# UNIT 1 NATURE AND SCOPE OF SOCIOLOGY

## Structure

## 1.0 OBJECTIVES

After you have studied this unit, you should be able to:

- give a definition of sociology;
- describe social groups and their different classifications;
- explain the major concerns of sociology;
- describe the relation between sociology and science;
- explain the relation between sociology and other social sciences; and
- give in brief the ideas about the founding fathers of sociology such as, Comte, Durkheim, Weber, Marx, and Spencer

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

Sociology, as compared to other social sciences, like economics and political science, is a young discipline. One could say, it is about a hundred-and-fifty years old but there

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has been a more rapid development of the subject in the last fifty to sixty years. This is partly due to desire, particularly, after the Second World War, to understand more about the behaviour of people in social situations. All social science subjects are concerned with the behaviour of people but each of them studies defferent aspects. Sociology, however, is concerned with social relations in general, and with social groups and institutions in particular.

## 1.2 WHAT IS SOCIOLOGY?

Sociology can be defined as a study of society or social life, of group interaction and of social behaviour.

### 1.2.1 Concept of Society and Culture

Society has been defined as a relatively self sufficient, usually large group of people who maintain direct or indirect contact with each other through a culture. Culture is generally understood as the shared language, beliefs, goals, artefacts and experiences that combine together to form a unique pattern. In other words, culture is a society's way of life (Stebbins, Robert A. 1987; p- 172)

### 1.2.2 Emergence of Sociology

During the 19th century sociology emerged as separate social science in Europe and its objective was the study of society. Auguste Comte, Spencer and Emile Durkheim besides several other social thinkers sought to establish the idea of society as a matter of study, unique in itself. They examined society as a whole - which is more than the sum of its parts. Society is more than the actions, thoughts, values, belief and wishes of its individual members. It is a complex and abstract reality; yet all human beings live in a society.

A sociologist is interested in the general study of social behaviour as it occurs in groups, large or small, and lays special stress on understanding social life in the contemporary world. The word 'general' has been used as other social science disciplines deal with more specific areas. For example, a political scientist studies governmental functions and activities and an economist studies production and distribution of goods. It is, however, difficult to draw an exact line of difference. Social psychology, social anthropology, political science and economics, all in a sense, have human social life as their general subject.

As sociology is a relatively young discipline compared with the discipline of philosophy, economics and political science, sometimes, people confuse it with social work. Sociology is used in the discipline of social work to analyse and understand social problems. Social work is concerned with the uplift of those socially deprived, physically handicapped, etc. Sociology is not concerned with the reformation of society as such nor is it directly involved in social planning or directed change. The sociological understanding and research can help in better planning and in finding ways and means of acceptance of improved practices, in the formulation of development policies and programmes. It is generally accepted that sociologists do not interfere with social process. They are supposed to be value-neutral, i.e., they are not supposed to have any bias or prejudice in the analysis of the social behaviour. There are, however, at present, some, who question this and feel that sociologists must take an active role in the development process.

We have defined sociology as the study of social life and group interaction and social behaviour. In order to understand social life, sociology is interested in the study of the organisation and the functioning of societies or social groups.

## 1.2.3 Social Groups

Just as every human being is born in a society, everywhere, social life is lived in groups, whether large or small. The term 'group' is used in different ways. There might be a group, which is watching a game in progress, there might be a group of people crossing a street. In sociology, the group is viewed in a different way. It has already been mentioned that the basic interest of sociology is human social behaviour. This leads to a study of how people relate to each other or interact with each other. The social group, therefore, would have to have the following:

i) a group of persons (two or more);

ii) a patterned interaction (i.e., there is a regularity in the social relations, based on shared beliefs, values and norms); and

iii) the interaction is sustained over a period of time.

The groups are formed in order to satisfy some human needs. A basic need is survival and a family, which is an example of a group, enables us to meet this need. As individuals, it is not possible to fulfil all the needs. It is through the groups that the needs are met. We derive many satisfactions from living in groups and therefore, being a part of the group becomes important. The solidarity of a group is dependent upon the frequency of interaction and the emotional attachment.

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**Box 1.1: Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft**

Ferdinand Tonnies (1855-1936), a noted German sociologist, while examining different kinds of societies found that there were two kinds of social groups, similar to the concepts of primary and secondary groups found in all societies. He found that in small homogeneous societies members interacted with one another on face to face, informal basis. In these groups tradition dictated social behaviour. Tonnies called this kind of society a Gemeinschaft, which when translated means broadly "a communal, or traditional society".

In comparison, societies that are large and heterogeneous, such as the modern industrial societies, relationships among members are impersonal, formal, functional and specialised. According to Tonnies these societies have often contractual relationships which are on the basis of clear cut, legal contracts rather than being governed by traditions. Tonnies calls these societies Gesellschaft, or "associational societies".

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## 1.2.4 Kinds of Social Groups

The classification of social groups in two major types is based on the extent of attachment the individual would have to a group. The major classifications are (i) primary and (ii) secondary groups.

i) A primary group has been defined as one in which the members have very close or intimate relations and there is an emotional involvement. It has also been defined as primary because it is this group, which is chiefly responsible for nurture of social ideas of the individual. From the description above, we can go on to a more precise definition.

Personality of an individual is involved in a primary group. The best example of the primary group is the family. As one tries to analyse one's behaviour within the family and the functions, the family performs for each individual member, one can understand the importance of a primary group in shaping the ideas, beliefs and norms of the members.

The primary groups (family, play groups, a community, etc.) also acts as a link between the individual and the larger society.

ii) In contrast to the primary group, there are secondary groups. In the secondary group, members interact with one another in a very specific range of activities. The relationships in the secondary group are more casual, impersonal and for specific purposes. A student body of a large college is a secondary group as they interact as students. People working in a factory are also an example of a secondary group as they relate to each other as workers. You can see yourself how the relationships between the family and in a work place differ. From that, you will be able to understand the difference between primary and the secondary groups. The understanding of the nature of the groups and their functions is very important for understanding social behaviour.

**Check Your Progress 1**

**Note:** i) Use the space provided below for your answers.

ii) Compare your answers with those given at the end of this unit.

1) Give a definition of sociology. Write about five lines.

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2) What is social group? Use about five lines for your answer.

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3) Given below are some social situations, which amongst them can be called primary group. Tick the correct answer:

a) Meeting of political leaders during a summit.

b) Children playing "Kho Kho" in a field.

c) A feminist leader addressing women labourers.

d) School Principal addressing students in an assembly.

## 1.3 MAJOR CONCERNS OF SOCIOLOGY

Sociology seeks to study the society and to analyse it in terms of the social relations that have a pattern. Sociology addresses itself to three basic questions:

i) how and why societies emerge?

ii) how and why societies persist? and

iii) how and why societies change?

Sociology has been concerned with the evolution of society. It has tried to analyse the factors and forces underlying the historical transformations of society. For example, societies have evolved from primitive tribal state to rural communities. How villages have become important centres of commercial activity or of art and culture and grown into towns and cities.

Sociology has also been concerned with the units of social life. The attempt has been to look at various types of groups, communities, associations and society. The effort has been to study the pattern of social relationships in these units. An important area which sociology deals with is social institutions. The institutions provide a structure for the society and perform functions, which enable the society to meet its needs. In any society, there are five basic social institutions; family, political institutions, economic institutions, religious institutions and educational institutions. However, in more complex

societies, there may be many other institutions such as bureaucracy, military organisations, welfare and recreational organisations, etc. Caste is also an institution, which is more or less peculiar to India.

Another area of study and analysis by sociologists is social processes. In one sense, the social institutions provide the stability and order whereas social processes are the dynamic aspects of social relations. Among the various processes that will be dealt with in the latter units are socialisation, social control, co-operation, conflict, social deviation and social change.

### 1.3.1 Concept of Culture

'Culture' is another very important concept. As mentioned earlier, we are immersed in culture from birth onwards, we take culture for granted. It is difficult to imagine what life would be like without culture. Culture provides summing up of the past experiences, which are the necessary foundation for living in the present. Culture is learned and shared among members of the group. Culture in a sense, can seem to be the chief means of survival and adaptation.

On each of the topics mentioned, which are concerns of sociology, there will be units which will deal in much greater detail. The society is dynamic and is changing, consequently, the areas of interest of sociologists are increasing. Today, there is sociology of knowledge, sociology of science and art, sociology of health, sociology of development, etc. This indicates the expanding nature of sociology.

### 1.3.2 Sociology and Science

At times, sociology has been defined as the science of society. This raises the question as to what science is. Some have thought of science as an approach whereas others have thought about it in terms of the subject matter. Simply stated, we might say that the scientific approach consists of certain assumption that the phenomena studied have a regularity and hence, a pattern. The method emphasises observation and verification of social phenomena. This involves a systematic approach to the study of phenomena.

The systematic approach consists of:

i)   defining a problem for study;

ii)  collecting data on the problem defined;

iii) analysing and organising the data; which would help in formulation of hypothesis; and

iv)  further testing of the hypothesis and on the basis of this, develop new concepts and theories.

Sociology has been using a systematic approach in the study of social life. On the basis of the knowledge gathered through the systematic approach, it has tried to build a body of reliable knowledge. From this knowledge, it has tried to establish the patterns of relationships from which effort can be made at understanding social behaviour.

If we look at sociology from the point of view of its approach to the study of society, then sociology can be considered to be a science.

**Check Your Progress 2**

**Note:** i) Use the space provided below for your answers.

ii) Compare your answers with those given at the end of this unit.

1)   Write a note, in eight lines, on the basic concerns of sociology.

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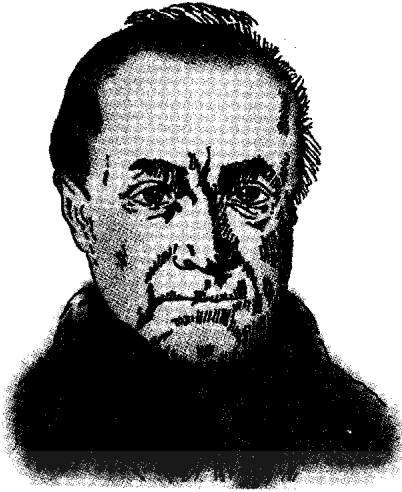
2) Explain the relationship between sociology and science. Write about five lines.

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**Auguste Comte**
**(1798 – 1857)**

**Emile Durkheim**
**(1858 – 1917)**

## 1.4 SOME FOUNDING FATHERS

Later on, in various units of this course you will come across the names of many early sociologists. A brief introduction is given of early sociologists, whose contribution to sociology is lasting. All of them wrote on the nature of human behaviour. In a way, they tried to understand profound changes taking place in society.

### 1.4.1 Auguste Comte (1798-1857)

Comte is regarded as the founder of modern sociology. He is the first one to have used the word 'Sociology'. He tried to create a new science of society, which could not only explain the past of mankind but also, predict its future course. He felt that society moves through definite and fixed stages and that, it progresses towards ever-increasing perfection. The three stages, according to him, in which the society moves, were:

i) the theological or the religious

to

ii) the metaphysical or the philosophical

to

iii) the positive or the scientific stage.

In the first stage, people thought, all phenomena were caused by supernatural forces. Abstract forces of either a religious or secular type were considered to be the source of knowledge in the second stage. In the last stage, scientific laws were supposed to determine both the natural and the social worlds.

He also talked about two broad areas —'social statistics', which deals with the orderly and stable aspects of social life and patterns of behaviour (family, occupational, polity, etc.). The second area called 'social dynamics' emphasises the study of changes in a social system. According to him, sociology was to be the queen of all sciences.

