

What is Society

Individual is the basic component of society. The interaction of individuals with each other gives birth to group. The social groups interact with each other and develop relationships with each other, leads to a society. Within the society there are patterns and groupings on the basis of likeness and differences. "Likeness" creates a chain of relations among the individuals having similarity in one or more conditions' like same profession, same residence, same caste, family and kinship, college, age, sex etc."

Consciousness of kind is developed and the people of similar interests are joined together rustling in the formation of various groups and categories. Without difference in cultural conditions of a society the human life would have been monotonous and probably limited in which little change is predictable. The system of give and take relationship creates reciprocal roles in human life. These differences lead to variety of human behaviors and social division of labor; the process of specialization is developed. Man is dependent on society for basic needs satisfaction i.e. food, protection, education, etc. There are societies on local as well as on national levels.

Meaning of Society

This term has been derived from a Latin word 'socius' that means association or companionship. Thus society means 'A larger group of individuals, who are associative with each other'.

The term directly means association, togetherness, gregariousness, or simply group life. The concept of society refers to a relatively large grouping or collectivity of people who share more or less common and distinct culture, occupying a certain geographical locality, with the feeling of identity or belongingness, having all the necessary social arrangements or insinuations to sustain itself.

Definition of Society

- Prof Wright: It is a system of relationships that exists among the individuals of the groups.
- Linton: Any group of people who have lived and worked together long enough to get themselves organized and to think of themselves as a social unit with well defined limits".
- A.W. Green: It is the largest group in which individual have relationships.
- Maclver: It is a web of social relationship, which is always changing.

We may add a more revealing definition of society as defined by Calhoun et al (1994):

"A society is an autonomous grouping of people who inhabit a common territory, have a common culture (shared set of values, beliefs, customs and so forth) and are linked to one another through routinized social interactions and interdependent statuses and roles." Society also may mean a certain population group, a community

Basic Features of a Society

- First, a **society is usually a relatively large grouping of people** in terms of size. In a very important sense, thus, society may be regarded as the largest and the most complex social group that sociologists study.
 - Second, the most important thing about a society is that **its members share common and distinct culture**. This sets it apart from the other population groups.
 - Third, a **society also has a definite, limited space or territory**. The populations that make up a given society are thus locatable in a definite geographical area. The people consider that area as their own.
 - Fourth, the people who make up a society have the **feeling of identity and belongingness**. There is also the feeling of oneness. Such identity feeling emanates from the routinized pattern of social interaction that exists among the people and the various groups that make up the society.
 - Fifth, members of a society are considered to have a common origin and common historical experience. They feel that they have also common destiny.
 - Sixth, members of a society may also speak a common mother tongue or a major language that may serve as a national heritage.
 - Seventh, a **society is autonomous and independent** in the sense that it has all the necessary social institutions and organizational arrangements to sustain the system. However, a society is not an island, in the sense that societies are interdependent. There has always been inter-societal relations. People interact socially, economically and politically. It is important to note that the above features of a society are by no means comprehensive and they may not apply to all societies. The level of a society's economic and technological development, the type of economic or livelihood system a society is engaged in, etc may create some variations among societies in terms of these basic features.
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Characteristics of Society

A human society has the following characteristics:

1. Social Group of People

Society is the largest social group of people living together for a long period. It is composed of social groups of various types. All the groups perform their respective purpose and have their own structure. These groups can be classified on the basis of profession, caste, age, sex, literacy, residence, mobility, stratification, race and religion.

2. Social Institutions are the Main Organs

The interrelationship among institutions creates structure for the society. Following social institutions are found in all the societies of the world;

- Family
- Education
- Economy
- Politics
- Religion

3. Dynamism

No society is static, how so preliterate it may be? All societies change though the rate of change is slow. A society not changing at all means dead society. But there is no dead society today. Society is like water in a stream or river that flows forever.

4. Rural-Urban Composition

Human societies have at least two aspects rural and urban. **Rural** society is sparsely residing group of people with simple culture. **Urban** society lives in cluster with complex culture.

