



CHAPTER 1

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SOCIAL LIVING

(In The Context of Human Behavior)

- ∞ *Society, the need for social living*
- ∞ *The difference between human and animal society*
- ∞ *The social structure*
- ∞ *Culture, Civilization and value system*

Society: *The quality that we call “humanity” can be achieved only through social living, for man cannot live without society--- the complex network of social relationships, which interconnects human beings with one another. Our society gives content, direction and meaning to our lives, we in turn, in countless ways reshape the society that we leave for the next generation.*

Social life, however, is not peculiar to humans and can also be found in animals--- such as ants, bees, geese, elephants etc. But human society differs from animal’s society, for the former is created by human beings themselves and is learned and modified by each new generation, where as the later is based primarily on unlearned, instinctive patterns of behavior. More explicitly speaking, animal’s societies are biosocial or hereditary in nature, human society/ies, on the other hand is/are socio-cultural i.e. fulfils its needs through social interaction. However both societies are not just a chaotic collection of randomly interacting constituents.

Social structure--- *the pattern of relationships among the basic components in a social system is an essential factor of not only the human social living but also of the animals. The components provide the framework for all societies, although the precise character of the components and the relationships among them vary from one society to another. Important components of a social structure are statues, roles, groups and institutions. Let’s analyse their role in social living.*

Status: *A status is a socially defined position in society. Every member of a society occupies a number of statuses---such as a student, a professor, an engineer, administer, son, father, mother and so on. A person’s status indicates where that individual “fits” in society and how he/she should relate to other people. Broadly, a person can have two types of statuses. One, **ascribe status**--- that is attached to people on grounds over which they have no control, for instance being young, old, male female etc. Two, **achieved status**---that depends to some extent on characteristics over which the individual has some control, for example become a spouse, a university graduate, a professional etc.*

Role: *A role is a set of expected behaviour patterns, obligations and privileges attached to a particular social status. The distinction between status and role is a simple one: an individual occupies a status, and plays a role. A university professor,*

for instance, is a social status. Attached to this status is a professional role, defined by social norms prescribing how the occupier of the status should behave. The status of a professor is a fixed position in a society, but a role is more flexible, for different occupants of the status actually play their roles in somewhat different ways. The status of a university professor includes one role as a teacher, one as colleague to other professors, one role as researcher, and perhaps other roles such as writer of scholarly articles.

The roles we play in life thus depend on the statuses we happen to occupy at a given time, and the two simultaneously determine our behaviour. If you are talking to your professor as a student, you will behave differently than you might when years later, you return to visit the campus as a professional. Similarly we respond to people according to the roles they play for us. Roles enable us to structure our own behaviour along socially expected lines. We can anticipate the behaviour of others in most situations and we can fashion our own actions accordingly.

Group: *Most social behaviour takes place within and among groups, which are constantly being formed and reformed. A group is a number of persons whose statuses and roles are interrelated. The distinctive characteristics of any society depend largely on the nature and activities of the groups that it contains. Groups like statuses can be classified into two main types, primary and secondary. A primary group consists of a small number of people, who interact over a relatively long period on a direct, intimate basis. The members know one another personally and interact in a manner that is informal and has at least some emotional depth, for instance, family, cliques of friends, close neighbors etc.*

On the contrary the secondary group consists of a number of people who interact on a relatively temporary, anonymous and impersonal basis. The members either do not know one another personally, or at best know one another only in terms of particular formal roles. Moreover, they are established to serve some specific purpose and people are generally less emotionally committed than they to their primary groups. Examples of secondary groups are formal organizations such as corporations, political parties, or government bureaucracies etc.

Institutions: *Every society must meet certain basic social needs, if it is to survive and provide a satisfying life for its members. For example, children must be raised and cared for; important social values must be shared and upheld; social order must be*

maintained, and so on. Each society, in order to meet these basic needs, creates patterns of thought and action that provide an appropriate solution for these recurrent challenges. These patterns of behaviour are what we call institutions. Put another way an institution is a stable cluster of values, norms, statuses, roles, and groups that develops around a basic social need. Thus the family institution provides for the care of children. The educational institution transmits cultural knowledge to the young. The political institution allocates power and maintains order.