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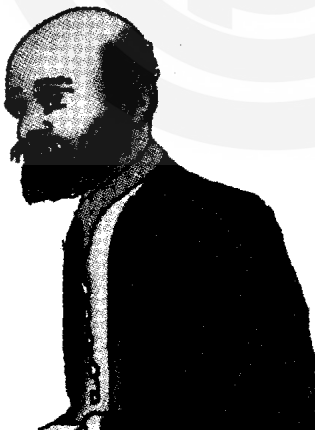
### 1.4.2 Emile Durkheim (1858-1917)

Durkheim was also interested in sociology being a scientific discipline. He wrote a book in 1895 entitled: **Rules of Sociological Method**. To him, social solidarity was one of the main principles of human life. He distinguished between two kinds of solidarity: **'mechanical solidarity'** based on common assumptions, beliefs, sentiments like those found in traditional societies and **'organic solidarity'** based on the division of labour and inter-related interests as found in industrial societies. When solidarity is broken, there would be social disorganisation and confusion in society.

He considered sociology as having wide interests, which includes sociology of religion, sociology of knowledge, sociology of law, sociology of crime, economic sociology, and sociology of education, art and aesthetics.

An important concept given by Durkheim was social facts, which, according to him, are external to the individual but they exert pressure on the individual in the behaviour pattern. Customs, traditions, folkways and mores are social facts. He felt that sociology should be involved in the reformation of society. For him society was a reality in itself, that is, it is more than its parts.

### 1.4.3 Max Weber (1864-1920)

Weber used the concept of social action rather than social relations. A comprehensive study of social action, to him, meant understanding the meanings human beings give to their behavioural pattern. The social behaviour was not merely a mechanical learning of norms but how people interpreted the social values. Sociology studies all kinds of social action without making any value judgements.

Weber was concerned with understanding of inter-relations between parts of society and also, with comparative studies of different societies. He studied religion in different societies. His work on **Protestant Ethics and the Spirit of Capitalism** is one of the well known works in sociology. Through both these approaches, he tried to develop propositions having general validity. For example, he classified authority into three types — charismatic, traditional and rational. These concepts are still used in the study of leadership authority and power.

**Max Weber
(1864 – 1920)**

### 1.4.4 Karl Marx (1818-1883)

Marx has helped through his ideas in understanding the nature of society, particularly, how conflicts occur. Marx writes in 1848 that all history is a history of classes and class struggles. The society gets divided between the oppressors and the oppressed-masters and slaves, lords and serfs and in the modern times, capitalists and workers. To analyse the structure of society, it was necessary to understand the forces of production and relations of production. The contradiction between the forces and the relations of production leads to class struggle. According to him, each society dies in time because of internal conflicts and contradictions and is replaced by a higher one. In time, capitalism would be destroyed and there would emerge a classless society characterised by absence of conflict, exploitation and alienation from this world.

**Karl Marx
(1818 – 1883)**

### 1.4.5 Herbert Spencer (1820-1903)

Spencer also emphasised a total view of society. According to him, the study of sociology covers the fields of family, politics, religion and social control, division of labour and social stratification. He emphasised the study of whole more than the study of parts. The individual institutions have significant relations. It is through a study of these inter-relations that one can hope to understand society. He indicated that the inter dependence of the various parts was functional, i.e., each of the part performs different functions, which is necessary for the total well being of society. A large number of sociologists, who are "functionalists", use Spencer's idea of the functional inter dependence as a basis for their approach to the study of society.

**Herbert Spencer
(1820 – 1903)**

Above descriptions of the contributions of founding fathers of sociology are sketchy. The main purpose is to introduce their names and to give you some idea of their concerns in sociology. In the later units of Elective course 13 on Sociological Thought we will be studying their approaches, theories and contributions in greater details.

## 1.5 SOCIOLOGY AND OTHER SOCIAL SCIENCES

As mentioned earlier, sociology has a broad perspective. It is concerned with those aspects of social life, which are present in all forms. It embraces every social setting. Most related social sciences have restricted range of specialisations. It must be pointed

out that human behaviour cannot be divided neatly into different compartments and each assigned to a specific social science. Hence, the boundaries between the disciplines are often overlapping. Almost all the social sciences get outside their 'own' and into 'somebody else's' domain with great frequency.

### 1.5.1 Social Psychology and Sociology

Social psychology is the study of social and cultural influences on the individual. It focuses on the behaviour of a single person and hence, differs from sociology, which is more concerned with relations among groups.

However, there are areas of common interest such as socialisation, norms and values. Moreover, the influences of the group on the individual and of the individual on the group are also of interest to both social psychology and sociology.

### 1.5.2 Sociology and Anthropology

There are many fields in anthropology, namely; archaeology, linguistics, physical anthropology and social anthropology. Although, anthropology has been regarded as the study of early (primitive) cultures, and sociology of the more contemporary society. This distinction is no longer valid. Many of the early village studies in India have been done by social anthropologists. The tribal communities in India have, by and large, been studied by anthropologists, in both their physical and social aspects. There is, hence, some overlap between the areas of study of sociology and anthropology, particularly, social anthropology. Culture and social organisations are concepts studied in both these disciplines.

### 1.5.3 Sociology and Economics

Sociology and economics both study industry but do so differently. Economics would study economic factors of industry, productivity, labour, industrial policy, marketing, etc., whereas a sociologist would study the impact of industrialisation on society. Economists study economic institutions such as factories, banks, trade and transportation but are not concerned with religion, family or politics. Sociology is interested in interaction between the economic institutions and other institutions in society, namely, political and religious.

Social life, in modern times, is very complex and no discipline by itself can study all of it in depth. While each social discipline focuses on a particular aspect of the society, there is need to keep in mind the inter-relations of institutions of society. Only some social sciences have been discussed so as to give a feel of relationships among social sciences. Similar analysis of the relation of sociology can be made to philosophy, history, public administration, etc.

### 1.5.4 Basic and Applied Sociology

Sociologists are interested in conducting research studies in the area of social life and developing theories with regard to human social behaviour. The purpose is to build a body of reliable knowledge through which various aspects of social life can be understood and explained. While this is important, it is necessary to make use of this knowledge in various aspects of human affairs. There are many factors, which have an impact on social relations. Increased use of technology is one such area. Sociologists could anticipate as to how people will receive and react to new technology and changes it might bring about in social relations. There are many programmes of development that are launched. Sociologist can indicate what care needs to be taken in introducing changes without affecting their way of life so that suggested programmes can be accepted. The reactions towards the innovations — acceptance, resistance or non-

acceptance should be noted, when studies could also provide further insight into social values and social behaviour.

Sociology thus provides an understanding about the social order in which we live and about the forces that shape and mould it. It also suggests paths of action to ensure the emergence of new social patterns. Imaginatively pursued the study of sociology enables us to understand the condition and the predicament of human beings. It can, also help in finding solutions for the present problems and dilemmas of society.

**Check Your Progress 3**

**Note:** i) Use the space provided below for your answers.

ii) Compare your answers with those given at the end of this unit.

1) What is the difference between basic and applied sociology?

Write about ten lines for your answer.

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## 1.6 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we have given you a definition of sociology. We also explained the idea of social groups. We have explained basic areas of concern for sociology. These include the mention of the concept of culture. It also includes the relationship of sociology with science as whole.

This unit also provides thumbnail sketches of five founding fathers of sociology. The theories of these thinkers continue to influence present day sociology and other social sciences as well. Finally we looked at sociology in its relation to psychology, economics, and so on. We have therefore provided a good idea about the nature and scope of sociology.

## 1.7 FURTHER READINGS

1) Mc. Kee, James B., 1981. *Sociology : The Study of Society*. Holt, Rinehart and Winston: New York.

2) Ogburn and Nimkoff, 1972. *A Handbook of Sociology*. Eurasian Publishing House: New Delhi

## 1.8 KEY WORDS

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| **Classification** | : | A way of putting data or information into different categories and groups. |
| **Culture** | : | This embodies the customs, rites and beliefs of a group of people. It includes both material culture, such as, houses, pots, coins etc. as well as non-material culture, such as, values, beliefs, norms etc. |
| **Group** | : | Comprises two or more people who have a meaningful interaction with each other and common goals. |
| **Primary group** | : | A social group with close ties and shared interests, e.g. the family. |
| **Secondary group** | : | A large group with looser ties but common well defined goals, e.g. office employees, or members of a club or associations. |

## 1.9 MODEL ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

**Check Your Progress 1**

1)   In broad terms, sociology can be defined as the study of social life, group interaction and social behaviour, while other social sciences study specialised areas of social behaviour, Sociology is interested in taking an overall view of social life.

2)   A social group refers to a group of persons (two or more), who have a regular social interaction, based on shared beliefs, values and norms. The interaction takes place on a basis over a period of time. The interacting persons view themselves as members of the group. Examples of a group are the nuclear family, a football team, etc.

3)   b)

**Check Your Progress 2**

1)   Sociology is basically concerned with the study of patterns in social relations. Once relations between people are familiar and well-established, they become institutionalised ways of social behaviour, then, it is sociology's concern to make comparative studies of social institutions, such as, the family, economy and polity. Sociology is also concerned with the study of social processes, which reflect the dynamic aspects of social relations.

2)   Being the scientific study of society, sociology views science as an approach to study social phenomena. In science, patterns in natural phenomena are discovered by observation and verification; in sociology, social phenomena are observed to formulate and test hypotheses.

**Check Your Progress 3**

1)   Sociology is engaged in giving explanations of human social behaviour. For making use of this knowledge of human affairs, sociological findings can be and are used in planning development programmes. This kind of use of sociology is given the name of applied sociology. It is obvious that basic sociology is confined to researches into human social behaviour. Applied sociology differs from basic sociology in the sense that it only makes use of sociological findings in planning and implementing action-oriented programmes for development.

# UNIT 2   BASIC CONCEPTS IN SOCIOLOGY

## Structure

# 2.0   OBJECTIVES

After you have read this unit we expect that you will be able to:

- explain the concept of society;
- describe the nature of social groups;
- discuss the concepts of status and role;
- explain the relation between culture and human behaviour;
- describe social change and social control; and
- discuss sociological methods.

# 2.1 INTRODUCTION

In this unit we introduce you to basic concepts in sociology. These concepts include that of society itself. The social group is discussed, as it is basic to society. We then discuss status and role, which are crucial concepts. This unit also introduces the concepts of social institution and sociological method. Further, we explain various aspects of culture including folkways and norms. The unit rounds off with explanations of social change and social control. This is an important unit for grasping some of the basic concepts of sociology.

# 2.2 KEY SOCIOLOGICAL CONCEPTS

Let us first see what is meant by concepts. A concept is a word or phrase, which is abstract from actual experience and which, more or less, means the same thing to all those 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 are also concepts.

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.

## 2.2.1 The Concept of Society

Society is viewed by sociologists as s chain of social relationships. A relationship is social, when it is determined by mutual awareness, that is, the behaviour of one individual influences the behaviour of another. For example, when a teacher enters the classroom, students stop making noise and stand up as a mark of respect for their teacher. This behaviour signifies the social relationship between the teacher and the taught. Thus, social relationships exist only when individuals behave towards one another in ways determined by their recognition of each other. This is why society is called a relational concept.

In other words, society is not a substantial concept. It does not denote a concrete reality, rather it refers to social relationships, which become institutionalised, when people relate to each other in well-established and familiar ways.

