

CONTENT

No.	Lesson	Writer	Vetter	Page No.
01	Nature and Scope of Sociology	Sh. M. R. Patra	Dr. P. K. Jena	
02	Group, Community, Institution, Society	Sh. M. R. Patra	Dr. P. K. Jena	
03	Family, Kinship, Caste, Clan, & Marriage	Sh. M. R. Patra	Dr. P. K. Jena	
04	Social Change	Sh. M. R. Patra	Dr. P. K. Jena	

About the Author and Vetter:

Sh. M. R. Patra

Faculty Member, Dept. of C M & T,
GJUST, Hisar.

Prof. Manoj Dayal

Dean, Media Studies,
GJUST, Hisar.

Bachelor of Mass Communication (1st year)

SOCIOLOGY (BMC 106)

Block: A Unit: I Lesson: 1

SOCIOLOGY- AN INTRODUCTION

Writer: Sh. M. R. Patra

Faculty Member, Dept. of C M & T,
GJUST, Hisar.

Vetter: Prof. Manoj Dayal

Dean, Media Studies,
GJUST, Hisar.

LESSON STRUCTURE

In this lesson we shall discuss about the some introductory aspects of sociology. Specifically, we shall focus on the nature and scope of sociology. We shall briefly discuss the different fields of sociology.

We shall also briefly discuss research in sociology. The relationship between sociology and other social sciences disciplines shall be discussed in some detail. Finally, we shall cover the emerging trends in the field of sociology. The lesson structure shall be as follows:

1.0 Objectives

1.1 *Introduction*

1.2 *Presentation of Content*

1.2.1 *History of Sociology*

1.2.2 *Fields of Sociology*

1.2.3 *Research Methodology in Sociology*

1.2.4 Psychology and Other Disciplines

1.2.5 *Emerging Trends in Sociology*

1.3 *Summary*

1.4 *Key Words*

1.5 *Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs)*

1.6 *References/Suggested Reading*

1.0 OBJECTIVES:

After reading this lesson, you would be able:

- *To Understand the History of Sociology*
- *To Know About the Fields of Sociology*
- **To Know About Research Methodology in Sociology**
- **To Know About Psychology and Other Disciplines**
- **To Understand the Emerging Trends in Sociology**

1.1 INTRODUCTION:

Sociology is the scientific study of human society. More specifically, it is the study of the development, structure, and function of human society. Sociologists examine the ways in which social structures and institutions- such as class, family, community, and marriage etc. Other disciplines within the social sciences- including economics, political science, anthropology, and psychology- are also related to sociology.

Sociological thinking is based on the fact that human beings act according to cultural and historical influences, not their own freely made decisions. They also act and behave according to the wishes and expectations of others. Therefore, social interaction, or the responses of individuals to each other, is perhaps the basic sociological concept, because such interaction is the elementary component of all relationships and groups that make up human society. The branch of Sociology that concentrates on the details of particular interactions as they occur in everyday life is called Micro-sociology; the branch of Sociology concerned with the larger patterns of relations among major social sectors, such as the State and the economy, and even with international relations, is called Macro-sociology.

In this lesson, we shall focus on various introductory aspects of Sociology.

1.2 PRESENTATION OF CONTENT:

The content of this lesson shall be presented as follows:

History of Sociology

Fields of Sociology

Research in Sociology

To Know About Psychology and Other Disciplines
Emerging Trends in Sociology

1.2.1 HISTORY OF SOCIOLOGY:

As a discipline, or body of systematized knowledge, sociology is of relatively recent origin. The concept of civil society emerging as distinct from the concept of State was expressed in the

writings of the 17th-century English philosophers. These thinkers included *Thomas Hobbes* and *John Locke* and thinkers of the Age of Enlightenment (in France and Scotland). Italian philosopher Giovanni Battista Vico and the German philosopher G. W. F. Hegel initiated the study of social change.

AUGUSTE COMTE:

Auguste Comte's believed in positive philosophy or positivism. He abandoned speculation about the supernatural in favour of scientific investigation. According to *Comte*, knowledge of all subjects, from astronomy to sociology, should come from the correlation of empirical (experiential, experimental, observed, or practical) evidence. His systematic study of the static elements and dynamics of society laid the foundations for modern sociology, which he first called **Social Physics**.

French philosopher *Auguste Comte* gave the first definition of sociology. In 1838, *Comte* coined the term sociology to describe his vision of a new science that would discover *laws of human society resembling the laws of nature by applying the methods of factual investigation* that had proved so successful in the physical sciences.

The British philosopher *Herbert Spencer* adopted both *Comte*'s term and his mission. *Herbert Spencer* did a lot of work to advance sociology as a social science discipline.

Several 19th-century social philosophers, who never called themselves sociologists, are today also counted among the founders of the discipline. The most widely influential among them is *Karl Marx*, but their number also includes the French aristocrat *Claude Henri de Rouvroy, Comte de Saint-Simon*, the writer and statesman *Alexis de Tocqueville* and, the British philosopher and economist *John Stuart Mill*.

These people were largely speculative thinkers, as were *Comte*, *Spencer*, and their predecessors in the 17th and 18th centuries.

A quite different tradition of empirical reporting of statistics also developed in the 19th century, and later became incorporated into academic sociology.

EARLY DEVELOPMENTS:

Émile Durkheim, one of the founders of sociology, employed scientific methods to study of society and social groups. *Durkheim* believed that individuals are products of complex social forces and cannot be considered outside of the context of the society in which they live. He used the conception of the collective conscience to describe the condition of a particular society.

According to Durkheim, this collective conscience is something entirely separate from the individual consciences that together form this collective conscience.

Not until the 1880s and 1890s did sociology begin to be recognized as an academic discipline. In France, *Émile Durkheim*, the intellectual heir of *Saint-Simon* and *Comte*, began teaching sociology at the universities of Bordeaux and Paris. *Durkheim* founded the first true school of sociological thought. He emphasized the independent reality of social facts (as distinct from the psychological attributes of individuals) and sought to discover interconnections among these facts. *Durkheim* and his followers made extensive studies of non-industrial societies similar to those that were later carried out by social anthropologists.

In Germany, sociology was formally recognized as an academic discipline in the first decade of the 20th century, largely because of the efforts of the German economist and historian *Max Weber*. The German approach was in contrast with the attempts to represent the field after the physical sciences, which were dominant in France and in English-speaking countries. In Germany, sociology was largely the outgrowth of far-ranging historical scholarship, combined with the influence of Marxism, both of which were central to *Weber's* work. The influential efforts of the German philosopher *Georg Simmel* to define sociology as a distinctive discipline emphasized the human-centred focus of German philosophical idealism.

In Great Britain, sociology was relatively slow to develop; until the 1960s the field was mostly centred on a single academic institution, the London School of Economics, part of the University of London. British sociology combined an interest in large-scale evolutionary social change with a practical concern for problems relevant to the administration of the welfare state.

In the second half of the 20th century, after the early interest in the broad evolutionist theories of *Comte* and *Spencer* had declined, sociology emphasized the study of particular social phenomena such as crime, marital discord, and the acculturation of immigrants.

The most notable centre of sociological study before World War II (1939-1945) was the University of Chicago, in the United States. In the University of Chicago, American philosopher *George Herbert Mead* stressed in his writings the origins of the mind, the self, and society in the actions and interactions of people. This approach, later known as symbolic inter-actionism, was largely micro-sociological and social psychological in emphasis.

In 1937, the American sociologist *Talcott Parsons* introduced the ideas of *Durkheim*, *Weber*, and the Italian sociologist *Vilfredo Pareto* in his major work *The Structure of Social Action*. This eventually overcame the narrow, limited outlook of American sociology. Leadership

in the field passed to Columbia University, where the American social scientist *Robert Merton* attempted to unite theory with rigorous empirical (data-gathering) research.

To a growing extent in both the United States and Western Europe, the three dominating figures of *Marx*, *Durkheim*, and *Weber* were recognized as the pre-eminent classical thinkers of the sociological tradition; and their work continues to influence contemporary sociologists.

1.2.2 FIELDS OF SOCIOLOGY:

Sociology was long identified primarily with broad evolutionary reconstructions of historical change in Western societies, as well as with the exploration of relationships and interdependencies among their more specialized institutions and aspects of social life, such as the economy, the State, the family, and religion. Sociology, therefore, was thought of as a synthesizing field that attempted to integrate the findings acquired from other social sciences.

Although such concepts concerning the scope and task of sociology are still prevalent, they now tend to be regarded as the province of sociological theory, which is only a part of the entire discipline of sociology.

Sociological theory also includes the discussion and analysis of basic concepts that are common to all the different spheres of social life studied by sociologists. An emphasis on empirical investigations carried out by standardized and often statistical research methods directed the attention of sociologists away from the abstract visions of 19th-century scholars towards more focused and concrete areas of social reality.

These areas became the sub-fields and specialties of sociology that are today the subjects of academic courses, textbooks, and specialized journals. Much of the scholarly and scientific work of sociologists falls clearly within one of the many sub-fields into which the discipline is divided. In addition to basic concepts, most sub-fields share research techniques; thus, sociological theory and research methods are both usually compulsory subjects for all who study sociology.

SUB-FIELDS OF SOCIOLOGY:

The oldest sub-fields in the discipline of sociology are those that concentrate on social phenomena that have not previously been adopted as objects of study by other of the social sciences. These include marriage and the family, social inequality and social stratification, ethnic relations, “deviant” behaviour, urban communities, and complex or formal organizations.

Sub-fields of more recent origin examine the social aspects of gerontology and the sociology of sex and gender roles.

Because nearly all human activities involve social relations, another major source of specialization within sociology is the study of the social structure of areas of human activity. These areas of teaching and research include the sociology of politics, law, religion, education, the military, occupations and professions, governmental bureaucracies, industry, the arts, science, language (or socio-linguistics), medicine, mass communications, and sport. These sub-fields differ widely in the extent to which they have accumulated a substantial body of research and attracted large numbers of practitioners.

Some, such as the sociology of sport, are recent fields, whereas others, such as the sociology of religion and of law, have their roots in the earliest sociological studies. Certain sub-fields have achieved brief popularity, only to be later incorporated into a more comprehensive area. Industrial sociology, for example, was a flourishing field in the United States during the 1930s and 1940s, but later it was largely absorbed into the study of complex organizations; in Great Britain, however, industrial sociology has remained a separate area of research. A more common sociological phenomenon is the splitting of a recognized sub-field into narrower subdivisions; the sociology of knowledge, for instance, has increasingly been divided into individual sociologies of science, art, literature, popular culture, and language.

At least two sub-fields, demography and criminology, were distinct areas of study long before the formal field of sociology existed. In the past, they were associated primarily with other disciplines. Demography (the study of the size, growth, and distribution of human populations) retains close links to economics in some countries, but in most of the Western world it is considered a subdivision of sociology.

Criminology has in recent decades been affected by general sociological concepts and perspectives, becoming more and more linked with the wider study of deviance, which is defined as any form of behaviour that is different from that considered socially acceptable or “normal”, and includes forms of behaviour that do not involve violations of the law.

INTERDISCIPLINARY FIELDS OF SOCIOLOGY:

The oldest interdisciplinary sub-field of sociology is social psychology. It has often been considered virtually a separate discipline, drawing practitioners from both sociology and psychology. Whereas sociologists primarily concern themselves with social “norms”, roles,

institutions, and the structure of groups, social psychologists concentrate on the impact of these various areas on individual personality.

Social psychologists trained in sociology have pioneered studies of: interaction in small informal groups; the distribution of beliefs and attitudes in a population; and the formation of character and outlook under the influence of the family, the school, the peer group, and other socializing agencies. To a certain extent, psychoanalytic ideas, derived from the work of Sigmund Freud and later psychoanalysts, have also been significant in this last area of social psychology.

Comparative historical sociology, often strongly influenced by the ideas of both Marx and Weber, has shown much growth in recent years. Many historians have been guided by concepts borrowed from sociology; at the same time, some sociologists have carried out large-scale historical-comparative studies.

The once-firm barriers between history and sociology have crumbled, especially in such areas as social history, demographic change, economic and political development, and the sociology of revolutions and protest movements.

1.2.3 RESEARCH IN SOCIOLOGY:

Sociologists use nearly all the methods of acquiring information that are used in the other social sciences and the humanities, from advanced mathematical statistics to the interpretation of texts. They also rely heavily on primary statistical information regularly collected by governments, such as censuses and vital statistics reports, and records of unemployment, immigration, the frequency of crime, and other phenomena.

DIRECT OBSERVATION:

First-hand observations of some aspect of society have a long history in sociological research. Sociologists have obtained information through participant observation—that is, by temporarily becoming or by pretending to become members of the group being studied. Sociologists also obtain first-hand information by relying on knowledgeable informants from the group. Social anthropologists have also used both methods.

In recent years, detailed first-hand observation has been applied to smaller-scale settings, such as hospital wards, religious and political meetings, bars and casinos, and classrooms. The work of the Canadian-born American sociologist *Erving Goffman* has provided both models and a theoretical rationale for such studies.

Goffman is one of several sociologists who insist that everyday life is the foundation of social reality, underlying all statistical and conceptual abstractions. This emphasis has encouraged intensive micro-sociological investigations using tape recorders and videocameras in natural rather than artificially contrived “experimental” social situations.

Sociologists, like historians, also make extensive use of second-hand source materials. These generally include life histories, personal documents, and clinical records. Although popular stereotypes have sometimes pictured sociologists as people who bypass qualitative (direct) observation of human experiences by reducing them to quantitative (statistical) summaries, these have never been accurate. Even where quantitative social research has been admired and sociology has distanced itself from the humanistic disciplines of philosophy, history, and law, qualitative research has always had a strong tradition.

QUANTITATIVE METHODS:

Increasingly refined and adapted to computer technology, quantitative methods continue to play a central role in the discipline of sociology. Quantitative sociology includes the presentation of large numbers of descriptive statistical data, sampling techniques, and the use of advanced mathematical models and computer simulations of social processes. Quantitative analysis has become popular in recent years as a means of revealing possible causal relations, especially in research on social mobility and status attainment.

SURVEY RESEARCH:

The term survey research means the collection and analysis of responses of large samples of people to polls and questionnaires designed to elicit their opinions, attitudes, and sentiments about a specific topic. For a time in the 1940s and 1950s, the construction and administration of surveys, and statistical methods for tabulating and interpreting their results, were widely regarded as the major sociological research technique.

Opinion surveys, especially in the form of pre-election polling and market research, were first used in the 1930s; today they are standard tools of politicians and of numerous organizations and business firms concerned with mass public opinion. Sociologists use surveys for scholarly or scientific purposes in nearly all sub-fields of the discipline, although surveys have most often been used in the study of voting behaviour, ethnic prejudice, responses to mass communications, and other areas in which the probing of subjective attitudes is appropriate.

