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331en08

NORMS AND VALUES

When teacher enters in the classroom, the students are expected to show their respect by standing up. Drinking too much alcohol, cheating in a test are not accepted and considered harmful in almost all modern societies. On the other hand, children's obedience towards their parents is considered absolutely necessary in modern societies. In sociology, these are known as norms and values. In this lesson we will read about norms and values and their importance in understanding society.

OBJECTIVES

After reading this lesson, you will be able to:

- explain what sociologists mean by norm and the process of their formation;
- describe the importance of norms in society;
- discuss different types of norms;
- explain and describe normlessness;
- explain what sociologists mean by values;
- state traditional and modern values and value conflict; and
- describe relationship between norms and values.

8.1 NORMS

Norms and values are the necessary part of each and every society. We are not at all wrong, if we consider them as the necessary pillars for social survival. Values



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are ideas held by individuals or groups about what is desirable, proper, good or bad.. Values, differ from society to society. An individual's values are derived from the specific culture of which he happens to be a member. For example, in India, most people still prefer to have sons, and in some cases, girl children are killed. In other words, we can say that male progeny is valued. Norms, on the other hand, are generally known as correct or proper forms of behaviour. They are specific prescriptions of how an individual ought to behave to be consistent with values of the contemporary society. Thus, norms can be seen as the reflection of values. If the students stand up when the teacher enters into the class, this particular norm reflects the value of showing respect to teachers. All human groups follow definite types of norms, which are always backed by positive or negative sanctions.

How do we generally expect a doctor to behave? Doctors are generally expected to be calm, stable, sympathetic and responsible at all times. That is to say, we expect a certain kind of behavior from a doctor, which we do not expect from other professionals. A norm is a rule or standard that governs our behavior from a doctor, which we do not expect from other professionals. A norm is a rule or standard that governs our behaviour in the social situation in which we act and operate. Norms are group-shared expectations. Such expectations are reflected in statements such as: "good citizen always respect lives", "younger one must always respect elderly people". For example, in India, children touch the feet of their elders on social occasions. A norm is a pattern setting limits on individual behaviour. In this sense norms are unwritten laws. Norms determine, guide, control and also predict human behaviour. Now, it is clear that norms can be understood as unwritten rules and regulations that groups live by. Norms are the means through which values are expressed in behaviour.

We can make a distinction between personal or private norms and social norms. Private norms are purely individual in character and they live with individuals only. They may influence only the behaviour of the individual concerned. For example, an individual may make some resolutions on the New year 's Day, say, he would stop smoking and decide to abide by it.

But sociologists are more interested in social norms. Social norms are rules developed by a group of people that specify as to how people should, and should not behave in various situations. For example, children must take parents' permission to go out. Social norms are always backed by societal sanction. Sanctions can be negative or positive. In case of negative sanction, the violators of norms suffer some penalties prescribed by the groups; while those who abide by the norms are rewarded as a result of positive sanction. For example, children who always obey their parents, do everything with their permission, are praised by everybody. But on the other hand, children who do not listen to their parents are criticized by



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family members, etc. A positive sanction at work place is the promotion given to an employee for doing good work in the office. We can say that a sanction is a reaction from others to the behavior of an individual or group, which has the aim of ensuring that a given norm is strictly adhered to or followed meticulously.

Sanction can also be formal or informal. Formal sanctions exist where there is a definite body of people or an agency whose task is to ensure that a particular set of norms is positively followed. The main types of formal sanctions in modern societies are those involved in the system of punishment represented by agencies viz. Police, courts, and prisons. For example, most motoring offences are punished with fines or loss of license. Formal positive sanctions are found in many other areas of social life, for instance, the presentation of medals for bravery, degrees or diplomas to recognise academic success, etc.

Informal sanctions, positive and negative, are routine features of every society. Those of a positive type, include saying 'well done' to someone, or giving the person an appreciative smile or a pat on the back. Examples of negative informal sanctions are insulting, scolding or physically shunning a given individual. Formal sanctions are of fundamental importance in ensuring conformity to norms, to secure the approval of family, friends, neighbourhood, etc. and to avoid to be ridiculed, shamed or rejected. People generally value both formal and informal sanctions.

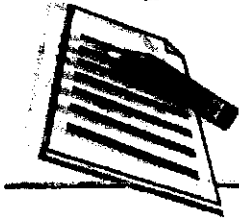
From the above discussion we may infer the following characteristics of norms:

- (i) Norms are parts of society.
- (ii) Norms are positive and negative both.
- (iii) Norms are formal and informal
- (iv) Norms have situations
- (v) Norms are related to sanctions.

