

Some Definitions of Society

1. "Society is a system of usages and procedures, authority and mutual aid, of many groupings and divisions, of controls of human behaviour and of liberties." -MacIver and Page
2. "Society is the union itself, the organisation, the sum of formal relations in which associating individuals are bound together." -Giddings
3. "A society is a collection of individuals united by certain relations or modes of behaviour which mark them off from others who do not enter into these relations or who differ from them in behaviour." -Ginsberg
4. "Society may be defined as the total complex of human relationships in so far as they grow out of action in terms of mean-end relationship, intrinsic or symbolic." -Parsons
5. "Society is a complex of forms or processes each of which is living and growing by interaction with the others, the whole being so unified that what takes place in one part affects all the rest." -Cooley
6. "Society is the complex of organised associations and institutions within the community." -G.D.H. Cole
7. "Society includes not only the political relations by which men are bound together but the whole range of human relations and collective activities." -Leacock

Society is a Web of Social Relationships

According to MacIver, society is "a web of social relationships."² which may be hundreds or thousands of types. To formulate catalogue of social relationships would be an uphill task. The family alone is said to have as many as fifteen relationships based on age, sex and generation. Outside the family, there is no limit to the number of possible relationships. Wright says, "Society in essence means a state or condition, a relationship and is, therefore, necessarily an abstraction." In the words of Reuter, "Just as life is not a thing but a process of living so society is not a thing but a process of associating."

But what is meant by social relationships ? Can the relationship existing between fire and smoke, between pen and ink, between a duplicator and a desk be called social relationship ? Obviously not, because psychical awareness of the presence of one another is lacking. Without this awareness, there can be no social relationship, and therefore no Society. A social relationship, thus implies reciprocal awareness. Society, as F.H. Giddings expressed it, rests on "consciousness of the kind". This reciprocal recognition may be the 'we-feeling, of Cooley or a 'common propensity' of W.I. Thomas.

will continue to exist.

As long as man possesses the instinct of sociability, society

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.

Man is a social animal. Before we explain the relationship between man and society, it may be worthwhile to explain the origin of society.

I. ORIGIN OF SOCIETY

A number of theories have been put forward to explain the origin of society. Thus, the *Divine Origin theory* makes society the creation of God. Just as God created all the animals and inanimate objects of this world, so he created the society as well. This theory in course of time, particularly in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries took the form of Divine Right Theory. The Force Theory makes society the result of superior physical force. According to this theory, the society originated in the subjugation of the weaker by the stronger. In the primitive times the man of exceptional physical strength was able to overawe his fellowmen and to exercise some kind of authority over them. Thus, through physical coercion or compulsion men were brought together and made to live in society. The Patriarchal and Matriarchal theories make society the expansion of family system. Sir Henry Maine defines patriarchal theory as "the theory of the origin of society in separate families, held together by the authority and protection of the eldest male descendant".¹ He believed that society is the family writ large. The matriarchal theory suggests that polyandry and transient marriage relations were more common in primitive times than monogamy or polygamy. Under such circumstances descent is traced through the mother, for as Jens pointed out motherhood in such cases is a fact, while paternity is only an opinion.²

II. TYPES OF SOCIETY

This planet on which man lives is made up of people in social relationship with each other. It breaks down into specific societies where people with a common culture carry on a shared life based on their interdependence. The type of society has not been the same everywhere on this planet nor has it been similar throughout the course of human history. Three main types of society—tribal, agrarian and industrial have been marked out on this globe. The African society is tribal, the Indian society is agrarian while the American society is industrial. A brief description of the structure and features of these societies follows:

