

# Unit - 1

## SOCIOLOGY AS A DISCIPLINE

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\*Sociology Imagination: - Developing a sociological outlook

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### **1.0 OBJECTIVES:-**

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- To give a basic understanding of sociology.
- To know the meaning and subject matter of sociology
- To understand the nature of scientific study

- To know the nature and scope of sociology
- To study the contribution of early thinkers towards the development of sociology
- To familiarize the students with various sociological perspectives

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### 1.1. INTRODUCTION:

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In the family of social sciences, Sociology is comparatively a new entrant. But because of its dealing with social problems, social relationships and social interactions the importance of the study of this subject has considerably increased. It has considerably developed in methodology, scope and approach. Attempts are now being made to study every social problem scientifically and objectively, eliminating subjectivity to the extent possible a distinctive way of examining human interactions. **Sociology** is the systematic study of social behavior and human groups. It focuses primarily on the influence of social relationships upon people's attitudes and behavior and on how societies are established and change. As a field of study sociology has a very broad scope. It deals with families, gangs, business firms, computer networks, political parties, schools, religions, and labor unions. It is concerned with love, poverty, conformity, technology, discrimination, illness, alienation, overpopulation and community.

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### 1.2. DEFINITION:

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Sociology is being defined differently by our sociologists and other's. Each one of course, has its own news about the nature and scope of the subject, as he conceives it.

According to **Ward** "**Sociology is science of society**".

**George Simmel** opines that **it is a subject which studies human inter-relationship**.

**Giddins** is of the view that "**Sociology is scientific study of society**".

**Max Weber** has viewed sociology as "**Science which attempts imperative understanding of social actions**".

Sorokin is of the opinion that **sociology is a study first of all the relationship and correlations between various classes, second between the social and non social aspects of life and third it studies general characteristics common to all classes of society.**

Ogburn has said that, **“Sociology is concerned with the study of social life and its relations to the factors of culture, natural environment, heredity and group.”**

Durkheim while defining sociology has said that, **“It is the science of collective representation.”**

We may thus **conclude** these definitions with the definition of E.S. Bogardus when he says that, **“Sociology may be defined as the study of the ways in which social experiences function in developing, maturing and repressing human beings through inter-personal stimulations.”**

From all these definitions it becomes clear that sociology is concerned with social relationships and studies society, human interactions, inter-personal and intra-personal relations. It tries to study scientifically social institutions, organizations and systems. These definitions also make it amply clear that sociologists view the subject differently and that there is no unanimity in this regard.

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### **1.3. SUBJECT MATTER OF SOCIOLOGY:**

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While discussing its subject matter of sociology, Sorokin said that, **“It seems to be a study, first of the relationship and correlation between various classes of social phenomena”** (correlation between economic and religious, family and moral, judicial and economic, mobility and political phenomena and so on); second that between social and non social (geographical, biological) phenomena; third the study of general characteristics common to all classes of phenomena. Thus according to his view point sociology studies social events, relationships between social and non social phenomena and generalized study of facts common to all aspects of social life.

In his book '**Society, Culture and Personality**' he has said that sociology is more or less concerned with the working of human beings. In this study he covers the study of human behavior, social organizations, social phenomena and social values. He is thus altogether opposed to formal school of thought.

**Let us check:**

**1. Define Sociology.**

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**2. Discuss its subject matter**

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**1.4. IS SOCIOLOGY A SCIENCE?**

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There is a continuing controversy about the nature of sociology. According to some sociologists it is a science, while others strongly refute this claim.

**What is a scientific study?** For a scientific study it is essential that the whole study should be systematic and without any subjectivity. A scientist is supposed to have a clear vision and a pointed approach. He should have capacity to record unbiased decisions and properly classify the data. He should also have vision

to collect only such data that is useful for his study. He should conclude his findings after verification of data and not on morality or certain pre-supposed philosophies, notions and ideas.

The most important element of a scientific study is that a scientist should deal with bear facts and not with ideal situations. Thus this study should be both factual and systematic. Then another element is that its results should have universal application. Then in a scientific study there should be cause effect relationship and it should also be capable of making certain safe predictions.

**Is Sociology A Science?** Now a question arises as to whether sociology is science or not. Those who support the cause of sociology as science plead that a present day sociologists must be methodological. He must base his conclusions on impartially collected, analyzed and interpreted data. He should also be willing to get his data tested anywhere to establish its validity. They also argue that like natural scientists, Sociologists are concerned with hard facts and not with ideal situations. They try to analyse facts of social life as they are. They also believe that there are many social facts and theories which the sociologists have developed after hard labor and these are universally applicable, under similar circumstances. They also point out that like natural scientists, the sociologists are very much concerned with cause effect relationship e.g. social stratification and social disorganizations are the outcome of certain causes, which have their effects as well. As with the natural scientists, so with the sociologists, it is equally that like the former the latter can make some safe predictions. They thus argue that “sociology is a science which attempts the interpretative understanding of social action in order to arrive at a casual explanation of its causes and effects.”

**Sociology- Not a Science:** there is other side of the picture as well. Many believe that society is not a perfect science. Like the results of natural sciences, the results obtained by social scientists cannot be generalized and these also cannot be same under all circumstances and at all places. The conditions always differ from society to society and social changes are unavoidable. These are also very complex. Then it is said that each human being has his

own limitations and he provides information keeping those limitations into consideration. He is not prepared to disclose secrets and thus the information provided is not factual. It is also said that the many situations are not within the control of sociologists and repeated experimentation is almost impossible.

Each sociologist has subjective approach to the problem under investigation. There is no stage of investigation in which there is no subjectivity. Each one has some secrets which he is not prepared to disclose to the investigators. Unlike natural scientist, a sociologist has no laboratory facilities and also has no control over material to be experimented i.e. human beings. Not only this, but it is not possible to repeat experiments. It is more or less not possible to make the safe predictions because nature of social problems with which the sociologists are not the same all over the world.

**Let us check:**

**1. Is sociology a science? Discuss it through the difference between natural and social sciences**

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### **1.5. NATURE OF SOCIOLOGY:**

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What is real nature of sociology about this controversy is likely to continue. According to Robert Stead, Sociology is a social science and not a natural science, because it deals with human beings and social phenomena. It is positive and not normative science because it studies social phenomena as it is and not as it ought to be. It is pure and not applied science because it studies underlying factors of a social phenomenon. Sociology is an abstract and not a concrete science because it studies society in general. It deals with society, which in itself is abstract and as such the subject

cannot be concrete. It is a science of generalization and not that of particularization because it studies a social problem in general and not in particular way. It does not study a social phenomenon from a particular angle. It is an empirical or rational science because it tries to follow logical method of data collection.

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## 1.6 SCOPE OF THE SOCIOLOGY

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Sociologist and others differ what should be the scope of sociology. August Comte makes us believe that sociology should try to study social phenomena on scientific lines. He has thus laid stress on scientific approach. Emile Durkheim has tried to separate sociology from other social science subjects and also tried to give an independent status to this subject. In his own way Pareto has tried to give it scientific orientation. According to him in sociology there should be no place for inferences. He is sure that there is basic unity among various social phenomena. He is of the view that sociology is much of science and social problems should and can be scientifically studied. Max Weber has however said that sociology should merely be interpretative understanding of social actions and nothing beyond that.

**Former or Specialist School of Thought:** There are two main schools of thought about the scope of sociology. Formal school of thought believes that scope of sociology should not be generalized but confined to the study of some specific aspects of society. The exponents of this school wish to keep the subject pure and independent. According to them it should deal with social relationships, social activities and processes of socialization.

**Max Weber**, who is the chief exponent of this school of thought, has said that sociology should deal with interpretations of social behaviors only.

**Vier Kandt**, , who is another exponent of this school of thought, is of the view that sociology should confine itself to the study of formal and not the actual behavior of the people in the society.

**Simmel** has given an abstract concept of sociology, in which stress has been laid on social relationship and social interactions. For him, every society is the mix of this two. Social relations are nothing but social interactions between two individuals. He has said that society is not collections of individuals but it is essentially a psychic inter-action between the individuals. It is sum total of social relations between the individuals living in it.

According to Simmel sociology should not be made a general science devoted to the study of social relations in general. It should be confined to the study of specific social relations because now these are being studied in the context of social production and social heritage.

**Vone Wiese** is another exponent of this school of thought. He believes that subject matter of sociology is different from other social sciences. He does not agree with the idea that sociology is combination of social sciences but it is a subject which combines different social science subjects. For him sociology as a special science has more importance than general sociology. It should separate its subject matter from other social sciences.

**Synthetic School of Thought:** The school of thought believes that sociology should study society as a whole and not confine itself to the study of only limited social problems. Auguste comte believes that the scope of sociology should be considerably widened. According to him the study of one aspect of society can lead to misleading results because all aspects of society, like parts of human body, are inter-linked. Hobb-House and Sorokin also contribute to this view point. They too believe that Sociology should study society as a whole. The supporters of this school of thought agree that in our modern times no social science subject can remain isolated altogether ignoring other subjects of study. The scope of sociology, they argue should be general and not narrow. Durkheim has gone to the extent of saying that "Sociology is science of collective representation."

**Sorokin is the main exponent of this school of thought.** He is not satisfied with the traditional views about sociology and



thus wants to give it a new approach. According to him sociology is a systematic science and it has manifold inter-actions. It is concerned with general facts of social life. He is keen to give systematic interpretation of society.

**Let us check:**

**1. Examine the nature and scope of sociology in detail**

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**1.7. EARLY THINKERS:-**

➤ **August Comte :**

In France, the 19<sup>th</sup> Century was an unsettling time for the nation's intellectuals. French monarchy had been deposed in the revolution of 1789 and Napoleon had suffered defeat in his effort to conquer Europe. Philosophers and intellectuals were finding the ways out to improve the society. August Comte is considered as the most influential philosopher of the early 1800s. He believed that in order to improve society the theoretical science of society should be developed and a systematic investigation of behavior should be carried. He Coined the term sociology to apply to the science of human behaviors. The term Sociology has been derived from Latin word '**socius**' means '**society**' and Greek word '**logus**' means '**science**'.

Comte hoped that the systematic study of social behavior would eventually lead to more rational human interactions. In Comte's hierarchy of the Sciences, Sociology was at the top. He called it the "queen", and its practioners "scientist-priests."

➤ **Emile Durkheim :**

Durkheim is considered as one of the founding fathers of sociology. He made many pioneering contributions to Sociology

including his most important theoretical work on Suicide. Durkheim (1858-1917) was son of a rabbi he was educated in both France and Germany. He has an impressive academic record and was appointed as one of the first professors of the Sociology in France. Durkheim asserted that behavior must be understood in the larger social context, rather an individual action.

Through intensive study of Arunta tribe, he focused on the important functions of religion in reinforcing group Solidarity. According to Durkheim the growing division of labor in industrial society and increasing specialization leads to what he called as Anomie. In the state on anomie the confusion and the inability to cope with the circumstances also results in cases of suicide.

➤ **Max Weber:**

Max Weber was born in Germany (1864-1920). He studied legal and economic history, but gradually developed an interest in sociology. Later he became professor and taught at various German universities. He taught the “Verstehen”, to his students. He said that in order to fully comprehend behavior, we must learn the subjective meanings people attach to their actions- how they themselves view and explain their behavior. He is also credited for his key conceptual tool: the Ideal type. The concept of ideal type can be used to study the family, religion, authority, and economic systems, as well as the analyze bureaucracy.

➤ **Karl Marx:**

Karl Marx (1818-1883) was a critique of existing institutions that a conventional academic career was impossible. He was a revolutionary and spent most of his life in exile from his native Germany. He was very much influenced by the ideas of Friedrich Engels (1820-1895) with whom he formed a lifelong friendship.

Marx lived in extreme poverty in England. He pawned most of his possessions, and several of his children died of malnutrition and disease.

In Marx's analysis, society was fundamentally divided between two classes i.e. Bourgeoisie and Proletariat who have

opposite interests. In his examination of industrial society, he saw the factory as the center of conflict between the exploiters (the owners of the means of production and the exploited (the workers).

Marx's influence on contemporary thinking has been dramatic. His writings inspired those who led the communist revolutions in Russia, China, Cuba, Vietnam, and elsewhere.

**Let us check:**

**1. Briefly analyze the contribution of early thinkers to the development of sociology.**

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## **1.8.PERSPECTIVES IN SOCIOLOGY:-**

Sociologists view society in different ways. Some see the world basically as a stable and ongoing entity. They are impressed with the endurance of the family, organized religion, and other social institutions. Some sociologists see society as composed of many groups in conflict, competing for scarce resources. To other sociologists, the most fascinating aspects of the social world are the everyday, routine interactions among individuals that we sometimes take for granted. The four perspectives that are most widely used by sociologists will provide an introductory look at the discipline. These are the functionalist, conflict, interactionist and critical perspectives.

### **1.8.1. Functionalist Perspective:-**

Also known as functionalism and structural functionalism, functionalist perspective is based on the assumption that society is stable, orderly system. This stable system is characterized by societal consensus, whereby the majority of members show a

common set of values, belief and behavioral expectation. According to this perspective a society is composed of interrelated parts, each of which serves a function and contributes to the overall stability of the society. Societies develop social structure or institutions that persist because they play a part in helping society survive. These institutions include the family, education, government religion, and the economy. If anything adverse happens to one of these institutions or part are affected and the system no longer functions properly.

**Talcott Parsons** (1902-1979). a Harvard university sociologist was a key figure in the development of functionalist theory. Parson had been greatly influenced by the works of Emile Durkheim, Max Weber and other European sociologists. Under the functionalist approach, if an aspect of social life does not contribute to a society stability or survival- if it does not serve some identifiably useful function or promote value consensus among member of a society- it will not be passed on from one generation to the next.

As an example of the functionalist perspective, let us examine prostitution. Why is it that a practice so widely condemned continues to display such persistence and vitality? Functionalists suggest that prostitution satisfies needs of patrons that may not be readily met through more socially acceptable forms such as courtship or marriage. The “buyer” receives sex without any responsibility for procreation or sentimental attachment; at the same time, the “seller” gains a livelihood through this exchange.

Through such an examination, we can conclude that prostitution does perform certain functions that society that seems to need. However, this is not to suggest that prostitution is a desirable or legitimate form of social behavior.

### **Manifest and Latent Functions:-**

Manifest function are intended or overly recognized by the participants in a social unit. In contrast, latent function is unintended function that is hidden and remains unacknowledged by participants. For example, a manifest function of education is the transmission of knowledge and skills from one generation to the

next, a latent function is the establishment of social relations and networks. Robert Merton noted that all features of a social system may not be functional at all times, dysfunctions are the un-desirable consequences of any element of a society. A dysfunction of education in United States is the perpetuation of gender, racial and class inequalities. Such dysfunction may threaten the capacity of a society to adapt and survive.

### **1.8.2.Conflict Perspective:-**

According to conflict perspectives, groups in society are engaged in a continuous power struggle for control of scarce resources. Conflict may take the form of politics, litigation, negotiations or family discussions about financial matter. Simmel, Marx and Weber contributed significantly to this perspective by focusing on the inevitability of clashes between social groups. Today, advocates of the conflict perspective view social continuous power struggle among competing social group.

Karl Marx viewed struggle between social classes as inevitable, given the exploitation of workers under capitalism. Expanding on Marx's work, sociologists and other social scientist have come to see conflict not merely as a class phenomenon but as a part of everyday life in all societies. Thus, in studying any culture, organization, or social group, sociologists want to know who benefits, who suffers and who dominates at the expense of other. They are concerned with the conflict between women and men, parents and children, cities and suburbs and whites and African Americans, to name only few. In studying such questions, conflict theorists are interested in how society's institutions-including the family, government, religion, education and the media-may help to maintain the privileges of some groups and keep others in a subservient position.

Like functionalist, conflict sociologists tend to use the Macro-level approach. Obviously, though, there is a striking difference between these two sociological perspectives. Conflict theorists are primarily concerned with the kinds of changes that can bring about, whereas functionalists look for stability and consensus.

The conflict model is viewed as more “radial” and “activist” because of its emphasis on social change and the need for redistribution of resources to eliminate existing social inequality. On the other hand, the functionalist perspective, because of its focus on stability, is generally seen as more “conservation” (Dahrendorf, 1958)

Currently, conflict theory is accepted within the discipline of sociology as one valid way to gain insight into a society.

One important contribution of conflict theory is that it has encouraged sociologists to view society through the eyes of those segments of the population that rarely influence decision making.

Feminist theory builds in important way on the conflict perspective. Like other conflict theorists, feminist scholars see gender differences as a reflection of the subjugation of one group (women) by another group (men). Drawing on the work of Marx & Engels, contemporary feminist theorists often view women’s subordination as inherent in capitalist societies. Some radical feminist theorists, however, view the oppression of women as inevitable in all male-dominated societies, including those labeled as capitalist, socialist and communist (Tuchman, 1992).

### **1.8.3. Interactionist or Interpretive:-**

The functionalist and conflict perspectives both analyze behavior in terms of society wide patterns. However, many contemporary sociologists are more interested in understanding society as a whole through an examination of social interactions such as small groups conducting meetings, two friends talking casually with each other, a family celebrating a birthday and so forth. The interactionist perspective generalizes about fundamental or everyday forms of social interaction. Interactionism is a sociological framework for viewing human beings as living in a world of meaningful objects. These “objects” may include material things, actions, other people, relationships and even symbols. Focusing on everyday behavior permits interactions to better understand the larger society.

George Herbert Mead (1863-1931) is widely regarded as the founder of the interactionist perspective. Mead was interested in observing the minutest forms of communication-smiles, frowns, nods of the head and in understanding how such individual behavior was influenced by the larger context of a group or society.

Interactionists see symbols as an especially important part of human communication. In fact, the interactionist perspective is sometime referred to as the symbolic interactionist perspective. Such researchers note that both a clenched fist and a salute have social meaning which are shared and understood by the members of a society. In the U.S, a salute symbolizes respect, while a clenched fist signifies defiance. However in another culture different gestures might be used to convey a feeling of respect or defiance.

Let us examine how various societies portray suicide without the use of words. People in the U.S point a finger at the head (shooting); urban Japanese bring a fist against the stomach (stabbing); and the south fore of Papua , New Guinea , clench a hand at the throat (hanging). These types of symbolic interaction are classified as forms of nonverbal communication, which can include many other gestures, facial expressions, and postures.

Erving Goffman (1922-1982) made a distinctive contribution by popularizing a particular type of interactionist method known as the dramaturgical approach. The dramaturgist compares everyday life to the setting of the theater and stage. Just as actors present certain images, all of us seek to present particular features of our personalities while we hide other qualities. Thus, in a class, we may feel the need to project a serious image; at a party, it may seem important to look like a relaxed and entertaining person.

#### **1.8.4.Critical Perspective:-**

This perspective says that we live in a society dominated capitalist society, based on exchange principles of value and profit. Capitalist society is not a peaceful society but based on unequal exchanges of power and privileges. Critical theory is a social theory whose aim is critiquing and changing society and culture, unlike

traditional theory whose aim is only understanding or explaining it. For eg. Instead of seeing the behavior of homeless youth as of criminal behaviour, the critical perspective would ask why did the youth become homeless and why are they connected to criminal behaviour?

Critical theorists like Horkheimer criticized science calling it harmful and destructive as it is controlled by the elite and powerful. They also critique the role of media in society, as it diverts the attention of people and only makes them consumers.

**Let us check:**

**1. Critically analyse various perspectives in sociology.**

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**1.9 SUMMARY :**

In the family of social sciences, sociology is a new entrant. Sociologists are not unanimous about definition of sociology. Wide variety of definition of the subject shows that there are differences of opinion about the scope of the subject. These definitions however make clear that sociology is concerned with human relations and social institutions.