Although surveys are an important sociological research tool, their suitability for many types of investigation has been widely criticized. Direct observation of social behaviour cannot be replaced by verbal answers to an interviewer's standard list of questions, even if such answers lend themselves easily to statistical tabulation and manipulation.

Observation enables a sociologist to obtain in-depth information about a certain group; the sample survey, on the other hand, allows the sociologist to secure uniform but superficial information about a much larger portion of the population. Survey research usually does not take into account the complex structure of relations and interactions among individuals that shapes their social behaviour.

1.2.4 SOCIOLOGY & ITS RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER SOCIAL SCIENCE DISCIPLINES:

The scope of sociological study is extremely wide. It can focus its analysis of interactions between individuals such as that of a shopkeeper with a customer, between teachers and students, between two friends or family members. It can likewise focus on national issues such as unemployment or caste conflict or the effect of state policies on forest rights of the tribal population or rural indebtedness. Or examine global social processes such as: the impact of new flexible labour regulations on the working class; or that of the electronic media on the young; or the entry of foreign universities on the education system of the country. What defines the discipline of sociology is therefore not just what it studies (i.e. family or trade unions or villages) but how it studies a chosen field.

Sociology is one of a group of social sciences, which also includes anthropology, economics, political science and history. The divisions among the various social sciences are not clear-cut, and all share a certain range of common interests, concepts and methods. It is therefore very important to understand that the distinctions of the disciplines are to some extent arbitrary and should not be seen in a straitjacket fashion.

To differentiate the social sciences would be to exaggerate the differences and gloss over the similarities. Furthermore feminist theories have also shown the greater need of interdisciplinary approach. For instance how would a political scientist or economist study gender roles and their implications for politics or the economy without sociology of the family or gender division of labour.

SOCIOLOGY AND ECONOMICS:

Economics is the study of production and distribution of goods and services. The classical economic approach dealt almost exclusively with the interrelations of pure economic variables: the relations of price, demand and supply; money flows; output and input ratios, and the like. The focus of traditional economics has been on a narrow understanding of 'economic activity', namely the allocation of scarce goods and services within a society.

Economists who are influenced by a political economy approach seek to understand economic activity in a broader framework of ownership of and relationship to means of production. The objective of the dominant trend in economic analysis was however to formulate precise laws of economic behaviour.

The sociological approach looks at economic behaviour in a broader context of social norms, values, practices and interests. The corporate sector managers are aware of this. The large investment in the advertisement industry is directly linked to the need to reshape lifestyles and consumption patterns. Trends within economics such as feminist economics seek to broaden the focus, drawing in gender as a central organizing principle of society. For instance they would look at how work in the home is linked to productivity outside.

The defined scope of economics has helped in facilitating its development as a highly focused, coherent discipline. Sociologists often envy the economists for the precision of their terminology and the exactness of their measures. And the ability to translate the results of their theoretical work into practical suggestions having major implications for public policy. Yet economists' predictive abilities often suffer precisely because of their neglect of individual behaviour, cultural norms and institutional resistance which sociologists study.

Pierre Bourdieu wrote in 1998.

A true economic science would look at all the costs of the economy-not only at the costs that corporations are concerned with, but also at crimes, suicides, and so on.

We need to put forward an economics of happiness, which would take note of all the profits, individual and collective, material and symbolic, associated with activity (such as security), and also the material and symbolic costs associated with inactivity or precarious employment (for example consumption of medicines: France holds the world record for the use of tranquilisers), (cited in Swedberg 2003).

Sociology unlike economics usually does not provide technical solutions. But it encourages a questioning and critical perspective. This helps questioning of basic assumptions. And thereby

facilitates a discussion of not just the technical means towards a given goal, but also about the social desirability of a goal itself. Recent trends have seen a resurgence of economic sociology perhaps because of both this wider and critical perspective of sociology.

Sociology provides clearer or more adequate understanding of a social situation than existed before. This can be either on the level of factual knowledge, or through gaining an improved grasp of why something is happening (in other words, by means of theoretical understanding).

SOCIOLOGY AND POLITICAL SCIENCE

As in the case of economics, there is an increased interaction of methods and approaches between sociology and political science. Conventional political science was focused primarily on two elements: political theory and government administration. Neither branch involves extensive contact with political behaviour. The theory part usually focuses on the ideas about government from Plato to Marx while courses on administration generally deal with the formal structure of government rather than its actual operation.

Sociology is devoted to the study of all aspects of society, whereas conventional political science restricted itself mainly to the study of power as embodied in formal organizations. Sociology stresses the inter-relationships between sets of institutions including government, whereas political science tends to turn attention towards the processes within the government.

However, sociology long shared similar interests of research with political science. Sociologists like Max Weber worked in what can be termed as political sociology. The focus of political sociology has been increasingly on the actual study of political behaviour. Even in the recent Indian elections one has seen the extensive study of political patterns of voting.

Studies have also been conducted in membership of political organizations, process of decision-making in organizations, sociological reasons for support of political parties, the role of gender in politics, etc.

SOCIOLOGY AND HISTORY

Historians almost as a rule study the past; sociologists are more interested in the contemporary or recent past. Historians earlier were content to delineate the actual events, to establish how things actually happened, while in sociology the focus was to seek to establish causal relationships.

History studies concrete details while the sociologist is more likely to abstract from concrete reality, categorize, and generalize. Historians today are equally involved in doing sociological methods and concepts in their analysis.

Conventional history has been about the history of kings and war. The history of less glamorous or exciting events as changes in land relations or gender relations within the family have traditionally been less studied by historians but formed the core area of the sociologist's interest. Today however history is far more sociological and social history is the stuff of history. It looks at social patterns, gender relations, mores, customs and important institutions other than the acts of rulers, wars and monarchy.

SOCIOLOGY AND PSYCHOLOGY

Psychology is often defined as the science of behaviour. It involves itself primarily with the individual. It is interested in her/his intelligence and learning, motivations and memory, nervous system and reaction time, hopes and fears. Social psychology, which serves as a bridge between psychology and sociology, maintains a primary interest in the individual but concerns itself with the way in which the individual behaves in social groups, collectively with other individuals.

Sociology attempts to understand behaviour as it is organized in society, that is the way in which personality is shaped by different aspects of society. For instance, economic and political system, their family and kinship structure, their culture, norms and values. It is interesting to recall that *Durkheim* who sought to establish a clear scope and method for sociology in his well-known study of suicide left out individual intentions of those who commit or try to commit suicide in favour of statistics concerning various social characteristics of these individuals.

SOCIOLOGY AND SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY

Anthropology in most countries incorporates archaeology, physical anthropology, cultural history, many branches of linguistics and the study of all aspects of life in "simple societies". Our concern here is with social anthropology and cultural anthropology for it is that which is close to the study of sociology. Sociology is deemed to be the study of modern, complex societies while social anthropology was deemed to be the study of simple societies. As we saw earlier, each discipline has its own history or biography. Social anthropology developed in the west at a time when it meant that western- trained social anthropologists studied non-European societies often thought of as exotic, barbaric and uncivilized.

This unequal relationship between those who studied and those who were studied as not remarked upon too often earlier. But times have changed and we have the erstwhile 'natives' be they Indians or Sudanese, Nagas or Santhals, who now speak and write about their own societies. The anthropologists of the past documented the details of simple societies apparently in a neutral scientific fashion. In practice they were constantly comparing those societies with the model of the western modern societies as a benchmark.

Other changes have also redefined the nature of sociology and social anthropology. Modernity as we saw led to a process whereby the smallest village was impacted by global processes. The most obvious example is colonialism. The most remote village of India under British colonialism saw its land laws and administration change, its revenue extraction alters, its manufacturing industries collapse.

Contemporary global processes have further accentuated this 'shrinking of the globe'. The assumption of studying a simple society was that it was bounded. We know this is not so today. The traditional study of simple, non-literate societies by social anthropology had a pervasive influence on the content and the subject matter of the discipline. Social anthropology tended to study society (simple societies) in all their aspects, as wholes. Social anthropology was characterized by long fieldwork tradition, living in the community studied and using ethnographic research methods. Sociologists have often relied on survey method and quantitative data using statistics and the questionnaire mode. Today the distinction between a simple society and a complex one itself needs major rethinking. India itself is a complex mix of tradition and modernity, of the village and the city, of caste and tribe, of class and community. Villages nestle right in the heart of the capital city of Delhi. Call centres serve European and American clients from different towns of the country.

Indian sociology has been far more eclectic in borrowing from both traditions. Indian sociologists often studied Indian societies that were both part of and not of one's own culture. It could also be dealing with both complex differentiated societies of urban modern India as well as the study of tribes in a holistic fashion.

It had been feared that with the decline of simple societies, social anthropology would lose its specificity and merge with sociology. However there have been fruitful interchanges between the two disciplines and today often methods and techniques are drawn from both. There have been anthropological studies of the state and globalization, which are very different from the traditional subject matter of social anthropology. On the other hand, sociology too has

been using quantitative and qualitative techniques, macro and micro approaches for studying the complexities of modern societies.

1.2.5 EMERGING TRENDS THE FIELD OF SOCIOLOGY:

Sociology expanded enormously in both Europe and the United States in the 1960s and thereafter. In addition to theoretical diversification, new sub-fields came into being, such as the sociology of gender (spurred especially by feminist movements), which includes analysis of gender-based social roles and inequalities, and the study of emotions, ageing, and the life course. Older sub-fields, such as historical and comparative sociology, were revitalized, as was the broad movement towards sociological practice, which encompasses applied sociology, and policy analysis. Sociological practitioners apply their knowledge through their roles as consultants, planners, educators, researchers, and managers in local and national government, in non-profit-making organizations, and in business—especially in the fields of marketing, advertising, insurance, human resources, and organizational analysis.

Since the 1960s sociologists have made greater use both of traditional research methods associated with other disciplines, such as the analysis of historical source materials, and of more sophisticated statistical and mathematical techniques adapted to the study of social phenomena. Development of increasingly complex computers and other devices for handling and storing information has facilitated the processing of sociological data.

Because of the wide diversity in research methods and theoretical approaches, sociologists working in a particular sub-field often have more in common with workers in a complementary discipline than with sociologists specializing in other sub-fields. A sociologist of art, for example, stands much closer in interests and methods to an art historian or art critic than to a sociologist who constructs mathematical models of occupational mobility. In theory, methods, and subject matter, no single school of thought or topic dominates sociology today.

1.3 SUMMARY:

- Sociological thinking is based on the fact that human beings act according to cultural and historical influences, not their own freely made decisions. They also act and behave according to the wishes and expectations of others. Therefore, social interaction, or the responses of individuals to each other, is perhaps the basic sociological concept, because such interaction is the elementary component of all relationships and groups that make up human society.

- The branch of Sociology that concentrates on the details of particular interactions as they occur in everyday life is called Micro-sociology; the branch of Sociology concerned with the larger patterns of relations among major social sectors, such as the State and the economy, and even with international relations, is called Macro-sociology.
- French philosopher *Auguste Comte* gave the first definition of sociology. In 1838, *Comte* coined the term sociology to describe his vision of a new science that would discover *laws of human society resembling the laws of nature by applying the methods of factual investigation* that had proved so successful in the physical sciences. The British philosopher *Herbert Spencer* adopted both *Comte's* term and his mission. *Herbert Spencer* did a lot of work to advance sociology as a social science discipline.
- Not until the 1880s and 1890s did sociology begin to be recognized as an academic discipline. In France, *Émile Durkheim*, the intellectual heir of *Saint-Simon* and *Comte*, began teaching sociology at the universities of Bordeaux and Paris. *Durkheim* founded the first true school of sociological thought. He emphasized the independent reality of social facts (as distinct from the psychological attributes of individuals) and sought to discover interconnections among these facts. *Durkheim* and his followers made extensive studies of non-industrial societies similar to those that were later carried out by social anthropologists.
- Because nearly all human activities involve social relations, another major source of specialization within sociology is the study of the social structure of areas of human activity. These areas of teaching and research include the sociology of politics, law, religion, education, the military, occupations and professions, governmental bureaucracies, industry, the arts, science, language (or socio-linguistics), medicine, mass communications, and sport. These sub-fields differ widely in the extent to which they have accumulated a substantial body of research and attracted large numbers of practitioners.
- The once-firm barriers between history and sociology have crumbled, especially in such areas as social history, demographic change, economic and political development, and the sociology of revolutions and protest movements.
- Sociology is one of a group of social sciences, which also includes anthropology, economics, political science and history. The divisions among the various social sciences are not clear-cut, and all share a certain range of common interests, concepts and

methods. It is therefore very important to understand that the distinctions of the disciplines are to some extent arbitrary and should not be seen in a straitjacket fashion.

- Sociology provides clearer or more adequate understanding of a social situation than existed before. This can be either on the level of factual knowledge, or through gaining an improved grasp of why something is happening (in other words, by means of theoretical understanding).

1.4 KEY WORDS:

Capitalism: A system of economic enterprise based on market exchange. “Capital” refers to any asset, including money, property and machines, which can be used to produce commodities for sale or invested in a market with the hope of achieving a profit. This system rests on the private ownership of assets and the means of production.

Dialectic: The existence or action of opposing social forces, for instance, social constraint and individual will. **Empirical Investigation:** A factual enquiry carried out in any given area of sociological study.

Feminist Theories: A sociological perspective, which emphasizes the centrality of gender in analyzing the social world. There are many strands of feminist theory, but they all share in common the desire to explain gender inequalities in society and to work to overcome them.

Macro-sociology: The study of large-scale groups, organizations or social systems.

Micro-sociology: The study of human behaviour in contexts of face-to-face interaction.

Social Constraint: A term referring to the fact that the groups and societies of which we are a part exert a conditioning influence on our behaviour.

Values: Ideas held by human individual or groups about what is desirable, proper, good or bad. Differing values represent key aspects of variations in human culture.

1.5 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS:

1. Why is the study of the origin and growth of sociology important?
2. Discuss the different aspects of the term ‘society’. How is it different from your common sense understanding?
3. Discuss how there is greater give and take among disciplines today.
4. Identify any personal problem that you or your friends or relatives are facing. Attempt a sociological understanding.

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Bachelor of Mass Communication (1st year)

SOCIOLOGY (BMC 106)

Block: A Unit: II Lesson: 2

GROUP, COMMUNITY, INSTITUTION, & SOCIETY

Writer: Sh. M. R. Patra

Faculty Member, Dept. of C M & T,
GJUST, Hisar.

Vetter: Prof. Manoj Dayal

Dean, Media Studies,
GJUST, Hisar.