5. Presence of Culture

All human societies have their own culture. It is the way of life of people. Culture consists upon values, sentiments, attitudes, beliefs, customs, rituals, fashions, religion, law and all habits of man acquired as member of society. Culture is the expression of human nature in our ways of living and thinking, in behaving and acting as a member of society.

6. Organized in Nature

A society is organized by the process of inter-dependence among the groups and the institutions. This need binds them all together into an organized unit.

7. Limited Geographical Boundary

A society is spread in a limited geographical boundary. Because the human societies have political Governments in which territorial boundary is an essential condition.

8. Presence of Social System

A society has social systems in which the people participate within their roles according to status. These systems bind the individuals in various activities and thus regulate human behavior.

9. Mechanism of Social Norms and Social Sanctions

Human societies have their own social norms and social sanctions so that human behavior may be controlled.

10. Socialization of Individuals

The basic meaning socialization is process that teaches a man to behave according to the rules and norms of a society. People promulgate their views in the way which they taught as appropriate, thus socialization may differ from society to society and thus, culture to culture. Socialization process circulates throughout life in society. By this process, an individual is made a useful member of society.

11. 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. People have similarities with regards to their needs, works, aims, ideals, values, outlook towards life and so on.

12. Differences

Society also implies differences. 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. Family for example, rests on the biological difference between the sexes. People differ from one another in their looks, personality, talent, ability, attitude, interest, taste, intelligence, faith and so on.

13. Social Control

Society as its own ways and means of controlling the behavior of its members. Co-operation, no doubt exists in society. Society has law, legislation, constitution, police, court, army and other formal means of social control to regulate the behavior of its members.

14. Society Implies Interdependence

Social relations are characterized by interdependence. Family, the most basic social group, for example, is based upon the interdependence of man and women. Today, not only individuals are interdependent upon one another, but even, communities, social groups, societies and nations are also interdependent.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF MODERN SOCIETY

To help understand how modern society developed, sociologists find it useful to distinguish societies according to their type of economy and technology. One of the most useful schemes distinguishes the following types of societies: *hunting-and-gathering*, *horticultural*, *pastoral*, *agricultural*, and *industrial*. Some scholars add a final type, *postindustrial*, to the end of this list. We now outline the major features of each type in turn.

- **Hunting-and-gathering societies**

Beginning about 250,000 years ago, hunting-and-gathering societies are the oldest ones we know of; few of them remain today, partly because modern societies have replaced them. As the name *hunting-and-gathering* implies, people in these societies both hunt for food and gather plants and other vegetation. They have few possessions other than some simple hunting-and-gathering equipment. To ensure their mutual survival, everyone is expected to help find food and also to share the food they find. To seek their food, hunting-and-gathering peoples often move from place to place. Because they are nomadic, their societies tend to be quite small, often consisting of only a few dozen people.

Although men do most of the hunting and women most of the gathering, perhaps reflecting the biological differences between the sexes discussed earlier, women and men in these societies are roughly equal.

Because hunting-and-gathering societies have few possessions, their members are also fairly equal in terms of wealth and power, as virtually no wealth exists.

- **Horticultural and pastoral societies**

Horticultural and pastoral societies both developed about 10,000–12,000 years ago. In horticultural societies, people use simple hand tools to raise crops.

In pastoral societies, people raise and herd sheep, goats, camels, and other domesticated animals and use them as their major source of food and also, depending on the animal, as a means of transportation.

Some societies are either primarily horticultural or pastoral, while other societies combine both forms. Pastoral societies tend to be at least somewhat nomadic, as they often have to move to find better grazing land for their animals. Horticultural societies, on the other hand, tend to be less nomadic, as they are able to keep growing their crops in the same location for some time.

Both types of societies often manage to produce a surplus of food from vegetable or animal sources, respectively, and this surplus allows them to trade their extra food with other societies. It

also allows them to have a larger population size than hunting-and-gathering societies that often reaches several hundred members.

Accompanying the greater complexity and wealth of horticultural and pastoral societies is greater inequality in terms of gender and wealth than is found in hunting-and-gathering societies.

