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## **BLOCK 2 BASIC CONCEPTS**

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A concept is a word or phrase, which is abstract from actual experience and which, more or less, means the same thing to those entire familiar with it. A concept represents a class of phenomena. Thus, car is a concept, which signifies a vehicle of a particular kind. Once we are familiar with the concept of car, we do not always have to see it physically in order to know, what someone means by it. Similarly, a house or a table lamp is also concept. Concepts are necessary in every science since accuracy is achieved through them. Every scientific discipline is continuously developing a refined set of concepts, which, to those familiar with that discipline, will mean the same thing at all times. Sociology, too, has a large number of concepts, which are similarly understood by all sociologists. Here, we shall introduce you to some important sociological concepts. Many of these concepts, it will be noticed, are expressed in words or terms, which are of daily use. It is necessary to be careful with their sociological usage, because in sociology, these very terms are used in some special sense.

The block 3 of the Course, 'Introduction to Sociology-1' aims to provide the learners a basic understanding of the sociological concepts. This block is divided into four Units. Unit-1 discusses the basic concepts like society, community, association and institutions. The concept of social group and various aspects of culture are discussed in the Unit 2, as these are basics to society. We then discuss status and role in the Unit 3, which are crucial concepts. Further, we explain various facets of social norms of including its characteristics, need and importance of social norms in society and so on. The Unit 4 rounds off with explanations of power relations. This is an important Block for grasping some of the basic concepts of sociology.

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# UNIT 1 SOCIETY AND COMMUNITY, ASSOCIATIONS AND INSTITUTIONS

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## STRUCTURE

- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Learning Objectives
- 1.3 Society: Meaning and Definition
  - 1.3.1 Characteristics of Society
  - 1.3.2 Differences between Human Society and Non-Human Society
- 1.4 Concept of Community
  - 1.4.1 Meaning and Definition:
  - 1.4.2. Elements of Community
  - 1.4.3 Difference between Society and Community
- 1.5 Concept of Institution
  - 1.5.1 Meaning and Definition
  - 1.5.2 Characteristics
  - 1.5.3 Types of Institution
- 1.6 Concept of Association
  - 1.6.1. Meaning and Definition
  - 1.6.2. Characteristics
- 1.7 Let Us Sum Up
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- 1.9 Check Your Progress: Answer Keys
- 1.10 Model Questions
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## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

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Sociology focuses on the study of man within a social environment. Society provides a social environment. It shall be sufficient here to say that society provides a social environment with some definite boundaries. Man is a social animal. He/she lives with many other people in a society and becomes member of different community and associations. Thus, the study of Society is of utmost importance in Society. In the previous Block, we have learnt about the relationship between Sociology and other Social Sciences. In this unit, we shall discuss the basic concepts in Sociology such as Society, Community, Institution, Association, so on and so forth.

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## 1.2 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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After going through this unit, you will be able to

- understand the meaning and characteristics of Society
- explain the concept of Community
- identify the differences between Society and Community
- understand the meaning and characteristics of Institution
- explain the concept of Institution.

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## 1.3 SOCIETY: MEANING AND DEFINITION

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The concept of society has been defined in several ways by various sociologists. Let us read some of these definitions:

*“A society is a collection of individuals united by certain relations and modes of behaviour which mark them off from others who do not enter into these relations or who differ from them in behaviour” – Ginsberg.*

*“Society is a “web of social relations which is always changing.”- MacIver.*

To understand these definitions, let us now read the following:

The term ‘society’ has been derived from the Latin word ‘*Socius*’ meaning companionship or friendship. Friends have a relationship between them. Similarly, there is some relationship between parents and children, between teacher and students, between the shopkeeper and the customer, between the government and the governed, the State and the citizens, etc. These are some of the different types of relationships. You have many people around you with whom you talk, act and do many other things. You have friends, parents, siblings, relatives, etc. You buy things from shopkeeper, eat in a hotel etc. Thus, you too have many and different types of relationship with people around you. These are the people whom you might meet, see, and talk to everyday or sometimes. You may even have relationship with people whom you might never meet or talk to. The common feature in all these relations is that you are ‘behaving’ with them and they too are ‘behaving’ with you. In order to behave with others, it is important to follow some common rules of behaviour. Then only will you know how to behave with others and others will know how to behave back. And, thus, you all will be able to understand each other. It is these common rules of behaviour and the behaviour of the people that make social relationship possible.

When there are social relations of various kinds between two or among many people, all the people together become a group. They are members of a social group. There are many groups, which also have relationship between them just as individuals have between them. All these individuals and groups have social relationships among them. They all follow some common rules of behaviour or conduct. And they form a bigger group. They consider those following these rules and behaving accordingly as members of this big group. This big group is called a society. In a society, there are many smaller groups as well.

In a society, the relationships are long lasting and enduring. Thus, a society is a long lasting social group.

### ACTIVITY 1.1

Do you think yourself as member of your society? Give a reason.

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Explain briefly about society in your own words.

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.....

By now we have come to know of the following:

- A society is, thus, a big group having many individuals and smaller groups.
- The individuals and groups interact among themselves.
- They follow some common rules of behaviour.
- They have social relations among them all.
- All the individuals and groups consider themselves as members of the society.
- The society is long lasting.

### 1.3.1 Characteristics of Society

So far we have discussed the basic meaning of the term society and also some of its basic characteristics or features. There are some more important characteristics of the society. Let us discuss them briefly —

- **Society consists of people and groups:** Society is a large group. Its smallest unit is the individual. Individuals in turn are organized in groups. A society comprises individuals and various groups.
- **Social relation:** We have already discussed social relation and the way social relationship lead to the formation of a society. Now, we shall learn that the individuals are organized in a web of social relationship. Likewise, the groups also are organized in a web of relationship. Web means a network. A spider builds a cobweb where every point or part is linked to every other part directly or indirectly. A cobweb is like a network. Similarly in a society, every individual and every group is linked and related to every other part of the society.
- **Social interaction:** In social relation, there also is social interaction. Social interaction means that one person acts and the other person reacts or acts back. When you buy things in a shop, you perform the act of paying the shopkeeper for the items you want to buy. The shopkeeper in return performs the act of selling you the items you paid for. This is interaction and is based on the common rules of the society. These are common rules because both of you along with others in the society have accepted and accordingly, are behaving. These lead to social interaction and social relation among people. In the example above, there are social relations between you as a customer and the other person as the shop keeper. Social interaction and Social relation are therefore a two-way traffic.
- **Mutual awareness:** It means that a person needs to be aware that there are other persons besides him/her and that his/her actions affect others. Similarly,

the actions of others also affect him/her. Hence, they need to behave in ways that are understood by others. This is mutual awareness. It is because of this awareness that people develop social relations.

- **Society fulfils social needs:** Every person has some individual needs like the need for food, shelter, clothing, need for affection, friendship, etc. Many of our needs are better fulfilled when people live together and work together with each other. For example: to build a house, it is convenient when many people do it together. This makes us all dependent on each other. Thus, we all are interdependent in many ways. This is our social need. Society, thus, fulfils our social needs. It also becomes important that we can maintain this interdependence. Otherwise, society will cease to exist.

### LET US KNOW

In modern times, we find that the farmer grows crops, sells the grains in the market by which he earns his livelihood. The crop in the market is bought by the wholesaler who in turn sells them to the retailer. He gets a profit, which is his income. The retailer then sells it to us and we buy the grains from them for our food. The retailer also earns some income and we get our food. Here, we see a long chain of relationship among various people and that; everyone in the line is dependent on each other. If the farmer does not grow crop we do not get food. If the wholesaler and the retailer do not buy and sell the grains, we will not get our food either. On the other hand, the farmer, the wholesaler and retailer also do not earn money if they do not buy and sell. Thus, we all are interdependent with some, we are directly dependent and with some others, we are indirectly dependent.

- **Cooperation among individuals and groups:** The above characteristics tell us that in the society, individuals and groups cooperate with one other. Without this cooperation, there will be no relation among the different parts of a society. Therefore, cooperation is one aspect of social relation.
- **Disagreement and conflict in society:** In every society, there is some degree of conflict. Even in your family, you may sometimes have some disagreement with your parents or even your siblings. Similarly, in our interactions outside the family, we may have conflict and disagreement with others, such as between employer and employee, customers and shopkeepers, etc. But despite such conflicts and disagreements, the relationship continues. Conflict is normal in a society. But only when the conflict becomes too serious that the relation may fail and break. Therefore, we can call “society is cooperation crossed by conflict.” Conflict also is one form of social relation.
- **Social differentiation:** In your family, you find that the rights and duties of your parents are different from those of yours and your siblings. This means that you all have different positions in the family. The positions of parents are different from those of the children and also the father’s position differs from that of the mother. You may also find that your position is different from that of your brothers and sisters. Likewise, the position of a doctor is different from that of a patient. In Sociology, position is termed as status of which we shall

learn more about a little later in this unit. It shows that in society there are different statuses. This is termed as social differentiation.

- **Social control:** For a society to continue, it is important that there is less of disagreement and conflict within it. As such, there need to be rules of behaviour and the people need to behave according to the rules they lay down. But sometimes, people violate (disobey) the rules and this leads to problems and disagreement in the society. In order that this does not happen, the society also lays down different means of controlling social behaviour. This is termed as social control. When someone does something wrong, there are always people as parents, friends, siblings, elders and others to correct the behaviour of the person. Society even has police to check deviant behaviour. These are some of the means of social control.
- **Society is dynamic:** This means that the society is ever changing. Have you noticed how your society has changed in the last ten years? There is no society that does not change. No society is static. Ever since humans emerged on earth they have been living in societies and societies have been changing.
- **Culture:** Culture is the way of life of a society. The rules that people make and follow, the means of social control, language, the way people eat, dress, talk, and think, the type of houses people make are parts of culture. Culture is thus, everything that people learn in society and do in society. Every society thus has its own culture.

These are some of the important characteristics of society. There are still other characteristics of society, but these are some of the basic ones.

**ACTIVITY 1.2**

Do you observe any of these characteristics in your society? Mention one or two of them.

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Have you noticed any change in your society in the last ten years? Mention two.

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### 1.3.2 Differences between Human Society and Non-Human Society

Many non-human beings such as ants, baboons, apes, elephants, etc. live together in groups and have specific patterns of behavior. Each member of the group behaves in some specific manner and there is co-ordination and co-operation in their behavior. In this regard, they also have society. But their society is different from the human society. Let us now understand these differences—

Unlike the human society, the society of non-human is static, i.e. its way of life does not change. The way the elephants behave or act today is same as they behaved or acted thousands of years ago. But in these several thousands of years, human society has changed from simple hunting gathering life style to that of modern society and man has even reached the outer space.

Man has culture. We learn social behavior and our social rules from our parents, friends, from school and people around us. We also pass it on to our younger ones and others around us. But animals behave by instinct. Even if some animals such as dogs learn new behavior from us yet, they cannot pass it on to others. This ability to pass on learned behavior and culture is unique to human beings only. Human society has culture and non-human society does not. Thus, after having studied about society we have learnt that:

- Man is a social animal and need to live in groups. Society fulfils human needs.
- It makes way for organized life.
- It is within society and with culture that men have developed from a simple life style to a modern complex life style.
- It helps us to understand how people behave in society.
- It helps us to know how people are arranged in different statuses in the society.
- That every society is dynamic.
- That culture is unique to human society.

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## 1.4 CONCEPT OF COMMUNITY

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The term community is used to refer to a wide variety of specific social units. In common parlance, the word, 'community' is used for a collection of people who do related kinds of work, such as the teachers' community' or the doctors' community. It is also used to denote a collection of people who share something in common as the 'Hindu community' or the 'Christian community' etc.

### 1.4.1 Meaning and Definition:

In Sociological literature, the word 'Community' refers directly to types of population settlements, such as rural community or urban community, to supposedly ideal typical ways of life in such places, and to social networks whose members share common characteristics apart from or in addition to common location. According to sociologists Mac Iver and Page, *"Whenever the members of any group, small or large, live together in such a way that they share not this or that particular interest, but the basic condition of a common life, we called that group a community."* For Bogardus, *"a community is a social group with some degree of the feeling and living in a given area."*

Community is, therefore, a geographical area having common centers of interests and activities. A community is essentially an area of social living. It is marked by some degree of social coherence.

Thus, community is a circle in which common life is living. It includes in itself all our social relationships. It includes a variety of associations and institutions. Within the range of a community, the members may carry on their economic, religious, political, educational and other activities. Hence, community is the total organization of social life within limited space. Examples: village, town, tribe, city and district.

### 1.4.2 Elements of Community

Community has some basic elements or characteristics as those given below –

- **Group or persons:** A community consists of a group of individuals. They live in a particular geographical area with ‘we feeling’ relations.
- **Locality:** A community always occupies a territorial area. The strong bond of solidarity that we find among the members of a community is derived from the conditions of locality living in a definite geographical area. Living together facilitates people to develop social contacts, gives protection, safety and security. It helps the members to promote and fulfil their common interests. Locality continues to be a basic factor of community life. However, in modern times the local bond of community is weakened by the development of the means of transport and communication. In fact, the extension of communication is itself the condition of a larger but still territorial community.
- **Community sentiment:** Locality is not enough to create a community. There must be the common living with its awareness of sharing a common way of life. The members develop a sense of ‘we feeling’. It means a kind of identification, a sense of awareness, a sense of living and sharing some common interests in life. Without these there cannot be any community.
- **Stability:** A community has not only locality and community sentiment, but also has stability. It is not a temporary group like a crowd or a mob. It is relatively stable. It includes a permanent group life in a definite place.
- **Natural and Normal:** A community cannot be made or created. By birth individuals become its members. Communities are spontaneous in their origin and development.
- **Size of community:** There is no any bar about the size of community. It may be big or small in size. A city or village or a district may be the size of community. There are communities within a community. Hence, there may be some small and some big communities.
- **Regulation of relations:** In every community, there are some systems which are known as customs, traditions, morals etc. This helps to regulate the relations of its members.

In modern times, the community sentiment of the members is gradually changing because the interests of people are diverse and complex. It is due to industrialization, urbanization, advancement of science and technology and the development of means of transport and communication.

### 1.4.3 Difference between Society and Community

Society and Community both are related to each other. Both society and community are considered on the basis of human relations, yet there are some differences between the two. Some of the differences of both the term society and community are given below:

**Society:** Society is a web of social relationship. A definite geographical area is not an essential aspect of society. Society is abstract. Community sentiment or ‘we-feeling’ may not be present in a society. In a society, there may be several communities. It

involves both likenesses and differences. Common and diverse interests are present in society.

**Community:** Community consists of a group of individuals living in a particular geographical area with we-feeling relations. It is concrete and community sentiment is an essential feature of community. Interests and objectives are not more extensive and varied. Likeness is essential and more important. Common agreement of interests and objectives are the part of community.

**ACTIVITY 1.3**

‘Man is a Social animal’ – Write the meaning of this statement in your own words.

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## **1.5 CONCEPT OF INSTITUTION**

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Institution is an established way of behaving or an established form of procedure. It consists of all the structural components of a society through which the main concerns and activities are organized and social needs are fulfilled.