INTEXT QUESTIONS 8.1

Tick mark the write answer:

1. Which of the following would be an example of value?
 - a. Nandini believes that it is wrong to cheat in a test.
 - b. Rajesh believes that it is good for his children to read books.
 - c. Sanjib believes that children should not drink tea or coffee



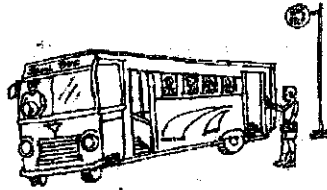
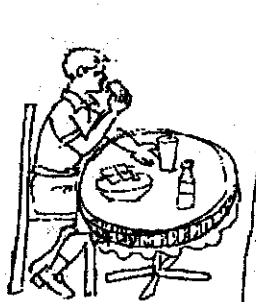
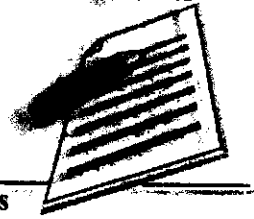
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- d. All of the above.
2. An example of a positive sanction would be
 - a. a jail sentence.
 - b. a cash award from a government for being a good citizen.
 - c. someone smiling at you for being kind to a lost child.
 - d. both b and c.
3. Norms may be
 - a. the normal behaviour in a group.
 - b. unwritten laws.
 - c. statements about what is believed to be good or bad.
 - d. all of the above.

8.2 IMPORTANCE OF NORMS

From the above discussion, it is clear that the concept of social norms constitutes the very foundation of social structure. Norms govern the behaviour of individuals and help in interaction that takes place between them. They add some amount of regularity and inevitability to our behaviour. They act as guides to our behavior. They help to mend our ways and regulate our daily life. No individual can ignore social norms without incurring the disapproval of others. For example, in a classroom, students are taught how to behave in front of a teacher. When the teacher comes into the class, the students stand up; when the teacher asks questions, they stand up and answer them; they must take permission to get into the class when they come late. If the students do not obey these rules, they must face disapproval of others or even punishments.

Norms are an indispensable part of our life. In our daily life, we do a lot of work and interact with a number of people. Without the norms, the individual would be faced with the burden of taking decisions at every moment. The following example reveals how norms can ease our daily work. For example: a college going student gets up early in the morning, brushes his teeth and takes bath, eats breakfast, wears dress, rides the vehicle to the college, meets other friends, attends lectures, goes to library, plays or chats with friends and returns home in the evening, and so on. The students do not find it difficult or problematic to do all these activities. The reason behind this is that each of these activities is governed by norms. The students knowledge of these norms has eased his work



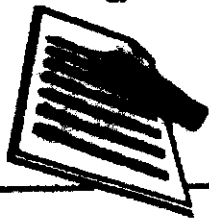
Norms Govern The Behaviour Of Individuals

Norms give cohesion to society. The collective and co-operative life of people is made possible because of norms. The normative system gives society an internal cohesion, without which social life is not possible. For example, in an office, all the employees including the boss have to follow certain rules regarding punctuality and completing office work. These rules help in bringing them on a common platform. Norms help to maintain social order.

8.2.1 Types of Norms

Social norms are numerous and varied. They assume different forms. They differ in terms of severity and durability. Their influence and effect on individual and society have not been uniform. Therefore, there is no standard classification of the norms in the sociology texts and each sociologist has presented a somewhat different list. We want to make two preliminary observations. The first of these is that the norms are both prescriptive and proscriptive, Prescriptive norms dictate what people should do and proscriptive norms what people should not do. Frequently, the prescriptions and proscriptions come in pairs; that is, we are required to do something and forbidden not to do something we are required to wear clothes in our society and forbidden to go naked on the street.

The second observation is that some of the norms pervade in entire society and others, less pervasive, prevail only in certain groups. We shall call the former

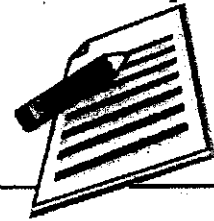


communal norms and the later associational norms. An example of a communal norm would be the custom of shaking hands upon meeting a new acquaintance, a custom that appears throughout our society, in all groups and classes. The example of associational norm would be the custom of wearing sacred thread among Hindus and it applies to the members of upper castes but not to the all other castes.

These two ways of classifying norms as prescriptive or proscriptive and as communal or associational represent categories that cross each other. However, all the norms may be subsumed under three major concepts – folkways, mores and custom – which we shall discuss here.

