

Man is a social animal. A completely isolated individual is purely hypothetical. He rarely, if ever, exists alone. His daily life is made up largely of participating in groups. He begins his day as a participating member of the family. He goes outside his home during the day for work and returns in the evening for a common meal. At the meal the members of the family relate their experiences of the day and enter into a discussion. During the course of discussion an exchange of experiences occurs—experiences dull or interesting, which spring from group relations and play an important role in shaping personality. The object of the present chapter is to give a general idea of the basic types of social groups in which man lives and which influence his life to an enormous extent.

I. MEANING OF GROUP

Social group is a collection of human beings. In its elementary sense, a group "is a number of units of anything in close proximity to one another".¹ Thus, we may speak of a group of houses on a street, of trees in a forest or of buses in a bus stand. In the human field, by group we mean "any collection of human beings who are brought into social relationships with one another".² Some of the important definitions of social groups are the following:

(i) "A group is a social unit which consists of a number of individuals who stand in (more or less) definite status and role relationships to one another and which possesses a set of values or norms of its own regulating the behaviour of individual members at least in matters of consequence to the group."³ —*Sheriff and Sheriff*

(ii) "A social group may be thought of as a number of person, two or more, who have some common objects of attention, who are stimulating to each other, who have common loyalty and participate in similar activities"⁴ —*Bogardus*

(iii) "Groups are aggregates or categories of people who have a consciousness of membership and of interaction."⁵ —*Horton & Hunt*

(iv) "A group is an aggregate of individuals which persists in time, which has one or more interests and activities in common, and which is organised."⁶ —*Green & Arnold*

(v) "A social group may be defined as two or more persons who are in communication over an appreciable period of time and who act in accordance with a common function or purpose."⁷ —*Eldredge & Merrill*

(vi) "A group always consists of people who are in interaction and whose interaction is affected by the sense that they constitute a unit."⁸ —*Turner and Killian*

(vii) "A group may be defined as a plurality of individuals who are in contact with one another, who take one another into account, and who are aware of some significant communality."⁹ —*Michael S. Oemsted*

(viii) "Whenever two or more individuals come together and influence one another, they may be said to constitute a social group."¹⁰ —*Ogburn and Nimkoff*

Social relationships involve, as we have seen, some degree of reciprocity between the related and some degree of mutual awareness. A social group is a collection of individuals, two or more, interacting on each other, who have some common objects of attention and participate in similar activities. It may be a cricket club or a political party. It ranges from a pair, a couple, to a group of millions of people. In an aggregation the element of interaction is lacking and so it differs from group within which observable *inter-action* is present. The essence of social group is not physical closeness but a consciousness of joint interaction. It is this aspect of human interactivity which interests us most in sociology.

... social group.

Characteristics of Social Group

From the definitions of social group given above the following characteristics may be pointed out :

- (i) **Reciprocal Relations.** Members of a group are interrelated to each other. A gathering of persons form a social group only when they are interrelated. Reciprocal relations form an essential feature of a group.
- (ii) **Sense of Unity.** Members of a group are united by a sense of unity and a feeling of sympathy.
- (iii) **We feeling.** Members of a group help each other and defend their interests collectively.
- (iv) **Common Interests.** Interests and ideals of a group are common. It is for the realisation of common interests that they meet together.
- (v) **Similar Behaviour.** Members of a group behave in a similar way for the pursuit of common interests.
- (vi) **Group Norms.** Every group has its own rules or norms which the members are supposed to follow.
- (vii) **Collection of Individuals.** A group cannot be formed without the gathering of individuals.
- (viii) **Mutual Awareness.** Group members are aware of each other. Their behaviour is determined by mutual recognition of each other.
- (ix) **Group Size.** Size of the group varies from smaller to a bigger number.
- (x) **Groups are Dynamic.** Social groups are not static but dynamic in nature. Groups are subject to changes according to changing needs and pressures from within or outside.
- (xi) **Stability.** Most of the groups are permanent and stable in nature. Very few groups are temporary and unstable.
- (xii) **Influence on Personality.** Social groups have a direct or indirect influence on the shaping of personality of their members.

... political party membership.