### **1.5.1 Meaning and Definition**

The term ‘institution’ has been given various interpretations. According to Mac Iver and Page, institutions may be defined as the “*established forms or conditions of procedure characteristic of group activity*”. Arnold Green has defined institution as the “organization of several folkways and mores into a unit which serves a number of social functions”.

From the above definitions, it is seen that an institution means some rules, regulations, folkways and mores which are gradually developed and obeyed by the society.

### **1.5.2 Characteristics**

The main characteristics of institution are –

- Institutions come into being due to the collective activities of the people. They are essentially social in nature.
- Institutions exist in all the societies and have existed at all the stages of social development.
- Institutions are considered as sanctioning norms. It prescribes the way of doing things.
- Institutions are not external, visible or tangible things. They are abstract.
- Institutions help to satisfy some basic and vital needs of man.
- Institutions control the behaviour of individuals.
- Institutions are mostly permanent in nature.

### 1.5.3 Types of Institution

Institutions are often classified into **Primary institutions** and **Secondary institutions**. The most basic institutions which are found even in primitive societies like religion, family, marriage etc. are primary in character. As societies grew in size and complexity, institutions became progressive and more differentiated. Accordingly, a large number of institutions are evolved to cater to the secondary need of people. They may be called secondary institutions, such as education, law, constitution, parliamentary procedure, business etc.

#### Check Your Progress Exercise 1.1

**Note:**

- I. Write your answer in the space given below.
- II. Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this Unit

**Q1:** Is community temporary in nature?

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**Q2:** What are institutions?

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## 1.6 CONCEPT OF ASSOCIATION

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Man as a social being has so many interests, needs, wants and problems. To fulfill the desires of the individuals in a society, sometimes individual efforts are sufficient for them and sometimes they have to cooperate with others. Co-operation and mutual assistance are essential in an association.

### 1.6.1 Meaning and Definition

Association is an arrangement for working together by a group to achieve some specified purpose or purposes. The emphasis is on organization and its aims. It differs from community in several ways. Its membership is limited by the nature of its aim. An association is an arrangement which may be temporary or permanent. MacIver and Page defined Association as “*an organization deliberately formed for the collective pursuit of some interest or a set of interests, which its members share.*” According to Morris Ginsberg, “*An association is a group of social beings related to one another by the fact that they possess or have instituted in common an organization with a view to securing a specific end or specific ends.*”

Men have several interests. Hence, they establish different associations to fulfil them. They have a number of associations of different kinds, such as, Political association

(The Bharatiya Janata Party, The congress Party etc.) Socio-Religious association (The Ramkrishna Misson, the Arya Samaj etc.) and so on.

### 1.6.2 Characteristics of Association

The main characteristics of Association are –

- Formal membership.
- Fixed rules and procedures to follow.
- Definite goals and deliberate interests.
- The duties are legally bound.
- It is voluntary in service and also in membership.
- Rights and duties for the members.

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## 1.7 LET US SUM UP

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- A society is a collection of individuals united by certain relations and modes of behaviour which mark them off from others who do not enter into these relations or who differ from them in behavior
- The term ‘society’ has been derived from the Latin word ‘*Socius*’ meaning companionship or friendship
- In a society, the relationships are long lasting and enduring. Thus, a society is a long lasting social group
- ‘Community’ is used for a collection of people who do related kinds of work, such as the teachers’
- Community is, therefore, a geographical area having common centers of interests and activities
- Institution is an established way of behaving or an established form of procedure
- Institution means some rules, regulations, folkways and mores which are gradually developed and obeyed by the society.
- Institutions are often classified into **Primary institutions** and **Secondary institutions**
- An association is an arrangement which may be temporary or permanent
- Association is an arrangement for working together by a group to achieve some specified purpose or purposes

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## 1.8 GLOSSARY

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<b>Association</b>	: a group of people organized for a particular purpose.
<b>Community</b>	: a group of people living within a limited geographical area having common interest.
<b>Community Sentiment</b>	: a feeling of belonging together
<b>Institution</b>	: an organized system with collective behavior having common rules and procedures to meet certain needs of the society

**Society** : a group of people who live in a defined geographical area who interact with one another and who share a common culture

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## 1.9 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS: ANSWER KEYS

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**Ans to Q1:** A Community is not a temporary group. It is relatively stable and permanent in nature.

**Ans to Q2:** In Simple words, Institution means some rules, regulations, folkways and mores which are gradually developed and obeyed by the society.

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## 1.10 MODEL QUESTIONS

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**A) Short Questions** (Answer each question in about 150 words)

Q1: What is Society? How is human society different from a non-human society?

Q2: Distinguish between Society and Community.

Q3: Define Institution. State the differences between Institution and Association.

**B) Long Questions** (Answer each question in about 300-500 words)

Q1: Define Community. Explain its characteristics.

Q2: Discuss the characteristic features of Society.

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## 1.11 REFERENCES

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## **UNIT 2 SOCIAL GROUPS AND CULTURE**

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### **STRUCTURE**

- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Learning Objectives
- 2.3 Meaning of Social Group
  - 2.3.1 Characteristics of Social Group
  - 2.3.2 Types of Social Group
    - 2.3.2.1 Primary Social Group
    - 2.3.2.2 Secondary Social Group
    - 2.3.2.3 Differences between Primary and Secondary Social Group
    - 2.3.2.4 In-Group and Out-Group
    - 2.3.2.5 Reference Group
    - 2.3.2.6 Organized Group and Unorganized Group
    - 2.3.2.7 Voluntary and Involuntary Group
    - 2.3.2.8 Quasi Group
- 2.4 Concept of Culture
- 2.5 Nature of Culture
  - 2.5.1 Characteristics of Culture
  - 2.5.2 Paradoxes of Culture
  - 2.5.3 Functions of Culture
  - 2.5.4 Universals of Culture
- 2.6 Types of Culture
- 2.7 Culture and Personality
- 2.8 Culture and Civilization
- 2.9 Let Us Sum Up
- 2.10 Glossary
- 2.11 Check Your Progress: Answer Keys
- 2.12 Model Questions
- 2.13 References

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### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

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In the previous Unit, we have already learnt the concept of society and other basic concepts. People in a society behave according to social norms and through the statuses they occupy. While behaving in society, people form groups. If you observe your own society, you will find the existence of a wide variety of social groups. People behave

as members of various groups. Social groups have some socially defined purposes and relatively stable patterns of social relation. In the process, social groups enable the varied interests of society to be met. Like the term, society there is another term, culture, which is often used in our day do day discussions. Both society and culture are interrelated concepts. Every society has its culture. Culture includes all the rules, ideas, norms, social behaviour and the material objects made and used by members of the society.

In this Unit, we will learn about social group: its various types, purposes, significance in the society and about group behavior and will also discuss about the concept of culture, its characteristics and types. We will also briefly discuss, in this unit, the relationship between culture and personality and culture and civilization.

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## **2.2 LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

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

- explain how Social groups are formed and the importance of Social groups in Society
- explain the structure of different Social groups
- discuss the objectives behind formation of different social groups.
- explain the concept of culture
- discuss the nature of culture
- identify the types of culture
- explain the relation of culture with personality
- identify the relationship between culture and civilization.

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## **2.3 SOCIAL GROUP: MEANING AND DEFINITION**

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A social group is a collection of individuals who interact with one another and who recognize themselves as a distinct social unit. Sociologist Marshall Jones defines social group as the unit of “*two or more people between whom there is an established pattern of interaction.*” The above two definitions of social group present several inherent characteristics of the social group.

### **2.3.1 Characteristics of Social Group**

- A social group is an aggregate of individuals.
- Members of a group share some common goals or purposes. Among the members of a social group, frequent interactions take place.
- These interactions assume some stable patterns.
- Such interaction leads to sharing of values and of beliefs among the members.
- This makes them identify themselves with one another.
- Such common identification leads to attachments and group solidarity.
- These give an “objective” existence to the groups. The group becomes a definite entity with a distinct subculture.

Social groups are important both to their members and to the society at large. Some of them are the most stable and enduring of social units and form the foundation of a

society. In that sense, a family, a village, a political party, a trade union are all social groups.

### **Differences of a Social Group with an Aggregate and Category**

A **social group** is distinct from an aggregate. An **aggregate** is simply a collection of anonymous people who happen to be at the same place at the same time such as the viewers at a cinema hall, shoppers at a market, a crowd, etc. They are gathered there either for individual and separate purposes or for a very limited common purpose as watching a movie or cricket match, all of which are of very short term nature. Hence, the interaction of the people in an aggregate is very temporary. As such, no definite and enduring pattern of behaviour or relation develops among the people in an aggregate. The people walk in and out of the aggregate. It is a short term phenomenon. Thus, an aggregate is not a social group. A social group has an enduring social existence with set goals, set patterns of behaviour and a feeling of group solidarity. An aggregate is sociologically significant because the aggregate has the potentiality to conduct such collective behaviour that may have an impact in the institutionalized behaviour of the society. As for example, the rioting and lootings committed by an aggregate like a crowd, the spreading of rumor within an aggregate, panic and hysteria occurring within an aggregate etc. can all have important social consequences.

A **category** is a collection of people sharing characteristics like education, social status, physical characteristics, etc. Common categories include subdivisions of gender, age, race, occupation, education, people below poverty line etc. Even victims of violence, people with tall stature, etc. constitute a category. Categories are so broad that enduring social relations based on specified common goals usually does not occur. This is the difference between categories and social groups. But the commonalities of the people in a category may provide sections of them the necessary base to constitute social groups. The section has to limit the scope of its expanse to form a group. As for example, the doctors of a specific region may form a doctors' association to work on their interests.

#### **LET US KNOW**

- A society is a system of social relationship and not simply a collection of human beings. People living in a society are members of that society i.e., membership is compulsory.
- Social groups are different from social classes, or status groups or crowds, which do not have the structure. They are categories and aggregates.

### **2.3.2 TYPES OF SOCIAL GROUP**

In society, we find that various types of social groups are formed with a view to realizing certain goals. Depending on their size and structure, purpose of formation, strength of relationship between the members, etc., social groups have been classified in various ways by various social scientists. Some of such important classifications are discussed below.

### 2.3.2.1 Primary Social Group

According to the degree of closeness of the members, social groups are often classified into two broad categories—namely primary and secondary.

In Sociology, the Primary Group refers to a social group that shares close and personal relations among the members. For example, our family, neighborhood, etc. A Primary group is a typically small social group. The members of such groups share concern for one another; they share activities and culture pattern, and spend long periods of time together.

Family is the basic primary group that is almost universal in all societies

The following are the basic characteristics of a primary group:

- Primary groups are mainly informal and members freely interact face to face with each other spontaneously without observing any formalities.
- Primary groups are smaller in size and, therefore, effective relationship between the members is possible.
- Primary groups are stable in nature and, therefore, relatively permanent.
- In a primary group, self-interest of the members is secondary; common interest comes first.

In primary groups the relations among the members are personal. It means that almost all the aspects of the personal life of its members are a concern to the other. This nature of intimate social involvement among the members make the relation informal and relatively long term. Since it involves the entire person, the withdrawal of one person changes the composition of the group. As for example, in a group comprising of spouses, if one withdraws the group ceases to exist.

### 2.3.2.2 Secondary Social Group

Now, since we know what a primary group is, it would not be difficult for us to define a secondary group. We have already stated that members of a primary group are closely related. In a secondary group, however, members have a lesser level of personal relations than a primary group. People in a **Secondary group** interact on a less personal level than in a primary group, and their relationships are temporary rather than long lasting. Since secondary groups are established to perform functions, roles of the members are more interchangeable. In a society, every person is performing roles.

From this definition, it follows that:

- Secondary groups are usually larger in size e.g. political parties, trade unions and corporations, international associations, etc.
- Membership in the case of secondary groups is mainly voluntary. Individuals are at liberty to join or to go away from the groups. However, there are some secondary groups like the State whose membership is almost involuntary.
- Physical proximity is not a character of the Secondary group. There are secondary groups, which are not limited to any definite area like Rotary

International and Lions Club, etc. The members of such groups are scattered over a vast area.

- Secondary groups are constituted to realize some specific interests or ends. Because of this, they are also sometimes called special interest groups. Members of the group are united because they have specific ends to aim at.
- Sometimes these specific aims and interests may be achieved within a short span of time. Once these are fulfilled, the group dissolves or may transform into some other groups with newer aims, goals and rules. For example, an enquiry committee set by a government to probe into a matter is a temporary social group. Once the enquiry is complete and the final report submitted to the government, the committee gets dissolved. Some groups as Rotary International, BCCI, etc. have long lasting interest and aims and these continue for a much longer time.
- Contacts and communications in the case of secondary groups are mostly indirect. Mass media of communication such as radio, telephone, television, newspaper, movies, magazines and post and telegraph are resorted to by the members to have communication.
- As secondary groups are bigger in size, the members of the group usually do not stay together and, therefore, the relations among the members are indirect, impersonal and non-inclusive.
- Since the group is status and role specific, and the occupants of the status are of instrumental significance, the group is not dependent upon a person but rather on status. When an occupant of the status leaves, it may be occupied by another one and the group continues. Secondary groups are structure based and a change in occupants does not change its structure.

### **2.3.2.3 Differences between Primary and Secondary Social Group**

From what we have discussed above, it is clear that both primary and secondary groups have some differences. In the following table, some of the differences between the primary and secondary groups have been serialized.

#### **Primary group**

- The sizes of the groups are usually small.
- They originate naturally and spontaneously.
- Face to face intimate relationship between the members.
- Communication between the members is direct and quick.
- Members are united for common interest and common welfare. Individual interest is secondary.
- Membership in a primary group is mandatory.
- Members cooperate with each other directly and work together in critical situations.
- As these groups are spontaneous, the status, powers and functions of the members are not regulated by any formal rules or procedure.
- The group has effective control over their members, although, means of control is informal.

## Secondary group

- Sizes are big.
- They are created purposefully with certain aims.
- Formal and less-intimate relationship between the members.
- Communication between the members is not always direct as they spread over a large area.
- Members join secondary groups to realize their own interest. That is why secondary groups are also called ‘special interest groups.’
- Membership is voluntary.
- Cooperation is mostly indirect and even in critical situations cooperation is not spontaneous.
- The status, powers and functions of each member are formally laid down in rules and regulations.
- The group has only limited control, although, they have laid down rules and regulations.

Despite these differences, we find that primary groups develop within the secondary groups and they influence the dynamics and functioning of a secondary group. Within a trade union and political party, groups of friends develop. Primary groups serve as a buffer between the individual and the larger society and secondary groups. We find the way our family and friends enable and support our interaction with the larger society. They facilitate our participation in secondary groups as schools, colleges, etc.

### ACTIVITY 2.1

Make a list of three secondary groups of which you are a member.

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Note four differences you observe between your primary groups and your secondary groups.

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### Check Your Progress Exercise 2.1

#### Note:

- I. Write your answer in the space given below.
- II. Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this Unit.

**Q.1:** Is Social Group an aggregate?

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**Q.2:** What is a Category?

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**Q.3:** Give an example of Primary group.  
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.....

**Q.4:** What is the nature of relation in a Secondary group?  
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.....  
.....

#### **2.3.2.4 In-Group and Out-Group**

In sociology, we find another set of groups known as **in- group** and **out- group**. Both these groups exist with reference to the opposite group. If an in-group exists, then there must be an out-group. In other words, there cannot be an in-group if there is no out-group or vice versa.

