UNIT 5 SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS AND SOCIAL CONTROL

Structure

5.0 INTRODUCTION

This unit is divided into two sections. The first deals with social institutions and the second section deals with social control. In this unit we will learn about the various institutions in a society. One can find social institutions all over the world. A social institution is an organized collection of statuses, roles, values and norms that are designed to fulfil one or many basic needs of the society. Social institutions vary from region to region.

Social control is a rather simple concept of sociology. It can be explained as the process wherein it is made mandatory for people to follow the standards and ideals of a society or social group. A spontaneous approach towards social control is by taking instances from the daily routines of life. People always have opinions about a number of things. Opinions are helpful in providing us with the knowledge to act and react in different scenarios. A large number of these opinions are a result of social mechanisms.

5.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

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

- Explain the concept of social institutions
- Give a detailed account of the features and functions of social institutions
- Present the various forms of social institutions
- Define social control
- Explain the types and agencies of social control

5.2 SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS

Generally, the term institution refers to a group of people who have some specific purpose. But, the sociological understanding is quite different from common usage. Every society is characterized by certain social norms. These norms are very important in interactive social systems. These norms are in fact, institutionalized, i.e., they are widely accepted among members of the society. In this context, it can be said that an institution is neither a building, nor people, nor an organisation. An institution is a system of norms aimed at achieving some goal or activity that people feel is important. It focuses on major human activities. Institutions are structured processes through which people carry on their activities.

> Institutions have been defined by MacIver, as 'established forms or conditions of procedure characteristic of group activity'. So, it can be said that social institutions are the social structures and machinery, through which the society organizes, directs and executes multiple activities that are required to fulfil human needs. An institution is an organized system of social relationships which embodies certain common values and procedures and meets certain basic needs of the society (Horton and Hunt, 1984).

Every organization is dependent on certain established norms that are accepted and recognized by the society. These norms govern socio-cultural and interpersonal relationships. These norms are institutions that are in different forms like marriage, family, economy, polity, religion, etc. These institutions govern social life.

5.2.1 Features Of Social Institutions

A social norm is said to be institutionalized in a particular social system when three conditions are fulfilled:

(i) Many members of the social system accept the norm.

(ii) Many of those who accept the norm take it seriously. In psychological terms, they internalize it.

(iii) The norm is sanctioned. This means that certain members of the system are expected to be guided by the norm in appropriate circumstances.

However the process of institutionalization involves the following characteristics:

- Institutions emerge as largely unplanned products of social living. People struggle to search for practical ways of meeting their needs; they find some patterns that work and become regular by repeated practice. These patterns are converted into standardized customs. As time passes, these patterns become part of customs and rituals which justify and sanction them. For example the system of lending has paved the way for banks to emerge as institutions for borrowing, lending and transferring money in a standardized manner.

- Institutions are means of controlling individuals.

- Institutionalized role behaviour is guided by expectations of the role and not by personal preferences. For example, all judges act in a similar manner when they are practicing, but it is not necessary for them to behave in the same manner in every situation as well.

- Institutions have some proceedings, which are formed on the basis of certain customs.

- Institutions have certain cultural symbols. People adhere to certain symbols which serve as convenient reminders of the institution. For example, the citizen is reminded of loyalty to the government by the sign of the flag. Similarly, national anthems, national songs, national flags, etc., strengthen institutional ties.

- Institutions have certain codes of behaviour. The people involved in certain institutions are expected to carry out some roles which are often expressed in formal codes, such as the oath of loyalty to ones country, marriage vows, etc.

- Every institution is based on certain ideological principles. An ideology may be defined as any set of ideas that explain or justify social arrangements, structures of power, or ways of life. These are explained in terms of goals, interests or social position of the groups or activities in which they collectively appear. The ideology of an institution includes both, the central beliefs of the institution and a rational justification for the application of institutional norms to the problems of life.

- Institutions are formed to satisfy the primary needs of members of the society and they have social recognition.

5.2.2 Functions of Social Institutions

A society is so complex and interrelated that it is impossible to foresee all consequences of any action pertaining to it. Institutions have a list of functions, which are the professed objectives of the institution. They also have latent functions, which are unintended and may not be recognized. If they are recognized, then they may be regarded as by-products.

Manifest functions of social institutions

These are functions which people assume and expect the institution to fulfil, for instance, families should care for their children, economic institutions should produce and distribute goods and direct the flow of capital where it is needed, schools should educate the young, etc. Manifest functions are obvious, admitted and generally applauded.

Latent functions of social institutions

These are unintended and unforeseen consequences of institutions. Economic institutions not only produce and distribute goods, but sometimes also promote technological change and philanthropy. Sometimes they promote unemployment and inequality. Latent functions of an institution may support manifest functions.

Apart from these functions, social institutions have some other common functions like provision of food, power, maintenance of law and order, shaping of personalities of individuals, manufacture and supply of commodities and services, regulation of morals, provision of recreation, etc.

Malinowski has remarked, 'Every institution centres round a fundamental need, permanently unites a group of people in a cooperative task and has its particular set of doctrines and techniques or craft. Institutions are not correlated simply and directly to new functions, one need not receive satisfaction in one institution'.

5.3 FORMS OF SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS

The various forms of social institutions are: marriage, family, education, economy, polity and religion. These are discussed in detail below.

5.3.1 Marriage

Marriage is a universal social institution. It is a secure association between a man and a woman who are permitted by the society to have children, without affecting their reputation in the society. Marriage is a deep personal commitment to another human being and a public celebration of the ideals of mutuality, companionship, fidelity and family. Marriage is a socially approved way of acquiring a family. It is only through the establishment of culturally controlled and sanctioned marital relations that a family comes into being. The institutionalized form of sexual relations is called marriage. Marriage and family are two sides of the same social reality. From a broader and more collective perspective, marriage ensures survival of the species of the group and its culture.