1. Tribal Society

Before we examine the structure and features of tribal society, it would be relevant to understand the meaning of the word "Tribe" as used in sociology. According to *George Peter Murdock*, tribe is a social group in which there are many clans, nomadic bands, villages or other sub-groups which usually have a definite geographical area, a separate language, a singular and distinct culture and either a common political organisation or at least a feeling of common determination against the strangers. As defined in the Imperial Gazette of India, 'A tribe is a collection of families bearing a common name, speaking a common dialect, occupying or professing to occupy a common territory and is usually not endogamous, though originally it might have been so.' According to *Bogardus*, "The tribal group is based on the need for protection, on ties of blood relationship and on the strength of a common religion." The tribe is a group of persons having a common definite territory, common dialect, common name, common religion and a common culture. They are united by blood relationship and have a peculiar political organisation.

know that he goes and comes back. As a matter of fact, not only do most children not know what their fathers do, but neither do many wives know exactly. The wife only knows that her husband works in the textile mill, but what he actually does there, whether he works on the assembly line, or is he a machine operator or is he a supply man, is not known to her. Under such circumstances, family fails to enable the child to walk out of adolescence into an adult occupational role.

- (vi) *Status to Contract.* The most important feature for an understanding of industrial society is the trend that sociologists describe as movement from status to contract. In medieval society the serfs had lands because of their status. A baron was born a baron. His grandfather had been a baron and it was his right. The serfs owned him certain obligations not because of achievement, but because each man was born into his status. The whole society was structured on ascribed status. The industrial society has shattered this structure. In an industrial society most people work for big organisations and contracts are substituted for status system. There is a wage contract, a social security contract, an unemployment insurance contract and so on. In place of mutual obligation system there is found contract system in industrial society.
- (vii) *Social Mobility.* Since an industrial society has moved from status to contract, therefore, as a consequence thereof, it is marked by social mobility. The member of industrial society can by his achievement raise or lower his status during his 'life time. The role of caste as a factor in determining status gets minimised in an industrial society
- (viii) *Position of Women.* In an agrarian society there are few economic pursuits open for women. They are mostly confined to household drudgeries; and render help at the time of planting and harvesting of the crops. In an industrial society there are more opportunities open for women. Industrialisation and specialisation have brought women to workshop and factory. They have entered into the wider life which has altered their outlook and liberated them from the exclusiveness of domesticity. Seats are now reserved for them in legislatures and other elective bodies. The 'lib' movement is a contribution of industrial society.
- (ix) *Deviance and Anomie.* The industrial society is a mass society with differing sub-cultures. Its members live under stresses and strains caused by acute competitiveness. The factories run day and night. People indulge in too many activities and work at tremendous speed. They are surrounded by complex and heterogeneous rules of behaviour laid down by various agencies which impose an enormous number of constraints on human behaviour. Capitalism, exploitation, class conflicts, cultural lags, impersonality of relationships, predominance of individualism and mechanical life are the attributes of industrial society which create mental and emotional disorders. The members of industrial society suffer from neurosis, psychosomatic disorders and psychosis. The incidence of suicide and drug addiction is also higher in industrial society.

To conclude, the industrial society has brought about great changes in the institutional structure and norms. The American society is an industrial society where the people are highly literate, scientifically trained, economically prosperous but individualistically oriented. Will human relationship in such a society be more stable and integrated? The answer is not definite. However, more and more agrarian societies are entering the phase of industrialisation and in future we shall have more industrial societies.

III. NATURE OF SOCIETY

is at best an analogy and not an identity.¹⁰

II. COMMUNITY

Meaning of Community

MacIver defines community as "an area of social living marked by some degree of social coherence."¹¹ He further says, "Whenever the members of any group, small or large, live together in such a way that they share, not this or that particular interest, but the basic conditions of a common life, we call that group a community."¹² We know that a person rarely exists alone. He is linked in many ways to his fellows who form a group. We cannot, however, expect a man to become the member of all the groups existing in the world. He can establish his relations only with the people who reside near him in a definite part of the territory. It is inevitable that people who over any length of time reside in a particular locality should develop social likeness, should have common social ideas, common traditions and the sense of belonging together. This fact of social living and common specific area gives birth to community.