## 2.2.2 Types of Society

The predominant types of social relationships form the basis of classifying human society in various types. Most sociologists contrast the industrial society in which they live with all other types. Some sociologists, like Spencer and Durkheim, classified societies on the basis of their size or scale and other features, such as, the extent and degree of the division of labour, political organisation and social stratification, etc. Some scholars, like Karl Marx, distinguish them on the basis of their economic institutions. Thus, there are clearly many ways of classifying societies. Without going into complicated arguments at this stage of your introduction to sociology, it is necessary to realise that there is no ideal classification and no 'pure' example of various types of society.

In broad terms, taking the wider interests of sociology into consideration, we can divide societies into two types, namely; simple and complex. All primitive or tribal social

organisations are included among simple societies. The industrial societies with overlapping sets of social relationships are called complex societies.

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**Activity 1**

Reflect about the type of society you live in and write a short note of one page about your understanding of your society.

Compare your answer with those of other students at your study centre and discuss with your Academic Counsellor.

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## 2.3 SOCIAL GROUPS

The concept of group is central to sociology. While in normal discourse, we regard any collection of two or more individuals to be a group, sociologically, individuals constituting a group must be conscious of a common belongingness, of sharing some common understanding, common interests and goals as well as accepting certain rights and obligations. In this sense, a family or a class can be called a group. A society or community can also be called a group.

### 2.3.1 Primary Groups

First coined by the sociologist, Charles Horton Cooley (1864-1929), a primary group is relatively small (though not all small groups are primary). Its members generally have face-to-face contact, and thus, have intimate and co-operative relationships, as well as strong loyalty. The relationships between the members are ends in themselves. There is a basic human need for face to face, intimate co-operative interaction with others. That is, members derive pleasure and enjoyment merely by associating with one another. They have no other particular ends or goals in view. The primary group comes to an end, when one or more members leave it; they cannot be substituted by others. The best example of a primary group is the family or the friendship, or 'peer' group, as sociologists call it.

### 2.3.2 Secondary Groups

Secondary groups, in several respects, are the opposite of primary groups. These are generally large size groups, though not always so. Members of the secondary group maintain relatively limited, formal and impersonal relationship with one another.

Unlike primary groups, secondary groups are specific or specialised interest groups. Generally, a well defined, division of labour characterises these groups. Member can be substituted and replaced, hence, a secondary group may continue irrespective of whether its original members continue to be its members or not. A cricket team, a music club, an army or a factory, and so on, are examples of secondary groups.

It is possible that within secondary groups, some members may come close to one another and develop primary relations and form a group of peers. Several sociological studies have shown that the presence of primary groups in armies, factories, and other secondary groups, have contributed to high level of morale, and more effective functioning.

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## 2.4 STATUS AND ROLE

The variety of social relations in any society is obviously countless. Parenthood, marriage, friendships, neighbourliness, and similar examples, illustrate the enormous range of social relations, which sociologists examine and on the basis of which they try to understand society. Each social relation is conceived, for purposes of analysis and understanding, in terms of two components, namely, status and role.

Status, also referred to as social position by some writers, is the 'socially defined location or place', which an individual occupies in a system of interaction or society. Thus, in any interaction, none of the participants is without status. Indeed, no individual can interact with another, if his/her status, as well as that of the person or persons, is not clear in a given situation.

Thus, interaction in the family poses no problems because each member knows well the status he/she and others are occupying. This knowledge allows for a smooth flow and predictable interaction. But, when we encounter a stranger, we first of all want to know his or her status. Until this is known, we are not clear, how we should behave towards him or her. Thus, it is status and knowledge of status that facilitates patterned interaction.

### 2.4.1 Types of Status

Sociologists make a distinction between 'ascribed' and 'achieved' statuses. Positions, which one is born into or one acquires without one's own effort, are known as ascribed status. Mostly, kinship statuses come in this category. Achieved statuses are, in contrast, based on and defined by what people do or acquire through their own effort. Usually, people's occupational positions come in this category. Only in some cases, it is possible to have both ascribed and achieved aspects in the same status, a hereditary priest in an Indian village, for example, may be rejected if he fails to learn the required scriptures.

### 2.4.2 Multiple Statuses

It should also be clear that every individual occupies multiple statuses. Even a young infant is a son, a grandson, a brother, a nephew, and so on. As we grow up, we may get into even more status positions. Public figures and other important men, women simultaneously occupy several statuses. There is, however, one key status in terms of which the individual is ultimately identified and evaluated. In modern societies, one's occupation indicates one's key status.

### 2.4.3 The Concept of Role

We turn now to the concept of role. Role is the behavioural aspect of status; there can be no statuses without a corresponding role attached to it Role is, thus, the dynamic aspect of status and consists of rights and duties attached to it. Thus, an individual occupying the status of a father, simultaneously, has some rights over his children, as well as, some responsibilities towards them. Statuses and roles are, thus, two sides of the same coin.

Role refers both to the actual behaviour of an individual occupying a particular status, as well as to a set of **expectations** regarding behaviour, shared by those involved in particular social relations. Thus, in the teacher-student relations, the teacher has an expectation as to how the student interacting with him will or should behave. The students, too, in turn, have their own set of expectations. Should either of them fail to act according to other's expectations, their relations are adversely affected. Since individuals, by and large, fulfil role expectation, society gains uniformity of behaviour.

This discussion indicates the significance of the concept of role. Indeed, it is one of the basic units of analysis of social order in human societies and later, in Block 7, more will be discussed about this concept.

## 2.5 SOCIAL INSTITUTION

Social institution can be defined as a 'broad goal-oriented behaviour, which is firmly established'. It becomes possible to understand and predict the behaviour of people

because of this established pattern of behaviour found in a society. The study of social institutions, therefore, includes groups, roles, norms, beliefs and practices in a particular area of social life.

Social institution provides the framework within which people in different societies and cultures live. It provides the very structure of society. People are born in a family, which is an institution. They are nurtured and socialised in this institution, which is governed by the values, norms and mores of that society. How the family and its members earn their living depends upon the economic institutions of their society. How they maintain order and administration depends on the political institutions of that society. How information and skills are passed from one generation to another, depends upon the educational institution of that society. Finally, how people explain their existence in society, from where they have come before birth and where they will go after death, i.e. the 'religious experience' is established by the religious institutions. Thus, all social institutions in a given society are inter-related. Family as an institution forms the pivot around which all other social institutions move as it provides the individual members to the society. Therefore, as Perry and Perry (1973 : pp. 300) mention, "its important to remember that institutions are simply abstract concepts of organised habits and standardised ways of doing things. We cannot see institutions, what we can see are families, schools, banks and so on." Culture is an essential aspect of all societies. You will learn more about it in the next section.

**Check Your Progress 1**

**Note:** i) Use the space provided below for your answers.

ii) Compare your answers with those given at the end of this unit.

1) Define the concept of society, in eight lines.

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2) Show the difference between primary and secondary groups. Use about six lines.

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3) Distinguish between status and role. Write about five lines for your answer.

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## 2.6  CULTURE

Besides society, role, status and institution, culture is another important theme that engages the attention of sociologists. Ordinarily, even those, who are not at all familiar with sociology, are familiar with the word 'culture'. In our daily life, we may describe some people as very 'cultured'. We give such a label if persons concerned are refined and polished in their behaviour and manner. But sociologists do not use the term 'culture' in this sense. They have their own, special understanding of it.

In sociological terms, culture can be defined as the total sum of human activities, which are learnt. It is passed on from generation to generation through membership of a particular society. As various learning processes in human societies involve systems of tools, communications and symbols, we can also say that the concept of culture refers to a system of tools, communications and symbols. People in order to learn new activities require tools, language and symbols.

Cultures in human societies differ from one another and also, change over time. One of the gains of studying sociology is that besides giving an idea of various cultures, it also helps to develop an understanding of other cultures than one's own.

### 2.6.1  Culture and Human Behaviour

A little reflection will show that in similar situations, people of different cultures reveal differences in the way they meet these situations. For example, while greeting friends and relatives, at home or on the street, men in our society may shake hands with other men but as a rule, not with women. Similarly, notwithstanding great hunger, a vegetarian refuses non-vegetarian food. This is because culture influences our behaviour in given situations. Stated in sociological terms, culture is **normative,** that is, it provides standards of proper conduct, and also therefore, tells us, what is right or wrong. Concretely, these standards are provided to us by what are called **cultural norms.** Thus, while many college students smoke these days, they do not normally do so in the presence of their elders or teachers. In our culture, such an act is considered to be wrong, that is, contrary to our cultural norms. The content of the non-material culture of every society consists of a large number of norms. These norms are learnt and enforced by folkways and mores.

### 2.6.2  Folkways

There are behaviour patterns that govern most of our daily life and contacts with other people. Thus, rising up from seats, when teachers enter into classrooms, allowing women to purchase tickets without queuing, distribution of sweets after getting a job or a promotion, and so on, are examples of folkways. A number of folkways are simply acts of politeness.

In order that folkways may not be taken lightly, mechanisms such as praise, approval and acceptance exist to make individuals conform to them. Conversely, a word of criticism, frown, or sarcastic remark or laughter are modes of expressing disapproval of incorrect behaviour. Since most people desire that they should not look funny or be considered rude and uncouth by their group, they fall in line with what the group expects and desires. Therefore, most people conform to the folkways without even being aware that they are conforming, or that there are alternative ways of behaving.

### 2.6.3 Mores

These are norms that are considered to be more important by group, and even vital for its welfare. Violation of the mores evokes an emotional response and instead of the mere raising of eyebrow or ridicule, a strong group action follows. Thus, prohibition of the consumption of beef and alcoholic drinks are part of the mores of Hindu and Muslim societies, respectively. Any violation of these will not be tolerated. Mores are linked to cultural values.

It should now be clear that mores are norms of a higher order than folkways. There is an element of compulsion in them and they are linked to the dominant values of the culture. Mores clearly and definitely reflect the concepts of what is moral and immoral. This is seen from the fact that mores are generally expressed in terms of 'must behaviour' (for example, all married men and women must remain faithful to their spouses and must observe sexual fidelity) or, negatively, in terms of 'must-not' behaviour, for example, women should not expose their bodies.

### 2.6.4 Values

Values, the ultimate essence and spirit of cultures, are the underlying principles and ideas on the basis of which societies and individuals choose their goals. Values are also the criteria on which social and individual ends and means are judged and evaluated. Apart from goals, all conduct and behaviour whether for achieving these goals, or otherwise, are judged and evaluated in the framework of accepted values. Any action that is contrary to the cherished values of the group or society is condemned and punished. For example, in Indian society there is a value regarding junior persons' behaviour towards senior persons. Any deviance from accepted behaviour is always a subject of criticism.

Unlike norms, which are quite specific, values tend to be generalised ideals and somewhat abstract; nevertheless, they attract the total commitment of the society.

### 2.6.5 Sub-cultures

Another important point to bear in mind is, that in the case of complex and heterogeneous societies, like India, which are characterised by many religious, linguistic and other diversities, it is usual to have a number of sub-cultures within the framework of the larger overall cultures. Thus, in India, religious communities like Muslims, Christians or Sikhs or linguistic groups like Tamilians, Maharashtrians or Punjabis and so on, have their own sub-cultural characteristics that distinguish them from other communities or groups. But simultaneously, we also share certain core values like secularism, democracy and equality of all citizens, irrespective of our diversities, and these integrate us. But heterogeneous societies have constantly to keep emphasising and nurturing their more universal and cultural values so that they are not forsaken in favour of the sub-cultural values.

## 2.7 SOCIAL CHANGE

In tracing the origins of sociology, as well as in pointing out the concerns of early Sociologists, it had been indicated that the changes brought by the industrial revolution had a major role to play in the birth of modern sociology. Due to this, sociology and sociologists have never lost sight of the study of social change, and this interest has been major concern of the discipline throughout its entire history of about two hundred years.