Cooley classified groups on the basis of **kind of contacts** into primary and secondary groups. In a **primary group** there is face-to-face and intimate relationship such as in the family. In a **secondary group** such as the state or political party the relationships are indirect, secondary or impersonal.¹⁴

IV. COOLEY'S CLASSIFICATION

Primary Group

Passing to Cooley's classification of groups, Cooley has classified groups into primary and secondary, though Cooley has never used the term "secondary group". His concept of primary group is similar to Sumner's concept of the in-group.

Meaning of primary group. The primary group is the nucleus of all social organisations. It is a small group in which a small number of persons come into direct contact with one another. They meet "face to face" for mutual help, companionship and discussion of common questions. They live in the presence and thought of one another. Charles H. Cooley, the first sociologist to draw the attention to primary groups, describes them in the following words :

"By primary groups I mean those characterised by intimate face-to-face association and co-operation. They are primary, in several senses, but chiefly in that they are fundamental in framing the social nature and ideals of the individual. The result of intimate association, psychologically is a certain fusion of individualities in a common whole, so that one's very self, for many purposes at least, is the common life and purpose of the group. Perhaps the simplest way of describing the wholeness is by saying that it is a "we"; it involves the sort of sympathy and mutual identification for which "we" is the natural expression. One lives in the feeling of the whole and finds the chief aim of his will in that feeling.

It is not to be supposed that the unity of the primary group is one of mere harmony and love. It is always differentiated and usually a competitive unity, admitting of self-assertion and various appropriative passions; but these passions are socialised by sympathy, and come, or tend to come, under the discipline of the common spirit. The individual will be ambitious, but the chief object his ambition will feel allegiance to common standards

Characteristics of a Primary Group

The essential characteristics of a primary group are intimate feelings and close identification. These qualities are found more abundantly in some concrete groups than in others. In a primary group we directly co-operate with our fellows and our relations with them are intimately personal. Intimacy of relationship depends upon the following factors:

(i) **Physical Proximity.** In order that relations of the people may be close, it is necessary that their contacts also should be close. Seeing and talking with each other makes exchange of ideas and opinions easy. It makes possible the "conversation of gestures".

However, physical proximity though it provides an opportunity for the development of primary groups, is not a necessary feature of primary group arrangements. Whether or not physical proximity will provide an opportunity for the development of intimate relations depends on the situation as defined in the culture. Differences of language, sex, status, occupation or age may prevent physical proximity from providing an opportunity for intimacy to develop. Thus, intimacy of relationship may not develop among people living in close proximity while it may develop over great distances by various means of communication.

(ii) **Small Size.** Relationship can be intimate and personal only in a small group. There is always a point at which further expansion of membership means "dispersion instead of concentration, dilution instead of reinforcement of the common interest". It is impossible to be in sensory contact with many people at the same time. As groups become larger, each person counts less as a unique personality but more as a sheer cipher or unit. Feeling and talking to each other facilitates subtle exchange of ideas, opinions, and sentiments. It makes possible the "conversation of gestures" of which mind speaks. Even in a family the growth of children beyond a point may make it difficult for the members to come into close contact with each other. In a small group the members can know one another personally and develop a group character and an intimacy more quickly.

(iii) **Stability.** To promote intimacy of relationship, the primary group should be stable to some extent.

(iv) **Similarity of background.** The members of a primary group must be not only close and near to each other but also approximately equally experienced and intelligent. "There is", says MacIver, "a level on which every group must dwell, and the person who is too far above or below it, disturbs the process of group participation."²¹ Each member must have something to give as well as to take. This feature is clearly evident in a discussion group where each member presents his own viewpoint and takes the viewpoint of others.

(v) **Limited Self-interest.** Though members join the group with the motive of satisfying their own interests, yet they should subordinate their interests to the central interests of the group. They must come together in a spirit to participate co-operatively. The common interest must predominate in their minds. If people meet merely to satisfy their self, they will not be representing fully the true nature of the primary group which shall find full expression if they come together to study a common subject or remove a common grievance. The commonness of interests provides mental pleasure and contentment to the members.

