UNIT 2: SOCIAL STRUCTURE AND DEVELOPMENT

UNIT STRUCTURE

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2.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to-

- understand the meaning of social structure
- know the meaning of culture and its types
- comprehend social structure as facilitator of development
- understand social structure as inhibitor of development

2.2 INTRODUCTION

Human beings, like other animals, have needs. At the minimum level it refers to the basic needs such as food, shelter, and clothes. But none of these needs can be fulfilled living all alone in a society. Thus, human being interacts with another individual and makes several relationships which can be easily recognized in the form of formal and informal relations. We

all know that human being is a social animal who has never lived nor can ever live alone. Thus developing relationships is nothing to be surprised at. When human beings relate themselves to each other they establish a structural form. It may be a group, an association or an organization. This unit highlights the concept of social structure and is role in development.

2.3 SOCIAL STRUCTURE: MEANING AND DEFINITIONS

The concept of social structure has been widely discussed by various scholars. It can be viewed as a creative process in which individuals establish patterns of relationships to satisfy their needs. We, as members of family realize the expectations of our role as son, daughter, father, mother etc. We are expected to do certain jobs in certain ways. In short we find that society is already there like a stage when we arrive on the scene as actors i.e. social structures appear to us, not as a product of our own activity, but as a thing with a life of its own that requires us to behave in a certain way.

The meaning of social structure can be easily understood if we take the example of organic structure. An organic structure say the human body, is an arrangement of different parts like hand, limbs, legs etc which are arranged in a systematic way so as to create a pattern. These parts are inert-linked and interdependent upon each other. Though the parts of organic structures are the same in every case, yet the form of organic structure of the people differs. Similarly every social structure has similar parts or institutions such as family, religion, political organization etc, but the forms of social structure differ.

Stated below are some of the definitions of social structure, put forward by different scholars.

Morris Ginsberg regards social structure as "the complex of principal groups and institutions which constitute societies".

Radcliffe-Brown defines social structure as "an arrangement of persons in institutionally controlled or defined relationships, (such as the relationship between King and his subjects, or that of husband and wife)".



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q1: What are the basic needs of a human being?

Q2: Why human being cannot live alone?

Q3: How do social relationships emerge?

Q4: Is social structure an abstract or concrete phenomenon?

Q5: What can social structures be compared to, in order to understand it better?

Q6: How are the parts of an organism connected to each other?

Q7: What kind of relationship is there between different parts of an organism?

2.4 VIEWS OF SOCIAL THINKERS ON SOCIAL STRUCTURE

Herbert Spencer (1820-1903)

Herbert Spencer was one of the early scholars to use the term 'structure'. The fact that Spencer brought the terms 'structure' and 'function' into direct association shows that he had an anatomical image in mind.

S.F. Nadel (1903-1956)

He emphasized that in order to study society; social relationships must be referred to instead of private relationships, as they show consistency over a period of time. And according to him, role is the most important dimension in the concept of social structure.

Radcliffe Brown (1881-1955)

He was a great social anthropologist of England. He belongs to the structural-functional school of Sociology. He stated, "Social Structures are just as real as are individual organism." An individual or organism is a collection of different parts arranged in a certain pattern to function as whole; similarly, social structure refers to an arrangement of parts or components related to one another in some sort of larger unity.

2.5 CHARACTERISTICS OF SOCIAL STRUCTURE

The different parts of a social structure work in coordination with each other for the maintenance of the society as a whole. The structures are not static but change according to the needs and expectations of the society. The main features of social structure are:

1. Endurance

Social structures are not formed in a day or two; these are established over a period of time when people start recognizing them collectively. Thus these are relatively of an enduring type which means that it is permanent in nature. Here permanent doesn't mean structures have no scope for change, it simply means that only a slow and gradual change is possible depending on the needs and expectations of a society.

2. Abstract

The term 'structure' as already discussed refers to "some sort of ordered arrangements of parts or components. But the component of the social structure is none other than the human beings who form a pattern of relationships (abstract) in some sort of larger unity.

3. Continuity

Persons who are members of any organization, political party, and religious group may leave after some time but these structures continue to exist as an arrangement of persons with some other individuals.

4. Patterned Arrangement

The concept 'social structure' draws its original inspiration from the works of Herbert Spencer who compared a society with that of a living organism. He established this analogy on the basis of the pattern and working of society and human body. An organism and society are made up of different parts that are inter-linked and inter-dependent upon each other and thus maintain the equilibrium necessary for a society.

