

## **B.A. / B.Sc. Sem-II (Anthropology)**

### **Paper-III Unit- I**

#### **Characteristics of Society:**

##### **1. Society is abstract:**

If society is viewed as web of social relationships, it is distinct from physical entity which we can see and perceive through senses. As written earlier, Maclver argued, “we may see the people but cannot see society or social structure, but only its only external aspects”. Social relationships are invisible and abstract. We can just realize them but cannot see or touch them. Therefore, society is abstract. Reuter wrote: “Just as life is not a thing but a process of living, so society is not a thing but a process of associating”.

##### **2. Likeness and difference in society:**

Society involves both likeness and difference. If people are all exactly alike, merely alike, their relationships would be limited. There would be little give-and- take and little reciprocity. If all men thought alike, felt alike, and acted alike, if they had the same standards and same interests, if they all accepted the same customs and echoed the same opinions without questioning and without variation, civilization could never have advanced and culture would have remained rudimentary. Thus, society needs difference also for its existence and continuance.

We can illustrate this point through the most familiar example of family. The family rests upon the biological differences between the sexes. There are natural differences of aptitude, of capacity, of interest. For they all involve relationships in which differences complement one another, in which exchange take place.

Likeness and difference are logical opposites but for understanding likeness, comprehension of its relation to the other is necessary. Society exists among those who have some degree of likeness in mind and in body. F.H. Giddings called this quality of society as “consciousness of kind” (a sense of likeness). Though likeness and difference both are necessary for the society to exist, but difference is always subordinated to likeness in society. Likeness has a predominant share in the constitution of society.

##### **3. Cooperation and conflict in society:**

Cooperation and conflict are universal elements in human life. Society is based on cooperation but because of internal differences, there is conflict also among its members. This is why, Maclver and Page observed that “society is cooperation crossed by conflict”. We know from our own experience that a person would be handicapped, showed down, and feels frustrated if he is expected to do everything alone, without the aid of others. “Cooperation is most elementary process of social life without which society is impossible” (Gisbert, 1957).

##### **4. Society is a process and not a product:**

“Society exists only as a time sequence. It is becoming, not a being; a process and not a product” (Maclver and Page, 1956). In other words, as soon as the process ceases, the product disappears. The product of a machine endures after the machine has been scrapped. To some extent the same is true not only of material relics of man’s past culture but even of his immaterial cultural achievements.

## 5. Society as a system of stratification:

Society provides a system of stratification of statuses and classes that each individual has a relatively stable and recognizable position in the social structure.

### Types of Societies:

**a) Professional Societies :** These societies are promoted by the professionals to enhance their profession and bring out a common code of conduct. These societies are also termed as associations

. They also include information societies, knowledge societies, academic societies and scientific societies, viz., Indian Management Association, Indian Society of Chartered Accountants, Association of Indian Universities, Indian Medical Association, etc.

**(b) Charitable Societies :** These are non-profit organizations to help the needy persons of the societies. Sometimes, they are also known as Non-government Organizations, financially supported by corporate and other philanthropists.

**(c) Economic Cooperative Societies:** Many societies like housing, agro-processing, credit, marketing etc., help their members in the particular trade, either through their own resources or from the Government. Examples are cooperative housing societies, cooperative banks, district marketing co-operative societies, each helping in marketing specific product like tea, coffee, jute, plantation, etc.

**(d) Religious and Cultural Societies:** These societies are formed to revive and maintain specific cultures, traditions and religious foundations. Examples are ISKON, Swaminarayan Temple Trust, Church associations, etc.

### Advantages of a Society

- (a) It promotes teamwork.
- (b) It teaches cooperation.
- (c) It teaches to share and care.
- (d) It brings in synergy.
- (e) It sets norms of behaviour for peaceful living.
- (f) In economic society, it reduces the cost of living. It provides physical and psychological protection.
- (h) It provides a balance between independence and inter-dependence.

### Disadvantages of a Society

- (a) It sets norms and thus curbs individual freedom to grow.
- (b) Society uses coercive methods for compliance of social norms.
- (c) Coercion can be physical and mental, which is detrimental to the general health of an individual.

## Community

The word "community" derives from the Old French *comuneté*, which comes from the Latin *communitas* "community", "public spirit"

A **community** is a small or large social unit (a group of people) who have something in common, such as norms, religion, values, or identity. Communities often share a sense of place that is situated in a given geographical area (e.g. a country, village, town, or neighborhood) or in virtual space through communication platforms. Durable relations that extend beyond immediate genealogical ties also define a sense of community. People tend to define those social ties as important to their identity, practice, and roles in social institutions like family, home, work, government, society, or humanity, at large.<sup>[1][2]</sup> Although communities are usually small relative to personal social ties (micro-level), "community" may also refer to large group affiliations (or macro-level), such as national communities, international communities, and virtual communities.