LESSON STRUCTURE

In this lesson we shall discuss about groups, community, institution, and society. Specifically, we shall focus on the nature and scope groups, community, institution, and society. The lesson structure shall be as follows:

2.0 Objectives

2.1 *Introduction*

2.2 *Presentation of Content*

2.2.1 *Groups - An Overview*

2.2.2 *Community - An Overview*

2.2.3 *Institution - An Overview*

2.2.4 *Society - An Overview*

2.3 *Summary*

2.4 *Key Words*

2.5 *Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs)*

2.6 *References/Suggested Reading*

2.0 OBJECTIVES:

After reading this lesson, you would be able:

- *To Get An Overview of Groups*
- *To Get An Overview of Community*
- *To Get An Overview of Institutions*

- **To Get An Overview of Society**

2.1 INTRODUCTION:

Each individual occupies a place or location in society. Each one of us has a status and a role or roles, but these are not simply what we as individuals choose. They are not like roles a film actor may or may not opt to do. There are social institutions that constrain and control, punish and reward. They could be 'macro' social institutions like the state or 'micro' ones like the family. Here in this chapter we are introduced to social institutions, and also to how sociology/social anthropology studies them. This lesson puts forth a very brief idea of some of the important social institutions.

In the broadest sense, an institution is something that works according to rules established or at least acknowledged by law or by custom. And whose regular and continuous operation cannot be understood without taking those rules into account. Institutions impose constraints on individuals. They also provide him/her with opportunities. An institution can also be viewed as an end in itself. Indeed people have viewed the family, religion, state or even education as an end in itself. We have already seen that there are conflicting and different understandings of concepts within sociology.

We have also been introduced to the functionalist and conflict perspective, and seen how differently they saw the same thing, for instance stratification or social control. Not surprisingly, therefore, there are different forms of understanding of social institutions as well.

A functionalist view understands social institutions as a complex set of social norms, beliefs, values and role relationship that arise in response to the needs of society. Social institutions exist to satisfy social needs. Accordingly we find informal and formal social institutions in societies. Institutions such as family and religion are examples of informal social institutions while law and (formal) education are formal social institutions.

2.2 PRESENTATION OF CONTENT:

The content of this lesson shall be presented as follows:

Groups - An Overview

Community - An Overview

Institution - An Overview

Society - An Overview

2.2.1 GROUPS- AN OVERVIEW:

In sociology, a group is usually defined as a collection of humans or animals, which share certain characteristics, interact with one another, accept expectations and obligations as members of the group, and share a common identity. Using this definition, society can appear as a large group.

While an aggregate comprises merely a number of individuals, a group in sociology exhibits cohesiveness to a larger degree.

Characteristics that members in the group may share include interests, values, ethnic/linguistic background, and kinship ties.

TYPES OF GROUPS

Primary groups consist of small groups with intimate, kin-based relationships: families, for example. They commonly last for years. They are small and display face-to-face interaction. Secondary groups, in contrast to primary groups, are large groups whose relationships are formal and institutional. Some of them may last for years but some may disband after a short lifetime. The formation of primary groups happens within secondary groups.

Individuals almost universally have a bond toward what are known as "Reference Groups". These are groups to which the individual conceptually relates him/herself, and from which he/she adopts goals and values as a part of his/her self-identity.

The dictionary gives the word group the meaning of "lump" or "mass." A general definition is "an assemblage of objects standing near together, and forming a collective unity; a knot (of people), a cluster (of things)." The dictionary quotation by the famous British author Walter Bagehot (1826-1877) offers an important and traditional perspective on the necessity of understanding groups: "Man can only make progress in cooperative groups."

A social unit consisting of a number of individuals interacting with each other with respect to:

- *Common motives and goals;*
- *An accepted division of labor, i.e. roles,*
- *Established status (social rank, dominance) relationships;*
- *Accepted norms and values with reference to matters relevant to the group;*
- *Development of accepted sanctions (praise and punishment) if and when norms were respected or violated.*

This definition is long and complex, but it is also precise. It succeeds at providing the researcher with the tools required to answer three important questions:

"How is a group formed?";

"How does a group function?";

"How does one describe those social interactions that occur on the way to forming a group?"

The attention of those who use, participate in, or study groups has been focused on functioning groups, with larger organizations, or with the decisions made in these organizations. Much less attention has been paid to the more ubiquitous and universal social behaviors that do not clearly demonstrate one or more of the five necessary elements.

Perhaps the earliest efforts to understand these social units has been the extensive descriptions of urban street gangs in the 1920s and 1930s, continuing through the 1950s, which understood them to be largely reactions to the established authority. The primary goal of gang members was to defend gang territory, and to define and maintain the dominance structure within the gang. There remains in the popular media and urban law enforcement agencies an avid interest in gangs, reflected in daily headlines, which emphasize the criminal aspects of gang behavior. However, these studies and the continued interest have not improved the capacity to influence gang behavior or to reduce gang related violence.

The relevant literatures on animal social behaviors, such as work on territory and dominance, have been available since the 1950s. However, they have been largely neglected by policy makers, sociologists and anthropologists. Indeed, vast literatures on organization, property, law enforcement, ownership, religion, warfare, values, conflict resolution, authority, rights, and families have grown and evolved without any reference to any analogous social behaviors in animals. This disconnect may be the result of the belief that social behavior in humankind is radically different from the social behavior in animals because of the human capacity for language use and rationality. And of course, while this is true, it is equally likely that the study of the social (group) behaviors of other animals might shed light on the evolutionary roots of social behavior in humans.

Territorial and dominance behaviors in humans are so universal and commonplace that they are simply taken for granted (though sometimes admired, as in home ownership, or deplored, as in violence). But these social behaviors and interactions between human individuals play a special role in the study of groups: they are necessarily prior to the formation

of groups. The psychological internalization of territorial and dominance experiences in conscious and unconscious memory are established through the formation of personal identity, body concept, or self-concept. An adequately functioning individual identity is necessary before an individual can function in a division of labor (role), and hence, within a cohesive group. Coming to understand territorial and dominance behaviors may thus help to clarify the development, functioning, and productivity of groups.

DEVELOPMENT OF A GROUP

If one brings a small collection of strangers together in a restricted space and environment, provide a common goal, and maybe a few ground rules, a predictable flow of behavior will follow. Interaction between individuals is the basic requirement. At first, individuals will differentially interact in sets of twos or threes while seeking to interact with those with whom they share something in common: i.e., interests, skills, and cultural background. Relationships will develop some stability in these small sets, in that individuals may temporarily change from one set to another, but will return to the same pairs or trios rather consistently and resist change. Particular twosomes and threesomes will stake out their special spots within the overall space.

Again depending on the common goal, eventually there will be integration of twosomes and threesomes into larger sets of six or eight, and corresponding revisions of territory, dominance ranking, and further differentiation of roles. All of this seldom takes place without some conflict or disagreement: for example, fighting over the distribution of resources, the choices of means and different subgoals, the development of what are appropriate norms, rewards and punishments. Some of these conflicts will be territorial in nature: i.e., jealousy over roles, or locations, or favored relationships. But most will be involved with struggles for status, ranging from mild protests to serious verbal conflicts and even dangerous violence.

By analogy to animal behavior, these behaviors can be termed territorial behaviors and dominance behaviors. Depending on the pressure of the common goal and on the various skills of individuals, differentiations of leadership, dominance, or authority will develop. Once these relationships solidify, with their defined roles, norms, and sanctions, a productive group will have been established.

Two or more people in interacting situations will over time develop stable territorial relationships. As described above, these may or may not develop into groups. But stable groups can also break up in to several sets of territorial relationships. There are numerous reasons for stable groups to malfunction or to disperse, but essentially this is because of loss of compliance

with one or more elements of the definition of group provided by Sherif. The two most common causes of a malfunctioning group are the addition of too many individuals, and the failure of the leader to enforce a common purpose, though malfunctions may occur due to a failure of any of the other elements (i.e., confusions status or of norms).

In a society, there is obvious need for more people to participate in cooperative endeavors than can be accommodated by a few separate groups. The military has been the best example as to how this is done in its hierarchical array of squads, platoons, companies, battalions, regiments, and divisions. Private companies, corporations, government agencies, clubs, and so on have all developed comparable (if less formal and standardized) systems when the number of members or employees exceeds the number that can be accommodated in an effective group. Not all larger social structures require the cohesion that may be found in the small group. Consider the neighborhood, country club, etc., which are basically territorial organizations that support large social purposes. Any such large organizations may need only islands of cohesive leadership.

For a functioning group to attempt to add new members in a casual way is a certain prescription for failure, loss of efficiency, or disorganization. The number of functioning members in a group can be reasonably flexible between five and ten, and a long-standing cohesive group may be able to tolerate a few hangers on. The key concept is that the value and success of a group is obtained by each member maintaining a distinct, functioning identity in the minds of each of the members.

There were no concepts of territory and dominance to inform the theory of Sociology in its formative stages. Great bodies of literature have developed on social relations, family, property, law enforcement, aggression, and others with only slight mention of territory or dominance. It was not until the 1950s that scientists in human psychology, human socialization, and animal social behavior began to meet together to try to integrate their perspectives. But the professional disciplines' traditions, basic concepts, and research methodologies were difficult to reconcile. Psychoanalysis, with its focus on introspection, and subjective data, had become the accepted theory for many psychologists and sociologists. However, the Macy Foundation did sponsor five annual scientific conferences, and published the proceedings in five volumes entitled Group Processes between 1954 and 1958.

Dominance behavior was first scientifically identified as the pecking order in chickens. But, of course, authority, differences in strength, intellect, and social rank in humans have been identified in literature and history as far back as there are records. The simplest marker for

dominance is that one individual is allowed to do something that others are not allowed to do. This may be anything from deciding a tied vote to kicking a person out of the group, or worse. Aggression and fighting are markers of the absence of an established dominance order in many cases (this includes politics). However, in small groups, there can exist a system where there is NO dominance, if the group is comprised of people who will not abide by one trying to gain dominance over the others.

Peaceful coexistence is the marker of the existence of a stable dominance order. Human beings have creatively defined, rationalized, and institutionalized many markers of dominance and authority, ranging from uniforms, titles, insignia of rank, to tone of language, mode of address, the corner office suite, size of bank account, make of car, and so on, to the next new word, symbol, or innovative marker.

The family is an available, familiar, and informative social structure to use as an exemplar of the interactions of territory and dominance. This section will explore some of the ways that families exhibit territory and dominance behaviors. For the purpose of exposition, it will leave aside an unresolved variety of opinions about some of the issues discussed, i.e., revised definitions of the family.

Dominance relationships within marriage and family are as familiar and as inevitable as the territorial relationships. Aristotle described the man as being the master and manager of his household to include wife, children, slaves, the ox and plough, and property.

Roman law specified this to include the power of life and death over children. This is no longer the accepted pattern today (unless you count a fetus as a child, in which case it depends on the laws of the local area), but not even the most unobservant can deny the existence of a dominance order within every family. Many of the subtleties of territorial or dominance behavior may be taken as "just the way things are" or "the kids always fight."

2.2.2 COMMUNITY- AN OVERVIEW:

A community is a social group of organisms sharing an environment, normally with shared interests. In human communities, intent, belief, resources, preferences, needs, risks and a number of other conditions may be present and common, affecting the identity of the participants and their degree of cohesiveness.

The word community is derived from the Latin *communitas* (meaning the same), which is in turn derived from *communis*, which means "common, public, shared by all or many".

Communis comes from a combination of the Latin prefix con- (which means "together") and the word munis (which has to do with performing services).

During human growth and maturation, people encounter sets of other individuals and experiences. Infants encounter first their immediate family, then extended family, and then local community (such as school and work). They thus develop individual and group identity through associations that connect them to life-long community experiences. As people grow, they learn about and form perceptions of social structures. During this progression, they form personal and cultural values, a world view and attitudes toward the larger society. Gaining an understanding of group dynamics and how to "fit in" is part of socialization. Individuals develop interpersonal relationships and begin to make choices about whom to associate with and under what circumstances.

During adolescence and adulthood, the individual tends to develop a more sophisticated identity, often taking on a role as a leader or follower in groups. If an individual develops the feeling that they belong to a group, and they must help the group they are part of, then they develop a sense of community.

If community exists, both freedom and security exist as well. The community then takes on a life of its own, as people become free enough to share and secure enough to get along. The sense of connectedness and formation of social networks comprise what has become known as social capital.

Western cultures are thus said to be losing the spirit of community that once were found in institutions including churches and community centers.

In a 1986 study, McMillan and Chavis identify four elements of "sense of community":

- 1) Membership,
- 2) Influence,
- 3) Integration and fulfillment of needs, and
- 4) Shared emotional connection. They give the following example of the interplay between these factors:

People attend the organizational meeting as strangers out of their individual needs (integration and fulfillment of needs). The team is bound by place of residence (membership boundaries are set) and spends time together in practice (the contact hypothesis). They play a game and win (successful shared valent event). While playing, members exert energy on behalf of the team

(personal investment in the group). As the team continues to win, team members become recognized and congratulated (gaining honor and status for being members).

Effective communication practices in group and organizational settings are important to the formation and maintenance of communities. How ideas and values are communicated within communities are important to the induction of new members, the formulation of agendas, the selection of leaders and many other aspects. Organizational communication is the study of how people communicate within an organizational context and the influences and interactions within organizational structures. Group members depend on the flow of communication to establish their own identity within these structures and learn to function in the group setting.

Although organizational communication, as a field of study, is usually geared toward companies and business groups, these may also be seen as communities. The principles of organizational communication can also be applied to other types of communities.

The process of learning to adopt the behavior patterns of the community is called socialization. The most fertile time of socialization is usually the early stages of life, during which individuals develop the skills and knowledge and learn the roles necessary to function within their culture and social environment. For some psychologists, especially those in the psychodynamic tradition, the most important period of socialization is between the ages of 1 and 10. But socialization also includes adults moving into a significantly different environment, where they must learn a new set of behaviors.

Socialization is influenced primarily by the family, through which children first learn community norms. Other important influences include school, peer groups, mass media, the workplace and government. The degree to which the norms of a particular society or community are adopted determines one's willingness to engage with others. The norms of tolerance, reciprocity and trust are important "habits of the heart," as de Tocqueville put it, in an individual's involvement in community.]

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Community development is often linked with Community Work or Community Planning. It is often formally conducted by non-government organisations(NGOs), universities or government agencies to improve the social well-being of local, regional and, sometimes, national communities. Less formal efforts, called community building or community organizing, seek to empower individuals and groups of people by providing them with the skills they need to effect change in their own communities. These skills often assist in building political power through the formation of large social groups working for a common agenda. Community development

practitioners must understand both how to work with individuals and how to affect communities' positions within the context of larger social institutions.

Formal programs conducted by universities are often used to build a knowledge base to drive curricula in sociology and community studies. The General Social Survey from the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago and the Saguaro Seminar at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University are examples of national community development in the United States. In The United Kingdom, Oxford University has led in providing extensive research in the field through its Community Development Journal, used worldwide by sociologists and community development practitioners.

At the intersection between community development and community building are a number of programs and organizations with community development tools.