Forms of marriage

The forms of marriage are diverse in nature. A cross-cultural study of marriage practices in different societies would include rules. These rules lay down preferences, prescriptions as well as proscriptions in deciding the form of marriage.

On the basis of the number of mates, marriage is classified into two types, monogamy and polygamy. Monogamy is the marriage between single partners (i.e., a husband having one wife or a wife having one husband). Monogamy is a prevalent form of marriage in most societies. It is also considered an ideal form of marriage. Polygamy is the practice of having more than one partner in marriage. Polygamy may be of two types: polygyny and polyandry. When one man has two or more wives at a time, the practice is known as polygyny. When two or more sisters share one husband, the practice is known as sororal polygyny.

When one woman gets married to more than one man simultaneously, the practice is known as polyandry. Polyandry may be of two types: fraternal or adelphic polyandry and non-fraternal polyandry. When one woman marries several brothers at the same time, the practice is known as fraternal polyandry. This practice is prevalent among the Toda community in India. When a woman has several husbands, none of whom are necessarily brothers, the practice is known as non-fraternal polyandry.

One may consider this with reference to two types of polygamous marriages, namely

(i) Levirate and Sororate

Marriage of a man with the childless widow of his deceased brother is known as levirate marriage. When a levirate marriage prevails, on the death of a husband, it is the duty of one of his brothers to marry his widow and any children that are born as a result of this union are counted as progeny of the deceased man.

When a sororate marriage prevails, the husband of a childless woman marries her sister and at least some of the children that are born as a result of this union, are counted as children of the childless wife. The term sororate is also used with reference to the custom whereby, upon the death of a wife, her kin provide her sister as wife to the widower. However, any children that are born as a result of this union are recognized as her own.

Levirate and sororate customs emphasize the acceptance of inter familial obligations and recognition of marriage as a tie between two families and not simply between two individuals.

5.3.2 Family

The institution of family is the basic and fundamental institution in the life of an individual. It is the basic primary group and an important agency of socialization. Historically, the institution of family has undergone many changes. The term family has been defined by many sociologists and anthropologists. Murdock (in 1949), after studying about 250 multi-cultural societies, defined family as a social group that is characterized by common residence, economic cooperation and reproduction. It includes adults of both the sexes, at least two of whom maintain a socially approved sexual relationship and one or more children are owned or adopted by the sexually cohabiting adults.

A family, according to MacIver and Page, is a group defined by a sexual relationship that is sufficiently precise and enduring to provide for the procreation and upbringing of children. They also bring out certain characteristic features of family:

- It is a relationship that originates from and is bound by marriage. It is formed when two individuals mate and produce offspring.
- It is a system of finding the hierarchy of ancestry.
- A family must have the financial sufficiency to achieve its economical wants and necessities that pertain to the birth and upbringing of children.
- A family should have a habitat, home or a household which it may either own solely or share with others.

Forms of families

Various sociologists have studied different forms of families. They have taken into consideration different factors for the classification of families. Following are the different types of families:

- Marriage classifies families into: monogamous and polygamous categories.
- Based on the location of their residence, families are categorized into two main types, family of matrilocal residence and family of patrilocal residence.
- On the basis of ancestry or descent, families are classified into matrilineal and patrilineal types.
- According to the type of authority, families may be identified as matriarchal and patriarchal types.
- In terms of size or structure, there may be two types of families, nuclear or joint.
- Families can be divided into conjugal and consanguineous types, based on the relations between the members. In a conjugal family, relations between the husband and the wife are private and their ties with the extended family are voluntarily. A consanguine family consists of close relatives other than parents and children.

5.3.3 Education

Education means developing of and cultivating various physical, intellectual, aesthetic and moral faculties of an individual. Durkheim defines education as 'the action exercised by the older generations on those who are not yet ready for social life. Its object is to awaken and develop in the child, those physical, intellectual and moral values which are required of him, both, by his society as a whole and by the milieu for which he is specially destined. It is a social process. Education is imparted by both, formal and informal means. It is an important means of socialization. Aristotle's famous concept of education says, 'education develops man's faculties, especially his mind, so that he may be able to enjoy the contemplation of the supreme truth, goodness and beauty, in which perfect happiness essentially

consists'. Durkheim further conceives education as socialization of the younger generation. According to him, it is a continuous effort to impose on the child, ways of seeing, feeling and acting which he could not have achieved spontaneously.

Education as a social process

Education is viewed as an integral fragment of socialization. Such a process of social learning is continuous. Education is also considered an agent of cultural transmission. The elements of culture are transmitted from one generation to another, through education. Education not only helps in acquiring knowledge but also inculcates the values of morality among individuals. Educational institutions are instrumental in shaping the personality of individuals and also formulation of ideologies. On the whole, education helps in reforming the attitudes of individuals and encourages them by inculcating a spirit of competitiveness in them.

Primitive and ancient societies had no educational institutions. Children learnt from their surroundings. Schools appeared when cultures became too complex for the learning to be handled within the family. Thus, educational institutions grew as time passed by. In India, the historical roots of educational institutions are referred to in the *guru-shishya* tradition. In this tradition, students had the advantage of being in personal contact with the teacher. The image of the guru was personified and the students were obliged to the guru or teacher.

Sociological perspectives on education

From a functionalist perspective, it is preferred that education contributes to maintenance of the social system. Emile Durkheim saw the major function of education as transmission of society's norms and values. He maintained that the society can survive only if a sufficient degree of homogeneity exists among its members. Education functions to strengthen this homogeneity by maintaining a balance of these similarities in an individual, since his childhood. Due to these similarities, the demands of life in all individuals are similar. Cooperation and social solidarity would never have existed in the absence of these essential similarities, would not be possible. Drawing conclusions from Dukheim's concept, the American sociologist, Talcott Parsons, gave a functionalist view of education. Parsons put across the theory after the spread of primary socialization within a family, the school assumes the role of a central socializing agency. School brings the family closer to the society. It prepares the child for his role as an adult. Davis and Moore shared Parson's view with reference to education. They too considered education to be useful in providing suitable roles to individuals. However, they hold the educational system directly responsible for creating divisions in the society. According to Davis, the education system has proved that it is able to select people on the basis of their capacities and allocate appropriate positions to them. Thus, the process of educational filtering organizes and categorizes individuals on the basis of their skills and capacities. The people with the highest level of talent get the highest level of qualification. Consequently, this leads them to better occupations which are most important in terms of functions to the society.

