

Basic Concept Of sociology: (course content- Society, community, Association, Institution, Status and Role (chapter-3) (B.A (H) 1st year and (Subsidiary, Sociology (lecture-1,2and 3))

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SOCIOLOGICAL CONCEPTS:

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

The Concept of Society:

Society is viewed by sociologists as a chain of social relationships. A relationship is social, while it is determined by mutual awareness, that is, the behaviour of one individual influences the behaviour of another. For example, when a teacher enters the classroom, students stop making noise and stand up as a mark of respect for their teacher. This behaviour signifies the social relationship between the teacher and the taught. Thus, social relationships exist only when individuals behave towards one another in ways determined by their recognition of each other. This is why society is called a relational concept. In other words, society is not a substantial concept. It does not denote a concrete reality, rather it refers to social relationships, which become institutionalised, when people relate to each other in well-established and familiar ways.

Types of Society

The predominant types of social relationships form the basis of classifying human society in various types. Most sociologists contrast the industrial society in which they live with all other types. Some sociologists, like Spencer and Durkheim, classified societies on the basis of their size or scale and other features, such as, the extent and degree of the division of labour, political organisation and social stratification, etc.

Some scholars, like Karl Marx, distinguish them on the basis of their economic institutions. Thus, there are clearly many ways of classifying societies. Without going into complicated arguments at this stage of your introduction to sociology, it is necessary to realise that there is no ideal classification and no 'pure' example of various types of society. In broad terms, taking the wider interests of sociology into consideration, we can divide societies into two types, namely; simple and complex. All primitive or tribal social organisations are included among simple societies. The industrial societies with overlapping sets of social relationships are called complex societies.

Community:

The word community has been derived from two words of Latin namely 'com' and munis. In English 'com' means together and 'munis' means to serve. Thus, community means to serve together. It means, the community is an organisation of human beings framed for the purpose of serving together. Community is a people living within a geographical area in common interdependence. It exists within the society. It is bound by the territorial units. It is a specific group while society is abstract. "Community living is natural to man.

He is born in it and grows in the community ways. It is his small world. Men, we have seen began with group life. Over the time, they occupied a habitat and while in permanent occupation of it; they developed likeness, common habits, folkways and mores, interdependence and acquired a name.

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Osborne and Neumeyer write, "Community is a group of people living in a contiguous geographic area, having common centres of interests and activities, and functioning together in the chief concerns of life."

According to Kingsley Davis, "Community is the smallest territorial group that can embrace all aspects of social life."

Mannheim describes community as “any circle of people who live together and belong together in such a way that they do not share this or that particular interest only but a whole set of interest.

BASIC ELEMENTS OF COMMUNITIES:

According to Maclver and Page, there are two main bases or essential elements on the basis of which community is formed.

(i) Locality:

Locality implies a particular or territorial area unless a group of people live in a particular locality; they cannot establish relations and generate the we-feeling among themselves. Living together facilities people to develop social contacts, give protection, safety and security. Locality continues to be a basic factor of community life. Maclver says, though due to the extending facilities of communication in the modern world the territorial bond has been broken, yet “the basic character of locality as a social classifier has never been transcended.

(ii) Community Sentiment:

Community can be formed on the basis of community sentiment. It is extremely essential. It implies ‘a feeling of belonging together.’ It is a ‘we-feeling’ among the members of a community. People living in a community lead a common life, speak the same language, conform to the same mores, feel almost the same sentiment and therefore, they develop a feeling of unity among themselves.

In other words, it can be said that community feeling has the four important aspects such as we-feeling, interdependence, participation and community control. The community sentiments are developed by we-feeling. The members of community develop we-feeling by their mutual interdependence. They contribute to the progress of the community by participating in its activities. Community controls the behaviour of its members. The obedience to community rules brings uniformity among the members.

Some other elements of community are as follows:

(i) Group of people:

Fundamentally, a community consists of a group of people. A solitary individual cannot form a community when a group of people share the basic conditions a common life, they form community.

(ii) Neutrality:

A community is not deliberately or purposively created. It is a spontaneous or natural growth. An individual is born in a community. It is my virtue of community that he develops.

(iii) Permanence:

A community is generally not temporary or short-lived like a crowd or a revolutionary mob. It is a permanent organisation or durable social group. This durability is evident from the age-old communities existing in modern times. A community continues as long as members are there.

(iv) Likeness:

In a community there is a likeness or similarity in language, custom, mores, traditions etc. among the members. So A. W. Green has rightly said, "A community is a cluster of people living within narrow territorial radius who share a common way of life."

(v) A Particular Name:

Every community is always known with a particular name, their immediate bases of origin give such community a particular name. For example based on the linguistic condition people living in Orissa are called Oriyas; living in Kashmiri culture are called Kashmiris.

(vi) Spontaneity:

Every community grows itself spontaneously. A community is not deliberately or purposively created. A kind of natural force acts behind the origin and development of communities. Various factors like customs, conventions, and religious beliefs bind the individuals together.

(vii) Common Life: Some sociologists like Elwood says that the life of the people in a community is near about the same. There is no epochal difference between the ways of life of the individuals. Their eating pattern, dressing style, language etc. are found to be similar. Due to their inhabitation on a particular geographical area, they develop a kind of emotional and cultural uniformity. Community is never formed with a particular aim. But they are the outcome of social uniformity among the individuals.

(viii) Common Interests:

In community, all the members have common and collective interests. People live in community and work together to fulfil these interests. Thus, Newmeyer says, community is a group of people living in a delimited geographic area, having common interests and activities and functioning together in their concern of life.