Some Definitions of Community

- (i) Community is "a human population living within a limited geographic area and carrying on a common inter-dependent life."¹³ -Lundberg
- (ii) Community is "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 interests." -Mannheim
- (iii) Community is a social group with some degree of "we feeling" and "living in given area."¹⁴ -Bogardus
- (iv) 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."¹⁵ -Osborne and Neumeyer
- (v) Community is "the total organisation of social life with a limited area."¹⁶ -Ogburn and Nimkoff
- (vi) Community is "the smallest territorial group that can embrace all aspects of social life."¹⁷ -Kingsley Davis

of community to the dimensions of the nation, and even the world, smaller communities now remain only in degree. Both the types of communities, big or small, are essential to the full development of life. While the larger community provides peace and protection, the smaller provides friends and friendship.

Difference between Community and Society

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(i) *Community sentiment.* A community as seen above is a group of people who live together in a particular locality and share the basic conditions of a common life. To constitute a community the presence of sentiment among the members is necessary. Society includes every relation which is established among the people. It is the name of the structure of all social relationships direct or indirect, organised or unorganised, conscious or unconscious, co-operative or antagonistic. There is an element of likeness in society, but it is not necessary that likeness should include the people in oneness, the enemies can also be included in society. When we think of "society" we think more particularly of organisation, but where we think of community we think of life whence organisation springs.

(ii) *Definite locality.* Secondly, society has no definite boundary or assignable limits. It is universal and pervasive. Society is the name of our social relationships. Community, on the other hand, is group of people living together in a particular locality.

(iii) *Community a species of society.* Community is the species of society. It exists within society and possesses its distinguishable structure which distinguishes it from other communities. Some communities are all-inclusive and independent of others. Among primitive people sometimes communities of not more than a hundred persons are found which were almost isolated. Small communities exist within greater communities; the village within a town, the town within a region, the region within a nation.

(iv) *Community is concrete, society is abstract.* Society is a network of social relationships which cannot be seen or touched. It is an abstract concept. On the other hand, community is a concrete concept. It is a group of people living in a particular locality and having a feeling of oneness. We can see this group and locate its existence.

Zimmermann and Frampton describe the distinction between community and society as follows:

"In the community (*Gemeinschaft*) the group has a life of its own, superior to that of its temporary members. The group is an end in itself. In the society (*Gesellschaft*) the group is merely a means to an end. In the *Gemeinschaft* we have faith, customs, natural solidarity, common ownership of property, and a common will. In the *Gesellschaft* we have doctrine, public opinion, fashion, contractual solidarity, private property, and individual will."²⁴

Communities may be of four *types* - village or rural, city or urban, nation and world. A detailed discussion of these communities has been given in further chapters.

III. ASSOCIATION

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Meaning of Association

An association is a group of people organised for a particular purpose or a limited number of purposes. According to *MacIver*, an association is "an organisation deliberately formed for the collective pursuit of some interest or set of interests, which its members share." According to *Ginsberg*, an association is "a group of social beings related to one another by the fact that they possess or have instituted in common an organisation with a view to securing a specific end or specific ends." *G. D. H. Cole* writes. : By an association I mean any group of persons pursuing a common purpose by a course of co-operative action extending beyond a single act and for this purpose agreeing together upon certain methods of procedure, and laying down in however rudimentary a form, rules of conduct.

Firstly, a group of people,

Secondly, these people must be organised ones *i.e.*, there must be certain rules for their conduct in the group, and

Thirdly, they must have a common purpose of specific nature to pursue.

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- (vii) *An association has got its office-bearers who manage its affairs but an office is not necessary to constitute a community.*
- (viii) *A community works through customs and traditions while an association works mostly through written laws and rules. The constitution of an association is generally written. It has a legal status.*

It may, however, be remembered that association may become communities by serving plurality of ends, though that may never be reached. Thus the so-called communities, which give rise to the problem of communalism, may not be called communities in the sociological sense. They are rather racial or religious groups.

