**Society**

The term ‘society’ is derived from the Latin word ‘socius,’ which means companionship or friendship. Companionship means sociability. As Georg 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.

Maciver defines society as “a web of social relationships.”

The basic characteristics of society are as follows:-

1. **Society consists of people**: Society is composed of people. Just as without students and teachers there can be no college or university, therefore, without people there can be no society, no social relationships, 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 as 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 similarities. People have similarities with regard to their needs, works, aims, 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. Giddiness calls ‘consciousness of kind.’ Society in brief exists among like beings and like minded.
4. **Society rests on differences too:** Society also implies difference. A society based entirely on likeness and uniformities is bound to be loose in socialities.. 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 aren’t 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, intelligence, faith and so on. People pursue different activities because of these differences. Thus we find farmers, labourers, teachers, soldiers, doctors, and others working in different capacities in different fields of society. However, difference alone can’t create society. It is subordinate to likeness.
5. **Cooperation and division of labour:** Primarily likeness and secondarily difference create the division of labor. DOL involves the assignment to each unit or group a specific share of a common task. Eg, 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. DOL is possible because of cooperation. Society is based on cooperation. It is the very basis of social life. As C.H. Cooley says, ‘cooperation 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 fulfil interests through joint efforts. People may have direct or indirect cooperation among them. Thus cooperation and DOL 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. No society can ever remain constant for any length of time. 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 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, etc as informal means of social control. And it also has law, legislation, constitution, police, court, army etc as formal means of social control to regulate the behaviour of its members.
9. **Culture**: Culture and society go together. 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. Linton describes culture as ‘the social heritage of man.’ It includes the whole range of our life. It includes our attitudes, judgments, morals, values, beliefs, ideas, ideologies & institutions, 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.
10. **Society depends on the gregarious nature of man:** Gregariousness refers to the tendency of man to live in groups. Man always lives amidst men. He cannot live without others. This internal nature of man has forced him to establish social groups and societies and to live in them. Aristotle rightly said, “Man is a social animal.”

**Community**

Definitions:

1. Community is a social group with some degree of “we-feeling” and living in a given area. — Bogardus
2. Community is an area of social living marked by some degree of social coherence. —Maciver

**Elements of community**: The main bases of community are locality & community sentiment.

1. **Locality**: A community is a territorial group. It always occupies some geographic area. Locality is the physical basis of community. Even the wandering tribe or a nomad community, for example, has a locality, though changing habitation. *A group of people forms community only when it begins to reside in a definite locality. In contrast with society, a community is more or less locally limited.*

Living together facilitates people to develop social contacts, gives protection, safety and security. It helps the members to promote & fulfil their common interests. Further, the very physical conditions may influence social life to a great extent. Most communities are settled and derive from the conditions of their locality a strong bond of solidarity.

Locality continues to be a basic factor of community life. However, in modern times the local bond of community is weakened by the development of the means of transport and communication. In fact, the extension of communication is itself the condition of a larger but still territorial community.

The physical factors such as fertile soil, minerals, forests, fisheries, water resources, vegetation, weather, climate, etc are included in the locality. These factors condition or influence the lives of community members in several ways. They have a close bearing on their economic activities in particular.

1. **Community sentiment:** Locality alone cannot make a group, community. Sometimes, people residing in the same area may not have any contacts and communications. For example, people living in different extensions of a city may lack sufficient social contacts. They may not have common outlook and share no common interests. A community is essentially an area of common living with a feeling of belonging. There must be the common living with its awareness of sharing a way of life as well as the common earth.

Community sentiment means a feeling of belonging together. The members must be aware of their staying together & sharing common interests. The members develop a sense of we-feeling. It means a kind of identification with the group. Without a sense of identification, a sense of awareness, a sense of living & sharing some common interests in life, there cannot be any community.

Other aspects of community:-

1. **Stability**: It is not a temporary group like a crowd or a mob. It is relatively stable. It includes a permanent group life in a definite place.
2. **Naturalness**: Communities aren’t deliberately created. But they are spontaneous in their origin and development. Individuals become its members by birth itself.
3. **Size of the community**: Size varies. A community may be big or small. A small community may be included in a wider community. A city and a village may be included in a wider community called the district. Hence, there are communities within communities.
4. **Regulation of relations:** Every community develops in course of time, a system of traditions, customs, morals, practices, rules and regulations to regulate the relations of its members.

