, community formation in a city is different from that of a village or town. From this example, we can see that geographical location plays a prime role in creating a community.

In addition, it is evident and natural that individuals who live in a specific area develop a sense of similarity, co-operation, and a sense of belonging to one another. Consequently, they share common customs, traditions, and cultures. They develop common social ideas due to this interaction—communities form when people share an everyday social life within a limited or defined geographical area.

Even though the term community is frequently used in a geographical sense as a synonym for the neighbourhood, it has a precise meaning in Sociology, derived from

Ferdinand Tönnies’ (1887) *Gesellschaft and Gemeinschaft* (or *Community and Society*). We could find the following characteristics in the community of the pre-industrial rural society. A small group of people interacted with one another over a long time and in various spheres of life: work, leisure, church, and family. Relationships were multifaceted, intimate, and long-lasting, and they resulted in reciprocal obligation, networks passed down from generation to generation. Due to ensuring stability and close relationships, there was a great deal of social cohesion.

During a typical day in an urban industrial society, large groups of people interact with one another only momentarily and for very narrow and specific tasks before moving on to the next task at hand. A lot of interactions are built based on a written agreement. According to some, the modern city provides a level of anonymity that was nearly impossible in small-scale pre-industrial societies. Not to say that community is absent from the city; where major social divisions prevent interaction (e.g., in an ethnic minority neighbourhood), one may experience an unusual degree of stability and intimacy in one’s relationships, as well as a sense of belonging. However, the difference in the degree of compulsion continues to exist. As a result, many of the current uses of the term ‘community’ appear to be completely inappropriate. The term ‘community’ alludes to a collection of individuals who share common interests, beliefs, and values but may only interact through intermediaries (for example, through the internet) and are referred to when the term “voluntary association” would be more appropriate. The absence of any sense of necessity or compulsion is critical; regardless of how involved people are in a steam engine restoration society or a white witch network, they can easily withdraw without causing significant disruption to the other aspects of their lives.

## a. Definitions of Community

This section will not go over all the various definitions of community, but instead focus on the most prominent ones and highlight their distinguishing characteristics. Because of this, we will discuss a variety of aspects that define the concept of community in social science. We do not intend to cover all possible definitions but instead we focus on a few of the most fundamental ones to develop a foundational understanding.

When individuals or members of any group, large or small, live together and share daily life, the group develops a strong sense of reverence and awe. They are involved in specific social, economic, and cultural relationships, and they have developed a sense of community consciousness that distinguishes them from other people in their environment. A community is a group of individuals or families who live in close physical proximity to one another within a defined geographical boundary and who are all members of the same religion, racial group, linguistic group, ethnicity or social status.

However, to comprehend the meaning of the term community, we must first look at the definitions provided by sociologists. On the one hand, sociologists have different approaches to understanding the community essential. Some people emphasise geographical or ecological aspects, while others place a strong emphasis on psychological factors.

Traditionally and conventionally, a community is defined as a social unit built, conceived, or imagined around individuals who share a common characteristic and who live in a common geographical area, according to sociological theory. In a society, a community is the most fundamental social unit. A community is typically associated with a specific location within a geographical area. There are communities of people who

live in villages, towns, and large cities in every continent.

Sociologist Robert McIver provided one of the most prominent definitions of community. He explains that a community is “an area of social living signified by some degree of social coherence.” McIver further states that “members of any group, small or large, live together in such a way that they share, not to show that particular interest, but the primary conditions of everyday life, we call that group a community”. Now think about how you can visualise what MacIver said. For other sociologists, community means any social group with a feeling and a dwelling in a particular locality. Any small territorial group that shares all aspects of life is also called a community. Additionally, a community is also an area of social living where a particular social group resides in a contiguous geographical location possessing similar interests in activities.

Talcott Parsons defined community as a group of people who share a similar geographical location as a base of everyday activities. According to Tönnies, a community is an organic, natural type social group whose members are linked together by a common identity formed through daily interactions across the whole spectrum of human activity. He offered ideal-typical images of social connections, connecting the community’s solidarity-based social interactions with the massive and impersonal social relations associated with industrialised societies. According to Kingsley Davis, it is the smallest geographical group capable of encompassing all facets of social life. According to Karl Mannheim, a community is any group of individuals who live together and are connected so that they share more than one interest.

## b. Characteristics of Community

When we examine the characteristics or elements of a community, we can understand



better its meaning. These characteristics determine whether a group is considered a community. Community, on the other hand, possesses the following features or elements:

To understand the characteristics of a community, one must investigate the ideas of community sentiments and locality. What role does community sentiment and locality play in describing the features of a community? Let us try to imagine an ideal community. What comes to your mind when you think about community? Let us say you are thinking about the farming community in a rural locality like a village.

A group of people living in the coastal area engaged in fishing is part of the fishing community. They share all the primary conditions of life, which is one of the prerequisites for being a community. This example depicts an occupational and location-based community. Similarly, migrant workers from the North of India who live in labour camps and housing colonies in the towns and cities of Kerala constitute the migrant labor community. This community is both linguistic and occupational-organisational based. From the above example, we can talk about how locality forms an essential aspect of a community. It would be beneficial if you kept in mind that even nomadic tribal groups such as the cattle herding groups of the Deccan plateau, the nomadic tribes of Rajasthan, or the pastoral tribes of Jammu and Kashmir are considered communities. The critical point to remember is that the human beings who constitute these communities tend to live together in a particular spot. Just living together in that specific geographic location qualifies them to be a community.

In society, we can identify a social group of people as a community if they exhibit the following characteristics.

1. **Group of people:** A community, no matter how small or large, is unquestionably a collection of

individuals. On the other hand, a community is a group of people who live together and share all the 'basic conditions' of social life. As a result of these circumstances, they come to be known as a community. For example, we can think of two or more houses where different families live as a small community and the entire human race as one large community to consider. The term 'community' has developed a broad range of meanings that we can apply in various contexts.

2. **Locality:** Considering that human communities always occupy distinct geographic locations, it is always appropriate to refer to them as territorial groups. The physical location of a community serves as the foundation for identifying that community. The nomadic tribes of the world and other nomadic cultures that roam the earth are well known to many people. They have a residence in the same way that everyone else does, though their address changes from time to time as they relocate from one location to another. According to the above definition, if a nomadic group has remained in one place for an extended period, they can only be part of a community. A group of people cannot be referred to as a community unless they are all located within a specific geographical area. The boundaries of a community are unquestionably defined by its immediate surroundings, as demonstrated when comparing it to society. When humans live near one another, the development of social relationships, the provision of protection, care, and the provision of security take place. When lived together, these elements assist

members of a community in identifying and pursuing common goals. The physical conditions of a place's environment and the nature of its social life have a significant impact on its overall character.

3. **Sense of mutual sentiment:** 'We' feeling is an essential part of the human experience. All members of a community express themselves with great enthusiasm when they are in social contact with others. The 'we' feeling fosters a sense of belonging among the members of the community. In period modern, people who live in a specific area are less likely to express such sentiments or have any form of mutual contact or communication. It is uncommon for people in a large city to know their neighbours well. To make a community, you need people with shared interests and values. Compared to people living in rural areas, people living in cities and urban areas may suffer from a lack of effective communication. Another issue to consider is that they may not have the same outlook on life or share any common interests, which is another factor. As a result, we cannot exist as a community unless we have feelings for one another.
4. **Belongingness and expression:** merely existing within a geographical area, let alone as a community, does not automatically transform a collection of human beings into a single entity. A community is a place of everyday life where people feel a strong sense of connection and belongingness and express themselves freely. The way of life shared by a community is essential for it to flourish.
5. **Stable and Permanent:** Apart from having a sense of place and community sentiments, the community must also have some stability to function. An alternative definition of a community is a group of people who have bonded together to achieve a common goal. A crowd waiting for a train at a railway station or a crowd watching 'test cricket' or a one-day international cricket match in a cricket stadium, cannot be referred to as a community. We cannot refer to people as a community because they are only temporary human group formations, not communities. Being a permanent member of a community is only possible if the individual or group decides to disown themselves or others and surrender the community membership and leave.
6. **Naturality:** Communities form through natural processes. They are not the result of a conscious effort to create them. Human communities are a natural phenomenon. From a traditional/conventional perspective, belonging to a community, whether it is one or many, and being a part of that community are universal aspects of human existence. By birth, people are becoming member of the community. As a result, participation in a community is not entirely voluntary.
7. **Sharing similar ways of living:** Another distinguishing characteristic of a community is the similarity in dialect, language, customs, and other characteristics that every member of a community shares. Following Arnold Green, "a community is a group of people who live within a small territorial radius and who are committed to a common way of life."



8. **The community has a broad role to play in a member's life:** A community is more than just a social group and their mutual interaction; community members aren't just there to fulfill specific needs; instead, they are part of a community in the long run. Instead, a community serves a much broader and eternal purpose for the people who are a part of it.
9. **Communities, according to the law, have no legal standing:** because they have no rights or responsibilities. As a result, no one can sue a community.
10. **Varying size:** A community can be of any size, from large to small in population. The size of a community varies. The concept of community size is a factor that distinguishes a group of people from another group of individuals. A small community can coexist with a larger community within a larger community. For example, a village may be located next to or within a city. As the name implies, a district is a geographical boundary encompassing both a

village, town, and municipality. In India, a district is a geographical area that contains small communities such as villages, towns, and cities, so the term community is used in a relative sense rather than in the strictest sense. Another example of a large community is the total number of citizens of a particular country or territory. On the other hand, a country is a collection of many different communities that share common sentiments, values, ideas of oneness, and humanistic characteristics concerning one another.

11. **Regulation of relations:** It takes long time for a community to develop; it takes time for traditions, morals, practices, and customs to build; and it takes time for the set of rules that regulate the relationships between the organisation's members to be established and become effective. Institutions and customs based on shared mutual traditions and memories define the general desire to live together.



Fig. 2.1.1 Society and Community

### 2.1.3 The Fundamental Distinctions between a Community and a Society

- 1. Shared sentiments:** Based on the examples provided above, we can conclude that a community is a group of people who live in a specific location and have a common need for necessities. However, the concept of community is incomplete if there is a lack of reciprocal feelings between members. Society doesn't need to have mutual feelings for it to function. People or groups who do not get along with one another can exist in a society. Community sentiment is another critical factor that distinguishes society and community from one another. Community sentiment is an essential characteristic of a community. It is impossible to form a community without the participation of all members. A society, on the other hand, may or may not have a sense of belonging. Society is more concerned with organisation, whereas the community is more concerned with life, which is the source from which organisation emerges.
  - 2. The community occupies a definite location while society is boundless:** Society has no defined boundaries, and it is up to those who define it to draw them. Consider, for example, Indian society, Kerala society, Tribal society, or any other society. Almost everywhere there is human society and it is universal and omnipresent. On the other hand, a community is a social unit that occupies a specific geographical area within a society. As a result, geographic location is not a necessary component of
- society's structure. In nature, society is abstract, whereas community is concrete in its manifestation. Although each community has its physical existence, society only exists in the minds of the individuals who make up the community. When we talk about society, we talk about a system of social relationships rather than a group of people who live in a specific location like a neighborhood.
- 3. A community is a divisible social unit of society:** Many communities make up an organisation's membership, and thus an organisation is an amalgamation of many communities. Communities are sub-orders or species of society that exist within a larger society. A community's social structure is distinct from that of other communities, and it has its own set of rules. A vast community may contain several smaller communities within its borders. There could be several small municipalities within a larger metropolitan area, each of which could be a substantial town, and smaller townships could be considered a small city. A society's size is consistently large, regardless of how small or large a community, such as a village or a nation.
  - 4. A community is specific, while society is an abstract idea:** An entire society comprises innumerable and intangible networks of social relationships. As a result, purely it is an abstract concept. A community on the other hand, is accurate, authentic, and objective in its existence. A community is a social grouping of people with similar sentiments and ideas of belonging and who come together. A society is a broader



concept, whereas a community is a more specific concept to consider for the simple reason that there are multiple communities within a society. As a result, the community is much smaller than the larger society.

- 5. A society is a web of social relationships, whereas a community is a group of people:** who live in a particular area and have a sense of belonging or cohesion. In nature, society is abstract, whereas community is concrete in its manifestation. Although each community has its physical existence, society only exists in the minds of the individuals who make up the community. When we talk about society, we talk about a system of social relationships rather than a group of people who live in a specific location like a neighborhood.

### 2.1.4 Association

In the previous sections, we discussed how the word society and community are used differently from a layman's perspective. We further discussed how it is different in Sociology and presented additional facts and definitions that enable you to have a final understanding of the concept. In this section, you will read about what association means in Sociology. You might have different ideas about the association, but you will have to keep them aside and pay attention to the new meanings and views from the ambit of sociology.

The term association is largely misinterpreted in everyday discussions. Sometimes the term is used for group functions, working groups, interest groups etc. But in a sociological understanding, the association is something different and specific. Therefore, it is essential to understand and isolate the real meaning of

association from the layman's perspective and its present use in Sociology. A common viewpoint is the grouping of people based on certain specific social, cultural, occupational, sporting attributes.

There are several examples of everyday associations that must have caught your attention. For instance, in a school or a college, you might have heard about a parent-teacher association. Such association's purpose is to discuss and solve common problems for students, teachers, and parents. These associations discuss many things. It includes students' daily commute and transportation from home to school, students' academic progress, extracurricular activities in sports and fine arts, personality development, and other concerns.

Another form of association we see every day is political associations. It is difficult to ignore the existence of political parties and the significance of their role in today's world. We live in a democratic country where political parties are an essential element in sustaining democracy. We see different political party outfits doing various activities. Political parties are a form of association. Religious associations exist to explore the spiritual and religious aspects of human societies. Student associations in schools and colleges are student-only associations that exist to advocate for the rights of students in a college or university. A Laborer's association exists to safeguard the rights of a laborer. Such an association needs to fight against the exploitation of employers who don't pay salaries for their workers. Professional associations assert, safeguard and advocate for skilled workers' rights.

#### a. Meaning of Association

Humans have diverse needs, desires, and interests, all of which must be satisfied. There are three options for meeting these requirements. First and foremost, they are

free to act independently, each in their way and without regard for others. It is a socially awkward situation with limitations. Second, men may seek to achieve their goals by engaging in conflict with one another. Finally, men may attempt to achieve their goals through cooperative efforts and mutual assistance with one another. We can find a reference to the association in this collaborative effort.

The formation of an association occurs when a group or collection of individuals organise themselves specifically to pursue their common interests cooperatively instead of individually. According to Morris Ginsberg, an association is a group of social beings connected by the fact that they share or have shared an organisation to achieve a specific end or a set of goals. We can find a variety of associations in a variety of fields. There is no single organisation that can satisfy all the interests of an individual or group of individuals. Because man has a wide range of interests, he organises various associations to pursue those interests. He may be a member of multiple organisations at the same time.

Therefore, we can restate that associations exist to fulfill specific human needs. Human beings have a wide range of interests and desires, some of which can only be satisfied by joining a specialised social group at certain times. The essence of collaboration and mutual assistance is the driving force behind the formation of the association. An association is a group of or a collection of human beings who pursue common goals or promote common interests.

#### **b. Definitions of Association**

An association is a group of people who come together for a specific purpose for a limited amount of time. It adheres to formal space, an association that differs from a regular group or team. Like-minded people

can form associations for various reasons, including the length of time they will be operational, determining whether they will be permanent or temporary. For example, an association formed for flood relief activities is brief, whereas one created for state issues is permanent. It can also be developed based on power, with autonomous entities such as the state, semi-autonomous entities such as universities, and non-tribal independent entities such as clubs. Third, it is formed to carry out a variety of functions, such as music clubs' associations for recreational purposes, sports associations for athletics or games such as tennis, teacher's associations and trade unions for vocational training, biological organisations such as families, and altruistic organisations such as charitable societies.

There are several different definitions for the term 'association' We will, however, focus on the most significant ones that will aid you in developing a fundamental understanding of the subject. An association is a group of people who come together to pursue common interests or a set of interests that all members of the group share. According to sociologist Robert Morrison MacIver, "an association is an organisation that has been purposefully formed for the collective pursuit of some interest or set of interests that its members have in common". Other sociologists, such as *Emory S. Bogardus*, asserts that "association is typically defined as a group of people coming together to accomplish a common goal." He went on to say that for an association to exist; it must first be formed. For an association to be valid, a few aspects must be present: (i) it must be a social group of people; (ii) it must have some form of social organisation and should adhere to rules and regulations, and (iii) they must be motivated to work toward a common goal and ambition. According to another sociologist, Morris Ginsberg, "an association is a group of social beings who are linked to one another by the fact that



they possess or have instituted in common an organisation to achieve a specific end or a set of specific ends”.

