

CC I : Introduction to Sociology - I

Unit-3: Basic Concepts

Sub-Unit : 3.2. Association and Institution

Q. social institution: definition, characteristics and functions.

Define social institution and describe its characteristics and functions.

Introduction:

According to famous sociologist Samuel Durkheim: "Sociology is the study of social institutions." Since societies have their existence on the basis of social institutions and complete the needs of individuals. Institutions organize the life and create continuity. There are many variations and revolutions in the society and it is the durability of structure of social institutions and the functions of their continuity that keep it safe from damaging shocks. These institutions not only provide a strong structure but also keep the attachment of individuals by fulfilling their basic needs. Human beings are not only animals, remaining dependent on the completion of biological needs but also being social animals they feel three kinds of needs to be fulfilled.

- i. Biogenic needs i. e., hunger, thirst, sleep and sex desire.
- ii. Sociogenic needs i. e., wealth, fame, honour and prestige.
- iii. Psychogenic needs i. e., love, attention, belongingness and feelings.

All of these need make him turn towards attachment with institutions and give stability to the existence of institutions.

Definitions of Institution

1. Ian Robertson : "An institution is a stable cluster of values, norms, status, roles and groups that develops around a basic social need."
2. Kingley Davis : "A set of interaction of Folk ways, mores and laws built around one or more functions is defined as the institution."
3. Harton and Hunt : "An institution is an organized system of social relationships which embodies certain common values and procedures and meets certain needs of the society."
4. Barnus : "A social institution means a structural skeleton through which the societies complete and guide the organizations of different activities regarding satisfaction of human needs."
5. RT. Schaefer : "Social institutions are organized patterns of beliefs and behaviour centered on basic social needs."

The above definitions show and explain that common values mean common views and aims. 'Common way of working means standard group behaviours and system of relative means status and role status combination just as, in the institution of family there is a set of common values i.e., love and mutual respect etc. Common procedures i.e., children's care, routine works and network of roles and stabilities i.e., father, mother; brother, sister etc. It sets up social reaction system that fulfils the family life basic

needs. Simple and complicated societies have fine important basic institutions i.e., family, schools, religion, political institutions and social institutions. In addition to fulfil specific secondary needs, there are secondary institutions in the modern societies. For example, recreational institutions, welfare institutions, health institutions and industrial institutions, they are of formal nature and demand a modern life.

Characteristics of Social Institutions

1. Stable Position and Permanent Structure :

Social institution is of permanent nature with a special structure just as, family, husband, wife, parents and children formulate its entity. This structure has been existing since ancient times and in spite of numerous changes this structure has not been changed.

2. Fulfils Specific Needs and Goals :

A social institution is a source of completion of specific needs and objectives just as, a religious institution functions as a ,spiritual peace, social security and integrity.

3. Specific Relation Patterns :

A social institution is a collection of social values, norms, status, role status and customs and on the basis of this, it established relations. A family comes into existence through Nikah for conjugal relations of husband and wife and abides by all the mores, method of domestic working, marriage, engagement and deaths.

4. Permanent Behaviour Pattern :

In a social institution, behaviours are fixed and individuals are accustomed to these, therefore, institutions prevent the changes, coming into the society which causing damage to the values. They think that change brings about a decrease in stability and mutual respect, therefore, these do not hesitate to attack changes.

5. Tend to be Interdependent :

Social institutions depend on each other and have a mutual co-existence. A family provides men forces for other institutions. Religious institution provides spiritual relief. A political institution provides security and stability to a society.

6. Tend to be the Site of Major Social Problems :

When social institutions do not function properly or are not in harmony with the social needs, problems are created. For example, if economic institution fails to provide food, employment and supply according to demand, then problems of famine and unemployment will be produced, if a political institution fails in maintaining peace, order and justice and then lawlessness, crimes and disorder will appear.

7. Tend to Change Together :

Social institutions present the change but it does not happen that if a change is brought about in an institution, other institutions are not affected because they are interdependent. Other institutions are bound to change. A change is in an agrarian economy then an industrial economy is bound to be affected, family institution from common family to simple family, etc.

Functions of Social Institutions

Social institutions have manifest and latent functions tending to make the stability and setting up of complicated relations in the society. These functions are discussed below :

1. Preservation of Human Race :

The family institution basically functions to preserve the human race and its growth by socially approved way of conjugal relations (marriage), provides food and dress for survival of life. The political institution provides security. Educational institutions and religious institutions help for better relations in the society, keeping the existence of society.

2. Transmission of Culture :

Social institution not only plays an important role in keeping the culture but also transmits it to the next generation. The family teaches values, traditions, language, dress and customs to the individuals. Educational institution transmits experiments through knowledge. Religious institution teaches to hold beliefs and values about sacred things and ways of worship in the minds of new generation.

3. Satisfaction of Basic Needs :

All social institutions aim at providing basic human needs and their satisfaction. The family institution provides sex satisfaction and survival of race. Economics institution provides food and political institution provides security to life and property. Religious institution provides moral training. Family and school arrange for education of children, teaches different skills. In short, all social institutions are for the satisfaction of basic needs of members of a society.

4. Social Solidarity :

Social institution plays a role in keeping law and order and unity. Family institution saves from sexual waywardness, keeps children safe from disorder by providing training of norms, values and traditions of the society. Religious institution keeps the society free from dispersion by teaching regard for social sanctions. Political institution provides stability by saving the society from external changes and by keeping law and order. The economic institution provides biological needs of the individuals of the society.

5. Social Welfare and Development :

Social institutions do the jobs of welfare of the society. Political institution establishes orphan houses, knitting centers for women, recreation for elders and old people through welfare institutions and for physically disabled persons to promote their welfare. Similarly, to establish schools, colleges, universities, professional colleges, research centers, industrial centers to promote modern inventions are the responsibilities of the social institutions.

6. Provision of Recreational Activities :

Social institutions provide peace, satisfaction and pleasant environment to the individuals of a society through a strong system of family. Different festivals are arranged to provide recreations to the individuals of a society just as, family provides such joys through function of marriage and engagement. Educational institutions do this through plays, games, Speech contest and other recreational programmes. Political institutions provide national athletic games competitions. Films, TV and setting up of theater also provide recreational chances to make a society healthy to enjoy pleasant activities.

7. Mental and Physical Security :

Social institution provides relief to the individuals in trouble and worry and provides mental peace and security. Religious institution makes the individuals hopeful and peaceful during failures and worries. Family provides a sense of security to the old, the rich and with refuge a mental and physical peace by providing an emotional, social and physical support. Political institution establishes departments of police, judiciary and jails to provide a security of life, property, honour and prestige. Welfare centers are established for refuge-less orphans and disabled people to provide them a mental and physical security.