In pastoral societies, wealth stems from the number of animals a family owns, and families with more animals are wealthier and more powerful than families with fewer animals. In horticultural societies, wealth stems from the amount of land a family owns, and families with more land are wealthier and more powerful.

One other side effect of the greater wealth of horticultural and pastoral societies is greater conflict than hunting societies.

- **Agricultural Societies**

Agricultural societies developed some 5,000 years ago in the Middle East, thanks to the invention of the plow. When pulled by oxen and other large animals, the plow allowed for much more cultivation of crops than the simple tools of horticultural societies permitted. The wheel was also invented about the same time, and written language and numbers began to be used. The development of agricultural societies thus marked a watershed in the development of human society. Ancient Egypt, China, Greece, and Rome were all agricultural societies, and India and many other large nations today remain primarily agricultural.

We have already seen that the greater food production of horticultural and pastoral societies led them to become larger than hunting-and-gathering societies and to have more trade and greater inequality and conflict. Agricultural societies continue all these trends. First, because they produce so much more food than horticultural and pastoral societies, they often become quite large, with their numbers sometimes reaching into the millions. Second, their huge food surpluses lead to extensive trade, both within the society itself and with other societies. Third, the surpluses and trade both lead to degrees of wealth unknown in the earlier types of societies and thus to unprecedented inequality, exemplified in the appearance for the first time of peasants, people who work on the land of rich landowners. Finally, agricultural societies' greater size and inequality also produce more conflict. Some of this conflict is internal, as rich landowners struggle with each other for even greater wealth and power, and peasants sometimes engage in revolts. Other conflict is external, as the governments of these societies seek other markets for trade and greater wealth.

If gender inequality becomes somewhat greater in horticultural and pastoral societies than in hunting-and-gathering ones, it becomes very pronounced in agricultural societies.

- **Industrial Societies**

Industrial societies emerged in the 1700s as the development of machines and then factories replaced the plow and other agricultural equipment as the primary mode of production. The first machines were steam- and water-powered, but eventually, of course, electricity became the main source of power. The growth of industrial societies marked such a great transformation in many of the world's societies that we now call the period from about 1750 to the late 1800s the Industrial Revolution. This revolution has had enormous consequences in almost every aspect of society, some for the better and some for the worse.

On the positive side, industrialization brought about technological advances that improved people's health and expanded their life spans. As noted earlier, there is also a greater emphasis in industrial societies on individualism, and people in these societies typically enjoy greater political freedom than those in older societies. Compared to agricultural societies, industrial societies also have lowered economic and gender inequality. In industrial societies, people do have a greater chance to pull themselves up by their bootstraps than was true in earlier societies, and rags-to-riches stories continue to illustrate the opportunity available under industrialization.

On the negative side, industrialization meant the rise and growth of large cities and concentrated poverty and degrading conditions in these cities. It also led to urban violence that, among other things, and rise of the modern police force and forced factory owners to improve workplace conditions. Today industrial societies consume most of the world's resources, pollute its environment to an unprecedented degree, and have compiled nuclear arsenals that could undo thousands of years of human society in an instant.

- **Postindustrial Societies**

We are increasingly living in what has been called the *information technology age* (or just *information age*), as wireless technology with machines and factories as the basis for our economy. Compared to industrial economies, we now have many more service jobs, ranging from housecleaning to secretarial work to repairing computers. Societies are moving from an industrial to a postindustrial phase of development. In postindustrial societies, then, information technology and service jobs have replaced machines and manufacturing jobs as the primary dimension of the economy. If the car was the sign of the economic and social times back in the 1920s, then the smartphone or netbook/laptop is the sign of the economic and social future in the early years of the 21st century. If the factory was the dominant workplace at the beginning of the 20th century, with workers standing at their positions by conveyor belts, then cell phone, computer, and software

companies are dominant industries at the beginning of the 21st century, with workers, almost all of them much better educated than their earlier factory counterparts.