However, the Marxian perspective provides a radical alternative to the functionalist position. Louis Althusser presents a general framework for the analysis of education, from a Marxian perspective. Being a section of the superstructure, the infrastructure finally gives shape to education. According to him, education benefits only the ruling class. For survival and prosperity, it is very important to reproduce the power of labour. Two steps are involved in the process of reproducing labour, the first step is reproduction of skills that are required for a capable labour force. The second step is reproduction of the ideology of the ruling class and socialization of workers. These processes combine to reproduce a technically efficient, submissive and obedient workforce. In a social structure that is dominated by capitalism, education reproduces such a workforce. Althusser stresses that reproduction of labour power not only requires reproduction of its skills, but also a simultaneous reproduction of its submission to the ruling ideology. This submission is reproduced by a number of 'Ideological State Apparatuses' which include the mass media, law, religion and education. Ideological State Apparatus is a trademark of the ideology of the ruling class which creates artificial class awareness. This awareness maintains the subject class in its subordinate position to a large extent. Education, according to Althusser, not only transmits ideologies of the general ruling class (which justifies and legitimates the capitalist system), it also reproduces the attitudes and behaviour that are required by major groups in the division of labour.

Ivan Illich has been critical of both, functionalist and liberal views of education. In *Deschooling Society,* that was published in 1971, he raises issues on the incapability of schools in matching educational ideals. In his opinion, schools are institutions that teach students about various means of exploitation. According to him, schools instigate compliance to the society and create a belief in students, to accept the interests of the powerful. However, real learning can never prevail through a set of instructions. It can be inculcated only when an individual is involved in every part of the learning process, on his own. To conclude, the majority of learning processes require no teaching. Illich blames the educational system as the main cause of all problems that have emerged in the modern industrial society. School teaches the individual to delay authority, assume isolation, to absorb and accept the services of the institution and neglect his own needs and wants. He is instructed to view education as a precious product such that it should be taken in large amounts. He, however also presents a solution. According to him, to resolve this issue, it is important to abolish the present system of education, since schools form the base of education. Deschooling is the primary step towards the liberation of mankind. Finally, Illich confirms that deschooling will create a society where every man can be truly liberated and can experience a sense of fulfillment.

Education as an instrument of social control and social change

The general character of formal education has undergone a rapid change through modern science and technology. Technological development today is quite unlike the development that took place in the 19th century. Unlike the present day society,

in ancient societies, education was considered as the learning related to a way of life. However, in primitive societies, the terminology of science comprised the production and distribution of labour. Formal education quickens the overall process of education. However, it is incapable in transmitting any practical knowledge. In societies of the recent times, the content of education more scientifically inclined and less scholarly. Thus, it can be concluded that education in modern societies inculcates freedom of thought and values that have an important role in streamlining the attitude of an individual.

It has been argued that education by itself does not bring about social change, rather it is an instrument which performs the functions that are entrusted to it. Innovations in the education system may lead to structural changes in the society. The Indian society has deep-rooted customs and traditions which are strongly embedded in the Indian lifestyle. Changes are resisted because they conflict with traditional values and beliefs.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. What is social control?
2. How has MacIver defined institutions?
3. Name the various forms of social institutions.

5.3.4 Economy

In considering the historical development of sociology, a few figures are taken from a vast interplay of schools of social thought. Any division of labour which leads people to pursue diverse and possibly conflicting lines of economic activity, may generate conditions of social dislocation and inequity. Here, the social arrangements that are aimed at establishing peaceful, cooperative and equitable interchange among economic agents are taken into consideration.

Herbert Spencer marked a confluence of two great traditions of evolution and classical economics. Spencer, from his evolutionary tradition saw many similarities between biological and social organisms. Both are capable of growth; both increase the complexity of the structure as they grow in size and both display a close interdependence of parts. He viewed social evolution as similar to biological evolution. Establishing his evolutionary scheme, he introduced a distinction between two types of societies, the militant and the industrial. The militant society is integrated by force and is characterized by compulsory cooperation. On the other hand, the industrial society contrasts with the militant one on many fronts. The political machinery is no longer subordinated to the single military principle. The principle of integration of industrial society is based on voluntary cooperation.

In industrial society, men interact by forming contractual arrangements. Spencer viewed industrial society like Smith viewed the competitive economy. So

his characterization of industrial society indicates that political regulation is almost unnecessary in such a society, since social coordination is guaranteed by voluntary cooperation among individuals.

Emile Durkheim: Solidarity as an active force in economic life

Most of the insights of Durkheim that concern economic integration are found in his book, *The Division of Labour in Society*. In this book, he has analysed the integration of social life. Durkheim set up a dichotomy between two types of societies, segmental and complex. To him, a segmental society is a homogeneous society with the presence of mechanical solidarity. There is a presence of repressive law. It has subordination of the individual to the undifferentiated collective conscience of the society. On the other hand, it differentiates complex societies as powerful forms of integration. He is different from Spencer such that he stressed the increased salience of integration in complex societies, rather than tending to regard it as a by-product of individual interactions.