### c. Characteristics of Association

We will discuss the various aspects that form an association. You know that associations are found in every walk of life from the examples we have discussed before. One single association cannot exist to fulfill all the needs. Numerous associations exist concurrently, and an individual may be a member of multiple associations. It is because human beings have different interests. Various associations exist to fulfill such needs. Therefore, a person might have political association, cultural, religious, professional or entertainment association. From the examples of these associations, we can infer that they all have different purposes. By taking one association at a time, we can discuss their characteristics.

To form an association, a group of people has to come together; second, this group should organise and work according to established specifications and rules to produce a successful outcome. Associations such as music clubs and labor unions are examples.

#### 1. Association is a human group:

Associations are formed or formed by people to achieve a specific goal. Although all associations are social groups, not all social groups are associations, and not all associations are social groups. An association is a distinct group of people who come together to pursue a common goal. It is a formalised organisational structure. For example, a large group of people at a college football game is not an association; however, other groups within a college, such as an art club, a debating club, or a sports club, are. Since the individuals

have come together to achieve a shared goal, it helps keep them connected and provides them a sense of concreteness, as no one will back out before the task or work at hand is completed. This teaches the members how to take on various roles that are appropriate for their abilities and how to work responsibly.

#### 2. General or specific interests:

All association members have one thing in common: they are all motivated by a common desire to achieve the same aim or achieve the same target. As a result, charitable or philanthropic interests will establish trusts or create new charitable institutions. Those engaged in political activism or social activism will join organisations specifically designed to meet their requirements. For example, in a college, a student union is formed to advocate for the student’s rights in an educational institution. Students make up the total membership of such a union.

#### 3. The association, like a community, does not grow in importance on its own;

rather, the specified number of people is only decided upon and finalised, after which the work progresses within the specific time frame. Furthermore, they all work under the supervision of a single individual, whereas everyone is free to pursue their ideas in the community. The association’s rules and regulations are established by the organisation’s president, who may outline the laws and regulations in consultation with other knowledgeable members of the organisation. The remaining members of the subordinates then devise ways to get around these

rules to achieve their goals. As a result, they are obligated to follow a 'code of conduct'. These rules, however, are adaptable and can be changed if the association's founder determines that the rules' provisions are preventing the desired outcome. They always have a goal in mind to maintain the identity of their organisation. To put it simply, they seek solutions to problems. The purpose of a drama association, for example, is to put up plays and dramas on stage, which is a natural outcome.

**4. A sense of cooperative spirit:**

An association is founded due to collaboration among its members. Working together, the participants complete a defined set of tasks, purposes, goals, or objectives. As an illustration, A political party has many officials. Most of them are at the grassroot level, with a few at the middle level. They work together to gain the support of the populace to gain control of the government. No one can be compelled to participate in the operations of the organisation. It is a voluntary decision because it is made solely based on the individual's desire. This is since an association is not the same as any other state or society's essential organisation, where a person becomes obligated to perform services for the organisation. They also don't feel compelled to participate, even though it is based on shared ideas. Everyone is responsible for their actions and outcomes because they are the result of voluntary movement. Another advantage of joining is that the individual can withdraw if they believe that the goal for which they joined is not being pursued with seriousness. A sports

association, for example, may exist that is not adequately serving the players' interests, and a considerate individual may decide to join in to assist them. However, suppose he discovers that he has not been given the freedom to execute plans in the players' best interests. In that case, he may decide to withdraw because he realises that he can work more freely if he is not associated with the project. If a person wishes to, they can also freely switch from one political party or organisation to another.

**5. Regulation of relations:**

Every organisation has its own set of strategies and tools for dealing with the issues that concern its members. For an association to function, it must be governed by law. These regulations may be in the form of a written document or spoken word. For example, when it comes to student union leadership, there is a democratic system in place with different persons holding crucial positions, such as the union president and several secretaries. They are responsible for allocating work and aiding the president. Several middle-level members, as well as representatives from various classes, serve on numerous committees. No association's leader can function effectively with disobedient members. A code of conduct exists that must be always adhered to and should not be violated. Only those who adhere to the rules and regulations are allowed to participate in achieving the goal because only they can gain the confidence of their superiors as employees. In addition, they are given official recognition as members. Anyone who violates their membership obligations almost



always faces expulsion from the organisation. It is critical to support the rules and regulations of the association rather than criticising them. Members should be aware of the importance of working together; otherwise, it is pointless to keep such a person as a group member.

6. **Associations as agencies:** Associations are a type of agency through which all its members work together to achieve their mutual and common goals. In addition to having leaders, associations also have officials and representatives who act following their needs. Along with a specific mode of operation and membership, an organisation has legal status.
7. **The durability of association:** An association can be either a long-term or a short-term social gathering. Some associations, such as state, political, and religious organisations, are permanent or have existed for a long time. On the other hand, some associations are only temporary, such as those formed to facilitate the work of well-known artists, scientists, writers, political or religious personalities, among others. As a result of these examples, we can deduce that associations are purpose-built to meet the needs of members who share a common interest. The concept of an expressly contained set of associations distinguishes itself from the idea of a social group. People gathered in a classroom, mob, or public assembly (such as a bus stop, crowd at a music concert, etc.) are not considered members of an association.

## 2.1.5 The Fundamental Differences between Association and Community

Even though a community can be made up of many associations, an association cannot be considered a community. In contrast, social groups are formed to meet specific needs within a community. Plantation workers in the Idukki district of Kerala, for example, will be members of the Tea Workers Association, the Cardamom growers Association, and so on. These are not communities but rather social groups that exist to support the members of their respective communities.

To elucidate further, the following are the significant differences between an association and a community.

1. **An association is a section, while a community is whole:** When a specific goal needs to be achieved, an association is formed. Even though the plans are not as intricate and complex as life itself, they are essential in that they require the cooperation of individuals to work together to achieve them in a specific way. A community comprises everything, including associations, and does not exist solely to serve the needs of individuals with specialised concerns. As opposed to associations formed on purpose and with the consent of their members, communities are more organic in their formation and development. Communities, in contrast to associations, do not have a clearly defined beginning. Compared to a community, social life in its raw form, which is widespread and unplanned, culminates in social life in its natural state.

2. **Many associations prevail inside communities:** Individuals form groups to pursue specific and similar interests. This is how associations include. In other words, an association is a group of people who come together to work for a common cause.
3. **Associations are synthetic while the community is raw and whole:** Members of a community with specific aspirations are more likely to form associations. On the other hand, communities are social organisations that have grown out of a standard set of values.
4. **Membership in association has finite implications while membership in a community has eternal significance:** When compared to the permanence of a community, an association may be considered a temporary social group. Individuals bond together to achieve common objectives, and the significance of the association remains active if members are available to meet their requirements. They are free to leave the organisation at any time if they so desire.
5. **Membership in associations is voluntary and based on choice:** In contrast, membership in communities is natural and cannot be chosen: All human beings are born into various social groups or communities, depending on where they live. As a result, there is no option but to belong to a gathering at the time of birth. On the other hand, We can join associations as per our choice.
6. **Sentiments are foundational to a community but not for an association:** Communities exist

due to the “us” and “we” feelings that people have. On the other hand, an association does not have such sentimental factors that encourage its members to stick together.

7. **Association has an official body and offices:** All organisations have offices that oversee all the organisation’s day-to-day operations and functions. A community, on the other hand, does not have an office.
8. **Associations have written laws, by-laws, rules and codes of conduct, whereas a community works following customs and traditions:** In contrast to a community, an association has legal standing. They also have a constitution that ensures that laws and rules are to be followed.

### 2.1.6 Differences between Association and Society

The following are the points of distinction between associations and societies:

1. First, society is a system of social relationships that are both invisible and intangible. It is the outcome of natural selection. An association, on the other hand, is a group of people. It is artificial or created on purpose.
2. Society is older than association; it had existed since the beginning of time when man first appeared on the planet, whereas association emerged later when man learned to organise himself to pursue a specific goal.
3. Man is unable to exist without the support of society. Society will exist for as long as there is a human being on the planet. It is mandatory to be a member of the organisation. On the other hand, man is free to live



his life without being a member of any organisation at all. The association may be only temporary. The association's membership is entirely voluntary.

4. Finally, society forms to promote the general well-being of its inhabitants. As a result, society's objective is broad in scope. Both cooperation and disagreement characterize it. It makes no difference whether it is organised or not. On the other hand, a formal association forms to advance the pursuit of specific interests or a set of interests. As a result, the association's mission is defined and founded on the collaborative

concept. The ability to manage one's time is required.

Association is further subdivided into various types. Clubs, trade unions, and voluntary organisations are studied by a branch of Sociology known as organisational sociology. As a result, the club serves an essential purpose. As a result, various social, professional, artistic, and sporting organisations significantly impact our society. To an extent, trade associations or organisations that work to benefit a particular industry or business organisation are confederations of large industrial conglomerates, as is the case with federations of large industrial conglomerates.

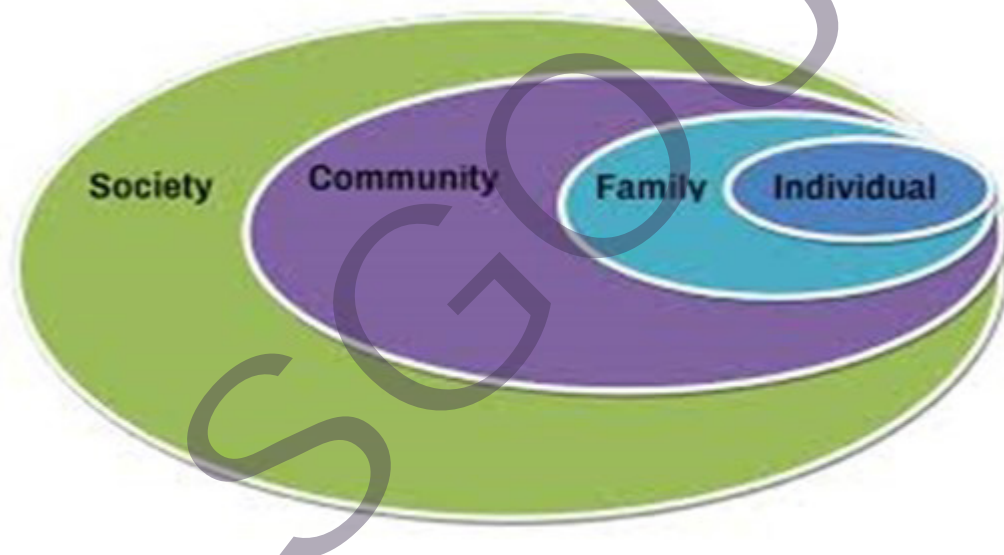


Fig. 2.1.2 Social Structure

### 2.1.7 Organisations

It is reasonable to assume that you have a good understanding of what society is and how a community is a social group within an organisation by this point of time. Also, you have gained a better understanding of what an association is in Sociology, which is beneficial. Along with this, you have gained a better experience of how an association functions to achieve specific goals and objectives. The study of human behaviour and interpersonal relationships,

among other things, will be covered in-depth in the section on social organisation in the course. Specifically, in the context of a social group, it is a term that you will come across in social science literature; however, we must simplify it for someone unfamiliar with Sociology to understand what it refers to.

Stability and change are both present in a well-organised society. Stability is the state of being in a balance among the various components of an organisation. It is also the state of being in which everything is running

smoothly. During this period, the number of social problems in society decreases. Society is in a state of flux, and change is inevitable. As a result of the achievement of social needs, organised society is changing as well. Disorganisation occurs in society due to sudden changes in revolution, which disrupts the existing social order.

The human body organs, which are functionally joined together and referred to as the organisation of parts in the human body, serve as excellent examples of an organisation. Typically, the carpenter will prepare the individual components of a table before assembling them in a logical sequence. This table is a well-organised structure. It means that organisation is the process of bringing together disparate parts to form a cohesive whole. In a similar vein, a social group is also an organisation of people who start a social unit. Individuals establish themselves in their positions (status), and through their interactions (roles), they form a social community. This indicates that they have been assimilated into the group by their respective positions. The participation of individuals in a group is referred to as a social organisation.

A large organisation in which individuals, groups, and institutions all participate in the entire society. It is a vast network of social relationships that is organised similarly to the components of a watch. By organising themselves in interaction with one another, the groups shape society: The organisation's process is analogous to that of a human body, a machine, a factory, an office, a bank, and the human society itself.

Organisations of various sizes have been discussed extensively in the preceding sections on society, community, and associations. It is also possible to think of society in its entirety as one large organisation. For example, the emergence of organised societies and large organisations is usual in

contemporary periods. On the other hand, humans can only realise their aspirations through the efforts of these organisations and individuals. In this context, the term 'social organisation' can refer to a wide range of things. Consider the concept of organisation as a foundational concept in the study of Sociology and organisational behaviour. The term 'organisation' refers to a formal agreement between two or more people or parts of a group of people. The word "reserved sense" refers to a specific attribute of associations representing the way roles and statuses are organised. Understanding the meaning of the word 'bureaucracy' in this context is also essential when it comes to organisation, bureaucracy can be defined as the process of controlling and managing using a vertical hierarchical structure. Governments and business corporations can function properly and efficiently because of bureaucracy. Anything from political parties to the United Nations can be considered an organisation.

The social organisations that exist within a society are constantly evolving. More private social organisations in the societal structure include groups that are born out of shared interests and discussions.

Smaller social organisations include many everyday groups that most people would not expect to have these characteristics, such as civic organisations and volunteer groups. Bands, clubs, and even sports teams are examples of small social organisations that we can find in various settings. There are characteristics shared by all these small-scaled groups that are like those found in a large-scale organisation. Even though these small social organisations do not have nearly as many members as larger organisations, they interact and function almost the same way.

In large-scale organisations, bureaucracy is almost always present in some form or



another. Bureaucracy consists of a set of regulations and a hierarchical system, to name a few characteristics. Attempting to maximise efficiency is now possible for these larger-scale organisations. It is also necessary for large-scale organisations to ensure that managerial control is appropriately implemented. A common approach is to take an impersonal authority position. Whenever authority is detached and unbiased in its interactions with all the other organisation members, this is known as a power vacuum. These procedures are followed to ensure that everything runs smoothly and that the social organisation remains at its peak performance level.

#### **a. Definitions of Social Organisation**

In this section, we will discuss the different definitions of social organisation. We will discuss what other sociologists stated about the idea of social organisations. The social organisation concept broadly pertains to societies. According to Auguste Comte, social organisation and social consensus are general social agreements. The social deal implies the popularly acknowledged consensus. For Herbert Spencer, a social organisation meant interrelationships between political, economic, and other societal divisions. For Emile Durkheim, Social organisation implied social integration and ideas of individual regulation through agreement on values and morals.

Social organisation is a structure of relationships that exist among both individuals and social groups. Characteristics such as sexual composition, spatiotemporal cohesion, leadership, organisational structure, division of work, and communication systems, among others, can be considered characteristics of social organisation. As a result of these characteristics of social organisation, people can keep track of their daily activities and participation in other activities that are regulated forms of human

interaction. Relationship, collective resources, interdependence of individuals, and recorded control are some of the interactions that take place. These interrelationships come together to form common characteristics in fundamental social units which includes families, businesses, clubs, and governments, among others.

Definitions of social organisation would be to emphasise the interdependence of parts in a social group. The social group we are trying to describe may be varying in size. It may be a large group or a tiny group. Sociologists such as Talcott Parsons, GH Homans, RK Merton advocate using a social system instead of social organisation. Social organisation is a phrase utilised in sociology to examine the significance of numerous parts and their interdependence in social groups and society. Social organisation enables us to discover how aspects of culture relate to one another and how each element is connected to the whole. From a functional point of view, social organisation enables the survival and effective functioning of societies and different social groups. For some sociologists, social organisations are “a pattern of relations of individuals and groups.” It is also defined as an aspect of interaction systems.

There are many definitions for social organisation, however, we will investigate the essential definitions to develop a basic understanding. According to Duncan Mitchell, a social organisation means “the interdependence of parts in a sensual characteristic of all enduring collective entities, groups, communities, and societies”. Ogburn and Nimkoff state that “an organisation is an articulation of different characteristics that perform various functions, this is an active group device for getting something done”. Finally, HM Johnson considers that “an organisation refers to the aspect of interaction systems”.