5. Normative Base

The parts of a social structure do not work in a haphazard manner but instead follow proper norms and values of the society that guide an individual about the behavior expected from him. An individual is punished for disobeying the norms of society so the members live together harmoniously.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q8: How did Herbert Spencer explain social structures?

Q9: Which dimension was focused by Nadel?

Q10: Whose ideas are similar to that of Spencer's?

Q11: What is the meaning of endurance?

Q12: What are the components of social structures?

Q13: Why are the social structures considered as abstract?

Q14: Can social structures disappear completely?

Q15: When the individual members die or leave any structures, then how does the social structure continue?

Q16: How is social order maintained?

Q17: What are the norms of a social structure?

2.6 ELEMENTS OF SOCIAL STRUCTURE

- Status: Linton (1936) has noted two types of statuses:-

  (a) Ascribed Status, (b) Achieved Status

- Role
- Power
- Prestige
- Norms
- Values



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q18: What is status?

Q19: How many types of statuses are there? Name them.

Q20: What are roles?

Q21: What are norms?

2.7 CULTURE

The Sanskrit term for culture is sanskriti. Both 'sanskrit' and 'Samskriti' are derived from samaskar, meaning ritual performance, which is a process of refinement. Human being is born as a social being; human beings undergo the process of socialisaiton and become cultured individuals by going through the samaskars. In general terms, a culture can be said to include all the human phenomena in a society that are not the products of biological inheritance. The ways in which we adopt to our environment are called collectively as culture. No society is devoid of culture. To put it in other words, all societies (preliterate or literate) have culture in some or the other from.

In the words of E. Tylor:

"Culture is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society."

Characteristics of Culture

1. It is shared by the members of the society.
2. It is learned and acquired, not inborn or instinctive.
3. It is material and non-material both.
4. It has adaptability and its elements are interrelated.
5. It is transmitted from generation to generation.

Types of Culture

1. **Material Culture:** Material culture includes the objects or belongings of human beings, including a wide range of physical items i.e. things that you can see, feel or touch has the potential to be an item of material culture. Architecture, photographs, documents, artwork, gardens, a can of soda are all examples of material culture.
2. **Non-material Culture:** Non-material culture refers to the nonphysical ideas that people have about their culture, including beliefs, values, rules, norms, morals, language, organizations, and institutions. When considering non-material culture, Sociologists refer to several processes that a culture uses to shape its members' thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Four of the most important of these are symbols, language, values, and norms.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q22: How many types of culture are there? Name them.

2.8 SOCIAL STRUCTURE AS FACILITATOR/INHIBITOR OF DEVELOPMENT

2.8.1 Role of caste in development

Caste is known as Jati in common parlance. Caste as a system of social relations has been a central point in Hindu society for several centuries. A lot of conjectures, controversies and explanations have come up about its origin, nature, and role in Indian society.

The Varna theory is also known as traditional theory or Divine origin theory. The main source of this is the Purush Sukta of the Rigveda. According to Purush Sukta, the four 'arnas originate from the four different parts of the 'viraat purush'. According to this theory, the Brahmins had emerged from the mouth of Supreme beings, Kshatriyas from the arms, Vaishyas from the thigh and the Shudras from the feet. It is clear now that the Hindu religious scriptures divide the Indian society into four Varnas. Supposedly knowledgeable Brahmins are at the top. The administrator warrior Kshatriya occupies the second place in the hierarchy. Then come the cultivator trader Vaishyas. Shudras or servants, who serve the higher castes, are at the bottom.

Caste is ascribed by birth. Hence, membership to a particular caste group automatically assigns professional identities to an individual, as has been indicated above. One of the significant drawbacks of the caste system is that it does not provide any opportunity to individuals to change the occupation according to the capability. Thus it implies that the achievement orientation is missing in the caste system which further hinders people's

creativity, innovativeness etc. However, it must be noted that the rigidity of the caste based occupation system has weakened over time, particularly in the urban spaces of the country.

Another limitation of the caste system pointed out by several scholars is the lack of inter-caste mixing and mobility. The Caste System ensures sexual division of labour, orderliness and regulation of behavior of its members through endogamy. This division of labour is expected to keep the scope of conflict or disharmony low. Rigidity in case of marriage curbs on the individual liberty and reduces the opportunity of inter-mixing among different castes which is important for development.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q23: Is Caste ascribed or achieved?

2.8.2 Religion as a facilitator or inhibitor of development

There has always been a continuous debate on whether religion promotes or hinders development. Various social scientists have presented their views on the relation between religion and development. For instance, Karl Marx contended that social and cultural phases of human evolution are the consequences rather than the causes of economic forces. The relation between religion and economic development was effectively analysed by Max Weber in his "The Protestant Ethics and the spirit of Capitalism"(1930).