Community building can use a wide variety of practices, ranging from simple events such as potlucks and small book clubs to larger-scale efforts such as mass festivals and construction projects that involve local participants rather than outside contractors.

Community organizing is sometimes focused on more than just resolving specific issues. Organizing often means building a widely accessible power structure, often with the end goal of distributing power equally throughout the community. Community organizers generally seek to build groups that are open and democratic in governance. Such groups facilitate and encourage consensus decision-making with a focus on the general health of the community rather than a specific interest group.

The three basic types of community organizing are grassroots organizing, coalition building, and faith-based community organizing (also called "institution-based community organizing," "broad-based community organizing" or "congregation-based community organizing").

Possibly the most common usage of the word "community" indicates a large group living in close proximity. Examples of local community include:

- A municipality is an administrative local area generally composed of a clearly defined territory and commonly referring to a town or village. Although large cities are also municipalities, they are often thought of as a collection of communities, due to their diversity.
- A neighborhood is a geographically localized community, often within a larger city or suburb.

A planned community is one that was designed from scratch and grew up more or less following the plan. Several of the world's capital cities are planned cities.

Definitions of community as "organisms inhabiting a common environment and interacting with one another," while scientifically accurate, do not convey the richness, diversity and complexity of human communities. Their classification, likewise is almost never precise. Untidy as it may be, community is vital for humans.

From this it is clear that the concept of the individual is not and cannot ever be separated from the concept of community. Without the primary community of our family, or the secondary communities discussed above, we could not develop stable personalities as individual human beings. This conveys some of the distinctiveness of human community.

2.2.3 INSTITUTIONS- AN OVERVIEW:

Institutions are structures and mechanisms of social order and cooperation governing the behavior of two or more individuals. Institutions are identified with a social purpose and permanence, transcending individual human lives and intentions, and with the making and enforcing of rules governing cooperative human behavior. The term, institution, is commonly applied to customs and behavior patterns important to a society, as well as to particular formal organizations of government and public service. As structures and mechanisms of social order among humans, institutions are one of the principal objects of study in the social sciences, including sociology, political science and economics. Institutions are a central concern for law, the formal regime for political rule-making and enforcement. The creation and evolution of institutions is a primary topic for history.

Although individual, formal organizations, commonly identified as "institutions," may be deliberately and intentionally created by people, the development and functioning of institutions in society in general may be regarded as an instance of emergence; that is, institutions arise, develop and function in a pattern of social self-organization, which goes beyond the conscious intentions of the individual humans involved.

Most important institutions, considered abstractly, have both objective and subjective aspects: examples include money and marriage. The institution of money encompasses many formal organizations, including banks and government treasury departments and stock exchanges, which may be termed, "institutions," as well as subjective experiences, which guide people in their pursuit of personal well-being. Powerful institutions are able to imbue a paper currency with certain value, and to induce millions into cooperative production and trade in

pursuit of economic ends abstractly denominated in that currency's units. The subjective experience of money is so pervasive and persuasive that economists talk of the "money illusion" and try to disabuse their students of it, in preparation for learning economic analysis.

Marriage and family, as a set of institutions, also encompass formal and informal, objective and subjective aspects. Both governments and religious institutions make and enforce rules and laws regarding marriage and family, create and regulate various concepts of how people relate to one another, and what their rights, obligations and duties may be as a consequence. Culture and custom permeate marriage and family.

While institutions tend to appear to people in society as part of the natural, unchanging landscape of their lives, study of institutions by the social sciences tends to reveal the nature of institutions as social constructions, artifacts of a particular time, culture and society, produced by collective human choice, though not directly by individual intention.

The relationship of institutions to human nature is a foundational question for the social sciences. Institutions can be seen as "naturally" arising from, and conforming to, human nature - a fundamentally conservative view- or institutions can be seen as artificial, almost accidental, and in need of architectural redesign, informed by expert social analysis, to better serve human needs- a fundamentally progressive view.

Economics, in recent years, has used game theory to study institutions from two perspectives. Firstly, how do institutions survive and evolve? Secondly, how do institutions affect behaviour?

Sociology traditionally analyzed social institutions in terms of interlocking social roles and expectations. Social institutions created and were composed of groups of roles, or expected behaviors. The social function of the institution was executed by the fulfillment of roles. Basic biological requirements, for reproduction and care of the young, are served by the institutions of marriage and family, for example, by creating, elaborating and prescribing the behaviors expected for husband/father, wife/mother, child, etc.

In history, a distinction between eras or periods, implies a major and fundamental change in the system of institutions governing a society. Political and military events are judged to be of historical significance to the extent that they are associated with changes in institutions. In European history, particular significance is attached to the long transition from the feudal institutions of the Middle Ages to the modern institutions, which govern contemporary life.

2.2.4 SOCIETY- AN OVERVIEW:

A society is a grouping of individuals, which is characterized by common interests and may have distinctive culture and institutions. Members of a society may be from different ethnic groups. A society may be a particular people, such as the *Nagas*, a nation state, such as Switzerland, or a broader cultural group, such as Western society.

The word society may also refer to an organized voluntary association of people for religious, benevolent, cultural, scientific, political, patriotic, or other purposes.

The English word "society" emerged in the 15th century and is derived from the French *société*. The French word, in turn, had its origin in the Latin *societas*, a "friendly association with others," from *socius* meaning "companion, associate, comrade or business partner." The Latin word was derived from the Greek *socus locus*, meaning locally social, and implied a social contract between members of the community.

According to sociologist Richard Jenkins, the term addresses a number of important existential issues facing people: How humans think and exchange information – the sensory world makes up only a fraction of human experience. In order to understand the world, we have to conceive of human interaction in the abstract (i.e., society).

Many phenomena cannot be reduced to individual behavior – to explain certain conditions, a view of something "greater than the sum of its parts" is needed.

Collectives often endure beyond the lifespan of individual members.

The human condition has always meant going beyond the evidence of our senses; every aspect of our lives is tied to the collective.

A major system of classification contains four categories:

- Hunter-gatherer bands, which are generally egalitarian.
- Tribal societies in which there are some limited instances of social rank and prestige.
- Stratified structures led by chieftains.
- Civilizations, with complex social hierarchies and organized, institutional governments.

In addition to this there are: humanity, mankind that upon which rest all the elements of society, including society's beliefs. Virtual-society is a society based on online identity. Over time, some cultures have progressed toward more-complex forms of organization and control. This cultural evolution has a profound effect on patterns of community. Hunter-gatherer tribes settled around seasonal food stocks to become agrarian villages.

Villages grew to become towns and cities. Cities turned into city-states and nation-states.

Today, anthropologists and many social scientists vigorously oppose the notion of cultural evolution and rigid "stages" such as these.

CHARACTERISTICS OF SOCIETY

The following three components are common to all definitions of society:

- *Social networks*
- *Criteria for membership, and*
- *Characteristic patterns of organization*

Social networks are maps of the relationships between people. Structural features such as proximity, frequency of contact and type of relationship (e.g., relative, friend, colleague) define various social networks.

Human societies are often organized according to their primary means of subsistence. As noted in the section on "Evolution of societies", above, social scientists identify hunter-gatherer societies, nomadic pastoral societies, horticulturalist or simple farming societies, and intensive agricultural societies, also called civilizations. Some consider industrial and post-industrial societies to be qualitatively different from traditional agricultural societies.

One common theme for societies in general is that they serve to aid individuals in a time of crisis. Traditionally, when an individual requires aid, for example at birth, death, sickness, or disaster, members of that society will rally others to render aid, in some form—symbolic, linguistic, physical, mental, emotional, financial, medical, or religious. Many societies will distribute largess, at the behest of some individual or some larger group of people. This type of generosity can be seen in all known cultures; typically, prestige accrues to the generous individual or group. Conversely, members of a society may also shun or scapegoat members of the society who violate its norms. Mechanisms such as gift giving and scapegoating, which may be seen in various types of human groupings, tend to be institutionalized within a society. Social evolution as a phenomenon carries with itself certain elements that could be detrimental to the population it serves.

Some societies will bestow status on an individual or group of people, when that individual or group performs an admired or desired action. This type of recognition is bestowed by members of that society on the individual or group in the form of a name, title, manner of dress, or monetary reward. Males, in many societies, are particularly susceptible to this type of action and subsequent reward, even at the risk of their lives. Action by an individual or larger group in behalf of some cultural ideal is seen in all societies. The phenomena of community

action, shunning, scapegoating, generosity, and shared risk and reward occur in subsistence-based societies and in more technology-based civilizations.

Societies may also be organized according to their political structure. In order of increasing size and complexity, there are bands, tribes, chiefdoms, and state societies. These structures may have varying degrees of political power, depending on the cultural geographical, and historical environments that these societies must contend with. Thus, a more isolated society with the same level of technology and culture as other societies is more likely to survive than one in closer proximity to others that may encroach on their resources. A society that is unable to offer an effective response to other societies it competes with will usually be subsumed into the culture of the competing society.

People of many nations united by common political and cultural traditions, beliefs, or values are sometimes also said to be a society (such as Judeo-Christian, Eastern, and Western). When used in this context, the term is employed as a means of contrasting two or more "societies" whose members represent alternative conflicting and competing worldviews.

Some academic, learned and scholarly associations describe themselves as societies (for example, the American Society of Mathematics. More commonly, professional organizations often refer to themselves as societies (e.g., the American Society of Civil Engineers, American Chemical Society). In the United Kingdom and the United States, learned societies are normally nonprofit and have charitable status. In science, they range in size to include national scientific societies (i.e., the Royal Society) to regional natural history societies. Academic societies may have interest in a wide range of subjects, including the arts, humanities and science.

2.3 SUMMARY:

- In sociology, a group is usually defined as a collection of humans or animals, which share certain characteristics, interact with one another, accept expectations and obligations as members of the group, and share a common identity. Using this definition, society can appear as a large group.
- While an aggregate comprises merely a number of individuals, a group in sociology exhibits cohesiveness to a larger degree.
- Characteristics that members in the group may share include interests, values, ethnic/linguistic background, and kinship ties.
- A community is a social group of organisms sharing an environment, normally with shared interests. In human communities, intent, belief, resources, preferences, needs,

risks and a number of other conditions may be present and common, affecting the identity of the participants and their degree of cohesiveness.

- The word community is derived from the Latin *communitas* (meaning the same), which is in turn derived from *communis*, which means "common, public, shared by all or many". *Communis* comes from a combination of the Latin prefix *con-* (which means "together") and the word *munis* (which has to do with performing services).
- Institutions are structures and mechanisms of social order and cooperation governing the behavior of two or more individuals. Institutions are identified with a social purpose and permanence, transcending individual human lives and intentions, and with the making and enforcing of rules governing cooperative human behavior.
- The term, institution, is commonly applied to customs and behavior patterns important to a society, as well as to particular formal organizations of government and public service. As structures and mechanisms of social order among humans, institutions are one of the principal objects of study in the social sciences, including sociology, political science and economics. Institutions are a central concern for law, the formal regime for political rule-making and enforcement. The creation and evolution of institutions is a primary topic for history.
- Although individual, formal organizations, commonly identified as "institutions," may be deliberately and intentionally created by people, the development and functioning of institutions in society in general may be regarded as an instance of emergence.
- A society is a grouping of individuals, which is characterized by common interests and may have distinctive culture and institutions. Members of a society may be from different ethnic groups.
- The word society may also refer to an organized voluntary association of people for religious, benevolent, cultural, scientific, political, patriotic, or other purposes.
- The English word "society" emerged in the 15th century and is derived from the French *société*. The French word, in turn, had its origin in the Latin *societas*, a "friendly association with others," from *socius* meaning "companion, associate, comrade or business partner."

2.4 KEY WORDS:

Citizen: A member of a political community, having both rights and duties associated with that membership.

Division of Labour: The specialization of work tasks, by means of which different occupations are combined within a production system. All societies have at least some rudimentary form of division of labour. With the development of industrialism, however, the division of labour becomes vastly more complex than in any prior type of production system. In the modern world, the division of labour is international in scope.

Gender: Social expectations about behaviour regarded as appropriate for the members of each sex. Gender is seen as a basic organising principle of society.

Empirical Investigation: Factual enquiry carried out in any given area of sociological study.

Endogamy: When marriage is within a specific caste, class or tribal group.

Exogamy: When marriage occurs outside a certain group of relations.

Ideology: Shared ideas or beliefs, which serve to justify the interests of dominant groups. Ideologies are found in all societies in which there are systematic and engrained inequalities between groups. The concept of ideology connects closely with that of power, since ideological systems serve to legitimise the differential power which groups hold.

Legitimacy: The belief that a particular political order is just and valid.

Monogamy: When marriage involves one husband and one wife alone.

Polygamy: When marriage involves more than one mate at one time.

Polyandry: When more than one man is married to a woman.

Polygyny: When more than one woman is married to a man.

Service Industries: Industries concerned with the production of services rather than manufactured goods, such as the travel industry.

State Society: A society, which possesses a formal apparatus of government.

Stateless Society: A society, which lacks formal institutions of government.

Social Mobility: Movement from one status or occupation to another.

Sovereignty: The undisputed political rule of a state over a given territorial area.

2.5 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS:

1. Note what are the marriage rules that are followed in your society. Compare your observations with that made by other students in the class. Discuss.
2. Find out how membership, residence pattern and even the mode of interaction changes in the family with broader economic, political and cultural changes, for instance migration.
3. Write an essay on 'work'. Focus on both the range of occupations, which exist and how they change.
4. Discuss the kind of rights that exist in your society. How do they affect your life?

5. How does sociology study religion?
6. Write an essay on the school as a social institution. Draw from both your reading as well as your personal observations.
7. Discuss how these social institutions interact with each other. You can start the discussion from yourself as a senior school student. And move on to how you are shaped by different social institutions. Are you entirely controlled or can you also resist and redefine social institutions?

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Bachelor of Mass Communication (1st year)

SOCIOLOGY (BMC 106)

Block: B Unit: I Lesson: 3

FAMILY, KINSHIP, CASTE, CLAN, & MARRIAGE

Writer: Sh. M. R. Patra

Faculty Member, Dept. of C M & T,
GJUST, Hisar.

Vetter: Prof. Manoj Dayal

Dean, Media Studies,
GJUST, Hisar.