Although, sociologists have been studying the process of social change for a long time, it is difficult to give a brief and precise definition. Social change refers to the process

by which alterations occur in society or social relations. Social change is a continuous process.

Social change can be caused by many factors. Increased population can bring about changes. Innovations—i.e., new ideas or an object can bring about new relationships. It is also possible that one society can borrow ideas or objects from other societies, which may cause variation in social relations.

Later on, you would be studying various theories of social change (evolution, cyclical, conflict, modernisation and development). The leading sociologists, who have been referred to in Unit 1, have their own ideas about how change occurs, which will be discussed later.

### 2.7.1  Agents of Change

An important question is the identity of agents of change. As mentioned earlier, any sub-units or institutions are instruments through which social change can be effected. Some of the institutions are more important than others—the economic, political and educational institutions are more central in effecting change. Religion can act as an agent of change as well as resistance to change.

Although, the society continuously undergoes change, it must be pointed out that there is usually resistance to change. New ideas and new behaviour patterns are not easily accepted. Even material innovations also take time to be accepted and diffused in any society (trains were considered in England as the work of the devil). Resistance is greater, when traditional values and beliefs are involved.

### 2.7.2  Rate of Change

Another question is with regard to the rate of change. In societies, which are industrialised and use sophisticated technology (which itself has brought about changes), the rate of change is more rapid than in pre-industrial societies. Another important fact to be kept in mind is that a great deal of change today is caused by planning. This is referred to as guided change, which is being undertaken in many developing countries. This would be discussed further in the unit on social development.

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**Activity 2**

Within your family, ask your grand parents or their cousins about the kind of changes that they observe today in our society which were not present when they were children. Make a note of one page and discuss it with other students at your study centre.

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## 2.8   SOCIAL CONTROL

Social control is a process to regulate behaviour within society. In a sense, social control is to discourage people from deviating from the established values and norms. Because of social control, people live up to what is expected of them. Social control is an aspect of all social institutions and thus, it is pervasive to social life on the whole.

Behaviour of people is controlled both by positive and negative sanctions. The aim of both these types of sanction is to encourage people to conform to the norms. Positive sanction can include praise, gifts and promotion whereas negative sanction can be punishment, demotion ridicule or boycott. Social control is not necessarily always successful. There are different approaches to the study of social control, these will be discussed in later units.

## 2.9  SOCIOLOGICAL METHODS

Sociologists have used many methods in studying society. In Unit 1, we have already discussed the scientific method and its characteristics. Although, sociologists may use different methods, the scientific approach is basic to all of them. The historical method involves the study of origins, development and transformation of social institutions. In this method, a sociologist uses information pertaining to one or more societies over a long period of time. The main approach is to try to get some insights from the past experiences with regard to social behaviour

In comparative method, data from different countries, different regions or different religions are gathered. An effort is made to see whether there are any common factors, which can explain patterns of behaviour.

The empirical method refers to collection of data from the field. The facts of social life are studied and described as they exist. The techniques used in this method are observation, survey, experimental, case studies.

These methods are not necessarily exclusive. There can be a combination of them. The purpose of all these methods, in a way, is to try to answer the questions: 'Why do people behave the way they do?' The sociological theories and concepts have emerged as a result of these studies.

**Check Your Progress 2**

**Note:**  i) Use the space provided below for your answers.

ii) Compare your answers with those given at the end of this unit.

1)  Write a note in ten lines on social division in tribal societies.

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2)  What is social control? Explain in about five lines.

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## 2.10  LET US SUM UP

This unit has explained clearly some important concepts in sociology. They are in fact concepts which keep appearing in the following units. We hope you have grasped these concepts, such as, those of society, social group, status and role, social institutions, culture, and so on. These concepts are basic to a sociological study. Finally, we

explained the concepts of social change and social control. It would be advisable that this unit is understood well by the student for then it would help them better to understand the following units.

## 2.11 FURTHER READINGS

1) Ritzer, G. Kammeyer, K.C.W. and Yetman, N.R., 1979, *Sociology: Experiencing a Changing Society*. Allan and Bacon Ind.: Boston

2) Perry, J. & Perry E., 1973, The Social Web An Introduction to Sociology, Canfield Press, San Francisco.

## 2.12 KEY WORDS

**Culture** : The system of behaviour, customs, regulations that are learnt and socially acquired.

**Folkways** : Behaviour patterns that govern daily life and interactions, e.g. ways of addressing one another.

**Mores** : Ways of behaviour that are crucial for the welfare of a society, e.g. non-violence, fidelity, non-thieving and so on.

**Role** : In social life man and woman undertakes many responsibilities, e.g. husband, mother, son, etc. They are various roles.

**Status** : Consists of rights and duties of a person in any position. Each status has a role or set of actions attached to it, e.g. the teacher must teach.

## 2.13 MODEL ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

### Check Your Progress 1

1) Society is a relational concept. It does not refer to a concrete reality. It is viewed as a chain or a network of social relationships. A relationship becomes social only when individuals interact in ways determined by well-established and familiar recognition of each other. So, we can say that the concept of society refers to social relationships, which become institutionalised.

2) Primary groups are characterised by personalised relationships among their members. They are typically small and profoundly influence the members' behaviour. Secondary groups, on the other hand, are relatively larger and more impersonal. These groups are, generally, formed with a specific goal.

3) Within a set of social relationships among people, a place or a position is referred to by the term 'status'. Each status carries with it a generally expected behaviour. This behaviour is termed as 'role'. Role is, thus, the dynamic aspect of status.

### Check Your Progress 2

1) Social change is a continuous process, which refers to changes occurring in society or social relations. Multiple factors, such as, increased population, innovations, natural disasters, political conflicts, etc., cause changes in society. Sub-units or institutions in society are instruments through which social change is effected. In pre-industrial societies, the rate of change is slower as compared to fast speed of change in industrial societies.

2) Social control refers to a regulatory process, which encourages people to conforming to established values and norms. Non-conformity is considered to be a deviant behaviour. Social control is exercised through the mechanism of positive and negative sanctions.

# UNIT 3 SIMPLE SOCIETIES

**Structure**

## 3.0 OBJECTIVES

After having read this unit, you should be able to:

- describe the main features of economy and social organisation in simple societies;
- explain the type of religion and political systems which exist in simple societies; and
- discuss the impact of colonialism on simple societies.

## 3.1 INTRODUCTION

The term 'simple societies' refers to small-scale societies with a relatively simple technology. Such societies are not only small-in size but also their control over the environment is quite limited. With small-scale markets, their scope for specialisation in the division of labour is restricted.

All tribal societies can be called simple in terms of their limited technological control over the environment. Their economies are, generally, based on the mode of production of material goods for subsistence. Most such societies around the world have interesting systems of exchange, which intervene between production and consumption of material goods.

With their distinct types of socio-political organisations, tribal societies all over the world present a striking contrast to the societies in which we live. Many tribal groups are, now, caught in the process of acquiring advance technologies. They can be called 'transitional'. Most transitional societies have experienced colonial rule by Europeans.

In this unit, you will, first, read about the main features of economies and systems of exchange in simple societies. Then, you will look at how these societies are socially and politically organised and how natural phenomena predominate in their religious belief-systems. Finally, you will learn about the impact of colonial rule on simple societies.

## 3.2 ECONOMIES IN SIMPLE SOCIETIES

Simple societies are spread over nearly the entire range of natural environments and are not confined only to one or two regions. They are found in the dense equatorial and tropical forests, in the hot and cold deserts and in the rich alluvial plains. They are found also in the foothills and high ranges of mountains, in the savannas, sea coasts and in the islands jutting out of the open seas. The diversity of natural environment has resulted in the diversity of economies practised by such societies. Given the simple technology, the impact of the natural environment is considerable. But the simple societies, even with their simple technology, have everywhere shown an indomitable spirit to face the harsh nature.

Based on the mode of production of material goods for subsistence, economies in simple societies can be grouped into the following types: a) Hunting and gathering; b) Pastoral; c) Shifting cultivation; and d) Settled cultivation.
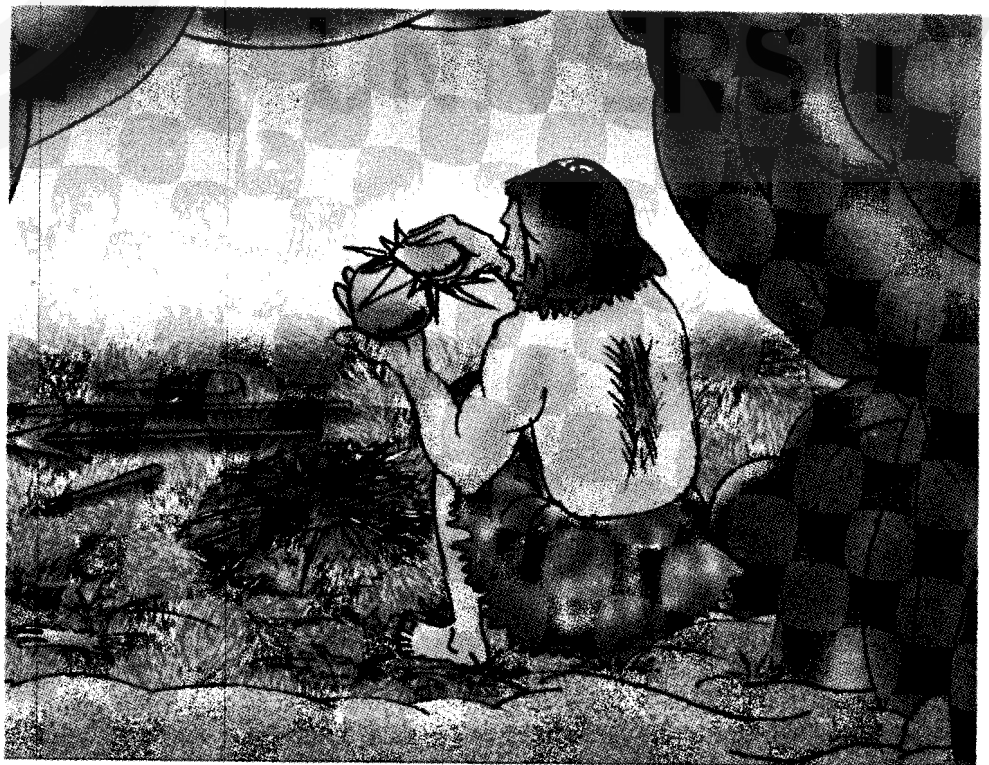


**Simple Society : Making a Fire**

### 3.2.1 Hunting and Gathering

Hunting and gathering societies live by hunting large and small game and by collecting a wide variety of roots, fruits, and tubers. Despite the similarity in the relationship with nature, the hunting and gathering societies differ a great deal among themselves, depending upon the habitat and the animals they hunt.

All these hunting and gathering societies live close to nature and (rather than adapting nature to themselves) they adapt themselves to nature. Following this principle, they keep on moving from place to place in search of animals, fruits, roots and tubers.

It was generally believed by early anthropologists that the hunting and gathering communities live on the edge of scarcity but recent researches have shown that this is not so and that they enjoy a measure of affluence/abundance.