There is a continuing controversy about the nature of sociology. Some claim sociology to be a science where as some refute this claim.

Views also differ about the scope of sociology. The formal school of thought believe that scope of sociology should not be generalized whereas synthetic school believes that sociology should study society as a whole.



August Comte is considered as the most influential philosopher of 1800s. He is called as the father of sociology. He hoped that systematic study of social behavior will eventually lead to more rational interaction.

Durkheim made pioneering contribution to sociology and is remembered as one of the founding fathers of sociology.

Weber is known for "Verstehen". He said in order to fully comprehend behavior we must learn the subjective meaning people attach to their action.

Marx's theory of class struggle is an incredible contribution to sociology in analyzing the conflict. His influence on contemporary thinking has been dramatic.

Sociologists view society in different way. The four perspectives i.e functionalist, conflict, interactionist and critical are most widely used by sociologists to give an introductory look at the discipline. Functionalist perspective is based on the assumption that society is stable, orderly system. Society is composed of interrelated parts, each of which serves a function and contribute to the overall stability of the society.

According to conflict perspective, groups in society are engaged in a continuous power struggle for control of scarce resources.

Many sociologists are more interested in understanding society through social interactions. The interactionist perspective generalizes about fundamental or everyday forms of social interaction.

Critical perspective says that we live in a society, based on exchange principles of value and profit.

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**1.10 QUESTIONS:**

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1. “Sociology is a systematic study of social behavior and human group”. Discuss the statement with reference to various definition and subject matter of sociology.
2. What is meant by scientific study? Illustrate with examples to support the argument whether sociology is a science or not.
3. Critically analyse the nature and scope of sociology. Elaborate on Former and synthetic school of thoughts.
4. Briefly highlight the contribution of early thinkers towards the development of sociology.
5. Discuss the various perspectives in sociology. Which one do you think is important and why?

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# Unit - 2

## DEVELOPING SOCIOLOGICAL IMAGINATION, CAREERS IN SOCIOLOGY

### Unit structure:

2.0 Objectives

2.1 Sociological imagination.

2.2 Developing a sociological outlook.

2.3 Importance /significance and practical utility of sociology.

2.3.1 Importance of study of sociology.

2.3.2 Significance of sociology.

2.3.3 Careers and specialization in sociology.

2.4 Summary

2.5 Questions

2.6 References

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### 2.0 OBJECTIVES:

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- To develop a sociological outlook by enhancing the sociological imagination.
- To Know the importance of the study of sociology.
- To understand the significance of sociology.
- To make students aware of the practical utility of sociology in day –to-day life.
- To explore the various specialization and career opportunities in sociology.

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### 2.1. THE SOCIOLOGICAL IMAGINATION:

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**Sociologist C. Wright** (1959 b) described sociological reasoning as the “Sociological imagination- the ability to see the relationship between individual experiences and the larger society.

This awareness enables us to understand the link between our personal experiences and the social context in which they occur. The sociological imagination helps us distinguish between personal trouble and social (or public) issues. ( Kendall ; 2007).

A key element in the sociological imagination is the ability to view one's own Society as an outsider would, rather than from the limited perspective of personal experiences and cultural biases. Sociological imagination allow us to go beyond personal experience and in attempting to understand social behavior, sociologists rely on an unusual type of creative thinking. C. Wright Mills (1959) described such thinking as the **sociological imagination**- an awareness of the relationship between an individual and the wider society. This awareness allows people (not simply sociologists) to comprehend the links between their immediate, personal social settings and the remote, impersonal social world that surrounds them and helps to shape them.

A key element in the sociological imagination is the ability to view one's own society as an outsider would, rather than from the limited perspective of personal experiences and cultural biases. Sociological imagination allows us to go beyond personal experiences and observations to understand broader public issues. Unemployment, for example, is unquestionably a personal hardship for a man or woman without a job. However, C. Wright Mills pointed out that when unemployment is a social problem shared by millions of people, it is appropriate to question the way that a society is structured or organized. Similarly, Mills advocated use of the sociological imagination to view divorce not simply as the personal problem of a particular man and woman, but rather as a structural problem, since it is the outcome of many marriages. And he was writing this in the 1950s, when the divorce rate was but a fraction of what it is today ( I . Horowitz, 1983:87-108)

Sociological imagination can bring new understanding to daily life around us.

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## 2.2. DEVELOPING A SOCIOLOGICAL OUTLOOK

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The sociological imagination require us, above all, to 'think ourselves away from the familiar routines of our daily life in order to look at them with a new perspective. Consider the simple act of drinking Coffee. What could we find to say, from a sociological point of view about such an apparently uninteresting piece of behavior.

We could point out first of all that coffee is not just refreshment. It possesses Symbolic value as part of our day-to-day Social activities, Often the ritual associated with coffee drinking is much more important than the act of consuming the drink itself. For many westerners the morning cup of coffee stands at the centre of a personal routine. It is an essential first step to starting the day. Morning coffee is often followed later in the day by coffee with others-the basis of a social ritual. Two people who arrange to meet for coffee are probably more interested in getting together & chatting than in what they actually drink. Drinking and eating in all societies, in fact, provide occasions for social interaction and the enactment of rituals- and these offer a rich subject matter for sociological study.

Second, coffee is a drug, containing caffeine, which has a Stimulating effect on the brain. Many people drink coffee for the extra lift it provides. Long days at the office and late nights studying are made more tolerable by coffee breaks. Coffee is a habit – forming substance, but coffee addicts are not regarded by most people in Western culture as drug users.

Third the individual who drinks cup of coffee is caught up in a complicated set of social & economic relationships stretching across the world. Coffee is a product which links people in some of the wealthiest & most impoverished parts of the planet, it is consumed in great quantities in wealthy Countries, but is grown primarily in poor ones, and it provides many countries, with their largest source of foreign exchange. The production & transportation of coffee require continuous transactions between people thousands of miles away from the coffee drinker. Studying such

global transactions is an important task of sociology since many aspects of our lives are now affected by worldwide social influences and communications.

Fourth, the act of sipping a coffee presumes a whole process of past social & economic development. Along with other now familiar items of western diets – like teas, bananas, potatoes & white sugar – coffee became widely consumed only from the late 1800s. Although the drink originated in the Middle East, its mass consumption dates, from the period of Western expansion about a century & a half ago. Virtually all the coffee we drink today comes from areas (South America & Africa) that were colonized by Europeans, it is in no sense a 'natural' part of the Western diet. The colonial legacy has had an enormous impact of the development of the global coffee trade.

Fifth coffee is a product that stands at the heart of contemporary debates, about globalization, international trade, human rights & environmental destruction. As coffee has grown in popularity, it has become 'branded' & politicized; the decisions that consumers make about what kind of coffee to drink & where to purchase it have become life style choices. Individuals may choose to drink only organic coffee, natural decaffeinated coffee or coffee that has been 'fairly traded' through schemes, that pay full market prices, to small coffee producers in developing countries. They may opt to patronize 'independent' coffee houses, rather than corporate coffee chains such as starbuck which is a brand in UK. Coffee drinkers might decide to boycott coffee from certain, with poor human rights & environmental records. Sociologists are interested to understand how globalization heightens people awareness of issues occurring in distant corners of the planet & prompts them to act on new knowledge in their own life.

**Let us check:**

1. What is meant by sociological imagination .Discuss the significance of sociological outlook in understanding and analysis of individuals existence in day to day society

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2. Critically examine the usage of mobile phone in contemporary society through your sociological imagination

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## **2.3 IMPORTANCE/ SIGNIFICANCE & PRACTICAL UTILITY OF SOCIOLOGY:**

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Sociology as a subject of study is a new comer in the family of social sciences but today it has occupied very important position, which signifies its utility. It has become very important because it is concerned with human beings who act and react in the Society.

Sociology studies human resources and determines their social strength. It is a body of knowledge which studies social relationships in a systematic way. Needless to say that these relationships are very important for proper conduct of human life.

**2.3.1.Importance of Study of Sociology:**Sociology is becoming quite popular subject of study because it has some obvious advantages. These may briefly be discussed as under:-

1. It is a subject which helps us in assessing available human resources and extent of human resources needed for solving our social problems. In this way sociology helps in human planning process which contributes significantly in economic problem.
2. It provides us basic and fundamental knowledge about human society, which includes strong and weak points of society, including human relationships. In this way it saves us from duping in the dark.
3. Each society is faced with social problems, which in turn create economic and political problems. Some of the social evils are deep rooted and it is essential that these should be rooted out. Sociology helps us both in identifying those problems and finding out their solution. Without proper understanding magnitude of the problems, these can not be properly tackled.
4. It is sociology which helps us in conciliation and adjustment. Each society has diverse elements. These, if not properly reconciled, can result in dis-organization and de-stabilization of the society. It is sociology which helps us in understanding the extent of diversity and the way in which this diversity can be converted into homogeneity.
5. It is sociology which helps us in making social reconstruction easy.
6. Each society has its cultural heritage and wants to preserve that. It is sociology which high-lights and researches past culture heritages and also helps in the development and growth of cosmopolitan culture, so that there are no cultural clashes.
7. It helps in bringing family stability. It is sociology which helps us in identifying the causes of family instability and family disorganization. It is again sociology which tells us how emerging de-stabilizing trends in the family should be checked, so that strong family system continues.



8. It is sociology which helps us in understanding social problems. Many social problems remain unidentified and many with the passage of time become maladies. It is essential that these should be timely checked before their tackling becomes difficult. It is sociology which helps us in timely identifying of social problems.

9. It helps us in proper understanding of the needs of social relationship and the way in which this relationship should be maintained.

10. It is sociology which makes us tolerant by telling us good points and healthy customs, traditions, norms and value of other societies. It enables us to appreciate what is the best in them which needs to be adjusted in our life style. Thus sociology helps us in tolerating others and appreciating their view point.

### **2.3.2.Importance of Study of Sociology in India :**

Study of sociology is very important for India . It is because we are a developing society and our rulers in the past not only tried to solve our social problems but also allowed these to get deep rooted.

The sociologists in India can help us in understanding deep rooted cause of casteism and regionalism, which today pose a great threat to our social, economic and political system. They can also tell us to why really untouchability is not getting rooted out and corruption at all levels in our society is on the increase

Again sociologists in India can play a significant role in our national and emotional integration by identifying the areas where such integration can easily be possible. This can be done with the help of scientific study of customs and traditions. The sociologist can also help in knowing why efforts made so far to raise the living standard of weaker sections of society have failed. In fact in our society the sociologists can play a big role because it is passing through very difficult stages of social transition and when it on the cross roads, the sociologists alone can provide proper direction and give proper lead. As already pointed out task becomes difficult because our society is full of diversities and neither problems of all sections of society are same nor solution can be uniform.

### **2.3.2 Significance Of Sociology:-**

Sociology has many practical implications, for our lives, as C. Mills emphasized.

#### **1. Awareness Of Cultural Differences:-**

First sociologist allows us to see the social world from many perspectives. Quite often, if we understand how people live, we can have better idea about their problems. Policies, which are meant for solving the problems of people's may fail if they have not understood the life of people. Example – Policies regarding tribal, or slum dwellers rehabilitation or street hawkers shifting bar dancer's profession or even allowing shopkeepers to have late night business, all require practical knowledge of their life.

#### **2. Assessing The Effect Of Policies:-**

Many policies related to employment or rehabilitation of people failed miserably since they do not make use of the aims & real needs of people. Sociologist brings the basic needs, & objectives of people concerned into light so that the government can understand the causes of failure. Unless people are involved in any programme meant for them, the programme is not going to be successful. Sociological research points, out deficiencies, in the policy and discrepancy between the people's aims & the policy aims.

#### **3. Self Enlightenment:-**

Sociology provides, knowledge to understand self. Sociology helps us to know why we behave in a particular manner. Many self help groups- Alcoholics, dog lovers, Anonymous, environmentalist, Senior citizen group have learned to help themselves without being dependent on government.

**Let us check:**

**1. Elaborate on the significance, importance and practical utility of sociology in everyday life**

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### **2.3.3 Careers & Specialization in Sociology:**

Sociology is not only an intellectual discipline, it is also a profession. When we speak of a profession, we refer mainly to such themes as the uses or applications of a body of knowledge. Sociologist plays a rich and varied role in today's society. They serve in a variety of capacities such, as consultant, teacher, policy maker, researcher, administrator, clinical counselor, social critic, interviewer, journalist, probation and parole worker, career counsellor, social worker, recreation worker, programme evaluator, urban planner, marketing administration co-coordinator and personal manager etc. they work in areas as broad and diverse as the discipline they have chosen.

**Knowledge of sociology can be used in the following areas of social life:**

1. Teaching
2. Social research
3. Social work
4. Professions-medicine, law, engineering, business etc.
5. Industry
6. Rural and Urban planning
7. Public administration- civil services
8. Policy making
9. Business consulting
10. Politics
11. Architecture
12. Child welfare and Health welfare
13. Gerontology (study of old age people)

14. Computer industry
15. Military intelligence and military
16. Entrepreneurship
17. International relations
18. Criminal justice
19. City management
20. New emerging careers: (a) action programme, and (b) development

#### **2.3.4. Specialization within sociology**

Aging/ Social Gerontology

Biosociology

Collective Behavior/ Social Movements

Community/ Rural Society

Comparative Sociology/ Macro sociology

Criminal Justice/ Corrections

Criminology/ Delinquency

Cultural Sociology

Demography

Development/ Modernization/ Social Change

Deviant Behavior/ Social disorganization

Economy and Society

Education

Environmental Sociology

History of Sociology/ Social thought

Human ecology

Industrial Sociology

International Development/ Third World

Law and Society

Leisure/ Sports/ Recreation

Marriage and the Family

Mass Communication/ Public Opinion

Mathematical Sociology

Medical Sociology

Methodology: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches

Micro computing/ Computer applications

Military Sociology

Occupations/ Professions

Political Sociology

Race/ Ethnic/ Minority Relations  
 Religion  
 Sex and Gender  
 Small Groups  
 Social Control  
 Social Networks  
 Social Organization/ Formal/ Complex  
 Social Psychology  
 Socialization  
 Sociological Practice/ Social Policy  
 Sociology of Art/ Literature  
 Sociology of Knowledge/ Science  
 Sociology of Language/ social Linguistics  
 Sociology of Markets  
 Sociology of Mental Health  
 Sociology of Work  
 Stratification/ Mobility  
 Urban Sociology  
 Visual Sociology

**Let us check:**

1. Discuss in detail the diverse specializations available in sociology directing one to opt for various careers in sociology

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**2.4 SUMMARY:**

The term sociological imagination was developed by C.Wright Mills to go beyond personal experience and to rely on an unusual type of creative thinking. The sociological imagination require us above all, to think ourselves away from the familiar routines of our daily life in order to look at them a new.

Today sociology has occupied very important position due to its significance and utility. Study of sociology is very important for India .It is because we are a developing society and our rulers in the past not only tried to solve our problem but also allowed it to get deep rooted.

Sociology makes us aware of cultural differences, help us in assessing the effect of policies and contribute to once self enlightenment. There are large number of specialization and career opportunities available in sociology.

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## **2.5 QUESTIONS:**

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1. Examine in detail how sociological outlook and sociological imagination helps one to develop a better understanding of society and social problem.
2. Highlight the significance of sociology in general and its importance in Indian society in particular.
3. Write a detail note on significance and practical utility of sociology.

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## **2.6 REFERENCE AND READINGS:**

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# Unit - 3

## **SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS: POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT**

### **Unit Structure**

- 3.0 Objectives
- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Features of Social Institutions
- 3.3 Classification of Social Institutions
- 3.4. Functions of Social Institutions
- 3.5 Power
- 3.6 Authority
- 3.7 Politics in Global Perspective
- 3.8 Global Political System
- 3.9 Political Spectrum
- 3. 10 Special Interest Groups
- 3.11 Political revolution
- 3.12 Terrorism
- 3.13 War and Peace
- 3.14 Summary
- 3.15 Questions
- 3.16 References

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### **3.0 OBJECTIVES**

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- To understand the concept of social institution and its functions.
- To evaluate the concept of politics and government.
- To understand significance of political system.
- To compare and contrast different political system.

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### 3.1 INTRODUCTION:

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Every society has certain basic needs and it is vital for the society to satisfy these needs. To satisfy these needs, society creates social institutions. Social institutions are built from social relationships in society so that basic needs such as law and order, stability, defining roles and responsibilities and decision making can be met. For sociologist social institutions are complex social forms that reproduce themselves such as family, marriage, religion, government and so on.

Social Institution can be defined as a complex, integrated set of social norms aimed to preserve certain basic societal values. It is essential for the survival of society. We may come across differences in the way a society establish social institutions, some are simple while others are complex but all the societies have certain primary social institutions such as government and politics, family, religion, economy and education.

Sumner (1906) defined “an institution consists of a concept and a structure”. By “concept” Sumner meant ideas, notions, doctrine and interest and “structure” meant a framework or arrangement. While Horton and Hunt (1964) termed institutions as “an organized system of a social relationship which embodies certain common values and procedures and meet certain basic needs of the society”. Here “common values” indicates shared ideas and goals, “common procedures” denotes standardized pattern of behaviour that a given group of people follows and “the system of relationship” indicates a set of roles and structures through which action takes place.

Turner (1997) refers to social institutions as a complex of positions, roles, rules and values located in certain types of social structures that have comparatively stable patterns of human activity regarding fundamental problems in producing life-sustaining resources, in reproducing individuals and in sustaining viable societal structures within a given environment. This definition brings out the essential function of social institution.



One of the most comprehensive meaning of social institution is given by Hertzler. Hertzler (1946) refers to social institutions as purposive, regulatory and consequently primary cultural configuration that is formed consciously or unconsciously to fulfill individual's desire and social needs. It consists of codes, rules and ideologies. It has essential symbolic organizational and material implementation. Hertzler definition brings out four important element of social institutions i.e purpose, functions, mechanism and structure.

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### **3.2 FEATURES OF SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS:**

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- Social institutions are means to control individual behaviour.
- It depends upon collective activities of humans.
- It possess well defined procedures that are based on customs and doctrines.
- It is stable than others means of social control.
- Every social institutions have specific norms which is essential for the members to follow.

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### **3.3 CLASSIFICATION OF SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS:**

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By social institutions sociologist mean normative system that function in five basic realm of life, which may be called as primary social institutions:

- Family-determines kinship and basic socialization
- Religion- regulates relation with supernatural
- Economic- leads to production and distribution of goods and services
- Political and government – regulates access to and use of legitimate power and authority
- Education- transmission of knowledge from one generation to another

All the above social institutions are universal in nature found in all human societies and play vital role in the development and smooth functioning of human societies. Beside these five primary

social institutions there are secondary social institutions also for example the secondary social institutions of education would be school, colleges and universities and for religion the secondary social institutions would be totem, temple, taboo, church, Synagogue and Mosque.

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### 3.4. FUNCTIONS OF SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS:

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- **To preserve human race:** The primary function of family is to preserve human race and its growth through socially approved way of conjugal relations and by taking care of basic needs of human being. Similarly political Institutions maintain law and order and legitimizes power and author.
- **To transmit culture:** Social institution play significant role in not only keeping culture intact but also transmit it from one generation to another generation. For example family transmit traditions, customs and values to its members and educational institution transmit knowledge.
- **To satisfy basic needs:** The aim of social institution is to provide for and satisfy basic needs of its members. Family and Educational institutions train individuals in various skill which are essential to lead a dignified life. Political institution for example maintain law and order and give stability to society.
- **To maintain social solidarity:** One of the fundamental function of social institutions is to maintain social solidarity and stability. Religious institutions promotes social solidarity through common belief, rituals and common worship. Similarly economic institutions generate employment opportunities to the individual so that they can earn their livelihood.
- **Welfare:** The vital function of social institution is welfare of its members. Political institution develop schemes and policies for the welfare of its members for example women hostels, orphanage, old age homes, skill development centers etc.