Max Weber on Religion

The principal theme of his work is that, there is a direct relationship between ethics of the community and the character of its economic system.

According to Max Weber, ethic or ideology and economic system influence each other and at times the ethical principles make way for economic changes. He believes that the two are inter-dependent. In order to prove his theory Weber selects the economic ethics and famous six religion of the world namely, Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism, Jainism, Christianity and Judaism and study the economic ethics of each one of them and look at their effect on the economic and social organization of the people who follow that particular religion. The best part of his work is seeing in term of the relationship between Protestants and capitalism. In the capitalist order of work, we are more concerned about the development, specialization and division of labour and maximizing profit. According to Weber the capitalist order in society is guided by a certain kind of motivation that could be seen in the Protestants ethics because it were the protestants who created favourable condition for the growth of capitalism instead of Catholics. He also proved that Protestants are economically better off as compared to Catholics.

Religious philosophies are characterized by various elements. Analysis of such elements enables to understand the role that religious philosophies may have in the process of development. Discussed below are some religious philosophies.

1. Doctrine of Karma

A Hindu accepts his/her caste, occupation, possession etc. as a result of his/her 'Karma". It operates like a law of causation whereby life of an individual 'self' is determined by its actions i.e. present life is the result of the actions of the previous life and one has to face the consequences of present life in the next life.

2. Illusion (Maya)

Several religions believe in 'other-worldly' things i.e. for them this world is an illusion. It is believed that mankind does not have control over his/her present as well as future lives since all depend upon his/her karma. The

belief in karma theory may further inculcate in them the feeling of renunciation.

3. Destiny

The notion that life in this world is the consequence of actions in the previous life and that present actions would determine the next life, makes the present life 'transitory' or secondary'. Thus destiny is comprehended as a pre- decided entity.

4. Elimination of desires

Some religions believe in asceticism and abstinence. It is believed that there are no sufferings if there are no desires. Thus elimination of desires is the ultimate goal.

5. Teachings of spiritual scriptures

The scriptures of different religions lay down various teachings to its followers. For example, the holy book laid stress on action (karma) by active involvement in performing one's duty, without expecting the reward for the same. This clearly indicates the notion "Do good and forget it". Gita considers work inevitable as no one can live without doing work. Religion, thus, focuses on the life of action rather than renunciation of desires.

6. Spiritual Values

Spiritual values are assigned top priority, while material pursuits are placed lowest in the scale. Welty(1973) states:

"Justice and mercy are valued more highly than injustice and cruelty. Spiritual values such as beauty, love and righteousness are of more importance than that of intellectual values such as logic, keenness, clarity and other skills. Below the spiritual and intellectual skills some biological values such as health and vitality and finally material values such as wealth and the like".

Thus an individual performs the action that is of higher values.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q24: How does the doctrine of Karma hinders the development?

Q25: Why is elimination of desires is important according to some?

2.8.3 Population as facilitator or inhibitor of development

India is the second largest country in terms of size of its population. One-sixth of the world's population lives in India. India is an overpopulated country because the growth of its population is much faster than the rate of its economic development. Unemployment, poverty, migration and slow mobility are mainly due to lack of balance between population growth and economic development.

Disadvantages of High Population Growth

1. The problem of overpopulation has created unevenness with regard to migration, employment opportunities, standards of living and styles of life.

2. If the present rate of growth continues, the new addition in the population would require more food, more educational infrastructure, health and medical facilities, more investment in education, housing and transport, the cost of which India can ill-afford.

3. Level of urbanization has increased from 27.81% in 2001 Census to 31.16% in 2011 Census and the proportion of rural population declined from 72.19% to 68.84%. Despite this change, the pressure on agriculture and allied pursuits has not come down.

4. There is a great deal of unemployment and underemployment in India due to overpopulation.

5. A sizeable section is below the poverty line and a large number of people do not get their minimum needs fulfilled. There are limited resources and numerous aspirants for them.

6. Overcrowding of our cities has brought about a virtual breakdown of transportation, electricity and other services. It has also led to the increased crime and violence.

7. Labour could get much low wage rates and thus the richer classes derive more surplus that goes directly in the pocket of those few only, and a larger section of the society is left behind in the overall development.

8. Increased population growth brings down per capita income and nullifies effects of increased productivity and income. Not only this, it hinders development of infrastructure because large investments need cannot be made available.