The term “social organisation” refers to any group, institution, or social system that exists within a society. Social organisation is defined as the process by which people form a group by assigning different roles and statuses in order to achieve a specific objective or meet a specific need. Individuals in a social organisation have a variety of roles and obligations. The ones that are delegated to them are determined by their current statuses. Human social organisation is formed through the cooperation of individuals with others in a social environment. Stability is achieved through social organisation in a society. Society is constantly evolving, but in many cases, the changes are slow and incremental. In a society, change occurs as a result of the shifting individual needs in that society. Institutions, too, are changing as a result of the transformation. In contrast, unless transformation is rapid or revolutionary, it will cause disorganisation in societies, groups, and institutions.

The cooperation and interaction of group members are not the only factors that contribute to social organisation. The collaboration and interaction of societal structures is, however, an important component. It is the result of social institutions’ efforts to organise themselves into a stable and functioning system. Take, for example, a manufacturing company. Each company has different units or departments, and they all work together to achieve their goals through coordination and cooperation. As a result, the manufacturing company is considered as an organisation. Social organisation is defined as the cooperation and interaction of different units of a social system, institution, or group. It is also known as social interaction. The term “social organisation” refers to the process by which every person within a team and institution fulfils its role. On a macro level, when each institution accomplishes its function and collaborates with other institutions in order to achieve its objective, this is referred to

as an ordered social system or a civilised society.

## **b. Nature and Characteristics of an Organisation**

Let’s discuss the characteristics of a formal organisation. What do you imagine when you think about social organisation? Yes, you might be thinking about an organisation like Railways and airports transporting people from one place to another by rail and air. In these two examples, we see that the organisation certainly functions to transport people from one place to another. We can also find that there is a consensus among the members of work in the respective organisation. They work with a method that has cooperation, agreement, and shared understanding. If such an organisation is unorganised, it will not work towards that common goal to transport people. In addition, we can find a clear-cut idea regarding the role and status of each employee. These organisations also regulate the behaviour of the individual.

Social organisation is the result of human encounter with one another. Organisation refers to the interrelationships between members or parts of a whole, which is an interaction. When the members of a family interact with one another, they begin to form an organised group. In the same way, the various sections of a factory are interconnected. Components of a single product are passed among teams until they are complete, and then the product is completed by putting the pieces together. Components interact to form a complex whole. It is all due to the interaction that occurs between sections, groups, and individual members. The result is social organisation.

Social organisations form during everyday life. Many people are members of a variety of social structures, both formal and informal. Clubs, professional organisations, and religious institutions are examples of this



type of organisation. They are becoming closer to one another and aids in developing a sense of belonging to the social organisation, which aids in creating a sense of community. While organisations bring together many like-minded people, they can also cause a rift with those who are not members of their organisation due to differences in thought. Social organisations are structured in such a way that there is a hierarchical structure. In social groups, a hierarchical organisational structure impacts how an organisation is structured, and the likelihood of the group remains intact.

These interactions also influence the group's cohesion. A group's members must feel a strong sense of belonging to one another. To be affiliated with a group implies that you have a connection with and acceptance in that group. When you become affiliated with an organisation, you are obligated to return to that organisation. To be affiliated with an organisation, the organisation must be aware of and recognise its membership. The organisation gains power as a result of the pooled resources of its affiliated organisations. Affiliates frequently have a vested interest in these resources, which serves as a motivator to continue improving the organisation. On the other hand, the organisation can replace individuals if the need arises. While the organisation requires affiliation and resources to survive, it also needs to replace individuals who leave the organisation to keep the organisation running. Because of all these characteristics, it cannot be easy to maintain organisational structure within an organisation. As a result, written control becomes more apparent and more organised due to writing down the information.

**1. A definite purpose:** An organisation has a specific set of goals that it strives to achieve. However, you should note that lack of a clear purpose or intent prevents individuals from

forming any organisation to meet the many different needs of humanity. Furthermore, the members of an organisation are interconnected with one another to achieve a common goal.

**2. Unanimity or consensus among members:** The members' shared understanding, cooperation, and agreement on conducting themselves are essential for an organisation's efficient operation. A family that operates on certain consensus, unity of interest, and so on becomes disorganised if these norms are broken.

**3. Harmony between statuses and roles:** An organisation can also be thought of as a method that brings a diverse range of individuals together to form a social interaction network that performs a variety of tasks. Every member of an organisation is assigned a status and a role by the organisation. It entails the performance of duties and the assumption of responsibilities. When there is a sense of acceptance of the designated statuses of the members and the roles that they must play, the organisation can function correctly. Consider the example of a college as a type of organisation. It consists of various people, including the principal, teachers, office staff, students, support and maintenance staff, and security personnel, among others. We can see that the college can effectively function if everyone is aware of their respective roles and responsibilities

**4. Control of organisation on the behaviour of individuals:** An organisation's control mechanism, which is in place to affect and

regulate members' behaviour, can influence, and regulate members' behaviour and daily activities. If a member violates the rules, they must face sanctions that range from a warning to a formal punishment. Students who, for example, violate the college's norms will face disciplinary action.

### c. Formal and Informal Organisations

Formal organisations have clearly defined organisational structures and procedures, and goals for the organisation's specific business objectives. Formal organisations, as opposed to informal ones, are frequently public-facing entities that follow hierarchy and instruct procedures to direct work situations systematically. Often, members of a formal organisation are assigned specific roles that they must fulfil to achieve specific objectives that contribute to its overall mission. In many organisational forms, the formal organisation is used to establish consistent processes for dealing with various aspects of daily business.

The term 'informal organisation' refers to social structures that direct how individuals work together in the place of employment or other organisations. Informal organisations collect professional and personal connections and norms that provide structure to the way teams accomplish projects and tasks and form

relationships at their places of employment. Informal organisations aren't typically seen as public entities but rather as a type of interaction within a work environment that fosters personal relations, communities that share similar values, and social networks among its members. Informal organisations also provide people who are actively engaged or associated with them through personal and situational support. People can collaborate across teams in informal organisations, fostering innovation and enabling teams to solve problems outside of traditional structures and processes of more formal organisations. Informal organisations provide a way for people to cooperate across teams, which can benefit both individuals and organisations.

Therefore, to summarise, we can say that an organisation can be divided into two. They are formal and informal organisations. Informal organisations are functioning based on norms, values, customs, etc. It may be temporary, more minor, and fulfils limited goals. Family is an example of an informal organisation.

On the other hand, formal organisations are more significant and functioning based on strict rules and regulations. There is a clear hierarchy of functions from top to bottom. For Society is a collection of human beings organised in simple and complex groups.

## Recap

- ◆ Society is a collection of human beings organised in simple and complex groups.
- ◆ Society consists of people and the complex social interaction system based on social norms.
- ◆ Society is a system of relationships based on interactions that result in patterns of behaviour and interaction.
- ◆ Giddens sees society as consisting of people who are working together for shared goals.



- ◆ A community is formed or imagined around individuals who share a common interest and live in the same area.
- ◆ A community is defined by a sense of “we” and by close living.
- ◆ A community is a collection of individuals who share common values.
- ◆ A community needs a local foundation.
- ◆ Communities comprises of regular, frequent contacts between individuals.
- ◆ Associations are held together by cooperation and mutual assistance.
- ◆ All associations include families, churches, trade unions, and music clubs.
- ◆ Associations may be formed on different bases, for example, duration, power, and recreational activities.
- ◆ Association can be defined as a group of people that has a common goal.
- ◆ A social group that has a collective organisation set up for a particular purpose is called an association.
- ◆ An association is a social organisation deliberately formed to pursue some interest or set of interests that all the members share.
- ◆ Officials and representatives work in conjunction with leaders’ associations to meet their requirements.
- ◆ An Association functions with a set of rules and regulations.
- ◆ Associations have offices and periodic meetings.
- ◆ For Auguste Comte, the social organisation refers to society, as well as social consensus or general social agreement.
- ◆ For Herbert Spencer, a social organisation meant interrelationships between political, economic, and other societal divisions.

## Objective Questions

1. What are the three conditions required for society to exist?
2. What is the essential feature of society?
3. What does society require to be called a society?
4. According to whom, is society a human product?
5. What can we call a complex collection of organised human beings with specific goals and relations?
6. What are the two types of relationships found in society?

7. What are the three fundamental elements of a community?
8. What is the foundation of a community?
9. What do people need to have to form a community?
10. Who defined an association as “an organisation that has been purposefully formed for the collective pursuit of some interest or set of interests that its members have in common”?
11. Who states that an “association is typically defined as a group of people coming together to accomplish a common goal.”?
12. What are the guiding factors of an association?
13. Who defined associations as “an association is a group of social beings who are linked to one another with the goal of attaining a specific set of goals”?
14. What type of social group is an association?
15. What are the essential factors required for a social organisation?

## Answers

1. Mutual awareness, common interest, and materials
2. Human interaction
3. Human beings
4. Peter L Berger
5. Society
6. Formal and Informal
7. Belonging, likeness, and cooperation
8. Structure of common living
9. Same values
10. Robert MacIver
11. Emory S Bogardus
12. Rules and regulations
13. Morris Ginsberg
14. Synthetic
15. Change and stability

## Assignments

1. Define society and discuss its types.
2. Discuss basic characteristics of a community.
3. Differentiate between an association and an organisation.
4. Explain the concept of social organisation and its types.
5. Elucidate the fundamental distinctions between society and community.

## Reference

1. Haramabos, M. & Martin, H. (2000). *Sociology; Themes and Perspectives*. London: Collins.
2. Rao, C. N. S. (2012). *Sociology, Principles of Sociology with an Introduction to Social Thought*. New Delhi: S. Chand Limited.
3. Ryan, J. M. (2005). *Core Concepts in Sociology*, Wiley Blackwell.
4. Prasad, D. P. (1932). *Basic Concepts in Sociology*. New Delhi: Rupa & Company.
5. Giddens, A. & Philip, W. S. (2014). *Essential concepts in Sociology*. London: Polity Press.
6. Gisbert, P.S.J. (1973). *Fundamentals of Sociology*. New Delhi: Orient Longman.
7. Stolly, S. K (2005). *The Basics of Sociology*. Connecticut: Greenwood Press.

## Suggested Reading

1. Giddens, A. & Philip, W. S. (2021). *Sociology*. Cambridge: Polity.
2. Hunt, E. F. (1972). *Social Science: An Introduction to the study of society*. London: Macmillan.
3. Macionis, J. J. (2021). *Society: The Basics*. Pearson.
4. Weber, M. (1922). *Basic Concepts in Sociology*. Melbourne: Hassel Street Press.
5. Braham, P. (2013). *Key Concepts in Sociology*. New Delhi: Sage Publications.

# UNIT 2

## Social Institutions – Family, Marriage and Religion

### Learning Outcomes

After reading this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ◆ explain the concept of social institutions and its significance in society
- ◆ identify the role of different institutions in society
- ◆ become acquainted with the different forms of marriage, family and kinship
- ◆ examine the changes that have occurred in marriage and family institutions

### Prerequisites

You are all interested in attending marriages and have participated in different marriage ceremonies and feasts. Do you think about the process involved in a marriage? When we speak of the institution of “marriage”, it is generally assumed as the union between two individuals stepping together to lead a new life. Do you ever think the union between these two persons are for particular needs that society ought to expect? In a way, society sanctions this union for having a socially accepted relationship for the right to sexual relations, procreation, and companionship and admits men and women to a family life. It fosters family and kin bonds. Therefore, Marriage, Family and Kinship as a social system cannot be signified by one single meaning. People’s conceptions of marriage, family, and kinship are changing over time due to the changes in society’s structure. However, families are the basic building blocks and the basic social unit upon which society is built upon. It is through marriages and families are created. Marriage and family are both social units by society. In everyday usage, these terms are close to you since, more or less, we remain adherents of it. Let us discuss more about these institutions.

### Keywords

Standardised practices, Monogamy, Polygamy, Exogamy, Endogamy, Matriarchal, Patriarchal, Descent, Lineage, Consanguinity, Affinity



## Discussion

Throughout the previous blocks, you learned about the basic concepts in sociology that provide prior knowledge regarding the key terms like society, community, association and organisations. Can you recollect your understanding of viewing society and community as fundamental elements of society? You may already be aware that sociology is concerned with the study of human societies and their companionships, interdependence, cooperation, and variety of social relationships. It also differentiates between society community and other fundamental concepts in common language.

The discussions in the previous units give a clear idea of the notions of social systems that reinforce society as a structured arrangement of parts and social structure as a patterned arrangement of human groups, organisations, collectivities and institutional agencies, without which society cannot move ahead. You have been introduced to these concepts and seen how it differs from one another. Each of the characteristics is significant and gives you better understandings in Sociology. Let us now further take into account the idea of social institutions and its significance in society in this unit.

Institutions are close to our daily lives. They perform different types of functions, which are fundamental. So, we depend on these institutions at varying levels. Without the help of the basic social institutions, it is impossible. Social institutions are a remarkable arrangement for binding people together with ties of obligation. The poet Robert Frost, said that 'home is the place where, when you have to go there, they have to take you in.' Thus, institutions are fundamental and important in our daily lives.

The following section will help you to examine these significant institutions in detail. A few questions may come to your

mind: What is a social institution? What is the significance of institutions in society? In addition, what purpose does it serve? In everyday conversations, you are familiar with the term 'institution' as it applies to schools, hospitals, banks, charity centers, etc. How do they help us? These institutions were set up to serve various purposes like training and education. For example, hospital for better treatment when we fall sick, bank support monetary transactions, legal provisions, and many others. Some agencies fulfill the needs of the individuals and help to smooth the functioning of society. These are the institutions that are close to our day-to-day lives, including family, education, religion, economy, and political systems. Without these social institutions, human life would be chaotic and without order. Thus, to have a comprehensive view of social institutions, we must understand the important institutions in society like the family, marriage, kinship, education and religious institutions.

### 2.2.1 Understanding Institutions

Usually, institutions are defined as certain permanent and accepted forms of procedure governing the relations between individuals and groups. In a way, these forms of procedures are highly sanctioned and approved by society. The word "institution" means "established practice." That is why it has a significant role in the social structure. Institutions are the characteristic agencies that integrate social norms that stand to preserve fundamental societal values. As we have said, it is not modes or endless ways of doing things, but through institutions that we move and act. These institutions exist everywhere; thus, its universality reveals that they are highly imperative in developing and maintaining order.

## 2.2.2 Marriage: Definition, Types and Changes

There are different marriage customs, which predominantly differ based on religion, caste, tribe, or region. The institution of marriage is not similar in all parts and in all traditions. Hence, each society has its own customs and rules for marriage, and it differs in its forms across the world. Although marriage exists as a social institution transversely in all cultures.

### a. Concept of Marriage

Marriage is a universal social institution found in all societies. It establishes a social and legal union between two individuals to form a common bond. They enter into a personal relationship (commonly called partners) through the process of marriage. From time immemorial, there have been different definitions of explaining the term marriage. Even sociologists could not rely on a single meaning since the perception of its object due to variations. However, historically it has been transformed from a mere legal union or permission to imply the right to sexual relations or the association between spouses of opposite sexes (male and female).

You could recall of the traditional expectations of marriage in society and how it differs today from its existence. For example, in modern societies, is it necessary for the union between spouses should be of opposite sexes? Does it require a legal sanction? Is marriage taken for granted as the production and maintenance of children alone? Even in between, same sex marriage also exists. Remarkable changes have been noticed from the earlier definitions of marriage. You can only understand it through the changes that have happened in human history. These changes will be deliberated on in later sections. Let us consider the meaning and characteristics of marriage.

Edward Westermarck defined marriage as the more or less durable connection between male and female, lasting beyond the mere act of procreation lasting even after the birth of offspring. Marriage, moreover, is a social institution that has biological foundations. It is defined more as a process in which men and women mutually unite together to start their lives for sexual gratification, procreation, companionship, economic dependence, and the rearing of offspring.

Sociologist George Peter Murdock has remarked that “Marriage is a universal institution that involves residential cohabitation, economic cooperation that leads to forming a nuclear family.”-

Thus, marriage is a socially approved way of establishing a family for the need of procreation and states the social pattern that unites two or more persons to establish a family. It consists of the rules and regulations that define the rights, duties, and privileges of husband and wife with due respect to each other.

From the above discussions, we can point out the following characteristics of marriage:

- ◆ Marriage as an institution necessitates the social, physical, and psychological needs of two individuals.
- ◆ It establishes a specific relationship based on mutual rights and obligations.
- ◆ The primary function of marriage aims at the regulation of sexual relationships.
- ◆ It allows partners to establish a family, allows them to live together, and produces children.
- ◆ Other essential components are procreation, mutual care, support, economic functions, and socialisation of children.