LESSON STRUCTURE

In this lesson we shall discuss about smaller sociological groups like family, kinship, caste and clan. Also, we shall focus on the institution of marriage. The lesson structure shall be as follows:

3.0 Objectives

- 3.1 *Introduction*
- 3.2 *Presentation of Content*
 - 3.2.1 *Family - An Overview*
 - 3.2.2 *Kinship - An Overview*
 - 3.2.3 *Caste - An Overview*
 - 3.2.4 *Clan - An Overview*
 - 3.2.5 *Marriage- An Overview*
- 3.3 *Summary*
- 3.4 *Key Words*
- 3.5 *Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs)*
- 3.6 *References/Suggested Reading*

3.0 OBJECTIVES:

After reading this lesson, you would be able:

- *To Get An Overview of Family*

- *To Get An Overview of Kinship*
- *To Get An Overview of Caste*
- **To Get An Overview of Clan**
- **To Get An Overview of Marriage**

3.1 INTRODUCTION:

All social institutions whether familial, religious, political, economic, legal or educational will operate in the interest of the dominant sections of society be it class, caste, tribe or gender. The dominant social section not only dominates political and economic institutions but also ensures that the ruling class ideas become the ruling ideas of a society. This is very different from the idea that there are general needs of a society.

As you go about reading this lesson, see whether you can think of examples to show how social institutions constrain and also offer opportunities to individuals. Notice whether they impact different sections of society unequally. For instance, we could ask, “How does the family constrain as well provide opportunities to men and women?” Or “How do political or legal institutions affect the privileged and dispossessed?”

3.2 PRESENTATION OF CONTENT:

The content of this lesson shall be presented as follows:

Family - An Overview

Kinship - An Overview

Caste - An Overview

Clan - An Overview

Marriage - An Introduction

3.2.1 FAMILY- AN OVERVIEW:

Family is the basic social group united through bonds of kinship or marriage, present in all societies. Ideally, the family provides its members with protection, companionship, security, and socialization. The structure of the family, and the needs that the family fulfils vary from society to society. The nuclear family—two adults and their children—is the main unit in some societies. In others, the nuclear family is a subordinate part of an extended family, which also consists of grandparents and other relatives. A third family unit is the single-parent family, in which children live with an unmarried, divorced, or widowed mother or father.

THE MODERN FAMILY: Historical studies have indicated that family structure has been less changed by urbanization and industrialization than was once supposed. As far as is known, the nuclear family was the most prevalent pre-industrial unit and is still the basic unit of social organization in most modern industrial societies. The modern family differs from earlier traditional forms, however, in its functions, composition, and life cycle, and in the roles of mothers and fathers.

The only function of the family that continues to survive all change is the provision of affection and emotional support by and to all its members, particularly infants and young children. Specialized institutions now perform many of the other functions that were once performed by the agrarian (rural) family: economic production, education, religious schooling, and recreation. Employment is usually separate from the family group; family members often work in different occupations and in locations away from the home. Education is provided by the state or by private groups. Religious training and recreational activities are available outside the home, although both still have a place in family life. The family is still responsible for the socialization of children, but even in this capacity, the influence of peers and of the mass media has assumed a larger role.

Family composition in industrial societies has changed dramatically since the onset of the Industrial Revolution. The average number of children born to a woman in the United States, for example, fell from 7.0 in 1800 to 2.1 by 2000. In the United Kingdom, the average in 2000 was 1.7 children, compared to 3.5 children in 1900. Consequently, the number of years separating the births of the youngest and oldest children has declined. This has occurred in conjunction with increased longevity. In earlier times, marriage normally dissolved through the death of a spouse before the youngest child left home. Today, husbands and wives (and unmarried long-term partners) potentially have about as many years together after the children leave home as before. The proportion of traditional nuclear family households in the United Kingdom, comprising a couple with one or more dependent children, fell from a third in 1971 to just under a quarter in spring 2002.

Some of these developments are related to ongoing changes in women's roles. In Western societies, women in all stages of family life have joined (or re-joined after having children) the labour force. Rising expectations of personal gratification through marriage and family, together with easier divorce and increasing employment opportunities for women, have contributed to a rise in the divorce rate in the West. In 2000, for instance, there was

approximately one divorce for every two marriages in the United States. In both Great Britain and Australia the rate was approximately two in every five marriages.

During the 20th century, extended family households declined in prevalence in the West. This change is associated particularly with increased residential mobility and with diminished financial responsibility of children for ageing parents, as pensions from jobs and government-sponsored benefits for retired people became more common.

By the 1970s the prototypical nuclear family had yielded somewhat to modified structures including the single-parent family, the stepfamily, and the family without children. One-parent families in the past were usually the result of the death of a partner or a spouse. Now, however, most one-parent families are the result of divorce, although some are created when unmarried mothers bear children. Between 1971 and 1991 the proportion of lone-parent households with dependent children doubled, from 3 to 6 per cent. The proportion remained at around this level in 2002. At the end of the 20th century, a total of around 3 million children—nearly a quarter of children—lived in a single-parent family. Almost one in five dependent children live in lone-mother families, while lone-father families accounted for around 2 per cent of all families with dependent children in 2000.

A stepfamily is created by a new marriage of a single parent. It may consist of a parent and children and a childless spouse, a parent and children and a spouse whose children live elsewhere, or two joined one-parent families. In a stepfamily, problems in relations between non-biological parents and children may generate tension; the difficulties can be especially great in the marriage of single parents when the children of both parents live together as siblings. In 2001 stepfamilies accounted for 8 per cent of the total number of families with dependent children in the United Kingdom. Eighty-eight per cent of these stepfamilies consisted of a couple with one or more children from the previous relationship of the female partner only.

Families without children may be increasingly the result of deliberate choice on the part of the partners or spouses concerned, a choice that is facilitated by the wider availability of birth control (contraception). For many years the proportion of couples that were childless declined steadily as cures for venereal and other diseases that cause infertility were discovered. In the 1970s, however, the changes in the status of women reversed this trend. Couples particularly in the West now often elect to have no children or to postpone having them until their careers are well established.

Since the 1960s, several variations on the family unit have emerged. More unmarried couples are living together, before or instead of marrying. Similarly some elderly couples, most

often widowed, are finding it more economically practical to cohabit without marrying. Homosexual couples also live together as a family more openly today, sometimes sharing their households with the children of one partner or with adopted or foster children. Communal living, where “families” are made up of groups of related or unrelated people, have long existed in isolated instances. Such units began to occur in the West during the 1960s and 1970s, but by the 1980s the number of communal families had diminished.

WORLD TRENDS: All industrial nations are experiencing family trends similar to those found in the West. Improved methods of birth control and legalized abortion have had an impact in decreasing the numbers of one-parent families that are unable to be self-supporting. Divorce is increasing even where religious and legal impediments to it are strongest. In addition, smaller families and a lengthened post-parental stage are found in all industrial societies.

In the developing world, particularly, the number of surviving children in a family has rapidly increased as infectious diseases, famine, and other causes of child mortality have been reduced. Because families often cannot support so many children, the reduction in infant mortality and the consequent population growth have posed a challenge to the resources of developing nations.

Perhaps no other social entity appears more ‘natural’ than the family. Often we are prone to assume that all families are like the ones we live in. No other social institution appears more universal and unchanging. Sociology and social anthropology have over many decades conducted field research across cultures to show how the institutions of family, marriage and kinship are important in all societies and yet their character is different in different societies. They have also shown how the family (the private sphere) is linked to the economic, political, cultural, educational (the public) spheres.

According to the functionalists the family performs important tasks, which contribute to society’s basic needs and helps perpetuate social order. The functionalist perspective argues that modern industrial societies function best if women look after the family and men earn the family livelihood.

The nuclear family is seen as the unit best equipped to handle the demands of industrial society by the functionalists. In such a family one adult can work outside the home while the second adult cares for the home and children. In practical terms, this specialization of roles within the nuclear family involves the husband adopting the ‘instrumental’ role as breadwinner, and the wife assuming the ‘affective’, emotional role in domestic settings. This vision is

questionable not just because it is gender unjust but because empirical studies across cultures and history show that it is untrue.

VARIATION IN FAMILY FORMS: A central debate in India has been about the shift from nuclear family to joint families. We have already seen how sociology questions common sense impressions. The fact is that nuclear families have always existed in India particularly among the deprived castes and classes. Sociologist A.M. Shah remarks that in post-independent India the joint family has steadily increased.

The contributing factor is the increasing life expectancy in India according to him. It has increased from 32.5 - 55.4 years for men and from 31.7 - 55.7 years for women during the period 1941 - 50 to 1981 - 85. Consequently, the proportion of aged people (60 years and above) in the total population has increased. "We have to ask" writes Shah — "in what kind of household do these elderly people live? I submit, most of them live in joint household" (Shah; 1998).

This again is a broad generalization. But in the spirit of the sociological perspective, it cautions us against blindly believing a common sense impression that the joint family is fast eroding. And alerts us to the need for careful comparative and empirical studies.

FEMALE-HEADED HOUSEHOLDS:

When men migrate to urban areas, women have to plough and manage the agricultural fields. Many a time they become the sole providers of their families. Such households are known as female headed households. Widowhood too might create such familial arrangement. Or it may happen when men get remarried and stop sending remittance to their wives, children and other dependents. In such a situation, women have to ensure the maintenance of the family. Among the *Kolams*, a tribal community in south-eastern Maharashtra and northern Andhra Pradesh, a female-headed household is an accepted norm.

Studies have shown how diverse family forms are found in different societies. With regard to the rule of residence, some societies are matri-local in their marriage and family customs while others are patri-local. In the first case, the newly married couple stays with the woman's parents, whereas in the second case the couple lives with the man's parents. A patriarchal family structure exists where the men exercise authority and dominance, and matriarchy where the women play a major role in decision-making in the family. While matrilineal societies exist, the same cannot be claimed about matriarchal societies.

FAMILIES ARE LINKED TO OTHER SOCIAL SPHERES AND FAMILIES CHANGE: Often in our everyday life we look at the family as distinct and separate from other spheres such as the economic or political. However, as you will see for yourself the family, the household, its structure and norms are closely linked to the rest of society. An interesting example is that of the unintended consequences of the German unification. During the post-unification period in the 1990s Germany witnessed a rapid decline in marriage. Notice how families and residences are different Work and Home because the new German state withdrew all the protection and welfare schemes which were provided to the families prior to the unification. With growing sense of economic insecurity people responded by refusing to marry. This can also be understood as a case of unintended consequence (Chapter 1).

Family and kinship are thus subject to change and transformation due to macro economic processes but the direction of change need not always be similar for all countries and regions. Moreover, change does not mean the complete erosion of previous norms and structure. Change and continuity co-exist.

The belief is that the male child will support the parents in the old age and the female child will leave on marriage results in families investing more in a male child. Despite the biological fact that a female baby has better chances of survival than a male baby the rate of infant mortality among female children is higher in comparison to male children in lower age group in India.

Sex Ratio in India between 1901-2001

Year	Sex Ratio	Year	Sex Ratio
1901	972	1951	946
1911	964	1961	941
1921	955	1971	930
1931	950	1981	934
1941	945	1991	926
		2001	(927)*

* In 2001 the sex ratio of girls in 0-6 group was enumerated as 927

The incidence of female foeticide has led to a sudden decline in the sex ratio. The child sex ratio has declined from 934 per thousand males in 1991 to 927 in 2001. The percentage of decline in the child sex ratio is more alarming. The situation of prosperous states like Punjab, Haryana,

Maharashtra and western Uttar Pradesh is all the more grave. In Punjab the child sex ratio has declined to 793 girls per 1,000 boys. In some of the districts of Punjab and Haryana it has fallen below 700.

3.2.2 KINSHIP- AN OVERVIEW:

Kinship is human relations based on biological descent and marriage. Kinship is founded on social differences and cultural creations. In all societies, the links between blood relatives and relatives by marriage are assigned certain legal, political, and economic significance that does not depend on biology.

DESCENT SYSTEMS: At the basis of kinship is the primary mother-child bond to which diverse cultures have added different familial relations. Additional kin are recruited to this basic unit by the principle of descent, which connects one generation to the other in a systematic way, and which determines certain rights and obligations across generations. Descent groups can be traced ambi-laterally, through both sexes, or unilaterally, through only the male or the female link. In unilaterally traced groups, the descent is known as patri-lineal if the connection is through the male line, or matrilineal if it is through the female line.

Less frequent forms for tracing descent are the parallel system, in which males and females each trace their ancestry through their own sex; and the cognatic method, in which the relatives of both sexes are considered, with little formal distinction between them.

SUCCESSION AND INHERITANCE: The study of kinship has directed much attention to the terms people use to classify and identify their relatives. Kin are everywhere categorized into distinct groups with specific roles and behaviour.

The way in which people classify their kin has many practical applications. Thus, the familial relationships peculiar to a society will largely determine the allocation of rights and their transmission from one generation to the next. The succession of office and titles and the inheritance of property are implicit in the kinship system. Property can pass across generations in several ways, as, for example: from the mother's brother to the sister's son (in matrilineal societies); from the father to the father's younger brother (in some patri-lineal cultures); or from the father to his son (in many patri-lineal societies).

In some societies, kinship terms may also indicate how the family is split over the inheritance of goods and property. The Iatmul people of New Guinea, for instance, assign five

different terms to designate the first, second, third, fourth, and fifth child in a family. In any quarrels over patrimony, the first and third children are expected to join forces against the second and the fourth.

THEORIES OF KINSHIP: The evolution of kinship and its terminology has interested anthropologists since the 19th century, when the American anthropologist Lewis Henry Morgan developed his theory of kinship. Morgan held that kinship terminology used in non-literate societies reflected a “low” level of cultural development, and that the terminology common in civilized societies indicated an “advanced” stage of development. This theory was abandoned when the discovery was made that the limited number of kinship systems in use are found among both technologically less-developed and more-developed peoples.

Some non-evolutionary theories see kinship terms as a result of cultural borrowings and modifications, as a means of understanding aspects of the history of a particular society, or even as a linguistic phenomenon. The most common anthropological view, however, is a functional one that relates kinship terms to contemporary behaviour. In this theory, the terms are considered tools for understanding the ties between—and values of—people in any given society.

Kinship is important in anthropological study because it is a universal phenomenon. It connotes certain basic human attachments made by all people, and it reflects the way in which people give meaning and ascribe importance to human interactions.

3.2.3 CASTE- AN OVERVIEW:

Caste is a rigid social system in which a social hierarchy is maintained by the heredity of defined status in society, and allowing little mobility out of the position into which an individual is born. The term, first used by Portuguese traders visiting India in the 16th century, derives from the Portuguese *casta*, meaning family lineage, or race. It is almost always applied to the complex system which developed under Hinduism in India, although caste-like systems have evolved in other cultures and religious groups.

EVOLUTION OF THE CASTE SYSTEM: All societies throughout history have developed social hierarchies. These hierarchies have almost always derived from occupations and their perceived relative status. As societies evolved from hunter-gatherer existence, through settled agrarian systems, development of trade, and industrialization, new occupations were created

and shifts in status occurred. The caste system represents, in essence, a formalised, overtly codified social hierarchy, deriving from and subject to the changing economic and political requirements of evolving societies. While typified by its rigidity in terms of the lack of mobility for the individual, over time, the caste system as a whole has shown shifts associated with just the changes in society outlined above. A unique feature of caste, however, has been its intimate association with religion.