Max Weber: The origins and sustaining conditions for capitalism

Max Weber made a comparative analysis of societies by using the method of ideals. Weber mentioned a historically unique configuration such as *rational bourgeoisie capitalism*. This refers to systematic and rational organization of the production itself. While identifying the historical conditions that gave rise to industrial capitalism, Weber rejected the belief that the rise of capitalism could be explained by the increase of population. On the positive side, he considered the rise of ascetic Protestantism, especially Calvinism. He established social and psychological conditions that were conducive to this form of capitalism. To him, bureaucracy also forms the most rational form of social organization for perpetuating industrial capitalism. Weber also found out certain institutional structures that were permissive for industrial capitalism. He found these structures in the political legal complex. So Weber specified certain institutional conditions under which maximum mobility is both, permitted and regulated. Weber also stressed the political legal regulation of money and exchange. Above all, he believed that rational capitalism cannot flourish unless the political authority guarantees the supply of money with relatively stable values. As to the type of medium of exchange, Weber saw the advantage of a generalized money currency since it allows for expansion of market and creation of credit. However unlike traditional economists, Weber was not interested in the regularities that were produced within the capitalist system of production. He believed in establishing an important background of institutional conditions, under which the capitalist system and its regularities could exist.

Social aspects of division of labour and types of exchange

One of the best known works of Durkheim is his study of division of labour, in which he analysed social functions of the division of labour. He also sought to show how in modern societies, it is the principal source of social cohesion or solidarity. In the course of his enquiry, Durkheim distinguished two kinds of

solidarities, mechanical and organic. He associated these with two types of laws, which he called repressive and restitutive. He also analysed the abnormal forms of division of labour, i.e., the anomic and the forced division of labour. By the first, he meant a condition of extreme specialization of labour. In this condition, the individual became isolated in his specialty and particularly a condition in which there was permanent division between capital and labour. Durkheim proposed the fostering of regular and prolonged contacts through professional associations and corporations and through institutional arrangement for discussion and negotiation between capital and labour. By the second form, Durkheim meant a condition in which individuals did not freely choose their occupations, but were forced into them. He regarded this discrepancy between the abilities of individuals and the functions imposed upon them, as the principal source of class conflict. Durkheim thought that modern societies could and would get rid of these abnormal forms of division of labour.

However, division of labour has not become so extensive in India, as in advanced industrial countries. Division of labour affects the caste system. In the caste system, the division of labour had the integrative functions, which Durkheim emphasised. In the village economy, caste, like the medieval guilds, ensured the performance of necessary functions (by passing on craft, skills, etc). These functions were organized by the direct exchange of services between castes (the *jajmani* system). In an industrial and money economy, the division of labour becomes far more complex and the exchange of services is accomplished through the market or by central planning. The caste system retains some integrative functions on the cultural level. However, these are likely to be less important as social cohesion comes to depend increasingly on the economic division of labour.

Types of exchange

The division of labour and possession by different individuals and groups makes exchange necessary for higher levels of efficiency in production. It is equally true that exchange makes division of labour possible. Exchange is found in every economy, no matter how primitive. There are six possible kinds of exchanges, according to the items exchanged, these are: goods for goods, services for services, goods for services, money for goods, money for services and money for money. The use of money occurs only in advanced economies. Interest was stirred in comparative exchange by the appearance of a volume, edited by Polanyi, Arensberg and Pearson, in the late 1950s. Going though the records of Babylon, Mesopotamia, Greece, Mexico, Yucatan, the Guinea Coast and rural India, they depicted how trading practices were separate from the familiar practices of free market exchange. They criticized the traditional economic theory and suggested an alternative framework for better comparative economics of exchange. Polanyi and his associates identified three major patterns of exchange, reciprocative, redistributive and exchange.

Reciprocative exchange is the most common form of exchange among primitive people. It is illustrated by ritualistic gifting practice among families, clans and tribes, as analysed by Malinowski and Mauss. Exchange of gifts like *kula* exchange is ceremonial in nature. Another illustration is found among farmers of many civilizations, who frequently work for one another, especially during the time of harvest. Economic calculation, price payments and wages are typically absent. Goods or services are given because it is traditional to do so. The only principle of calculation is that giving and receiving should balance among exchanging parties in the long run.

Redistributive exchange means that the produce of the group is brought together, either physically or by appropriation. This is then distributed among the members again. This brings economic goods and services to a central source that is often governmental. It then redistributes them throughout the populace. Polyani, Arensberg and Pearson identified several instances of this exchange pattern in ancient Asian and African civilizations. Any system of redistribution involves some economic exchange, but redistribution at the same time is political. Modern illustrations of such type of exchanges are tax institutions which redistribute wealth in the society. *Potlatch*, among the Trobriand islanders and *jajmani* system in traditional India are also examples of redistributive exchange.

The third pattern, which is more familiar in the Modern West, is termed exchange. In this case economic goods and services are brought into the market. Prices are not standardized on the basis of tradition, but as a result of bargaining for economic advantage.

5.3.5 Polity

Every individual is involved in some kind of political institution, as member of the society. Political systems have existed since ancient times. Our political institutions are amalgamations of modern superstructure, historical delegation of authority, decentralization and inculcation of the basic level of Panchayati system. These are characterized by the traditional consensus pattern of decision making and are held together by a charismatic leadership. The state has been an important governing institution. No study of society is complete without study of the state or the governing institutions of society, because the government occupies an important place in the social lives of people.

The state

The relation between state and other associations has been a matter of debate among scholars. Some scholars argue that state is the supreme social institution and all other associations owe their origin to its initiative, acquiescence and support. They exist because the state allows them to exist. On the other hand, the pluralists recognize the special role of the state as a regulator of social life. Laski has argued that the state does not exhaust the associative impulses of men. In his opinion, the society should be regarded as essentially federal in its nature. The other associations are real in the sense that the state is real. State is viewed as a community agency

that is charged with the responsibility of coordinating and adjusting the claims and activities of various associations. This distinctive function gives the state its unique character.