## b. Types of Marriage

Marriage as an institution has evolved over eternity. Different types of marriage can be visible in human societies based on various common grounds. Every culture, region and nation has their own laws and practices for getting married. It exists in numerous ways based on the number of spouses, mate selection, certain uniformities in marriage customs, and other rules governing marriages. Monogamy, polygamy, polyandry, endogamy, exogamy etc to a few to name. Certain marriage types are detailed below.

- i. **Monogamy** (single spouse): Usually, we see a relationship between a husband and wife that ought to have only one partner at a time rather than multiple partners. It is the most common type of relationship. Monogamy is regarded as the type of marriage whereby one man marries one woman at a time.

A monogamous family is more successful, stable, and enduring for a more extended period. Its stability offers a robust familial bond and gives equal importance to all members. It opens up further chances for getting significant support, love, care, and affection between the partners. At the same time, husband and wife enjoy more rights, freedom and understanding between each other.

- ii. **Polygamy** (plurality of wives and husbands) As opposed to monogamy, when a single individual has more than one spouse at a time, it is called polygamous relationship. When an individual is married to more than one individual simultaneously, it is called polygamy. It permits the individual to engage in a relationship with more than one of the opposite sexes. Therefore, it is a condition in which an individual has more than one spouse at one time. Such marriage was prevalent among kings,

aristocrats, and rulers of ancient India and partially among some religious and customary traditions. There are two basic forms of polygamy: polygyny and polyandry.

- iii. **Polygyny** (one man with many wives) Polygyny is the form of marriage in which one man marries more than one woman at a time. Though these practices date back to ancient civilisations, these marriages were found among primitive tribes like Baigas or Gonds of India. Besides, it is also sanctioned in Muslim communities.

- iv. **Polyandry** (one woman with many husbands) Polyandry is depicted as the typical marriage system in which one woman marries multiple men at a time (plurality of husbands). Brothers often share a wife is also involved in poly andry . Such marriage resulting in brothers marrying one woman (husbands of the shared wife are brothers to each other) is known as fraternal polyandry. The prime motive behind such forms of marriage is to retain the land undivided within their own families. The best-known occurrence of polyandry is noticed in South India, particularly among the Nayars of Hindu religion of the Malabar Coast, the Paharis settled in Northern parts of India, the Bahamas of Africa, and the Todas, Kota, and Khasa tribes of India, etc. In traditional Nayar families, women engage in sexual relationships with more than one man and have children within these alliances. Interestingly, paternity cannot be acknowledged or claimed by any single one

- v. **Endogamy:** Generally, people are interested in marrying within their same caste or group. Thus, marriages taking place within one's castes, a similar ethnic, cultural, social, and

religious group is called endogamy. It strictly prohibits marriage outside the group, thus contributing the various features of group unity. For example, marrying within a caste is caste endogamy. Within the sub-caste, there is sub-caste endogamy.

**vi. Exogamy:** Exogamy is just the opposite of endogamy marriage. It is the rule of marriage outside one's group or clan. In the early system of marriage individuals were prohibited from marrying outside their group and also restricted to marrying certain degrees of blood or affinal relationships. Exogamy can take several forms, including gotra exogamy (marrying outside one's gotra), pravar exogamy (marriage of persons from the same pravar is forbidden), and village exogamy (restriction on marrying outside one's village). Marriage alliances also take place between individuals belonging to different social statuses. For instance, it is a kind of inter-caste marriage. There is a provision for men and women belonging to different castes (higher or lower) to marry each other. Thus, this system is of two forms: Hypergamy, commonly known as Anuloma and Hypogamy, commonly known as Pratiloma.

**vii. Anuloma Marriage:** Certain marriage customs occur between spouses of different social statuses, which mean that marriages do not happen between social equals. Therefore, Anuloma (hyper gamy) implies that a man of higher varna or caste marries a woman of lower caste or varna. Nowadays, such marriages are found to be practiced. For example, a marriage between Brahmin men and shudra girl.

**viii. Pratiloma Marriage:** The marital practices whereby a man belonging

to a lower caste or varna marries a woman of higher caste or varna is referred to as pratiloma. The traditional norms of marrying someone above the social class or status are changing. Today, to a large extent, love or inter-caste marriages occur where either the mates or females are free to choose their partners from any caste or varna.

**ix. Sororate:** You learned different marriage forms so far, and apart from these, there is certainly another custom of marriage. Usually, after the death of the wife or being unable to conceive a child, the man remarries another spouse. It is a type of marriage system under which if a man's wife dies, is expected to marry his wife's sister or sisters. The Latin word 'soror' means sister generally; such marriage is practiced in patrilineal societies with a preference for cross-cousin marriages.

**x. Levirate:** On the other hand, when a woman's husband dies in a levirate marriage, she is expected to marry his brother or a male member of the dead husbands' lineage. The Latin word 'levir' means 'husband's brother'. It has been practised by societies that follow a strong clan structure.

**xi. Cross Cousin Marriages:** The custom of marriages between cousins is one of those which is most acceptable in some cultures. Let us say your brother's marry their mother's daughter or your syster's marry their father's sister's son. Cross-cousin marriage refers to the marriage alliance between the children of a brother and sister. This rule specifies a man marrying either his mother's brother's daughter (maternal uncles' child) or his fathers' sisters' daughter (paternal



aunts' child). The siblings would be from parents of opposite sexes.

As marriage is viewed as an essential social institution, each society is obliged to follow specific rules and regulations for guiding its marriages. Since the choice for mate selection and of the union between two individuals, every society imbibes certain restrictions. One such limitation that controls the relationship is that marriages are forbidden between close blood relationships (or on account of consanguinity) like brother and sister, mother and son, or father and daughter. In addition to this, there are several restrictions on entering in to marriage such as in the name of caste, community and status. This led to different forms and types of marriage.

### 2.2.3 Family: Definition, Types and Changes

The family structure is traditionally meant for both the relationship between parents and children or between spouses. However, from the sociological point of view, the family cannot be limited to this characterisation alone. You may think of your family. Whom do you consider as your family? Is it your parents, brothers and sisters alone? Or else does it include father, mother, siblings, grandparents and other relatives too? People generally consider their intimate network as their families. It is explained chiefly on the grounds of joint families (encompassing parents, children, or other relatives) or extended families (including three or more generations), or nuclear families (comprising parents and children alone) as of today. Earlier, the family system is generally recognised as a system in which several generations live together in a single household. Similarly, it examines a broader kinship group that closely links ancestors and their descents together.

How do you define family? It may vary from society to society and from culture to

culture. You will notice that the traditional family has changed relatively over time, and you will find it difficult to explain what we mean by “family”.

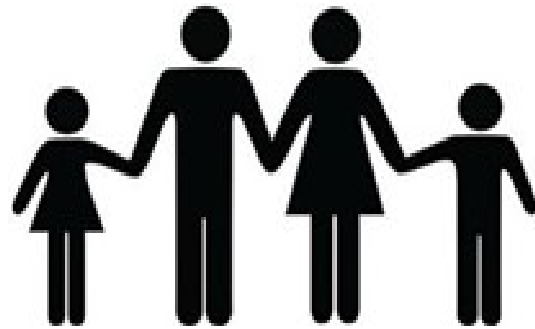


Fig. 2.2.1 Nuclear family



Fig. 2.2.2 Joint family

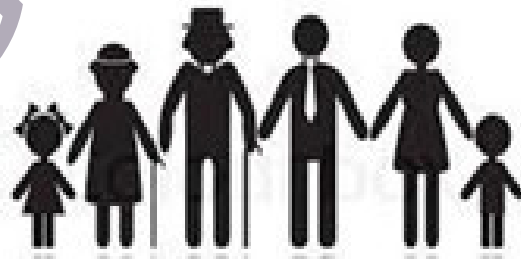


Fig. 2.2.3 Extended Family

Generally, “family” is an intimate domestic group of people bonded by ties of blood or common ancestry, marriage, adoption or degree of kinship. It is the nucleus of the growth of the social structure and the first society of human beings. It is derived from the Latin word ‘famulus,’ meaning servant. Fundamentally, the family structure consists of either the relationship between parents and children or the ties between spouses. It is the primary social institution that forms the “fundamental institution” of

any society. The primary function of the family makes it an essential prerequisite in a community. It is also regarded as the universal social group as it is intended to meet our basic needs. No society exists without any system of family organisation. Through marriage, the social arrangement consists of parenthood, binds social bonding through love, care, companionship, and maintains social control. Therefore, the family, as a vital social institution, functions as the primary pillar of any society.

#### **a. Meaning and Characteristics of Family**

A family is regarded as a biological unit sex relationships consisting of a husband, wife, and children. It is sufficiently precise and enduring to provide for the procreation and upbringing of children. It is a more or less durable association of husband and wife with or without children. Thus, family is a socially recognised group (bonded together by blood, marriage or adoption) that forms the basic unit of society.

According to Malinowski, "Family is a group consisting of a mother, father, and their progeny (offspring). It is a biological unit with a common dwelling place for its members with institutionalised or sanctioned sex relationships between husband and wife." Similarly, George Peter Murdock pointed out that "Family is a universal social institution, characterised by common residence, economic corporation, and reproduction. It maintains a socially approved sexual relationship between two persons of both sexes to have their own or adopted children."

Thus, family is so important and has the following peculiarities.

1. Consisting of households, who live in one house or under one roof, including children and parents
2. A group encompassing parents and

their children, whether they live together or not

3. All groups that are nearly tied to each other by blood and affinity
4. Those having a common descent or ancestry.

Though there are several definitions of 'family' given by earlier sociologists, the diversity within the modern world suggests broader definitions for the term. Thus, a family is considered a group of two or more people related by blood, marriage, or adoption. Family as defined by modern social thinkers have been redefined to intensify family as a group of people who are either related each by blood, marriage or in the form of other committed relationships. We will examine in detail while discussing the considerable changes that have happened to the family in the subsequent section.

#### **b. Essential Characteristics of Family**

As per your understanding of various definitions and meanings of family discussed earlier, families in all communities satisfy similar needs and procedures for their members. Though it is their obligation to secure food and shelter, rear children, and care for dependents, these primary groups perform vital roles in society. Members come together to form strong bonds of physical, emotional, and social ties. Thus, families provide crucial functions internally (for the family members themselves) and externally (for the society). Other distinctive features of it comprise:

##### **i. Universality**

Why is the family regarded as the universal group? Family, considered as the nucleus and oldest of all social organisations, exist around all parts of the world. Every culture identifies a family structure that controls



the sexual behaviours of the members and shares common elements. Hence, it is said to be universal.

## **ii. Limited size**

The size of the family is primarily well-defined in terms of biological conditions consisting of a household having a husband, wife, mother, father, son, or daughter taking each other to their respective social roles. In many earlier families, all family members lived together in a single household called a joint or extended family. Later, with the emergence of nuclear families, family structure changed, individuals left their homes to live independently due to marriage, jobs, or many other reasons. Thus, parents and their children form the family unit.

## **iii. Common Habitation**

Our basic survival needs are food, clothing, and shelter. Therefore, to have a shared experience, a family permits the members to live in a common household. After marriage, the spouses start to live in a home that generates the foundation for affection, companionship and a new family.

## **iv. System of Nomenclature**

In Kerala's history, royal families (raja kudumbam) derive their family names such as Arackal Kingdom, Kollattiri. As time passed, the royal situation changed, and each family became known by their surname. The nomenclature system attaches the members to their families. Generally, a family is recognised by a distinct name that gives representation to it. Sometimes, it helps to trace the descent (recognition of the biological relationship between individuals).

## **v. Emotional Basis**

In a family relationship, members are attached by family ties. Thus, such an emotional relationship between the members

often forms the basis of any family structure. For example, people are emotionally attached to their siblings thus husband-wife, brothers, and sisters. Strong bonds of psychological attachment among the group members constitute the firmest social support mechanism. In addition sexual relationships provide an effective emotional basis. This intimacy and affection laid the foundation of its unity and solidarity between the members. The intensity of affection surrounding the family members helps them to withstand situations of quarrels and disagreements.

## **vi. Economic Provision**

In every family, either the husband or wife is an earning member, and in some families both. This provides financial security to the family members. All other members depend on this income and are meet the economic needs of their members. Economic cooperation is provided through the division of labour and income generation. For earnings, gradually they engaged in different occupations or activities for earnings. In a sense, it serves as a significant economic unit to provide financial provisions and economic stability. Henceforth, it shares responsibility among the members of the family.

## **vii. Responsibility of Members**

Each family member has a different role. Parents provide basic necessities such as food, shelter, and education for the children. Individuals of the family develop a sense of responsibility for members towards each other. Family defines the meaning of social responsibility and the necessity for cooperation.

## **viii. Social Control**

Social control is the means through which society brings people into an accepted code of behaviour. It can be either direct or indirect. The family also exercises some powerful means of control on the behaviour

of its members. It is carried out when the person with proximity in a family exerts control in better socialising individuals with the norms and values of society. A family represents a socially approved organisation for maintaining social customs and legal regulations. It exercises its profound influence in the form of social rights and rules over its members.

### **c. Functions of Family**

Families as an institution satisfy several purposes. It fulfils several imperative functions and needs that include regulating sexual activities and reproduction, offering support and care to the members, and providing an economic commitment. Sociologists have enumerated different functions of families. Ogburn and Nimkoff distinguished family functions into affection, economic, religious, protective, recreational, and educational. In contrast, MacIver divided it into essential and non-essential functions. A few of the essential functions of the family are as follows.

#### **i. Biological Functions**

Every society regulates sexual activity of its members through reproduction or procreation. The strong biological basis to satisfy the mating relationship is an essential function of the family. The primary function of it is to fulfil sexual regulations and control reproduction. Thus, all societies recognise it as desirable to promote stability and survive over time.

#### **ii. Psychological Functions**

The human need for affection and companionship is a fundamental phenomenon. A family provides affection and emotional support for its members. Thus, families are the primary source of providing a sense of identity, love, comfort, belongingness, protection, and security. In times of emotional instability and distress, it is the most conducive environment providing

intangible support and acceptance.

### **iii. Sociological Functions**

Families form the primary unit of socialisation. Thus, they are agents for primary socialisation. Children learn their fundamental values and norms from the beginning of their lives. Through this socialisation process, the child is nurtured and molded to become responsible individuals in society. Once they are physically, mentally, and emotionally strong, it will be maintained throughout their life. Through family, children recognise their status and role arrangements and socialise with society. Henceforth, the family makes essential contributions to regulating its members' behaviour, social control, and socialisation. In addition to this, it transmits familial traditions, customs, and beliefs from one generation to another.

### **d. Classification of Family**

The composition and structure of families vary according to structure, rules of authority, blood relationship, residence, and descent or ancestry. Just like marriage, family structure differs in various significant ways. It can be of different types based on multiple classifications, including the number of spouses, authority, strength of the bond, spouse choice, residence, etc. In the following part, we may see these broad distinctions.

#### **1. Classification based on Family Structure**

On the basis of division of family structure, the families are classified into three divisions; joint family, extended family, and the nuclear family.

##### **i. Joint Family**

The family system consists of a more extensive kinship network whereby close relatives and other family members jointly live together in the same household or under the same roof. Such families are referred



to as joint families. It is a kind of extended family commonly found in primitive and non-industrial societies that comprise parents, grandparents, children, brothers, sisters, uncles, aunts, etc. They lived in such families with the care, support, and guidance of all those family members and mostly shared all household chores. Likewise, there are many other peculiarities for the joint family

system. As recognised, social bonds are strong enough in such families. Members are relatively dependent on each other and rely on a typical dwelling with generations living, working, eating, and worshipping together. Besides, the property is held in common. Generally, properties are not divided. The head of the family (basically the eldest male member) exercised all regulatory powers.