The term in-group in Sociology refers to a group of people who are united by common beliefs, attitudes, or interests by which they identify themselves. The attachment of the members of the in-group is the outcome of their hatred for or opposition towards another group known as out-group.

For example, for a group of cricket lovers, all others who love cricket constitute an in-group, while members of hockey or football lovers constitute their out-groups. This concept of in-group and out-group can further be simplified with the help of Sociologist Horton and Hunt's definition. The groups to which a person can say "my group" are his/or her in-groups e.g. my family, my clan, my religion, my state etc. The person belongs to all these groups which he refers as 'my group', while the other's family, other's clan, other's religion etc. to which he or she does not belong are out-group for him or her.

Sometimes, in-group out-group relationship may overlap. For example, members belonging to a town, irrespective of their caste, creed, religion, etc. constitute an in-group and other town dwellers constitute their out-groups. But when the same town dwellers consider their caste group, all the persons belonging to their caste spread over several towns constitute their caste in-group. This happens because the same person may be members of various groups.

Members of an in-group are loyal to the group members. They help each other in times of need and do everything to achieve superiority over their out-group.

The in-group members always believe that their group is the best and most dependable. An excommunication of a member from the group, therefore, affects the member badly.

### **2.3.2.5 Reference Group**

Reference group is another type of social group which as the name suggests, acts as a frame of reference to which people always refer to evaluate their achievements, their role performance, aspirations and ambitions. According to the sociologists Ogburn and Nimkoff, “*groups which serve as points of comparison are known as reference groups.*” Eminent sociologist, Merton defined reference groups as “*those groups which are the referring points of the individuals, towards which he is oriented and which influences his opinion, tendency and behaviour*”.

The individual is surrounded by countless reference groups. In some situations, an individual despite belonging to his own group likes to be identified as members of another group. For him or her, this second group is ideal and acts as a reference group. In a society, we find various classes of people. People always try to achieve the rank and characteristics of a higher class. Economically weaker sections always attempt to become economically stronger, that is to say, that they aspire to be identified as persons belonging to elite sections of the society. In this context, elite group may be considered as a reference group for the person belonging to the economically weaker group.

### **2.3.2.6 Organized Group and Unorganized Group**

Depending on the degree of organisation, groups may be classified into organized group and unorganized group. An organized group is one which comes into being through some systematically formulated norms to realize some definite objectives. Such groups are sometimes called associational groups. Organized groups are of various sizes, it may be as small as a family and also as big as political party or trade unions.

Unorganized groups come into existence suddenly without any careful planning. They are unorganized because they do not follow any specific norms or have any specific objectives to realize. The group members in an unorganized group are not loyal or sympathetic to each other. In most cases, they do not know each other. Such unorganized groups are temporary in nature. Crowds watching a football match or cricket match or cultural night, mobs engaged in vandalism or demonstrating physical power, etc. are examples of unorganized group. Some sociologists would prefer to term such groups as aggregates rather than social groups. Regulatory norms are absent in the case of these groups.

### **2.3.2.7 Voluntary and Involuntary Group**

Depending on the nature of joining a group by its members, groups can be divided into voluntary groups and involuntary groups. Voluntary groups are those whose membership is not mandatory – one may join it or may not join it. A person may join an art group to pursue his/ her interest. Such groups are voluntary groups. But there are groups, the membership of which is mandatory. A person is a member of his/her own clan. A student is a member of his school / college students’ union. These groups are termed an involuntary group.

### 2.3.2.8 Quasi Group

A quasi group is not organized or structured. It is a collection of members who do not actually know or feel that they have some common purposes. Bottomore defines Quasi group as “*an aggregate which lacks structure or organisation and whose members may be unaware or less aware of the existence of grouping.*” In that sense, each age and sex group of a population constitutes a quasi-group. Similarly, classes or status group in a society also is an example of quasi group.

#### Check Your Progress Exercise 2.2

**Note:**

- I. Write your answer in the space given below.
- II. Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this Unit

**Q.5:** Are Unorganized groups permanent in nature?

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.....

**Q6:** Distinguish between Voluntary and Involuntary Group.

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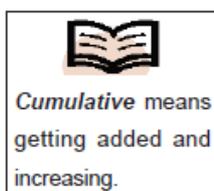
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## 2.4 CONCEPT OF CULTURE

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By now, we have come to know that we all live in a society and we are all social beings. Whatever we do in society, right from waking up in the morning to the way we sleep at night are all the various aspects of culture. What we eat, the way we eat, we dress, talk, believe, write, and the ways we think are some examples of the different aspects of culture. Although there are individual differences in these ways, yet these differences are culturally defined. This leads us to the question, ‘what is culture?’

In 1871, E. B. Tylor had given a broad definition of culture which is widely used even today. “*Culture.....is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, arts, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.*”

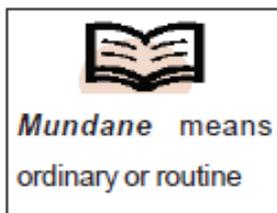


Coon defines culture as “*the sum total of the ways in which human beings live, transmitted from generation to generation by learning.*”

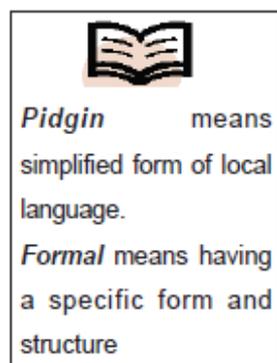
Malinowski defined culture as the “*cumulative creation of man.*”

Culture, thus, means everything that human beings learn and act as a member of society. We all are members of a society. As a member of society, we need to formulate rules that are more or less accepted for shared social life and accordingly, we need to behave. We also identify and define ways of making and using

material things in society. All these together constitute culture. Culture is the sum total of the learnt ways of living, and of doing of the entire society. It is also viewed as an instrument or tool that people use for social survival.



Most of these rules, behaviours, and the material things have *mundane* applicability and are *mundane* occurrences of our day to day life such as the way we walk, talk, eat, and dress etc. Some have occasional applicability as the Presidential speech on India's Republic day, the Bihu festivals, etc.



All these are components of culture. We find that people in different parts of Assam speak Assamese in different ways. These local variations of speech are called as *pidgin* and are informal patterns. Again, the Assamese language has special literal form, style and structure. All these variations, the informal and *formal* together, are aspects of culture. Culture does not mean only refinement or elite culture but also the popular culture about which we shall learn more in this Unit. In brief, culture is the “entire way of life of an entire society”.

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## 2.5 NATURE OF CULTURE

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Now, let us learn about the nature of culture. In discussing the nature of culture, we shall deal with the characteristics, paradoxes, functions and universals of culture. This will make the concept of culture clearer to us.

### 2.5.1 Characteristics

Culture has many characteristics of which we shall discuss the few basic ones —

- **Learnt.** Culture is not biologically inherited. The natural hair colour is a biologically given fact, while hair dying is a learnt practice. Culture is, therefore, based on learnt practice. The process of learning one's culture is called **enculturation**. It is because of this feature that a person born and brought up in India and later on settled, for example, in England, learns and acquires the ways of the English culture. Culture is acquired. We are not born with a culture but born into and grow within a culture. Right from the moment of our birth, we get into the process of learning and acquiring culture.
- **Shared.** Culture is shared by the members of a society. It means that it is constructed and accepted by the members of the society. It is not “culture of one”. It is mutually constructed through a constant process of social interaction. Culture is constructed only when members of the society accept it. As culture is shared, the members of the society are more or less able to understand each other and interact with each other in the society. This makes Culture social.
- **Symbolic.** Human beings can think symbolically and assign meanings to events. We see and interpret the world around us in symbolic terms. The sign of a ‘namaskar’ in Indian culture and that of a hand- shake in Western culture are different symbols of greetings and showing respect. Here, we find different

symbols conveying the same meaning. In western culture, the showing of the thumb means wishing the best, while in others, it may mean an insult. Here, the same symbols have different meanings. We use language which is symbolic. Even the material objects have symbolic meaning. The chair in our culture is meant for sitting. Likewise, every aspect of culture is symbolic. And within a society we construct, learn and transmit the common meanings of these symbols through our behaviour, actions, language etc. and interact with each other. These common meanings are developed by people in society. Culture is, therefore, a construct developed by human interactions. Since culture is symbolic, it can be transmitted and learnt.

- **Integrated.** The various aspects of culture are interrelated with each other. For example, the economic aspects are related to the political aspects of culture. In India, the government which includes the political elements of our culture, decides and influences the economy of the country. In a similar way, education is related to the economy. With everything within a culture being interrelated, culture becomes a ‘complex whole’. It is more or less an integrated whole. By integration, we mean some degree of smooth interrelation between the various aspects which make these different parts come together to form one big unit. There may not be complete smooth interrelation between its parts. There occurs some conflict between the parts of culture. Yet, some degree of integration is necessary for a culture to survive.

**ACTIVITY 2.2**

Make a list of five things that you consider are aspects of your culture

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.....

### 2.5.2 Paradoxes of Culture

Culture is both organic and super-organic. Culture, as we have said, is manmade. In this sense only, it is organic. Yet, it is considered to be external to human beings. We do not inherit culture biologically. The French sociologist, Emile Durkheim stressed that culture is outside us and exerts a strong force upon us. Culture influences our activities, moulds our ideas, thoughts and even our personality. The strength of culture becomes evident when we try to oppose it. In this regard, culture is super organic.

- Culture is stable, yet always changing. Within a culture, the parts have some degree of integration which gives the culture some degree of stability. Yet, this stability does not make culture static; it keeps on changing.
- It is universal in terms of human experience, yet it has local and regional manifestations. Every society has a culture. Yet, no two cultures are completely alike.

### 2.5.3 Functions of Culture

- Culture enables people to interpret and understand the world in which they live.

- It gives to people some common meanings and enables them to understand and interact with one other.
- It enables a person to interact and adapt with the environment.
- It shapes the personality of the members of the society.



Every culture performs these functions. From cultures as simple as that of the Melanesian Islanders of the Pacific Ocean and tribes of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands to complex societies such as the European culture, perform the above mentioned functions. Therefore, no culture can be considered as either superior or inferior to another one. Rather, culture is differentiated in accordance with the degree and nature of its complexity and other criteria. An understanding of the concept of culture equips a person to appreciate all the cultures and to understand culture in the context in which it occurs. This is called cultural relativism. In other words, it enables us not to evaluate other's cultures with the values, beliefs, practices and ideas of one's own culture. It enables us to perceive the different ways in which the different cultures cope with human problems. The knowledge of culture also enables us to overcome the attitude of 'ethnocentrism'. Ethnocentrism implies the attitude of considering one's own culture as superior and that of others as inferior.

#### 2.5.4 Universals of Culture

Culture is universal in human experience i.e. every human society has culture. In all the cultures, certain universal phenomena can be found which are called 'universals of culture' or 'culture universals'. Clark Wissler in 1923 presented nine cultural facts or cultural aspects as found universally in all human societies.

- Speech including language and writing systems
- Material traits
- Mythology and scientific knowledge
- Art
- Religious beliefs and practices including treatment of the sick and dead
- Family and social control
- Property, trade and exchange system
- Government and political forms
- War

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## 2.6 TYPES OF CULTURE

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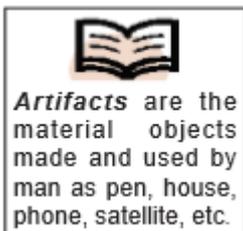
According to Osgood, a culture has three basic components or aspects, viz, mental, social and material. The mental and social are together termed as the non-material culture.

- **Non-Material culture:** This comprises the shared ideas, beliefs, values, norms, and goals of a culture. In other words, this component includes the codes for behaviour in a society. In our culture, respecting elders and being loyal to family

are some of our values; the various legislations on marriage and child-care are some of our norms. These are parts of non-material culture.

- **Social culture:** The members of a society behave in the society on the basis of shared ideas, values, beliefs, norms, etc. The behavioral aspects of culture are the social culture. It is intrinsically related to the mental aspect. People follow the norms and accordingly, behave in society. The values and norms of the society allow space for creativity and diversity. Therefore, various patterns of behaviour emerge within the wide net of values and norms. Again, these norms are not always followed as they are. Occasionally, there occur some **deviations** from the norms. In Hindu culture as in most other cultures, polygyny is prohibited by norms. It is also prohibited by the Hindu Marriage Act. Yet, we find occasional instances of polygyny occurring and some sections of our society tolerating such behaviour. Among the Muslims, alcohol consumption is prohibited by religious norms, yet it is not always followed. Violation of norm is called deviation. Also, in due course of time, deviations and new patterns may become accepted by the society and become norms and values of the society. For example, caste **endogamy** in India has been the traditional norm for centuries. During the 19th century, with the social reformation movement in India, inter castes marriages occurred and now such marriages are facilitated and protected by the Constitution of India by many legislations such as the Special Marriage Act, 1954. Thus, the behavioural or social realm of culture is related to the mental realm. The mental realm influences and guides social behaviour and also gets influenced by it.

- **Material culture:** These include all the material objects, those that are only used and those that are both made and used (artifacts) by people in society. The material aspects include among other things the food we eat, both the raw apple and also the apple jam. It includes the clothes, houses, vehicles, etc. Material objects are either used directly from nature or it is further processed from nature to render it fit for human use. It is through material culture that society directly interacts with the environment and fulfills individual and social needs. In the making and using of items of material culture, certain rules and norms are followed and people interact with each other in this process. For example, in making a hand axe, a person follows an accepted design which he retains in his mind. In making the axe, he may buy from someone in the market the iron to make the blade and wood to make the handle of the axe. Here, the person is behaviorally interacting with many other persons in the process of making the hand axe following the norms. Here, we find that both mental and the social culture interact with the material culture.



### LET US KNOW

The modern means of transport and mobile phones are examples of material culture. The uses of these have changed the nature of social relations. People can now communicate more easily than before. People from villages can work in the cities and towns on a daily basis and return home. This has

brought changes in the social life in the villages. The use of mobile phone and internet has enabled people to communicate almost at anytime and anywhere and plan, arrange and rearrange different activities and avail various opportunities. A great variety and intensity of work has become possible because of these modern means of communication. New patterns of behaviour and norms have consequently developed.

The above categorization of culture reveals the interrelationship among the three aspects or components of culture. In fact, we can repeat that culture is a “complex whole”. Again, any part of culture is it the economy, political, educational, religion, or family could be analyzed using this model of categorization. For example, in India the political sphere has the ideological aspect in the form of values and rules enshrined in the Constitution of India. That India is a ‘Sovereign Socialist Secular Democratic Republic’ is our Constitutional value and goal. Based on these, we as the citizens of India, are, accordingly, required to behave. One example of our political behaviour is that we vote our representatives to the Legislature to form our government. The material culture includes the voting machines, the paper, stamp etc.

The above explanation also points out the relation between society and culture. While society is the group of individuals and groups who are interacting and behaving with each other, culture is the complex whole that includes the entire way of life of the entire group and society. For a society to perpetuate, it needs culture, i.e. a commonly shared way of life. For a culture to survive, it needs a society. Without society, there can be no culture. Thus, society and culture are the two sides of the same coin.