### 3.2.2 Pastoral

The domestication of animals forms the main feature of the pastoral stage. Some of the pastoral communities mix pastoral economy with agriculture. For acquiring sufficient water and pasture ground for their animals, the pastoral communities have to move from place-to-place. Some pastoralists make only seasonal movements, while others remain constantly on the move. Because of the importance of movement among these people, the size of their population is always relatively small. Raiding of livestock is quite common among pastoralists. They are known to have little regard for authority and centralised administration. In India, the important pastoral communities include the Toda (The buffalo herders of Nilgiri Hills, Tamil Nadu), the Gujar (cattle and buffalo herders) and the Bakerwal (sheep and goat herders) of Jammu and Kashmir.

The pastoral communities have as their staple diet the animal products of meat, milk and blood. The Toda do not mix the blood of the animal with milk as some African pastoralists do.

The livestock reared among pastoralists have deep impact on their religious and other behaviour. Rearing the buffalo, for example, is a sacred activity for the Toda.

### 3.2.3 Shifting Cultivation

In shifting cultivation, after every few years, new ground is cleared by the farmer for planting crops and the old plot is left to its natural growth. Compared to the pastoralists' way of life, practitioners of shifting cultivation have relatively long residence in one area. In such societies, land is often owned by the community.

A number of tribes practise shifting cultivation such as the Bantu of equatorial Africa, Garo of Meghalaya, Baiga and Abujhmar Maria of Madhya Pradesh and Saora of Orissa. A number of tribes in Arunachal Pradesh also practise shifting cultivation.

### 3.2.4 Settled Cultivation

Relatively larger number of simple societies practise settled cultivation, where the same fields are cultivated year after year. Settled cultivation makes it necessary for the villages to become permanent settlements. A number of gods and deities rise up all around the villages, investing religious significance to the villages. The institution of private property also gets more crystallised.

Depending upon the technology, the settled cultivation admits of a two-fold division: hoe cultivation and plough cultivation. Many island communities, like the Trobriand Islanders in the Pacific, are hoe cultivators. The Munda, Santhal and Gond in India are plough cultivators. The hill slopes give rise to yet another type of settled cultivation, because to cultivate the hill slopes are cut up into terraces. The Nagas in India are good examples of terrace cultivators.

## 3.3   SYSTEMS OF EXCHANGE IN SIMPLE SOCIETIES

To give and take things from each other is a necessary part of our daily behaviour and therefore, forms an important aspect of interpersonal relations. In this sense, exchange is not simply a theme in economics. Undoubtedly, many exchanges of goods are of economic nature. In some other cases, occasions of gift-giving, being also ceremonial in nature, express well established and thus, institutionalised relationships among the people. Often, the purpose of exchanging goods is to maintain amicable relations between groups to minimise the possibilities of conflict. For instance, during wedding ceremonies in India, gifts are given and taken by both the sides of the bride and bridegroom. In terms of their use-value, such gifts have certain economic value but they also serve as a mark of status and put a kind of seal or stamp on the new relationship. Secondly, such exchanges are not transacted only once. They usually form a series of gift-giving, which builds mutual feelings of goodwill and express happy relations between the two sides. One of the purposes of exchanging goods is to maintain a state of mutual indebtedness.

Face-to-face relationships of mutual help in simple societies are continually reinforced by exchange of gifts. Many scholars, especially social anthropologists, have studied simple societies. They have highlighted some forms of exchanges, which are peculiar to some cases, with no parallels in Indian society. We bring you two classic examples of the other than economic importance of gift-exchanges in simple societies.

### 3.3.1 Two Examples

#### i) The Kula Exchange

Malinowski, in his study of economic activities known as the Kula ring of the Western Pacific region, showed that among the Trobriand Islanders, the members of the Kula ring exchange among themselves ritually and socially valued objects. The system of exchange is regulated in a kind of ring with two directional movements. In clockwise direction, the red shell necklaces circulate and in anti-clockwise circulation, the white arm-shells' circulate among the members of the Kula ring. These objects have no commercial value but carry differing prestige value for donors and receipients. The tribals undertake long dangerous sea voyages in search of these objects, which are economically useless. While the Islanders normally haggle and bargain in their day-to-day buying and selling of other goods, the objects given and taken in the Kula are never subjected to any bargaining.

#### ii) The Potlatch Ceremony

Our second example is from the American North-West where, the Kwakiutl (and also, some other tribes of the region) organised large-scale feasts. At such occasions, not only enormous quantities of food were consumed and gifts given to guests, but also many articles (considered valuable by them) were destroyed. The practice of feasts

(known as the institution of potlatch) among these people shows how giving away of goods to the extent of physically destroying them was linked with their claims to a higher social status. The more feasts one group organised, the more prestige it received. Further, the more a group was invited to such potlatches and the more gifts it received, the more prestige the group gained in the eyes of other groups. These feasts were always organised by agnatic groups, i.e., by those standing in the relationship of brothers to each other. One such group invited other such groups and vied with each other in giving more and more food to eat and more and more gifts to take home and more and more valuables to destroy.

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**Activity 1**

Do you also have examples of gift exchange which are ritualised? Write an essay of one page on a ritual exchange of gifts in your community. You may discuss your essay with other students at your study centre, as well as, your Academic Counsellor.

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### 3.3.2 Markets

Although, most economic exchange of goods in simple societies take place in markets, there are some societies in which multiple transactions in different items take place without a market. The Trobriand Islanders are a good example of this type.

In some simple societies, for instance in West Africa, markets are well-recognised places for exchanges of goods. They are essential to the functioning of the society's economic system. But besides their economic importance, markets also assume social meaning as a meeting-place. The tribes of Yoruba of Nigeria and Arusha of Tanzania are famous for their markets. Often, Market-places are also used as centres of administration and for dissemination of information. In this respect, traditional centres for development of folk forms of performing arts.

## 3.4   SOCIAL ORGANISATION IN SIMPLE SOCIETIES

In order to present an overview of simple societies, their social organisation can be briefly studied in four parts, namely, kinship, marriage, religion and polity. Kinship roles in these societies subsume religious and political activities and it is, therefore, reasonable to discuss them in one section.

Social anthropological studies have shown that simple societies have extremely elaborate systems of kinship, religion, economy and polity. But in contrast to modern complex societies, simple societies present relatively simpler ways of organising social life.

### 3.4.1 Kinship

Since most simple societies have been studied in relation to tribal social systems, we discuss the four aspects of social life in simple societies in similar terms. A tribal group is generally considered to be a good example of a simple society. A tribe is, often, spread over a small territory with its language, political and religious organisation. It is usually divided into two or more sections. When divided into only two sections, each section is called a moiety. But if a tribe is divided into more than two sections, each section is called a phratry. Moieties and phratries are, generally, exogamous groups, that is, members of these groups must find their spouses outside these groups; they cannot marry within. Only in some societies, the moieties are endogamous, that is members of such moieties must marry within the moiety. The Toda are an example of such a group.

The members of a moiety or phratry, clan and lineage are under social obligation to help each other. They generally act as corporate groups in performing a number of

social, economic, political and religious activities. But the wide dispersal of a number of tribal groups today in many parts of the world has weakened the corporate character of these groups.

### 3.4.1.1 Descent

Common descent or origin in simple societies is generally traced through lineages and clans. Lineages are those groups, which reckon common descent from a known ancestor. Clans are the groups of those people, who treat each other as related through common ancestry, even though, it may not be traceable with certainty. In other words, clans have mythical ancestors. Lineages are relatively smaller groups with known ancestors within clans, which are wider groups with presumed common ancestry.

Descent is usually traced through either mother or father. Descent through the mother is called matrilineal or uterine descent. In a matrilineal system of descent, a man does not belong to his father's lineage and clan. He belongs to the same clan and lineage as his mother and his mother's brother. The Nayars of South India are an example.

In patrilineal descent, relationship with males and females of one's group is traced only through males. Most of the students of the course are likely to belong to this form of descent system.

Some people, however, have systems of double descent, that is, both matrilineal and patrilineal groups are recognised, but for different purposes. For example, among the Yako (Forde, 1950), the inheritance of immovable property is regulated through patrilineal descent and that of movable property through matrilineal descent.

### 3.4.2 Marriage

In all societies, so also in simple societies, social recognition of mating among their members is arranged through the institution of marriage. Monogamy is the most popular type of marriage found in simple societies. Few tribal groups also practice polygyny where a man has more than one wife at a given point of time. More rare is the polyandry type of marriage, in which a woman is simultaneously the wife of more than one man. The Khasa in Uttar Pradesh and the Toda in Tamil Nadu practise polyandry. But there is a difference between the two. Among the Khasa, the eldest brother marries and all other brothers simultaneously become the husbands of their elder brother's wife. This type of polyandry is called adelphic or fraternal polyandry.

Among the Toda, the husbands of the woman need not be brothers. Multiplicity of husbands raises the problem of the paternity of the child. The Toda solve this problem by the performance of the 'bow and arrow' ceremony. When a woman becomes pregnant, the husband who performs the 'bow and arrow' ceremony becomes the father of the child to be born. He becomes the father of all the children born to her after the ceremony. He is regarded as the father of the children born even after his death if no other husband has performed, in the meantime the 'bow and arrow' ceremony. This institution is indicative of the fact that the Toda give emphasis to social rather than biological paternity.

**Check Your Progress 2**

**Note:** i) Use the space provided below for your answers.

ii) Compare your answers with those given at the end of this unit.

1) Write a note in ten lines on social division in tribal societies.

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### 3.4.3 Religion

With their simple technology, the people in simple societies have very little control over the natural environment. They are always overawed by the ferocities of nature. Forest fires, floods thunder, cloud-bursts, earthquakes and wild animals, all affects them severely and therefore they get frightened by the natural calamities far more than in more complex societies.

The belief in impersonal supernatural force finds expression in the wide spread belief in 'mana', a supernatural power generally associated with kings or successful men. Many Indian tribes, such as the Munda and the Ho of Singhbhum, Bihar also believe in this force, which they call 'bonga'. Yet another expression of impersonal supernatural force is 'taboo'. Taboo is a negative force and anyone who does not observe it exposes himself to the danger of supernatural punishment. Taboo is used to regulate social activities. Many tribal communities put a taboo mark on their property in the field and the forest to ensure against theft. 'Mana' and 'taboo' are polynesian terms, which have been incorporated into anthropological/sociological vocabulary.

Lack of understanding of the environment causes in them great anxiety. So it is no wonder that the simple societies develop their own theories regarding the nature and functioning of their environment. They have developed a theory of causation, which tells them that natural events are caused by supernatural forces. The supernatural forces have been visualised as belonging to two categories: personal forces and impersonal forces. Religion addresses itself to the personal forces and magic relates to the impersonal forces. Religion and magic, for the tribal, are thus not contradictory but complementary to each other.

### 3.4.3.1 Religion and Magic

Religion assumes that certain spirits and deities preside over nature. They have to be propitiated, placated and worshipped in order to get their blessings. These spirits may send both blessings and curses. So an element of freedom and an exercise of will are attributed to the spirits and deities. Magic on the other hand, is an impersonal force which can be made to operate provided the magic is performed properly. There is no exercise of will with regard to the impersonal force. Magic must succeed. It can fail only by an improper performance of magic or by the performance of more powerful counter-magic.

Frazer (1920) believed all magic to be sympathetic, based on the principle of sympathy between cause and effect. He identified two laws governing the operation of magic, the law of similarity and the law of contact. The magic based on the first law he called homoeopathic or imitative magic and the magic based on the second law he called contagious magic. In homoeopathic magic an image of the enemy is destroyed in order to destroy the enemy. In contagious magic, magic is played on the separated part of the body of the enemy, such as paired nails and hair.

But magic is not always destructive. It is in fact only a symbolic act. Magic is the playing out of an event. It expresses desires in symbolic ways.