(vi) *Intensity of Shared Interests.* In a primary group the common interest is shared by every member and by being shared by all the interest acquires a new significance, a new emphasis and a new valuation. Each member shares the interest intensely because he is sustained by the devotion and energy of his fellow members. The interest is now supported by a greater number of people at a higher level since the people pursue it in association which they would not pursue in isolation. The person in the primary group is not merely a legal entity, an economic cipher, or a technological cog. He is all of these rolled into one. He is the complete concrete person. His value attaches not to any particular aspect or activity of himself but to his whole self. Face-to-face companionship with other people enables a man to endure hardships in company that would be unendurable single-handedly. There is a fusion of personalities within the group, so that what one experiences the other also tends to experience. It gives to the relation an altruistic character. The primary group not only sustains the common interest but does more than that: "It sustains the interest of living itself."²² The relationship is not regarded by the parties as an end but rather as a value or end in itself, a good in its own right. It is not a means to a superior end but is intrinsically enjoyable. It is not contractual or formal. It is personal, spontaneous, sentimental, inclusive and non-transferable.

(vii) *Face-to-face Relationship.* It may also be understood that face-to-face characteristic which is major aspect of a primary group does not mean that it exerts a compelling influence over its members. Members of a family may not necessarily cast a magic spell over each other; indeed, they may come to develop different and even opposed viewpoints and habits. A group may be called primary because it has exerted an influence in the early life of a man *i.e.*, before other groups could influence him. Family in this sense is a primary group because its influence over the child is the earliest.

(viii) *Direct Co-operation.* "In a primary group men do the same thing together and may have similar desires and attitudes so that they are striving for similar things. They look at the world through the same eyes. Each party pursues as one of his ends the welfare of the other. They directly and face-to-face co-operate with each other to achieve their common interest. They do not act independently even interdependently but all participate in the same process."²³ They have a common experience. Though there may be division of labour in a primary group, yet it must act together. In a cricket group there are batters, bowlers and fielders but they all play together. Similarly, the members of a research group may undertake study of different problems, but they must bring together their results in a common process at the point where the group activity begins.²⁴ The members of a primary group are, thus, united not only in the product but also in the process.

(ix) *Spontaneous Relationship.* Members of a primary group share a voluntary, natural and spontaneous bond. It is not planned in nature, *e.g.* husband-wife, mother-child, teacher-student, nurse-patient relationship.

(x) *Inclusive Relationship.* All individuals of a primary group are treated as complete human beings. Members are aware of each others' strengths and weaknesses.

(xi) *Unspecialised Character.* A primary group exists because of a common and particular interest of people. This makes the group unspecialised in nature.

group--

Importance of the Primary Group for the Society

Primary groups are important not only from the individual's point of view, they are equally important from the viewpoint of society. The primary group is the birth place of human nature. Primary groups help in the socialisation of the individuals and maintain social control over them. They teach the members to work in the society according to their rules. They are the nuclear cells of social organisation. It is from these groups that the individual acquires basic attitudes towards people, social institutions and the world around him. The attitudes of kindness, sympathy, love, tolerance, mutual help and sacrifice which provide the cementing force to social structure are developed in the primary groups. Their disintegration soon leads to social disintegration.

Secondary Group

Meaning of a Secondary Group. We now turn to the secondary group, which is of special significance in modern society and of which the large scale organisation is the most outstanding example. A secondary group is one which is large in size such as a city, nation, political party, corporation, international cartel and labour union. Here human contacts become superficial and undefined. The relations of the members are limited in scope and arrived at by much trial and error and in terms of self-interest calculations of the members. A member exerts only indirect influence over the other. He knows personally only a very few of the other members and functions as one among almost countless members. His co-operation with his fellow workers is indirect and very seldom comes face-to-face with them. He communicates with them by such indirect means as the written word.

Definition

Some of the definitions of secondary group are as follows:

(i) "Secondary groups are those that are relatively casual and impersonal in their relationships. Relationships in them are usually competitive rather than mutually helpful." -P.H. Andis

(ii) "The groups which provide experience lacking in intimacy are called secondary groups". -Ogburn

(iii) "Secondary groups can be roughly defined as the opposite of everything already said about primary groups." -Davis

(iv) "When face-to-face contacts are not present in the relations of members, we have secondary group." -H.T. Mazumdar

Difference between Primary Group and Secondary Group

The following are the chief points of difference between the primary group and secondary group :

(i) **Size.** A primary group is small in size as well as area. The membership is limited to a small number and usually confined to defined area. It is not spread over the whole world, *i.e.*, in family, play-group, study-group. Membership is confined within small limits. At the other end, in a secondary group the membership is widespread. It may contain thousands of members scattered in different parts of the world as is the case with a corporation.