### ACTIVITY 2.3

Your family is a part of the wider culture you belong to. Taking your family as an example, find out the mental, social and material aspects of it.

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There are some other categorizations of culture that try to focus on other dimensions of culture. Let us discuss some of these.

- **Subculture:** A society is composed of a varied number of social groups having specific patterns of social and cultural life. They form sub-cultures within broad cultures. The Indian society has a broad and composite culture which we call the Indian culture. Within it, there are many religious groups, sects, castes, class and many linguistic, ethnic, regional groups, etc. Each of these groups comprises a sub-culture in relation to the broader Indian culture. With so many sub-cultures within a broader culture, there exists interrelation between them. All these groups together have some common broad cultural patterns which keep these subcultures more or less integrated to form a wider complex whole. One example of the common cultural patterns in an ethnically, linguistically and religiously diverse India is the principles of Indian Constitution. Simple societies, i.e. societies having a simple technological and social system

usually have a single integrated culture shared by everyone. Complex societies have many sub-cultures within it which make the society complex. Indian society is a complex society.

- **High Culture or Elitist Culture:** There are certain aspects of culture which are held in high esteem and are exclusive to a few sections in the society, as the culture of the ruling class, art and literature. Although highly regarded, they are not accessible to all in the society, as literature is accessed only by the educated, and the ruling class is a small, more or less exclusive group. Entry into this group is difficult for many.
- **Popular culture or pop culture:** It is referred to as those that are popularly represented in a culture. Culture by definition is commonly shared ways of life and this would mean that all aspects of culture are popular. But when we analyze the complex societies, we can find that there exists the high or elitist culture. On the other hand, there are cultural elements that are widespread in the sense that most of the people participate in these patterns of cultural life. It includes the day-to-day interactions, needs, etc. that constitute the everyday life of the mainstream (ordinary majority). Cooking, clothing, folklore, mass media, etc. are elements of popular culture. These are transmitted through the vernacular language or the common lingua franca and hence, have widespread appeal and accessibility.
- **Mass Culture:** There is an approach that equates pop culture with Mass Culture. This is seen as a commercial culture, mass produced for mass consumption. When popular culture is shaped by the mass media, distributed and marketed, it is mass culture. Mass culture becomes possible only with modern communication and electronic media. The mass media may pick up elements of the prevalent high culture and the popular culture and bring it to the wider public. It is said that mass media entertainment industry that includes fashion, advertisements, television soaps, sports, etc have an appeal to the general public and are widely consumed by the public. As such, these go on to produce a culture which is called mass culture.

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## 2.7 CULTURE AND PERSONALITY

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The relation between culture and personality has been viewed as interdependent and interactive. Personality is made up of the characteristic patterns of thoughts, feelings, and behaviours that make a person unique. In addition to this, personality remains fairly consistent throughout life.

Every society has a culture. Through the process of socialization (or enculturation), the culture of the society is internalized by the members of the society. The individual from her/his childhood onward learns the values, beliefs, norms, and the social and cultural practices of the society. In this process, culture moulds the personality of its members. Kardiner and Linton are of the view that culture frames the 'basic personality types' shared by most of the members of the society.

At the same time, culture is man-made and culture keeps changing. It is the members of the society who brings change into the culture. Culture always provides space for

creativity and in the personalities of the members such characteristics and capabilities are nurtured. Also, in a culture there exist some conflicts and tensions which find reflections in the personality of its members. These characteristics also bring changes in culture through the agency of people. Through these, people bring changes in their cultures. Again, the continuities of the culture are also due to the personalities that the culture shapes. People maintain the culture they have learnt.

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## 2.8 CULTURE AND CIVILIZATION

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Since the emergence of man, human society has passed through three stages - savagery, barbarism and civilization. Civilization is a more developed stage of society which is correlated with the growth of cities, the emergence of writing, science and so on. Thus, civilization represents a particular type of culture.

However, there are some differences between culture and civilization. Culture is regarded as the moral, spiritual and intellectual attainments of man. On the other hand, civilization refers to the whole machinery and complex of devices developed by man.

Civilization is external. It caters to the external needs of man and consists of technology, material culture and social institutions. It is the sum total of the instruments of cultural life. Culture is something internal. It is the expression of our modes of living and thinking. MacIver and Page have said, “*Civilization is what we have, culture is what we are.*”

### Check Your Progress Exercise 2.3

**Note:**

- I. Write your answer in the space given below.
- II. Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this Unit

**Q.7:** Fill in the blanks with appropriate words.

- (a) The process of learning one’s culture is called \_\_\_\_\_ .
- (b) \_\_\_\_\_ implies the attitude of considering one’s own culture as superior and that of others as inferior.

**Q.8:** What is Mass Culture?

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## 2.9 LET US SUM UP

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- A social group is a collection of individuals who interact with one another and who recognize themselves as a distinct social unit.
- Among the members of a social group, frequent interactions take place.
- A social group is distinct from an aggregate
- In society, we find that various types of social groups are formed with a view

to realizing certain goals

- According to the degree of closeness of the members, social groups are often classified into two broad categories—namely primary and secondary.
- Primary Group refers to a social group that shares close and personal relations among the members. For example, our family, neighborhood, etc.
- Members of a Secondary group have a lesser level of personal relations than a primary group. People in a Secondary group interact on a less personal level than in a primary group, and their relationships are temporary rather than long lasting.
- The term in-group in Sociology refers to a group of people who are united by common beliefs, attitudes, or interests by which they identify themselves
- Reference group is another type of social group which name suggests acts as a frame of reference to which people always refer to evaluate their achievements, their role performance, aspirations and ambitions
- An organized group is one which comes into being through some systematically formulated norms to realize some definite objectives.
- Unorganized groups come into existence suddenly without any careful planning. They are unorganized because they do not follow any specific norms or have any specific objectives to realize.
- Depending on the nature of joining a group by its members, groups can be divided into voluntary groups and involuntary groups
- Voluntary groups are those whose membership is not mandatory – one may join it or may not join it.
- But there are groups the membership of which is mandatory.
- A quasi group is not organized or structured. It is a collection of members who do not actually know or feel that they have some common purposes.
- Culture means everything that human beings learn and act as a member of society.
- Society and culture are like two sides of the same coin.
- Society is the social relations of the groups and individuals. Culture is the total way of life of man in society and social groups.
- Culture comprises the mental, social and material aspects.
- Culture shapes individual and group personality, yet it provides scope for individual variations and creativity.
- Culture is not biologically inherited.

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## 2.10 GLOSSARY

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**Cultural Lag:** the difference between material and non-material culture. The concept of cultural lag was first introduced by W.F. Ogburn in his book Social Change which was published in 1922.

**Culture:** acquired behaviours, beliefs, values, law, custom which are shared by and transmitted among the members of the society

**Endogamy:** marrying within one's own group like caste and class

- Primary Group:** small, informal groups of people who are closest to us
- Quasi Group:** a social group is unaware or less aware about their existence
- Reference Group:** groups to which an individual compares herself
- Secondary Group:** larger and more impersonal groups that are task-focused and time limited
- Social Group:** any collection of at least two people who interact with some frequency and who share some sense of aligned identity

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## 2.11 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS: ANSWER KEYS

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**Ans to Q1:** A social group is distinct from an aggregate. An aggregate is simply a collection of anonymous people who happen to be at the same place at the same time such as the viewers at a cinema hall, shoppers at a market, a crowd, etc. But a social group has an enduring social existence with set goals, set patterns of behaviour and a feeling of group solidarity.

**Ans to Q2:** A category is a collection of people sharing characteristics like education, social status, physical characteristics, etc.

**Ans to Q3:** Family is an example of Primary group.

**Ans to Q4:** Relationships among the members in a Secondary group are indirect, impersonal and non-inclusive. It is temporary rather than long lasting.

**Ans to Q5:** Unorganized groups are not permanent but temporary in nature.

**Ans to Q6:** Voluntary groups are those whose membership is not mandatory – one may join it or may not join it but Involuntary groups are those whose membership is compulsory.

**Ans to Q7:** a) enculturation b) ethnocentrism

**Ans to Q8:** When popular culture is shaped by the mass media, distributed and marketed, it is mass culture. Mass culture becomes possible only with modern communication and electronic media.

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## 2.12 MODEL QUESTIONS

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**A) Short Questions** (Answer each question in about 150 words)

- Q1: What are the characteristics of a Social Group?  
Q2: Distinguish between In-group and Out-group.  
Q3: What is Reference group?  
Q4: Define culture. Describe its nature.  
Q5. What are the various types of culture?

**B) Long Questions** (Answer each question in about 300-500 words)

- Q1: Explain the characteristics of Primary Group.  
Q2: Distinguish between Primary and Secondary Group.  
Q3. “Culture is a complex whole.” Discuss.  
Q4. “The relation between culture and personality is one of interaction and interdependence.” Explain.

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**2.13 REFERENCES**

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## **UNIT 3    ROLE AND STATUS**

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### **STRUCTURE**

- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Learning Objectives
- 3.3 Role: Meaning and definition
  - 3.3.1 Classification of Roles
  - 3.3.2 Dimensions of Roles
  - 3.3.3 Use of Role Theory
- 3.4 Status: Meaning and Definition
  - 3.4.1 Characteristics of Status
  - 3.4.2 Types of Status
- 3.5 Rewards and punishments associated with role and status
- 3.6 Let us sum up
- 3.7 Glossary
- 3.8 Answers to check your progress
- 3.9 Model questions
- 3.10 References

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### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

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In this unit, we have covered the concept of role as a dynamic aspect of status. This unit follows the one on social structure. We have indicated how roles have been classified. We also describe roles in both simple and complex system. Next, the dimensions of role are taken up. These include a discussion of multiple roles and role set, role signs and role changing, role conflict and role structure. Finally, we examine the use of role theory.

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### **3.2 LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

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After reading this unit, you should be able to:

- explain the concept of role;
- describe various models of classifying roles;
- discuss the notions of the multiple roles and role-set;
- describe role signs and role changing;
- explain role conflict and role strain; and
- discuss how role theory can be used in sociological research.
- Understand the concept status and its types

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### 3.3 ROLE: MEANING AND DEFINITION

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The concept of Role is related to the concept of status. While status is a position in the society, role is the dynamic or the behavioral aspect of status. While status is occupied, the role is played. A status, thus, serves as the means of identifying a role. In other words, the status enables one to identify the behaviour expected of a person in a particular situation and to act accordingly. Ralph Linton, a sociologist who contributed to the theory of Role has perceived role as the expression of the prescribed and static behavioural expectations of a status. Role is viewed as a manifestation of normative behaviour contained in the status. Status provides guidelines to behaviour.

Robert Bierstedt defines role as the “*dynamic and behavioural aspect of status...A role is what an individual does in the status he occupies.*”

According to Ogburn and Nimkoff, role is a “*set of socially expected and approved behaviour patterns consisting of both duties and privileges, associated with a particular position in a group.*”

Kingsley Davis states that a role is “*the manner in which a person actually carries out the requirements of his position.*”

R. K. Merton added a new dimension to the concept of role. The prevailing view was that one status carried only one role. But Merton stated that a person occupying a status interacts with not only one category of person but several different categories. A person in a status, thus, has relations with several role partners. “*A complement of role relationships in which persons are involved by virtue of occupying a particular social status*” is defined by Merton as ‘role set’. For example, a person in the status of a school teacher has to play different roles in reference to his pupils, his colleagues, parents of the pupils, the school board members etc.

**Role set:** From the concept, statuses set we came to know that a single person can have different statuses in different context. In each context along with the statuses, an individual will be allotted some roles. Thus, role set refers to the sum total of all roles which an individual occupying different statuses play.

**Role conflict:** One individual may be a member of different groups and sub-groups. In each group, the individual is given some status and accordingly, he or she is expected to play some role for the effective functioning of the group. Now role conflict occurs when the individual’s role in one group is incompatible with the roles, he or she is supposed to play in the other groups. For example : A and B are brothers (belonging to one group/family). But they are also members of other groups like A is a police officer and therefore his role is to punish criminals. Now B, for some reason got engaged into criminal activity. In such a situation, A might experience a role conflict. If A protects B then it goes against the role of a police officer and if A punishes B, his role as a brother/family member might come under scrutiny sometimes.

### 3.3.1 Classification Of Roles

Various methods of classifying roles have been used by sociologists. We are here concerned with classifications of roles in terms of social status.

#### 1. Ascribed and Achieved Roles

According to Linton roles can be divided into:

- i) Ascribed roles
- ii) Achieved roles

The ascribed roles are those obtained at birth. Here role learning commences at birth itself. Such learning pertains to one's caste, class, family, gender and so on. Each caste, for example, has its own set of rituals to be performed at the birth of a child, who is subjected to various ceremonial procedures at every stage of growing-up. Achieved roles are acquired by individuals through merit and competition. Thus, this method of classification is based on the way that roles are allocated.

#### 2. Relational and Non-relational Roles

Nadel (1957) adopted the principle of content (i.e., the kind of conduct expected) of roles and divided them, like Linton, into two categories of ascribed-achieved roles. He further subdivided them into relational and non-relational roles. A relational role can be played only in relation to a complementary role, while non-relational role is not dependent on a complementary role. A husband's role cannot be perceived without the wife's role. Similarly a creditor's role is inconceivable without a debtor. Thus, these can be taken as examples of relational roles. On the other hand, the examples of the role of a poet or a scholar do not require a complementary role, in the sense that a poet does not have to interact with others for writing poetry. Thus, such roles can be described as non-relational. Nadel's classification is based mainly on the conduct that is implied in them. Thus, role differentiation for Nadel indicated to what extent holding of one role, is independent of holding or relating to other roles.

#### Check Your Progress 3.1

**Note:**

- I. Use the space given for your answer.
- II. Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

**Q.1** Write a note on the concept of role. Use about five lines for your answer.

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**Q.2** Is there only one valid way of classifying roles? Use two lines for your answer.

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### 3.3.2 Dimensions of Roles

Now, we look at various aspects of the concept of role. First, we speak of the array of roles that an individual may perform, and then we discuss the different role relationships which make up a role-set. Similarly, we discuss the array of role sign, changing of roles, role conflict and strain.

#### 1. Multiple Roles and Role-set

It is important to realise that one person can occupy more than one role. For example, in the area of kinship alone, one cannot avoid holding many roles at the same time. Try to count how many kinship roles you occupy. In the modern times, we find that people have several roles in other areas of social life than kinship. For example, besides being a son/daughter, brother/sister, husband/wife, father/mother etc., you are an IGNOU student, the citizen of your nation, and you may be occupying many other roles of various types. Occupying of many roles is given the term multiple roles. Of these multiple roles, some are played together while others are separated. Similarly, some may be carried out in a sequence and other over many years. It is quite common to observe the situation of intra-role conflict, because often a person occupying several roles faces opposite expectations in different role sectors. While playing one role, a person is linked with many 'role-others'. According to Merton (1968-84), these 'role-others' with regard to a particular person form his/her role-set. Merton distinguishes this idea of role-set from multiple roles, which are several roles of the same person. A role-set, on the other hand, refers to 'role others' in relation to a person playing a role. For example, a student of OSOU will carry on his/her role (as a student) in relation to specific 'role-others' such as the counsellor, fellow students, the librarian, the audio/video operator, the peon at the study-centre. Thus, in relation to a student, all these are 'role-others' from role-set. The following diagrams clearly show the difference between multiple roles and a role-set.