As part of post industrialization in the United States, many manufacturing companies have moved their operations from U.S. cities to overseas sites. Since the 1980s, this process has raised unemployment in cities, many of whose residents lack the college education and other training needed in the information sector. Partly for this reason, some scholars fear that the information age will worsen the disparities we already have between the “haves” and “have-nots” of society, as people lacking a college education will have even more trouble finding gainful employment than they do now.

Type of society Key characteristics

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| Hunting-and-gathering | These are small, simple societies in which people hunt and gather food. Because all people in these societies have few possessions, the societies are fairly egalitarian, and the degree of inequality is very low. |
| Horticultural and pastoral | Horticultural and pastoral societies are larger than hunting-and-gathering societies. Horticultural societies grow crops with simple tools, while pastoral societies raise livestock. Both types of societies are wealthier than hunting-and-gathering societies, and they also have more inequality and greater conflict than hunting-and-gathering societies. |
| Agricultural | These societies grow great numbers of crops, thanks to the use of plows, oxen, and other devices. Compared to horticultural and pastoral societies, they are wealthier and have a higher degree of conflict and of inequality. |
| Industrial | Industrial societies feature factories and machines. They are wealthier than agricultural societies and have a greater sense of individualism and a somewhat lower degree of inequality that still remains substantial. |
| Postindustrial | These societies feature information technology and service jobs. Higher education is especially important in these societies for economic success. |

Difference between Community and Society

“A community is said to exist when interaction between individuals has the purpose of meeting individual needs and obtaining group goals...a limited geographical area is another feature...the features of social interaction, structures for the gratification of physical, social and physical needs, and limited geographical area are basic to the definitions of community.” (Sussman, in Bell and Newby, pp. 29 and 30).

“Community is a social group with a common territorial base; those in the group share interests and have a sense of belonging to the group” (Robert Stebbins, *Sociology. The Study of Society*, Harper and Row: New York, 1987, p. 534).

Calhoun et al (1994): "A society is an autonomous grouping of people who inhabit a common territory, have a common culture (shared set of values, beliefs, customs and so forth) and are linked to one another through routinized social interactions and interdependent statuses and roles." Society also may mean a certain population group, a community

Difference between society and community

The main points of differences between society and community are the following:

- 1) Society is a web of social relationships. It includes every relationship which established among the people. This social relationship may be direct or Indirect, organised or unorganized, conscious or unconscious. But community consists group of individuals.
 - 2) A definite geographical area is not necessary for society. It is universal and pervasive; but, a definite geographical area is essential for a community.
 - 3) Community Sentiment or a sense of "we feeling" is not essential in a society; community sentiment is indispensable for a community. There can be no community in the absence of community sentiment.
 - 4) Society is wider; there can be more than one community in a society. Community smaller than society. There cannot be more that one society in a community.
 - 5) Society is abstract. It is a network of social relationships which cannot see or touched. On the other hand, community is concrete. It is a group of people living in a particular area. We can see this group and locate its existence.
 - 6) In a community, common interests and common objectives are necessary. People in a community live together for achievement of common interests and common objectives. On the other hand, common interests and common objectives are not necessary in society.
 - 7) Society involves both like-ness and difference. Both common and diverse interests are present in society. But, likeness is more important than difference in community.
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SEDENTARY SOCIETY

The sedentary is the society other than the nomadic having permanent settlement in rural urban areas.

CHARACTERISTICS:

Following are the chief characteristics of sedentary society.

(i) Permanent settlement: people of this society are permanently settled at one place. They live in villages, towns and cities constructing their houses.

(ii) Transfer of ancestral land: Agricultural and residential lands are found which transferred from generation to generation. Concept of private ownership of land and houses exists.

(iii) Stratified social change: Social change can be seen with very slow pace which also varies from area to area. Some of the areas are more advance and rate of change is high than the other areas.

(iv) Presence of sub culture: Multiculturalism exists in this kind of society. There have so other sub cultures and local cultures found with distinct identities.

(v) Presence of tribal group: Tribal people are also part of this society who are permanently settled on their land since centuries like tribe, kutchi tribe etc.