**Check Your Progress:**

1. What is Social Institutions?

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2. Explain features of Social Institutions.

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3. Classify Social Institutions.

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4. What are functions of Social Institutions?

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### **3.5 POWER:**

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For centuries scholars from different discipline have explored and analysed power. Power relationship describes our world. For Macdonald, politics is the social institution that distributes power, set social goals and make decision. In Weber's opinion every society is based on power and power has the ability to achieve desired results despite resistance from others. Foucault expresses that power relation is present in all facet of social life. Power not only influence our personal relation but also moulds social groups, organizations and governments. Power is mainly used by the government.

Government is a formal organization that gives direction to the political life of the society. Although government demands compliance from its people, it does not openly use threat on its people. In most cases people respect and adhere to their political system. In contemporary world government power is not limited to its citizens but may extend to other governments or nations for instance U.S government.

Government as political institution maintains law and order and security of its people. Form of government and the way it functions depend on the accepted behaviour pattern of the society. Development and welfare is the major responsibility of the government today. To be effective and efficient the government may decentralize for example local self-government, Panchayat in India.

Power can be coercive that is not legitimate where force is used or it can be legitimate which is accepted and supported by the legal system i.e authority. According to Weber it is legitimacy that forms core of authority.

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### **3.6 AUTHORITY:**

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In Weber's view authority is a power that people perceive as legitimate rather than coercive. There are three types of authority according to Weber.

➤ **Traditional Authority:**

This type of authority emanates from customary laws and is sanctified by ancient traditions. Indonesia's King Maha Vajiralongkorn for example occupies a position that he has inherited traditionally by succession. In Ritter's words traditional authority is grounded in the claim by the leaders and a belief on the part of the followers that there is virtue in the sanctification of age old rules and powers. In traditional authority the subordinates accept the traditional rights of the powerful individuals or groups for instance religious leaders, spiritual guru, family and patriarch. Traditional authority is mostly supported by culture for instance symbols such as cross, crescent moon or flag and by structures and institutions. It is believed that traditional authority hinders social change and is likely to be irrational and inconsistent and maintains status quo.

➤ **Rational legal Authority:**

In this type of authority the power originates from a formalistic belief in the content of both legal law and rational. The followers do not obey to any specific individual but adhere to a set of uniform norms for instance bureaucracy. The individual who exercises this type of authority have qualifications that are prescribed and codified. For instance people obey traffic police because he exercises authority due to his position bestowed to him by law. The rational legal authority is present in modern state, corporations and other voluntary organizations. In Weber's opinion development of modern state is undistinguishable with that of modern officialdom and bureaucratic organizations just as the development of modern capitalism is associated with bureaucratization of economic enterprise. However, no authority structure can be purely bureaucratic there would be some elements of charisma present in bureaucratic structure.

➤ **Charismatic Authority:**

This type of authority is based on perceived extraordinary characteristics of a leader. The followers are extremely devoted to the charismatic leaders and adhere to the way of life preached by such leaders. They believe that the leader has some supernatural power. As long as the leaders continue to prove their magical power, they enjoy authority and they are worshipped by their

believers. To continue charismatic authority it has to be transformed into legal or traditional form of authority. Thus charismatic authority rest on the personal charisma of the leader who enjoys power due to his personality and personal traits for instance Dr. B.R Ambedkar, Indira Gandhi and Aung San SuuKyi.

**Check your progress:**

1. Write a note on Power and Authority.

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### **3.7 POLITICS IN GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE:**

Throughout history, humans have created various types of political system from monarchy to republic to maintain law and order, protect themselves from foreign invasion and to have sound economic system. There are various type of political system with varying degree of success and having its own advantage and disadvantage. Differences in political systems is based on the way it provide services to its people, protect their rights and enforce rule of law upon them.

The prominent political system in the world are as follows:

➤ **Monarchy:**

A monarchy is a form of political system in which a single family rules from generation to generation through the lines of inheritance. It was common form of government in many of the agrarian societies. In the modern industrial societies however, monarchy lost its charm. Today some countries continue to have monarchy example Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. In this form of political system legitimation, level of authority, power, succession, role and responsibilities was determined by historical factors, culture and desires and preferences of the ruler.

➤ **Democracy:**

The historical trend in modern society is towards democracy. Democracy is a type of political system in which power rest in the hand of people as a whole. It is referred as government of the people, by the people and for the people. In a system of representative democracy authority is in the hands of the elected leaders who from time to time compete for office in elections. An ideal democratic political system is based on universal suffrage that allows its citizens to exercise adult franchise. The success of democratic political system depends on an enlightened electorate, politically conscious citizens who actively participate in the democratic process. The role of the elected representative is to frame the policies and programmes, formulate the budget and implement the programmes through a network of officials.

Democracy and rational-legal authority is closely associated in much the same way as the monarchy and the traditional authority are associated. However it is not necessary that most of the democratic nations would be democratic in real sense for the following reasons:

**a. Bureaucracy:**

The problem with Indian bureaucracy is that it lack professionalism, there is rampant corruption and misuse of powers and this is adversely affecting the administration and the governance. People find Indian bureaucracy to be slow, tremendously rigid and mechanical and therefore not adaptive to change.

**b. Economic inequality:**

Rich people have far more political influence than the poor people. This is due to the fact, the rich, particularly the business tycoons fund the political parties campaign during elections. The 2019 election in India is said to be one of the most expensive election ever in Asia. India's business tycoons have played very significant role ranging from funding the election, endorsing the political parties to being the topic of hot debates themselves. Niranjana Sahoo of ORF commented that this will lead to

unstoppable corporate influence that can have detrimental effect on policies.

➤ **Authoritarianism:**

The concept of authoritarianism is opposite to democracy. Authoritarianism as a political system has strong central power and it denies people popular participation in government, political pluralism, and defence of civil liberties and is not accountable to the people. It may resort to unconstitutional means such as censorship, fear, and force. In the authoritarian form of government the power lies in the hand of a single leader or a small group of elite who are not constitutionally accountable to the people. Those in power consider themselves above the law.

The traditional authoritarian government had monopolistic control over the political life of its people by one party system that was organised around a strong leader or a military junta and direct rule by the executive, often through martial law with no role or some role of the parliament. Puddington (2017) discern that 21<sup>st</sup> century is marked by resurgence of authoritarian government in spite of economic instability and popular resistance. It has succeeded due to sophisticated strategies to repress any opposition by way of controlling the media, propaganda, creating illusion of political pluralism and suppressing civil society example Russia and China.

➤ **Totalitarianism:**

In totalitarian political system state is supreme than the individual. The state controls and regulates almost all the aspects of public and private life of its citizens. The totalitarian political system exercise total political, social and cultural control over its citizens and usually is ruled by charismatic ruler. It is a single mass party rule headed by a dictator who attempt to mobilize the people to support state ideology and does not tolerate any activities that is against the goals of the state. The totalitarian government makes use of various means of social control such as secret police, regulation and restriction of freedom of speech, control of mass media, use of surveillance equipment and so on example Vietnam and North Korea.



Although some totalitarian state claim to represent the view of the people but most seek to bend people to the will of the state. Such state as the name indicates have total concentration of power and do not allow any organised opposition. It denies its subject right to assemble for political purpose and control access to information. These government uses intimidation and terror to create fear in people. Socialization in totalitarian system is intensively political seeking not just compliance but personal commitment to the system.

**Check your progress**

Explain the following political system:

a. Monarchy:

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b. Totalitarianism:

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c. Democracy:

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d. Authoritarianism:

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### 3.8 GLOBAL POLITICAL SYSTEM:

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We often come across terms such as global economy: Are we heading towards global political system? The answer is 'NO'. Although most of the economic activities now involves more than one nations, but the world still remains divided into nation states. However due to the devastating effects of two world wars United Nations was setup, an initiative towards global government. However, the critics argue that UN is dominated by five of its elite members who also happen to be nuclear power. It is also evident from the War on Iraq that the UN is often divided and its member nation's functions largely to serve their own interest.

At the same time we observe that politics has become a global process due to following reasons:

- a. ICT has revolutionised the world of information as national politics is easily accessible to people around the world.
- b. There are thousands of NGOs working across the world for various causes such as environment, war, health, violation of human rights and women issues. They are watchdog of society, therefore in today's context, no government can function and take decision in privacy. For example Amnesty international India, Jagori etc.

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### 3.9 POLITICAL SPECTRUM:

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Today a wide range of political outlook exist leftist, rightist, secular and moderate. This wide variety of political view point help in sustaining democracy. The two major factors that determines an individual's political view is the change they expect in their government and society and how much government involvement they are ready to accept in the economy. In other words an individual's viewpoint on various social and political issues determine their political spectrum. A political spectrum is made up of continuum or value line people fall on that depending on their belief. So an individual may be a liberal, radical, conservative or moderate.

The leftist (radical) political view would call for rapid change in political, social and economic system and may not even hesitate to resort to violence to bring about change. While liberal reject any violent means of social change, they believe in gradual and peaceful change in the political system. They promote social welfare of people. In case of moderates they believe in both the liberal and conservative ideology. In fact they follow wait and watch policy. They are tolerant and against use of any violent means to bring about change in political system. The conservative maintain status quo, they want to keep things as they are. In Jefferson's view "the best government governs least".

#### **The debate over abortion:**

The liberals would support abortion stating that it is private matter so let women decide what she wants similarly the moderates view it as women's choice. The conservative stand would be that a pregnant woman is morally obliged to bear the child only in some extreme case she has right to abort.

#### **How do we choose Political Spectrum?**

For many scholars it is economic pressures that motivate people to take political stance. People who are rich will definitely want to maintain status quo while the one who are poor would support change. However, we may come across rich liberals and conservative poor too. Age can be another factor usually young are

liberal and old are supposed to be conservative. Beside economic pressure and age another factor that influence once political stance is nature and psychology of an individual.

### **Does people's Political Stand change?**

Over a period of time there is possibility that by altering their position on the continuum, people's attitudes may shift to the right, left or may remain stationary. There are numerous examples of people in Indian politics who have changed their political spectrum such as Navjot Singh Siddhu in 2004 he joined BJP and contested election from Amritsar and 2017 he joined Indian National Congress.

### **Check your progress:**

1. Write a note on Political Spectrum.

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## **3. 10 SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS:**

Special Interest groups are political alliance of people interested in some economic and social issues. It may include association of elderly people, women, doctors, teachers, artists, farmers and so on. This groups are numerous working across the society for example Washington City alone has nearly 15000 lobbyists working on behalf of special interest groups.

Political action committee are organization formed by Special interest groups, independent of any political parties involvement, to raise and spend funds in support of political objectives.

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### 3.11 POLITICAL REVOLUTION:

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Political revolution is overthrow of one political system and establish another. It brings about radical change in social and political structure. The 20<sup>th</sup> century is marked by revolution in the history of Asia. One of the reason for so many revolution in Asia was imperialism of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Many of these Asian countries not only became independent but also brought about fundamental social, economic and political changes in their society. While on the other hand reforms refers to bringing about modification in the system.

#### Characteristics of Revolution:

- **Rise in expectation:** A revolution will not take place if there is no expectation.
- **Irresponsive government:** A revolution will never take place if government response to people's expectation and demand.
- **Leader:** A revolution will take place only under the leadership of radical elites who demand for complete change. In absence of leadership there cannot be revolution. Elites provide the justification for revolution and thereby leadership too.
- **Establishing a new system:** By overthrowing the old political system the revolution paves for establishing a new system though it is not easy. But still difficult is to maintain the success of revolution.

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### 3.12 TERRORISM:

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Terrorism means acts of violence or threat to use violence as a political strategy or ideological aims that targets civilians. The people who use such violence are called as terrorist. Terrorist attacks can happen anywhere at any time and therefore it is difficult to combat such violence example "26/11" attack on Mumbai and recent attack on church in Srilanka. Terrorist attacks are not blind attacks it is symbolic. They choose targets based on their identity, locations or activities example assassination of Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi by LTTE. The features of terrorism are as follows:

- Terrorist attempt to justify violence as a legitimate political tactics even though such act is condemned by International communities.
- Terrorism is used not only by individual or group but also by government against foreign citizens or even against their own people example violence against the Kurds in Iraq by Saddam Hussain.
- Democratic societies reject terrorism in principle, but they are vulnerable to terrorist attacks because they accord extensive civil liberties and have extremely less secret political networks.
- Terrorism is matter of definition because government claim the right to maintain law and order, even by using force and therefore may term groups that opposes its policies by resorting to violence as terrorists.

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### 3.13 WAR AND PEACE:

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The most critical political issue is war which may be defined as 'organised arm conflict' among people of various nations on the behest of their government. The 20<sup>th</sup> century history is full of nations or group of nations involved in armed conflict. United States alone has waged number of wars against nations such as Vietnam and Iraq resulting in death tolls of 1.3 million people and injuring people many times more.

#### **Factors responsible for Wars:**

- **Perceived threat:** US war on Iraq is an example of perceived threat that Iraq was in possession of mass weapon of destruction.
- **Social Issues:** To divert people's attention from states failure to tackle certain pressing socio-economic issues government may resort to war.
- **Political Objectives:** Poor nations may use armed conflict to uproot foreign rules. While wealthy and militarily powerful nations may do so to maintain their dominance in world politics.
- **Scarce economic resources:** Conflict of interest between nations over scarce economic resources may also result in

armed conflict example China and its neighbour over gas and oil resources in South China Sea.

- **Moral objectives:** Some wealthy and militarily powerful nations may feel that it is their moral responsibility to save the people from a tyrant. For example America's war over Iraq under Saddam Hussain regime.
- **Absence of alternatives:** War may take place between or amongst nation when dialogues fail and it is felt that there is no other alternatives.

The consequences of war can be felt beyond the battle field. There is massive toll in terms of human life and break down of social, political and economic institutions. There is urgent need for us to respect human rights of minorities-ethnic, religious, linguistics and racial. At the same time an effort should be made to strengthen civil society and emphasize on good governance.

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### 3.14 SUMMARY

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Social institutions are major part of social life or societal subsystems which formed to meet basic human needs such as law and order. Various social institutions such as family religion, political system and government are essential for the proper functioning of the society. Sociologists interest lie in understanding the impact of politics and government on individual and larger societal systems. Weber examined power and authority and classified authority as traditional, rational legal and charismatic. Nation states are governed by various types of political system such as monarchy, authoritarianism and democracy. Due to the devastating effect of two world war a step was taken towards global government by establishing UN. However the present political life face various challenges such as global terrorism and war.

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### 3.15 QUESTIONS

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1. What is social institutions? Explain its features, types and functions.
2. Explain the concept Power and Authority.
3. Discuss in detail different types of political system.
4. Write a short notes on:
  - a. Political Spectrum
  - b. Special pressure group
  - c. War and Peace
  - d. Terrorism

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# Unit - 4

## SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS: FAMILY AND RELIGION

### Unit Structure:

- 4.0 Objectives
- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Sociological Perspective on Religion
- 4.3 World Religions
- 4.4 Types of Religious Organization
- 4.5 Religiosity
- 4.6 Secularization
- 4.7 Religion and Fundamentalism
- 4.8 Family
- 4.9 Sociological approach to understand family
- 4.10 Stages of family life
- 4.11 Transformation and troubles in family life
- 4.12 Violence in Family
- 4.13 Alternative types of family
- 4.14 New reproductive technology and the family
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- 4.16 Summary
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### 4.0 OBJECTIVES

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- To understand the concept of family and religion.
- To evaluate the functions and significance of family and religion as a social institutions.
- To explore the changes taking place in the family and religion as a social institutions.

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### 4.1. INTRODUCTION:

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The term religion is derived from the Latin word '**religio**' meaning sacred and '**religare**' meaning obligation. It has existed in

all the societies throughout the world. People have used it in various forms such as narrations and symbols to make sense of life and understand the universe. It can be explained as a system of beliefs and practices that divides the world into sacred and profane. For Durkheim religion is a whole made up of parts which is more complex system of rites, ceremonies, myth and dogmas. Durkheim explains sacred objects as something which set apart from everyday life while profane stands for things that are used in everyday life example among Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs it is observed that they remove their shoes before entering their place of worship this is done to avoid defiling sacred place by the soles that have touched the profane ground.

Durkheim believed that religion was source of social stability. In Weber's opinion religion brings about social change. He explored the impact of religious belief on economic activities and concluded that protestant societies were the most highly developed societies for example Netherland, Germany. According to Weber Calvinism played a key role in development of spirit of modern capitalism. While in Karl Marx view religion manifest social stratification in society and maintained inequality and status quo.

### **Elements of religion:**

The basic elements of religion are as follows:

- a. **Beliefs:** Religion is based on numerous beliefs which may not be universal for example monotheism –belief in one god and polytheism – belief in more than one god.
- b. **Rituals:** All the religion of the world have rituals and certain ceremonies for example life cycle rituals such as marriage, coming of age and pilgrimage.
- c. **Sacred objects:** Every religion has sacred objects for example for Hindu water of river Ganga, for Muslim water from well ZamZam.
- d. **Symbols:** It is signs used as sacred object and plays significant role in the life of the people who are believers for example cross for Christian, Om for Hindus. Symbols form basis for knowledge about supernatural and gives meaning to the events beyond comprehension.
- e. **Sects:** There may be many small groups within a particular religion having their own set of believers such as Shias and

Sunnis in Islam, Roman Catholics and Protestants in Christianity.

- f. **Religious organization:** There are many types of religious organization with sets of beliefs, practices and rituals. These organizations vary in size, structure and perform various functions. For example during Kumbhmela which is mass Hindu pilgrimage considered to be one of the largest religious gathering for holy bath in sacred water depicts organization structure of Hinduism. Religious organizations consists of network of institutional arrangement with certain status and role such as temples and priests, monks and monasteries.
- g. **Expressive culture:** All the religion comprises of performing and visual arts such as music, dancing, singing, and chanting.

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## 4.2 SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE ON RELIGION:

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During the 19<sup>th</sup> century industrialization and secularization, the classical sociologists like Emile Durkheim, Karl Marx and Max Weber attempted to understand the relationship between society and religion.

### **Structural functionalist view on Religion:**

Durkheim refers to religion as a unified system of beliefs and practices which are sacred. By sacred he meant extraordinary and related to divine. He believed that religion is about community, it brings about social cohesion, promotes social control, and gives strength to people during the transitory phase of their life and at the time when they face tragedies. In his view religion represents power of society so when they celebrate sacred things, they celebrate power of their society.

The three major functions of religion according to Durkheim is as follows:

1. **Social Unity:** Religion brings people together through shared values, norms beliefs and symbols
2. **Social control:** To promote conformity society promotes religious ideas example marriage and reproduction.
3. **Meaning and purpose to life:** In almost all the societies major life events is marked by religious observation this is due to the fact that religion gives meaning and purpose in one's life.

Durkheim's structural functionalist approach is criticized for representing collective life of society and give less importance to religion's dysfunction example most of the terrorist organization claims that God favor's their actions.