(ii) **Kind of Co-operation.** In a secondary group the co-operation with the fellow-members is indirect. It is formed more or less deliberately and in terms of common interests in the achievement of some recognised goal. The members co-operate only to achieve the group's objective. It is not the process that binds them together but the object to whose attainment they unite. They do not work together but one works for the other, they do assigned tasks toward a common object. Individuals are selected to act on behalf of the whole, a hierarchy of

officials arises and the executive becomes distinct from the members. In a primary group, on the other hand, the members directly co-operate with each other participating in the same process. They sit together, discuss together, play together, decide together.

(iii) *Types of Structure.* Every secondary group is regulated by a set of formal rules. A formal authority is set-up with designated powers and a clear-cut division of labour in which the function of each is specified in relation to the function of all, the rest follows. In a word, the organisation of a secondary group is carefully worked out. The primary group is based on an informal structure. The members, as told above, participate in the same process. There is spontaneous adjustment in the working of the group. No formal and detailed rules are drafted. The structure is simple.

(iv) *Relationship.* The relationship of members with each other in a primary group is direct, intimate and personal. There is congeniality among the members. They meet face-to-face and develop direct contacts. The primary group is concerned with the total personality of a person. The relations are inclusive. A secondary group is regulated by formal rules which means a substitution of impersonal for personal relationships. The relations now become secondary and formal. It does not exercise a primary influence over its members because they do not live in the presence and thought of one another. They need not meet face-to-face and may communicate with each other by indirect means. They perform their jobs, carry out the orders, pay their dues and contribute to the group interest, still may never see each other. The members of national political party pay their annual subscriptions, carry out the orders of the High Command, work for the party interest, but hardly establish personal and direct relationships with each other. The average member plays a passive role and often comes to feel that the party lies beyond the area of his control. Paul Landis called secondary groups the representative of the "cold world". Primary groups are relationship-directed whereas secondary groups are goal-oriented. In fact, the warmth of the relations in primary groups cannot be found in the secondary groups. The relations in the secondary group are of "touch and go" type.

Some thinkers are of the opinion that classification of groups into primary and secondary is not very satisfactory. No group can be classified as wholly primary or wholly secondary. Even a large scale group cannot work without a certain identification of its members with the organisation as a whole. Instead of classifying the groups into primary and secondary it is easier to classify contacts. The main difference between primary and secondary groups is not one of size or structure but of relationship. If a nation is called a secondary group, it is so called because its members do not have close, personal and warm relations. It is devoid of personal interaction; its members express the body of oneness through impersonal and indirect methods. Even if the members of a secondary group meet face-to-face it is of the touch and go variety.

Main Characteristics of Secondary Group

The main characteristics of secondary group are the following:

(i) *Formal and Impersonal Relations.* The relations of members in a secondary group are of a formal and impersonal type. It does not exercise primary influence over its members as mentioned above. The members need not meet face-to-face. They perform their jobs, carry out the orders, pay their dues and still may never see each other. The relations of the members are merely casual and of "touch-and-go" type. We go to a bank counter or an office, meet the clerk, get our work done and come back. We are not concerned with the other aspects of his life. We do not find warmth of relations in a secondary group.

(ii) *Large in Size.* Secondary groups are large in size. They might be spread all over the world, for example, the Red Cross Society consists of thousands of members scattered all over the world.

(iii) *Option of Membership.* The membership of most of the secondary groups is not compulsory. It is not essential to become the member of Rotary International or Red Cross Society.

(iv) *Active and Inactive Members.* A secondary group is large in size. There is absence of intimacy among its members. Due to the absence of intimate relations some members of the group become inactive while some others are quite active. A large number of members of a national political party do not take any active interest in the party work. They confine themselves to the payment of annual subscriptions.

(v) *Relations.* The members of a secondary group hardly meet face-to-face. They are scattered throughout the world, e.g., members of International Red Cross Society and Rotary International. They communicate with each other by indirect means.

(vi) *Formal Rules.* A secondary group is regulated by formal rules. A formal authority is set-up and a clear-cut division of labour is made. The organisation of a secondary group is carefully worked out. As a matter of fact, the stability of a secondary group depends much upon the way it is organised than upon uncertain sentimental attachment.