### **Definitions of Community:**

“A set of interrelationships among social institutions in a locality” (Bell and Newby,).

“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,).

“Community is, first, a place, and second, a configuration as a way of life, both as to how people do things and what they want, to say, their institutions and goals” (Kaufman in Bell and Newby).

“Community is a number of families residing in a relatively small area within which they have developed a more or less complete socio-cultural definitions imbued with collective identifications and by means of which they resolve problems arising from the sharing of an area” (Sutton and Kolaja, in Bell and Newby).

“Community refers to a structure of relationships through which a localized population provides its daily requirements” (Hawley in Bell and Newby).

“Community is a collection of people who share a common territory and meet their basic physical and social needs through daily interaction with one another” (in Allan Johnson, *Human Arrangements*, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Publishers: Orlando, 1986).

“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).

“Community is a body of people living in the same locality...Alternatively, a sense of identity and belonging shared among people living in the same locality..., Also, the set of social relations found in a particular bounded area” (Sylvia Dale, *Controversies in Sociology. A Canadian Introduction*, Copp, Clark and Pitman: Toronto, 1990).

## **Types of Community:**

There are two types of communities Rural and Urban communities, due to different social conditions in both rural and urban areas.

### **Rural Community**

Rural community is a natural phenomenon. It is present in every society of the world having distinct culture and pattern of social life. It is actually a product of natural free will of the people having extreme similarity in their objectives and ambitions of living. Agriculture is the main identity and element. People of this community mostly have. Face to face 'interaction with high degree of homogeneity in their identities. Basic urban facilities like school, hospital, market, municipal office, police station etc. are usually missing in this community.

### **Urban Community**

Urban community is the opposite of rural community. The urban people lifestyle are highly impersonal with each other along high degree of complexity and heterogeneity in their living style and identities. It is actually a product of rational choice. A complex division of labour with specialization in their jobs is the identity of urban community. Modern civic facilities are usually available.

## **Characteristics of Community:**

### **(1) A group of people:**

A group of people is the most fundamental or essential characteristic or element of community. This group may be small or large but community always refers to a group of people. Because without a group of people we can't think of a community, when a group of people live together and share a common life and bind by a strong sense of community consciousness at that moment a community is formed. Hence a group of people is the first pre-requisites of community.

### **(2) A definite locality:**

It is the next important characteristic of a community. Because community is a territorial group. A group of people alone can't form a community. A group of people forms a community only when they reside in a definite territory. The territory need not be fixed forever. A group of people like nomadic people may change their habitations. But majority community is settled and a strong bond of unity and solidarity is derived from their living in a definite locality.

### **(3) Community Sentiment:**

It is another important characteristic or element of community. Because without community sentiment a community can't be formed only with a group of people and a definite locality. Community sentiment refers to a strong sense of awe feeling among the members or a feeling of belonging together. It refers to a sentiment of common living that exists among the members of a locality. Because of common living within an area for a long time a sentiment of common living is created among the members of that area. With this the members emotionally identify themselves. This emotional identification of the members distinguishes them from the members of other community.

**(4) Neutrality:**

Communities are naturally organized. It is neither a product of human will nor created by an act of government. It grows spontaneously. Individuals become the member by birth.

**(5) Permanence:**

Community is always a permanent group. It refers to a permanent living of individuals within a definite territory. It is not temporary like that of a crowd or association.

**(6) Similarity:**

The members of a community are similar in a number of ways. As they live within a definite locality they lead a common life and share some common ends. Among the members similarity in language, culture, customs, and traditions and in many other things is observed. Similarities in these respects are responsible for the development of community sentiment.

**(7) Wider Ends:**

A community has wider ends. Members of a community associate not for the fulfillment of a particular end but for a variety of ends. These are natural for a community.

**(8) Total organised social life:**

A community is marked by total organized social life. It means a community includes all aspects of social life. Hence a community is a society in miniature.

**(9) A Particular Name:**

Every community has a particular name by which it is known to the world. Members of a community are also identified by that name. For example people living in Odisha is known as Odia.

**(10) No Legal Status:**

A community has no legal status because it is not a legal person. It has no rights and duties in the eyes of law. It is not created by the law of the land.

**(11) Size of Community:**

A community is classified on the basis of its size. It may be big or small. Village is an example of a small community whereas a nation or even the world is an example of a big community. Both the type of community are essential for human life.

**(12) Concrete Nature:**

A community is concrete in nature. As it refers to a group of people living in a particular locality we can see its existence. Hence it is concrete.

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*With Best Wishes For Bright Future & Carrier*

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