### **Symbolic Interactionist Approach:**

The symbolic interactionist perspective is the micro approach to understand the relationship between religion and society. From the perspective of symbolic interactionist religion is constructed socially through various rituals which may be observed every day or annually for example fasting during Ramadan or offering prayers five times every day. For them belief and experiences cannot be termed as sacred until people in the society regard them as sacred. And once people regard it as sacred then the belief and practices get special significance in people's life and give sense to their life.

This approach to religion attempts to understand everyday life through sacred lens. It ignores the relationship between religion and inequality.

### **Social Conflict Approach:**

According to Conflict theorist religion promotes social inequality and social conflict. Karl Marx believed that religion legitimizes status quo and diverts people's attention from social inequalities and thus serves the ruling elites. Karl Marx said religion is opium of the masses, it makes them accept their daunting situation and be happy. People believe that by enduring the suffering they will be rewarded by God after death. Peoples religious believe does not allow them to oppose the atrocities conducted on them and thus help to continue the unjust social practices.

Religion also support gender discrimination and inequality as it promotes stereotypes and reinforces patriarchal values.

However conflict perspective on religion neglects the positive contribution of religion for example Archbishop Tutu and Pope John Paul II strongly condemned War in Iraq.

**Check your progress:**

1. What is religion?

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2. Explain elements of religion.

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**4.3 WORLD RELIGIONS:**

**1. Christianity:** With almost two billion followers, consisting nearly one third of the world's population Christianity is the most practiced religion in the world. Most of the people who identify themselves as Christians stay in Europe and America. Christianity emerged as a cult, transmuted into a sect and now it exist as ecclesia. Christianity is monotheistic religion that is belief in one god. Yet it has a unique concept of Trinity- God the Creator; Jesus Christ, Son of God and Redeemer; and the Holy Spirit, Christian's personal experience of god's existence. Christianity has taken many forms from Roman Catholic Church to the Protestant Reformation of the middle ages.

**2. Islam:** The followers of Islam call themselves as Muslims. There are about 1.6 billion people around the world who are follower of Islam. A majority of the Muslims reside in Middle Eastern countries. Moreover significant number of Muslims also live in west Asia. The sacred text of Muslims is the Quran, it is word of Allah (God) as transmitted through Prophet Mohammad. After the death

of Prophet Mohammad Islam widely spread to other parts of the world. Though there are various sects in Islam, major being the Shias and Sunnis but they believe in five pillars of Islam.

**3. Judaism:** There are fourteen million followers of Judaism in the world with highest concentration in United States. Judaism has a very distinctive concept of covenant that is a special relation with God by which the followers of Judaism became the chosen people. It means a duty to observe gods command particularly the 'Ten Commandment' as revealed by Moses on Mount Sinai. There are three main denominations of Jews: the orthodox, the reformist and the conservative.

**4. Hinduism:** Hinduism originated in Indus valley civilization 4500 years ago. They constitute fifteen percent of the world population. Unlike other world religion Hinduism cannot be linked to any one person nor do it has any single sacred writings. Although Hindus belief and practices vary but they all believe in a moral force in the universe called as Dharma. Another concept in Hinduism is Karma. Hindus believe that their actions have moral consequences and living life properly contributes towards development of morals. Hinduism also believe in Moksha that is state of spiritual freedom. Once it is achieved an individual gets salvation and becomes free from the bondage of life and death.

**5. Buddhism:** Around seven percent of the world populations follow Buddhism. Buddhists are found nearly in all the Asian countries such as Burma, Thailand, Cambodia and Japan. Like Christianity in Buddhism too the inspiration stems from one person, Gautama Buddha. Inspired by the charismatic personality of Lord Buddha, his followers spread Buddhism throughout India and later in 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C the Buddhist King sent missionaries to other parts of Asia and thus Buddhism became a world religion.

**6. Confucianism:** From 200 B.C onwards to early parts of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Confucianism was the official religion of China. But after the 1949 revolution the Chinese government repressed religion. Confucius was deeply moved by the plight of people so he instructed his followers to engage the world on the basis of moral

code of conduct. Confucianism believe in the principle of 'Jen' meaning 'humaneness'.

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#### 4.4 TYPES OF RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATION:

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**1. Church:** A church is a religious organization that is well integrated into the larger society. It has well established rules and regulations and formally trained leaders. Johnstone described following characteristics of religion:

- It is universal in nature. All members of society are included in the church organization within their ranks and have a tendency to equate citizenship with membership.
- It exercises religious monopoly and attempts to eradicate any competition.
- It may closely associate with the state and secular powers.
- It is hierarchical and bureaucratic in nature with complex division of labour.
- It appoints officially trained clergy.
- There is addition of new members by birth and socialization.
- It is diverse for example nuns and monks rather than forming new religions.

**2. Sect:** A sect is a small religious organization that is not well integrated with the society and it may be in conflict with some of the norms and values of the society. A sect breaks away from the larger denomination in order to maintain what the members consider to be original beliefs and practices of the denomination. Mostly the sect do not have any officially trained clergy and also lack bureaucracy of denomination and ecclesia. The worship services of sect is emotional experience for its members. New members in the sect are added by proselytization and recruitment. Once the sect is formed it may follow three route- dissolution, institutionalization or may grow and become more bureaucratic and evolves into denomination example many of the protestant denomination began as a sect.

**3. Cult:** Like sect the cult are new religious groups. But differ in three aspects; first they do not break away from their larger denominations and originate outside the mainstream religion.



Secondly, they are secretive in nature and do not believe in proselytization. And thirdly, they are led by charismatic leaders having extraordinary qualities. Though the term cult today may have negative connotation but all the major religions of the world such as Islam, Judaism and Christianity, denominations like Mormons began as cults. Generally cult are located in urban areas and draw huge population for its membership. Cults are transitory in nature therefore may dissolve upon the death or disrepute of their founder.

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#### **4.5 RELIGIOSITY:**

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Religiosity may be explained as the significance of religion in an individual's life. How religious people are? There is no clear answer to this question because people may claim themselves to be more religious than actually they are. People in India may claim to be more religious than anywhere else. Religiosity may vary on the basis of denominations example members of sect are more religious than any mainstream religious groups. Age wise older generation people are more religious than the younger, similarly gender wise we may observe women to be more religious than men.

Religiosity influence peoples life positively. Researchers have found that there is low rate of delinquency among young people with strong religious belief and low divorce rate among adults who follow religion. Religiosity bind children, parents and local communities together that is beneficial for young individuals.

#### **Check your progress:**

1. What is religiosity?

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2. Explain characteristics of religion.

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#### **4.6 SECULARIZATION:**

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All social institutions such as family, economy and politics have changed over a period of time so does religious belief and practices.

Secularization means declining influence of belief in supernatural and the sacred in everyday life of people. Religious organization are focusing less on other worldly subjects such as life after death and are dealing with more worldly issues such as hunger and poverty, problems of homeless. Secularization also refers to some of functions taken over by other organizations such as charity one of the function of Church is now taken over by NGOs and government.

In today's modern scientific and technologically advanced world people experience transitions in their life such as birth and death in the presence of a physicians than a religious head or guru. This reveals that significance of religion in our day to day life has decreased. Does this means religion will disappear someday soon? Sociologist say 'no'. Because large number of people in the world still believe in god and claim to pray and follow rituals. In fact religious affiliation is now much higher than earlier. Therefore secularization does not mean end of religion. It means that some aspect of religiosity has decreased while other has increased.

People are in double mind about the impact of secularization. The conservative believe that weakening of religion means decline in moral values, the progressive believe that it is liberation from the beliefs of the past and people will be free to choose their beliefs. Secularization also help the society to do away

with age old evil practices such as sati, child marriage, gender discrimination etc.

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#### **4.7 RELIGION AND FUNDAMENTALISM:**

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Religious fundamentalism is on rise globally. It is not limited to any one particular religion. Fundamentalist tendencies can be found in all worlds' major and minor religion whether it is Christianity, Islam, Hinduism or some ethno-religious movement such as Shamanism of Nepal, Seicho-No-Le of Japan.

Fundamentalism refers to a conservative religious doctrine that attempt to replace intellectualism and worldly accommodation by traditional and other worldly religious beliefs and practices. Religious fundamentalist view that growing influence of science is weakening the traditional family norms and therefore they defend the traditional values. The five distinctive religious fundamentalisms are as follows.

**1. Literal interpretation of religious texts:**

To counter the excessive intellectualism amongst the liberal religious groups the fundamentalists stress on literal interpretation of sacred text.

**2. Rejects religious pluralism:**

The fundamentalist reject tolerance and relativism as they believe it would weakens the personal faith. They think that their belief system is true and others belief is unreal.

**3. Follow personal experience of God's presence:**

Fundamentalist believe in revival of old belief and practices. For example for a fundamentalist Christian being born again and have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ should be evident in his day to day life.

**4. Opposes secular humanism:**

Secular humanism refers to seeking guidance from scientific community rather than god in matters related to how to lead one's life.

**5. Endorse conservative political goals:**

To oppose the liberal thoughts some fundamentalist enter politics example opposing homosexuality, abortion and feminism.

**Check your progress:**

1. Write a note on secularization.

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**4.8 FAMILY**

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**Introduction:**

Family is the basic unit of society. It is a universal social institution that performs various functions for the benefits of its members and smooth functioning of the society along with other social institutions such as school. Family relations are also called as kinship relations that are based on blood, marriage or adoption. Which relations can be termed as kin differs throughout history and from culture to culture.

Family orientation means people are born into a family consisting of parents and siblings and the role the family in socialization. As people grow and attain adulthood they form the family of procreation to have their own children or through adoption. Families are formed round marriage. Though in many societies marriage is considered as sacred but marriage is a legally sanctioned relationship involving sexual activity, childbearing and rearing and economic cooperation. However, nowadays association between family and children is declining. There is opposition to traditional definition of family through some quarters because it is believed that it endorses a particular standard of moral conduct. Organization today are increasingly recognising family of affinity i.e. people with or without blood or legal ties, who have a sense of belongingness and who desire themselves to be called as a family. For Scholars such as Winter (2000), Fukuyama (1995) and Bourdieu (1986) family is a tool for creation, development and transfer of social capital.

**Variations in Family:** In spite of similarity there are considerable variation in forms of family across the societies. In western society nuclear family is very common while in other society we may come across extended family also such as India.

- **Extended family**

Extended family is also called as consanguine family. It is a form of family that consists of parents, children and other kin.

- **Nuclear family**

Nuclear family is called as conjugal family. It consist of one or both parents and the children,

**Patterns of family:**

**a. Marriage**

There are various forms of marriage depending upon the cultural norms.

- **Endogamy**

It is marriage between people belonging to same social class. It limits marriage prospects to others belonging to same age, religion or social class.

- **Exogamy**

It means marriage between people belonging to different social categories example India, people marry within same caste but from different village.

- **Monogamy**

In nations with high income, the law prescribe monogamy as a form of marriage. Monogamy is a form of marriage that unites two people.

- **Polygamy**

Polygamy means marriage that bring together the union of three or more people. The low income countries such as Africa and southern Asia allow polygamy. Polygamy involves two types of marriages. The most common one is polygyny. Polygyny composed of one man and two or more women such as in Islamic countries of Middle Eastern and African countries. Despite this the most common form of marriage in these countries is monogamy. Another form of polygyny is polyandry. It is a form of marriage where a women take two or more husbands.

However, most of the societies of the world culturally prefer monogamy because managing multiple spouses is expensive, financially not possible and the number of females to males is almost same.

**b. Residents**

The most common form of residents is patrilocality where the couple after their marriage stay with the men's parents or near his relatives. In some societies matrilocality was also followed where the newly wedded couples would stay with the women's mother or near her family. The modern industrial society gave a new pattern of resident's i.e. neolocality to the newly wedded couples where they lived independently apart from both sets of parents.

**c. Descents**

Descent means the system by which the members of society trace their kinship over generations. There are three types of Descent: Patrilineal, matrilineal and bilateral. In modern industrial society people recognise their decent bilaterally that is through their mothers as well as fathers sides relatives.

**d. Authority**

The world is patriarchal in nature, there is no pure form of matriarchal society. Although wives and mothers do enjoy some amount of power in all the societies. In modern industrial society egalitarian families are evolving due to women's participation in labour markets but still boys are preferred over girls.

**Check your progress:**

1. Describe patterns of family.

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## **4.9 SOCIOLOGICAL APPROACH TO UNDERSTAND FAMILY:**

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For the functionalist the family performs many significant functions as a social unit. It rears children, gives them emotional, social, economic support and regulate their conduct particularly related to sex and sexual reproduction. It gives its members social identity. Any transition in the structure of family will have consequences on the stability of the society.

However the conflict theorist argue that family leads to social inequality. It reinforces economic inequality and patriarchal values. It leads to conflict including violence and cruelty against its own members.

The symbolic interactionist argue that the interaction of family members and intimate relationship between the couples involves shared understanding of their situations. The spouses have different style of communication. The social class to which the couple belongs also had bearing on the expectations that they have from each other in their marriage.

Another micro level approach Social Exchange analysis see courtship and marriage as a type of negotiation. While dating the couples try to weigh the advantage and disadvantage of getting married to the person. The couple always keep in mind what they will have to offer in return. According to this approach in Patriarchal structures men bring power and wealth in the marriage market while women represent beauty. But as women are entering labour market the terms and conditions for exchange is converging for men and women.

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#### 4.10 STAGES OF FAMILY LIFE:

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Family is a dynamic institution that experience changes throughout its life course. The family life begins with courtship of the young couple and settling down, addition of biological or adopted children, parenting of the adolescents, empty nest, and retirement and so on. For Framo (1994) each of the developmental stage of family life cycle is a shock to the system as the roles are redistributed, values repositioned, status modified, loss and mourning of the near and dear ones to be dealt with and to meet the needs through new avenues. Most of the family undergoes through the following stages of family life cycle:

- **Courtship:** In traditional societies parents arrange marriage for their children. In such societies romantic love has nothing to do with marriage as these societies are homogeneous and the young are socialized well to be good partner. Thus parents were least concerned about the compatibility of the couples. They viewed that

the couples would be culturally compatible. However, Industrialization weakened the extended family relationship and corroded traditional practices and value system. In most of the low income group countries parents do not attach importance to courtship it is left up to the young.

The young preferred to select partners on their own and started delaying marriage till they attained financial security. Now a days there are in fact dating sites where young attempt to sharpen their courtship skills and have sexual experimentation.

- **Romantic Love:** Though romantic love appears to be at the centre of successful marriage but in reality in many societies it has little to do with marriage. For sociologist society plays cupid so that the young leave the nest and start their own family. It is society that arranges marriage i.e. homogamy, mostly people fall in love with those who belong to their social class, religion, race and age group. But romance alone cannot be the base of the marriage.

- **Settling down:**

1. Most of the culture paint rosy picture of marriage that disappoints the couples particularly the women for whom marriage is the only source of happiness.

2. Sexuality may be another source of disappointment, people may feel that their honeymoon period would continue for ever but that does not happen. Though happy married life and sex go together but it is not the only factor in marital bliss.

3. Sex outside marriage strongly disapproved in all the culture. Infidelity though not rare and both man and woman cheat on their partners. In the world of ICT, the online affairs are threat to marriage.

4. Raising Children: Parenting is a life time job. In preindustrial society big family was the norm because it supplied labour force. Therefore women duty was to bear and rear children. In industrial society children were no more an asset in fact they became a liability. As a result the size of family also became small. In industrially advanced nations there is trend of small family and



some of the couples either delay birth or prefer not to have children at all. While even today in most of the agricultural based economy and poor countries we may come across big families.

5. Conflict: In families where both parents are working it becomes extremely difficult for them to balance between work and family responsibility. So almost in all the nations of the world we have maternity leave for women to take care of their health and wellbeing of the child and in some countries of the world even father is given paternity leave to spend some valuable time with their new born and be with their wife for example in Sweden new parents are entitled to sixteen months leave with eighty percent of their normal pay. However in case of India to fulfil their family responsibility women are entitled to twenty six weeks of paid maternity leave but fathers, particularly working in private sector establishment are not entitled for paid paternity leave.

**Check your progress:**

1. Explain stages in family life.

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#### **4.11 TRANSFORMATION AND TROUBLES IN FAMILY LIFE:**

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**Divorce:** Once taboo, divorce is now common in all cultures and society. Social change along with repositioning of social values and rise of participation of women in production of goods and services leads to structural and functional changes in the family as a social institution. Women no more stay in unhappy, violent marriages. Relaxing divorce law has helped them to obtain divorce easily. Due to increase in divorce rate there is increase in the rate of remarriage as well. It has led to emergence of new type of family

i.e. blended family involving parents and children from present and past marriages.

#### **Causes of divorce:**

- **Individualism:** Due to rise in individualism, the family of today spend less time together. Family members have become more individualistic and give priority to their interest and happiness and think more about making money than considering the wellbeing of their children or other family members.
- **Loss of romance:** The cultural bases of marriage is romantic love, therefore troubles start shooting up in marriages when sexual passion dwindles.
- **Independent women:** Due to increase in women participation paid jobs their dependence on husband for financial security is weakened as a result women do not hesitate to seek divorce in case of unhappy marriages.
- **Stressful marriage:** Both the partners work outside their homes and jobs drain away their energy and leave them with less time to spend with the family. In such situation managing family responsibility as parents becomes extremely challenging, therefore it is observed that divorce takes place in the initial years of marriage as the couples are not able to balance work and family life and are stressed.
- **Social acceptance of divorce:** Divorce no more is considered as stigma. In fact people believe that it is better to take divorce than stay in abusive and unhappy marriage.
- **Easy to get divorce:** In the past getting divorce involved long legal process but now most states easily allow divorce if the partners decide that their marriage has failed.

#### **Divorce and Remarriage:**

There is higher probability that young couples with brief courtship period, having weak financial status and who also are emotionally immature resort to divorce. If couples have jumped into marriage due to unexpected pregnancy or if either partner or both of them have issue of substance abuse, and also people who have

divorced parents in all of these cases, there are higher chances of divorce.

Beside the above factors even the people with sound economic background having successful professional life may take divorce due to stress of balancing marriage and career. People who are not religious divorce more willingly than those who are religious.

Children are badly affected by divorce of their parents. Due to divorce of their parents they are uprooted from their familial environment and feel broken due to bitter fight between parents. They may even held themselves responsible for divorce of their parents.

Due to negative effect of divorce there are couple who are taking steps towards conscious uncoupling so that they can prevent their family from being badly affected by divorce. Most of the time the people who take divorce remarry. They attempt to create blended family that may continue to function in a healthy manner but outside the traditional form of marriage. Blended families consists of biological parents, stepparents, brothers, sisters, half brothers and sisters, step brothers and sisters who may live elsewhere. People in blended family face challenge of defining relationships and are confused over who is part of their nuclear family.

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## 4.12 VIOLENCE IN FAMILY

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Family ideally should be a place where an individual feel cared, loved and secured. However in reality not all individual experience pleasure and support from their family. In many homes we may come across people suffering emotional, physical, economic and sexual abuse by one of their family members.

### **Violence against women and children:**

Violence against women is present all the societies cutting across social, religious, cultural, economic and regional boundaries. It occurs through their life cycle right from birth till their death. The home is considered as a place where one feels cared for, loved and secured but for women it is a place that imperils and breeds various forms of cruelty against women by their husbands and other family members.

Children are also victims of domestic violence. It has devastating effects on children. It affects them emotionally and physically.

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#### 4.13 ALTERNATIVE TYPES OF FAMILY:

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Although most families of the world still consist of married couples who at some point of time may raise children together but our society is changing today we find great diversity in family types.