#### 2. Role Signs

The area of role signs is a vast topic and here we will touch only the main points. In all cultures across the world, we find that costume is basic as a role sign that differentiates males from females. Why is this case? This is because these role signs serve as an indicator of differences between men and women. Their roles are also different in the social organisation. Thus a role sign tells us more about a person or group. Just as a broken window is sign of violence and a wasted appearance a sign of ill health, a dress can serve as a sign of a role. There are some roles which have more signs while in other cases role signs are few or not at all. Let us consider a situation where all role signs are removed: the general takes off his uniform, and the policeman follows suit. Men start wearing skirts and saris and ladies pants and coats! What would be the result? Basic information would become muddled up. It would take a long time to find out the fundamental information. Thus role signs provide a better means of conveying information than does verbal communication. It would also become difficult to know what good conduct is, as the examples in daily life will be difficult to follow. Thus, role signs further communication as well as control. According to Banton (1965: 689-92) signs of various roles can be usefully described in terms of basic, general and independent roles.

### **3. Role Changing**

To change roles is often very difficult. The person must know the rights and obligations concerning new roles. He or she must change his/her behaviour accordingly. Other people also have to change their roles towards him/her. Role change, therefore, can be problematic. Let us consider the above with the help of some examples. In almost all tribal societies childhood and adulthood are comparatively difficult. A youth, unable to pass his initiation test, is in a bad position. He may never be able to marry if he lives among the Bushmen! Thus, role changing here is a must if negative sanctions are to be avoided. Take another example. In an industrial society which changes rapidly, role models themselves undergo change. None of them can be followed uncritically. There is no ready way in which role change can be made. Let us consider adulthood. This implies readiness for marriage. 'This involves a role change. It is also a fact which alters social relations. All these require alteration of role behaviour by husband, wife, relations and friends. In marriage, the bride undergoes a greater change since it is often a time of extreme emotional changes for her. She may have to leave her home and go to the place where her husband lives. Finally, a word about retirement and death. Retirement tends to be an individual event. Further there is a sense of loss and despair. This comes from being jerked out of a particular routine. What follows is a lack of routine. This can be very disorienting, and it takes a person time to pick up the threads. Death itself is a period of adjustment for the widow/widower and others. They will now have to take on more responsibilities. Role changes often take long and tend to be a period of frustrating adjustments.

### **4. Role Conflict and Strain**

Society is structured in a manner that keeps conflict of roles down to a minimum. However, there are occasions that individuals have to play rather incompatible roles. For example, stepfather and stepson, or the role of divided loyalties between two employers. Such situations cause role conflict to increase. Role-conflict comes when commitment is divided between two or more roles. As a result, usually the overall performance suffers. Role strain occurs in case of situations where a person does not fit into the slot given to him/her. Thus, if a woman is physically mature but does not marry we have role strain. If a woman marries but is sterile, this again creates role strain. The position is very difficult for a barren woman. She cannot lead the life of an ordinary wife. Among the Nuer of Sudan, she can become a diviner or a trader. She is considered to be almost a man. Again, among the Hindus, the spinster creates role strain. In some communities, this is reduced by marrying her to a tree or a fruit. The small number of roles in society also creates strains. There are customs, therefore, which reduce these strains in an innocuous manner. One such device is the festival or carnival which takes place each year. Ranks are forgotten and everybody intermingles. Role adjustment is more difficult in tribal and peasant societies. In industrial societies the chances of acceptance of roles that do not go into a slot are much larger. However, strain does exist whenever a role faces the problems of choice and adjustment.

#### **3.3.3 Use of Role Theory**

The concept of role has been applied in sociological analyses of various dimensions of social life. As we record changes in the notions and expectations around particular roles

we arrive at the process of social changes. Similarly, in studying role relationships, we focus our attention at the complex nature of organizational links in social life. Here we point out some of such applications of role-theory in sociological research. Both functionalists and Interactionists use this concept. The functionalists view roles as the culturally defined behavior which is linked with particular social statuses. For them, roles are determined by social values, norms and attitudes. The Interactionists believe that the sense of self comes fully through interaction. They emphasize that we learn meanings by interacting with others, and then organize our social life around these meanings. They lay special stress on the interaction aspect than the social role aspect. They discuss roles in terms of individual choices and interpretation of one's roles. Both the schools of sociological thought increase our understanding of the concept of role, and each perspective can be used advantageously in different ways. Social roles patterned either flexibly or rigidly, are better explained in terms of functionalist approach. The roles, attached to positions with a wide range of feelings, beliefs and behaviour can be fully discussed in terms of interactive view of role. Thus, we find that both approaches are useful.

**Check Your Progress 3.2**

**Note:**

- I. Use the space given for your answer.
- II. Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

**Q.3** What is a role sign? Comment in about five lines.

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**Q.4** Role change requires only a different dress. (Yes/No)

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**Q.5** What is role strain? Use about three lines for your answer.

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**3.4 STATUS: MEANING AND DEFINITION**

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Society lays down different social positions and with each position some defined rights and duties are assigned. We occupy these positions and act accordingly. Such social positions with defined rights and duties associated with it are called Status. Your mother occupies the status of a mother in reference to you and to your siblings. In reference to your father, she occupies the status of a wife. When you go shopping with your friend, you occupy the status of a friend in relation to your friend, but when you reach the shop and get to shopping, you occupy the status of customer in relation to the shop keeper. Each status has some expected modes of behaviour associated with it.

These behaviours include rights and responsibilities. A particular status also provides the required resources needed to perform the responsibilities. For example: in order to effectively perform the role of a parent, one needs certain resources in the form of command over the time of child. These differences of behaviour differentiate the statuses into various kinds. Statuses are institutionalized social positions.

According to Kingsley Davis, “*status is a position in the general institutional system, recognized and supported by the entire society.*”

Duncan Mitchell defines status as “*the position occupied by a person family, or kinship group in a social system relative to others. This determines rights, duties and other behaviours, including the nature and extent of the relationships with persons of other statuses.*”

### 3.4.1 Characteristics of Status

The characteristics of status are mentioned below:

- Status is a position in the society.
- Each status has defined modes of behaviour having rights and duties assigned to it.
- A status is in reference to other status. Statuses interact in the society.
- A person may hold various statuses at the same time or at different times.
- Society lays down statuses. Social statuses are governed by norms.
- Individuals in society occupy these statuses.

As statuses are laid down by society and individuals occupy them, Society enables everyone to know what is expected of him or her in the society. This enables some degree of understanding and interaction in the society. Statuses, thus, provide some degree of social stability and social order.

### 3.4.2 Types of Status

Ralph Linton has divided statuses into two types based on the nature of how an individual can come to occupy a status in society. These are ‘**ascribed**’ and ‘**achieved**’.

- **Ascribed Status:** These statuses are based on characteristics that persons are born with or born into and have no choice or control over it. Age and sex are two such characteristics a person is born with. Also being born into a family or a kinship group, an ethnic group, gender immediately ascribes one’s status. The moment you are born into a family, you occupy the status of a child to the parents you are born to and you have no choice over it. If you are born a male, you will occupy the status of a son or if a girl then the status of a daughter. Taste Status is also ascribed. Caste system is one of the general forms of social organisation which ascribes different status to people by birth. Once you are born into a caste, you cannot change the caste in the Hindu Social Organisation
- **Achieved Status:** This status is based on characteristics which an individual come to achieve in life and thus has some control and choice over it. For example, choosing to study particular subjects by an individual will make him/her a student. It is a status that a person comes to attain in some ways

through his/her own efforts and choice. For example, Lawyer, Teacher, Doctor etc.

- **Status Set:** It is another concept that means the sum total of all the statuses that a person occupies. You must be occupying a number of statuses at this time, like that of a student, friend, son or daughter, a sibling, cousin, citizen of India etc. All these together comprise your status set.

### ACTIVITY 3.1

Make a list of 10 of all the statuses that you are occupying these days. Try to include both ascribed and achieved statuses

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### 3.5 REWARDS AND PUNISHMENT ASSOCIATED WITH ROLE AND STATUS

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In every society, one is ranked according to the kind of role he or she is playing and how they are performing their role. For example: the role of a student is to study regularly and complete the assignments given to them in proper time. If the students perform these roles effectively, they are awarded with good marks. Again in every society, some 'roles' are considered more difficult and important. Therefore, they get a higher status in society. People having higher status are generally rewarded more in society. However, it is the society which defines which task is more important. For example: ancient tribal societies had to continuously fight with others in order to protect their tribe from enemies as well animals. Therefore, the warriors who were able to kill more enemies were given a higher status in society. They were also given rewards in the form of land, valuable items of daily use etc. Similarly, when one does not perform the role assigned to him or her efficiently, then the society has provisions to punish the person.

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### 3.6 LET US SUM UP

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- Status is a position in the society.
- Each status has defined modes of behaviour having rights and duties assigned to it.
- A status is in reference to other status. Statuses interact in the society.
- A person may hold various statuses at the same time or at different times.
- Society lays down statuses. Social statuses are governed by norms.
- Those statuses which are based on traits which a person is born with or born with are called ascribed status.
- Individuals do not have much control over the ascribed status.
- Those statuses which the individuals earn by their hard work and dedication is called achieved status.

- Role consists of the socially expected and approved behavior pattern to be performed by an individual.
- Role set refers to the sum total of all roles which an individual occupying different statuses play.
- Role conflict occurs when a person's one role contradicts with others role/roles.
- Every role and status is associated with some kind of award and punishment.

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### 3.7 GLOSSARY

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<b>Achieved roles:</b>	These are roles, which are gained by personal efforts, such as a General in the army, Prime Minister in a democracy
<b>Ascribed roles:</b>	In these types of roles, birth is the basic influence. For example, being born in a certain caste will imply certain role behaviors e.g., a priest's son will train to be a priest
<b>Ascribed Status:</b>	the social status a person is assigned at birth
<b>Achieved Status:</b>	the social Status acquired on the basis of merit, skills, knowledge, abilities and so on
<b>Multiple role:</b>	This indicates the fact that every man or woman has to play different roles in different situations. For example, a teacher in the school; a worshipper in the temple
<b>Role:</b>	This is a combination of rights and duties. It is the dynamic aspect of status
<b>Role-other:</b>	A role-other is a person with whom a person interacts while performing a role
<b>Role-set:</b>	Here the multi-links of a single role in a single situation are highlighted.
<b>Role signs:</b>	These arise when a person is not able to fully play a role assigned to him or her

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### 3.8 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS: ANSWER KEYS

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- Ans to Q.1** Individuals have different positions in social life. For example, being a managing director of a company or an editor in a publishing house. Such positions are called statuses. A status is, therefore, a set of rights and duties. When a person is enacting these, a person is performing a role.
- Ans to Q. 2** No, there are more than one way of classifying roles. One can give at least four different ways of classifying them. Each of this classification has been developed for a specific aim.
- Ans to Q.3** Role signs give pointers to differences between roles. For example, dresses/costumes differentiate between men and women. Role signs tell us, for example, more about the role of a person.

**Ans to Q.4** No

**Ans to Q.5** Role strain results when the incumbent of a role cannot properly play it. For example, a lady police officer may find it difficult to handle criminals on the one hand and behave in a lady like manner otherwise, as generally a lady of a good family is expected to behave.

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### **3.9 MODEL QUESTIONS**

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**A) Short Question** (Answer each question in about 150 words)

**Q1:** What do you understand by role? What is the relation between roles and rewards?

**Q2:** Is caste an ascribed status or achieved status?

**B) Long Question** (Answer each question in about 150-300 word).

**Q1:** What is the significance of status in a society? What are the different types of status? Discuss briefly.

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### **3.10 REFERENCES**

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## **UNIT 4 SOCIAL NORMS AND POWER**

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### **STRUCTURE**

- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Learning Objectives
- 4.3 Norms
  - 4.3.1 Meaning and Definition of Norms
  - 4.3.2 Types of Norms
  - 4.3.3 Violation of Social Norms
  - 4.3.4 Need and Importance of Social Norms
  - 4.3.5 Characteristics of Social Norms
- 4.4 The Concept of Power
  - 4.4.1 Importance of Power
  - 4.4.2 Social Power
  - 4.4.3 Essence of Power
- 4.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 4.6 Glossary
- 4.7 Model Questions
- 4.8 References

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### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

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Social norms are the informal, often unspoken rules, guides and standards of behaviour which people in that society follow with great care. These social norms are generally internalized during the process of socialization and produces guilt, shame etc. when they are violated. Though there is no identifiable formal authority that will enforce compliance to norms, the communal sanction for violation of norms can be swift and harsh. These norms are followed and fulfilled in general because failure to do so induces feelings of guilt or shame, gossip, shunning, ostracism, and at times violence. While compliance to norms brings with it tangible and intangible rewards such as increased esteem, trust and, most importantly, cooperation, noncompliance brings with it a disparaging glance or expression of disapproval or disgust, often as a prelude to shunning, ostracism etc. Norms typically have strong roots in the soil of small groups and communities. The feeling of guilt or shame may make the external enforcement of internalized norms unnecessary. Some social norms are universal (e.g., the prohibition of incest), while others are more localized. Social norms, as such, are neither good nor bad, but rather become benefit or burden in so far as they facilitate or constrain behaviour guided by moral values, practical reasons or instrumental ends. The behaviour guided by these norms may be strongly reinforced by self-interest. Furthermore, universalistic norms without dyadic sanctions or enforcement are often comparatively weak, as would be a norm of trustworthiness in a large society.

The operation of social norms often takes place, when a subcultural group, such as a gang, draws attention to itself through its regular and flagrant violation of popular or culturally predominant norms. While the internalization of social norms may take place below the surface of consciousness, it is worth noting that at times social norms can get internalized to the extent that they do not need social enforcement. In fact they are adhered to by individuals of their own accord.

Social norms are in fact omnipresent and they resemble tradition and customs which are generally not violated. Violation brings severe sanctions of which the social ostracisation makes people think twice before they break the norm.

Social conflict is exclusively an aspect of social power. To understand social conflict we must deal at the level of social powers and their related factors. When two persons or more than two persons clash with each other verbally or physically, there is a conflict and in a social situation it turns out to be a social conflict. The social conflict cannot be understood without taking into consideration the social power as most of the conflicts that emerge in a social situation is related to the power one has and the power one is able to wield. In this unit, we will be defining the norms in general, the social norms and give a description of the different types of norms etc. Emphasis will be laid on the need for such norms and the typical characteristics of the norms. In this unit we also deal with the nature of social power and family power and how these affect individual's behaviours.

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## **4.2 LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

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By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- define social norms;
- enlist various types of social norms;
- elucidate the needs and importance of social norms;
- explain the characteristic features of social norms; and
- describe the influence of norms on individual's behavior.
- explain the concept of power;
- discuss the importance of power;
- identify the essence of power;
- analyze various types of power

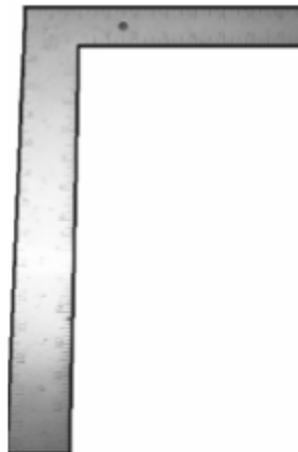
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## **4.3 NORMS**

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It is a mutually agreed fact that our behaviour is guided by the norms of the society we live in and we like to do the things which we think and believe that other people will approve of. Similarly, we try to avoid those behaviours which we think and believe that other people will disapprove of. That's why, everybody smiles while wishing somebody happy birth day and nobody laughs during somebody's funeral. We use social norms that are the socially established behaviours, as information about what behaviour is appropriate in a given situation. Let's have a closer look at the word norm before entering this interesting field.