Nature of power

Power in general means the ability to carry out ones wishes despite opposition. In any process of interaction, some participants usually have more power than others. When we assert that someone has more power than someone else, we usually imply the existence of a more or less extended field of potential conflict. We often have to specify the field of potential conflict. However, it is often true that A has more power than B in some situations, while B has more than A in others. Power is a relative matter. Weber's definition of power implies that those who hold power do so at the expense of others. It suggests that there is a fixed amount of power and therefore everyone does not have access to it. This view is sometimes known as the constant sum of power. Since the amount of power is constant, power is held by an individual or group to the extent that it is not held by others. Arguing from a functionalist perspective, Talcott Parsons rejects the 'constant-sum' concept of power. They view that power is employed in the furtherance of sectional interests. A Marxian analysis of power provides a radial alternative to Parson's functionalist approach. From a Marxian perspective, the source of power in societies is the economic infrastructure. In all stratified societies, the forces of production are owned and controlled by the minority ruling class. This relationship to the forces of production provides the basis for dominance. It therefore follows that the only way to return power to the people involves communal ownership of the forces of production. Since everyone will now bear some relationship to the forces of production, power will be shared by all members of the society. From a Marxian perspective, the use of power to exploit others is defined as coercion. It is seen as an illegitimate use of power which forces the subject class to submit to a situation which is against its interest. If the power of the ruling class is accepted as legitimate by the subject class, it indicates false consciousness.

Power of random groups

Power is the capability of a person or a group to achieve its goals, irrespective of any resistance from any other person or group. Weber recommends that the access of power is based on the party. Party is a united category of organizational structure that focuses on a common interest. This interest may be on the basis of a class, a status or any similar type. Very few persons are able to act individually in order to achieve their interests.

Voting behaviour

Marx predicted that class struggle has turned the western society into an institution that would end in the proletarian revolution. With the extension of franchise and the proliferation of interest groups, members of the working class are drawn into the political process. Their interests are represented by political parties and interest

groups such as trade unions. They are able to express their discontent with an institutional framework and as a result, more violent expressions of class conflicts are unlikely. S.M. Lipset sees national elections as an expression of class struggle and competition between political parties as the institutionalization of class conflict. He argues that more than anything else, the party struggle is a conflict among classes and the most impressive thing about party support is that in virtually every country it is economically sound. The lower-income groups vote mainly for parties of the left front while higher income groups vote mainly for parties of the right front. The voting behaviour does not strictly follow class lines.

Pressure groups and political parties

Pressure groups are associations or groups which have objectives that are different from political parties. These pressure groups or interest group have important political functions in all modern societies. These functions may either be useful or harmful to the stability or progress of the society. Interest groups may be based on economic, ethnic, linguistic, religious, regional or other considerations. Sometimes they would convert themselves into political parties or win over some members of the government and pressurize the government to give in to their demands. In this case, the group could be considered as a pressure group. At times, when the government introduces a bill or a budget proposal in the Parliament, the interest groups will use their influence and lobby to pressurize the government to either withdraw or to amend it to a form that is acceptable to them. Interest groups and pressure groups use a number of strategies to influence the government and to get their demands accepted. These strategies include threats of direct action like boycott, threat of holding back essential services, protest closure of shops and agitations such as street demonstrations and strikes.

Political parties are organized groups of citizens who hold common views on public issues and act as political units. They seek to obtain control of the government with a view to encourage the programme and policy, which they profess. A political party is essentially a social group that has an associative type of social relationship. A political party primarily strives to secure political power and to hold it either singly, or in cooperation with other political parties. Political parties are indispensable for the working of a democratic government. They are the connecting link between people and the government. They are the vehicles which individuals and groups use to secure and exercise political power. Political parties are seen as representing diverse elements in a national tradition and as being concerned to some degree with general, rather than class or sectional interests.

Political participation

Political system functions on the basis of political participation. Lester Milbrath has suggested that members of the society can be divided into four categories, in terms of their degree of political participation. Firstly, the politically apathetic who are literally unaware of the politics around them, secondly, those involved in spectator activities, which include voting and taking part in discussions about politics, thirdly,

those involved is transitional activities, which include attending a political meetings. or making financial contributions to a political party, finally, those who enter the political arena and participate in activities such as, standing for and holding public and party offices. These levels of political participation are not uniformly distributed throughout the population. In general, higher is an individual's position in the class structure, greater is his degree of participation. Studies have shown that political participation is directly proportional to income level, occupational status and educational qualification. It has also been associated with a variety of other factors. For example, men are likely to have higher levels of participation than women, married people than single people, middle-aged people than either young or old, members of clubs and associations than non-members, long-term residents in a community than short-term residents, etc. However, those with low levels of participation often lack the resources and opportunities to become more directly involved in politics. They lack the experience of higher education, which brings a greater awareness of the political process and knowledge of the mechanics of participation. Secondly, individuals are unlikely to participate in politics if they are likely to be rewarded for their involvement. Robert Dahl argues that an individual is unlikely to participate in politics, if he feels that the probability of his influencing the outcome of events is low. Thirdly, levels of political participation appear to be related to the degree of involvement and integration of an individual in the society. Thus, an individual who is not likely to be involved in local or national politics, does not feel a part of either the local community or the wider society. Finally, Dahl suggests that individuals are not likely to have high levels of political participation if they believe that the outcome of events will be satisfactory without their involvement.

However, the significance of differential political participation varies. Pluralists have argued that low participation may be an indication that interests of the politically inactive are adequately represented. Lipset proclaims that the combination of a low vote and a relative absence of organization among the low-status groups means that they will be neglected by politicians who are receptive to the wishes of the more privileged, participative and organized strata.

Democratic and authoritarian forms

Abraham Lincoln defined democracy as a government of the people, by the people and for the people. Democracy is a mixture of the rational, legal and charismatic types, with a touch of traditionalism in some instances. However, democracy is an emotive term which means for many as freedom of the individual to participate in those decisions which affect his life. This suggests that the individual should be directly and regularly involved in the political process. From a pluralist's perspective, democracy is seen as a system of representative government, whereby many elites represent a range of interests in the society. It implies that the representative government is the only way in which the democratic ideal can be realized in a contemporary society. Bottomore regards the western system of governance as an imperfect realization of democracy, as it permanently excludes many from the

experience of governance. He argues that only when the democratic ideal becomes an established feature of everyday life, a democratic system of national government can be created. This would involve 'social democracy', where people directly participate in the management of their firms. He further argues that a truly democratic national government will only be possible when all major institutions of the society operate on the principles of democracy.