- **Single parent:** Single parent household is due to divorce or death of one of the spouse or an unmarried women or men to have children. Scholars believe that children raised in single parent home are at disadvantage because presence of both mother and father is essential for social development of children
- **Living in relationship / cohabiting:** It is sharing of household by unmarried couples. It is very common in countries like Sweden and other Scandinavian countries, in India too we come across such couples. It appeals to those people who believe in gender equality and who are more open and independent minded. Not all the living in relationship culminate in to marriage. However, the critic point out that this forms of relationship discourage marriage and leads to low commitment.
- **Same sex couples:** Denmark was the first country to lift ban on same sex marriage. This gave some social legitimacy to such relationship and allowed them to gain some advantage in case of inheritance, taxation and joint ownership of the property. Most gay couples adopt children or take help of new reproductive technology.
- **Singlehood:** In recent time people deliberately choose to stay alone. A trend which is seen in both men and women. For economically independent women, now a day's, husband is a matter of choice and not compulsion for financial security.

**Check your progress:**

1. Explain alternative types of family.

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#### **4.14 NEW REPRODUCTIVE TECHNOLOGY AND THE FAMILY:**

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Advancement in medical sciences are influencing family. It is assisting the couples who cannot have children normally. It also help to decrease the number of birth defects. But it also raised some ethical questions? In case of women who carries the embryo made from the egg and sperm of some other women than who is the mother? The one who is carrying the embryo or the one with whose egg the embryo was formed? Regarding frozen eggs if the couple take divorce that who will use that frozen eggs? Such questions speak volume about the consequences of the use of new reproductive technology.

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#### **4.15 FUTURE TRENDS:**

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Family life across the world would continue to change and would be a cause of controversy and debates. The advocate of traditional family system will always strongly oppose the one who would voice greater personal choice. However the future trends of family mostly would be:

- Increase in divorce rate
- Diverse family life: Single parent family, cohabiting couples, same sex family and so on. So in future family forms would be based on more personal choices
- In future too men will have a limited role in rearing of their child. Although small percent of them would be stay at home dad or hands-on-dad.

- Economic changes would continue to influence the family life.
- New form of reproductive technology would continue to change the experience of traditional parenthood.

Despite the controversy and debates that surrounds family it will continue as a social institutions and people will feel happy and blessed as parents and partners.

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#### **4.16 SUMMARY:**

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Religion as a social institution play a significant role in the life of people. It is cultural universal found almost in all the society. There are various forms of religious organization such as church, sect and cult. The major world religions are Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and Judaism. Sociological understanding of religion gives valuable insight in to the belief and practices of people and functions of religion.

Family is one of the smallest and basic unit of society. Family as a social institution is undergoing change across the globe in terms of patterns, size and functions. New types of families are emerging. Marriage rate is falling, divorce rate is going up, and same sex marriage is legalised in some countries. In spite changes taking place family will continue to remain one of the most important social institution.

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#### **4.17 QUESTIONS:**

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1. Evaluate the significance of religion as a social institution and explain its elements.
2. Briefly discuss church, cult and sect.
3. Examine sociological perspective on religion.
4. What is family? Discuss its patterns.
5. Discuss transformation and troubles in family life in present time.
6. Write short notes on:
  - a. New reproductive health and family
  - b. Religion and fundamentalism
  - c. Stages of family life
  - d. Religiosity

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# Unit - 5

## CULTURE

### Unit Structure

- 5.0 Objectives
- 5.1 Introduction
- 5.2 Aspects of Culture
- 5.3 Definition of Culture
- 5.4 Culture and Society
- 5.5 Characteristics of Culture
- 5.6 Functions of Culture
- 5.7 Elements of Culture
- 5.8 Development of Culture
- 5.9 Conclusion
- 5.10 Summary
- 5.11 Questions
- 5.12 References

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### 5.0 OBJECTIVES:

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- To understand the definition and meaning of culture.
- To study the various aspects of culture and understand its transmission.
- To examine how culture helps to guide and organize our social lives.

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### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

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Culture is unique to man. It is the most important trait that distinguishes humans from animals. Culture does not exist at the sub-human level. Culture is a very broad term that includes all aspects of our lives. Culture is the totality of learned and socially



transmitted behavior. It includes the customs, traditions, ideas and values and artifacts of groups of people. Culture is essential for individuals because it is fundamental for the survival of societies. Culture has been described as the '*common denominator that makes the actions of individuals intelligible to the group*' (Haviland, 1993). It may be said that human behavior is determined by our biological and genetic makeup (nature) rather than our social environment (nurture).

Humans do not have instincts. Sociologists agree that culture and social learning, not nature, account for virtually all of our behavior patterns. Since humans cannot rely on instincts in order to survive, culture is a "tool kit" for survival. Swidler (1986) states that culture is a "tool kit of symbols, stories, rituals, and world views, which people may use in varying configurations to solve different kinds of problems". The tools we use will depend on our personality and the unique situations we face.

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## 5.2 ASPECTS OF CULTURE

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There are two aspects of culture; *material culture* and *non-material culture*.

- **Material culture** refers to objects, things, resources and spaces that people use to define their culture. They are tangible and have concrete existence. For example, tools, clothes, houses, materials used to produce anything, etc. The physical aspects of culture, i.e., material culture defines and shapes the behavior and perceptions of its members. Technology is an important part of our lives. While the urban children would be busy playing on their phones, the tribal children would be learning to make weapons and hunt.
- **Non-material** culture refers to ideas and perceptions that people have about their culture. These include beliefs, practices, language, norms, values, mores, organizations and institutions. These are intangible and are abstract notions. For example, the cultural concept of religion consists of set of ideas and beliefs about God, worship, ethics and morals. A musical instrument such as a flute could be an example of material culture, but the music that it generates is a part of non-material

culture. Similarly, TajMahal is our material cultural heritage, but it symbolizes love and devotion, which are non-material cultural traits.

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### 5.3 DEFINITION OF CULTURE

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**Horton and Hunt** define culture as *‘everything which is socially shared and learned by the members of a society’*.

**Tylor** defined culture as *“that complex whole including beliefs, art, religion, values, norms, ideas, law, language, practices, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society”*.

**Robert Bierstedt** states that *“culture is the complex whole that consists of all the ways we think and do and everything we have as members of society”*.

#### Check Your Progress

1. Define Culture. Mention its two aspects by giving examples of each.

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### 5.4 CULTURE AND SOCIETY

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Society and culture are distinct yet interrelated concepts. A society is the largest form of human group. It occupies the same geographic territory and is subject to the same political authority and dominant cultural expectations. It consists of people who share a common heritage and culture. Whereas a society is composed of people, a culture is composed of ideas, behavior and material possessions. Therefore, it would be apt to state that society and culture are interdependent; neither could exist without the other. Just as culture is essential for individuals, it is also fundamental for the survival of societies. Gillin and Gillin have compared culture to the cement that binds individuals together into a society.

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## 5.5 CHARACTERISTICS OF CULTURE

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**Every culture has the following characteristics:**

➤ **Culture is learnt:**

Culture is not inherited biologically, but learnt socially by man. One is not born with culture and there are no cultural instincts as such. It is for this reason that culture is referred to as 'learned ways of behavior by man as a member of society'.

Unlearned behavior, such as blinking of eyes, drooling or any reflex actions are purely biological and not cultural. Greeting each other, touching feet of the family elders, on the other hand, are cultural.

Similarly, wearing particular kinds of clothes, cooking food, drinking from a glass, or eating food with forks, hands or chopsticks, following religious practices, etc., are all ways of behavior learnt by man culturally.

➤ **Culture is social:**

Culture is necessarily a product of society. It originates and develops through social interactions. It is shared by members of society. It is not an individual phenomenon and therefore does not exist in isolation.

Culture can only be passed on through with association with other human beings. The process of becoming 'human' or acquiring human qualities is possible only in a human environment. Deprivation of human company or association with other individuals or human contact is equivalent to deprivation of human qualities.

➤ **Culture is shared:**

Culture is not possessed by any individual. In a sociological sense, it is something that is shared. Our customs, traditions, beliefs, practices and value systems are shared by people of a group or society.

The works of literature or artifacts as well as our values or mores are all shared by a large number of people who constitute the society. Robert Bierstadt states that 'Culture is something

adopted, used, believed, practiced, or possessed by more than one person. It depends upon group life for its existence,

➤ **Culture is transitive:**

Culture is composed of all the modes of thought, behavior and production that are handed down from one generation to the next. This is done through the means of communicative interaction, such as language, gestures, writing, building and other communication among humans. Language is the most important medium through which parents pass on culture traits to their children. This means that culture is not genetic or heredity and needs to be consciously transmitted to the next generation. Culture may be transmitted through the processes of imitation and instruction.

➤ **Culture is continuous and cumulative:**

Culture is a continuous phenomenon. In its historical growth it tends to become cumulative. Culture reflects our past and the presents and makes provision for the future achievement of mankind. Thus it can be referred to as a 'growing whole', which is continuous and accumulates over a period of time. "Culture may thus be conceived of as a kind of stream flowing down through the centuries from one generation to another"

Sociologists such as Linton, equated culture to the 'social heritage' of man. Bierstadt calls culture as 'the memory of the human race'. The culture that we see today is the result of continuous accumulation of traits of several decades or even centuries.

➤ **Culture is integrated:**

Culture has the tendency to be consistent. Several parts of culture are interrelated, interdependent and interconnected. For instance, a society's value systems and its religion, economics, customs and beliefs are all closely related to each other.

➤ **Culture is dynamic and adaptive:**

No culture is static. Culture is subject to slow and constant changes. Change and growth are inherent in culture. Thus culture is dynamic.

Culture is also adaptive as it responds to the changing conditions within the society. It also intervenes in the natural environment and helps man in his process of adjustment. Culture provides us tools and techniques of survival and therefore, helps in adaptation.

➤ **Culture is gratifying:**

Culture prescribes means and also provides opportunities to satisfy our needs. These needs may be biological or social in nature. Our basic needs of food, shelter and clothing as well as the need for security, status and money, are all fulfilled as per the norms prescribed by culture.

➤ **Culture varies from society to society:**

Every society has a unique culture of its own. Cultures are not uniform as they differ from society to society. No culture is constant or static.

➤ **Culture is superorganic and ideational:**

Classical sociologist Herbert Spencer stated that culture is neither organic nor inorganic, but is 'superorganic'. It means that every physical object and physiological act has deep social meaning. The social meaning may be independent of the physiological and physical properties and characteristics of that object.

For eg. The flag of a country is not just a coloured piece of cloth, but is a symbol of a nation; its honour, pride and respect. Similarly a chair may have different meanings depending on its location.

Every society considers its culture as an ideal. It is regarded as an end in itself. It is intrinsically valuable. Thus, people within a culture will consider it as the best culture and also use it as a yardstick to measure the worthiness of other cultures.

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## **5.6 FUNCTIONS OF CULTURE**

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Culture is a universal human phenomenon. Man is a social animal as well as a cultural being. Man's social life has been

possible because of culture. It is important to know whether culture corresponds to any universal human needs. This brings us to the significant functions of culture. Culture has certain functions for both individual and society.

➤ **Culture is a treasury of knowledge:**

Culture is a rich repository of knowledge which is required for the physical, social and intellectual existence of man. Unlike animals who rely on instincts, man displays intellect, creativity and learning capacity which enables him to adapt to the environment. Culture has made such an adaptation and modification possible and easier by providing man the necessary skills and knowledge. Culture preserves this knowledge and helps transmit it from generation to generation through its basic element, viz., language. Language is not only the vehicle of transmission of knowledge but also preservation, accumulation and diffusion. Such a process is seen lacking among animals, because culture does not exist at sub-human level.

➤ **Culture defines situations:**

Culture defines the situation for us. It not only defines but also conditions and determines what we eat and drink, what kind of clothes we wear, what verbal or non-verbal language we speak, which faith we follow, etc. It reveals the 'socially correct' response to a situation. Each culture has many subtle cues which define each situation. A person who moves from one society to another may take a lifetime to understand the cues.

➤ **Culture defines attitudes, values and goals:**

Attitude refers to the tendency or orientation of the mind to think and behave in a particular way. Values are collective conceptions of what is considered good, desirable and proper – or bad, undesirable and improper in a culture. While goals refer to the attainments which are values define as worthy. Our culture shapes and conditions our attitude towards various societal issues such as, marriage, contraception, religion, economics, science, etc. Our values relating to concept of liberty, private property, choice of partner in marriage are all influenced by our culture. All our goals; whether they are familial, economic, religious in nature are determined by our culture. For instance, traditional societies may

value cooperation, but modern societies thrive on competition and conflict.

➤ **Culture defines myths, legends and the supernatural:**

Myths and legends are integral part of every culture. These may be passed on from one generation to another through oral tradition. Whether they are true or not, they still inspire, reinforce effort, guide and bring comfort in bereavement. Behaviour of an individual within a group is influenced by myths, legends and supernatural beliefs they hold. Thus they prove to be powerful forces in a group's behavior.

➤ **Culture provides patterns of behavior:**

Culture provides a map of behavior patterns for an individual in a society. Culture assigns goals and provides means of achieving them. Culture provides a ready reckoner of set patterns which the individual needs only to learn and follow. These rules are used to guide food habits, beliefs, practices, customs relating to marriage, etc.

Individuals use culture to fulfill their purpose in society, however, the same culture imposes limits on humans and their activities. There is a need for order and stability in the society, and culture provides direction to the behavior of individuals. It prescribes certain acts and provides rewards for following socially acceptable path; while on the other hand, it proscribes certain acts as these are not desirable for the society. Thus, it helps in controlling chaos and disorder which is inherent in any society.

➤ **Culture moulds human personality:**

Culture plays a very important role in the development of human personality. A human child can develop human qualities only in the presence of cultural environment. Culture provides man with the 'design of living' and makes him ready for group life. Culture also provides man opportunities for the development of personality and also decides limits on its growth. Well known anthropologist, Ruth Benedict analyses culture in three primitive societies in her famous work 'Patterns of Culture', and points out that every culture will produce its special type or types of personality. Another American anthropologist, Margaret Mead, in her well known work on "Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive

Societies”, has states that “culture shapes the character and behavior of individuals living in it.

It is a fact that an individual is molded by the culture of the group in which he is born. Culture provides for ‘universals’ as well as for ‘alternatives’. There is not only conformity in cultural learning but also variations. Still no individual is completely determined by culture. Other agencies such as, school, mass media, peer group, neighborhood, etc., expose the individual to a variety of influences outside of culture. Numerous biological and social factors help bring out the uniqueness of an individual within the society.

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## 5.7 ELEMENTS OF CULTURE

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Societies all over the world have different cultures. However they all have five common elements such as: symbols, language, values and beliefs, norms and material culture and technology. These elements look different across cultures, and many change with time as a society evolves.

### ➤ Symbols

A symbol is anything that meaningfully represents something else. No culture can exist without symbols because there would be no shared meanings among people. Symbols help us to express abstract concepts with visible objects. People who share a culture often attach a specific meaning to an object, gesture, sound or image. In other words, people share the same meaning for a particular object. For example, a cross is a religious symbol to Christians. It is not simply two pieces of wood attached to each other, nor is it just an old object of torture and execution. To Christians, it represents the basis of their entire religion, and they have great respect for the symbol. Similarly, for a Hindu, the cow is not just an animal (object), but represents a celestial being, and is therefore to be revered.

Speech is an important part of language system which consists of vocal and other kinds of gestures, such as bowing shaking hands, saluting, kissing, blushing, etc. These gestures too have symbolic meanings which are mostly cultural. Similarly, places, colours, objects, clothes, etc., all have hidden symbolic



meanings. Emoticons are combinations of keyboard characters which are used by many to represent their feelings online through texting.

Many material products or things are primarily symbol vehicles, for example, flags, pictures and statues, etc. A building, a tomb, a stone or physical place, etc., signifies a symbolic form, the meaning of which is cultural.

### ➤ **Language**

Language is the foundation of every culture. Language tells us a great deal about a culture. In many ways the priorities of a culture are reflected in its language. Language is an abstract system of words and symbols used to communicate with each other. This includes verbal and non-verbal language which is unique to certain groups of people. Language includes speech, written characters, numerals, symbols and gestures of nonverbal communication.

In contrast to some other elements of culture, language permeates all aspects of society. Certain cultural skills such as cooking or carpentry can be learned without the use of language, but through observation and imitation. However, it is impossible to transmit complex religious or legal knowledge by merely watching to see how they are performed. Therefore, societies depend upon language for the use and transmission of most part of a culture.

Cultural languages differ beyond vocabulary. For eg., eye contact represents different meanings in different cultures. In America, eye contact suggests that you are paying attention and are interested in what the other person is saying. In Asian cultures, eye contact may be considered rude and also a challenge of authority.

### ➤ **Norms and Values**

Values are collective ideas about what is right or wrong, good or bad, and desirable or undesirable in a particular culture (Williams, 1970). Values may be specific, such as honouring elders within the family, or they may be more general, such as health, love, and democracy. Values influence people's behavior and also provide guidelines for evaluating the actions of others. Values typically exist in pairs of positive and negative values, such as

being good or bad, brave or coward, hardworking or lazy. We as members of a society use values to justify our behavior. Therefore, we tend to defend them staunchly. For example, if a culture places high value on the institution of marriage, then it may have norms (and strict sanctions) which prohibit the act of adultery or even premarital sex.

Values provide ideals or beliefs about behavior but do not clearly state how we should behave. Norms, on the other hand, do have specific behavioural expectations. Two types of normative systems operate within the society. **Prescriptive norms** state what behavior is appropriate or acceptable, in other words, 'what we should do'. A person with a decent source of income is required to pay income tax. Norms based on customs require us to help the elderly cross the street or lift a load. By contrast, **proscriptive norms** state what behavior is inappropriate or unacceptable to the society, in other words, 'what we should not do'. Restriction on physical intimacy before marriage is a norm in many traditional societies. Prescriptive and proscriptive norms operate at all levels of society. These influence our day to day actions as well as provide the foundation for the formulation of laws.

There appears to be a direct relationship between the values, norms and sanctions of a culture. In a sociological sense, punishments and rewards for adhering to or violating norms are known as sanctions. Cultural norms vary depending on the degree of sanction associated with them. Rewards can range from a sweet smile to the Nobel Prize; whereas punishments can vary from a raised eyebrow to a more stringent death penalty.

### Check Your Progress

1. Name and explain five common elements of culture.

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2. Can you differentiate between Prescriptive and Proscriptive norms?

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## 5.8 DEVELOPMENT OF CULTURE

There is no way to know the exact time when human culture began. Any attempt to do so would be an arbitrary one. One way to represent growth of culture over time is to select an arbitrary date and to divide man's experience from that point into 'life-times'. Alvin Toffler, in his famous book 'Future Shock' has made an attempt to give some direction to this problem. He divided last 50,000 years of experience into 62 years 'life-times', which means currently man can be placed in his 800<sup>th</sup> life-time.

As per this chronological structure, 650 life-times were spent in caves. Written language in the form of scripts has existed only for the last 70 life-times and the printed work has been widely available only for the last 6 life-times. The electric motor has existed only for 2 life-times. Television, airplanes, automobiles, and nuclear weapons all developed within the 800<sup>th</sup> lifetime and 90% of all the scientists who have ever existed are alive during this lifetime, ie., from 17<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> century. All of modern technology has developed in less than 1/25000<sup>th</sup> of the total time it has taken for human culture to reach its present level of development". (Leslie, Lorntanand Gorman).

The above explanation shows that only recently has culture begun to grow and change rapidly. Culture grows in three ways and results in socio-cultural change: Discovery, Invention, and Cultural Diffusion.