Advantages of Population Growth

1. India is the second largest country in terms of population, but it is also has the second largest trained and technically qualified manpower in the world.

2. Increase population implies human capital, one of the most important forms of capital in a nation, more than the physical capital (i.e. machinery, equipment etc). Thus there is an increase in each individual's capital in a very special form: skills and education.

3. Much of hunger in India is not due to over-population but because of poor yield and economic deprivation of the lower castes. If the Indian farmer cultivated his/her land as carefully as the Japanese, he/she would obtain nearly four times the yield of rice from the same area.

4. According to Census 2011, 41 % population is under 20yrs and nearly half of the population is of working age i.e. 20-59 age group. This implies that if young and active minds are trained in right direction, then it could benefit the nation.

5. Population growth also leads to an increase in the rate of savings. A rapidly growing population contains fewer old people as indicated by 2011 census (only 9% above 60 yrs). This means a higher proportion of men in the prime of life, able and willing to save.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q26: Do you think population can help develop any country? How?

Q27: How can population growth inhibit development?



2.9 LET US SUM UP

- Human being interacts with another individual and makes several relationships called social relations.
- Social structure is an abstract phenomenon.
- Every social structure has similar parts or institutions such as family, religion, political organization etc.
- Herbert Spencer was the first Sociologist who took Darwins's theory and applied it to how societies change and evolve over time.
- Social Structures are abstract, continuous and permanent in nature.
- Social Structure imparts order to the society.
- Status, Role, Power, Prestige, Norms, Values are the elements of Social Structures.

- Culture includes all the human phenomena in a society that are not the products of biological inheritance.
- Material culture includes the objects or belongings of human beings that you can see, feel or touch etc.
- Non-material culture refers to the nonphysical ideas that people have about their culture, including beliefs, values, rules, norms, morals, language, organizations, and institutions.
- According to Weber the capitalist order in society is guided by a certain kind of motivation that could be seen in the Protestants ethics because it was protestant which created favourable condition for the growth of capitalism instead of Catholics.
- India is the second largest country in terms of size of its population. One-sixth of the world's population lives in India.
- A high population growth has both advantages and disadvantages.



2.10 FURTHER READING

1) Rawat H.K.(2007), *Sociology: Basic concepts,* Rawat Publications.

2) Bhushan Vidya (2014), *An introduction to Sociology,* Kitab Mahal.

3) Shankar Rao C.N. (2007), *Sociology: Principles of sociology with an introduction to social thought,* S. CHAND.

4) Sharma K.L. (2007), *Indian Social Structure and Change,* Rawat Publications.



2.11 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: Food, shelter and clothes.

Ans to Q No 2: because he is a social animal

Ans to Q No 3: Through the process of social interaction.

Ans to Q No 4: Abstract

Ans to Q No 5: Organism

Ans to Q No 6: systematic way or in a pattern

Ans to Q No 7: Parts are inter-dependent and inter-linked

Ans yo Q No 8: by comparing with human body

Ans to Q No 9: Role

Ans to Q No 10: Radcliffe Brown

Ans to Q No 11: Permanent

Ans to Q No 12: Human beings

Ans to Q No 13: The social relationships developed by parts are not visible.

Ans to Q No 14: No, they are continuous.

Ans to Q No 15: It replaces individuals with other individuals.

Ans to Q No 16: Social order is maintained through cooperation between different parts.

Ans to Q No 17: Norms are the guidelines or blueprints.

Ans to Q No 18: Socially defined positions

Ans to Q No 19: Ascribed Status and Achieved Status

Ans to Q No 20: The task assign to each individual

Ans to Q No 21: Norms are the guidelines.

Ans to Q No 22: Two, material and non-material culture.

Ans to Q No 23: It is ascribed

Ans to Q No 24: By making people believe that nothing is in their hand.

Ans to Q No 25: Because desires are responsible for all the sufferings.

Ans to Q No 26: Yes, by using the human capital in appropriate direction.

Ans to Q No 27: Growth in population implies shortage of resources.

2.12 MODEL QUESTIONS

A) Short Questions (Answer each question in about 150 words)

Q1: What do you understand by the term Social Structure?

Q2: Discuss few features of social structure.

B) Long Questions (Answer each question in about 300-500 words)

Q1: What is the meaning of culture? Discuss its types with examples.

Q2: Explain in detail whether social structures act as facilitator or inhibitor of development?

Q3: Explain in details if caste provides hindrance to the development of a nation.

Q4: Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of the growth in population in the development of a country.

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