Therefore, democracy can be seen as a system in which every individual has an equal opportunity to participate in the political process and an equal say in governance of the society. Democracy often means easy, egalitarian manners with no expectation that anyone will show a marked deference to another. In a democratic society, power is distributed among many groups. Democratic governance is characterized by emphasizing on the autonomy of individuals and subsystems. An important feature of the democratic government is rule by the law and equal treatment by the law.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

4. Name the six possible kinds of exchanges, according to the items exchanged.
5. Which was the most common form of exchange among primitive people?
6. What does redistributive exchange mean?

5.3.6 Religion

Since the days of the primitive society, religion has always existed in one form or another. There are mysteries and perplexities of life for which there is no adequate explanation. The elements of nature, sunshine, wind and rain affect man in a number of ways. Religion is the expression of the manner and type of adjustment that is effected by people in terms of their conception of the supernatural. In the words of James Frazer, the author of the book *The Golden Bough,* religion has been explained as 'a belief in powers superior to man, which are believed to direct and control the course of nature and of human life.' According of Ogburn and Nimkoff, 'Religion is the attitude towards superhuman powers'. Such attitude gives rise to coherent systems of beliefs and practices that concern the supernatural order. Thus religion is a more or less a coherent system of beliefs and practices that concerns a supernatural order of beings, forces, places, or other entities: a system that, for its adherents, has implications for their behaviour and welfare implications that the adherents in varying degrees and ways take seriously in their private and collective lives.

The origin and evolution of religion

The early sociological studies of religion had three distinctive methodological characteristics, these were evolutionist, positivist and psychological. These are

shown in the works of Comte, Tylor and Spencer. According to Comte, sociology is one of the fundamental conceptions of the so called law of three stages, according to which human thought had passed through theological metaphysical and positive stages. Comte treats theological thinking as an intellectual error which is dispersed by the rise of modern science. He traces, within the theological stage, a development from animism to monotheism and he explains religious belief in psychological terms by reference to the perception and thought processes of early man. Later, Comte propounded his own religion of humanity and thus recognized in some sense a universal need for religion.

However the work of Tylor and Spencer was rigorous as they were concerned with explaining the origin of religion. They believed that the idea of the soul was the principal feature in a religious belief. They set out to give an account, in rationalist terms, of how such an idea might have originated in the mind of primitive man. According to this, men obtained their idea of the soul from a misinterpretation of dream and death. Spencer refers to that original theory of things as from which the supposed reality of dreams, resulted a supposed reality of ghosts. E.B. Tylor believes animism was the oldest practice of religion. He argues that animism was a result of the efforts of mankind to answer two questions of the difference between a living body and a dead one and what are those human shapes which appear in dreams and visions. The soul is a spirit being which leaves the body temporarily during dreams and visions. Animals were invested with spirits as were human tribes, such as Australian aborigines. Tylor points out that religion, assumes the form of animism with the purpose of satisfying the intellectual capacity of mankind and meet his quest for knowledge about death, dreams and vision. Similarly, naturism endorses the concept that the forces of nature are supernatural powering nature. Max Muller believes this to be the earliest form of religion. He argues that naturism came to exist as a result of man's interaction with nature, typically as the outcome of the reaction of nature on man's emotions. According to him, animism tries to find the source of religion in man's intellectual requirements; naturism seeks it in his emotional needs. Naturism is how man responds to the effect of power and to the nature on his emotions.

However, there is a lot of criticism about the evolutionary approach. The origin of religion is lost in the past. However, theories about the origin of religion can only be based on speculation and intelligent guess work, according to some critics. Moreover, the exact phases of the evolution of religion do not match with the facts. Andrew Lang has highlighted that the religion of a large number of simplest societies is monotheistic in nature, which according to Tylor was restricted to modern societies.

The sacred and the profane

Durkheim held that the essence of religion is to sustain divisions into the phenomena of sacred and profane ideologies. He does not believe that the essence of religion lies in the belief of a transcendent God. He proclaims that the true aim of religion is to establish the phenomena of the sacred and the profane in the society. The

'sacred' consists of a body of things, beliefs and rites. Supernatural entities are always sacred, that is, they are worthy of being treated with respect whether they are good or evil. Supernatural beings and forces are invisible and intangible, but certain sacred objects are quite tangible and visible, for instance, the alter in a Christian church. On the other hand, everything that is not holy is profane. Profanity is using names without proper respect.

Functions and dysfunctions of religion

Religion has various social functions. Religion is an agency of social control. It disciplines human behaviour in terms of sacred and profane. Performance of rituals and ceremonies gives a sense of collectivity to the society. The law of *karma*, the fear of retribution and such other prescriptions, always has a moderating and civilizing impact on human action. The norms of conduct, once established, regulate social relations. Religion has unified the principles of every society. Religion is an integrating and unifying force of the human society. Kingsley Davis and Wilbert .E Moore reason why religion is necessary and is apparently to be found in the fact that human society achieves its unity through the possession by its members of certain ultimate values in common. Although these values and ends are subjective, the influence of behaviour and its integration enables the society to operate as a system.

Though the direct impact of religion remains healthy, elevating and socializing, its indirect effect may be dysfunctional for the society. In Europe, religion hindered the growth of science and inquiry till decline of the organized church in the 19th century. The superstitious superstructure that developed successively, caused immense harm to the society at all levels. Religion inhibits protests and impedes social changes. Religion has resulted in wars, devastations and genocides. While fulfilling the identity function of religion, certain loyalties arise which may actually impede the development of new identities that are more appropriate to new situations.