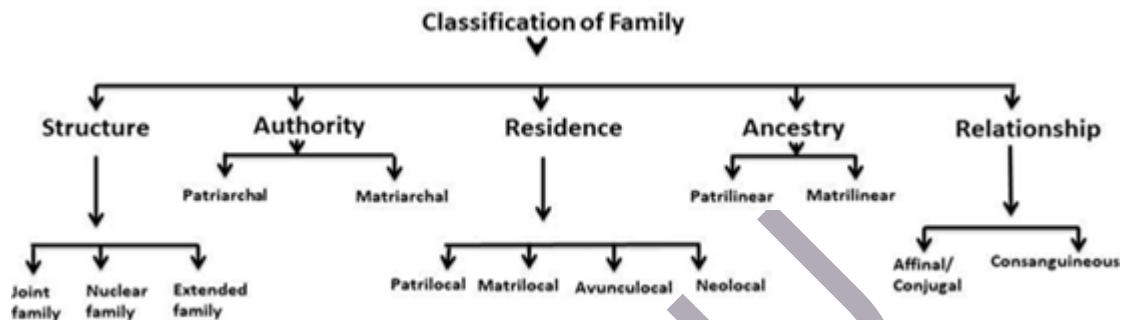


Fig. 2.2.4 Classification of Family

## ii. Extended Family

This type of family consists of three or more generations (several or multiple generations) of people, who usually live together in the same residence and undertake shared responsibilities. Rather than just your parents and brothers or sisters, you have many relatives who maintain strong bonds with you. All these near-relatives and cousins, such as great-grandparents, grandparents, uncle or aunt, your married brother or sister etc., come under the extended family. They follow a common culture, share equal rights over belongings, and perform all religious and familial functions together as a coherent group. They enjoy specific advantages like greater support from the members, share a sense of security and togetherness, and are responsible for supporting and helping each other. In short, extended families are composed of more than two generations.

## iii. Nuclear Family

This is the universal form of family. A nuclear family is composed of a husband,

wife, and their unmarried children. Factors like industrialisation, urbanisation, education, and employment paved the way to shift from rural areas to urban areas. Henceforth, the joint family or extended family system which prevailed then had shrunk to a small group composed of a husband, wife, and their children. Why do you think, in modern times, nuclear families have gained popularity? This type of family predominantly depends upon autonomy and self-independence, which allows greater flexibility for the members.

## 2. Classification based on Agency or Authority

On the basis of ownership of property and authority over family members, a family can be divided into patriarchal and matriarchal.

### i. Patriarchal or Father-centred Family

Patriarchy connotes merely descent through the patrilineal line. The same implies authority in the hands of the eldest male member of the father's family. Male Member is the owner and has authority over all family

members. The family property ultimately lies under his control. Male Member has the right to preside over religious ceremonies in the household and is the custodian of all household goods. The most common characteristics of a patriarchal family include tracing the descent through the father's line.

## **ii. Matriarchal or Mother-centred Family**

Matriarchy is the system in which the family's authority and ownership of property reside in the mother's hands. Moreover, the transmission of descent is through the female line. The determinant of family structure is through matriliney, in which the descent is reckoned through the mother only. Here, the mother is the head of house and the husband lives in the wife's house. Apart from this the women are authorised to perform religious rites. The 'Marumakkathayam' among Nairs community in Kerala and those practiced among the Khasi and Garo tribes of Meghalaya are examples of matriliney.

## **3. Classification based on Residence**

In terms of changing the family's residence after marriage, there are various kinds of families. It is customary for men and women to alternate their residences. Therefore, you can find various forms of residence patterns across different cultures. After marriage, the couples want to settle down somewhere. The types of families based on residence are patri-local, matri-local, avunculocal, and neo-local systems.

### **i. Patrilocal/ Virilocal Family**

The type of family in which the bride moves to or near the parental home of her groom. In this kind of family, a woman moves to the location where her husband is residing. The binding link forms the father-son relationship in which the son remains at his own home whereas the daughter moves out after marriage.

### **ii. Matrilocal/ Uxorilocal Family**

Matrilocal is just the reverse of patrilocal residence. In this type of family pattern, the groom moves to or near the parental home of his bride. Here, mother-daughter forms the binding link. The daughter remains at home while the son moves out after marriage.

### **iii. Avunculocal Residence or Avunculocality**

In this family type the couple is expected to live at the groom's maternal uncle's house. Thus, the binding link is between nephew and maternal uncle. The best example of this is practiced among the Nayars of Kerala. After the marriage, the married couple settles at the maternal uncle's house.

### **iv. Neo-local Residence or Neo-locality**

Since it is the most common and familiar residence system wherein the couple lives separately after marriage. The common trend today is that after they become financially stable, they move to a new residence, either in the parental property or purchased one. This type of residence is called neo-local.

## **4. Classification based on Descent**

Based on the descent or ancestry, families are classified into Patrilineal and matrilineal types.

### **i. Patrilineal (Makkathayam)**

The inheritance and descent rules that follow the father's line are called patrilineal descent. In such families, the rights, lineage, and properties are transferred from the father to the next generations. It is the common type of social organisation found in society. In the traditional system of monarchies (rule of the monarch or a king), the patrilineal descendant is followed as they allow only male succession, from the father to son. Thus, after the death of the king, only his son can succeed him.



## ii. Matrilineal (Marumakkathayam)

Familial relationships traced through the female line are known by matrilineal descent. In this kind, the family's ancestry is believed to be a woman who is the central figure. Moreover, the position of the father tends to remain peripheral. The wealth is normally divided among children through their mother's descent. As compared to the patrilineal system, matrilineal lineage is least significant. In India, Khasis in Meghalaya and traditional Nayers of Kerala were typified as having matrilineal.

## 5. Classification based on Relationship

Based on relationships, there are also different types of families namely consanguineous and Conjugal.

### i. Consanguineous Family (same blood)

Consanguineous family means that family organisations related by blood relationships or having the same origin. Rather than marital relationships, parent-children relations or brothers-sisters' links are of prime importance. The degree of relatedness based on blood is consanguinity.

### ii. Conjugal Family (united by marriage)

The family constituted through a marriage relationship is referred to as a conjugal family. In this kind of family organisation, rather than blood relationships, the primary emphasis is placed upon husband-wife relationships.

## 2.2.4 Changes in Marriage and Family

The above section presents a brief overview of conceptualising marriage and family, its characteristics and various forms of occurrences. Even though marriage and family are the fundamental social institutions, it undergoes tremendous changes in the present society due to various reasons.

The traditional conception of marriage underwent transformations. Variations happened in its structure as well as existence. Age-old days portray marriage as a legally recognised social contract between two persons that traditionally rely upon a sexual relationship with permanent union and companionship. Marriage, though primarily conceived as the union between a man and a woman, legitimised to have offspring which involve certain rights and duties for the fulfilment of individual needs, is on the decrease.

Today, the very form of its existence is questioned and often debated with the emergence of personal concepts of marriage like living together or co-habitation (the arrangement in which two persons started to live together without being married) homosexuality (having same-sex partners), single-headed parenthoods, etc. These modern trends have affected the existence of family as a primary social institution. It is no longer considered the union between male and female nor tends to the procreation of children.



Fig. 2.2.5 Homo-Sexuality (Male-Male & Female-Female)

A wide range of diversity occurs in traditional patterns of marriage among different cultures. Society is hesitant to accept all these emerging marriage patterns. In contemporary society, men and women have more choices. Preferential selection of marriages has increased tremendously. The breakdown of caste endogamy and the preference for inter-religious marriages

are more common. Moreover, the growing option for couples to live together has also become the new norm of marriage, just like homosexual marriages and living together are tremendous changes that have occurred in the marriage institution.

Similarly, families as a social institution undergo significant changes by replacing traditional extended families with the modern nuclear family (a smaller family size). It may, however, be noted that this basic social unit linked by blood, marriage, or adoption has tremendously transformed in its structure. Moreover, as seen earlier, urbanisation and large-scale migration prompted individuals to move towards cities mainly in search of work, leaving their home villages and family members.

The advent of urbanisation, industrialisation, and modernisation has intensified these changes. As a result, many of the main activities of the family—like religion, caring for elderly parents, rearing of children, etc.—were handed over to other agencies or institutions.

Some of the notable changes that happened in the marriage and family are:

**a. Changes in the regulation of sexual and reproductive functions**

Sexual behaviour is still regulated through the institution of marriage. However, there is an occurrence of extra and pre-marital relations. Nevertheless, to a certain extent, the exercise of traditional control in regulating sexual behaviour has failed in the modern times.

**b. Changes in the structure of family**

Changes that happened in the marriage and among the members' relationship affect the family profoundly. The decreased control of marriage contracts provides more autonomy.

Parental control and other forms of social pressure have lessened. Choice of mates and mutual determination of relationships that binds people have replaced the traditional rules.

**c. Economic independence**

However, fulfilment of a family's economic needs remains as a primary function. Changes occur in the division of labour between sexes. It has moreover become a shared responsibility between men and women as both earn to meet their living. Women also attained more economic independence than earlier times.

**d. Decline in the influence of mores and religious values**

The notable decline of religious control made families more secular in their outlook. Many of its earlier rites like religious sentiments, beliefs, and attitudes are losing their grounds to a great extent and are absent in modern families. The conception of the family as a divine ordinance became less prevalent.

**e. Changes in the social functions**

One of the most significant functions of the family is its stable social control. As this function of the family declined, it failed to exercise direct control over the individuals, leading to family disharmony. As a result, the custodianship and the traditional role of the family are weakened largely. The decline of the authoritative mores tends to lose some of its supremacy over its members.

Members of the family are responsible for specific duties and obligations. Hence, it provides security and protection for the members. However, duties of the family are now undertaken by other agencies and the protective functions of the family have been extorted. Even though the family remains the primary agent of socialisation their role



is minimised. It has been taken away from families and vested with other agencies of socialisation. For instance, the child-rearing functions have been shifted to preschool agencies and maternity centers.

#### **f. Separation of non-essential functions from the family**

The modern family imparts many functions that are not essential to its emerging characteristics. Most of the traditional functions, which it ought to perform were taken over by other external agencies. For example, fulfillment of various economic functions and specialised work was attributed to banking institutions. Apart from home, educational functions are better provided by schools. Besides, the non-essential functions are transferred to other institutions like the healthcare system, financial institutions and other governmental agencies.

Thus family and marriage undergoes tremendous changes due to various functions like education, nature of women employment, emergence of child rearing and old age care institutions, etc.

### **2.2.5 Kinship: Definition and Types**

Imagine a social gathering to celebrate the birthday of your child. Whom do you invite first? You will surely invite your friends and intimate members of your family like aunts, uncles, nieces, and members of your spouse's family including many kith and kin: the near and dear ones or relatives that were so close to you. What is the common feature that you notice all around? The invitees except friends are either related to you through blood or commonly by marriage. Some people might have been recognised as biological links to you, such as your mother, father, sister, brother, children, grandparents, uncles, aunts, or cousins.

In contrast, your husband, or wife, other members like mother-in-law, father-in-law, brother or sister-in-law's were also related to you, not by blood but through marriage. You might also note some other affinity or close relationships between individuals due to adoption or different practices, forming stronger relations. Hence, it may be near or distant. Since all these relationships in which people are generally born into or created at a later part of their life stood as a solid binding force of so-called 'kinship.'

Most people use different terms to address these relations. All our relationships are resultant of these ties or bonds. This formal grouping for classifying people to have relationships between individuals are all kinsmen who are commonly thought to have family ties. We see everywhere that kinship connections are based on these blood ties or family groups. Kinship is the most noteworthy social organising principle that transmits status and property from generation to generation.

Generally, consanguinity refers to blood relation and affinity refers to marital relation. For example, mother-child relation is blood relation and husband-wife relation is by marriage. Kinship can be traced as the essential feature of primitive, rural or tribal societies. It has close connectivity with kinship relations. Moreover, it is intensely concentrated in villages, castes, families, and other significant social structures. It has been predominantly evident during the rituals performed in various familial, marriage or death ceremonies. You also might have observed or been part of several such occasions in and around you. It is obligatory to practice these rituals during various events. For example, naming the newborn by fathers' sister, rights and duties accomplished by mothers' brother during the marriage of their daughters, strict compliance of preventing kinsmen from social gatherings (entering a place of religious worships, attending

marriages etc.) up to 14- 16 days after the death of their close family members which is ubiquitous among the Hindu cultures. Many other customary rituals that occur during weddings (exchanging gifts) among different castes or tribes are strictly adhered to rituals. Various kinds of such incidence are followed in various communities. It similarly varies from one region to another region.

### a. Defining Kinship

Kinship ties can be determined by the connections between individuals established either through the lines of descent connected based on blood relations or marriage. Otherwise, the kinship system forms a social structure with strict adherence to rights and obligations. It can also be explained as the degree of sharing likelihood among two individuals who were unrelated either by lineage or marriage. Thus, kinship can be explained in different ways. Robin Fox explained that 'Kinship' is simply the relations between 'kin' that are persons related by real, putative or fictive consanguinity'. George Peter Murdock views "Kinship as a structured system of relationships in which kins are bound to one another by complex interlocking ties".

Harry. M. Johnson accorded six major characteristics for kinship:

- i. **Sex:** Some specific terms of reference, like "brother, sister, father, mother" etc. not only indicate biological relation but also used to classify different ties of relatives. In all societies, usage of such terms embodies exact relationships.
- ii. **Generation:** Kinship explicitly indicates the relationship between a person and the generation of the relative to which he is referred. For example, the generation between father and son specifies two successive generations. The relationship between brother

and cousin represents the same generations.

- iii. **Affinity or Closeness:** Mostly, kinship terms are widely related to genetic ties or bonds initiated by marriage. Example: husband-wife, parents-children but unlike these, a few relations like son-in-law and uncle or those in the uncle or aunt exist.
- iv. **Collaterality:** Blood relations may be lineal specifying relatives not in a direct line of descent or collateral relatives consisting of one's siblings or all other siblings of his or her ancestral relatives beyond their generations. eg: uncle, aunts and cousins.
- v. **Bifurcation (Division):** Kinship is also recognised in terms of bifurcation. The distinction for specifying relations concerning division like son's daughter's son, daughters' son's son, brother's daughter or sisters son etc.
- vi. **Linkage:** A commonly distinguished binding thread defined in terms of the intimacy of relation. Family tree, lineage or descent, residence, bond through family and marriage are considered the basis of kinship system.

### b. Kinship Types

The previous section gives you a clear picture of individuals related to one another based on closeness or affinity to their relationship. Concerning the kind of bond that arises, kinship has got various divisions. It is of several types based on the principle of biological origin, based on the relationship on blood ties, socially or legally defined bonds of marital relationships, and rules that trace the individual's descents (rules of descent). Let us examine these types one by one in the sections below.



Based on nearness or distance, the degree of relations is classified as primary kins and Secondary kins and tertiary kins. Now we can discuss various divisions of these kinship relations:

- i. Primary Kins:** The most intimate kind of kinship related to the closeness within the family is called primary kin. It may be the nearness of husband-wife, father-son, mother-son, mother-daughter, father-daughter, brother-sister etc. Hence, your primary kins are your parents, younger or older brothers and sisters under this system. The relationship between siblings (two brothers or two sisters) also form examples of immediate kinship.
- ii. Secondary Kins:** Secondary kinship refers to those who are directly related to one's primary kin. Thus, your grandparents. Mothers or fathers' brother (uncle), father's sister or brother's wife (Aunt), sisters' husband (brother-in-law's) or brothers' wife (sister-in-law) and parents-in-law also belong to your secondary kins.
- iii. Tertiary Kins:** This is another kind of kinship which is neither primary nor secondary. It refers to the relationship of the secondary kins of our primary kins. To your understanding, the examples of tertiary kins consist of either of your great grandparents (parent's grandparents), first cousins, nephews and nieces and some other relatives like sister's husband's brother, wife's brother's son, grand uncles or aunts, spouse's grandparents and so on.

Let us see how family relationships are shaped by each other. They are shaped based on blood or marriage ties. Accordingly, based on the degree of relationships, there are mainly two types of kinship found in any society. The kinship relations established

based on birth (blood relations) are called consanguineous kinship. The bond of marital relationships known by affinal kinship tends to exist in societies.

#### **i. Consanguineal Kinship (bond of blood)**

The relationships established between persons based on birth (biological process), blood, or descent are termed consanguineal kinship. One person is related to the other as consanguine (blood) relatives. It is observed as the most universal and elementary kin relations among humankind. Parent-child relationships and relations between siblings, uncle, nephew, and cousins were notable examples of consanguineous kinship groups. You may also note, rather than the actual blood relationship established through the biological process, kinship ties also arise based on social recognition, as in adopted children. Hence, blood relations may therefore be actual or supposed.

#### **ii. Affinal Kinship (bond of marriage)**

It refers to the relationship expressed in terms of marriage. The two persons have therefore established a relationship through the ties of marriage, which is affinal. They become kin to one another via the marriage bond, which forms wider kinship groups. The union of spouses (husband-wife) is a typical relationship of this type of kinship. As a result of marriage, a person is entitled to become husband or wife and connect to the broader web of social relationships like a brother-in-law, sister-in-law, son-in-law, mama, mami, dadha dhadi etc. These relationships bind themselves together apart from biological descent.