The word *norm* comes from the Latin word ‘norma’ which means a *carpenter’s square* (see picture below), a pattern or a rule. You might have seen a carpenter’s toolkit having



this tool. Stopping for a while, have you ever seen him using it? Can you just describe how and why he uses this tool? This tool is used as a guide to create true, standard lines for cutting the lumber. Thus, norma is used by the carpenter to know how to “go on”, and if he systematically *follows the guidance*, it results in a well-made, beautiful structure. And, the credit for this goes to the carpenter and not to the norma or square as such. Isn’t it? OK, let’s now move on to the meaning of norms in psychological terms in social context.

#### **4.3.1 Meaning and Definition Of Norms**

Here we shall look into various definitions of norms and shall try to know the norms we are going to study in this unit.

Sherif (1936) explained norms as the jointly negotiated rules for social behaviour, the “customs, traditions, standards, rules, values, fashions, and all other criteria of conduct which are standardized as a consequence of the contact of individuals” (p. 03).

Granovetter (2004) defines norms in simple terms as the “shared ideas about the proper way to behave”.

Postmes, Spears and Cihangir (2001) defined group norm as “a standard or a rule that is accepted by members of the group as applying to themselves and other group members, prescribing appropriate thought and behaviour within the group”.

According to Critto (1999), “social norms are shared ways of thinking, feeling, desiring, deciding and acting which are observable in regularly repeated behaviours and are adopted because they are assumed to solve problems”.

It is also worth sharing a widely accepted definition of social norms: “socially shared definitions of the way people do behave or should behave” (emphasis added, see Paluck, 2009, p. 596).

On the basis of the above definitions of norms, group norms and social norms, what do you conclude? We may say that, having a unique characteristic of being shared, norms

are attitudes and behaviours of people which we expect them to show uniformly when they are in their group and/or society and these norms are learned, established and utilized when a person comes in contact with others. Let us take a few situation examples which can make these definitions more explicit. An exercise is given in the box. Try it before proceeding further.

**A Small Exercise.** Let's live the following situations for a short while. First, tell us about the dress and possible behaviour of Mr. A in three different situations when: (a) he has to go to park for morning walk; (b) he has to go to celebrate the birth day party of a colleague's kid; and (c) he has to attend a funeral. Write at least one paragraph on each of these three situations mainly describing what *types of dress* would Mr. A wear in these three situations and what *type of behaviour* he might exhibit in these situations.

Second, Ms. B is coming to the regional center to attend her psychology counseling session. On the road, she hears the siren of an ambulance van coming near from behind. What would she do after listening to that siren?

Imagine the situation, take your time and write a few lines describing your probable response. Well, now, go through your descriptions of these four situations in which Mr. A and Ms. B found themselves. Do you see something unique to each of these situations? Do one more thing here.

Ask some of your other co-learners to take these exercises as above and now, compare your descriptions with theirs. Do they also think on the grounds similar to you? Are there any similarities in the response pattern of all of you? If yes, what are these and why did these similarities, if any, appear in your descriptions under the circumstances that the above exercise was not your planned test, you were not given any fixed syllabus or study material few days back to understand such social situations which we may face and face in our lives, and you were not prepared at all to take this quiz today. Despite this, you all might be confident about the correctness of your descriptions of the above situations.

You might have described the above example situations as follows: Mr. A would go the park in the morning in casual wear and would do some jogging and light exercises to remain fit; he would go to the colleague's house in formal wear congratulating the parents and giving good wishes to the kid with some attractive gift to celebrate his birth day and share happiness; and, in somebody's funeral, he would go in rather plain, simple and white cloths and would empathetically condole the aggrieved family members and relatives of the deceased; and Ms. B would leave the way taking her extreme left to let the ambulance van go first, keeping in mind that it might be carrying somebody in emergent conditions for seeking immediate medical care and attention for saving his/her life. What you and others had imagined and described for Mr. A and Ms. B covered certain behaviours which are considered "proper" under given situations in our society and are known as social norms. We shall study about these *social norms* in this unit.

### **4.3.2 Types of Norms**

In the above few paragraphs of the previous section, we have just read up a few important definitions of norms and realized that these are something highly crucial and integral part of our life which influence almost each and every domain of our behaviour as the backbone of our social life. You might be wondering here that how many types of norms are there. Let's us have a look at some of the major types of norms.

#### **1) Group norms vs. social norms**

Group norms may be situational and locally defined, and hence may be quite independent and distinct from social norms that exist at the levels of communities and societies (see Postmes, Spears and Cihangir, 2001).

#### **2) Explicit vs. implicit norms**

This is a very important distinction between two types of norms. Many times, we have clear, detailed and explicitly stated rules of behaviour and usually cover the written constitutions and laws. A general example is "No parking" or "No Horn" designated areas, and while traveling in public transport, it is explicitly prohibited to carry weapons, explosives or the things which may be dangerous to the health and life of others.

On the other hand, we also have norms which are unspoken or implicit which usually develop in informal manner. Why do we usually go the parties or social meetings late? Because we apply our past experiences to the specific situations and think (rather, know) that it would not start in time and others would also have not yet arrived. Similarly, how many of us leave the hotel/restaurants without giving a tip for the waiter who served us?

#### **3) Injunctive norms vs. descriptive norms**

When we are concerned about what others think we should do or should not do in a given situation in order to either get others' approval or to avoid their disapproval, it is regarded as injunctive norms or also as subjective norms.

Injunctive norms are based on one's perception of what others believe to be appropriate behaviour. Taking cognizance of few contemporary researches, Deutsch and Gerard (1955) remarked that individual psychological processes are subject to social influences. They described two different types of social influences, viz., (i) Normative social influence (ii) Informational social influence.

Normative social influence refers to an influence to conform to the positive expectations of others and is based on our fundamental need to be accepted by others, making us follow injunctive norms.

On the other hand, informational social influence is one in which we accept information obtained from another as evidence about the reality., These are descriptive norms which are concerned with individuals' perceptions and beliefs about the prevalence of others'

behaviour or about what others do in a specific situation (Deutsch & Gerard, 1955).

#### **4) Consensus norms vs. critical norms**

Postmes, Spears and Cihangir (2001), made a distinction between consensus norms and critical norms while studying the impact of group norms on the quality of decisions taken by them. In consensus norms, they ascribed devotion of groups to initial decisions and the inclination to ignore disconfirming evidence in order to strongly tilt toward reaching a consensus.

On the other hand, critical norm group members, adopting critical thought, invested their energy in the critical examination of decision alternatives before reaching a consensus.

The researchers found that the groups with a consensus norm made poorer decisions than the groups with critical norms. Critical norms improved the quality of decisions, whereas consensus norms did not. This revealed the importance of critical thinking and independence in certain group situations.

#### **5) Reciprocity norms vs. social-responsibility norms**

Myers (1990) discussed about the above two types of norms: The reciprocity norm, as the name suggests, guides us to return help to those who have helped us at the appropriate time that is when they also need help.

And, the social-responsibility norm makes us help the needy, who deserve help even if they have never helped us when we were in need of some type of help.

#### **6) Situational norms**

Norms are also situation dependent and are known as situational norms. For example, when you in a library, you either remain silent or do not speak in loud voice. Instead, you whisper. Similarly, whenever a Hindu devotee goes to temple, he/she removes the shoes to enter the temple. He/she takes care that temple is a sacred place and does everything, expected of him/her, to maintain its sanctity.

Thus as is seen above, there are various types of norms. Law is always in written format. Norms need not always be in written form. There are also verbal norms which are nowhere written and we learn as well as teach them during the course of interaction and in the process of socialization. For example, it is a written norm you usually find pasted at the railway stations and in the trains warning people and forbidding them from taking eatable from strangers because earlier some innocent passengers have been drugged and looted. It is usually in verbal form that we teach the norm to our children not to talk to strangers on road or in park or else they may get kidnapped. Regardless of the type of norm, we all respect, follow and obey them.

### 4.3.3 Violation of Social Norms

*“The right of life of women in Pakistan is conditional on their obeying social norms and traditions.”* - Hina Jilani, an advocate of the Supreme Court of Pakistan and human rights activist (emphasis added).

While shame and guilt are minor forms of punishment for norm violation, there can be more serious punishment such as murder also if one deviates from and violates the social norms. Take for instance, the honour killings. Honour killing, in general terms, refers to the brutal murder/killing of the youngsters who marry against their prevailing caste norms. A broad meaning to honour killings, which are not just observed in India alone, was given by Human Rights Watch (2001), *“Honour crimes are acts of violence, usually murder, committed by male family members against female family members, who are held to have brought dishonor upon the family”*.

A woman, victim of honour killing, may be targeted by her family members if she refuses to enter into an arranged marriage with the person of their choice. They may kill her if she had been raped or had become a victim of sexual assault, etc. In certain cases women who proceed to seek divorce on the grounds of spouse abuse or if she had allegedly committed adultery, the woman can be killed which is the most severe form of punishment.

During June 2010, the Supreme Court of India issued notices and sought responses from the Central Government and states of Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Rajasthan, Jharkhand, Bihar, Himachal Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh where the instances of honour killing appeared in one form or the other. A vacation bench of Justices R M Lodha and A K Patnaik issued notices to the Union of India and the ministries of Home Affairs and Women and Child Development. The chief secretaries of Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand and Bihar have been directed to likewise respond after they were allegedly found to show a high propensity to honour crimes.

Even in Delhi, the capital of the country, two such cases were reported during those times. Taking a lead in the matter, an NGO ‘Shakti Vahini’ had filed a PIL in the Supreme Court against the killings of couples for honour who fell in love and got married violating their social norms (The Times of India, June 22, 2010). Although the criminals and killers are punished by the Law of the land, yet it is too late if two innocent lives are lost. It is worth mentioning here what considered was a landmark judgement for such honour killings, a court in Karnal district of Haryana in March 2010 awarded the death sentence to five persons and life imprisonment to one for murdering Manoj and Babli, members of the same clan, who had eloped from their village and got married in Chandigarh in April 2007. The couple was later abducted and murdered. Their bodies were found in a canal in June 2007 (Hindustan Times, March 30, 2010).

Here, we need to stop for a while and think: what is wrong here? Do we have a wrong social norm, are we interpreting it wrongly or are we applying it wrongly? And, most importantly, do we need to change this norm? If yes, how?

#### 4.3.4 Need and Importance Of Social Norms

The social norms perform important functions and serve our specific purposes, even our being unaware of these most of the time, which highlight their need and importance in our daily life. Various experimental studies have revealed that social norms can influence and determine one's perception, evaluation and behaviour (e.g., Sherif, 1936 and Asch, 1955) about which we shall study in detail in the third and fourth units. In one study, the research found that despite being rated by participants as less motivating, descriptive norms were stronger predictors of activity behaviour and healthy eating intentions than other well established non normative reasons (Priebe, 2009).

Critto (1999) remarked that social norms function as shared ways of thought and action due to which we may expect some predictable courses of action when we observe them appropriately in a given specific situation. So, we may guess what others might do under certain social circumstances and accordingly we may choose our course of action also.

Norms especially group norms are important because, besides controlling the group behaviour, they also control the behaviour of its members, and provide stability and a socially desired orderliness to the groups. In the absence of norms, the behaviour of group members will become chaotic and the group and its members will not be able to survive for long. Norms are also important for as they facilitate and foster interaction between and among the group members.

It is because of these social norms that we see the predictable similarities in the behaviour of group members. At the same time, it is these group norms which make the groups different from each other because they follow different norms and traditions. The effect of these norms on one's behaviour is not necessarily dependent on his/her being in the group. Rather, these norms affect the behaviour even when he/she is not a part of a group and remains alone. Thus, the norms regulate the social behaviour. If one's behaviour is in conformity with the group norms, he/she may get the acceptance and praise. On the contrary, if there is nonconformities or breaking of social norms, the non-conformist or violator person may have to face criticism or be subjected to punishment as decided by the particular group.

Another important function performed by the norms, which makes them important for us, is that they provide us solutions to common problems by offering available possible alternatives. Also, norms promote mutual respect and service for others which ultimately give rise to harmony in the social relations and a sense of social well-being. So, norms perform an important function of linking people to people, people to the society and society to society.

Norms, in addition to the above also help us fulfill one of our basic psychological needs, viz., to belong to others. Being social beings, humans need to be associated with others; they require love, self-esteem and belongingness. Following norms, all these needs of the individuals will be satisfied. This otherwise is neither possible nor persistent.

Thus, norms play a very important and fulfilling role in human lives. However the

norms are to be framed by the society in order to the members have a better life the society also advances in a positive direction. The society by formulating the norms encourages its members to follow the norms for their own benefit and the benefit of the society in which they live.

#### **4.3.5 Characteristics of Social Norms**

By now, it is clear that behaviour of humans is guided by the prevailing social norms which interact with human environment and societal factors and affect the social wellbeing of people in the society. These norms have certain features unique to them which are as follows:

##### **1) Serve as guiding principle**

The norms, (as the norma guides and help a carpenter) show the group members ways to behave in a socially appropriate manner which all the other members approve of. Coming back to the examples of Mr. A and Ms. B, your responses exactly reflect the prevailing norms specific to the given social situations like attending somebody's birth day party or funeral.

##### **2) Develop as a result of interaction and communication**

Norms are formed as a result of human interactions and communication in the society. Hence, due to the vast size of a society and interaction as well as communication being a complex process, norms are not formed so easily and quickly. Once formed, they are not susceptible to change in any short or long time unless there is a dire need to change the norms in the interest of the society and the individuals who live in it.

##### **3) Culture – specificity**

That the norms are culture specific seems to be obvious by the occurrence of the same phenomenon at two places differently. Take for instance child marriage. The Hindu (August 04, 2010) reported that the State Minister for Social Welfare Damodar Rawat saying, "Bihar is one of the hotspots for child marriages in the country and on an average marriages of 67 percent girls are below the age of 18 years.

Earlier this very year (February 20, 2010), The Hindu had published a study prepared by the Population Council of India and was released by Union Health Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad, which was conducted in six states of India including Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Rajasthan, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu and surveyed over 58,000 youths in the age group of 15 – 29 years. The main findings, as published by The Hindu showed that one-fifth of the young women surveyed were married off before the age of 15, half before they turned 18 and two-thirds before the age of 20. In this context, Zaman (2008), while presenting an appraisal to the marriage system of the Karbis of Assam, pointed out that Child marriage is an unknown system among the Karbis. Thus it appears that the culture decides the norms in a society and thus norms are culture specific.