5.4 SOCIAL CONTROL

Social control is the most significant characteristic of modern social and political sciences. There are many writings on how different types of societies are based on fluctuations in the order of institution and specifically the gradual destruction of traditional methods. These were the constituents of modernity. Paradoxically, the extent of freedom directly affects the need to control. In a world where the common belief is that customs, relationships and the links of social structures of the society are persistently delicate and structured, our cognitive and affective response is to try to gain a higher level of social control.

In contemporary usage, social control generally refers to some form of organized reaction to unexpected activities. Stan Cohen calls social control 'those organized responses to crime, delinquency and allied forms of deviant and/or socially

problematic behaviour, which are actually conceived of as such, whether in the reactive sense (after the putative act has taken place or the actor has been identified) or in the proactive sense (to prevent the act)'. E.A. Ross defines social control as 'the mechanisms by which society exercises its dominion over its component individuals and enforces conformity to its norms, i.e., its values'. However, social control is not only the exercise of control on individuals, but it is also the practice of control by individuals.

Thus, it is generally accepted that social control is a set of methodologies that is used to improve people who are believed to be destructive, crime-oriented, or destructive in one or more ways, by others. Reviewing the literature pertaining to sociology, Meier (1982) proposes the theory that social control is available in three key contexts:

(i) As a means to describe the basic social process or condition. This methodology relates to classical sociological theory and thus, was the most popular way to define it in the first half of twentieth century.

(ii) As a mechanism to ensure compliance with norms.

(iii) As a means to study social order.

In the more recent times, Horowitz (1990) has proposed that, 'Social control emerges out of and serves to maintain the ways of life and social practices of groups'.

5.4.1 Types of Social Control

Social control is broadly categorized into two types: formal and informal. According to Black (1976), formal social control refers to an activity where the imposition of control has a legal base. Activity apart from this directly or indirectly implies the power to control can be defined as informal control. However, formal social control involves enactment of laws, rules and regulations against lack of cooperation. It is usually enforced by the government and organizations that use methods to enforce law and other formal sanctions such as, fines and imprisonment. Societies where the control is democratic get a large degree of support and voluntary compliance from the population. The reason for this is that the goals and methodologies of formal social control are ruled by elected representatives.

On the other hand, informal control means signifying the role of customs, traditions, norms and other usages that an individual inherits. The society executes this without a clear statement of rules. This is done through customs and norms that originate from informal sanctions like, criticism, disapproval, guilt and shame.

5.4.2 Agencies of Social Control

Social control is carried out through series of agencies, many of which are discussed below as both formal and informal agencies of control. The regular channels of social control are as follows:

Law

Law constitutes one of the primary mechanisms through which social control is enacted. Simple societies are characterized by homogeneity among individuals and operation of informal social control. However, when societies grew in size and complexity, they were compelled to formulate rules and regulations which defined certain behaviour patterns. Due to increased differentiation and division of labour, there has been interdependence between different individuals who portray heterogeneous relations. In a society that is marked by extreme differentiation, the old informal means of control like folkways, mores, etc., seem to be insufficient to exercise control. So there is a need to regulate individual behaviour by formulating a set of common laws which are backed by the political machinery of the state.

For Black (1976), law is 'governmental social control', being the rules and processes that the state uses to intervene in social conflicts between both organized and individual interests. Law is a body of rules that is enacted by legally authorized bodies and enforced by authorized agencies. It is enforced with the help of the police, the court and even the armed forces. Law is an instrument of control that eliminates and suppresses the homicidal activities of individuals. It also motivates individuals to pay attention to the rights of others and act in cooperation with others. Law has become the most pervasive and indispensable agency of social control in the contemporary society.

Education

Apart from law, education is also an important agency of social control. Durkheim conceived of education as socialization of the younger generation. He also stated that 'it is actually a continuous effort to impose on the child ways of seeing, feeling and acting'. Education does not restrict itself only to the transfer of a way of life. In modern times, a large section of it is dedicated to communicate empirical knowledge. Through education, the new generation learns about the social norms and about the penalties that can be awarded for violating them. Education converts social control into self-control. In the absence of a well-organized educational system, social control would remain merely as an arbitrary pressure, which may not last long.

Coercion

Coercion is the practice of attaining a specific goal by using compulsion or power. Whenever people are refrained from doing a particular work, whenever limits are imposed on the range of their choices through the use of force, or through threat of its consequences, it may be defined as coercion. This emerges as the final method to achieve social control when every other method fails. State is the only association which is empowered to use coercion in social control. No other association is vested with this power. State resorts to coercion to combat anti-social tendencies. Coercion may or may not be of a physical nature. Physical coercion can also comprise of bodily harm, captivity or capital punishment. Physical coercion is the most degrading means of social control and societies should avoid using it unless it

becomes a necessity. Non-violent coercion, on the other hand, consists of strike, boycott or non-cooperation.

Human experience has revealed that coercion or force is necessary as a guarantee of political laws. Its service is best rendered when it is used to the minimum. Where a common rule is considered necessary or beneficial for the common good, some degree of compulsion is involved. Hence force becomes necessary for common rule. But only when the use of force is limited, it becomes subjugated to the liberties of the people.

Informal means of social control are exercised by informal institutions like family, peer group, neighbourhood, etc. These are discussed below:

Folkways

Folkways are informal means of social control in the sense that they are some customary norms which individuals conform to. These are actually ways of thinking, feeling and acting in a human group that has certain prescribed modes of conduct. William Graham Sumner (1906), in his book *Folkways*: *A study of Mores, Manners, Customs and Morals*, defined folkways as 'folkways are a societal force'. They are instinctive in nature. The folkways simultaneously serve every need of life. In one group, they are consistent and global, crucial and constant. As time passes by, folkways become increasingly random, constructive and inevitable. The process of producing folkways comprises of activities that are repeated continuously, when faced with the same need. It inculcates habits in the individuals and customs in the group. Through the use of habit and custom, every individual within its domain feels the stress. Thus, it emerges as a force of the society. Folkways are not a creation of human purpose or wit. They are like products of natural forces which men, unconsciously set in operation and are handed down by tradition. As a consequence of this, the life of the entire mankind, in all ages and stages of culture, is mainly governed by a large collection of folkways. These folkways are transferred from the primitive races and undergo changes by human philosophy, ethics and religion.