It is important to note that in modern times, the nature of community sentiment is gradually changing. Today, the interests of men are diverse and complex. Their attachment towards their community is gradually fading. In modern highly industrialised urban communities, the spirit of community sentiment is very much lacking.

**Association**

**Association as a means of pursuing ends:** Men have diverse needs, desires and interests and ends which demand their satisfaction. They have three ways of fulfilling their ends. Firstly, they may act independently, each in his own way without bothering the others. This is unsocial and has its own limitations. Secondly, men may seek their ends through conflicts with one another. One may clash with another or others to snatch things or objects which one wants from others. Finally, men may try to fulfil their ends through co-operation and mutual assistance. On the basis of this cooperative effort, each individual will be contributing to the ends of his fellow men. This cooperative pursuit has a reference to association. When a group or collection of individuals organises itself expressly for the purpose of pursuing certain of its interests together on a cooperative pursuit, an association is said to be born.

**Definitions:**

1. An association is an “organisation deliberately formed for the collective pursuit of some interest, or a set of interests, which its members share.” — R.M. Maciver
2. An association is a group of people organised for the achievement of a particular interest or interests.

Men have several interests. Hence they establish different associations to fulfil them. They have a number of associations of different kinds. Some examples may be cited here.

Examples:

1. **Political associations**: The Bharatiya Janta Party, The Congress Party etc.
2. **Religious Associations:** The Vishwa Hindu Parishad, The Ramakrishan Mission, The Arya Samaj etc.
3. **Students’ Associations:** The Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad, Delhi University Students’ Association, The National Students Union of India etc.
4. **Labourers’ Associations:** Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangha, The Hindu Mazdoor Panchayat, All India Trade Union Congress, etc.
5. **Professional Associations:** Karnataka State College Teachers’ Association, The Indian Bar Council
6. **Economic Associations or Business Organisations:** Hotel Owners’ Association, Chamber of Commerce, The Consumers’ Cooperative Society etc.
7. **International Associations:** The Amnesty International, Y.M.C.A, Y.W.C.A, etc.

The Associations may be found in different fields. No single association can satisfy all the interests of the individual or individuals. Since man has a bundle of interests, he organises various associations for the purpose of fulfilling his varied interests. It follows then that a man may belong to more than one association. He may be member of a political association, religious association, a professional association, a cultural association, an entertainment club, a sports club, a rotary club and so on.

**Main characteristics of association:** The main characteristics of association are as follows:

1. **Association- a human group:** An association is formed or created by people. It is basically a social group. Without people, there can be no association. However, all groups are not associations, because an association is basically an organised group. An unorganised group like crowd or mob can’t be an association.
2. **Common interest or interests:** An association is not merely a collection of individuals. It consists of those individuals who have more or less the same interests. Accordingly, those who have political interests may join political associations, and those who have religious interests may join religious associations and so on.
3. **Cooperative spirit:** An association is based on the cooperative spirit of its members. People work together to achieve some definite purposes. Eg- a political party has to work together as a united group on the basis of cooperation in order to fulfil its objective of coming to power.
4. **Organisation**: Association denotes some kind of organisation. An association is known essentially as an organised group. Organisation gives stability and proper shape to an association. Organisation refers to the way in which the statuses and roles are distributed among the members.
5. **Regulation of relations:** Every association has its own ways and means of regulating the relations of its members. Organisation depends on this element of regulation. They may assume written or unwritten forms.
6. **Association as agencies:** Associations are means or agencies through which their members seek to realise their similar or shared interests. Such social organisations necessarily act not merely through leaders, but through officials or representatives, as agencies. Associations normally act through agents who are responsible for and to the association. This fact gives association a distinctive character and its peculiar legal status. Further, association may have its own methods of operation peculiar to it as an association,
7. **Durability of association:** An association may be permanent or temporary. There are some long- standing associations like the state, family, religious associations, etc. Some associations may be purely temporary in nature. Eg- associations that are established to felicitate some great writers, scientists, and religious leaders and associations created for performing some social, religious or other ceremony or fair on a grand scale.