II. MEANING OF THE STATE

State has been defined variously by political thinkers. Some of the definitions are the following:⁴

- (i) "State is a numerous assemblage of human beings, generally occupying a certain territory among whom the will of the majority or of an ascertainable class of persons is by the strength of such a majority made to prevail against any of their members who oppose it." -Holland
- (ii) "State is a particular portion of mankind viewed as an organised unit." -Burgess
- (iii) "State is a people organised for law within a definite territory." -Wilson
- (iv) "State is a territorial society divided into government and subjects claiming within its allotted physical area a supremacy over all other institutions." -Laski

- (v) "State is a union of families and villages having for its end a perfect and self-sufficing life by which we mean a happy and honourable life."
—Aristotle
- (vi) Hall defines the state as follows : "The marks of an independent state are that the community constituting it is permanently established for a political end, that it possesses a defined territory and that it is independent of external control."
- (vii) Garner says : "The state as a concept of political science, and public law, is a community of persons more or less numerous permanently occupying a definite portion of territory, independent, or nearly so, of external control possessing an organised government to which the great body of inhabitants render habitual obedience."
- (viii) According to MacIver, the state "is an association which, acting through law as promulgated by a government endowed to this end with coercive power, maintains within a community territorially demarcated the universal external conditions of social order."⁵
- (ix) According to Ogburn, a state "is an organisation which rules by means of a supreme government over a definite territory."⁶
- (x) According to Max Weber, "The state is an association that claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of violence."⁷
- (xi) According to Anderson and Parker, "A state is that agency in a society that is authorised to exercise coercive control within a given territory."⁸

From the above definitions, we conclude that state consists of four elements, i.e., population, territory,

Difference between State and Society

In a previous chapter, we have defined the concept of society. Therein we noted that society includes every kind of willed relationship of man to man. Here to understand the state it may be distinguished from society.

The father of Political Science, Aristotle, and other early Greek thinkers did not make any distinction between state and society. This was due to the peculiar circumstances prevailing in the Greek city-states. The city-state being a small and compact body included the activities of the whole life of man. The citizens knew one another personally and met together in common assemblies to pass laws and choose magistrates. The problems facing them were simple in character. The city to them was the state, the church and the school, all in one. Today, however, no such identification is possible because in the words of MacIver, "to identify the social with the political is to be guilty of the grossest of all confusions, which completely bars any understanding of either state or society."¹² The state exists within the society but it is not even the form of society. Interpreted strictly the state is a political organisation. It is society politically organised. It is different from society both structurally and functionally.

The following points of difference between state and society are worth remembering :

- (i) In point of time, society is prior to the state. The people lived in society much before the state emerged.
- (ii) State is organised; society may be organised or unorganised. The primitive society was unorganised, but the state is always organised.
- (iii) Society exercises authority largely through customs and persuasion. The state exercises authority through laws and coercion. The state alone can legitimately use force. To use the language of Barker. The area of society is voluntary co-operation, its energy that of good-will, its method that of elasticity; while the area of state is rather that of mechanical action, its energy force, its method rigidity."¹³
- (iv) State is a territorial organisation while a society does not occupy any definite territory. A society may extend to the whole world. It may be international like the Red Cross Society.
- (v) A society embraces the whole life of man and all those ties which bind men together. But the state is concerned only with those social relationships that express themselves through government. The state cannot regulate every form of social conduct. MacIver expresses this difference beautifully in the following words : "There are social forms like the family or the church or the club, which owe neither their origin nor their inspiration to the state : and social forces like custom or competition, which the state may protect or modify, but certainly does create; mid social motives like friendship or jealousy, which establish relationships too intimate and personal to be controlled by the great engine of the state".¹⁴
- (vi) The membership of the state is compulsory but not so of the society. Man like Robinson Crusoe may, if he so likes, live outside the society.

Thus "state is structure not co-eval and co-extensive with society but built within it as a determinate order for the attainment of specific". The importance of state to society is brought about by Barker when he says, "Society is held together by the state; and if it were not thus held together, it could not exist."¹⁶