In brief, religion provides the simple societies with a theory of causation. It builds confidence of nature. The fertility of fields, herds, women, of land and water are believed to be ensured by religion. Religion also has certain political aspects, which we shall examine, in the following section. You have already noticed the role of taboo in the maintenance of order in certain spheres of tribal life.

### 3.4.4 Polity

Maintenance of order over time is the central concern of political organisation in all societies. But different societies solve this problem of order in different ways. Modern state societies, characterised by structural differentiation, use the differentiated state apparatus for the maintenance of order.

The simple societies are characterised by undifferentiated ways of keeping law and order. The responsibility of maintenance of order is distributed among a number of institutions and structures. Manifestly non-political institutions like kinship and religion also perform political functions.

### 3.4.4.1 Types of Political System—Cephalous

Political systems among the simple societies are divided into two groups: (i) cephalous and (ii) acephalous. Cephalous political system is one in which there is a recognised head, a chief or a king. Acephalous political system is one in which no single head is recognised and order is maintained by means other than state apparatus. Both cephalous and acephalous political systems admit of a number of subtypes within them.

Among the cephalous political systems at least four subtypes can be recognised. Shilluk, Swazi, Ethiopean Kingdom and Muslim Emirates of northern Nigeria may be taken to represent these four types. Among the Shilluk, the headship is more ritual and symbolic than substantial. The order is maintained by the principle of lineage rather than by state apparatus. Swazi and Ethiopean Kingdoms represent two variants of a common system. In both systems, kingship is a powerful institution. Kingship enjoys divine sanction in both these systems. To disobey the king is not only a breach of political obligation, it is also at the same time a breach of the religious obligation. In both, authority is devoluted from the king to his subordinates from the king to his subordinates. Among the Swazi, the devolution of authority is made from the king to his close kinsmen. Thus in this type, the king and his close kinsmen rule.

In the Ethiopean Kingdom also there is devolution of authority from the King to his subordinates. But the subordinates are not his kinsmen, they are his loyal non-kin dependants. In fact in this system the kinsmen are avoided and very often intense rivalry exists between the king and his kinsmen. Close kinsmen are often imprisoned so that they do not create any trouble for the ruling chief. Thus, kinship is not without significance even in this third type of cephalous political system. Though it must be noted that in this type the significance is negative and instead of basking in the sunshine of their kin, they are consigned to the darkness of the prisons.

The fourth subtype within the cephalous is qualitatively different from the above three subtypes. In all the three, the ruler and the ruled are tribals of one ethnic group or another. They share a number of social and political attitudes despite differentiation on class and power hierarchy. In this fourth subtype the ruler comes from a different culture and dominates over the tribal culture. It is clearly a case of political conquest. Our example representing this type is the Muslim Emirate of northern Nigeria.

### 3.4.4.2 Acephalous

Among the acephalous political systems, once again, four subtypes can be identified. The (i) Central African Bushmen, (ii) Yako of Nigeria, (iii) Masai of east Africa, and (iv) Nuer of Sudan may be taken to represent these four subtypes. Bushmen are

hunting and gathering people, constantly moving from one place to another in search of roots, fruits and tubers or in search of game animal. They are fragmented into small bands. Whatever disputes that arise within and between families are resolved by the elders of the band.

The second subtype consists of autonomous villages with their councils. Among the Yako the village councils contribute to the maintenance of order. Membership of the village council is based on a number of criteria such as genealogical position, economic success and qualities of leadership.

The third subtype of which Masai herders are an example is quite widespread in east Africa. The transition from childhood to manhood is not an unnoticed and uneventful phenomenon among the simple societies. Most of them give ritual recognition to this phenomenon. Among the Masai, the children undergoing this transition are initiated into the youngest age-set. In course of time the youngest age-set becomes the eldest age-set and then it has to take on the responsibility of maintaining law and order. So in this third subtype the maintenance of order is the responsibility of the age-sets.

The fourth subtype is also quite widespread and Nuer tribe of Sudan is an example of this subtype. Order is maintained in such societies by balanced opposition. The Nuer are divided into agnatic descent groups, the lineages. Members of a lineage are obliged to help other on occasions of dispute. Hence a dispute between two individuals belonging to two different lineages soon becomes a dispute between two lineages. Each lineage organises itself into a fighting group to support its member. But when the two persons in dispute belong to the same lineage, then the conflict is confined to this particular lineage and nobody outside this group is involved in this dispute

**Check Your Progress 3**

Note:  i) Use the space provided below for your answers.

ii) Compare your answers with those given at the end of this unit.

1)  What is an acephalous political system? Write in about twelve lines.

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# 3.5  COLONIAL IMPACT ON SIMPLE SOCIETES

European colonialism came to be imposed on many simple societies from the 18th century. Nineteenth century and the following decades represent the worst period of

colonial exploitation. Though a large number of simple societies in Latin America, Africa, Asia and Oceania have been able to cast off colonial rule, there are quite a few still struggling to throw off the yoke. Even in those societies which have become politically independent, a number of structures and networks of exploitation established during colonial rule continue to sap, manifestly or latently, the economic, political and psychological vitality of these ex-colonial communities.

Colonialism imposed its imprint on all aspects of tribal life since the 18th century. Economic, political, social and cultural aspects of the simple societies came to be directly and indirectly, influenced by colonial rule. It has however to be noted that all tribal societies under colonial rule did not experience the same level of disorganisation in their social systems. In some the disrupting influence was much more severe than in others. We shall now examine the impact of colonialism in the economic, political, social and cultural aspects of simple societies

With the establishment of colonial rule the economics of the simple societies came to be integrated with the international capitalist economic system. Some got intimately integrated while others were only remotely integrated. In other words, some societies adapted themselves much faster to new ideas practices and technological changes then others. Economic integration with the capitalist system took three main forms: one, by supplying the traditional products to the international commercial network through a series of local and provincial agencies; two, through the introduction of new crops at the inducement and coercion of the colonial capitalists; and three, by joining willingly or under pressure, the industrial wage labour. The impact of economic integration was most in the third and least in the first.

### 3.5.1 Supply of Traditional Products

In the first category come the hunting and gathering, pastoral and agricultural communities that sold their traditional products to the agents of the capitalist market. This initiated a new system of exchange and influenced to a certain extent, their traditional systems of exchange and exchange obligations. But the impact was limited to only certain areas of their social life. Cash got introduced to their system and they could purchase with it certain new items of consumption but this did not bring about a restructuring of economic relations in these simple societies.

### 3.5.2 Introduction of New Crops

The changes introduced by the second type of integration were more far reaching than those associated with the first. In this a new agricultural cycle had to be followed bringing about considerable change in the domestic organisation of production. Most important consequence was the impact of fluctuations of the international price with regard to the cash crops grown by these communities. Tobacco and sugarcane, were some of the crops grown by the tribal communities specially for the world market. In many cases they had to replace food crops by cash crops and hence were forced to buy food from the market. Tribes in West Africa, for instance the Yorubas, were drawn into the international capitalist market through this second type of integration. But this type of integration did not result in geographical dislocation.

### 3.5.3 The Industrial Wage Labour

The most disastrous consequences followed from the third type of integration, by entering the industrial labour market. The colonialists developed industries for which they needed cheap labour. A number of inducements were first tried in Africa to lure people into industrial employment. But when they failed, a lot of repressive measures were taken to force the tribal people to work in the mines in the copper belt and in other factories started all over urban Africa. People were forced to pay taxes in cash which was available only in urban-industrial labour and when even these measures failed, physical capture of tribals was resorted to man the mines and the factories.

These repressive measures did not stop at the factory gates but the entire industrial discipline and the conditions of work were very repressive. Plantations in India, Africa and Latin America, employed tribal and non-tribal labour also called indentured labour and subjected them to dehumanising industrial discipline. This kind of integration involved geographical migration, very often leaving the wife, children and old-parents at home in the village. The worker faced problems at both ends of migration, at the village end as well as at the factory.

Imposition of colonial rule disrupted the political order of the tribal communities. The traditional political systems lost their sovereignty and legitimacy. The traditional political chiefs suddenly found that their rights, authority and power had vanished. They acted now as the representatives of the colonial power and had to behave with their own tribesmen in ways they would not have ever thought of doing in the past. Traditional jurisprudence, traditional measures of the resolution of conflict, all became irrelevant in the new colonial situation.

New political institutions, like police, magistrates and jails, came up all over the tribal world. New jurisprudence was imposed on them whose logic they failed to appreciate. New men came to occupy many of these new positions. Though following the principle of indirect rule, the British in 'Africa tried to retain old chiefs in many areas but this could not be done everywhere. Hence new chiefs were appointed in many communities.

### 3.5.4 Problems of Colonialism

The new political system had many problems. It was divorced from its relationship with kinship and religion. In the traditional political order as we have examined in an earlier section, kinship and religion played an important part. The chief was assumed to possess supernatural power because it was retained within one family. With chiefs coming from other families, the religious character of kingship got considerably eroded. Irrelevance of kinship support disintegrated not only the political system, but also, to a great extent, even the kinship system. This is because of the fact that this political role of the kinship system went a long way in giving a sense of unity and solidarity.

Economic and political changes had serious implications for the institutions and processes of social solidarity. In fact the tribals found it hard to accept the cognitive and affective elements of the new industrial culture. They got industrialised but could not internalise the values of industrialism. The lack of industrialism resulted in the high rate of absenteeism and low rate of turn over. The tribals became migrants not only from the village to the urban-industrial complex but also from factory to factory, from industry to industry. Thus an element of uncertainty and insecurity developed.

Colonial imposition resulted also in the disintegration of tribal cultures. Introduction of new market rationality and cash economy moved them over from generalised reciprocity to balanced reciprocity and in many cases to even negative reciprocity.

In the new urban-industrial environment they were not in a position to perform their multiple rites and rituals connected with birth, marriage and death. This created psychological deprivation and psychological strains within them. Living in an urban-industrial environment kept them away from the annual ritual cycle, from the festivals and also from a host of ritual obligations they were supposed to meet at their village home. They suffered from a cultural vacuum at the urban industrial centre. They could not practise their own culture and they could not participate in the cultural activities of the urban-industrial centres. They became alienated not only from their village but also from the industrial culture. In fact they got alienated from themselves.

The triblas did not meekly accept the imposition of colonial rule. Researches and studies bear testimony to the fighting spirit of the tribals. In Kenya the Giriamas rose against colonialism in 1913-14. The cult of Mumbo gripped the Gusii and the Luo in Kenya. The Mau Mau rebellion, again in Kenya, speaks of the tribals' determination to throw away the colonial masters. The cargo cults in Oceania are another expression

of the tribal antagonism to colonialism. In India too the tribals rose in violent uprisings against the British and their supporters throughout the nineteenth century. The tribes of Chotanagpur, the Munda, Ho and the Santhal, all rose against the British and the Zamindars in the nineteenth century. In fact the uprisings were so many in the nineteenth century Chotanagpur, that it may easily be called the century of tribal rebellions.

Two features stand out very clearly with regard to these tribal uprisings. One, most of them were violent, to the extent permitted by their primitive tools. Two, they looked for religious support for their success., They were all movements of hope of one kind or another and were all too sure about their success. Needless to say most of them were brutally crushed by the mighty colonial powers.

**Check Your Progress 4**

**Note:** i) Use the space provided below for your answers.

ii) Compare your answers with those given at the end of this unit.

1) Write a note in about fifteen lines on exploitation of labour under colonialism.

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## 3.6   LET US SUM UP

We have seen in this unit that simple societies have many different aspects to them. There are tribal economies, which have special features including hunting, gathering and agriculture.

