

The is the union itself,
the organisation,



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The term 'society' is derived from the Latin word 'socius', which means companionship or friendship. Companionship means sociability. As George Simmel pointed out, it is this element of sociability which defines the true essence of society. It indicates that man always lives in the company of other people. Man is a social animal', said Aristotle centuries ago. Man lives in towns, cities, tribes, villages, but never alone. Loneliness brings him boredom and fear.

Man needs society for his living, working and enjoying life. Society has become an essential condition for human life to arise and to continue.

Human life and society always go together. Definition: 1. "A society is a collection of individuals united by certain relations or mode of behaviour which mark them off from others who do not enter into these relations or who differ from them in behaviour". 2. "Society is the complex of organised associations and institutions with a community".

3. "Society is the union itself, the organisation, the sum of formal relations in which associating individuals are "bound together." 4.

"The term society refers not to group of people, but to the complex pattern of the norms interaction, that arise among and between them". 5. Society is "a web of social relationship". Characteristics of Society: The basic

characteristics of society are as follows: (1) Society consists of People:

Society is composed of people. Without the students and the teachers there can be no college and no university. Similarly, without people there can be no society, no social relationships, and no social life at all. (2) Mutual

Interaction and Mutual Awareness: Society is a group of people in continuous

interaction with each other. It refers to the reciprocal contact between two or more persons.

It is a process whereby men interpenetrate the minds of each other. An individual is a member of society so long as he engages in relationship with other members of society. It means that individuals are in continuous interaction with other individuals of society. The limits of society are marked by the limits of social interactions. Social interaction is made possible because of mutual awareness.

Society is understood as a network of social relationships. But not all relations are social relations. Social relationships exist only when the members are aware of each other.

Society exists only where social beings 'behave' towards one another in ways determined by their recognition of one another. Without this awareness there can be no society. A social relationship thus implies mutual awareness.

(3) Society Depends on Likeness: The principle of likeness is essential for society. It exists among those who resemble one another in some degree, in body and in mind. Likeness refers to the similarities.

People have similarities with regards to their needs, works, aims, ideals, values, outlook towards life, and so on. Just as the 'birds of the same feather flock together', men belonging to the same species called 'Homo sapiens', have many things in common. Society, hence, rests on what F. H. Giddings calls consciousness of kind. "Comradeship, intimacy, association of any kind or degree would be impossible without some understanding of each by the other and that understanding depends on the likeness which each

apprehends in the other” Society in brief, exists among like beings and likeminded. (4) Society Rests on Difference Too: Society also implies difference.

A society based entirely on likeness and uniformities is bound to be loose in socialites. If men are exactly alike, their social relationships would be very much limited. There would be little give-and-take, little reciprocity. They would contribute very little to one another. More than that, life becomes boring, monotonous and uninteresting, if differences are not there. Hence, we find difference in society.

Family for example, rests on the biological difference between the sexes. People differ from one another in their looks, personality, ability, talent, attitude, interest, taste, intelligence, faith and so on. People pursue different activities because of these differences. Thus we find farmers, labourers, teachers, soldiers, businessmen, bankers, engineers, doctors, advocates, writers, artists, scientists, musicians, actors, politicians, bureaucrats and others working in different capacities, in different fields in society. However, difference alone cannot create society. It is subordinate to likeness.

(5) Co-operation and Division of Labour: Primarily likeness and secondarily difference create the division of labour. Division of labour involves the assignment to each unit or group a specific share of a common task. For example, the common task of producing cotton clothes is shared by a number of people like the farmers who grow cotton, the spinners, and weavers, the dyers, and the merchants.

Similarly, at home work is divided and shared by the father, mother and children. Division of labour leads to specialisation. Division of labour and specialisation are the hallmarks of modern complex society. Division of labour is possible because of co-operation.

Society is based on co-operation. It is the very basis of our social life. As C. H. Cooley says, ' co-operation arises when men realise that they have common interests.

It refers to the mutual working together for the attainment of a common goal. Men satisfy many of their desires and fulfill interests through joint efforts. People may have direct or indirect co-operation among them. Thus co-operation and division of labour have made possible social solidarity or social cohesion. (6) Society Implies Interdependence Also: Social relationships are characterised by interdependence: Family, the most basic social group, for example, is based upon the interdependence of man and woman. One depends upon the other for the satisfaction of one's needs.

As society advances, the area of interdependence also grows. Today, not only individuals are interdependent upon one another, but even, communities, social groups, societies and nations are also interdependent.

(7) Society is Dynamic: Society is not static; it is dynamic.

Change is ever present in society. Changeability is an inherent quality of human society. No society can ever remain constant for any length of time. Society is like water in a stream or river that forever flows. It is always in flux. Old men die and new ones are born. New associations and institutions and groups may come into being and old ones may die a natural death. The

existing ones may undergo changes to suit the demands of time or they may give birth to the new ones.

Changes may take place slowly and gradually or suddenly and abruptly. (8) Social Control: Society has its own ways and means of controlling the behaviour of its members. Co-operation, no doubt exists in society. But, side by side, competitions, conflicts, tensions, revolts, rebellions and suppressions are also there. They appear and re-appear off and on. Clash of economic or political or religious interests is not uncommon.

Left to themselves, they may damage the very fabric of society. They are to be controlled. The behaviour or the activities of people are to be regulated. Society has various formal as well as informal means of social control. It means, society has customs, traditions, conventions and folkways, mores, manners, etiquettes and the informal means of social control. Also it has law, legislation, constitution, police, court, army and other formal means of social control to regulate the behaviour of its members. (9) Culture: Each society is distinct from the other. Every society is unique because it has its own way of life, called culture.

Culture refers to, as Linton says, the social heritage of man. It includes the whole range of our life. It includes our attitudes, judgments, morals, values, beliefs, ideas, ideologies and our institutions: political, legal, economic; our sciences and philosophies. Culture is the expression of human nature in our ways of living and thinking, in behaving, and acting as members of society. Culture and society go together. What distinguishes one society from the

other is culture. Culture is a thing which only human beings possess. It is not found at the level of animals.

Culture is not society, but an element of society. As Gillin and Gillin say, “ Culture is the cement binding together into a society its component individuals; ... human society is people interacting; culture is the patterning of their behaviour”. (10) There is yet another attribute on which society depends: It is the gregarious nature of man. Aristotle said that “ man is a social animal”. Psychologists like McDougall, say that man is social because of the basic human instinct called the gregarious instinct. Gregariousness refers to the tendency of man to live in groups. Man always lives amidst men.

He cannot live without it. This internal nature of man has forced him to establish social groups and societies and to live in them. Human life and society almost go together. Man is born in society and bred up in society, nourished and nurtured in society. From childhood to adolescence, from adolescence to youth, from youth to maturity, from maturity to old age, from old age up to death, man lives in society.

He depends on society for protection and comfort, for nurture and education. Participation in society is necessary for the development of personality. Various cases show that man can become man only among men. Society makes our life livable. It is the nurse of youth, the arena of manhood and womanhood Society is, therefore, as Maclver puts it, more than our environment. It is within us as well as around us.

Society not only liberates the activities of men, but it limits their activities also. It controls their behaviour in countless ways. It shapes our attributes, our beliefs, our morals and our ideals. Emotional development, intellectual maturity, satisfaction of physical needs and material comforts are unthinkable without society. Society is a part of our mental equipment and we are a part of society. It stimulates the growth of our personality.

It liberates and controls our talents and capacities.