The religious sanction and framework given to the caste system in India have made it a particularly powerful social tool—a rebellion against caste becomes a rebellion against religion, with consequences in this and future lives—and has been a factor in its remarkable endurance to this day. The caste system appears to have evolved some time after the arrival into northern India of the Indo-European peoples known as the Aryans, a nomadic people, around 1500 bc, after the collapse of the Indus Valley civilization. No written records exist of this period (the Aryans had no writing) but it would appear from clues from later sources based on ancient oral tradition that they encountered resistance from indigenous peoples, and were involved in a protracted period of warfare with local peoples before emerging victorious. Aryan society was already split into warriors, priests, and the general populace, an unremarkable form of social organization. On vanquishing the indigenous peoples, who are described as darker skinned and with different features from the Aryans (it is possible that this refers to the Australoid and Negroid characteristics still seen in certain peoples in India), anxiety to maintain the low status of the conquered and to retain racial purity are the most likely reasons for the addition of a fourth group of servants to the social system, made up of the non-Aryan peoples. The racial aspect of caste is clearly indicated in the term that emerged to describe the four groups— varna, the Sanskrit word for colour. The four varnas, in descending order of status, were then the Kshatriyas (the king and warriors), the Brahmins (priests), the Vaishyas (who, with the rise of trade and agriculture, became the farmers and merchants), and the Shudras (servants).

Further changes were to occur before the system ossified. Most importantly, the Brahmins, pointing out their importance in sanctioning the divinity of the monarch, and vesting him with his regal authority, were able to manoeuvre to the top of the scale. As society developed (after the heights reached by Harappan culture, the Aryan period initially represented a considerable step backwards), the area under settled agriculture expanded, and trade and the arts began to flourish, resulting in the slow rise of the Shudras into the roles of cultivators of the land, and skilled artisans. Those who performed the most menial tasks, such as the sweepers, and those who collected waste, were left out of the caste system altogether, becoming

outcastes or Chandalas. A system of subcastes, or jatis, evolved, related to each occupation. It is at the level of jatis that the caste system has primarily operated, with individuals of a particular jati constrained in various social aspects, especially marriage, to remain within their jati. As social and economic conditions changed, the relative position of some jatis as a whole has shifted to reflect the changing status of the occupations concerned.

This detailed link with occupation is interesting. Occupations tended to be hereditary, the son learning from the father. It was a small step, then, for caste, related to the status of the individual and their role in society, to become strictly hereditary, thus further assuring the supremacy of the Brahmins. But it is this most insidious aspect of caste that was to trap millions of individuals effectively in an impoverished, uneducated, and stigmatized state for generation after generation.

The religious exposition of this social and political phenomenon is found in the earliest of the sacred texts of Hinduism, the Rig Veda (dating back to about 300 bc but representing a far older oral tradition), which described the division of the primeval Man, Purusha, into four parts, the mouth becoming the Brahmins, the arms, the Kshatriyas, the legs, the Vaishyas, and the feet, the Shudras. The roles of the four varnas were then established as a law of nature. But without offering some hope of salvation for all, no religion can succeed. This was provided, in Brahmin orthodoxy, by the ideas of karma (roughly translatable as “fate”) and rebirth. While, in an individual's earthly life, his or her caste was decided by the caste of the parents, the fact of being born into a particular caste was no accident. It was dependent on one's deeds in past lives. The Bhagavad-Gita stresses the idea of duty. The duty of an individual was dependent on caste. Thus a “good” shudra would improve his karma by a lifetime of devotion to his or her masters. Likewise, charity was part of the duty of the higher castes. Through the carrying out of these caste-defined duties, it was possible to be reborn into a higher caste. The ultimate purpose of all this was moksha, or release from the cycle of life and death, through acquiring a spiritual insight that relied, in traditional interpretations of Hinduism, on being born a Brahmin. Thus all could have hope, and the route to salvation was in doing the duty expected of one's caste.

It is important to stress here a key difference between the workings of caste and socio-economic class. A class system could be said to be, broadly speaking, related to material wealth. This is not so for the caste system. Brahmins, being spiritually superior, were expected to renounce such worldly pleasures. It was, however, the duty of other castes to provide the

Brahmins with food and other material requirements. Nevertheless, with education confined chiefly to the higher castes, there has, in effect, been a correlation between caste and class.

Much of the stigma against the lower castes and, in particular, the outcastes, or Chandalas, has been strengthened and justified through the religious concept of “ritual purity”. Manual work was regarded as essentially unclean, those associated with it could not be allowed to enter into intimate contact with the higher castes, and in particular with the Brahmins, who performed religious ceremonies before which they, too, had to purify themselves by bathing. Thus, in addition to the taboo on intercaste marriage, the *Chandalas*, in particular, were not to be allowed near the preparation of food for higher castes, or even into temples (especially in South India). Eventually their touches, and even their shadows, were considered to be polluting, resulting in the *Chandalas* becoming so-called *Untouchables* and even *Unapproachables*.

As the system evolved, new sub castes or *jatis* formed with new occupations, and incoming groups of peoples were given a suitable sub caste to fit them into the system, although this did not always prove straightforward.

THE BATTLE AGAINST CASTE: Indian lawyer and social reformer *Bhimrao Ambedkar* devoted his life to striving to improve the rights and quality of life of the “Untouchables”. Initially seeking to promote his cause through journals and peaceful protests, *Ambedkar* became a recognized leader of the suppressed classes, and on Indian independence he joined the Cabinet of *Jawaharlal Nehru*. He helped frame the Indian Constitution of 1949 that outlawed *untouchability*.

Over the centuries, the caste system has experienced regular and strong attack from within and without, and continues to do so. Applied with varying levels of strictness at varying times, depending on the perceived vulnerability of the Brahmins, it has proved remarkably resilient.

Hinduism is not a clearly defined religion with a founder and a single sacred text. It evolved, in the first instance, through the amalgamation of Aryan ideas with Dravidian concepts, themselves linked to ancient Mesopotamia and other cultures. It has a number of sacred texts, ranging in content from the most profound philosophical thought to the most pragmatic detail of ritual, and with many apparent internal contradictions. Over the centuries, the influence of Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam (particularly Sufism), has also shaped thinking broadly termed Hindu. A rich, regional Hindu folk tradition has constantly questioned aspects of orthodoxy. Hinduism, then, espouses a variety of paths and approaches to the Ultimate, which itself has

been described as Brahman, the Essence without any attributes, and in the more popular forms of the many gods of Hinduism, such as Shiva and Krishna. Clearly, in its most profound form, there is no place for caste.

Both Buddhism and Jainism represent major rebellions against the caste system, as part of Brahmin orthodoxy and oppression. The egalitarian nature of Sikhism, developed by Guru Nanak in the 16th century, was also a reaction against caste. But within the fabric of Hinduism itself, there have been many individuals and sects who have ignored or condemned caste. The mystics of the Bhakti movement, such as *Chaitanya*, were oblivious of such considerations, being concerned only in mystic union with God. They happily accepted Untouchables, women, and those from other creeds as their disciples. The most important disciple of the 15th century mystic, *Ramananda*, a key figure in establishing the worship of *Rama* as a deity, was *Kabir*, a Muslim, who became an important poet and mystic in his own right.

Over the centuries, many unknown or unremembered individuals, including many Brahmins, have also fought their own personal battle, often being made outcastes, or even killed, in the process.

In the 19th century, *Ram Mohan Roy* pioneered a revival of the Vedanta and, in keeping with the spirit of the Upanishads, condemned the caste system. By the 20th century, a number of prominent individuals spoke out against the institution. The battle against caste became part of a greater nationalist struggle: it was, along with the Hindu-Muslim divide (partly perpetuated by the British), seen as a factor that divided Indians. Gandhiji appealed for the *Untouchables* to be integrated with the rest of Hindu society. He renamed them *Harijans*, or “*People of God*”. *Ambedkar* set up schools and colleges for *Untouchables*, and fought for their political rights.

With the coming of independence, a policy of positive discrimination was established guaranteeing a large quota of places in colleges and professional institutions, and in the civil service, to Untouchables, and other depressed classes, now collectively known as “scheduled” castes. The new Indian Constitution enshrined a belief in a secular and egalitarian system, without discrimination by caste or creed. Political organization along caste lines, and often shallow appeals by parties in order to acquire the Harijan vote, have, however, helped little and sometimes positively hindered attempts to reduce the divisions of society. Many government and volunteer organizations continue to fight against prejudice. Social customs and prejudices are hard to counter. Yet some considerable progress has been made.

THE CASTE SYSTEM TODAY: Beyond these efforts, new factors attacking caste are now at play and may prove unstoppable. These are related to India's emergence as a modern, industrial nation, linked by satellite television and computer to the other nations and cultures of the world. The rise of the urban middle classes, with free mixing of sexes, and associating material success rather than caste with social status, has led to erosion of the caste system. Arranged marriages, a key vehicle for the propagation of caste, are declining in number, although many are continuing with the purpose of propagating wealth and status. A significant number of young people in the cities are questioning the system and rebelling against it. Many problems remain, however, in the urban slums and in rural areas, where the issue of caste sometimes further complicates the fight against poverty. The former *Harijans* or *Dalits*, as they are now called, continue to be those most needing access to primary health care, clean water, and other basic resources. Of equal importance must be education, which alone can empower those who have been denied it for so long.

The impact of the caste system on the development of India over many centuries is incalculable. The country has produced many great scholars, scientists, and mathematicians. Yet it is possible, for example, that the extreme separation of practical and mental work affected by the caste system has been a factor in the paucity of technological innovation in India. The cost in social suffering has clearly been enormous. The greatest effect on the country as a whole must be the denial of the opportunity for learning and self-improvement to the great majority of the population, and with it the loss of many potential innovators, scholars, and statesmen and women. Caste, like sex discrimination, is on the decline in modern India. But its far-reaching effects may take many years to eradicate.

3.2.4 CLAN- AN OVERVIEW:

Clan (*Gaelic, clann, "offspring"*) is a group of families who claim common ancestry. Although clans have existed for many years in all parts of the world, the term came to refer to those groups originating in Scotland and Ireland in about ad 1000, and today is applied almost exclusively to communities in Scotland living in specific areas and distinguishable by their surnames. Generally the members of a Scottish clan assume the same surname and adopt a particular tartan, a distinctive plaid pattern used for socks, kilts, and capes.

Anthropologists sometimes use the term clan when referring to various groups of indigenous people throughout the world. In this usage, it describes a group of people who can trace their descent from a common ancestor, or who identify with a common totem or animal.

Tribe, term formerly used to denote a group of people sharing customs, language, and territory, such as the Apache people of North America. Anthropology stresses the importance of kinship in tribes. Usually a tribe has a leader, a religion teaching that all its people are descended from a common ancestor (therefore forming a single genus or clan), and a common language and culture. A tribe is often small in size, is fairly limited in its contacts with other societies, and is correspondingly ethnocentric in its view of the world. Experts disagree about the relative importance of linguistic, political, and geographical boundaries for defining tribal groups. Whatever definition of tribe is chosen, however, exceptions to it abound. The most important criteria for a tribe continue to be linguistic and cultural resemblances.

Both anthropologists and the public have long used the word tribe, but recently it has come under attack as a derogatory term implying an inferior way of life. Moreover, its use is inconsistent; it is not usually, for instance, applied to modern European groups that meet the criteria of the definition. The designations people or ethnic group is generally preferred today.

3.2.5 MARRIAGE- AN OVERVIEW: Marriage is a social institution (usually legally ratified) uniting a man and a woman in special forms of mutual dependence, often for the purpose of founding and maintaining a family. In view of the necessity for children to undergo a long period of development before attaining maturity, the care of children during their years of relative helplessness appears to have been the chief incentive for the evolution of the family structure. Marriage as a contract between a man and a woman has existed since ancient times. As a social practice, entered into through a public act, it reflects the purposes, character, and customs of the society in which it is found.

CUSTOMS: Marriage customs vary greatly from one culture to another. However, the importance of the institution of marriage is universally acknowledged. In some societies, community interest in the children, in the bonds between families, and in the ownership of property established by a marriage are such that special devices and customs are created to protect these values. Infant betrothal or marriage, prevalent in places such as Melanesia, is a result of concern for family, caste, and property alliances. Levirate, the custom by which a man might marry the wife of his deceased brother, was practiced chiefly by the ancient Hebrews, and was designed to continue a family connection that had already been established.

Monogamy, the union of one man and one woman, is thought to be the prototype of human marriage and its most widely accepted form, predominating also in societies in which

other forms of marriage are accepted. All other forms of marriage are generally classed under polygamy, which includes both polygyny, in which one man has several wives, and polyandry, in which one woman has several husbands.

Under Islamic laws, one man may legally have as many as four wives, all of whom are entitled to equal treatment. The Mormons in Utah also practised polygyny briefly in the United States during the 19th century. The incidence of polyandry is rare and is limited to Central Asia, southern India, and Sri Lanka. Frequently polygyny or polyandry involves a man or woman marrying two or more siblings. Polygyny sometimes results in the maintenance of separate households for each wife, although more frequently the shared-household system is employed, as with Muslims and among many Native American tribes before the colonization of North America.

RITUAL: In most societies, marriage is established through a contractual procedure, generally with some sort of religious sanction. In Western societies the contract of marriage is often regarded as a religious sacrament, and it is indissoluble only in the Roman Catholic Church and Eastern Orthodox Church. Most marriages are preceded by a betrothal period, during which various rituals, such as exchanges of gifts and visits, lead to the final wedding ceremony and make the claims of the partners public. In societies where arranged marriages still predominate, families may negotiate a dowry, future living arrangements, and other important matters before marriage can be arranged.

Most wedding ceremonies involve rituals and symbolism that reflect the desire for fertility, such as the sprinkling of the bridal couple with rice, the bride's adornment with orange blossom, and the circling of the sacred fire, which is part of the marriage ritual in Hinduism, for example. The ancient Hindu ceremony of *Svayamvaram* (Sanskrit, "I am wish"), practiced especially by royalty, involved the woman choosing her future husband from assembled eligible men by garlanding him.

Hindus, Buddhists, and many other communities consult astrologers before and after marriages are arranged to choose an auspicious date and time. In some societies fear of hostile spirits leads bridal couples to wear disguises at their weddings or sometimes even to send substitutes to the ceremony. In some countries, for instance Ethiopia, it was long customary to place an armed guard by the bridal couple during the wedding ceremony to protect them from demons.

The breaking of family or community ties implicit in most marriages is often expressed through gifts made to the family of the bride, as among many Native American, African, and Melanesian societies. An exchange of rings and/or the joining of hands frequently represent the new bonds between the married couple. Finally, the interest of the community is expressed in many ways, through feasting and dancing, the presence of witnesses, and the official sealing of marriage documents. Marriage can be seen as a rite of passage since certain social and religious rituals that underline its importance not just to the couple concerned, but also to their families and wider society usually accompany it.