### ➤ **Discovery**

Discovery is one of the sources of socio-cultural change. Horton and Hunt define discovery as '*a shared human perception of an aspect of reality which already exists*'. In other words, discovery

involves making known or sharing the existence of an aspect of reality. The gravitational force of the earth, circulation of blood, principle of concentration of energy, etc., were already there before their discovery. A new discovery becomes an addition to society's culture only when it is shared within the society. It becomes a contributing factor to social change only when it is put to use. For eg., the power of steam was studied by the ancient Greeks long back. In fact, a steam engine was built as a toy in Alexandria around 100 AD. But the principle was not put to use for nearly 1700 years after its discovery. The finding of the DNA molecule and the identification of a new moon of Saturn are both acts of discovery. A distinguishing feature in the process of discovery is the sharing of newfound knowledge with others. By contrast, invention results when existing cultural items are combined into a form that did not exist before. The bow and arrow, the automobile, and the television are all examples of inventions. In the early stages of human history, cultural change was slow and that happened only through discovery. As the number of discoveries in a culture increased, inventions became possible.

➤ **Invention:**

The process of introducing an idea or object that is new to a culture is known as innovation. There are two forms of innovation: discovery and invention. According to Horton and Hunt, invention refers to "a new combination of or a new use of existing knowledge". While Robertson defines invention as "*the combination or new use of existing knowledge to produce something that did not exist before*".

Inventions can occur at two levels: **Material inventions** such as bow and arrow, aircrafts, machines, computers, etc. and **non-material inventions** may include constitutional government, music, drama, literature, religion, etc. Today's invention is always based on past discoveries and previous knowledge. The nature and rate of inventions in a society will always depend on the past repository of knowledge available in that society. By that logic, Ralph Linton observed that, "If Einstein had been born into a primitive tribe which had limited counting ability, and could count only upto their fingers and toes, lifetime contribution to mathematics would not have been possible.

It can be stated that “the more inventions a culture possesses, the more rapidly further inventions can be created”. Existing cultural knowledge within a society provides a solid foundation for new inventions. Ogburn has listed 150 inventions that were made almost simultaneously by different scientists in the same or similar cultures. This fact explains as to why modernization process spread rapidly in those societies which made several inventions that those societies which merely adopted the inventions of others.

➤ **Diffusion:**

It is not necessary for societies to always discover or invent its culture; it may also adopt ideas, technology, and customs from other cultures. Sociologists use the term diffusion to refer to *the process by which a cultural item – both material artifacts and ideas - is spread from group to group or society to society*. There are number of ways through which diffusion occurs; some of which are, exploration, military conquest, missionary work, the influence of the mass media and tourism.

Diffusion and social change are interrelated. George Murdock has estimated that about 90% of the contents of every culture have been acquired from other societies. Kroeber, a well-known anthropologist considers diffusion as the main source of social and cultural change. In the early stages of human history, culture changed rather slowly, through discovery. As a number of discoveries in a culture increased, inventions became possible. The more inventions there were the more rapidly further inventions could be created. At the same time more and more diverse cultures came into contact with one another, which is why they could each take advantage of the other's innovations. Thus, when we read a newspaper, we look at characters invented by the ancient Semites, printed by a process invented in Germany, on a material invented in China (Linton, 1936).

There is no space barrier for the diffusion process, as diffusion may take place over extremely long distances. Kroeber observed that the use of smoking tobacco began when Indian tribes in the Caribbean invented the habit of smoking the tobacco plant, where it grew wild. Hundreds of years later, tobacco was acquired

and cultivated by one neighbouring tribe after another. Through diffusion, this practice travelled through Central America and across the North American continent.

While diffusion is common, the process of diffusion of cultural traits does not occur automatically. Sometimes groups and societies resist ideas which seem too foreign as well as those ideas which are perceived to threaten their beliefs and practices. Each culture is selective about what it absorbs from another culture. Europe accepted silk, the magnetic compass, chess, and gunpowder from the Chinese. At the same time it rejected the teachings of Confucius as an ideology. Similarly Indians adopted the English language as a form of formal communication, but have rejected the food habits of the westerners.

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## 5.9 CONCLUSION

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Culture is a way of life shared by members of a society. Several species display limited capacity for culture, but only human beings rely on culture for survival. Culture consists of symbol, language, values and norms to guide human behavior. Cultural values and beliefs not only affect how we perceive our surroundings, they also form the core of our personalities

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## 5.10 SUMMARY

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Culture is unique to man. It is the most important trait that distinguishes humans from animals. Several related concepts help us understand the culture better.

Culture is defined as 'everything which is socially shared and learned by the members of a society'.

**Culture has the following characteristic:** Culture is learned, is social, is integrated, dynamic and adaptive. Culture is superorganic and ideational.

**Functions of culture** are: Culture is treasury of knowledge, culture defines situations, attitudes, values and goals. Culture provides patterns of behavior, and moulds personality.

**Culture consists of material and non-material aspects.** Material aspects consists of objects, artifacts and technology. Non-material aspects consists of language, symbols, values and norms.

**Development of culture:** Culture grows in three ways and results in socio-cultural change: Discovery, Invention, and Cultural Diffusion.

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### 5.11 QUESTIONS

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1. Define Culture. Discuss the important characteristics of culture
2. Evaluate significant elements of culture.
3. Discuss the varied functions of culture.
4. Discuss the relation between culture and society. Show how culture developed through the ages.

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# Unit - 6

## COMPONENTS OF CULTURE

### Unit Structure

- 6.0 Objectives
- 6.1 Introduction
- 6.2 Components of Culture
  - 6.2.1 Culture Trait
  - 6.2.2 Culture Complex
  - 6.2.3 Subculture
  - 6.2.4 Counterculture
  - 6.2.5 Culture Universals
  - 6.2.6 Cultural Diversity (Variables)
- 6.3 Ethnocentrism
- 6.4 Cultural Relativism
- 6.5 Is our Culture Changing?
- 6.6 Conclusion
- 6.7 Exercise
- 6.8 Summary
- 6.9 References

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### 6.0 OBJECTIVES

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- To understand the meaning of concepts related to culture
- to understand people's perspective on culture
- To examine how culture helps to guide and organize our social lives.

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### 6.1. INTRODUCTION

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In the last unit, we have studied about the definition of culture, whereas now, we will understand how certain concepts like Cultural Diversity, Ethnocentrism, Cultural Relativism play a major role in developing the minds of people and its effect on society.



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## 6.2 COMPONENTS OF CULTURE

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### 6.2.1 Culture Trait

The smallest unit of culture is called a trait. Hoebel states that “*trait is a irreducible unit of learned behavior pattern or material product thereof.*” Trait of the material culture would typically include things such as a needle, thread, nail, pen, etc. The non-material trait would include a Namaste, salute to the flag, or a smile in communication. Each culture is a combination of thousands of such traits.

### 6.2.2 Culture Complex

*Culture complex is a cluster of related traits.* In other words, when traits come together meaningfully, they form a culture complex. For example, the dandiya dance is an example of culture complex. It has several small traits such as, the specific dhol music, colourful flowing costumes, dance steps and songs, all come together to form a culture complex.

### 6.2.3 Subculture

Subcultures are those groups that have values and norms that are distinct from those held by the majority. *A subculture is a category of people, who share distinguishing attributes, beliefs, values, norms that set them apart from the dominant group.* Culture is not a uniform pattern that creates same influences on those who are exposed to it. A person is exposed to culture that is not general, but to particular culture of the group in which he lives. This is because in large societies which are heterogeneous, there are multiple groups with their own cultures. For example, we as Indians, are part of regional groups, religious groups, caste groups, racial groups, occupational groups, linguistic groups and several other groups. Each of these groups has their own culture. Such culture is known as subculture. These subcultures are a part of a national culture.

Subcultures exercise immense influence on its members. Not all children within the same society will be exposed to the same culture, as there are numerous subcultures. Greater the complexity within a society, larger will be scope for the growth of subcultures. Each subculture will have its own custom, folkways, norms,

practices, rites, rules of behavior, etc. The subcultures exert a deep and long lasting impact on its members.

#### **6.2.4 Counter Culture**

Cultural diversity may also include outright rejection of traditional ideas and behavior patterns. There are some subcultures that actively oppose the larger society. *A counter culture is a group that strongly rejects dominant societal values and norms and seeks alternative lifestyle* (Yinger 1960). Young people are most likely to join to the countercultural groups. The reason for this may be that younger persons generally are less invested in the existing culture. Examples of counterculture are the flower children of the 1960s America, members of non main stream religious sects and cults. Some countercultures also engage in revolutionary political activities. Some youth may reject the cultural standards of their parents, especially with respect to sexual mores.

#### **Transgenders as countercultures**

*Transgender is an umbrella term that is used for persons whose gender identity, gender expression or behavior does not match their gender assigned at birth.* Depending on the religious and cultural orientations transgenders are given names in local language such as, Hijras, Tiritiya Panthi, Napumsaka, Jogtas, etc. The transgender community was considered a counterculture and therefore was excluded from mainstream society.

Transgenders are socially, culturally, economically and politically excluded. This also means that they do not have social, cultural, economic and political rights, something we take for granted. They cannot be a part of the education system as they are often harassed or are victims of bullying and sexual violence. Employability is low amongst transgenders and therefore many resorts to begging, extortion, entertainment or prostitution. Transgenders live on the fringes of society and are still fighting for their right to identity, right to livelihood and entitlement to universal services such as health and security. However, the condition is changing today and steps are being taken to absorb them in the mainstream society.

### Check Your Progress

1. Explain the meaning of Counter culture. Apart from transgenders, what are the other examples counter the well established culture?

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### 6.2.5 Cultural Universals

Humans all over have the same basic needs, such as food, shelter and clothing. Therefore we engage in similar activities that will help in our survival. *Cultural universals are those customs and practices that occur across all societies.* Anthropologist George Murdock (1945) has compiled a list of more than seventy cultural universals. His categories included appearance (such as bodily adornment, ornaments and hairstyles), activities (such as, sports, dancing, games, joking and visiting), social institutions (such as, marriage, family, law, religion, politics), and customary practices (such as cooking, folklore, gift giving, and hospitality). At a general level, all these practices may be present in all cultures; however, their specific forms may vary from one group to another and may also change with time. For example, what may be considered as a joke in one culture may be an insult in another culture.

Cultural Universals serves a particular purpose. In terms of their functions, cultural universals are useful because they help in operating society in a smooth and continuous manner. One of the functions of a society is to provide its members the basic necessities of life as well as security. Children and new members must be taught the ways of the group. A society must regulate social behavior, settle disputes among its members and deal with people's emotions. All the while, the self-interest of the individual must be balanced with the larger needs of society as a whole. Cultural universals help fulfill these important functions of the society.

Seen from another view, however, cultural universals may not be the result of felt needs of the society. These practices may have been imposed by members of one society on another. It is important to understand that similar customs may not necessarily mean that cultural universals exist. It may also indicate that a conquering nation used its power to enforce certain customs upon the defeated people. Sociologists might ask the question such as “Who determines the dominant cultural patterns?” For instance, religious is a cultural universal. However, history shows that in many cases traditional religious practices of indigenous people (early settlers) have often been repressed using violent means by conquerors that held immense economic and political power over them.

#### **6.2.6 Cultural Diversity (Variables)**

Each culture has a unique character. Cultures adapt to meet specific sets of circumstances, such as climate, level of technology, population and geography. This adaptation is reflected in the differences in all elements of culture. Despite the presence of cultural universals, there is still great variation or diversity among several elements of culture worldwide. Even within a single nation, certain segments of the population will develop cultural patterns which are different from those of the dominant group of the society. *Cultural diversity refers to the wide range of cultural differences found between societies and within societies.* Countries may differ from each other culturally on the basis of natural circumstances such as climate and geography. They may also differ on the basis on social circumstances such as level of technology and composition of population. Some nations such as Sweden may be referred to as homogenous societies, meaning they share common language, culture and religion. Whereas, the United States may be referred to as heterogeneous societies, meaning that they include people who are dissimilar in terms of their social, economic and ethnic characteristics.

One of the contributory factors to cultural diversity is migration in all its forms. A person who has migrated will carry his own culture in the new place. Such a person may be made to feel like an outsider by the members of society. Some analysts believe that it is possible to communicate with others despite differences in

race, ethnicity, origin, nationality, gender, social class or occupation, etc. People whose culture is different from the dominant group may also find reassurance and social support in a subculture or a counterculture.

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### 6.3 ETHNOCENTRISM

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A number of statements we use on a daily basis reflect our attitude that our culture is the best. We may use the term *developed*, *underdeveloped* or *primitive* to describe a society. We may consider our belief as religion, and other person's belief as superstition and mythology. It is extremely tempting to evaluate the practices of other cultures in terms of our own perceptions. Sociologist William Graham Sumner (1906) coined the term *ethnocentrism to refer to the tendency to assume that one's culture and way of life is superior to all others*. The ethnocentric person sees his or her own group as the center or defining point of culture and all other cultures as deviations from the 'normal'. The other culture is constantly judged against standards derived from the culture with which one is most familiar. For example, the European explorers often considered their conquests as uncivilized and barbaric tribes.

Ethnocentrism manifests itself in two ways: *positive ethnocentrism* and *negative ethnocentrism*. Most school children are taught to be proud of their school and their nation. The school song, the pledge and the national anthem are all forms of positive ethnocentrism. The functionalist perspective states that ethnocentrism is important at two levels: First it serves to maintain a sense of solidarity among people, and secondly, it promotes group pride. Yet, this type of social stability is established at cost of looking down upon other people's nations and cultures. Some Indians will find it unthinkable to leave their parental home and live life independently.

Negative ethnocentrism can also result from constant emphasis on the superiority of one's own group or nation. This attitude is reflected in the derogatory stereotypes and remarks about other people, especially the migrants or anybody who is not like 'us'. The comments may be on the customs, religious

practices, behavior, dress style or language of the immigrant which is completely different from those of the dominant-group members. From the conflict perspective ethnocentric value judgments devalue groups. This also results in denial of equal opportunities for the new group.

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## 6.4 CULTURAL RELATIVISM

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Cultural relativism is an alternative to ethnocentrism. *Cultural relativism is the belief that the behaviours and customs of any culture must be viewed and analyzed by the culture's own standards.* To get along well with others it is important to suspend judgment about other cultures and also view people's behavior from the perspective of their own culture (and not ours). Cultural relativism places a priority on understanding other cultures, rather than dismissing them as 'strange' or 'exotic'. Cultural relativism is an example of value neutrality in scientific study as professed by Max Weber.

Cultural relativism emphasizes that different social contexts give rise to different norms and values. Practices such as polygamy, bullfighting and monarchy need to be examined within the particular contexts of the cultures in which they are found. Anthropologist Marvin Harris (1974) uses cultural relativism to explain that despite widespread hunger and malnutrition in India, cattle are not killed and eaten because they are viewed as sacred. From a foreigner's point of view, it can be concluded that cow worship is the cause of hunger and poverty in India. On closer observation it can be seen that the Hindu taboo against killing cattle is related to their economic system. Live cows are more valuable. From the ecological point of view cows consume grass which is of little value to humans. They also produce two valuable resources: oxen (the neutered offspring of cows) to be used in farming and manure (for fuel and fertilizer). They also provide milk, cow dung and leather. Thus Harris concludes that culture must be viewed from the standpoint of those who live in a particular society.

Cultural relativism also has a downside. Sometimes it may be used to excuse customs and behavior (such as cannibalism) that may violate basic human rights. Cultural relativism is a part of

sociological imagination. Researchers must be aware of the customs and norms of the society they are studying and then spell out their background assumptions. Doing so will help others to spot possible biases in their studies.

There is another interesting extension of cultural relativism, which is referred to as *xenocentrism*. Xenocentrism is the belief that the products, styles, or ideas of one's society are inferior to those that originate elsewhere. In one sense, it is the opposite of ethnocentrism. Seen from the conflict perspective, xenocentrism has proven to create an economic impact especially in the developing countries. Consumers in the developing nations frequently degrade and look down upon locally produced goods and instead purchase items imported from Europe, Japan or North America.

### Check Your Progress

1. Define Ethnocentrism. Can you give an example?

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2. Define Cultural Relativism. Is cultural relativism increasing amongst the people in our country? Give reasons for your answer.

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## 6.5 IS OUR CULTURE CHANGING?

Culture is ever-changing because of human imagination. Humans are producers as well as products of their culture. One pertinent question is '*Are human beings prisoners of culture?*'

Humans are born into a culture. The perceptions and ideas that we imbibe through our society do not leave us at any moment of our lives. Our tastes, moral compass and world view is shaped and reshaped by our culture. This can also result in perpetuating stereotypes about other cultures.

Humans cannot live without culture. But this capacity to create culture has some drawbacks. We may be the only creatures who apply symbolic meanings to objects. Culture is largely a habit. In many cases it limits our choices and drives us to repeat troubling patterns. Out of sheer habit we may engage in racial prejudice and gender discrimination. Additionally, in the age of information technology, our culture may be manipulated by the business-dominated media to generate profits in an unethical manner, thereby making us prisoners of our own cultures.

Human beings are cultural creatures and are different from animals. Biological instincts help to create a readymade world. But culture, on the other hand forces us to choose as we make and remake a world for ourselves. This is so evident in the cultural diversity of own society and human diversity around the world.

The issue of cultural diversity will gain importance in the future and in the field of education. Multicultural education that focuses on the contributions of a wide variety of people across cultures will be an issue of debate. Schools and educational institutions will have to face the challenge of embracing widespread cultural diversity. While doing so the institutions will have to convey a sense of community and national identity to its students.

Technological advancements will also affect culture in a profound way. With increasing access to technology and media there will be an increase in the flow of information. This will help expand cultural diffusion throughout the world. Technology can promote integration or fragmentation. Integration occurs when there is widespread acceptance of ideas. By contrast, fragmentation occurs when people in one culture hate or dislike the beliefs and actions of other cultures. Whether it is integration or fragmentation, technology will continue to revolutionize communication in society.



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## 6.6 CONCLUSION

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The structure of culture comprises of traits and complex. There are a number of culturally distinct groups within a society. If a distinct group fails to assimilate fully, it is referred to as a subculture. But if it challenges the accepted norms and values of the larger society, it may become a counterculture. In a diverse country like ours, there may be ethnocentrism tendencies but cultural relativism helps understand and appreciate the differences.

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## 6.7 SUMMARY

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**Culture Trait:** The smallest unit of culture is called a trait.

**Culture complex** is a cluster of related traits.

A **subculture** is a category of people, who share distinguishing attributes, beliefs, values, norms that set them apart from the dominant group.

A **counterculture** is a group that strongly rejects dominant societal values and norms and seeks alternative lifestyle.

**Cultural universals** are those customs and practices that occur across all societies.

**Cultural diversity** refers to the wide range of cultural differences found between societies and within societies.

**Ethnocentrism** to refer to the tendency to assume that one's culture and way of life is superior to all others.

**Xenocentrism** is the belief that the products, styles, or ideas of one's society are inferior to those that originate elsewhere.

**Cultural relativism** is the belief that the behaviours and customs of any culture must be viewed and analyzed by the culture's own standards.

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## 6.8 QUESTIONS

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1. Discuss the components of culture.
2. Evaluate the relationship between ethnocentrism and cultural relativism.

3. How do cultural universals and cultural variable help us in understanding society?
4. What are the implications of cultural changes for our future?