This unit covered the factor of exchange in simple societies and their social organisation. Marriage religion and political organisation were also discussed. Types of political system in simple societies were examined. We have also pointed out how simple societies suffered under colonialism, including exploitation of labour. We have thus given a well-rounded overview of simple societies. A video programme, sent to your study centre and dealing with an example of a simple society, gives you a visual understanding of simple societies.

## 3.7   FURTHER READINGS

1)   Bose, N.K., 1971. *Tribal Life in India*. National Book Trust: Delhi.

2)   Radcliffe Brown, A.R., 1964. *Structure and Function in Primitive Society*. Cohen and West: London.

3) Walker, A.R., 1986. *The Toda of South India: A New Look.* Hindustan Publishing Corporation: Delhi.

## 3.8 KEY WORDS

**Acephalous** : Society with no recognised head, or single political authority.

**Cephalous** : Society with a single political head, e.g. a king.

**Exogamous** : Where marriage must be outside a given group.

**Matrilineal** : Where descent is traced through female ancestors.

**Moiety** : When a tribe is divided into two sections.

**Patrilineal** : When descent is traced from male ancestors.

**Phratry** : When a tribe is divided into many sections, each section is called a phratry.

**Poligyny** : When a man has more than one wife.

## 3.9 MODEL ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

### Check Your Progress 1

1) In hunting and gathering societies, people live by hunting large and small animals. They supplement this source of food by collecting a wide range of roots, fruits, and tubers. Living close to nature, the people adapt themselves to nature and move from place-to-place in search of food. In some cases, the hunters and gatherers managed to enjoy a measure of affluence by securing surplus food.

### Check Your Progress 2

1) Generally, a tribe is divided into two or more sections. In a tribe with two sections, each section is called a moiety. Tribes with more than two sections refer each of these divisions by the term 'phratry'. Moieties and phratries are, generally, exogamous, that is, spouses are found from outside the social divisions. In some societies, e.g., the Toda, moieties are endogamous, that is, members of the moieties must marry within the division.

### Check Your Progress 3

1) In acephalous political systems, no single head is recognised and order is maintained by means other than the state apparatus. This system has four sub-types, exemplified by four groups—the Central African Bushmen, the Yako of Nigeria, the Masai of East Africa and the Nuer of Sudan. In the first sub-type, order is maintained by the eldest of each band of Bushmen, hunters and gatherers. In the second sub-type, the village councils and in the third sub-type, age-sets take the responsibility of keeping order in society. In the fourth sub-type, order is kept on the basis of relations among lineages.

### Check Your Progress 4

1) Labour was required for industries, developed by colonial powers in various parts of the world. The colonialists, being a part of the capitalist economic system, wanted to acquire labour at minimum cost. As they held also political power over the colonies, they were able to coerce the colonised people in providing cheap labour to their industries. People from simple societies were lured into factories on false promises. When these protests lost their efficacy, even repressive measures were employed for keeping the tribals in labour force. Plantations in Asia, Africa and the Americas subjected their labourers to dehumanising conditions of work

# UNIT 4   COMPLEX SOCIETIES

**Structure**

## 4.0   OBJECTIVES

After you have gone through this unit carefully, you should be able to:

- define a complex society;
- discuss the rural-urban dichotomy;
- describe modern employment organisation;
- explain what generates conflict in industry;
- identify the characteristics of the employment of women in complex society; and
- describe the main features of post-industrial society.

## 4.1   INTRODUCTION

In Unit 3 we have indicated various aspects of simple societies. We find that complex societies are not tribal or simple in their organisation. In part, we find, technological advancement is what defines the complexity of modern society. There is however a rural-urban dichotomy, and community life too is not completely removed from that in simple societies. We examine industrial conflict in complex societies and also aspects of employment of women. Finally we turn our attention to post-industrial society, its main features, and some trends.

## 4.2   DEFINING A COMPLEX SOCIETY

Technological advances from the stage of hunting and gathering to landing on the moon have given birth to a technologically advanced complex society in modern times. Described as 'complex societies', modern industrial nation-states are contrasted with the simple societies in various important ways:

i)  larger territory and population membership;

ii)  greater occupational differentiation, and specialisation of work and social groups;

iii)  advanced technology for production of consumer items, building of houses, work places, etc;

iv)  greater co-ordination in the management of the complex society;

v)  quick rate of change in terms of consumer goods, forms of education, and so on;

vi)  faster modes of mass communication, such as, radio, TV, computers internet etc.

Initially it was technological advances that ushered in change. Huge markets sprang up, occupational opportunities and population increase created the nation-state. This is far more inclusive in organisation than anything in simple societies.



**Advanced Technology in Complex Society**

## 4.2.1  Rural-Urban Dichotomy

Sociologists had earlier thought that there is a clear difference between the urban and the rural community. However gradually this concept of rural-urban dichotomy underwent change. Some sociologists found that there was as much individualism, lack of understanding, fear and suspicion of strangers even among the villagers as it existed in the urban life. The 'peaceful village' image of rural life took a severe blow.

These studies indicated that the happy community-type of existence in villages was not a fact. Remarkably the concept of the urban community also underwent change in the 1950's. It was found that family and friends made life close, informal, and secure. That is to say there does exist 'urban villages' in city life as well.

This aspect of complex societies is very puzzling. Moreover there exist people who live in villages and work in towns. Neither the village nor the town can thus be thought of as a stereotype. Close associations or lack of them did not depend on the environment. They were independent.

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**Activity 1**

Closely examine the community in which you live and write a report of about one page on the nature of your community in terms of its level of urbanisation; whether you will call it rural, urban or semi-urban and why?

Discuss your report with those of other students at your study centre.

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### 4.2.2 Aspects of Community Life

One thing is clear from the above is that the rural and urban life in complex society is not the opposite of one another. In fact it could no longer be assumed that environment determined any one type of association. However this is not to say that rural and urban populations do not have any differences.

Later studies stressed that:

i)   social class and

ii)  stage in family cycle were very important factors in the complex societies.

According to the studies, social class influences choice over where a person can stay (live). Stage in family cycle determines choice of area within a social class. Thus young parents in a social class do not have as much to invest as those who are older. There are thus several constraints on where a person can live. The housing market makes a cluster of similar social class and stage in family cycle.

Some sociologists point out that it is the group that is influenced-not the community as such. They argue in favour of studying local social systems. They feel these should be studied with reference to:

i)   maintenance and establishment;

ii)  modifying circumstances; and

iii) inter-relationships with national systems.

It was suggested that community ties and behaviours are very much linked to national behaviour. Personal ties were believed to be decreasing to a very large extent. Thus vertical links to the central decision makers are replacing the 'horizontal' local ties. Thus the two are deeply inter linked, although community reflects the nation. Again the analysis of economic factors has become very important in urban studies. Further, it was felt that urban problems are not exclusively urban, e.g. slums and poverty. Thus, it may be pointed out that community studies do help in studying social change. However locality study gives more precise data for the same.

### 4.2.3 Types of Urbanisation

There are three types of urbanisation concept:

i)   Over-urbanisation.

ii)  Under-urbanisation.

iii) De-urbanisation.

The developing world is experiencing over-urbanisation. Cities are enclaves which are surrounded by villages. They are also considered to be 'beach-heads' from which economic growth and its benefits go out towards rural areas. Our view on over-urbanisation is that metropolitan development is due to foreign capital. Thus, cities are being exploited by the main powers of the developed world.

Such urban centres become exploiters of the rural areas near them. They are, however, themselves dependent on industrial nations—both for economic and political dominance. In this situation, manufacturing industry does not grow strong. The service sector is over-emphasised. What results therefore is urbanisation without proper industrialisation. Thus over-urbanisation implies that cities in the developing world are not industrialised enough relative to population ratios. The picture indicates that the service sector has a deep agrarian root.

**Check Your Progress 1**

**Note:** i) Use the space provided below for your answers.

ii) Compare your answers with those given at the end of this unit.

1) What is a complex society? Describe in about five lines.

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2) List the three types of urbanisation. Use about five lines.

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## 4.3 MODERN SOCIETY

Modern society is basically industrial. In such societies we find that technical skills are valued very much. Unskilled labour is valued but much less so. All this is reflected in the wage structure. Administration and management services are very prestigious. Modern society has several features. These include:

i) profit-motive production by big capitalists;

ii) technological advances;

iii) high rate of urban populations;

iv) bureaucratic organisation; and

v) spread of education.

Thus modern societies, large organisations are very important, but they make interaction impersonal. In contrast to **over-urbanisation** in the developing world, there is **under-urbanisation** in Eastern Europe. This is in a sense the opposite case relative to over-urbanisation. While the former is produced by industrialisation and low rural employment opportunities, under-urbanisation is the result of extra or over industrialisation, accompanied by a lack of support systems like housing. Thus, those employed in urban areas could not be given housing by the state. Further, the free market rate was too steep for the average person's budget. Workers thus have to travel a long way up and down to work. Only the higher strata people have chances of possessing a house. The process of under-urbanisation puts the burden of industrialisation on the less well-off sections of society.

The next aspect that we examine is that of **de-urbanisation**. In Britain since the late seventies there has been a movement away from large urban towns to small towns and

villages. There has thus been a ruralisation of urban/industrial relations. This is seen as a result of the economic and industrial policies, which encourage such a process. Such ruralisation is especially evident in advanced technology sectors.

In general therefore community remains an important factor. It helps to study change. Even today the idea of a good community is very strongly present. However, the connection between community and wider society must be kept in mind always.

Again in modern society kinship significance goes down in terms of expectations and obligations. However, there develops a complex division of labour. There is a great deal of specialisation inside a large organisation.

In modern society also there are many varieties of subcultures and counter-cultures, each representing a section of people. These form around music, philosophy, or political beliefs. Further we find that the arena of the sacred is relatively small in modern society. On the other hand folk societies are much smaller and closely knit together. There is little use of technology and the religious ethos is very strong. It presents to an extent a picture opposite to that of modern society.

There are some other aspects to modern society. There is the view that what is emerging is a mass society. That is a society in which small groups have no chance. Psychologically people become superficial, and without any deep commitment. Relationships are insecure and competitive.

In terms of politics that local groups are cut off from the mainstream. Job satisfaction is rare and people do not feel a sense of belonging to the work place. Thus this discontent is manipulated by politicians. Some sociologists however see only pluralism in these situations. They feel that modern society offers unlimited choices to the individual.

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**Activity 2**

Prepare a map of the city/town/village where you live. Identify residential colonies and find out who are the people living in this colony, what is their social background in terms of religion, language, class and caste. Write a report of one page and discuss it with the other students at your Study Centre and also Your Academic Counsellor.

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## 4.3.1 Work in Complex Societies

Work in complex organisations means work that is paid. However work may not earn monetary wage. It may be time consuming and call for skill without being wage productive, e.g. house repairs. In simple societies, the tendency is often to be partial towards leisure. Work is thus mental or physical action that has some end result. Thus work has a wide range of being. In fact, among the complex societies leisure activities have to some extent become a means of work and wage earning, e;g; cricket, football, wrestling and tennis. The players earn their living providing a spectacle to the crowd. Others are willing to pay for their playing. Thus employment or self-employment is the main arena of work. People's leisure activities are also related to it.

## 4.3.2 Work Structures

Very often in simple societies work is deeply linked with family and religion. Bronislaw Malinowski indicates that in the Trobriand Islands many day to day tasks were overseen by a magician. Again what was produced agriculturally was distributed keeping kinship obligations in mind. In such societies work is not separated from domestic activities. This is true also of pre-industrial France. Here household members helped in every way with the work on the farm. In contrast, complex societies have specific workers or employees. These people have a common work place away from home. Their work uses power and machinery and is supervised. Thus there is little job-freedom. Fixed hours have to be worked without a let-up in effort.