#### **c. Rule of Descent**

It is interesting to note that many cultures follow or adhere to a decent system of its kind. From traditional times onwards, the rights, statuses, and properties were transmitted



from one generation to the next through this socially recognised biological relation between persons. Generally, it is used to trace one's ancestry (people who lived in the past) or his parentage. In every family, the descent centres on this organisation of kinship relationships. Primarily, one's descent is traced through the lines referred to as the 'lineage', which may encompass many generations. We can describe this lineage either through your father's line or your mother's line or from both sides. Therefore, you usually may notice these lineages through rules of inheritance. An individual's economic rights and authority structures were transformed from parents to children through these descent groups.

The rules of descent refer to the succession of inheritance by a person commonly related by blood in recognition of biological relationships. Sociologically, it fixes one's relation to one's close and distant relationships through the line of succession. Based on the rule of descent, kinship is generally classified into different types. It can be traced either on the paternal line or through the maternal line or involving both sides. Thus, kinship based on the rules of descent are of different types such as cognate, unilateral (Matrilineal and Patrilineal) and bilateral descent. The rule of descent is significant in terms of:

- i. **Cognate:** It is a mode of descent where people share a common ancestor. That is, the descent is traced through any combination of male or female lines. Such kinds of kinship relations are known as cognates.
- ii. **Unilateral Descent:** The kinship line is traced through only one line. It is called unilateral descent. The two types of unilateral descent are patrilineal (descent through fathers' line) and matrilineal (descent through mothers' side) descent.

iii. **Agnatic Kinship (Patrilineality):**

The kinship that traces the descendant through the father's lineage generally involves the inheritance of rights, property, and entitlements through male kin. Kodangs trace their descendants through the male line alone.

iv. **Uterine Kinship (Matrilineality):**

As the name implies, matrilineality is a form of kinship whereby the descent is traced exclusively through the female line. The individual is therefore identified with their matrilineal kin (female ancestor). Hence the property and other titles also are inherited in terms of the mother's lineage. Hopi, Khasis and Nayars in Kerala are matrilineal societies.

v. **Bilateral Descent (Double Descent):**

The rule of descent in which an individual's family membership is derived from paternal and maternal sides. In this type of kinship, the descent and inheritance are generally passed equally through both parents. Since, here in this kinship type, a 'double unilineal' system of descent exists 'which allows individuals to choose or rely upon two sets of families. Hence it is also known as 'double descent', commonly found among primitive tribes such as Yako in Nigeria.

d. **Kinship Terminology**

In our day-to-day interactions within our families, we use common names to refer to our relatives. It may differ between cultures, communities, caste, or even households. For example, we call father's sister as paternal aunt or mother's sister as maternal aunt and many other different kinds of relative terms to denote different individuals. It is interesting to study these kinship phrases as it determines many things such as whom one should marry and whom one shouldn't,



to whom one can joke with or show respect etc. There are different types of kin groups, and it differs from societies. Some may have only lineages; some have both clans and lineages. In contrast, some others have different combinations of descent groups, including clans, phratries and moieties, etc. Now we examine various such terminologies used to define kinship in multiple ways.

Kinship usages, therefore, involve words used to identify or classify relationships and may be found complex among varied cultures. Similarly, it consists of different terms to address similarities or differences between kinds of relations. These terms of reference particularly help to identify the relationships of the kins. The kinship terminologies regulate the behaviour of kins normally. Lineages, clans, phratries, moieties and joking relationships are kinship terminologies that you will learn in detail in the subsequent section.

### **i. Lineages**

You learnt about the matrilineal and patrilineal descent groups that traced the lineage either through the mother's or father's line. A lineage is defined as a unilineal descent group that traces its origin from a common ancestor. Depending on tracing their descent through mothers or fathers' line, it may either be patrilineal or matrilineal descent, respectively. Thus, it helps individuals to determine their exact genealogical relationship and recognise their inheritance and obligations in the broader category of kinship groupings.

### **ii. Clans**

Like lineage, clan is also referred to as a unilineal descent group whereby the social group members claim their descendant from a common founder or ancestor. The exact genealogy of their ancestors is unknown. The ancestors are either claimed as humans or believed mythically to be animals, plants or

inanimate objects. These objects were called 'totems'. Hence, large groups, geographically dispersed, usually live in the same locality and share similar beliefs, rituals, and a common totemic name, in particular and are termed as clans. 'gotra' of the Hindus is an example of a traditional clan.

### **iii. Phratry**

We have already seen the peculiarities of a clan. So, if the size of the clan becomes huge, what can be done? For easy identification, it can be divided or segmented into smaller units. This splitting up of clans into small sections is termed as phratry, usually considered a clans group's brother. In other words, several clans combine to form phratries. It is predominantly found among the Oraon, Ho and Munda tribes. Phratry is thus a much larger grouping or association of clans that recognise some relationships to each other and are composed of traditions of common descent. The actual genealogical links are not evident in these unilineal descent groups. Same as in clans, mythical ancestors are common in phratries too.

Moiety is a specific form of phratry. The whole society is divided into two kin groups so that there is dual organisation. In such cases, each group is called a 'moiety'. Among the tribes of Todas in Nilgiri Hills of Kerala, moiety systems of social organisation are distinguished. Teivaliol and Tartharol are two such groups of dual organisations. It is interesting to note that each of these moieties has several clans by its division. Moieties are intended to undertake consistent positions and functions in societies. They are usually exogamous. Thus, marriages are only permitted within the group itself. As clans and phratries, the members of moiety cannot trace their descent links back to a common ancestor.

### **iv. Teknonymy**

The kinship usage found in different cultures in which the kin are not referred

directly but referred through another kin. For example, the practice of referring to parents by the names of their children. It can be found among Khasis of Meghalaya, Tao of Taiwan and various other societies.

#### v. Avunculate

Avunculate is a peculiar kind of kinship usage in which the relationship exists between a person and his maternal uncle (mothers' brother). This usage is expected in the matrilineal system. The mother's brother has an important relation to their nephews and nieces.

#### vi. Couvade

Another kinship usage that provides a robust marital bond between husband and wife where the husband leads a life along with his wife. It is most prevalent among the tribes like Todas and Khasi. The husband is obliged to carry out specific active work, follow some diet, and observe some taboos, the same as undertaken by his wife whenever she prepares to give birth to a child.

#### vii. Amitate

Similar to the reference towards providing special significance to the maternal uncle, the usage, amitate usually found in patrilineal societies, gives superior reference to father's sister. Besides the mother, particular respect is given to the father's sister. Consider if you have an aunt (Chitta) who has a unique role in your life. The supreme authority is handed over to fathers' sisters where the child gets their title not through their parents but in terms of their fathers' sister.

#### viii. Joking Relationships

A joking relationship simply is a kind of relationship permitting individuals and groups to tease and make fun of each other in certain social situations. It comprises a combination of friendliness and antagonism. It provides a platform to exchange abuse, mock, ridicule and make vulgar references even to sex without any offence. In this relationship, extreme familiarity is expressed that sanctions equality and mutual reciprocity.

## Recap

- ◆ Marriage is a universal social institution.
- ◆ Marriage regulates the sexual behaviour of individuals.
- ◆ Through marriage, individuals establish a family for procreation.
- ◆ Marriage permits regular cohabitation with some degree of rights and obligations.
- ◆ Marriage exists in various forms depending upon the number of spouses and other rules.
- ◆ The principal forms of marriage are monogamy and polygamy.
- ◆ Monogamy is the leading marriage form that permits one man to marry one woman at a time.
- ◆ The family is the most fundamental and primary institution.
- ◆ Family is the most pervasive (universal) of all social institutions.



- ◆ Families are the fundamental social unit and the nucleus of all social organisations.
- ◆ The biological unit consists of husband, wife, and children united by ties of blood, marriage, or adoption.
- ◆ Families can be classified on the basis of authority, blood relationship, and descent.
- ◆ In terms of structure, families are of joint, extended, and nuclear families.
- ◆ Based on the authority there are patriarchal and matriarchal families.
- ◆ Patri-local, matri-local, avunculocal and neo-local are the other patterns of residence.
- ◆ Matrilineal and patrilineal forms were classifications of family in terms of ancestry or descent.
- ◆ Consanguineous and affinal families are the nature of families based on kingship ties.
- ◆ Kinship is the primary organising principle in the social structure of every society.
- ◆ Kinship relations are either through blood relations or marriage.
- ◆ The ties of blood relation are called consanguine.
- ◆ Marital ties are called affinal kins.

## Objective Questions

1. Who defined marriage “as a universal institution that involves residential cohabitation, economic cooperation that leads to the formation of a nuclear family”?
2. Which marriage is commonly referred to as the marriage that takes place within the lineage or group?
3. Which system of marriage wherein can “One man marry one woman”?
4. Which is an institution that permits a man to have more than one wife at a time?
5. Which is the system of marriage wherein can one woman marry several men at a time and keep all of them with herself?
6. What do you call marriage within one’s caste, tribe, group, or community?

7. Which is the form of inter-caste marriage wherein a man of higher castes marries a woman of lower caste?
8. What do you call the marriage of a man with the sister of his deceased wife?
9. Which marriage preference rule relies on a widow to marry her deceased husband's brother?
10. Which marriage form is found to be superior to other forms of marriage?
11. What do you refer to, when the marriage involves relationships with three or more people?
12. Which marriage type is otherwise called "Hypergamy"?
13. Which is the institution often called the basic building block of society?
14. Who defined family as a biological unit having a common dwelling place for its members with institutionalised or sanctioned sex relationship between husband and wife?
15. Which type of family system, members of several generations, live under a common household?
16. Which type of family consists of a small group composed of husband and wife and their children?
17. What do you refer to, the family in which authority is vested in the eldest male member of the family?
18. When authority is vested with the female member of the family, it is known as?
19. What is another term for a virilocal family?
20. What is a typical example of the families that trace their lineage through mothers' line?
21. Which kind of kinship relations occurs through the bond of blood?
22. Which kind of kinship relations occur through the marriage relation?

## Answers

1. George Peter Murdock
2. Endogamy
3. Monogamy



4. Polygyny
5. Polyandry
6. Endogamy
7. Anuloma
8. Sororate
9. Levirate
10. Monogamy
11. Polygamy
12. Anuloma
13. Family
14. Malinowski
15. Extended
16. Nuclear family
17. Patriarchal
18. Matriarchal
19. Patrilocal
20. Nair Family
21. Consanguinean
22. Affinal kinship

## Assignments

1. Describe the various kinds of kinship terminology
2. Examine and the major trends in the institution of family
3. Describe recent trends in the forms of marriage
4. Distinguish between the various forms of family
5. Describe the nature of kinship

## Reference

1. Shah, A. M. (1998). *The Family in India: Critical Essays*. India: Orient Longman.
2. Rivers, W. H. R. (2012). *Kinship and Social Organisation* (Routledge Revivals). United Kingdom: Taylor & Francis.
3. Devadoss, T.S.(1995). *Hindu Family and Marriage: A Study of Social Institutions in India*. Madras: Radhakrishnan Institute for Advanced Study in Philosophy.
4. Guha, S.(2010). *Anatomy of Social institution: Marriage in India in Hinduism and Islam, 18th and 19th Century*. India : Frame Eternity.
5. Peterson, G. W., Bush, K. R. (2012). *Handbook of Marriage and the Family*. Germany: Springer.
6. Kashyap, A. K. (2011). *Sociology of Kinship, Marriage and Family*. India: Mohit Publications.
7. Fox, R. (1996). *Kinship and Marriage: An Anthropological Perspective*. United States.

## Suggested Reading

1. Gisbert, P. (2010). *Fundamentals of Sociology* (Reissue). India: Orient BlackSwan.
2. Page, C. H., MacIver, R. M. (1974). *Society: An Introductory Analysis*. India: Macmillan.
3. Harry M Johnson. (1966). *Sociology: A Systematic Introduction*. Harcourt. Brace and World Inc.
4. Bottomore, T. B. (2010). *Sociology (Routledge Revivals): A Guide to Problems and Literature*. United Kingdom: Routledge.
5. Fox, Robin. (1967). *Kinship and Marriage*. Harmondsworth, London: Pelican Books.



# UNIT 3

## Social Groups, Role and Status

### Learning Outcomes

After reading this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ◆ examine the concepts of group behaviour
- ◆ familiarize themselves with the concepts of role and status
- ◆ explain the meaning and nature of social status and roles

### Prerequisites

Hope you have seen groups of trees in a forest, a group of birds or a herd of animals. What makes them stay together? What are the natural binding forces that decide their spaces and gestures? Researchers have proved that the plant and animal world follow a common pattern with respect to the environmental cycles and climate. Similarly in the social world, human beings observe a sequence that decides the way of common behaviour and activities. As social beings we are into family, peer group, neighbourhood, workplace, political parties etc. The members of an assemblage are closely associated with the day-to-day life.

We belong to respective groups just because we practice certain norms related to it. We perform our actions knowingly or unknowingly. A family structure expects cooperation, empathy, love and support from us. Similarly a workplace demands discipline, assurance and obligation. It is the practice of these rules or norms, which confirm our membership in the groups. Once we violate the norms, we are subjected to scrutiny, warning, discomposure, conflict and in the end rejection. In this unit, we shall discuss such collectivistic perceptions and social groups. Deviance and the aspects of social control would be an interesting topic of discussion as we all are part of some group in every day social life.

Now, we see society as a vast web of statuses. Status in society has an associated role, and here role means the expected behaviour of a member. As you carry out the roles, expected behaviours, rights, obligations, responsibilities, and privileges assigned to social status, each status (position) in your network includes certain behaviours and obligations. Roles are the dynamic, action-oriented component of a

society's status. They specify how each participant in a conversation is expected to behave. For example, attending classes, learning, taking tests, writing essays, and conversing with professors and other students are all part of the role of a person with the status of a "college student".

## Keywords

Group, Proximity, Patterns of behaviour, Cultural norms, Hierarchy

## Discussion

### 2.3.1 Social Groups

Do people in proximity always constitute a group? Then how is a group different from mere collection of individuals?

Imagine a stadium where people are gathered to watch a soccer cup match. All the people present in the stadium on that day just happened to be at the same place at the same time. They are called an aggregate. On the other hand the national football team players in that ground playing soccer is an example of a social group. The team members will share meaningful relationships with each other and they interact regularly sharing common interest and purpose.

Our life begins as a member of the group called family. As we grow up, we come across a number of other groups to fulfill different needs in our life.

As a person, you may belong to many groups such as an ethnic group, your workplace/colleague group, your college class, a sports team or a political party etc. All these constitute a social group. Our survival in this society is closely associated with these groups. They play an important role in shaping our values, attitude and personality.

These collective bodies of individuals

enjoying meaningful relationships are called social groups and this concept is one of the central ones in Sociology.

In this unit, we will move further to understand the basic concepts of social groups and different classifications of social groups. In other words we will start to explore, how individuals as part of society function in groups.

Think about other groups in which you are a member. List down any five groups in which you are member.

#### a. Definitions of Social Group

The term group consists of a minimum of two individuals or the society as a whole. Therefore we cannot define a group with a single definition. Following are some of the definitions by different sociologists on social group and they deal with different aspects of social group.

1. According to Ogburn and Nimkoff "whenever two or more individuals come together and influence one another, they may be said to constitute a social group."
2. MacIver and Page define social group as "any collection of human



beings who are brought into human relationships with one another.”

3. E. S Bogurdus defined “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.”
4. Horton and Hunt in their book Sociology (1984) asserted “social group as an aggregate of categories of people who have consciousness of membership and interaction.”

People in an aggregate or category can become a group, only when they share a sense of affiliation with one another. Hence more than a physical entity, a group is a

collection of individuals who share common characteristics with persistent interaction.

Concept of social group is central one in Sociology, which has the following basic elements:

- a. Group is an aggregate (collection) of two or more individuals.
- b. Members of a social group have definite relationships and interaction among them.
- c. Group members will share common objects of interest and common loyalty.
- d. Mutual awareness among the members.



Fig. 2.3.1 Social Groups

#### **b. Characteristics of Social Group**

Each group has its own peculiarities. For them to be a social group, they should have the following characteristics:

- i. Collection of Individuals:** Individuals in a group constitute the basic

units of a social group. Without individual members there can be no groups.