It is clear from the above, that an association is not merely a group, it is something more than that. It is a group expressly organised around a particular interest. The qualification “expressly organised,” helps to distinguish between associations and other social groups. Social groups like class, crowd, mob, public, etc. in this way aren’t associations.

In modern society, the number of associations is on the increase. Not only their numbers is increasing, but their varieties are also increasing. In almost all the fields of our social life we have associations. The rapid changes that are taking place in different fields of our social life have necessitated the birth of a large number of associations. In modern democratic countries, associations have a distinct role to play. Their role in strengthening the democratic set-up can hardly be exaggerated. The modern age today, is really an age of organisations or associations. Man’s life is, today, to a very great extent, lived and controlled by the larger association (the state).

**Institutions**

The concept of institution is one of the most important in the entire field of sociology. Unfortunately, it is a concept that has not been consistently used by sociologists. The importance of understanding the concept of institution in order to understand society is, at the same time, recognised by all the sociologists. In fact, Durkheim has gone to the extent of defining sociology as the science of social institutions.

Ginsberg defines institutions as they “may be described as recognised and established usages governing the relations between individuals and groups.”

Maciver and Page, “Institutions may be defined as the established forms or conditions of procedure characteristic of group activity.”

An institution must be understood as standardised procedures and norms. They prescribe the way of doing things. They also prescribe rules & regulations that are to be followed. Marriage as an institution, for example, governs the relations between husband and wife.

Institutions are established by men themselves. They come into being due to the collective activities of the people and hence they are social in nature. Institutions cater to the basic and vital needs of man: the need for self-preservation, the need for self-perpetuation and the need for self-expression.

The inter-personal relations of the individuals are regulated by institutions. Institutions like religion, government, law, etc control the behaviour of men. These mechanisms preserve the social order and give stability to it. Hence they are responsible for unity and uniformity that are found in society. Institutions are thus the controlling mechanisms.

Institutions are often classified into primary and secondary institutions. The most basic institutions which are found even in primitive societies like religion, marriage, property, some kind of political system, are primary in character. As societies grew in size and complexity, institutions became progressive and more differentiated. Accordingly, a large number of institutions are evolved to cater to the secondary needs of people. They may be called secondary institutions. Eg- education, law, legislation, constitution, parliamentary procedure, etc.

Thus, institutions may persist in the form of oral and/or written traditions. For the primitive societies, they may be largely oral. But in modern complex societies, they may be observed in written as well as unwritten forms. There may be written institutional forms like constitutions, sacred text books, syllabus, governmental orders, business contracts, examination systems etc relating to political, religious, educational and economic institutions and so on.

It is important to note that institutions are abstract in nature. Hence they are not external, visible or tangible things; they are abstract. Thus, marriage can’t be kept in a museum, religion can’t be rated or quantified, law can’t be brought to the laboratory experiments and so on.

Institutions may have their own symbols, material or non-material. Eg- religion may have its own symbols like crescent, swastika; marriage may have its own wedding ring, or mangalsutra and so on.

Institutions though diverse are inter-related. Understanding of one institution requires the understanding of other related institutions. The religious, moral, educational, political, economic and other types of institutions are essentially interlinked.

Institutions normally do not undergo sudden or rapid changes. Changes take place slowly and gradually in them. Many institutions are rigid and enduring. They, in course of time, become the conservative elements in society. Eg- caste, religion, etc. In such a scenario, institutions may cause harmful effects as they might hamper the personalities of the people.

It is important to note that often the terms association and institution are used interchangeably when they in fact are different, and this difference between the two terms is of great importance in sociology. When men create associations, they must create institutions to get their desires fulfilled. Men form an association to satisfy their need or needs; but these needs are fulfilled through institutions. Every association has its own institutions. Eg- family as an association has its institutions like marriage, the property system, the home, etc. A state as an association may have its institutions like government, legislative procedure, parliament, etc. Institutions are impossible without associations. Institutions may be established by community as well as by association.