*Within very broad limits, “human nature” is what we make of it, and what we make of it depends largely on the culture in which we live. Unlike animals, we human beings are not born with rigid, complex, behaviour patterns that enable us to survive in specific habitats; we in fact learn and invent means of adopting physical and social environment. This learned and shared behaviour is what we call culture. More explicitly speaking, **Culture** is the social heritage i.e. our modes of living, our thinking, our interaction, literature, religion, recreation, values, habits etc that we acquire through learning .The term **Civilization** on the other hand refers to the utilitarian order of things. In other words civilization is the material culture, i.e. the external achievements of man. While Culture is the realm of values, of styles, of emotional attachment, of intellectual adventures, all things pertaining to non-material phenomena. It is a whole, the round of life in its entire sweep that comprises both the non-material and material objects of human living.*

We create our culture, but culture in turn creates us. We make our own social environment, inventing, and sharing the rules and patterns of behaviour that shape our lives, and we use our learned knowledge to modify the natural environment. Our shared culture is what makes social life possible. Culture frees us from reliance on the slow, random, accidental process of physical evolution, by offering us a flexible and efficient means of adopting to changing conditions.

*Culture also provides a system of **social control**--- a set of means of ensuring that people generally behave in expected and approved ways. It is a social process by which the individual is made group responsive, and by which social organization is built and maintained. Social control comprises two types of patterns of control, i.e. formal and informal. The earlier control, over the individual’s behaviour is exercised formally through government agencies such as the police etc. The informal sources of social control are values and social norms.*

*Values are socially shared ideas about what is good, right and desirable. They are abstract general concepts, which originate in the social structure and culture. People while living in society, experience various facts in life. On the basis of collective living they develop customs, rituals and conventions. This customary behaviour provides experiences of good things and ideas to the people. It is these collective experiences of good that we call values. **Social norms** on the other hand, are shared rules or guidelines that prescribe the behaviour appropriate in a given situation. They define how people “ought” to behave under particular circumstances in a particular society. Values influence the content of norms, where as norms safeguards values. For instance, if a society values education highly, its norms will make provisions for mass schooling. The norms that require a student to be more polite to his/her teacher than to his/her fellow students expresses the value that society places on respect for age(experience) and learning. Values are hard customs of society, a part of the routine behaviour and hence the core of culture. However both values and social norms vary from society to society and culture to culture.*

Speaking of the human society as a whole, human conscious does upheld certain values as uniform and universal---such as justice, honesty, truthfulness, compassion etc.

*Values and social norms ensure that social life proceeds smoothly, as they give us guidelines for our own behaviour and reliable expectations for the behaviour of others. That is why they are called shared expectations of the group members. Norms are classified into two types, folkways and mores. **Folkways** are the recognized ways of behaviour and acting in society, which arise spontaneously within a group to meet the problems of social living. They are unconscious and uncoordinated adjustments and ordinary conventions of everyday life. For instance the rules of eating and drinking, meeting and departing, types of dressing, ceremonies and rituals for different situations and the manners and etiquettes of institutional situations such as family, school, market masque etc. As they are ordinary conventions of everyday life their violation and the punishment on them is unwritten. They in fact unconsciously appear and disappear in society. **Mores** are strong norms that are regarded as morally significant, and their violation unlike folkways is considered a serious matter. Their origin like folkways, however, is social interaction. Mores determines that item in society holds such position and holds such value. The difference between folkways*

and mores vary only in their degree of intensity. Wearing cloths for instance are mores and the cloths of different styles are folkways. Although informal, their violation creates a serious threat to social order. For instance, entering one's house without permission, contemptuous use of religious symbols, desecration of the national flag etc. all brings a strong social reaction. Some norms particularly mores are encoded in law.

Law--- *a rule that has been formally enacted by a political authority and backed by the power of the state. Law is the formal source of social control. It is also a custom but refined according to the social situation. Law is the guardian of the highest values (life, honour, property) of society.*

The purpose of all the different means of social control is a social process by which the individual is made group responsive, and by which social organization is built and maintained.

Most social control, however, does not have to be exercised through the direct influence of other people. We exercise it ourselves, internally. Growing up in society involves the internalization of norms---the unconscious process of absorbing cultural norms. We think and act in ways that are to great extent shaped by the society we live in.

CONCLUSION

The social interdependencies, organised kinship, neighbourhood and other forms of affiliations provide ties on which individuals count for goods, services and emotionally significant symbols of permanence, particularly at times of crises and deprivation. This is what we call society or social living. This kind of support provides a minimal sense of long-term security, which most individuals need.

The social structure publicly defines virtue and vice establishes a predictable moral environment and provides unambiguous conditions for interpersonal trust and positive self-regard. This order gives the individual both the satisfaction of living a good life according to community standards and the comfort of being able to trust others in the community.

Relationships define the purpose of adult activities, motivating individuals to direct their efforts towards the benefits of others (their family), towards the approval; of those whom they respect (elders), and toward recognition within groups they value (their community). It benefits the individual by setting personal achievements in a collective context that gives it additional meanings. Thus personal security, community trusts, positive self-regard and group morale are all benefits possible from social linkages, through the support, structure and motivation they provide for individuals of a given society. Their importance can be assessed by imagining life without them.