While the above research on the topic of child marriage was across cultures, let us see if within the same culture such differences in the norms exist. Take for instance widow

remarriage. A Hindu widow is expected to live a life of prayers and noble endeavors by the society she lives in. The expectation does not extend to Hindu widowers. Interestingly, a man who loses his wife is usually pressurized to marry for the sake of ‘companionship’ and so on. The obvious gender discrimination begins from within the society and percolates to the people who are a part of it. Those who question it are disapproved of or alienated tacitly and those who abide by these social norms are labeled as respectable”.

#### **4) Keep control over violators**

Social norms help keep control over the behaviour in direct as well as indirect fashion. Each society has its own measures to ‘punish’ the violators (direct control) who deviate from the established social norms and people also ‘feel shame and guilt’ when they violate those norms (indirect control). Can you imagine the consequent embarrassment you might face if you go to attend somebody’s birthday party ‘without gift’ or what will your reaction when you find a person laughing during somebody’s funeral?

#### **5) Social norms are dynamic**

Social norms are an integral part of social systems like gender disparities. If the society and groups strive for changing the social norms, such existing inequalities would be greatly reduced to improve the human wellbeing and raise the quality of life of all. This dynamic nature of norms has witnessed many major normative changes in Indian history as for example the Sati-pratha in which a widow used to willingly burn herself with her deceased husband on his funeral pyre.

Similarly, Falomir-Pichastor, Munoz-Rojas, Invernizze and Mugny (2004) noted that strengthening norms against discrimination can lead to lessening of prejudice and discrimination which have been traditionally explained by the influence of social norms. This in turn would help to improve the integration of immigrants into the larger society. Norms are generally considered as injunctive and indicative of what is socially approved or disapproved, and they are often related to social influence processes. Similarly, Zitek and Hebl (2007), focusing on the role of social psychology in studying the attempts to reduce or eradicate people’s prejudices, noted that prejudices may be altered through social influence.

#### **6) Norms teach two way cooperation**

There are studies which indicate the existence of a norm of conditional cooperation in social settings. For example, if other group members cooperate with us in any endeavour, the norms also require us to cooperate in return (Fehr and Fischbacher, 2004). Thus, norms teach us to be cooperative with other helpers.

#### **7) Norm is not a single entity**

Norms also encompass prevailing traditions, folkways, mores, fashion, religion, and laws which are dominant and in use in the society. Laws are a binding force on the people to accept and follow the legal requirement, and fashion also is an exception but other types/forms of norms are more or less conservative in nature and require

mammoth efforts for change.

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#### **4.4 THE CONCEPT OF POWER**

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Power exists in all social situations and practically pervades in all organizations. Different authorities have tried to define power in different ways. According to R. A. Dahl, power is the ability of one person or group to cause another person or group to do something they otherwise might not have done. It is the ability to influence others successfully in the desired fashion. Power resides in individuals (such as managers, and informal leaders), in formal groups (such as department and committees) and in informal groups. It is the principal means of directing and controlling organizational goals and activities. The person or the group having power influences the behavior of others. We can say a manager or the supervisor has the power when works are done by their subordinates as they wish to be done, way they want to be done etc. Thus, the manager's ability to get the work done depends upon the power possessed by him or her. In fact, almost everyone, at every level from within and outside try to exert their power on organisation to get their work done. Accordingly, knowledge of power in organisation is very important for every individual in general and the people possessing power in particular in order to manage their activities and for the smooth functioning of the organisation.

You should not get confused with the power and authority. Though power and authority are used interchangeably, but there exists difference between the two. While power is the ability to influence others, authority is the right to command. Normally power is exercised by the person but authority is attached with the position and it is legitimate. Authority is one of the major sources of power. Authority is always positional, concerned with position and legitimate. However, when one's authority can increase one's growth in organizational hierarchy, but the growth may not accompany same amount of power. Moreover while authority normally moves downward but power moves in all direction, depending upon the power being used by the person in the organisation. It is because power is not institutional but the authority is institutional.

There are ways in which power can be used to help the organisation .It is called positive when the managers of the organisation debate over the appropriate course of action to improve the quality of organizational decision making. In positive sense, individuals try to establish a balance in their personal and organizational interest and openly solve the problem of the organisation without any hidden agenda.

In the organizational context, the terms power has also negative connotations. It becomes negative; when individuals associated with them normally use organizational resources for their personal advantage. They try to achieve their personal goals at the expense of the other goals. Decisions are made against the interest of organisation and there is extreme pursuit of self-interest and individuals pursue their hidden agendas. In negative sense, there is illegitimate use of authority, resources and information of the organisation.

The bases and sources of power are interchangeably used. However, it is the base or platform from where the power is generated. Base refers to what a person controls,

which ultimately enables him/her to influence the behaviour of the group. While the strongest power base is legitimacy and greater power, the weakest is the coercion.

#### **4.4.1 Importance of Power**

For a variety of reasons, power is very important and needed in the society. Not only the society needs power for its functioning, but people in the society seek power because of the following reasons:

- Power is used in the society to control the people and other resources so that they cooperate and help to achieve a society's current goals.
- Power can also be used to engage in politics and influence decision-making process in order to help promote new and more appropriate organizational goals.
- It is the power, which influences complexity, formality and centralization of activities in the organizations.
- Individuals having power even determine about the size of the organisation, allocation of rewards, selection of technology etc.
- Power is needed for the efficient functioning of the society.

#### **4.4.2 Social Power**

Social power refers to the capacity to produce effects that is using that power one should be able to make another person or persons to do what you desire. There are two factors involved in social power to have its effects, viz. the intentionality and orientation towards another person's self, apart from their body.

Social behaviour has clear intentional orientation towards another self. This orientation takes the other self into account in terms of one's acts, actions, or practices. The essence of social power should be parallel, that is it must have the capacity to produce effects through another self. Power is physical and not social when purposely employed to affect another person. Physical power applied in opposition to another's will is force. Getting a person to willfully give you something is using social power. But knocking them unconscious and taking something from them is the use of force. Social power works on the other's perceptions, dispositions, interests, will, and all other aspects of a person's self. Physical power however disregards the other person's self and uses physical means to take or get whatever one wants. Depending on what capabilities are employed, social power has different forms. Let us now deal with some of these social powers.

##### **1) Coercive Power**

Coercive power is the ability to make others do what they would not otherwise do. The means of coercion may vary such as use of weapons, the military, the police, jails, sanctions, threats, and so forth. There are other forms of power which involve cooperation, love, exchange etc. In addition other powers include power of competence, altruism, love, and rewards. Love and power have been seen as opposites, rather than essentially entwined. Justice has been seen as ideally independent of such power, rather than as based on effective power. Let us take an example of i and j as before. Let us say that 'I' have interest in X and 'J' has interest in Y. Now both X and Y can be negative

or positive interests. That is, positively the person may say “I want . . .” or a negatively say “I do not want. . . .”

Let X is positive for I and negative for J. For example, X may be J’s wallet which ‘I’ wants and which j does not want him to have. For I to overcome J’s negative interest X, while avoiding force, i must tie X to another positive or negative interest Y. This will make j have a balance preference of X to Y. This can be done by threatening that if j does not do X, then i will do (or refrain from doing) Y. For many, accepting official law is such a negative interest manifested only because of the connected threat of sanctions if the law is broken. The outcome then basically depends on the relative strength of the two negative interests. Between the wallet (money) or one’s life. The choice is between lying to convict a friend or a long jail term for oneself, the choice is not so clear. Coercion is more than a threat of some future sanction, however. A tortured spy can be threatened with additional suffering unless he yields the desired information. Here, as in kidnapping or posting bond, a deprivation is first applied, followed by a threat to continue (a negative interest y) if you do not accept the negative interest X (giving the secrets, paying a ransom, or appearing in court). This kind of coercive situation for j is also characterized by two negative interests between whom the person must choose. In both situations of coercion, j’s self is placed by i’s threat between two powers, both of which are negative interests. Escape from this is prevented by two barriers as shown in the figure below:

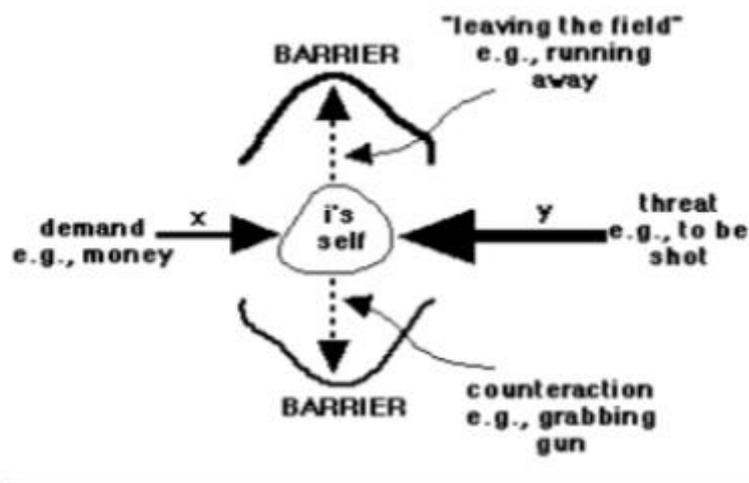


Figure the two negative interests are shown as vectors bearing on the self. The length of the vectors indicates their strength. As in all psychologically inconflit situations, when i is coerced he would prefer to “leave the field,” to run away from the threat. But this may be blocked, as shown by the barrier in the figure, by one’s physical weakness or by physical surroundings, thus forming a barrier to escape.

Another possibility may be counteraction, such as grabbing for the gun, producing one’s own gun, calling for help, and so on, but this “escape route” also may not be possible, forming another barrier. With these counteractions blocked, only a choice between the threat and demand may be left, and the choice will depend on which of these two negative interests is stronger.

Negative wants are outside powers bearing on the self. They are powers imposing

undesired goals. When being robbed, both “escaping from the field” and others counteractions are positive interests, and thus moving outward. If positive interests are blocked one must choose between negative interests. Then the choice will depend on which negative vector is strongest. In this case Y is the stronger negative interest, the more powerful “I do not want . . . ,” and thus X would be chosen over Y by i. Note that coercive power confronts the self with a double negative bind. Nonetheless, the self has a choice, even if between two negatives and therefore chooses willfully. A coerced individual’s will is free, and in this lays the great unpredictability of coercion. On the other hand, force is predictable that is if a person hit on the head hard enough the person will be immobilized. A number of policemen can carry a person resisting arrest into the wagon. Also a person’s opposition can be eliminated by killing him. But in coercion, a self-faced with two negative alternatives control the final choice.

Nonetheless, the choice of an interest X can be made more probable by increasing the power (negative interest) of Y. We do not know what j will do if i demands the turn over military secrets (X) or be shot (Y). He may be a patriot. Honor or self-esteem may simply not allow him to betray his country to save himself. But, if j is threatened with the slow torture and execution of his family and is himself undergoing torture, his choice of X becomes more probable.

Thus coercive power is a capability to threaten a person into choosing one undesirable behavior over another. The success of coercive power depends on the strength of the barriers against escaping the threat and the strength of the two negative interests. If one negative interest is much stronger than accepting the threat, then coercion may be defeated. For example, a POW threatened with being shot if he doesn’t divulge military secrets (a threat from which there is no escape), then he may say “Never! Go ahead, kill me.”

Coercion is fundamentally a coupling of expectations and motivations. For example, “If you do not pay your rent, I will evict you.” The link between the resulting expectations of deprivations and the negative want is through the psychological field.

A negative want does not stand alone. That is, the psychological field of coercion involves fundamentally another’s behavioral dispositions and his expectations. His actual behavior, then, is a weighting of these dispositions within the coercive situation by his associated expectations of the outcomes.

The success of coercion, is then a function of these two variables, that is a person’s behavioural dispositions, which is the negative interest X transformed through the person’s psychological field, and his expectations, which relate negative interest Y to X within this dynamic field. This success will depend not only on the strength of the negative interest, but also on the credibility of its threatened manifestation, that is the expectation that the threat will be carried out.

For instance, if an indulgent parent uses hollow threats to keep his children in line, they soon will ignore the threats. Thus the parent’s coercive power over the child will be weak. Credibility is a crucial concept in understanding coercive power, for the degree to which another expects a threat to be carried out determines how seriously the negative

interest will be taken. If the threat is incredible, then from j's perspective there is no coercion, for he has no opposing alternative negative interests to choose between.

To conclude one may state that (i) the negative interest of a person is a goal which the person does not want and the strength of this feeling is against it. (ii) Coercion is when the individual has to choose between two negative alternative interests with one being a threat makes the other the likely choice. (iii) The success of coercion depends on the expectations of the threatened negative interests, that is the threat's credibility in that how far it will be used.

## **2) Bargaining Power**

Coercion is characterized by two negative interests connected by a threat. Bargaining power is characterized by two positive interests connected by a promise.

Consider again two individuals i and j and now two positive interests x and y, each being of the form "I want. . . ." Let the situation be such that for i to gratify one interest, he must give up the other. For example, in order to buy a new car (one positive interest) you must give up considerably money (another positive interest). To get money, you must give up some of your time to work. To develop a skill, you must devote considerable time to practice. And so on. Our lives are full of such trade-offs.

Bargaining power involves two people having positive wants they can exchange. Each can forgo the gratification of one want in exchange for the other. Such exchange relationships not only refer to goods and money, but any positive interests whatsoever. Thus, a girl may yield to a boy's overtures in return for his promise of love; a colleague may be highly supportive in return for similar support. All these are positive interests or in economic terms, goods.

If through bluff and haggling, I, for instance is able to exchange the minimum Y he is willing to give up for the maximum gratification of his interest X, then J has given up his maximum X for a minimum Y.

Then 'I' has more bargaining power than 'J'. For example, let us say in looking for a new house you see a suitable one that you and your mate both decide is worth as much as Rs.4,00,000.00, a sum you could handle in your budget. The owner, however, is asking for Rs.3, 80,000.00. Knowing that the initial price on a home is always negotiable, you offer Rs.3, 40,000.00. Finally, after bargaining, you both agree on Rs. 3.65, 000.00. Since you were willing and able to go Rs. 4, 00,000.00, you had more bargaining power than the owner in this situation. In fact you paid less than you were willing to pay. The owner received less than he could have had.

To sum up, it can be stated that a person has bargaining power if he can exchange his interests with others. He has greater power than another if he gets more for less than he was willing to give up. Thus one can define bargaining power as a capability to use promises to entice a person into choosing one's behavior over another.

Note the similarity in bargaining and coercive power. Both work through another self. Both involve two alternative interests tied together. Coercion, however, involves two

negative interests. Bargaining involves two positive interests. In coercion, one generates a negative interest to cause another to select a connected undesirable alternative. In bargaining, one generates a positive interest to cause another to select it over a connected desirable alternative.

Psychologically, how do coercion and bargaining compare? Coercion works through expectations. By posing a credible threat of something unwanted, one tries to get another to select an alternative negative interest.

In bargaining, however, one uses promises of rewards rather than threats of deprivations. One hopes to induce another to accept the reward in exchange for another positive interest.

And as in coercion, credibility is crucial. A person by reputation or by his previous behaviour or commitments, or his capability must show that he can and will follow through on his promises.

Let us now take up the domain of bargaining power. This form of power is often confused with economic exchange, such as in bartering possessions or buying and selling goods and services. This is only one arena for bargaining power.