SOCIAL REGULATION: The taboos and restrictions imposed on marriage throughout history have been many and complex. Endogamy, for example, limits marriage to partners who are members of the same society or the same section of a society, to adherents of the same religion, or to members of the same social class. Fear of incest is a universal restriction to the freedom of marriage, although definitions of incest have varied greatly throughout history. In most cases, the prohibition extends to mother and son, father and daughter, and all offspring of the same parents. Among certain groups, however, such as ancient Egyptian royalty, marriages between brothers and sisters were in fact decreed by the prevailing religion.

In many societies, taboos are broadened to include marriages between uncles and nieces, aunts and nephews, first cousins, and, occasionally, second cousins. Exogamy, or marriage outside a specific group, can involve the separation of a society into two groups, within which intermarriage is not allowed.

The traditional importance of marriage can be observed in the customs surrounding widows and widowers, such as waiting times prescribed before remarriage, the wearing of mourning clothes, and the performance of ceremonial duties owed to the dead. The most extreme custom, abolished by law in India in 1829, was that of suttee, in which a widow was expected to sacrifice herself on her husband's funeral pyre.

TERMINATION OF CONTRACT: Most societies have allowed for some form of divorce, except those dominated by religions such as Hinduism and Roman Catholicism that regard marriage as indissoluble. The most frequently accepted grounds for divorce have been infertility, infidelity, criminality, and insanity. In some non-industrial societies divorce is uncommon, mainly because it generally requires the repayment of dowries and other monetary and material exchanges dating from the time of the wedding.

MODERN MARRIAGE: Because the family unit provides the framework for most human social activity, and since it is the foundation on which social organization is based in most cultures, marriage is closely tied to economics, law, and religion.

The institution of marriage has altered fundamentally in Western societies as a result of social changes brought about by the Reformation, the Industrial Revolution, and a growing ideology of individualism. The rise of a strong middle class and the growth of democracy gradually brought about a tolerance for the idea of romantic marriages based on free choice. Arranged marriages, which had been accepted almost everywhere throughout history, eventually ceased to predominate in Western societies, although they persisted as the norm in aristocratic society up to the mid-20th century. One of the most extreme applications of the custom of arranged marriages was in pre-revolutionary China, where it was often the case that a bride and groom met for the first time only on their wedding day. In April 2005 forced marriages were made illegal under Islamic law in Saudi Arabia, a country whose high divorce rate was thought to be in part due to the common practice of forcing women to marry against their will.

Among the social changes that have affected marriage in modern times are: the increase in the incidence of (and tolerance shown towards) premarital sex brought on by the relaxation of sexual taboos, and the gradual rise in the average marriage age; the increase in the number of women pursuing careers outside the home, which has led to the changed economic status of women; and the liberalization of divorce laws, including the legalization of divorce for the first time in Italy in 1970, although in some other countries, such as Ireland, it is still illegal. Also significant have been the legalization of abortion, the improvement and increased accessibility of birth control, the removal of legal and social handicaps for children of unmarried people, and changes in the accepted concepts of male and female roles in society. Common-law marriages usually are those that have acquired legal status through a certain number of years of continuous cohabitation.

A major step towards legalizing same-sex marriages was taken in September 2000 when the Dutch parliament voted to grant such unions full parity of rights, and in April 2001 the first same-sex marriages were granted. This was a significant extension of existing legislation that, since 1998, allowed homosexual people to register their relationships and claim certain benefits. In 2003, Belgium became the second country in the world to legalize same-sex marriages. Elsewhere, Denmark had recognized gay marriages in 1989 and Norway and Sweden permit registration of gay unions. The Canadian provinces of Ontario and British Columbia legalized

same-sex marriages in 2003, as did Quebec province the following year. In the United States, Vermont was the first state to grant homosexual couples equal rights, in 2000.

In November 2003, a court in Massachusetts ruled it unconstitutional to forbid same-sex marriages and in May 2004, Massachusetts became the first US state to allow homosexual marriages. This followed months of clashes with the state legislature and opposition from President George Bush, who backs a proposed amendment to the US Constitution that would outlaw such marriages across the United States (from late 2006), although states would still be able to make their own laws regarding civil unions. Same-sex married couples in Massachusetts enjoy equal legal rights with opposite-sex married couples, including the right to make life-or-death medical decisions and inheritance rights. However, same-sex unions in the United States remain unrecognized by the federal government.

THE INSTITUTION OF MARRIAGE: Historically marriage has been found to exist in a wide variety of forms in different societies. It has also been found to perform differing functions. Indeed, the manner in which marriage partners are arranged reveal an astonishing variety of modes and customs.

FORMS OF MARRIAGE: Marriage has a large variety of forms. These forms can be identified on the basis of the number of partners and rules governing who can marry whom. In terms of the number of partners that can legitimately enter into matrimony, we have two forms of marriage, namely, monogamy and polygamy. Monogamy restricts the individual to one spouse at a time. Under this system, at any given time a man can have only one wife and a woman can have only one husband. Even where polygamy is permitted, in actual practice, monogamy is more widely prevalent.

In many societies, individuals are permitted to marry again, often on the death of the first spouse or after divorce. But they cannot have more than one spouse at one and the same time. Such a monogamous marriage is termed serial monogamy. Remarriages on the death of a wife have been a norm for men for the most part. But as all of you are aware that the right for upper caste Hindu widows was denied and that the campaign for widow remarriage was a major issue in the 19th century reform movements. What you are probably less aware is that today in modern India nearly 10 per cent of all women and 55 per cent of women over fifty years are widows (Chen 2000:353).

Polygamy denotes marriage to more than one mate at one time and takes the form of either: Polygyny (one husband with two or more wives) or Polyandry (one wife with two or more husbands). Usually where economic conditions are harsh, polyandry may be one response of society, since in such situations a single male cannot adequately support a wife and children. Also, extreme poverty conditions pressurize a group to limit its population.

In some societies, the decisions regarding mate selection are made by parents/relatives; in some other societies individuals are relatively free to choose their own mates.

In some societies these restrictions are subtle, while in some others, individuals who can or cannot be married, are more explicitly and specifically defined. Forms of marriage based on rules governing eligibility/ ineligibility of mates is classified as endogamy and exogamy.

Endogamy requires an individual to marry within a culturally defined group of which he or she is already a member, as for example, caste. Exogamy, the reverse of endogamy, requires the individual to marry outside of his/her own group. Endogamy and exogamy are in reference to certain kinship units, such as, clan, caste and racial, ethnic or religious groupings. In India, village exogamy is practiced in certain parts of north India. Village exogamy ensured that daughters were married into families from villages far away from home.

The geographical distance plus the unequal relationship in the patri-lineal system ensured that married daughters did not get to see their parents too often.

A family is a group of persons directly linked by kin connections, the adult members of which assume responsibility for caring for children. Kinship ties are connections between individuals, established either through marriage or through the lines of descent that connect blood relatives (mothers, fathers, siblings, offspring, etc.) Marriage can be defined as a socially acknowledged and approved sexual union between two adult individuals. When two people marry, they become kin to one another.

3.3 SUMMARY:

- Family is the basic social group united through bonds of kinship or marriage, present in all societies. Ideally, the family provides its members with protection, companionship, security, and socialization. The structure of the family, and the needs that the family fulfils vary from society to society.
- The nuclear family—two adults and their children—is the main unit in some societies.
- Sometimes, the nuclear family is a subordinate part of an extended family, which also consists of grandparents and other relatives.

- A third family unit is the single-parent family, in which children live with an unmarried, divorced, or widowed mother or father.
- Families without children may be increasingly the result of deliberate choice on the part of the partners or spouses concerned, a choice that is facilitated by the wider availability of birth control (contraception).
- In the developing world, particularly, the number of surviving children in a family has rapidly increased as infectious diseases, famine, and other causes of child mortality have been reduced.
- Research shows that the institutions of family, marriage and kinship are important in all societies and yet their character is different in different societies. They have also shown how the family (the private sphere) is linked to the economic, political, cultural, educational (the public) spheres.
- The functionalist perspective argues that modern industrial societies function best if women look after the family and men earn the family livelihood.
- The incidence of female foeticide has led to a sudden decline in the sex ratio. The child sex ratio has declined from 934 per thousand males in 1991 to 927 in 2001. The percentage of decline in the child sex ratio is more alarming. The situation of prosperous states like Punjab, Haryana, Maharashtra and western Uttar Pradesh is all the more grave. In Punjab the child sex ratio has declined to 793 girls per 1,000 boys.
- Kinship is human relations based on biological descent and marriage. Kinship is founded on social differences and cultural creations. In all societies, the links between blood relatives and relatives by marriage are assigned certain legal, political, and economic significance that does not depend on biology.
- Caste is a rigid social system in which a social hierarchy is maintained by the heredity of defined status in society, and allowing little mobility out of the position into which an individual is born. The term, first used by Portuguese traders visiting India in the 16th century, derives from the Portuguese *casta*, meaning family lineage, or race. It is almost always applied to the complex system which developed under Hinduism in India, although caste-like systems have evolved in other cultures and religious groups.
- Clan is a group of families who claim common ancestry. Although clans have existed for many years in all parts of the world, the term came to refer to those groups originating in Scotland and Ireland in about ad 1000.

- Anthropologists sometimes use the term clan when referring to various groups of indigenous people throughout the world.
- Marriage is a social institution uniting a man and a woman in special forms of mutual dependence, often for the purpose of founding and maintaining a family.
- Marriage as a contract between a man and a woman has existed since ancient times. As a social practice, entered into through a public act, it reflects the purposes, character, and customs of the society in which it is found.

3.4 KEY WORDS:

Citizen: A member of a political community, having both rights and duties associated with that membership.

Division of Labour: The specialisation of work tasks, by means of which different occupations are combined within a production system. All societies have at least some rudimentary form of division of labour. With the development of industrialism, however, the division of labour becomes vastly more complex than in any prior type of production system. In the modern world, the division of labour is international in scope.

Gender: Social expectations about behaviour regarded as appropriate for the members of each sex. Gender is seen as a basic organising principle of society.

Empirical Investigation: Factual enquiry carried out in any given area of sociological study.

Endogamy: When marriage is within a specific caste, class or tribal group.

Exogamy: When marriage occurs outside a certain group of relations.

Ideology: Shared ideas or beliefs, which serve to justify the interests of dominant groups. Ideologies are found in all societies in which there are systematic and engrained inequalities between groups. The concept of ideology connects closely with that of power, since ideological systems serve to legitimise the differential power which groups hold.

Legitimacy: The belief that a particular political order is just and valid.

Monogamy: When marriage involves one husband and one wife alone.

Polygamy: When marriage involves more than one mate at one time.

Polyandry: When more than one man is married to a woman.

Polygyny: When more than one woman is married to a man.

Service Industries: Industries concerned with the production of services rather than manufactured goods, such as the travel industry.

State Society: A society which possesses a formal apparatus of government.

Stateless Society: A society which lacks formal institutions of government.

Social Mobility: Movement from one status or occupation to another.

Sovereignty: The undisputed political rule of a state over a given territorial area.

3.5 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS:

1. Note what are the marriage rules that are followed in your society. Compare your observations with that made by other students in the class. Discuss.
2. Find out how membership, residence pattern and even the mode of interaction changes in the family with broader economic, political and cultural changes, for instance migration.
3. Write an essay on 'work'. Focus on both the range of occupations, which exist and how they change.
4. Discuss the kind of rights that exist in your society. How do they affect your life?
5. How does sociology study religion?
6. Write an essay on the school as a social institution. Draw from both your reading as well as your personal observations.
7. Discuss how these social institutions interact with each other. You can start the discussion from yourself as a senior school student. And move on to how you are shaped by different social institutions. Are you entirely controlled or can you also resist and redefine social institutions?

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Bachelor of Mass Communication (1st year)

SOCIOLOGY (BMC 106)

Block: B Unit: II Lesson: 4

**SOCIALIZATION
AND
SOCIAL CHANGE**

Writer: Sh. M. R. Patra

Faculty Member, Dept. of C M & T,
GJUST, Hisar.

Vetter: Prof. Manoj Dayal

Dean, Media Studies,
GJUST, Hisar.

LESSON STRUCTURE

In this lesson we shall discuss about socialization. We shall focus on the process of socialization or social change. Also, we shall focus on the agents of socialization. The lesson structure shall be as follows:

4.0 Objectives

- 4.1 *Introduction*
- 4.2 *Presentation of Content*
 - 4.2.1 *Socialization - An Overview*
 - 4.2.2 *Process of Socialization or Social Change*
 - 4.2.3 *Agents of Social Change*
- 4.3 *Summary*
- 4.4 *Key Words*
- 4.5 *Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs)*
- 4.6 *References/Suggested Reading*

4.0 OBJECTIVES:

After reading this lesson, you would be able:

- *To Get An Overview of Socialization*
- *To Understand the Process of Socialization or Social Change*
- *Agents of Social Change*

4.1 INTRODUCTION:

At the time of birth, the human infant knows nothing about we call society or social behaviour. Yet as the child grows up, s/he keeps learning not just about the physical world. But about what it means to be a good or bad girl/boy. S/he knows what kind of behaviour will be applauded and, what kind will be disapproved.

Socialization can be defined as the process whereby the helpless infant gradually becomes a self-aware, knowledgeable person, skilled in the ways of the culture into which s/he is born. Indeed without socialization an individual would not behave like a human being. Many of you will be familiar with the story of the 'Wolf-children of Midnapore'. Two small girls were reportedly found in a wolf den in Bengal in 1920. They walked on all four like animals, preferred a diet of raw meat, howled like wolves and lacked any form of speech. Interestingly such incidents have been reported from other parts of the world too.

We have so far been talking about socialization and the new-born infant. But the birth of a child also alters the lives of those who are responsible for its upbringing. They too undergo new learning experiences. Becoming grandparents and parenting involves a whole set of activities and experiences. Older people still remain parents when they become grandparents, of course, thus forging another set of relationships connecting different generations with each other. Likewise the life of a young child changes with the birth of a sibling. Socialization is a life long process even though the most critical process happens in the early years, the stage of primary socialization. Secondary socialization as we saw extends over the entire life of a person.

4.2 PRESENTATION OF CONTENT:

The content of this lesson shall be presented as follows:

Socialization- An Overview

Process of Socialization

Agents of Socialization

4.2.1 SOCIAL CHANGE (SOCIALIZATION)- AN OVERVIEW:

The term socialization is used by sociologists, social psychologists and educationalists to refer to the process of learning one's culture and how to live within it. For the individual it provides the resources necessary for acting and participating within their society. For the society, inducting all individual members into its moral norms, attitudes, values, motives, social roles, language and symbols is the 'means by which social and cultural continuity are attained'.