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## 6.9 REFERENCES

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# Unit - 7

## NEW SOCIAL MEDIA- SOCIAL DIMENSION, SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES

### Unit Structure:

- 7.0 Objectives
- 7.1 Introduction
- 7.2 Understanding social media
- 7.3 Sociology and social media
- 7.4 Types of social media
  - 7.4.1 Twitter
  - 7.4.2 Facebook
  - 7.4.3 LinkedIn
  - 7.4.4 YouTube
  - 7.4.5 Blogs
  - 7.4.6 WhatsApp
- 7.5 Social dimension of media
- 7.6 Let us sum up
- 7.7 Questions
- 7.8 References/Suggested Reading

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### 7.0 OBJECTIVES

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- To understand the concept of social media.
- To understand the role of sociology in social media.
- To explore the different types of social media.
- To understand the social dimension of social media.

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## 7.1. INTRODUCTION:

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Sociology is the study of human behavior in groups, how we live our everyday lives and how we interact with other human beings. Today with the advent of new technology the way we interact with each other socially, economically and politically has undergone change. Today we communicate online and replicate offline behavior through online portals like Facebook and other social media sites through which our social circle boundaries are changing. We might come across people whom we may have never met and may never even meet but we seem to know them thoroughly with all their personality traits. We also market ourselves professionally to the world with LinkedIn. This has been made possible through new social media. We do not only use social networking to keep in touch with friends; we also use it to express our likes and dislikes and express opinions on TV shows, products, events or celebrities. It is an interactive medium that supports and enables us to connect with others in a very personal and compelling way, through posts and conversations that actually happen on a very human level.

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## 7.2 UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL MEDIA

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### **What is social media?**

The Cambridge dictionary defines Social media as,

“Websites and computer programs that allow people to communicate and share information on the internet using a computer or mobile phone.”

The Merriam Webster dictionary defines social media as, “forms of electronic communication (such as websites for social networking and microblogging) through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content (such as videos)”.

Social media is defined as a media for the society, for the people to get more social and start a conversation. It might be a thought, an opinion, a picture, a video, a quote that you can easily share with your network online. This open-mindedness to new

concepts and approaches today is a result of social media influencing our social, economic and political lives.

Social Media has bound people together in a common voice with a familiar goal. It has become the key source of dissemination of information. Take for example the massive protests outside the World Economic Forum in Davos, 2008 Mumbai attacks, the Arab Spring uprising, the public outcry against the 2012 gang rape in Delhi, the Anna Hazare movement of India Against Corruption, etc. In all these major international and national events, online social media networks were used to run campaigns, to spread the word and connect like-minded people. It helped in shaping public opinion in terms of meeting points and protests. With social media, Indians are voicing their opinions freely and actively. In 2012, Delhi was faced with its worst rape case in which a woman (Nirbhaya) was beaten and gang raped in a private bus in which she was travelling with a male friend. This incident saw a large number of protests – on the streets, in the newspapers, on TV as well as on social media. It put a lot of pressure on the government to arrest the criminals and punish them severely. This incident led to a number of popular apps for women such as Guardian (started by Microsoft), On Watch, Nirbhaya -Be fearless, FightBack and many others. In Mumbai, Seeti Bajao, an online campaign that asked women to whistle when in trouble, was started.

In all this, platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp and Instagram seem to have emerged and are being accepted as the fifth pillar of media after print, TV, digital and radio. More importantly, it is gradually being accepted as the fifth estate (if media was the fourth estate of a state or democracy).

Social platforms are powerful and intimidating tool for public advocacy. Nothing is hidden from the social media advocates that broadcast everything ranging from the option to report potholes, traffic problems, women's safety, mishandling of public utilities to corruption. An average citizen has come to have the power to turn the tide through public deliberations and discussions, giving the users a platform for expression. Take for example- A Bangalore based civil society organization, [www.ipaidabribe.com](http://www.ipaidabribe.com) has become an important place to discuss corruption at all levels of the

government. They are also there on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube that enables them to highlight corruption and empower common people by giving them a voice. In Delhi, localcircles.com is popular among people. It helps people to exchange information about water availability and domestic help, find blood donors and report corruption. Thus Social Media becomes not just a political tool but a solution provider.

Today the message is louder than the messenger. However everything broadcasted on social network forums is not guaranteed as opinions could be created and manipulated to suit private interests. This can be dangerous as it limits the scope for consensus, debate and tolerance of listening to opposite views. We come across trolls, hate mails that reduce space for open interaction.

**Check your progress:**

Explain the concept of social media.

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### **7.3. SOCIOLOGY AND SOCIAL MEDIA**

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Social media has influenced our lives today economically, politically and socially. Media has changed from being a monologue to a dialogue – or even more, an open debate, with personal opinions and uncensored debates.

Sociologists are interested in new social media and ask questions like the role of social media in our choice making decisions- whether social media restricts our choices or makes us more open minded and explore new things and ideas? Is content generated through new media controlled by those in power? Can owners of technology and power affect opinion far more than those

who are digitally deprived? Does social media in the words of Noam Chomsky, an American media critic, “manufacture consent”? Do social media manufacture consent based on the owners of the technology who sway public opinion on the basis of what they want us to perceive. This could be true. For example, if you like a political leader/ celebrity and often visit his/ her fan page, your friends and family will be made aware of your liking and that in a way is a method to influence them. The post on your timeline creates a newsfeed that your friends are seeing allowing peer influence. On the other hand, that one ‘like’ allows other pages linked to leader/ celebrity to then show up on your sponsored posts list to encourage you to like those too. How does technology change our lives for the better? Or does it? Does being part of online signature petitions make us more participative in promoting social change in the society? Does the constant flow of information mean we are more aware and engaged than any society before us? In this medium, opinion leaders hold plenty of sway. Whether it is politics, banking, consumer marketing, and durables, there are opinion leaders who have a fan following. They pre-digest the subject and make it friendly enough for all to have a say in it. To that extent, social media is not really as social as it seems. The common person on social media is always surrounded with information and ideas, many of which are hard to break down and digitally digest.

In the previous sections we studied about the various sociological perspectives. How can we understand social media from a sociological perspective? From the structural functionalist perspective one would discuss the social purposes technology and media serve. One would look at the manifest and latent functions of media and technology, as well as their role in social dysfunction. Someone applying the critical perspective would focus on the inequality created systematically by unequal access to media and technology. Someone applying the interactionist perspective to technology and the media might be interested in the creation of self and identity- the difference between the real lives we lead and the reality depicted on social forums.

We need to use our sociological imagination to explore how media and technology impact society. It is interesting to study the

process by which ideas spread through social media networks. Ideas, behavior and culture spread through the simple means of doing what others do.

**Check your progress:**

Bring out the relation between Sociology and social media.

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## 7.4 TYPES OF SOCIAL MEDIA

**What comes to your mind when you think about social media?**

New media encompasses all interactive forms of information exchange. These include social networking sites, blogs, podcasts, wikis, and virtual worlds, Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, twitter. However these networks represent just one of the many types of social media platforms. Social media networks can be categorised into social networking sites (twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn) which help us connect with family, friends and brands; social review sites (Trip advisor, Trivago, Zomato) which help us get information from community members for experiences of locations and travel, cuisine and stay; image sharing sites (Instagram, snapchat) with images that capture our imagination; video hosting sites (YouTube) that has revolutionised the way we watch and create videos; community blogs and discussion forums.

**7.4.1. Twitter:** Short, snappy, formal and quick is twitter. Twitter is what is happening in the world and what people are talking about right now. For elections campaigns and elected representatives, Twitter is a way to connect directly with constituents, voters and observers, affecting traditional media. For debates it is the instrument to set the stage and sow the idea in the minds of the public. For people it's a great platform to voice opinions and offer criticisms. Twitter is clearly the better media because it enables quick response and communication to a wide audience. About



10,000 tweets do the rounds every second. Twitter also echoes people's choices and views and brings them together. It allows them to get behind issues that they are concerned about. Twitter feed is a great on-spot meter of moods, ideas, reactions and behaviours. In 2016 Twitter had approximately 319 million active users.

Practically all leaders of state are on Twitter, from Presidents to Prime Ministers, to popular leaders in film, culture and sports. The world's top leaders have used this social media to declare various 'events'. Hashtags play an important role in Twitter conversations. They act as hyperlinks and help to launch search queries of that keyword. This is the ultimate goal of any campaign manager – creating a search tag that is pumped up by his team, followers of his ideas and then made into a 'trend'.

In India Twitter has been feared, avoided and criticized but today has been openly accepted and followed by most politicians who want to make a mark for themselves in the virtual world of politics.

Information is sent fast and it focuses on one thought since it is restricted to 140- characters. It is a one to one medium: Leaders and people can reach out to one another by sharing, retweeting or replying to a tweet. Twitter sets new trends. You can know what people are thinking by just following it.

Take for example in the Anna Hazare Anti-Corruption Movement, twitter was used to get the people together. During the Delhi rape case it was used to share details of night vigils, candle light marches, etc. Twitter is also used highlight the good work for example- police department in Bengaluru and Jaipur use twitter to highlight their work as well as display their helpline number.

Twitter chats, conferences and discussions have become a great way to reach out to a lot of people by hosting on Twitter. The response is instant, all you need is just the smartphone and there is no need for much planning and arrangements. A politician can instantly call for a discussion or debate on a burning issue and get the conversation going. So now you don't have to wait to watch TV

to see the debate. Social media has taken the prime time slot now rather than watching debates and discussions on television.

**7.4.2. Facebook:** Its power and reach make it one of the most effective spaces to get attention of constituents that matter to people and organizations. It is the plugins that allow people to just about participate and 'like' anything on any website if you are logged on into your account. The view of the cyber world has become important today. The number of 'likes' that a leader, politician, a friend receives is a sign of his or her popularity. By analyzing the likes or followers and 'how many were talking about it' – can show a person's popularity.

Facebook checks the pages of important figures by contacting them and making sure that they are not fake people operating it.

At the time of elections, user engagement is given the most importance. So, political parties create an interactive experience by involving people in discussions. Judging the opinions of people using Facebook questions or encouraging fans of your page to submit questions or common comments creates a genuine dialogue between politicians and their supporters.

Thus through crosslinking and feeding the website with regular updated material, Facebook becomes more 'social'. Facebook also has hashtags which are mostly seen at the end of lengthy posts or between sentences. This allows many people to engage in discussions that were earlier restricted to friends or friends of friends. Also Facebook has the trending and follow features. Now people can follow others even if they can't be friends. This works very well for leaders and political figures fan pages.

Misuse of Facebook is also present. Many believe people could take shortcuts to become popular. On Facebook, there are many websites advertising instant 'likes' in exchange for money. Several politicians are known to employ IT companies and have a dedicated IT team to use Facebook, twitter and YouTube to help politicians to increase their popularity as well as create negative publicity for their rival.

**7.4.3 LinkedIn:** Unlike Facebook and Twitter, LinkedIn doesn't offer direct, great features, but that does not mean that it is not useful or powerful. It is mainly used for professionals to connect with each other or for job opportunities. But it helps to connect with similar or like-minded groups.

Just like twitter and Facebook, LinkedIn allows members to update their status, which could be a location, a viewpoint or a new change in life. This update can then become an engagement tool. Sharing public information, speeches and highlights of rallies can benefit any leader and politician.

In politics LinkedIn is a great place to engage with people who can plan and implement projects and help in campaigning. It also helps to do background checks on people who are interested to join a political party. It is a perfect networking tool in a more closed and controlled user group. Leaders looking to reach out to contacts and their contacts can join or support from outside, hold events and help in raising funds. It helps to build a brand image of a political party and politician. This will help in the long run to create followers who will spread the word further and you will also gain insights into what your followers care about.

**7.4.4. YouTube:** It is the world's second largest search engine after Google. There are thousands of people who use YouTube to get their message across. The audio-visual Video content is media friendly and easily available to many. Images and videos are also more easily shared. Videos are easy and quick communication and also influences more people to share them. The entertainment industry gains a lot from uploading videos on YouTube. It is also a place where leaders communicate with their constituents and control the messages that they give out. It is used mostly by the young population. They want to share their experiences on how policy, politics and civic life affect them.

**7.4.5 Blogs:** Blogging has fast become an important medium to spread ideas because it is expressional and informational. It allows writers to express their views creatively. Most interesting blogs allows people to follow current updates of any matter.

**7.4.6. WhatsApp:** It is an instant messaging app for smartphones. The app uses the Internet to send text messages, images, video, user location and audio media messages. Over 900 million users are active worldwide using the WhatsApp service. The major difference between regular SMS text messages and WhatsApp text messages is that WhatsApp is free. You use the internet connection on your phone (Wi-Fi or part of your mobile data package depending on subscription or pre-paid type). Emoticons (example-smileys) are used as a type of non-verbal communication. As social media has become widespread, emoticons have played a significant role in communication through technology. They express “tones”, “feelings” “emotions” through facial gestures while in the middle of a text based communication. They have many times even replaced text based communication.

**Check your progress:**

- Which of the following is not a form of new media?
  1. Facebook.      2. LinkedIn.      3. A cable Television programme.
  4. Instagram.      5. Twitter.
- Explain the different types of social media?

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## 7.5 SOCIAL DIMENSION OF MEDIA

Social media is a relatively new trend in India. It is the concept of using an electronic platform (for example computers, mobiles, tablets) to interact with people across the globe anywhere, anytime. It allows you to voice your opinions, share your thoughts, etc. with people.

Social Media describes websites that allow users to share content, media, etc. Common examples are the popular social networking sites like Facebook, Myspace, etc. Social media also includes YouTube, Photobucket, Flickr, and other sites aimed at photo and video sharing. Wikipedia and other online reference

sources are also counted as social media. In India the total number of social network users in 2018 was estimated at 326.1 million (statista.com).

Facebook is the largest accessed website accessed by 96% of all social media users and it is mostly used to connect with friends, publishing content and searching contacts. Today most smart phones come with a Facebook and WhatsApp. Social media is used by all-teenagers, sit-at-home moms, grandparents, restless youth, neighbours and leaders in each and every field. They are all engaging. They are all adding to the network and are influencing. In addition to influence, social media in the digital word has become the new form of “empowerment.” Be it politics or simple consumption of goods, the consumer or voter feel that their opinion is important.

The power to influence a consumer has shifted from brand managers to brand users. Brands have realized that consumers today have their own views and they will listen to only what they want to listen and not what brands want them to listen. Hence brands – both business and political need to track, influence and then select the suitable medium and approach. Social media has become popular at a time when the consumption needs and market demands are changing. Behavior of individuals as a ‘social being’ is driven by what others are doing on social media. Social media influences population and their choice decisions. Consumption today is driven by choices made online which are further decided by algorithms and data analysis. Here, consumption is loosely defined as absorption of ideas, product purchases, opinion triggers, etc. The advertising that we see on Google or on Facebook page is led by our past searches on Google or our likes on Facebook.

Social media engagement demonstrates humanity’s basic need to network; people feel happy and fulfilled when they interact with others. With each interaction at different level, a person’s satisfaction increases. As people interact on a massive scale, there is more potential for them to influence each other’s personal and professional lives.

Social media influences personal choices and behavior and sociologists in particular are interested in how social media creates

identity and the self. On networking sites we have multiple identities with *avatars*. An *avatar* is an image or username that represents person online, most often within forums and social networks. People drive the success of social media by taking any number of actions, from cultivating a large group of friends on Facebook or thousands of Twitter followers. They do so by consistently grooming their profiles to keep their followers and friends updated and interested.

Social media also enables users to form bonds related to common causes and organize events for social and political causes. For instance, Twitter and Facebook played a major role in political movements in Libya, Egypt, Tunisia and Algeria.

Social media has changed the way humans communicate. They no longer have to interact face-to-face. They can easily engage others around the world. This new aspect can create new power dynamics, where some voices become stronger than others due to their greater social media presence.

One of the biggest reasons for the success of social media is accessibility to people at incredible speeds. The interactivity of social media is what relates to human nature. The sociological characteristics of social media can be credited with its own progress. Human beings' influence on each other is a part of the phenomenon that is inevitable. People make choices in life (and the same applies to their interaction through social media) in large part due to what other people do and say.

Social media, and the interactions that people have through it, allows many different emotions to be expressed and relationships to flourish due to the ease of interactions.

Internet is used as a platform for presenting the self. Some expected, or manifest, functions of social networking sites are that they facilitate connections with family, friends, and other parties; allow members to share photos and videos; support discussions with like-minded people about hobbies and other interests; and help users to plan face-to-face meetings with friends. They also allow users to establish and maintain contacts with a far greater number of people than is typically possible using non-digital means. An

unexpected, or latent, function of social networking sites is that many offer users a tool that allows them to connect with people with whom they have lost contact, including lost relatives. One manifest dysfunction of such websites is that there is no way to tell whether people are presenting real or fabricated self-profile.

Many people create a Facebook page for the purpose of meeting like-minded friends or staying in touch, not thinking that potential employers may view postings for clues about someone's character apart from the resume and interview. An unexpected, or latent, dysfunction of social networking sites is that once something is posted for others to access, there is no way to control how it will be used.

Symbolic interactionists study social interaction and focus on self-awareness, symbols, and negotiated order. Symbolic interactionists are interested in learning how social networking platforms serve as a mirror, giving users especially teenagers the chance to be noticed by others and to receive feedback. Symbolic interactionists studying Facebook and other social networking sites familiarize themselves with vocabulary and symbols people use to convey intent and mood with words.

Social media helps to make informed choices but very often these choices are unanimously fed without realization. Take for example the popups on your communication platforms. Communication has become one-sided shrinking what Habermas referred to as the public sphere. .

Today social media has created a generation who live in the virtual world. Teenagers and youth consider themselves popular on the basis of how many friends they have on the various portals, how many likes and dislikes they have on their posts to gauge their popularity. Failure to get noticed on social media has serious repercussions leading to stress and anxiety among social media users to the extent of feeling rejected. The use of emoticons has created a generation that does not understand face to face interaction and everything is communicated through symbols. This is negative since they do not know how to present self in direct, face to face interaction on a daily basis in their everyday lives.

**Check your progress:**

1. How do social media create self and identity?

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2. What is the impact of social media on youth?

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**7.6 LET US SUM UP**

The advent of new technology has impacted our lives socially, economically and politically. Today offline communication is being done online through social networking sites making the world a smaller place. We live in virtual world with interconnections like never before. Unlike traditional medium like radio, print and television the reach of social media is far reaching. Social media can be categorised into social networking sites, microblogging, discussionforums and video sharing portals. Sociologists are interested in studying the impact of media and approach it from functionalist, critical and symbolic interactionist perspective.

The impact of social media is far reaching with easy accessibility due to easy access to smartphones. However the rise of social media is not without its challenges. The idea of self and identity is challenged with our various avatars, the challenge of manufacturing consent through manipulation of information, trolling are some challenges facing social media. Failure to get noticed on the new media portals also takes a psychological toll on the youth.



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## 7.7 QUESTIONS

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- Q1. What is social media? Explain the social dimensions of media.
- Q2. Briefly explain the different types of social media?
- Q3. What is the social impact of social media? Explain with suitable examples.
- Q4. Explain the impact of social media on youth.
- Q5. How has digital media changed social interactions?

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# Unit - 8

## NEW SOCIAL MEDIA- ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL DIMENSION

### Unit Structure:

- 8.0 Objectives
- 8.1 Introduction
- 8.2. Economic dimension of social media
  - 8.2.1. Social media marketing
- 8.3. Political dimension of social media
  - 8.3.1 Role of Social media in 2019 elections in India
- 8.4. Let us sum up
- 8.5 Questions
- 8.6 References/ suggested readings

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### 8.0 OBJECTIVES

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- To understand the economic dimension of social media.
- To understand the relation between social media and politics.