The domain of bargaining power comprises all social relations. It is present in the exchange of status deference for protection, sex for security, or agreement for promotion. It is involved in the exchange of compliments, greetings, dinner invitations, and letters. Indeed, it underlies all social exchange, all situations of social reciprocity. Implicit in social exchange is a promise of a reward in exchange for some action. The promise need not be enunciated, but may be implicit in the other's field of expression or in the social relationship.

Economic exchange is usually explicit ("I'll give you five dollars for that book"), but this does not constitute a difference of kind, but of degree.

The same form of power is involved, as in "I'll scratch your back, if you'll scratch mine." The commonality is the presence of some mutual positive interests  $x$  and  $y$ , such that one person can exchange  $x$  for  $y$  and another  $y$  for  $x$ .

Since power is a key concept, let us see some of the definitions of power which are examined below:

- i. Power is the production of intended effects. If intentionality is omitted from this definition, it would be similar to power as a capability to produce effects.
- ii. Power is the ability to employ force. This definition confounds the difference between It does not take into account power in terms of non-coercive forms.
- iii. Power is when one's behaviour causes another's. This is a broad definition overlapping power in its various forms. As a person with power behaves, it affects others. One can affect another's perception, intentions, temperament, and moods without affecting his behaviour. In fact you may cause another to reassess his goals without changing them. This definition misses power's essence. It neither captures the genus or species of power, nor only obliquely taps its many

forms.

- iv. A person *i* has power over another person '*j*' to the extent that '*I*' can get '*j*' to do something that *j* would not otherwise do. Here power is defined as a form of power that is coercion. And the definition is restricted to having as distinct from exercising coercive power. And other forms of power are ignored or unappreciated.
- v. The power of '*I*' over '*j*' with respect to a given change equals the maximum strength of the resultant force which '*I*' can set up in that direction, where strength is determined by the relative magnitudes of the forces activated by '*I*' to comply and resist (Cartwright, 1959).
- vi. This definition is dispositional and involves intentions. It is a general definition, since it only refers to a resolution among psychological forces. It ignores physical power (force) and other non-intentional forms of power.
- vii. Power is the ability to satisfy wants through control over preferences and/or opportunities. Here also power is dispositional (ability) and intentional (control), and involves both coercion and bargaining (in my terms). Ignored by the definition are forces, unintentional power, and other forms of social power, including manipulative power.
- viii. Power is the relation between two parties modally characterized by (1) asymmetric influence, and (2) the predominance of negative sanctions (threatened or actual) as a feature of behavior in the dominant party. This makes power something more than a disposition. It is a "procession relation," a movement towards something. In form, it is coercive, with the emphasis on negative sanctions and resistance (negative interests).
- ix. Power is the process of affecting policies of others with the help of (actual or threatened) severe deprivations for nonconformity with the policies intended. Here again, only one form of power is defined: coercion. Power as they define it does not include force (in my terms). It is pure coercion.
- x. The essence of power is command. Power is something one has, which is actualized in being able to get others to do what is wanted. It is therefore dispositional and intentionally exercised. And it can take the form of coercion, altruism (one obeys out of love for the person or his cause), or authority. It ignores bargaining, manipulative, and intellectual powers, in which no command need be involved, as well as force and, of course, the other unintentional forms of power.
- xi. Power is the ability to cause or prevent change. Here the essence of power is the capability to do something.

Power has been analyzed into its forms and characteristics. The different types of powers and the different components of power all act and interact together and do not act independently. Similarly, power in its various forms and characteristics are united in reality, although these are analytically separable. Concerning social interaction particularly, the various forms of power can all coexist in the same relationship, forming a balance, a power field. Thus, even in an innocuous conversation with a stranger one may use manipulative power in steering the person conversationally towards my interests. All the forms of power are present and active in a unified but invisible whole.

It is the overall concrete resources of power reflecting this whole, which comprise power as status. On this, let me briefly consider status again.

### **3) Power as Status**

As a status, power means having power. It includes both the resources of power and their effective manifestation. It also includes all forms of power or their combination, depending upon the situation. Status is a bundle of characteristics upon which there is consensus as to their desirability. One such cluster is wealth or a person's command over an abundance of desirable possessions. Another is prestige, or a person's honour, respect, desirable reputation, or glamour. Power is a cluster that combines those capabilities underlying power in its various forms. As a cluster, power is a component of social space. It locates people in social space by virtue of their over-all capabilities for exercising power in all its social and nonsocial, intentional and unintentional, and coercive and non-coercive forms. Thus, power as status is clearly a generalized component. It subdivides into different aspects, elements, and forms as previously discussed.

#### **4.4.3 Essence of Power**

Power is a concept basic to understanding a reality of potentialities and actualities. Let us see what power within this view is. (i) First, power is the linkage between different states of being; between potentialities and actualities, between dispositions and manifestations, and between determinable and determinants (specifics). (ii) Power is that linkage that is strength of becoming, an active will to completeness. It is a push from the level of pure potentiality, of mere possibility, to ever greater levels of clarity and definiteness. (iii) Third, it is an imminent energy, an inherent force towards identity of all beings. (iv) Fourth, it is a vector whose direction is towards greater specificity, determinateness, completeness, identity, and whose magnitude is the strength of becoming, will to completeness, and force towards identity of a being. This is saying that power has a direction that is it is "pointed" at something and it represents the strength to actualize a potential of some kind. (v) Finally, in essence, power is a vector towards manifestation.

#### **1) Power, Relative or Absolute**

Is power as understood here relative or absolute, a quality of being or a relationship between being? Overwhelmingly, social scientists have defined (social or political) powers as relative. According to this view, power is some kind of ability of a person to impose him on another. This ability must be relative to the other, and the conception is therefore comparative.

At the same time, power has the capacity to produce effect. It comes from within a being as a pushing towards ever more completeness. In this meaning, power is a quality of being. It is absolute and no relatives. When we consider our power, therefore, we must separate two aspects. There is, first, our power toward distinctiveness as a living being, which is as a capacity to produce effect. This is a human quality, no less distinctive of our individuality than our personality.

## **2) Identive Power**

Most discussions of power imply that it is an ability to achieve intended results, usually in terms of getting some other person to do what he would not otherwise do. The focus on intention illuminates one face of power and power is a capacity to produce both intended and unintended effects. The unintended manifestation for example refers to a person's mere existence causes others to take notice, to take him into account, to compensate for him. As he walks down a sidewalk, he has the power to become manifest in the perception of other pedestrians, and to produce compensating movements. If he is well dressed, young, and handsome, he has the power to attract admiring glances. If he is also tall and muscular, he may cause some especially timid souls to be careful they do not bump into him.

Identive power is the fundamental striving of all beings for determinateness, for completeness, for an explicit identity. It is thus the will to power. Identive power is the basic, the super ordinate, upward striving to completion labeled variously by psychologists as the drive to power, to self-assertion, to self-esteem, to self-affirmation, to identity. It is that which gives underlying direction to our activities, interests, and goals. It is our future oriented law of movement. In the words of Alfred Adler, Identive power is the capacity of one's being able to produce effects, whether through other selves or through the environment.

## **3) Assertive Power**

The unintended, active becoming which is natural to all beings is identive power. For us as human beings, however, much of our activity is focused, purposive, and intentional. We transform identive power into a means towards the accomplishment of some goal, the gratification of some need, the satisfaction of some interest.

Because the focus here is on social behaviour, one can divide these manifestations of intentional power into three levels: the environment, another's body, and another self. Turning to the first level, the environment, we have a variety of powers which we often call abilities. Our strength, memory, reason, verbal fluency, numerical fluency, intelligence, and so on is powers through which we manifest our interests. As we intentionally bring these powers to bear against the environment through our perspective, we are asserting our interests. For this reason, we call this form of power assertive. It is a pushing outward, but not only the essential pushing of all beings, but the thrusting against external powers, a struggle, to manifest one's future goal.

## **4) Power and Interests**

Intentions are interests being manifested through behaviour, and thus involve three elements: interests, gratification, and will. Interests are activated attitudes, which in turn are linked to the basic needs. Needs are source of psychological energy driving persons to seek security or sex, to self-assertion or pugnacity, and so on. As culture becomes more and more complex, and the knowledge and experience increase, one tends to connect these needs and their gratification to an increasing

extended attitudinal lattice. Needs become gratified through a variety of attitudes and one attitude may help satisfy more than one need. The attitude thus gives specific direction to our needs. It matches the universal needs to the widely varying complexities of different cultures and to the circumstances of the individual's time and place.

It is within the attitude, the sentiments and roles are located. Sentiments are attitudes sharing the same goal, although they may satisfy different needs. Thus, one finds a clustering of attitudes into the religious, career, sports and games as well as sentiments. Most importantly, one finds the self-sentiment and the superego sentiment. The former are "the attitudes centered on the self, which include wanting to control one's mental processes, avoiding damaging self-respect, being first-rate in one's job, having a reputation for honesty and high principles, and to be responsible and in charge of things". On the other hand, the superego sentiment is a cluster of attitudes "centered on being moral, including duty to church and parents, unselfishness, avoiding sexual sin, gambling, and drinking and maintaining good self-control".

Even though attitudes cluster by goal into a specific sentiment, the situations related to these goals may differ. The self-sentiment, for example, may involve situations ranging from occupation to games to parent child and husband wife relationships. However, there are attitudes which share both the situation to which they are relevant. A role is a clustering of attitudes that refer to the same situation and that have the same goal. Attitudes sub serve the needs, and thus the needs surely form an element in these attitudes. In addition, there are three other elements viz., the integrated self, involving our ego and superego, a physiological autonomic element, in effect comprising our unconscious id, and our external context, that which we perceive.

Thus we find attitudes as the basic motivational unit, the dispositions defining our needs, goals, sentiments, and roles. Attitudes combine id, ego, and superego and frame our motivational structure. As dispositions, however, attitudes have direction (the goals) but no necessary power to be manifest through behaviour. For example, we may want to eat steak, but that particular attitude may be dormant because we are not hungry. We must bring into the picture the notion of activated attitudes and dormant attitudes, in which the activated need is one that not only has direction but a power to be manifest (to be satisfied). The seat of this power lies in the psychological energy associated with the needs. It is the same in form as identity power, in that it has the capacity to produce effects.

The attitude gives direction to this power which in turn gives attitudes strength to-becoming; together they form our interests: our attitudes and their associated power-towards-gratification. Since attitudes, the basic motivational units, involve both the integrated self ("I") and the goal, the attitude thus defines an intentional disposition.

There are two kinds of motivational powers, the first being a person's interests that are directed by the associated attitudes and given magnitudes by their power toward gratification. The second power corresponds to a person's intention, that is, it is the resolution of the power of an interest with the power of the will towards its gratification. Thus, assertive power is the conjunction of our interests whose goals

focus on the environment, such as learning to swim, pruning flowers, or building a fire, and our will to gratify them.

## **5) Force and Physical Power**

We satisfy our interests not only against the environment, but against others as well. In understanding power directed intentionally towards others, there is one primary consideration that is whether the power is directed towards the other self or his body?

Power directed towards another self is oriented towards the other's psychological field, perceptions, motivations, behavioural dispositions, interests or intentions. For instance the advertisements, propaganda, commands, threats, inducements, deception, promises etc. that we make are examples of power directed towards another self.

Power also can be directed to another's body. This distinction between the self and body oriented powers is what divides two healing professions: medicine and psychoanalysis. Medical doctors are concerned with the body's health and so direct their powers towards its wellbeing; psychoanalysts concerned with the self-use their powers to help another self-integrate and direct its interests and use its own powers.

Power directed intentionally towards another's body is called physical power. There are many kinds of physical powers, of which one, the medical, has already been mentioned. Prostitutes, masseurs, gymnasts, beauticians, and so on are known for their manifestation of particular physical powers. There is a type of physical power which is central to social area, which intentionally and physically affects a person contrary to his will. It is not oriented towards influencing, changing, or altering the person's choice, but to directly opposing it physically. This is called force, which refers to trying to physically affect another's body or interests contrary to that person's intentions. This idea of force uncovers a nest of issues, some of which should be clarified here and the rest in conjunction with the discussion of social power.

Now, to use force means is to use physical power to overcome the resistance of another's will. Thus, a holdup is not force, but if the person hits you over the head and takes your money in spite of your willful opposition, that is force. The second is between coercing a person's will or physically overcoming it. Everyone can be forced against their will. They can be tied up, knocked unconscious, carried off to jail, regardless of their will's opposition. But no one can be forced to do something against his will. He can only be coerced.

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## **4.5 LET US SUM UP**

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Social conflict is exclusively an aspect of social power. To understand social conflict we must deal at the level of social powers and their related factors. When two persons or more than two persons clash with each other verbally or physically, there is a conflict and in a social situation it turns out to be a social conflict. The social conflict cannot be understood without taking into consideration the social power as most of the conflicts that emerge in a social situation is related to the power one has and the power one is able to wield. In this unit we learnt about the above factors, in addition to the

nature of social power and family power and how these affect individual's behaviours.

Defining Conflict, we pointed out that it is the confrontation of powers. But power takes many forms. Power can be identified. It can be assertive, altruistic and manipulative, coercive and physical, and so on. Some powers are intentionally directed, as are assertive and bargaining powers; some powers are directed wholly towards a person's body, as is a blow to the body or application of force to make the person submit.

The social conflict means intentionally taking into account other persons in the environment or in the society. In social conflict the persons concerned use power to produce effects, and social power is an intentionally directed measure to produce effects on the other person or through another person. Social conflict is then the confrontation of social powers.

In order to understand power, coercive power and social conflict we need to know about violence and how far it is the same as coercive power. We learnt in this unit that Violence directed towards coercing another's will comprise either a threat or deprivation, and is an indication of the application of coercive power.

We discussed the many ways of resolving conflicts besides exchange and coercion. However, for one reason or other these may be undesirable or unworkable. One can then abdicate the interest. If success does not seem worth the cost, x may be left to the other person.

Social power refers to the capacity to produce effects that is using that power one should be able to make another person or persons to do what you desire. There are two factors involved in social power to have its effects, viz. the intentionality and orientation towards another person's self, apart from their body.

Social power has different forms and these include coercive power, bargaining power, and power as a status. Under essence of power we discussed power as a concept basic to understanding a reality of potentialities and actualities. Power was discussed in terms of relative and absolute. We defined identive power, assertive power and pointed out as to how power and interests are inter related.

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## 4.6 GLOSSARY

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<b>Authority</b>	: When power is legitimized it becomes authority
<b>Charismatic Power</b>	: Power derived from exceptional personality and abilities of the person which influence and inspire the followers.
<b>Coercive Power</b>	: The power to give punishment or withhold it.
<b>Power</b>	: The ability of a person or group to influence other person or group
<b>Social Norms</b>	: some guidelines which implicitly or explicitly govern our action.

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## 4.7 MODEL QUESTIONS

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- Q.1 Describe the role of social norms in maintaining harmony in the society.
- Q.2 Give five examples each of the behaviours which your society do approve and do not approve in your own specific socio – cultural set – up.
- Q.3 How do social psychologists utilize their knowledge and understanding of social norms to reduce/remove prejudice against any special target group e.g., ex-convicts?
- Q.4 Can you imagine “a society without norms” and write a critical essay on it?
- Q.5 Describe the nature of power and its various dimensions.

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