FORMS OF SOCIALIZATION

Sociologists may distinguish six kinds of socialization:

Reverse socialization

Developmental socialization

Primary socialization

Secondary socialization

Anticipatory socialization

Resocialization

Primary socialization is the process whereby people learn the attitudes, values, and actions appropriate to individuals as members of a particular culture. For example if a child saw their mother expressing a discriminatory opinion about a minority group, then that child may think this behaviour is acceptable and could continue to have this opinion about minority groups.

Secondary socialization refers to process of learning what is appropriate behavior as a member of a smaller group within the larger society. It is usually associated with teenagers and adults, and involves smaller changes than those occurring in primary socialization. For eg. entering a new profession, relocating to a new environment or society.

Developmental socialization is the process of learning behavior in a social institution or developing your social skills.

Anticipatory socialization refers to the processes of socialization in which a person "rehearses" for future positions, occupations, and social relationships.

Resocialization refers to the process of discarding former behavior patterns and accepting new ones as part of a transition in one's life. This occurs throughout the human life cycle. Resocialization can be an intense experience, with the individual experiencing a sharp break with their past, and needing to learn and be exposed to radically different norms and values. An example might be the experience of a young man or woman leaving home to join the military.

Agents of socialization are the people and groups that influence our self-concept, emotions, attitudes, and behavior.

Family is responsible for, among other things, determining one's attitudes toward religion and establishing career goals.

The school is the agency responsible for socializing groups of young people in particular skills and values in society.

Peers refer to people who are roughly the same age and/or who share other social characteristics (e.g., students in a college class).

Theorists like Parsons and textbook writers like Ely Chinoy (1960) and Harry M. Johnson (1961) recognized that socialization didn't stop when childhood ended. They realized that socialization continued in adulthood but they treated it as a form of specialized education. Johnson (1961), for example, wrote about the importance of inculcating members of the US Coastguard with a set of values to do with responding to commands and acting in unison without question.

What these theorists of socialization didn't recognize was the importance of the mass media which, by the middle of the twentieth century were becoming more significant as a social force. There was concern about the link between television and the education and socialization of children – it continues today – but when it came to adults, the mass media were regarded merely as sources of information and entertainment rather than moulders of personality. They were wrong to overlook the importance of mass media in continuing to transmit the culture to adult members of society.

Some sociologists and theorists of culture have recognized the power of mass communication as a socialization device. Dennis McQuail recognizes the argument: "the media can teach norms and values by way of symbolic reward and punishment for different kinds of behaviour as represented in the media. An alternative view is that it is a learning process whereby we all learn how to behave in certain situations and the expectations which go with a given role or status in society. Thus the media are continually offering pictures of life and models of behaviour in advance of actual experience.

Human infants are born without any culture. Their parents, teachers, and others must transform them into cultural and socially adept animals. The general process of acquiring culture is referred to as socialization. During socialization, we learn the language of the culture we are born into as well as the roles we are to play in life. For instance, girls learn how to be daughters, sisters, friends, wives, and mothers. In addition, they learn about the occupational roles that their society has in store for them. We also learn and usually adopt our culture's norms through the socialization process. Norms are the conceptions of appropriate and expected behavior that are held by most members of the society. While socialization refers to the general process of acquiring culture, anthropologists use the term enculturation for the process of being socialized to a particular culture. You were enculturated to your specific culture by your parents and the other people who raised you.

Socialization is important in the process of personality formation. While much of human personality is the result of our genes, the socialization process can mold it in particular directions by encouraging specific beliefs and attitudes as well as selectively providing experiences. This very likely accounts for much of the difference between the common personality types in one society in comparison to another.

Successful socialization can result in uniformity within a society. If all children receive the same socialization, it is likely that they will share the same beliefs and expectations. This fact has been a strong motivation for national governments around the world to standardize education and make it compulsory for all children. Deciding what things will be taught and how they are taught is a powerful political tool for controlling people. Those who internalize the norms of society are less likely to break the law or to want radical social changes. In all societies, however, there are individuals who do not conform to culturally defined standards of normalcy because they were "abnormally" socialized, which is to say that they have not internalized the norms of society. These people are usually labeled by their society as deviant or even mentally ill.

Large-scale societies, such as the United States, are usually composed of many ethnic groups. As a consequence, early socialization in different families often varies in techniques, goals, and expectations. Since these complex societies are not culturally homogenous, they do not have unanimous agreement about what should be the shared norms. Not surprisingly, this national ambiguity usually results in more tolerance of social deviancy--it is more acceptable to be different in appearance, personality, and actions in such large-scale societies.

Socialization is a learning process that begins shortly after birth. Early childhood is the period of the most intense and the most crucial socialization. It is then that we acquire language and learn the fundamentals of our culture. It is also when much of our personality takes shape. However, we continue to be socialized throughout our lives. As we age, we enter new statuses and need to learn the appropriate roles for them.

We also have experiences that teach us lessons and potentially lead us to alter our expectations, beliefs, and personality. For instance, the experience of being raped is likely to cause a woman to be distrustful of others.

Looking around the world, we see that different cultures use different techniques to socialize their children. There are two broad types of teaching methods--formal and informal. Formal education is what primarily happens in a classroom. It usually is structured, controlled, and directed primarily by adult teachers who are professional "knowers." In contrast, informal

education can occur anywhere. It involves imitation of what others do and say as well as experimentation and repetitive practice of basic skills. This is what happens when children role-play adult interactions in their games.

SOCIALIZATION AND INDIVIDUAL FREEDOM: IT IS PERHAPS EVIDENT THAT SOCIALIZATION IN NORMAL CIRCUMSTANCES CAN NEVER COMPLETELY REDUCE PEOPLE TO CONFORMITY. MANY FACTORS ENCOURAGE CONFLICT. THERE MAY BE CONFLICTS BETWEEN SOCIALISING AGENCIES, BETWEEN SCHOOL AND HOME, BETWEEN HOME AND PEER GROUPS. HOWEVER SINCE THE CULTURAL SETTINGS IN WHICH WE ARE BORN AND COME TO MATURITY SO INFLUENCE OUR BEHAVIOUR, IT MIGHT APPEAR THAT WE ARE ROBBED OF ANY INDIVIDUALITY OR FREE WILL. SUCH A VIEW IS FUNDAMENTALLY MISTAKEN.

The fact that from birth to death we are involved in interaction with others certainly conditions our personalities, the values we hold, and the behaviour in which we engage. Yet socialization is also at the origin of our very individuality and freedom. In the course of socialization each of us develops a sense of self-identity, and the capacity for independent thought and action.

4.2.2 PROCESS OF SOCIAL CHANGE:

Social change can be defined as. "Social change is a process by which alteration take place in the structure and function of a social mechanism". Evolution and invention of new techniques, adaptation of new ideas is all example of social change. Alteration both in structure and function of social system occur as a result of such thing. Social change and development takes place in societies. The wheel of social change cannot be stopped. The process of social change starts when an innovation spread in a society. Social change accepted easily in some societies and some societies show rigidity in acceptance. The process of social change has few steps they are.

1. *Discovery*
2. *Invention*
3. *Innovation*
4. *Diffusion of innovation*
5. *Social change.*

Discovery is a shared human perception of an aspect of reality, which already exists. Discovery becomes a factor of social change only when it is put to use. A discovery adds something new to the culture because although this reality may always have existed it becomes part of the

culture. New combination of existing things (discoveries) is invention and it is a long process to invent anything.

One of the greatest pains of human nature is the pain of new idea. It makes you think after all, your favorite nation may be wrong, your firmest belief may be ill. It is naturally common men hate new ideas, and disposes more or less to ill. When we have an innovation, then it is time to diffuse it in society. There are a lot of ways to diffuse innovations in a society but most effective and popular are.

1. Communication channels.
2. Mass media.
3. Interpersonal communication.

After successful diffusion of innovation, we can see and feel the social change. **Discovery --> Invention --> Innovation --> Social change.**

THE PROCESS OF SOCIAL CHANGE:

Governments derive their direction from the visions of the people. As more and more of us decide to expand our identification to include our neighbors (and the whole Earth), not to preoccupy ourselves with enemies, and to reject violence, then we can and will release our unprecedented creativity to lead our peoples beyond war, toward our common future.

There are steps toward change. Step One is with people connecting -- engagement, with a new quality of listening with intent to learn. Dedication is to excellent communication and to each other. "Skipping steps" often is not successful.

As Innovators communicate and live the idea, it begins to gain social acceptability. The process begins to include a much larger segment of society- Early Adopters, including recognized leaders- embracing the idea.

At 20%, the idea is "unstoppable." Much work is still required, but it involves implementation rather than trying to convince people that the idea is worthy of consideration. In building the new sanctuary, this would be the point at which the structure is beginning to take shape and many people can envision its beauty, even though the project is far from finished.

Understanding this process of social change is important for two reasons. First, it explains how the impossible becomes possible. As more and more people adopt the new idea, the environment changes.

4.2.3 AGENTS OF SOCIAL CHANGE:

The child is socialized by several agencies and institutions in which she or he participates, viz. family, school, peer group, the neighbourhood, and the occupational group and by social class/caste, by region, by religion.

FAMILY:

Since family systems vary widely, the infants' experiences are by no means standard across cultures. While many of you may be living in what is termed a nuclear family with your parents and siblings, others may be living with extended family members. In the first case parents may be key socializing agents but in the others, grandparents, an uncle, a cousin may be more significant.

Families have varying 'locations' within the overall institutions of a society. In most traditional societies, the family into which a person is born largely determines the individual's social position for the rest of his or her life. Even when social position is not inherited at birth in this way the region and social class of the family into which an individual is born affect patterns of socialization quite sharply. Children pick up ways of behaviour characteristic of their parents or others in their neighbourhood or community.

Of course, few if any children simply take over in an unquestioning way the outlook of their parents. This is especially true in the contemporary world, in which change is so pervasive. Moreover, the very existence of a diversity of socializing agencies leads to many differences between the outlooks of children, adolescents and the parental generation. Can you identify any instance where you felt that what you learnt from the family was at variance from your peer group or maybe media or even school?

Peer Groups:

Another socializing agency is the peer group. Peer groups are friendship groups of children of a similar age. In some cultures, particularly small traditional societies, peer groups are formalized as age-grades. Even without formal age-grades, children over four or five usually spend a great deal of time in the company of friends of the same age. The word 'peer' means 'equal', and friendly relations established between young children do tend to be reasonably egalitarian.

A forceful or physically strong child may to some extent try to dominate others. Yet there is a greater amount of give and take compared to the dependence inherent in the family situation. Because of their power, parents are able (in varying degrees) to enforce codes of conduct upon their children. In peer groups, by contrast, a child discovers a different kind of interaction, within which rules of behaviour can be tested out and explored.

Peer relationships often remain important throughout a person's life. Informal groups of people of similar ages at work, and in other contexts, are usually of enduring importance in shaping individuals' attitudes and behaviour.

Schools:

Schooling is a formal process: there is a definite curriculum of subjects studied. Yet schools are agencies of socialization in more subtle respects too. Alongside the formal curriculum there is what some sociologists have called a hidden curriculum conditioning children's learning. There are schools in both India and South Africa where girls, but rarely boys, are expected to sweep their classroom. In some schools efforts are made to counter this by making boys and girls do those tasks that are normally not expected of them. Can you think of examples that reflect both trends?

Mass Media:

The mass media has increasingly become an essential part of our everyday lives. While today the electronic media like the television is expanding, the print media continues to be of great importance. Even in the early print media in nineteenth century India, 'conduct-books' instructing women on how to be better housekeepers and more attentive wives were popular in many languages.

The media can make the access to information more democratic. Electronic communication is something that can reach a village not connected by road to other areas and where no literacy centres have been set up.

There has been much research on the influence of television upon children and adults. A study in Britain showed that the time spent by children watching television is the equivalent of almost a hundred school days a year, and that adults are not far behind them. Apart from such quantitative aspects, what emerges from such research is not always conclusive in its implications. The link between on-screen violence and aggressive behaviour among children is still debated.

If one cannot predict how the media influences people, what is certain is the extent of the influence, in terms both of information and of exposure to areas of experience distant from one's own. There is a sizeable audience for Indian television serials and films in countries like Nigeria, Afghanistan and among émigrés from Tibet. The televised *Mahabharata* was aired after dubbing in Tashkent, but even without dubbing was watched in London by children who spoke only English!

Other Socializing Agencies:

Besides the socializing agencies mentioned, there are other groups, or social contexts, in which individuals spend large parts of their lives. Work is in all cultures an important setting within which socialization processes operate, although it is only in industrial societies that large numbers of people “go out to work” — that is, go each day to places of work quite separate from the home. In traditional communities many people tilled the land close to where they live, or had workshops in their dwellings.

4.3 SUMMARY:

- Socialization can be defined as the process whereby the helpless infant gradually becomes a self-aware, knowledgeable person, skilled in the ways of the culture into which s/he is born. Indeed without socialization an individual would not behave like a human being.
- Primary socialization is the process whereby people learn the attitudes, values, and actions appropriate to individuals as members of a particular culture. For example if a child saw their mother expressing a discriminatory opinion about a minority group, then that child may think this behaviour is acceptable and could continue to have this opinion about minority groups.
- Secondary socialization refers to process of learning what is appropriate behavior as a member of a smaller group within the larger society. It is usually associated with teenagers and adults, and involves smaller changes than those occurring in primary socialization. For eg. entering a new profession, relocating to a new environment or society.
- Developmental socialization is the process of learning behavior in a social institution or developing your social skills.
- Agents of socialization are the people and groups that influence our self-concept, emotions, attitudes, and behavior.

- Family is responsible for, among other things, determining one's attitudes toward religion and establishing career goals.
- The school is the agency responsible for socializing groups of young people in particular skills and values in society.
- Peers refer to people who are roughly the same age and/or who share other social characteristics (e.g., students in a college class).

4.4 KEY WORDS:

Socialization: Socialization can be defined as the process whereby the helpless infant gradually becomes a self-aware, knowledgeable person, skilled in the ways of the culture into which s/he is born. Indeed without socialization an individual would not behave like a human being.

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Peers: Peers refer to people who are roughly the same age and/or who share other social characteristics (e.g., students in a college class).

Great Tradition: It comprises of the cultural traits or traditions, which are written and widely accepted by the elites of a society who are educated and learned.

Little Tradition: It comprises of the cultural traits or traditions that are oral and operates at the village level.

Self Image: An image of a person as reflected in the eyes of others.

Social Roles: These are rights and responsibilities associated with a person's social position or status.

Subculture: It marks a group of people within a larger culture who borrow from and often distort, exaggerate or invert the symbols, values and beliefs of the larger culture to distinguish themselves.

4.5 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS:

1. What in your mind is the most effective agent of socialization for your generation? How do you think it was different before?

2. Is cosmopolitanism something you associate with modernity? Give examples of modernization.

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