- ii. Interaction among members:** How individuals act and react in relation to others is important in social groups. The way we interact

by means of speech, gestures or even through writings make us connected with other members of the group.

**iii. Common goals and shared interests:** Social groups are formed on the basis of shared interests or objectives. Members join a group either to fulfil a certain need or interest.

We join educational institutions for learning, join political parties based on our interest, or join a particular organisation to earn money. Other members in that group also join with a similar purpose or interest.

**iv. We-feeling:** Members of a social group identify themselves with the group and consider others as outsiders. Membership in a group creates a 'we' feeling among its participants and thus a sense of belonging. Group is considered more important than individual concerns.

**v. Similar behaviour:** Members of a group behave more or less in a similar way. In a university classroom, students will arrive more or less on time, sit in an orderly manner, listen to lectures and take notes and leave at a certain time, thus their behaviours are somewhat similar.

**vi. Mutual awareness:** Every individual member in a group is aware of others in the group. It does not imply every individual should know about each other personally, but there exists an understanding and they are aware of their roles, statuses, responsibilities, obligations and privileges from group experience.

**vii. Size of the group:** Two members constitute the smallest possible group called dyad. Sometimes we may use the word 'group' to refer to the entire human race as well.

With each additional member, the size of the group also increases. More members in a group mean more stability, but less will be the individual loyalty and responsibility to the group.

**viii. Acceptance of common norms and values:** Family or an organisation you belong to has its own written or unwritten sets of rules, rituals and values. They are supposed to be followed by every member in that group. These rules and values vary with the purposes of the group. Members will have a consensus about the rules of behaviour, values and goals they should follow in their group environment.

**ix. Group practices of social control:** A group expects certain acceptable behaviour from its members and exerts some control over its members. This type of controlling can be direct or indirect. Violating those guidelines could bring punishment. A person who violates them is called deviant or non-conformist.

**x. Groups are dynamic in nature:** Social groups are flexible to adapt changes in their functioning. This means groups are not static. Groups adapt to certain changes in their surroundings. They may add or expel members. These changes reflect in the behaviour of individual members in the group as well.

Think how your family is getting adapted to the technological advancements of the modern world. Are interactions in your family the same as before ten years ago when there were no modern facilities and internet?

**xi. Stability of Group:** Social groups can be permanent or temporary in nature. Some social groups are permanent. For example, family is a permanent group whereas a



crowd or an enquiry committee is temporary in nature.

### 2.3.2 Role

The following section discusses what role means from an everyday perspective of a layperson and how role is defined in Sociology. Further, it explains how sociologists use the role as a concept to understand human interaction in society, by exploring the meaning, nature, and types of roles. What do you think about social roles? Since we have mentioned the various ways of role as part of daily life, you might have some idea regarding the position. So, therefore, we want you to take a moment to think about your role in society. The word role is familiar and commonly used and therefore not at all strange. We use the word role or hear it being used in many different contexts. For example, the word 'role' is often used in theater arts such as drama or movies to denote the character role of a performer or actor. Similarly, daily we play different roles as members of society. On an individual level, we are members of other communities and sometimes members of associations or part of an informal or formal social organisation. Being part of any social group comes with a role that you must play as a member.

When it comes to understanding the concept of role, the most straightforward approach is to ask yourself about your role in society. Consider the role you play in the community to which you belong or in any other social group to which you belong, such as an association or an organisation. Then ask yourself how you came to be in this role. The process of reflecting on yourself and your relationship to the role that you play on a day-to-day basis will assist you in better understanding what role means.

The following illustration, which includes real-life examples, will further explain the sociological concept that underpins the

concept of role. First and foremost, we can state categorically that everyone who is reading this material is a member of the human community. So you play the role of an individual who belongs to a specific community, association, or organisation in a general sense. Second, roles are created as a result of belonging to a specific gender. These are referred to as gender identities, such as being female, transgender, or male. As a result, the role that comes with being a member of a particular gender is referred to as the gender role. The third category includes those of you who are full-time or part-time employees who work in a variety of business or social organisations. This means that their role is that of a laborer. Some of you may also be aspiring sociology students aiming for a bachelor's degree in Sociology, which will require you to take on the role of a student. As a result of the predicament mentioned earlier, we as members of society are responsible for a variety of roles on a daily basis.

#### a. Meaning of Role

All individuals in society have roles to play. They are expected to do this on behalf of their community, association, or social organisation, which can be their job or occupational unit. They are assigned a task to perform daily. The word for this is the division of labor. It constitutes an essential aspect of the human social system. Sociologist Lundberg defined social role as a set of behaviour that is expected from an individual who belongs to a specific group of situations. Social roles also mean what a person is supposed to do as part of his role enactment in the everyday activities of his social group or community. Another sociologist Young and Mack, states that a role is a function of status. For Sociologist Morris Ginsberg, status is considered a position, and role is the technique in which that position is filled. Other sociologists defined role as a set of expected behaviours

that are associated with social positions. The role is also interpreted as how an individual carries out the requirements of his position. Few other sociologists consider the role to be the dynamic and behavioural aspect of status. Social roles are patterns of behaviour expected of an individual in a particular group or social situation. Ogburn and Nimkoff explained that a role is a set of socially expected and approved behaviour patterns, both duties, and privileges, associated with a particular position in a group. These definitions will bring the required clarity to your understanding of the social role and its relation to society.

### **b. Nature of Role**

We'll go over the various characteristics that make up the role description. This section discusses the most critical aspects of Sociology straightforwardly to make it easier for those new to the field. Putting yourself under the microscope allows you to gain a clear understanding of the various characteristics of a role. When a person is five years old, they are required to enroll in school. In a school, they take on the role of a student from the time they are pre-teens until they reach late adolescence. The average person spends 15 years in school; however, there are some exceptions to this rule. Individuals must have completed formal or informal education, regardless of their family and social circumstances. As a result, an individual becomes familiar with the roles of a student. It is a step-by-step procedure that has taken more than a decade to complete. We can see from this that an individual must go through a long and rigorous training process to master the role of a student. In the meantime, an individual uncovers the existence of gender roles. It influences how they act and behave following cultural norms. Men will learn about the role of a man, and women will learn about the role of a woman. They will also realise that certain roles cannot be interchanged

because cultural norms and expectations condition them. For example, the role of procreation falls to the female. In today's society, many roles that were previously restricted to women have become available to them. In today's society, men and women occupy nearly identical roles.

Furthermore, it is influenced by various other social factors, which are not considered in this investigation. We will now go into greater detail about the characteristics of the role. The following section will dwell on some of the essential applications of roles.

1. Every social group member or society is naturally assigned a specific role to play in the group or society. In other words, having a role is a requirement for all members of the community. However, there are times when one person is required to perform multiple roles. This is determined by the type of status they currently hold.
2. Organisation and regulation of human behaviour takes place as a result of the establishment of social roles. They choose the methods that society, communities and social organisations use to complete a specific task. For example, a doctor can effectively treat a patient if both parties act following their respective roles. This means that the doctor pays close attention to everything that the patient is saying. The patient is disclosing all their medical history as well as their current medical problems. This implies that they should limit their attention to finding a solution to the health problem under consideration.
3. It is common for people to take on multiple roles. For example, millions of people around the world take on the role of a teacher every



year. Every citizen of every country is called upon to fulfill the role of an ideal citizen daily. The social expectations placed on a soldier's role while on duty and off duty are different. While on duty, the role is defined by the occupation. It is standard practice for any soldier from any country tasked with protecting their country's borders. Protecting our borders from intruders is a shared responsibility between Indian soldiers, particularly those in the border security force. While off duty, a soldier is not required to carry out the on-duty role.

4. Some social roles are positions that a single individual can only perform at a given time. Other people can take over this role in the event of a vacancy. For example, the role of chief minister is performed by a single individual from the time of their election until the time of the next election. The President of the country and the prime minister's role position are also decided similarly.
5. Social life is more predictable and orderly when roles are defined. When students and instructors are in the same room, they are constantly interacting according to their respective roles. So long as they adhere to their assigned roles, they will predict and understand each other's actions effectively.
6. From a cultural perspective, roles provide the necessary directives and guidelines for establishing a well-ordered society.
7. Human beings have a wide range of attitudes toward one another in society. From the same person, different behaviours emerge as a result of their various roles.

8. A crucial aspect of social role is the division of labor. There is a specific task assigned to each individual to complete. The job expected to be completed by a person constitutes the role they are expected to perform.

9. Specific roles are sometimes assigned voluntarily by the organisation. Individuals are given the option of accepting or declining the role that has been offered to them. During a natural disaster such as a flood or a cyclone, for example, different associations form volunteer groups to assist those in need. The volunteers are assigned to a variety of roles. If anyone wishes to participate entirely voluntarily, there is no obligation to take on any roles or volunteers.

10. There are times when specific roles are assigned to a person who did not choose to take on those responsibilities. A person is compelled to perform a role for which they have no preference—taking on the role of a stateless refugee fleeing from a war-torn country. In the same way that females will be required to perform a female role, men will be necessary to perform the role of a man.

### 2.3.3 Status

In society, status is a social position. We communicate with others, and they respond to us in part based on our statuses. When we are in the role of a daughter with our parents, student with our professor, or friend with our peers, we interact differently. Each person has multiple statuses, and the combination of these statuses is referred to as a status set: for example, daughter, sister, worker, teammate, and student.

Individuals' social statuses have an impact on the types of interactions they have. People

are equals in some interactions (such as with classmates). Individuals interact with people who have a superior or inferior status in other situations. Your interactions with former peers and subordinates will change if you are promoted as supervisor. Consider the interactions that could occur if the first relationship is between equals and the others are between people of unequal status. These status relationships are constantly negotiated and bargained with a friend: “I’ll do what you want tonight, but I choose tomorrow.” However, when people are in dominant or subordinate positions, their interactions are influenced by power or deference. A more powerful person, such as one with more wealth or privilege, can interrupt and show less deference in a conversation with their partner.

Status can be defined as the different types of social positions all members of society are assigned. All of them usually have an occupational status. It means a man or a woman can hold occupational statuses like being a teacher, a doctor, an artist, a driver, among others. Other forms of status come as a part of being in a family. They are statuses such as mother, daughter, father, and son. There are also culturally defined statuses. They might be based on biological factors such as the sex or racial identity of an individual. For example, skin color or hair color does not connect with an individual’s status. These are insignificant factors that do not assign any status.

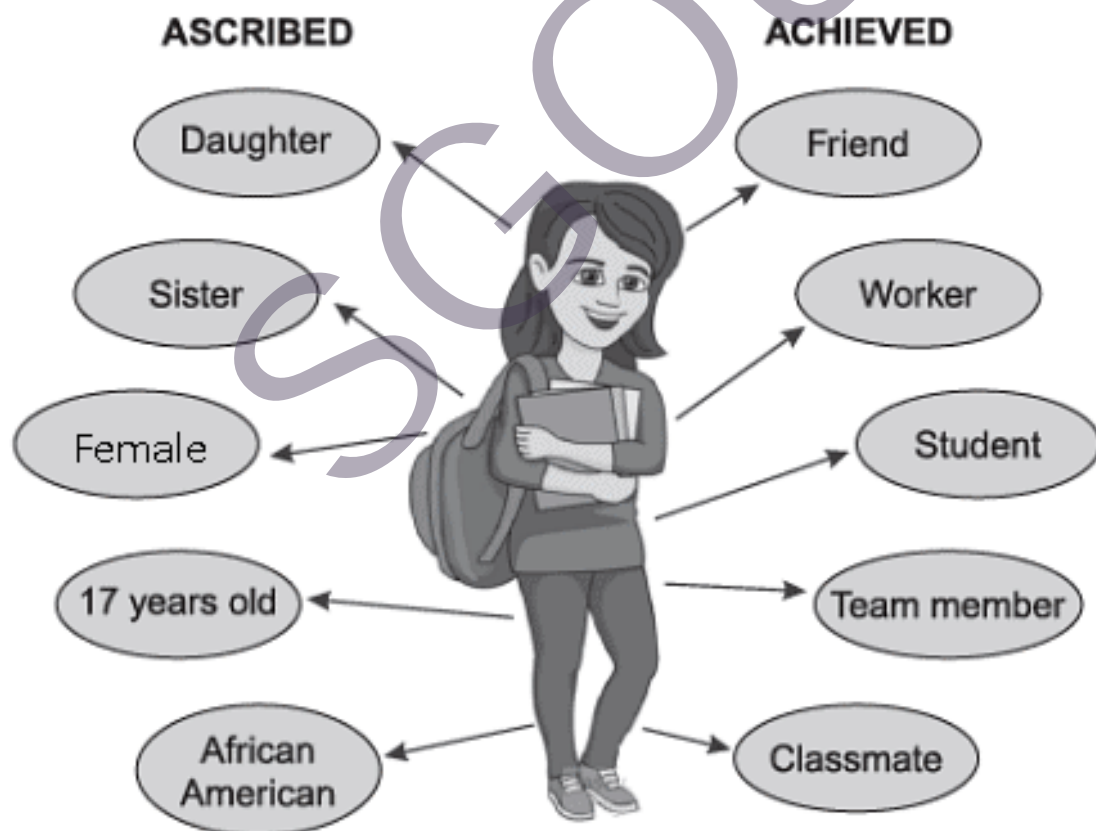


Fig. 2.3.2 Types of Statuses

### a. Meaning of Status

The word status is not a new word. It is something that people use in everyday conversations. The term is typically used to denote someone's position regarding education, knowledge, wealth, and other biological traits in a hierarchy. However, in Sociology, it is conceptualised and represented differently. There are two approaches to understand the idea of status in Sociology. In the first approach, status is identified as the position an individual occupies in the social structure. For example, think of a doctor or a driver. The approach, status, is associated with social roles and conceptualised as role status. In the other approach to understanding social status in Sociology, we identify status concerning ranking in which status groups are ranked and arranged by cultural, legal, and political characteristics.

Furthermore, status is a term used to designate the relative amount of prestige, difference, and respect accorded to persons who have been assigned different roles in a group or community. The status of a person is high if the role he plays is considered necessary by the group. It also pointed out that status is the rank order position assigned by a group to a role. An individual of high status is greeted with respect and enjoys great prestige in society. Thus, an individual wins respect for his social status.

### b. Definitions of Status

There are several different ways to define social status. However, to gain a fundamental understanding, we will concentrate on the most important ones. According to Ogburn and Nimkoff, status is the rank order position assigned by a group to a role or a set of roles in a hierarchy of importance. He states that 'status' refers to an individual's position within a group—his place in the social network of reciprocal obligations and

privileges, rights, and duties—according to H T Mazumdar. As defined by Duncan Mitchell, social standing is the position held by a person, family, or kinship group regarding their relationships with others within a social system. This determines our rights, responsibilities, and other behaviours, as well as the nature and extent of our relationships with other people and our social statuses in general. Sociologist Lundberg pointed out that social status is defined as the level of prestige and respect accorded to a person's position in society.

### c. Nature of Status

We have understood the numerous factors that contribute to the definition of status. Now we'll talk about the different types of status that exist. Referring to individuals who occupy different roles in a social group, status is used as a social measure of privilege, respect, or difference to distinguish them from one another. As a result, an individual's social standing is determined by their role in society.

- 1. External symbols to identify status:** people's identities reveal their social status when they engage in social interaction. Signs, symbols, and logos that aid in identifying someone's status, on the other hand, may not always be as consistent as they should be in some instances. To recognise a police officer a temple priest a lawyer a doctor or a nurse, each of these individuals must dress in a specific way. In the same way, there are differences in the uniform and badges that show the person's rank in the army, navy, and police, indicating the person's status in the organisation.
- 2. Every status has its rights, duties, and obligations:** The normative system of a society determines the

rights and responsibilities of its members. A right can be thought of as a genuine expectation that a person can fulfill through portraiture. To give an example, from the perspective of a manager, he can expect all of the foremen to behave in a specific manner while also knowing that the workers will act differently from the foreman. Expecting this type of behaviour is part of the managerial position the manager holds.