The main attraction for the employees, in a complex society, is the wages they are paid. They have to submit themselves to higher authorities (manager, supervisor, etc.) while at work. All this is quite different from simple societies. Work rhythms that take account of the worker's pace and stamina are almost non-existent. The question of not following the routine doesn't arise. A few provisions are made for emergencies (casual leave, medical leave, etc.) in government organisations. Lax rhythms or personally oriented rhythms are obsolete now. In complex societies commercial offices stress time keeping and ceaseless labour. Time keeping is part and parcel of capitalist and modern work modes.

Gradually, these factors were no longer considered to be imposed upon the workers; they themselves found it convenient. They were willing to work hard and to follow all the rules. This attempt to make workers time conscious and hard working continues till the present day. All these changes have met with some opposition. However, the complex societies do realise that the standard of living has risen greatly. However, some of the work has been both mentally and physically exhausting. Alienation is a modern day fact in social life of the complex societies. This is quite opposite of the tribal situation, e.g. Kalahari Bushmen. Here the material wants were few and easily met with. There was no tendency or opportunity to aggravate wants.

Thus some sociologists have pointed out that simple societies have had a better life. It is not so mechanical and relentlessly time oriented. There is time enough for leisure. However, in complex societies, the concept of 'leisure' time has taken another meaning. Some institutions; eg. Companies, offices etc. give paid vacations to their employees, special leave is given so that the productivity and capacity of the workers may improve.

Work has become a most vital aspect of life in complex societies and wage labour is an important factor in the area of work. To get the work done is also considered a kind of work. Some sociologists think that when work, as an employment-earning wages, a social status and standard of living pervades all areas of life, as it does in a complex society, people's attitudes become exceedingly commercialised. Some sociologists even believe that in contemporary societies class can be understood in terms of consumption. Thus, a person who consumes more or expensive items may be placed in a higher class. The tendency of commercialisation can lead to conflicts among the factors of economy. To illustrate this point we take the issue of conflict in industry.

### 4.3.3 Conflict in Industry

In industry, the employer has control over the employees' labour over a particular time. The employer would like to use his employee in different capacity. Therefore, he leaves the contract sufficiently vague. Nevertheless, (i) work conditions and effort; (ii) technical qualifications; and (iii) responsibility are areas of management worker discussions, and often disputes. Thus, work effort is always being discussed relative to pay. The worker wants higher pay and facilities. The management however, wants to maximise profits, and this includes keeping low wages and long hours of work for the workers. The same problem exists with technical skill and pay. Again responsible behaviour is sought after by management. The level of responsibility varies with the level in an organisation. Higher positions carry higher responsibility—and higher pay. This too afterwards becomes a bone of contention.

Further conflict areas exist when attempts are made to put machines to work and remove workers. This is also called retrenchment of labour. It also exists when attempts are made to control them very closely. Jobs can often be dehumanising and alienating.

The most visible form of industrial conflict are legal or illegal strikes. However, other methods require co-operation among workers to:

i)    go slow;

ii)   absenteeism; and

iii)  sabotage.

These methods may not show much on surface but cause great damage to management.

Industrial conflict has most meaning when it is recognised by management as a just step. This is rarely the case. Very often trade unions are not recognised by management. The pluralist view of industrial conflict is that various groups may have many complaints. Later, when changes are to be made, they have to participate in decision making. Control over workers is a controversial issue as well. Further this control is established through bureaucratic rules and regulations. Thus choices are extremely limited and the feelings of being hemmed in are very strong. Industrial conflict is a worldwide fact and injustices are in it. However, it is important to provide solution to this area.

### 4.3.4 Employment and Women

In complex societies appreciable headway has been made on employment of women. Women however remain separated from men in the work spheres. There is "horizontal" segregation in that women are mostly in clerical jobs, catering, receptionists, nursing, school teaching and so on. There is 'vertical' segregation also—for example relatively few women reach top managerial positions, or skilled manual jobs. As such their wages too are lower than those of men. As matters stand today anti-women job discrimination is on the way out. It is no longer felt that a woman must stay at home and only do domestic work.

Further the concept of two incomes has gained popularity, since it raises the standard of living. The responsibility of raising the young however remains vested with women. This is also true of domestic work. However, in most nuclear families in urban areas, men do contribute to the domestic work in one way or the other out of choice or out of compulsion. As such maternity leave is provided for in most jobs. Women also often spend time with their young. Even there is a provision for paternity leave which can be availed by the would be father. But still, women as workers are taken less seriously than men by employers. They are not often delegated to workshops, which increase their skill. It is often felt that they have domestic interests which reduce work—seriousness. This need not be true, however, that union meetings etc. are not conducive to women's participation although communication and technology advancement is bringing more and more women into the work force. In general work is still more male oriented.

**Check Your Progress 2**

**Note:** i) Use the space provided below for your answers.

ii) Compare your answers with those given at the end of this unit.

1) Write a brief note in five lines on conflict in industry in modern societies.

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2) Provide a picture of women and employment in complex society, in about three lines.

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## 4.4    POST-INDUSTRIAL SOCIETY

Post-industrial society is a combination of various dimensions or features. These features separate it from the modern society. We will examine three of them here and two more in the next section. The first important feature is:

i)    **Service Economy:** In post-industrial society, agriculture and manufacturing do not absorb a majority of the work force. Services and trade are the major avenues of employment and the governments are major employers. Today only the U.S.A. shows indications of this stage. There are over 60 per cent work force engaged in services. This is expected to go even higher.

ii)   **Professional and Technicians:** In industrial societies blue collar and semi skilled labour predominate. However in post-industrial societies professional and technical operators grow to dominate. A new class structure begins to form the basis of post-industrial society.

iii)  **Theoretical Knowledge:** In post-industrial society, theoretical knowledge has a crucial value. Scientific knowledge along with mathematics based social science become very significant. In fact a shortage of scientifically trained professionals is felt. In providing this need universities gain a great deal of importance.

### 4.4.1 Further Features

Post industrial societies manifest two more features:

#### i) Technology Planning

In modern society, use of some technologies has proved to be harmful e.g. DDT is affecting crops, birds, wild life. Nuclear energy generating plants are creating nuclear wastes and accidents risks as in Chernobyl. USSR. Post-industrial societies have technology assessment to prevent any harmful effects of the technology. Thus, the government and people are much more aware of the possibility that the advance of technology can often lead to harmful side consequences.

#### ii) Intellectual Technology

A new intellectual technology will be crucial to post-industrial society. It is not the machine technology of the modern age. Intellectual technology comprises management and other techniques needed to organise. Vast use of computers and super computers and new mathematics is crucial. Decisions regarding the actual use of advanced technology rest with the politicians and not with the technicians. In this situation, the economy may feature an all-out exploitation of the less-developed population. This may lead to a revolution on the part of those exploited. Thus, the post-industrial society may not last long or else societies, both the developed as well as the developing, may take conscious steps to protect themselves from over exploitation of natural environment and pollution.

### 4.4.2  Some Trends

Post-industrial society depends for its emergence on the persistence of the present trends. What happens if this does not happen? Let us consider some of these aspects below:

i)    **State Tasks:** These include saving and distribution of wealth equitably. Both these are contradictory - for the latter means expenditure not saving of capital. Higher taxes do not solve the problem. Education, medicine, insurance, all needs great expenditure. Saving is not enough to meet them and a fiscal crisis arises.

ii)   **Cultural Change:** Change may come culturally - not only in the economy but all aspects of social life. The new young may find fulfilment outside their careers as well as inside them.

iii) **Ideologies:** Post-industrialism regulates the big corporations strictly. It is a type of 'state capitalism'. In other countries state socialism exists. Socialism should lead to communal society, which eventually makes the state obsolete. However this is not borne out by trends in modern communism. It is also felt by some sociologists that bureaucracy needs to be replaced by communal structures.

Thus there is much speculation about future trends. Recently, however it is being questioned whether progress alone is the future. Cannot there be devastation in a global sense or regional nuclear holocaust? This factor has come in to create much sobriety and stops utopic visions of the future from being readily accepted.

In the 21st century, we have entered yet another era of social existence. This era is referred to as the **"information age"** where global communication through radio, T.V., Computer networks, satellites has changed the very notion of social group or community. People from different regions, societies, languages etc. can be part of an Internet group, constantly in touch with each other and so on. Sources of knowledge and its accessibility through improved communication technologies has taken such a significant shape that we can talk about a 'global' world today where development of any kind, be it social cultural, political or economic; it affects all societies throughout the world in different ways and different proportions. One example is the post September or 9/11 event in America when in 2002 the World Trade Center (WTC) building was destroyed by two aeroplanes carrying passengers. Thousands of people were killed. The tragedy was immense but its socio-political implications are still being felt everywhere in the world.

**Check Your Progress 3**

**Note:** i) Use the space provided below for your answers.

ii) Compare your answers with those given at the end of this unit.

1) List three features of post-industrial society. Use about four lines.

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## 4.5 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we have examined the notion of complex societies. We began with a discussion on the features of complex societies. This involved taking into consideration rural and urban aspects of community life. It also included a look at various forms that urbanisation takes.

We studied modern society as a major form of complex society. We examined work and its aspects within such societies. Industrial conflict and women's employment were two important issues that we explained. Finally, we studied post-industrial societies and what they are comprised of. This included studying the features and various possible trends that complex societies might take in the future such as, the media revolutions which has really made the world a global world. We have thus provided a rounded view of complex societies.

## 4.6 FURTHER READINGS

1) Bell, Daniel, 1973. *The Coming of post-industrial Society.* Basic Books: New York.

2) Worsely, Peter (ed.), 1987. *The New Introducing Sociology.* Penguin Books Limited: Middlesex.

## 4.7 KEY WORDS

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Absenteeism** | : | When workers are not in the work place without being on any leave. |
| **Alienation** | : | A feeling of dissatisfaction and dislike for the job that the worker is doing. |
| **Contention** | : | A dispute over something, e.g. wages for work, with the management. |
| **Horizontal Segregation** | : | Keeping one particular group apart within the similar wage and status level. |
| **Medicare** | : | Medical treatment available to workers and others. |
| **Obsolete** | : | No longer in use; out moded. |
| **Stereotype** | : | A generally held idea about something e.g. villages are beautiful and peaceful places. |
| **Vertical Segregation** | : | Separating people at the top (or bottom) level from others, e.g. owners, managers, and supervisors. |

## 4.8 MODEL ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

**Check Your Progress 1**

1) A complex society is one, which has high technological developments. Its organisations are formal and its' complicated bureaucratic set-up is an important feature of a complex society.

2) The three types of urbanisation are:

    i) over-urbanisation;

    ii) under-urbanisation; and

    iii) de-urbanisation.

**Check Your Progress 2**

1) Conflict and disputes arise in industry in modern societies over

    i) working conditions;

    ii) required technical qualifications; and

    iii) responsibility relative to pay.

2) A large number of women are employed in complex society. However, most of them are in low-level jobs—clerical, receptionists, etc. Very few reach high positions.

**Check Your Progress 3**

1) Three features of an industrial society are:

    i) basically, a service economy, e.g. trade;

    ii) dominance of professionals and technicians; and

    iii) vast scientific knowledge.

## REFERENCES

References cited in Block 1 (These are given here for those students who wish to follow up certain points in detail.)

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**Stebbins, Robert A, 1987**. *Sociology, The Study of Society*, Harper and ROW Publishers, New York.