Mores

Mores are established practices of the society rather than written laws. They are basically in the form of social regulations and have a significant impact on social conduct. Sumner used the concept of mores for folkways which were very significant to groups and highly important for their welfare. According to Sumner, mores comprise of popular usages and traditions when they include a judgment that they are conducive to social welfare and when they exert coercion on the individual to conform to them. They are not coordinated by any authority. Sumner believed that mores represent the living character of the group. They are always considered right by the people who share them. Mores help an individual in realizing that living in a community or a group is possible only when one conforms to the norms of that community or group. A distinction is always made between folkways and mores. Sumner says that when folkways work on the ideology of correct

living and are directed to the wellbeing of life, then they are converted to mores. Thus, in this context, it can be said that mores are important means of social control. They determine much of our individual behaviour, such that they compel behaviour and also forbid it. In a society, many mores like monogamy, democracy, prohibition, etc., operate. These mores also identify an individual with a group and help in maintaining social bonds. Moreover, violations of these mores entail some punishment in the form of penalties. Therefore mores are considered one of the strongest means of informal social control.

Customs

Custom is also an informal means of social control. According to Kingsley Davis, customs refer primarily to practices that have been often repeated by a multitude of generations. These practices tend to be followed simply because they have been followed in the past. The socially accredited ways of acting are the customs of the society. Many of our daily activities are regulated by customs. Custom is a broader term that comprises of both, folkways and mores. Customs are social habits, which through repetition become the basis of an order of social behaviour.

Customs are long established habits and usages of people. Whenever there is a widespread habit, there is a corresponding custom as well. According to Lundberg, they are folkways that persist over relatively long periods of time. Thus, they attain a degree of formal recognition and are passed down from one generation to another. A particular characteristic of custom is that it exists only as a social relationship and an external sanction for the individual. Customs not only regulate social life but also bind it together. Customs guide human behaviour and enlighten man in social life.

Customs are conformed most unconsciously. Man learns about them since early years of socialization and diligently follows them. They are rarely opposed and mostly adhered to. Customs form the base to collective human life and are found in almost every society. They are more influential and dominant in the primitive society rather than in modern societies. In the struggle for existence, only those societies survive which are able to evolve through customs that bind them together, assimilate their actions to the accepted standards, compel control of the purely egoistic impulses and exterminate individuals who are incapable of such control.

Custom is obeyed more spontaneously because it grows slowly. People follow similar behaviour patterns. Thus, customs play an important part in regulating our social behaviour. They determine our culture, preserve it and transmit it from one generation to the next.

Religion

Religion implies man's faith on some supernatural power or force. According to MacIver and Page, 'religion encompasses relationships among men and also those between man and supernatural forces. Religion regulates the activities of people in its own way. It regulates human conduct through religious code. Religion fulfills

social, psychological, emotional and spiritual needs of human beings. Religion conserves the norms and values of life through agencies like family, church and school. Religion inculcates the values of life in the minds of growing children. Religion has its own methods to deal with those individuals who violate religious norms and conduct. Various religious institutions like church, temples and monasteries also help to control the disobedient. Religion has its own ways and means to re-integrate people into a social group. Moreover, religious sanctions are widely used to support ethical codes and moral practices.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

7. How has James Frazer defined religion in his book *The Golden Bough*?
8. What according to E.B. Tylor, is the earliest form of religion?
9. Which is one of the key concepts of the modern social and political sciences?

5.5 SUMMARY

- Social institutions are important in every society.
- Various social institutions include family, marriage, polity, economy, religion and education. All these institutions have been performing various functions and have been catering to individual needs.
- Various formal means of social control are law, education and coercion.
- Informal means are folkways, mores, customs and religion.
- Social institutions and social control are very important for any society.

5.6 KEY TERMS

- **Social control:** Control that is exerted (actively or passively) by group action
- **Social institution:** A group of social positions, connected by social relations that perform a social role
- **By-products:** A substance that is produced during the process of making or destroying something else
- **Monogamy:** The fact or custom of being married to only one person at a particular time
- **Polygamy:** The custom of having more than one wife at the same time
- **Polygyny:** The practice of having several wives, at the same time

- **Polyandry:** A form of marriage in which a woman has two or more husbands at the same time
- **Levirate:** The practice of marrying the widow of one's childless brother
- **Sororate:** The custom of marriage of a man to his wife's sister or sisters

5.7 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

1. Social control is the process wherein it is made mandatory for people to follow the standards and ideals of a society or a social group.

2. Institutions have been defined by MacIver as, 'established forms or conditions of procedures, characteristic of group activity'.

3. The various forms of social institutions are: marriage, family, education, economy, polity and religion.

4. There are six possible kinds of exchanges, according to the items exchanged, these are: goods for goods, services for services, goods for services, money for goods, money for services and money for money.

5. Reciprocative exchange was the most common form of exchange among primitive people.

6. Redistributive exchange means that the produce of a group is brought together, either physically or by appropriation.

7. James Frazer, in his book *The Golden Bough,* defined religion as 'a belief in powers that are superior to man, which are believed to direct and control the course of nature and human life.'

8. E.B. Tylor believes animism to be the earliest form of religion.

9. Social control is one of the key concepts of the modern social and political sciences.

5.8 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. What does an institution mean?
2. What is an ideological state apparatus?
3. What are pressure groups?
4. What is the difference between sacred and profane?

Long-Answer Questions

1. Explain the meaning of an institution. Enumerate some features of an institution.
2. Discuss the functions of institutions.

3. Analyse the various types of institutions.

4. What is social control? Why is it necessary?

5. Differentiate between formal and informal means of control.

6. Discuss the various formal agencies of social control with suitable examples.

7. Discuss the informal agencies of social control.

5.9 FURTHER READING

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