(vi) Low geographical mobility: Very low geographical mobility is found. People use to On their ancestral land and are emotionally attached with it.

(vii) Social reforms: Social reforms, in this society, are enforced by the authorities and government. People react against these reforms and try to live with their own way.

(viii) Ethnocentrism: a high degree of ethnocentrism is found and they are always ready to cooperate their members in case of any emergency.

(ix) Less social change: Problems like social deviance and crime are found but very minor of type due to slow pace of social change taking place in this society.

NOMADIC SOCIETY

Nomadic societies have no permanent place of settlement. The people roam from place to place with their luggage on the backs of camels, horses and donkeys in search fodder and water for their animals and food for themselves. They have no hereditary property. They are more a tribe and have tribal culture. The cultural traditions have very forceful binding upon the members.

CHARACTERISTICS:

Following are the chief characteristics of nomadic society.

- (i) Population size:** Population of this society is very small sometimes not more than thousands.
 - (ii) Geographical mobility:** Geographical mobility is common for the sake of food, grass, shelter water and income. They don't have their permanent place of residence.
 - (iii) Absence of ownership:** People of this society don't have agricultural or ancestral property.
 - (iv) Traditional way of living:** Their way of living is Old and traditional. Old customs and values are practiced and transmitted from generation to generation.
 - (v) Strict social norms:** They have defined their own social norms which are very strict in. Strict punishment is awarded by their council to the violator of norms.
 - (vi) Local Culture:** They are having their own subculture which include local language, dialect, dresses, marriage ceremonies, and practices on the Occasion of death and birth.
 - (vii) Profession:** Animal husbandry, labor and small cottage industry are the major of this society. Now some of them are serving in Arab states as laborer.
 - (viii) Resistance to social change:** People of this society dislikes and strongly resist to changes. They prefer to live with their own old way of living and culture. Therefore, very minimal changes observed in this society.
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RURAL SOCIETY

Rural is the society which is sparsely populated with emphasis on agricultural professions. Simple culture with natural environment and informal social life are the conditions. Homogeneity in professions, dress, language and customs of social life is usually found in such people. The rate of change is slow due to slow means of communication. Agriculture is their profession.

CHARACTERISTICS:

Following are the characteristics of rural society.

- (i) Open settlement:** they have open settlements. Patterns of houses are scattered and having open houses covering vast area for courtyard.
- (ii) Mud constructed houses:** most of the houses in these kinds of societies are mud constructed. Although use of bricks and stone is increasing in the societies.
- (iii) Agriculture:** most of the people of these societies are associated with agriculture profession. Some of them are also involve in labor related to agriculture.
- (iv) Informal social norms:** Informal social norms are more important and practiced than the formal social norms.
- (v) Informal social groups:** informality among different social groups is found. In the evening, people are used to sit at common place called 'dera' sharing daily activities and talking issues of the common interests.
- (vi) Informal social interaction:** interaction is more frequent, deep, fact-to-face and informal among the members of rural society.
- (vii) Informal social control:** modes of social control in rural societies are informal and more effective than the formal one. Panchayat system is very much effective and use for the solution of their day to day problem.
- (viii) Low literacy rate:** literacy rate in this kind of societies is generally low and females are discouraged to go for formal education.
- (ix) Less social change:** these kinds of societies are relatively static. very slow and selective modes of social change takes place.

(x) Attachment with religion: people of this society are emotionally attached with religious beliefs. Knowledge of the people in this society about religion is generally poor and they are the follower of Imam Masjid in their social life.

(xi) Poor urban facilities: urban facilities like hospital, schools, colleges, universities, paved roads, electricity, gas, telephone, internet, cable, recreational parks, big shopping malls etc. are lacking behind in this society.

Traditional Society

Traditional society is that society which has fewer social institutions. Simple culture with old ways of life exists. Means of communication were very slow and old. Urban life was very rarely found. Social changes were minimum and almost invisible.