3. **Norms control statuses:** Norms vary depending on who you are, where you are, and what you do. They are, however, believed to be well-known to the general public. Realistically speaking, a person who is assigned to a specific role status cannot always tell the truth. For example, when passengers are waiting for a train, they are frequently informed of delays in their scheduled arrival time. When they inquire with the railway officer in charge of public relations at the station, they are rarely given an accurate answer about when the train will arrive at the station. In this context, accuracy is synonymous with truth. The truth, on the other hand, cannot be revealed in this situation. All of the facts have been determined, but the truth is not readily available to the person performing the role of holding the position.
4. **One individual has several statuses:** Society can be thought of as a network of social standing. In every society, there are some
5. **Status changes with the difference of importance:** Some social statuses are considered more important than others, determining an individual's place in society. For example, in India, caste status and occupational status may be more critical. In primitive societies, caste, gender, age, and kinship status are more important than other considerations.
6. **Statuses contribute to social order and social stability:** We are all born into specific social and economic situations. We need to be aware that no role in the process of creating them from scratch. However, that status, like culture, is subject to change at any time.
7. **Social status is hierarchical:** Because social statuses are not evenly distributed, a small number of people hold the highest positions, while the majority holds ordinary places. As a result, social standing is determined competitively by a person's ability and the demand for that ability in society.

individuals or groups who hold a variety of different social statuses. Every Indian has one of these positions, and the one they hold will vary depending on their group's identity. Every individual today may find himself in a large number of different statuses daily. For example, a University student may work as a project assistant for a professor, a part-time employee in an organisation, a private tutor for a high-school student, and so on.

## Recap

- ◆ The collective bodies of individuals with meaningful relationships are called social groups.
- ◆ Social Group may be thought of as a number of persons, two or more, who have some common objects of attention.
- ◆ Group members have common loyalty and participate in similar activities.
- ◆ Social group is an aggregate of categories of people who have consciousness of membership and interaction.
- ◆ Charles Horton Cooley an American sociologist, first mentioned about Primary Group in his book *Social Organisation*.
- ◆ Members in primary groups will be in closer proximity.
- ◆ Social roles mean patterns of behaviour expected from an individual in society.
- ◆ The role involves behavioural aspects, function, manners, and expectations.
- ◆ All members are assigned roles to play.
- ◆ Roles are shared and regulated by social groups or organisations.
- ◆ Roles create order and division of labor.
- ◆ Some roles are voluntary, while others are involuntary.
- ◆ Social status simply means a position afforded by group affiliation.
- ◆ Signs, symbols, and emblems identify status.
- ◆ Status is a body of rules, duties, and obligations governed by certain norms.
- ◆ A person's position in society and position in their career are both important.

## Objective Questions

1. Who defined social group as 'any collection of human beings who are brought into human relationships with one another'?
2. What is the basic unit of a group?
3. Which are the examples for social groups?
4. Which is the smallest possible group of two?
5. What does social role help to understand society?

6. What role does society create?
7. Who defined “social role as a set of behaviour expected from an individual who belongs to a specific group of situations”?
8. Who stated that role is a function of social status?
9. What is a set of expected behaviours that are associated with social positions?
10. What determines multiple roles?
11. What is the relationship between role and status?
12. What is “status” in society?
13. Who defined status as the rank-order position assigned by a group to a role or a set of roles in a hierarchy of importance?
14. Who defined “status” as an individual’s position within a group—his place in the social network of reciprocal obligations and privileges, rights, and duties?
15. Who defined status as a social standing is the position held by a person, family, or kinship group within a social system regarding their relationships with others?
16. Who defined social status as the level of prestige and respect accorded to a person’s position in society?

## Answers

1. MacIver and Page
2. Individual
3. Family, neighbourhood
4. Dyad
5. Human interaction
6. Division of Labor
7. Lundberg
8. Young and Mack
9. Social role
10. Status

11. Mutual expectations
12. Social position
13. Ogburn and Nimkoff
14. H T Mazumdar
15. Duncan Mitchell
16. Lundberg

## Assignments

1. Briefly classify social groups with examples
2. Define social groups with needed examples
3. Define role
4. Discuss the nature of social status and pen down its various types

## Reference

1. Beteille Andre. (2002). *Sociology-Essays on Approach and Methods*, UK: Oxford University Press.
2. Abraham, F. (2006). *Modern Sociological Theory. An Introduction*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
3. Giddens , A. (2006). *Sociology*, New York: Polity Press.
4. Jayaram, N. (1988). *Introductory Sociology*, Madras: Macmillan India.
5. Rao, C. N. S. (2012). *Sociology, Principles of Sociology with an Introduction to Social Thought*. New Delhi: S. Chand Limited.
6. Haramabos, M. & Martin H. (2000). *Sociology: Themes and Perspectives*. London: Collins.
7. Giddens, A & Philip, W. S. (2014). *Essential Concepts in Sociology*. London: Polity Press.
8. Gisbert, P. S. J. (1973). *Fundamentals of Sociology*. New Delhi: Orient Longman.

## Suggested Reading

1. Harry, M. J. (1961). *Sociology: A Systematic Introduction*, London: Rutledge & Kegan Paul Ltd.
2. Horton, P. B., & Hunt, C. L. (1968). *Sociology*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
3. Page, M. (2018). *Society: An Introductory Analysis*, India: Surjeet.
4. Hunt, E. F. (1972). *Social Science: An Introduction to the study of Society*. London: Macmillan.
5. Braham, P. (2013). *Key Concepts in Sociology*. New Delhi: Sage Publications.
6. Weber, M. (1922). *Basic Concepts in Sociology*. Melbourne: Hassel Street Press.

SGOU

# MODEL QUESTION PAPER SETS

SGOU



QP CODE: .....

Reg. No: .....

Name: .....

SIXTH SEMESTER BA SOCIOLOGY EXAMINATION  
GENERIC ELECTIVE

**B2ISO01GE - Introduction to Sociology**

(CBCS - UG)

2021-22 - Admission Onwards

SET-1

Time: 3 Hours

Max Marks: 70

**Section A**

**Answer any *ten* of the following questions in one word or sentence, each carries *one* mark**

1. What is the center of the universe according to the heliocentric theory?
2. Who is the author of the book Positive Philosophy?
3. What is the etymological meaning of the term "Sociology"?
4. Which school considers Sociology as a general science?
5. Which concept helps us understand the relationship between individual experiences and public issues?
6. Which theory states that all knowledge is based on experiences derived from the senses?
7. In which year did the 'Fall of Constantinople' occur?
8. Who said that society is a human product?
9. What is the foundation of a community?
10. Name the familial relationship traced through the female line.
11. Name the type of family where the couple stays at the groom's maternal uncle's house.
12. What is the term that refers to relationships expressed through marriage?
13. To which kinship terminology are the tribes of the *Todas* and *Khasis* associated?
14. Name the system of marriage in which one man can have more than one wife at a time?



15. Name the term that refers to the expected behavior associated with social positions.

(10x1=10)

### Section B

Answer any *ten* of the following questions in one or two sentences, each carries *two* mark

16. Idealism

17. Definition of Sociology

18. Rationality

19. Common sense

20. Scientific spirit

21. Industrial Revolution

22. Association

23. Organization

24. Status

25. Social group

26. Endogamy

27. Affinal kinship

28. Joking relationship

29. Clan

30. Levirate

(10x2 = 20)

### Section C

Answer any *five* of the following questions in one paragraph, each carries *four* mark

31. Explain the role of the Twin Revolutions in the emergence of Sociology in Europe.

32. Briefly describe the role of major intellectual forces in the foundation of the Social Sciences.

33. Write any four factors related to the nature of Sociology.

34. Critically examine the theoretical positions on the scope of Sociology.
35. Define 'Sociological Imagination'. How is it different from common sense?
36. Differentiate between community and society.
37. Write about any four characteristics of an association.
38. Explain the major changes that have occurred in the institutions of family and marriage in India.
39. What is kinship? Explain its various types.
40. Can we call the people present in a stadium to watch a match a 'group'? Why or why not? Explain the characteristics of a social group.

(5×4 = 20)

#### Section D

Answer any *two* of the following questions in 300 words, each carries *ten* mark

41. Elucidate the role of socio-political forces in the emergence of Sociology.
42. Examine how Sociology is distinct from Anthropology and Psychology.
43. Identify the fundamental distinctions between association and organization.
44. Discuss the nature and types of role and status in society with examples.

(2×10 = 20)





QP CODE: .....

Reg. No: .....

Name: .....

SIXTH SEMESTER BA SOCIOLOGY EXAMINATION  
GENERIC ELECTIVE

**B21SO01GE - Introduction to Sociology**

(CBCS - UG)

2021-22 - Admission Onwards

SET-2

Time: 3 Hours

Max Marks: 70

**Section A**

**Answer any *ten* of the following questions in one word or sentence, each carries *one* mark**

1. What is considered the center of the universe according to the geocentric theory?
2. Who proposed the 'Law of Three Stages' in the development of knowledge?
3. When did the French Revolution erupt?
4. Who is the leading theorist of the formalistic school?
5. Name the author who introduced the concept of the 'Sociological Imagination.'
6. With which school of thought is Emile Durkheim associated?
7. Which theory envisions things in their ideal form?
8. Who stated that culture refers to the social heritage of humanity?
9. Which term is used to refer to North Indian migrant workers in Kerala?
10. Name the familial relationship that is traced through the male line.
11. Name the type of family in which the couple lives separately in a new residence.
12. What term refers to family relationships expressed through blood relations?
13. Which type of kinship is predominant among the *Oraon* and *Munda* tribal groups?
14. What is the system of marriage in which one woman marries more than one husband at the same time?
15. According to whom is status a position and role a technique?

**(10x1=10)**



## Section B

Answer any *ten* of the following questions in one or two sentences, each carries *two* mark

16. Empiricism
17. Definition of Society
18. Role
19. Sociological imagination
20. Institution
21. Humanitarianism
22. Community
23. Kinship
24. Ascribed status
25. Agnatic kinship
26. Bilateral descent
27. Teknonymy
28. Couvade
29. Culture
30. Cross cousin marriage

(10×2 = 20)

## Section C

Answer any *five* of the following questions in one paragraph, each carries *four* mark

31. Explain the role of the French Revolution in the emergence of sociology.
32. Compare and distinguish between sociology and history.
33. How did the Enlightenment lead to the emergence of sociology?
34. Examine how sociology is different from common sense.
35. Discuss any five characteristics of society.
36. Briefly discuss the characteristics of association with examples.
37. Write about the nature and characteristics of social organization.
38. What are the essential characteristics of family?



39. Describe recent trends in the forms of marriage in India.
40. Write about the nature of status.

(5×4 = 20)

#### Section D

Answer any *two* of the following questions in 300 words, each carries  
*ten* mark

41. Elucidate the role of intellectual forces in the emergence of Sociology.
42. Examine how Sociology is related to and distinct from other branches of social science.
43. Identify the differences between society and community.
44. Briefly discuss about social groups, its nature and types.

(2×10 = 20)

SGOU

സർവ്വകലാശാലാഗീതം

വിദ്യാൽ സ്വതന്ത്രരാകണം  
വിശ്വപൗരരായി മാറണം  
ഗ്രഹപ്രസാദമായ് വിളങ്ങണം  
ഗുരുപ്രകാശമേ നയിക്കണേ

കുതിരുട്ടിൽ നിന്നു ഞങ്ങളെ  
സൂര്യവീഥിയിൽ തെളിക്കണം  
സ്നേഹദീപ്തിയായ് വിളങ്ങണം  
നീതിവൈജയന്തി പറണം

ശാസ്ത്രവ്യാപ്തിയെന്നുമേകണം  
ജാതിഭേദമാകെ മാറണം  
ബോധരശ്മിയിൽ തിളങ്ങുവാൻ  
ജ്ഞാനകേന്ദ്രമേ ജ്വലിക്കണേ

കുരിപ്പുഴ ശ്രീകുമാർ

# SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY

## Regional Centres

### Kozhikode

Govt. Arts and Science College  
Meenchantha, Kozhikode,  
Kerala, Pin: 673002  
Ph: 04952920228  
email: rckdirector@sgou.ac.in

### Thalassery

Govt. Brennen College  
Dharmadam, Thalassery,  
Kannur, Pin: 670106  
Ph: 04902990494  
email: rctdirector@sgou.ac.in

### Tripunithura

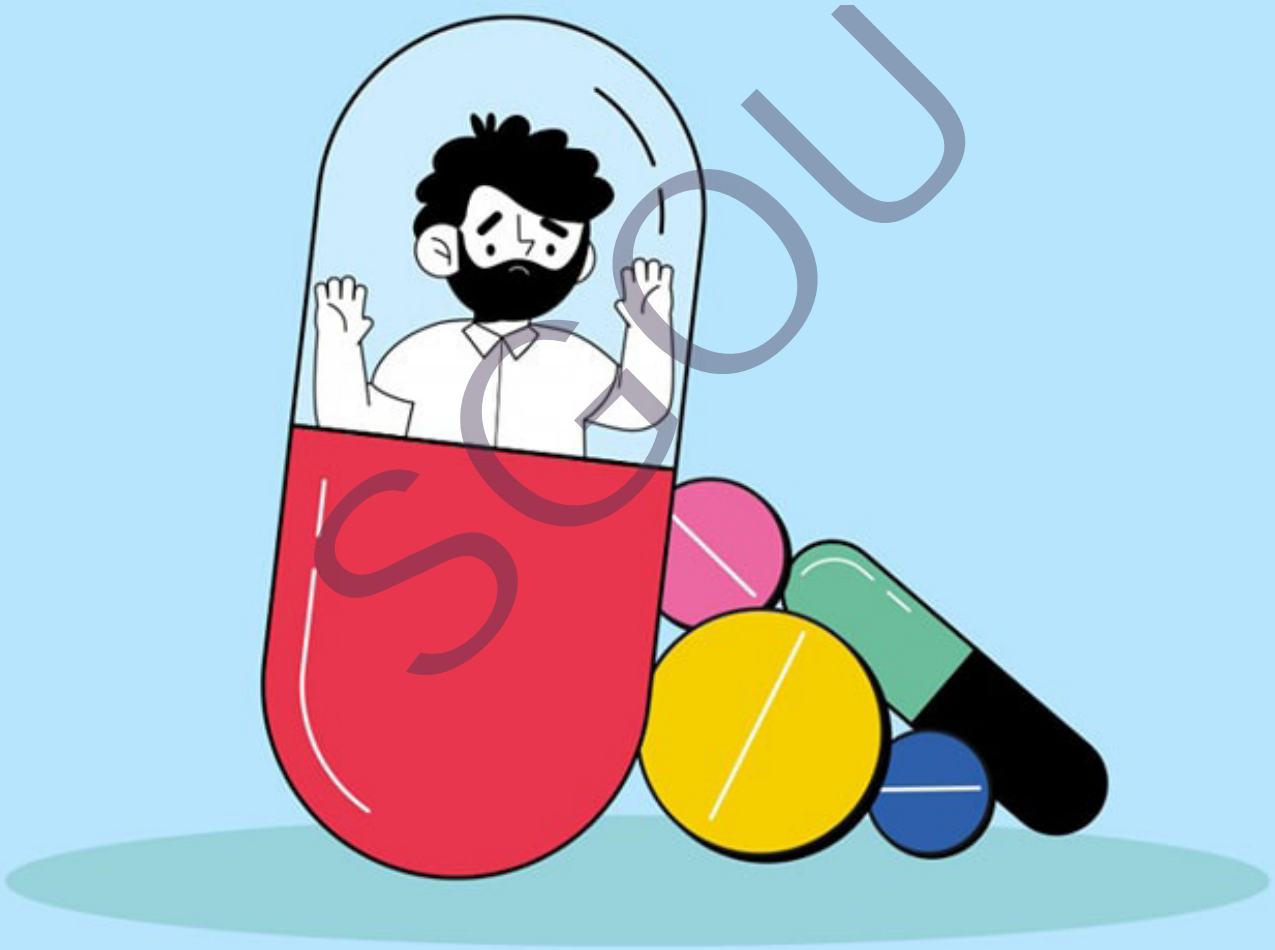
Govt. College  
Tripunithura, Ernakulam,  
Kerala, Pin: 682301  
Ph: 04842927436  
email: rcedirector@sgou.ac.in

### Pattambi

Sree Neelakanta Govt. Sanskrit College  
Pattambi, Palakkad,  
Kerala, Pin: 679303  
Ph: 04662912009  
email: rcpdirector@sgou.ac.in



# NO TO DRUGS തിരിച്ചിറങ്ങാൻ പ്രയാസമാണ്



# INTRODUCTION TO SOCIOLOGY

COURSE CODE: B21SO01GE

SGOU



YouTube



Sreenarayanaguru Open University

Kollam, Kerala Pin- 691601, email: [info@sgou.ac.in](mailto:info@sgou.ac.in), [www.sgou.ac.in](http://www.sgou.ac.in) Ph: +91 474 2966841

ISBN 978-81-986991-0-7



9 788198 699107