**SOCIAL CONTROL AND DEVIANCE**

Every group within society, and even human society itself, depends on norms for its existence. These very norms make social life possible by making behavior predictable. We can count on most people most of the time to meet the expectations of others. As a result there is some kind of *social order* in the society.

**Social order** is a group's usual and customary social arrangements, on which members depend and on which they base their lives. Without social order there is likely to be chaos.

**Social Control**

Every society or group develops its mechanism for making its members to obey the norms for the smooth functioning of its life. These are the attempts of society to regulate people's thoughts and behavior. This process, may be formal or informal, is referred to as *social control*. Hence **social control** is a group's formal and informal means of enforcing its norms.

**Deviance**

Sociologists use the term *deviance* to refer to the violation of norms. *How* a society defines deviance, *which* is branded as deviant, and *what* people decide to do about deviance all have to do the way society is organized.

Hence:

... *It is not the act itself, but the reactions to the act, that makes something deviant.*

In other words, people's behavior must be viewed from the framework of the culture in which that takes place. Therefore it is group's definition of behavior, not the behavior itself that makes it deviant. Perhaps everybody violates the norms of society, but every violation may not be defined as deviance. So, what is deviance", is the creation of the society i.e. an act to which people responds negatively is deviance .Social creation of deviance and crime is also called **social construction** of deviance and crime. *The preceding discussion can also be called as "relativity of deviance."* An act, which is called deviance by one group in one culture, is considered as praise worthy by another group in another culture. Similarly what is deviance at one time may not be considered so at another time. Look at somebody who is called by one group as a terrorist and by another as a freedom fighter. Sociologists usually use the term *deviance* non-judgmentally. The concept of deviance can be applied to individual acts and to the activity of groups. Deviant group behavior may result in deviant sub-culture.

**Crime**

Crime is the violation of norms that are written into law. An act approved in one group may be a crime punishable by death in another group, which suggests the cultural relativity of crime. Look at honor killing, homosexuality, polygamy, and cousin marriages; these are all examples of cultural relativity of crime. Acts of suicide bombers may be considered as positive (acts of bravery) in one situation and negative in another.

Deviance and crime are not synonymous but these may overlap. In fact deviance is much broader than crime because it can apply to all those acts, which violate the norms of society; norms may be unwritten.

The crimes are such acts that violate those norms that are enacted into the laws of society with special agencies for their enforcement.

**Deviants**:

Deviants are those people who violate the norms and rules of society. People usually react negatively against such violations.

**Stigma:**

To be considered as deviant, a person may not have to do anything. Sociologist Erving Goffman used the term **stigma** to refer to attributes that discredit people. These are the "blemishes" that discredit a person's claim to a "normal" identity. Without the choice of a person these are the violations of norms of ability (maazoor i.e. handicapped due to blindness, deafness, mental disability), and norms of appearance (facial birthmark, obesity). It can also be involuntary membership in groups such as relatives of criminals or victims of AIDS. The stigma becomes a person's master status, defining him or her as deviant.

A stigma operates as a master status overpowering other aspects of social identity so that a person is discredited in the minds of others, becoming socially isolated, and may start following a deviant behavior.

In this perspective, as individuals develop a stronger commitment to deviant behavior they typically acquire a **stigma, a powerfully negative label that greatly changes a person's self-concept and social** **identity.**

**Juvenile Delinquency**

Juvenile delinquency refers to the violation of legal standards by the young. Who is young is again a relative concept and has social construction. Nevertheless, it is defined under the law of the country.

**Labeling**

Labeling implies giving "*bad-name" (budnaam)* to individuals. It implies that the labels people are given affect their own and others' perceptions of them, thus channeling their behavior either into deviance or into conformity.

A labeling theory has been developed by Howard Becker, under which there is *an assertion that deviance and* *conformity result not so much from what people do as from how others respond to those actions.*

Some people are tagged with a negative social label that radically changes a person's self-concept and social identity. This very label could act as a `master status' as discussed earlier.

No act is intrinsically deviant; it is the people's creation. In fact it is the creation of people in *power,* who impose the labels (categories of deviance). *Deviant behavior is behavior that people so label.* Individual accepts the label and acts accordingly.

Labeling a child as delinquent is actually stigmatizing him as criminal, and resultantly he is likely to be considered as untrustworthy. Society isolates him and he gets isolated.

**Primary and Secondary Deviation**

The action that provokes only slight reaction from others and has little effect on a person's self-concept is *primary deviance.* For example skipping school or initial act of stealing may be ignored. But when people notice some one's deviance and make something of it and give a label on repeated violations, may be as a reaction the person repeatedly violates a norm and begins to take on a deviant identity. This may be called as secondary deviation