(vii) *Status of Individual Depends on his Role.* In a secondary group the status of every member depends upon his role. The status of the president in a trade union depends upon the role he plays in the union and not upon his personal qualities or birth.

(viii) *Goal Oriented.* The main purpose of a secondary group is to fulfil a specific function. A trade union is formed to better the working conditions of the workers. A school is opened to provide education. The success of a secondary group is judged by its efficiency to perform its task.

(ix) *Specific Ends or Interest.* Members are interested in the groups because they have specific ends to aim at. Secondary groups help individuals fulfil their specific interests or ends.

(x) *Indirect Communication.* Impersonal nature of social relationship is because of indirect communication. There is no direct communication between members. Message is conveyed through radio, telephonically, TV, postal media etc.

(xi) *Group Control.* Secondary groups have informal means of social control which are less effective. Behaviour of individuals are controlled by formal means like law, police, legislations etc.

(xii) *Group Structure.* Secondary groups have a formal structure. A formal authority is established with designated power. A clear-cut division of labour is specified for members.

(xiii) *Limited Influence on Personality.* Secondary groups have less influence on an individual's personality. Members are less involved as a result their attachment is also very limited.

the other organisations from making undue encroachments on the interests of people. Once the end of responsibility has been attained in a state, it can prevent

Importance of Secondary Group

The primary groups have an important place in a simple and small society but in modern era the trend is towards secondary groups. The small communities have now given way to large communities. In place of cottage industry we have now giant corporations, employing thousands of men. Population has moved from the village to the city. The changing trends of modern society have swept away primary groups. Man now depends for his needs more on secondary groups than primary groups. One activity after the other is being withdrawn from the primary group. The child was formerly born in the warm atmosphere of the family, now he is born in the cold atmosphere of the hospital. Most of the needs which were earlier satisfied in the village are now satisfied in the city. Industrialisation has moved the worker from the village disrupting his local associations. It has also influenced the roles played in the family. Employment of women in offices and factories has influenced her domestic role. The "laissez-faire" has given way to globalisation.

While the growth of secondary groups has created numerous problems, it has also brought some benefits. These benefits are the following :

(i) *Efficiency.* A secondary group is marked by clear-cut division of labour. There are set rules to regulate it. A formal authority is set-up with the responsibility of managing the organisation efficiently. The organisation of a secondary group is carefully worked out. The emphasis is on getting the job done. Sentiment is subordinated to achievement. The great advances in material comfort would be impossible without the rise of goal directed secondary organisations.

(ii) *Channels of Opportunity.* Secondly, the secondary group have opened channels of opportunity. They provide a greater chance to develop individual talents. In the earlier times there were only a handful of pursuits like agriculture and small trades. But today there are thousands of occupations which open the way for specialised careers. The talented individual can now rise from an unknown background to the highest position in business, industry, civil or technical service.

(ii) *Wider Outlook.* A secondary group broadens the outlook of its members. A primary group is a group of vested interests. It consists of members belonging to a locality and is small in size. The members of a neighbourhood group looks to the interests of the neighbourhood only, a family looks to its own interests. The outlook of its members get narrowed because they think of their limited interest only. On the other hand, the members of a secondary group are widespread. Its boundaries extend beyond the primary group. A secondary group has to accommodate a large number of individuals and localities which widens the outlook of its members. It is more universal in its judgement than the primary group which is influenced by local customs and personal attitudes. It may shatter the bonds of localism, provincialism and casteism.

GROUP STRUCTURE

Group structure is based on stability, group norms, standards, authority, and responsibilities. Group structure helps regulate the actions of its group members. The group power (expert power, legitimate power, assumed power) control the behaviour of others by giving some rewards or punishments. Group structure may be based on communication, as communication is essential in transforming information and coordinating the activities of individuals in groups. Stabilisation of particular line of communication is essential, e.g., two-way communication in family, students and teacher relationship.

Group structure lengthens the channels of vertical communication, increases the difficulty of upward communication in large organisations. Group structure affects the quality of employees' relations; flat structure increases the group morale by decreasing the length of vertical communication. Self-actualisation, self-realisation, independent activities and effective thinking raises the morale of an individual.