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### 8.1. INTRODUCTION

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Social media has become popular at a time when the consumption needs and market demands are changing. The power to influence a consumer has shifted from brand managers to brand users. Brands have realized that consumers today have their own views and they will listen to only what they want to listen and not what brands want them to listen. Hence brands – both business and political need to track, influence and then select the suitable medium and approach. Behavior of individuals as a 'social being' is driven by what others are doing on social media which also includes the buying behavior for products.

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## 8.2. ECONOMIC DIMENSION OF SOCIAL MEDIA

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This section discusses how social media influence our consumer choices. Companies use advertising to sell to us, but the way they reach us is changing. Advertising has changed with technology. Conventional advertising is on the wane as technology and media have allowed consumers to bypass traditional advertising venues like the print media. New media allows consumers to bypass traditional advertising venues, causing companies to be more innovative as they try to gain our attention. Social media advertising, or social media targeting, are advertisements served to users on social media platforms. Social media marketing is a powerful way for businesses of all sizes to reach prospective customers through social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc. to achieve marketing and branding goals. Social media marketing includes activities like posting text and image updates, videos, and other content that drives audience engagement. Marketing of products through social media sites help companies in sale and achieving success.

For businesses, social media is an indispensable and significant tool. Companies use the platform to find and engage with customers, drive sales through advertising and promotion. It facilitates communication with customers. E-commerce, which can be conducted over computers, tablets, or smartphones, may be thought of as a modernized version of mail-order catalog shopping. All products and services are available through e-commerce transactions which include books, air tickets, financial services and electronic goods. E-commerce offers consumers the convenience to engage in business 24/7. They offer consumers with a wide range of products at competitive and comparative prices unavailable elsewhere. Retailers like Amazon offer instant gratification with quick delivery as premium option. Retailers online also provide their customers with easy, refundable and exchange offers. When digital purchases are dissatisfying if products do not match consumer expectations retailers exchange them readily thus increasing their sales. Social media helps in building customer relationships through loyalty programs linked to social media.

Social media is a multibillion dollar industry that is fueling the next generation of corporate giants. Major corporates today have digital marketing strategy led by experts who tap the available consumer base provided by social media. Take the case of Facebook- a free social network has created a social media marketing model using online advertisement and selling you goods and services in subtle ways without you realizing it. When consumers use these websites, at first they are given free services. They are encouraged to use these services more frequently. This is also when companies like Facebook start bombarding their customers with advertisements. Customers who were at first totally averse to advertisements later become increasingly more tolerant. Companies like Facebook also get consumers to sign over the rights to their privacy. The terms and conditions offered by this website are never read by anyone. However, they authorize Facebook to collect information regarding the user's activities both on and off the website. This data is then fed into a giant data mining algorithm which can then develop the most targeted advertisement targets for these consumers. Social media forums are fueling a generation that lays utmost emphasis on consumerism.

#### **8.2.1. Social media marketing**

Social media marketing is a form of online marketing that companies use to create and share content on social media networks to achieve marketing and branding goals. It includes activities like posting text, displaying company logos, image updates, videos and any other content that enhances audience engagement. Companies use variety of communication channels that include social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and others. By using social media to create effective social marketing campaigns your brand or organization can make a big difference in people's lives, and the communities in which they live. More consumers are now engaged on social media and if companies do not use social media they are wasting an opportunity to compete and outsmart their competitors and reach out to prospective customers. Social media marketing enables companies to directly interact with their customers through social platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram etc.

Advertisers don't have to pay publishers and distributors any money to convey their message and sell products. Companies can create their own creative and interesting content and post them online that will attract viewers. Take for example Dell Company. They have used social media with its popular website IdeaStorm where users add ideas for new products vote them up or down and comment on submissions. Starbucks has also launched MyStarbucks Idea Site. Big brands use innovative viral and social marketing campaigns to sell their products. Small brands can achieve great success using social media and outsmart their competitors. Advertisers use social media as it costs less and is easier to get started and can have enormous financial impact on business. Companies use blogs to connect with potential customers. Twitter is used to announce offers and marketers tweet about new content, offers and news about their products.

Social media engagement is necessary to keep businesses afloat by helping them engage with potential customers. The interaction between brands on social media and potential customers help to establish rapport and trust. However businesses need to interact democratically and genuinely with their customers that involve listening, reading and participating, instead of simply throwing out mass marketing messages.

**Check your progress:**

1. What is social media marketing?

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2. How do new social media affect advertising and marketing?

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### 8.3 POLITICAL DIMENSION OF SOCIAL MEDIA

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This section will focus on the role of social media in political campaigns. Do social media impact voting patterns? Do social media influence our politics? Why interacting is more important than informing? Can likes be votes?

Digital space for campaigning can be done through paid advertisements on Facebook, Google, YouTube and other online publishers, and disseminating political propaganda over private groups on Facebook and WhatsApp.

The 2014 general elections in India saw the use of social media for the first time on a mass scale to reach out to the electorate which continued even in the recently concluded 2019 elections. The elections were not only about being politically elected but also socially elected. Political leaders used the social media networks to convey to the first time voters who belonged to the demographic who have easy access to technology. The increasing use of social media amongst the new generation has made politicians take notice of the social media sites to campaign for themselves and the party. The BJP employed social media as a key campaign tool in the 2014 election. In sheer numbers, the BJP dominated social media during the election. It is considered that the 2014 Lok Sabha elections was essentially media election and it was 'media logic', not 'political logic' that determined the outcome of the elections, and the BJP's victory was largely due to its high voltage media campaign.

The current elections also has many first time voters who use digital medium and political parties have dedicated and committed social media team to reach out to the electorate. Campaigning via social media and connecting people online affects political leaders when combined with strong website. Though social media may not guarantee votes it is important to have online presence than none at all.

What India is witnessing today, the USA has already used before. In 2008, Barrack Obama used social media very effectively to win the Presidential elections. He employed a team of tech savvy people who adopted social media and data analysis, crafted ideas

to suitable media from Facebook to Twitter to public forums. Mr. Barack Obama used the online medium very effectively and ended up winning people's support as well as the elections. For that purpose he used tools like internet video, social networking outreach, online advertising and the MyBarackObama.com activist toolkit. In 2008, Barack Obama made his victory announcement also on Twitter. All these are a part of social media.

We see that social media has made icons of newcomers, produced new election experts, announced candidates, declared poll results, exposed politicians and even brought many down. On the negative side social media has been used for trolling- a negative campaign for the political rivals to bring them discredit.

Political campaigns are using social media now to sow an idea and then allow it to multiply through online communities of its fans, followers and friends. It is instant and campaigns, conversations and ideas just multiply fast and reach unlimited number of people. Rally, discussions and communication with people on the ground is immediately conveyed to a larger audience through the social media platforms.

Importance of Twitter was seen during elections in India. It is not only a medium for people to communicate with world leaders but also a way for these leaders to communicate with each other. On the one hand, it is a broadcast tool and on the other hand it allows access and engagement. The Prime Minister's office uses its @PMOIndiahandle effectively to make announcements or send out instant reactions – where it wants – on key issues.

Journalists get a lot of their news from Twitter too and this can get politicians into trouble. For example Prime Minister Narendra Modi became a joke on Twitter for wrongly spelling 'Lotus' (political symbol of BJP) as 'Louts' (an embarrassed British person). Rahul Gandhi does not use Twitter much but made headlines when he commented on Mayawati not "done much to lift the dalits in society". During the last elections Congress and BJP had set up "digital war rooms" to monitor online voter discussions and comments.

Knowing that social media brings people face to face with their leaders, it is important that politicians use it effectively as a marketing tool and take maximum benefit from it.

For politicians, social media especially Twitter is perfect for telling stories and sharing experiences. Twitter thus becomes an extension of them. It is also important that politicians personalize their accounts and stay up to date with what is being tweeted on their behalf by their team. Most politicians today have their own personal accounts too. Obama used and publicized his style by ending his tweet with -'BO'. Thus it was his personal touch that made him popular. Arvind Kejriwal says that he personally tweets on his own and doesn't let anyone else take care of his handle.

Facebook is more of a reflection and sharing medium while twitter spreads messages and themes like wildfire. For example; AAP managed to use a lot of their social media posts to drive people to see the AAP website where they invited donations. On Narendra Modi's Facebook page, you will find links that open up the website's video or audio for his fans. For politicians LinkedIn can be useful as it helps to increase networking with like-minded people across the world, to stay connected and to exchange the best work practices. The former British PM, David Cameron was very popular on LinkedIn connecting with business contacts of other countries. Same is with Narendra Modi, Bill gates, Obama and Nilenkani.

Indian politics has used Google to a large extent. It started elections portal in India giving voters a onetime access point to all the news related to elections and politics as well as information about various political parties. Google believes that the consumer and politics need each other and Google was only helping by giving both a platform. Google has tried to use the internet to shape democracy. It plans to empower the voters with all the information they need at a single destination for all upcoming elections. They plan to engage the voters with the candidates to make a participative democracy. It also helps people to vote – how to register, voter ID card, how to exercise vote, etc. Google is also aware that politicians are already using many of its platforms from Search to Google Hangout.



Most of the popular politicians effectively use videos to connect with the people. They update the video footage of events within minutes or hours of the event. They use online videos for their campaign ads, to telecast speeches and events and to convey messages to the people.

India's 2014 election was called a Facebook /Twitter election and as the largest democratic election in the world to date so much of it took place online. The present PM, Mr. N Modi made a name for himself as the first Indian politician to actively engage with citizens on social media since 2012 when he was CM of Gujarat, according to the Times of India. Infact #ModiHangout became a top trending topic in the country and the hangout itself became so popular it took 45 minutes to begin because the site kept crashing. When he won the elections, rather than use mainstream media, Modi announced his win via Twitter @narendramodi to his 4.27 million fans and encouraged voters to tweet their "fingies" or "ungli" in Hindi with the hashtag #selfiewithmodi. Selfies came in mostly from the younger crowds.

With so much noise being created about social media and its mediums and more and more youngsters joining in day-by-day, the world of Indian politics has finally woken up to its importance. More politicians, be it young or old are actively using social media. Since 2014 elections one sees that almost every political party and top political leaders used the social medium to get their message across the masses. E.g.:- Congress, Bharatiya Janata Party, Samajwadi Party, Bahujan Samaj Party, etc.

Each of these and the remaining ones have their own websites which was not seen some years back. And some of them also use other social mediums to interact with people. Let us look at the Congress party. Rahul Gandhi who is one of the icons of youth in India has used almost every social medium apart from actual communication to interact with the people and especially the youth. This makes us feel that they are within our reach.

Campaigning plays a very important and crucial role during elections. It showcases the party profile, their goals in near future and what the public can expect from them. In short, campaigning has a very strong effect on how the elections turn out.

Indian politicians are rushing to set up Facebook page, twitter handles and communicating directly with their vote bank online. It is clear that those politicians who directly communicate with them on a one to one basis are bound to be winners. Brand experts believe it makes sense for politicians and parties to address citizen's queries on a variety of social, municipal and national matters and engage with them. Social media is an important medium of propagating your mandate to the general public and assuring your voter that you care for them and be a problem solver. Harish Bijoor, a brand expert, feels that being on social media for politicians is no longer a choice. It has become essential. Leaders want to understand their importance and use social media and networking sites to position themselves. Social media may make brands for some, as well as break brands. Leaders have felt the need to connect with the youth by creating brands.

Given that the medium is fast, viral and widespread, does it reward the first movers? Narendra Modi's connect with the youth through all social media networks is much more. The victory of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) in Delhi in February in 2015 has shown that if you don't have money, social media can help in communicating with those who support you. It has also helped to discover new voters for the party. Much of the 2015 Delhi election - was fought on Facebook and Twitter. The canvassing loudspeakers, at high decibel levels in each Delhi *mohalla*, were replaced this time by hashtag wars fought by party followers on social media platforms. To spread information AAP released apps on Android like the list of their candidates of each constituency; voters question and answer column, etc. What's more important is that it didn't increase their campaign budgets like other traditional media did.

The role of networking sites on politics has been well established by the fact that the Election commission of India has rules and regulations to monitor the use of posts, tweets, etc. during election campaigns.

Social media has changed the way political parties and politicians meet and discuss politics. Google hangouts, Skype calls, and Facebook groups are where they meet nowadays. Politicians armed with smart phones are a common sight now and they often

tweet while at public events. They share pictures of their visits, give reactions to news and engage with voters online. Government organizations like the Planning Commission have a website and are also on Facebook. The deputy chairman of the Commission discussed the 12<sup>th</sup> plan on a Google hangout, making it the first in the history of a government organization.

Social media impacts politics in various ways. Political leaders are able to directly contact their voters without spending any money. Political campaigns produce commercials and publish them for free on YouTube instead of paying for time on television or the radio. Twitter and Facebook have become instrumental in organizing campaigns. Donald Trump, President of USA used twitter and Facebook extensively during his political campaign to reach out to potential voters. Social media help to customize the messages of political leaders based on selected demographics. For example in the recent elections in India social media reach was in both rural and urban areas and political parties focused on specific themes in selected regions and used messages based on the demographics. Social media helps in creating messages and targeting voters according to their age. A message for the youth may not appeal the same way to the elderly. Twitter and Facebook have energized younger voters, who have easy access to these platforms due to smartphones and this has had a profound impact on elections.

Nitin Pai, Director of the Takshashila Institute prescribes how politicians gain through social media. Social media enables politicians to engage with people directly and can strengthen their leadership brand. They can mobilise more efficiently the masses and help connect with an international audience as well. He also cautions that where social media users are a small fraction of the overall population it is important to be aware that the online population and discourse might not be representative of the real thing.

### **8.3.1 Role of social media in 2019 elections in India.**

The 2019 elections also can be called as the elections played on social media. BJP started using social media much earlier when Narendra Modi was the chief minister of Gujarat. The 2014 elections was a big social media campaign. The other parties

though are late players have realized the reach of social media. The Congress party has seen a resurgence of social media strategy in the last one year. With 900 million voters in 2019 and with 300 million active users on Facebook, 200 million users on WhatsApp and about 35 million users on Twitter social media will have an impact on voting patterns. Its outreach has been widespread and the importance of social media can be determined by the fact that the election commission this time in 2019 issued guidelines on how political parties can use it. The election commission met the heads of Facebook, twitter and Instagram to ensure that these social media giants don't give advantage to any party specifically.

Across the political parties every leader in on social media and they communicate. Social media is a vital component of campaigning. Today the penetration of mobile phones is even at the grassroot level that allows decision making. Every political party has a dedicated team of digital experts who handle the IT cell of the party. The impact of social media can be gauged from the fact that between 10 March 2019 to 16 March 2019 the top 5 searched terms on Facebook were BJP, Congress, Modi, Rahul and India. The first phase of the Lok Sabha elections 2019 had Twitter buzzing with over 45.6 million tweets recorded in the election month which translates into 15 lakh tweets per day. Prime Minister Narendra Modi emerged as the most talked about political figure on Twitter in the election month. The conversation on social media was dominated by topics like "national security, religion, jobs, agriculture, and taxes and trade".

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who is followed by over 46 million people on Twitter, has used social media extensively to boost his political campaigning. The social media platforms also become a fertile ground for disseminating fake news and unchecked propaganda. During the recent 2019 elections one post that went viral on social media had BJP head Amit Shah saying, "We agree that for election, we need a war." That post, intended to showcase the BJP as a warmongering party, was seen by 2.5 million viewers and shared several thousand times before being taken down. It was later, proven to be a fake. Another post which went viral on WhatsApp intended to showcase the Congress as soft

on militancy, and claimed that a party leader had promised money to free terrorists and stonepelters. That was proven to be false as well. But by the time the truth catches up the fake news has spread like wild forest fire on the social media platforms.

Social media and messaging platforms do affect the choice India makes politically. As seen in the recently concluded elections political parties spent a considerable amount of the election campaigning funds on social media campaigning. Business today reported that according to Facebook's Ad Library Report, there were 1.21 lakh political ads with a total spending of more than Rs 26.5 crore between February and May 15 in 2019 elections in India. Political parties have spent over Rs 53 crore on digital platforms like Google and Facebook between February and May, with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) accounting for major share of the spending followed by the Congress that spent Rs 1.46 crore on Facebook for 3,686 ads and Rs 2.71 crore on Google's platforms with 425 ads. Ruling party BJP spent Rs 4.23 crore on over 2,500 ads on Facebook. Supporting pages like 'My First Vote for Modi', 'Bharat Ke Mann Ki Baat' and 'Nation with NaMo' too, infused over Rs 4 crore on ads on the social networking platform that has well over 200 million users in India. On Google's platforms, it has spent more than Rs 17 crore. Similarly other parties too used social media with TMC spending Rs 29.28 lakhs, Aam Aadmi Party spent out Rs 13.62 lakh for 176 ads on the Facebook page.

Since many in 2019 elections were first time tech savvy voters the reach of social media was wide and had profound impact on elections. Thus one cannot underestimate the role of new media in politics

### **Check your progress:**

1. Do social media affect the outcome of elections?

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2. Explain the relation between social media and elections.

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## 8.4 LET US SUM UP

Social media influence our consumer choices. New media allows consumers to bypass traditional advertising venues, causing companies to be more innovative as they try to gain our attention. Social media marketing and digital marketing have changed advertisement and consumer reaction.

Social media transcends the physical boundaries and brings the demographic, consumption behaviour and political choice making at the fingertips of an election campaign. It has made “social sanction” very important for politicians. Media, politics and elections are interrelated and social media platforms have become the essential ground for the discussion of political narratives and discourse. However one must be cautious as it can be used to disseminate fake news and rumors and one must exercise caution while engaging in a political dialogue on social media. Today, social media has affected the mainstream media who picks up views, sound bites from the social media. Social media is here to stay and no politician can underestimate the power of social media today. If leaders want to win elections they need to be aware of the power of new social media and they ought to be in the place where most people are – and that’s online.

We can observe that social medium helps increase simultaneous interaction with everyone. No need to take appointments, wait for them to talk, we can talk to them just at the click of a button. No doubt its popularity is increasing day-by-day.

## 8.5 QUESTIONS:

Q1 Show the interrelation between social media and politics?

Q2 Describe the use of social media in politics.

Q3 What is media? Explain the role of media in politics.

Q4 Explain how social media is used for marketing and advertising.

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## MODEL QUESTION PAPER

### SEMESTER I

- Note :** 1) Attempt any five questions.  
2) All questions carry equal marks (20 marks each)

1. Attempt Any Two sub Questions
  - a. Discuss the various perspectives in sociology. Which one do you think is important and why? (10 Marks)
  - b. Examine in detail how sociological outlook and sociological imagination helps one to develop a better understanding of society and social problem. (10 Marks)
  - c. Highlight the significance of sociology in general and its importance in Indian society in particular. (10 Marks)
2. Attempt Any Two sub Questions
  - a. What is social institutions? Explain its features, types and functions. (10 Marks)
  - b. Evaluate the significance of religion as a social institution and explain its elements. (10 Marks)
  - c. Discuss transformation and troubles in family life in present time. (10 Marks)
3. Attempt Any Two sub Question
  - a. Define Culture. Discuss the important characteristics of culture. (10 Marks)
  - b. Discuss the relation between culture and society. (10 Marks)
  - c. Discuss the components of culture. (10 Marks)
4. Attempt Any Two sub Questions
  - a. What is social media? Explain the social dimensions of media. (10 Marks)
  - b. Show the interrelation between social media and politics? (10 Marks)
  - c. Explain how social media is used for marketing and advertising. (10 Marks)
5. Write Short Note on ANY TWO of the following: (20 Marks)
  - a. Sociological Imagination
  - b. Ethnocentrism
  - c. Political Spectrum
  - d. The Impact of social Media