Characteristics of Traditional Society

The traditional society is governed by traditions, customs, religion and conservation. Its characteristics may be discussed as below:

- 1) **Importance of Primary Institutions:** In the traditional society special significance is attached to primary institutions like family, neighborhood and community etc. Social behaviour is predominated by primary relations. Traditions represent the dominating pattern of behaviour.
- 2) **Comparative Isolation:** Traditional society is comparatively isolated from progressive society. In the modern sense, it is backward because the characteristics of our modern complex society are absent there. There is lack of industrialism and technological advancement.
- 3) **Lack of Scientific and Technological Progress:** Traditional society is very backward from the technological point of view as such there is dearth of industrialization. Production is carried on for the satisfaction of subsistence needs. There is no mass scale production and specialization. Mostly people earn their livelihood either through agriculture or cottage industries.
- 4) **Relatively Homogeneous:** A traditional society, in contrast to open or complex society is homogeneous. Social life is governed by traditions and customs. Apart from it, there is predominance of primary institutions which leads the growth of community sentiments.
- 5) **Intimate or Personal Relations:** Social relations in a traditional society are mostly of personal nature. They have a quality to collectivism and inner consistency in contrast to the individualistic behaviour in the complex society. Even member of the community knows the other member.
- 6) **Prominence of Primary Control:** In the traditional society there is prominence of primary control. Family, caste religion and clan are the main agencies which regulate social behaviour. The agencies of secondary control seldom develop because there is little impact of urbanization and modernisation.
- 7) **Prominence of conservation:** In the traditional society there is lack of intellectualism and conflicting ideologies. Members are highly motivated by their motivational ideas. Social life is relatively unchanged because it is connected with the ascribed bases of social existence.
- 8) **Rigid Social Structure:** The traditional society is rigid in its structure. Members of such society mostly live in rural and semi rural areas. Social life is governed by traditions and customs. Similarly, social stratification is based on the ascribed system. Due to these factors, traditional society is rigid in its structure.

- 9) **Lesser Social Mobility:** In a traditional society, there is less change in role and status. Similarly occupational changes are seldom. People generally follow to their heredity occupations, generally, the dominant activity is agriculture which is untouched by the scientific and technological progress. Due to these factors, mobility in a traditional society is very low.
 - 10) **Non-industrial Structure:** Structure of this society is non industrial. People of this society are associated with agriculture profession.
 - 11) **Simple Economic Institutions:** Industrialization and its related profession are lack in this type of society. Due to this, simple economic professions are found. Most of the people are associated with agriculture, labor, and small scale business.
 - 12) **Simple Way of Living:** Simple way of living along with old pattern of houses is common. Facilities like electricity, gas and telephone are rarely available.
 - 13) **Kacha tracks and roads:** Paved road network for cars and other heavy vehicles are rarely found. Although kacha tracks are available for tongas, bull cart etc.
 - 14) **Lack of modern communication facilities:** Modern communication facilities like telephone, gas, electricity, internet, fax, mobile phone, airport etc are not available. People are mostly dependent on traditional models like postal service, telegram etc.
 - 15) **Slow Social Interaction:** Social interaction among members of this society is very slow. Modern swift communication devices like internet, fax, mobile phone and telephone are not use for the purpose. This is just due to the slow pace of life of this society.
 - 16) **Limited social institutions:** Only basic social institutions are found very poor resources fulfilling the basic needs of the people. Working organizations or sub institutions of basic institutions are not found for which they have to travel to the cities for need satisfaction.
 - 17) **Small Population:** Population size of this kind of society is very small. People are scattered and settled on their land.
 - 18) **Lack of Invention:** People do not want to invent something new. Rather they discourage inventions and resist to social change.
 - 19) **Less Social Change:** Very lesser degree of social change takes places. People adopt only those changes which are compatible to their socio-economic needs and tastes.
 - 20) **Lack of basic civic facilities:** Basic civic facilities like electricity, gas, telephone, drinking water system, mobile phone, fax, internet, road networks, airports, shopping mall and commercial centre etc are not available in this society.
 - 21) **Protection of religious and cultural values:** These people are true guardians of religious and cultural values of their societies.
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