Mores represent yet another category of norms. Mores is a term used to denote behaviour patterns, which are not only accepted but prescribed. In simple words, when the folkways clearly represent the group standards, the group sense of what is appropriate, right and necessary for the well being, then they are known as mores. Mores may be positive or negative. Positive mores represent what should be for example, respecting elders, speaking the truth, etc. While negative mores represent 'don'ts', examples like do not steal, do not tell lies. Mores are the means by which individuals gain identification with their fellows. As a result, mores bind people into one strong cohesive group. In this way the mores help to maintain social order. For example, students must wear uniform in school. It is not only accepted but also prescribed form of behaviour. This prescription creates pressure on students, and they cannot deviate from this rule. And, this dress code undoubtedly gives the students a common identification in the school.

Customs, another kind of social norms, are socially accepted ways in which people do things together in personal contacts. Our accepted procedures or practices of eating, meeting people, playing, working, etc. can be called custom. Custom preserves our culture and transmits it to the next generation. For example, it is the custom to touch the feet of elders before examination or at different other auspicious and religious occasions in India, but not in western countries. People have seen their elders to maintain this custom. People have learnt this and they themselves maintain this. In this way this particular custom has become a part of our culture from generation to generation. They have added stability and certainty to our social life. Customs are found in all the communities of the world, No society can do without them. Therefore, customs act as an effective means of social control. Individual can hardly escape their grip. Customs also provide the background for the formulation and establishment of rules. Customs become laws when the state enforces them as rules to be abided by the citizen.



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8.3 NORMLESSNESS

Normlessness is a sense of detachment from existing social norms or rules, mostly society functions in an orderly fashion. A good number of people conform to the norms of their respective groups unconsciously. Thus, ordinarily people do what is expected from them by society. This keeps the society running smoothly. But this is not always the case. In a state where existing social norms contradict each other or face a collapse, people feel detached from their own fellows. This is a state when there exists lesser consensus or a lack of certainty on values or goals. At those moments people have little commitment to shared norms, and lack societal guidelines for personal conduct. They are inclined to pursue their private preferences without regard to the interest of the society as a whole. Social control becomes ineffective. Hence the society is threatened with disorganization. This situation is called **anomie**.

INTEXT QUESTIONS 8.2

Fill in the blanks with the appropriate words from the brackets:

1. Norms are _____ expectations (individual shared, group-shared)
2. Norms are backed by different kinds of _____ punishment, reward, sanction)
3. Three kinds of norms are folkways, _____, custom (tradition, mores, ritual)
4. Norms give _____ to society (cohesion, threat, competition)
5. Norms help to _____ social order (break, maintain, sustain)
6. In case of _____ social norms contradict each other or just simply breakdown (deviance, normlessness).
7. In case of normlessness, social control becomes _____ (effective, strong, ineffective)
8. Without appropriate norms society is threatened with _____ (punishment, disorganization, instability)



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8.4 VALUES

Values are broad ideas regarding what is desirable, correct, and good that most members of a society share. Values define social preference, specify societal choice, and provide a vision for future action. Individuals' values are strongly influenced by their specific culture. Social structure, social institution are generally followed by a change in social values and also sometimes vice versa. This position will be very clear if we focus on how these social values have evolved from traditional to modern societies.

8.4.1 Importance of Values

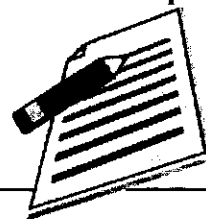
Values are important for the following reasons

- 1) **Values provide stability in group interaction.** They hold the society together because they are shared in common. Since they are shared, the members of a society are likely to see others as "people like themselves".
- 2) **Values bring legitimacy to the rules that govern specific activities.** The rules are accepted and followed because they embody the values.
- 3) **Values help to bring about some kind of adjustment between different sets of rules.** For example, if India cherish the value of equality then they will have to modify the rules governing the interpersonal relationships between husband and wife and man and woman and between castes.

8.4.2 Traditional and Modern Values

Traditional Indian society was organized on the principles of hierarchy, pluralism, and holism. Hierarchy implies the ordering of units, which constitutes a system of relation to the whole in a superior-inferior gradation. For examples, the Brahmins who are believed to have emerged from the mouth of the creator occupy the highest position as compared to Sudra who are believed to have emerged from the feet of god. Hierarchy manifested itself not only in the system of caste and sub caste stratification but it also depends upon the Hindu concept of occupational life-cycles, age grades and moral duties. For example, traditionally, the Sudra could not take up the occupation of a priest and teaching. While the concept of hierarchy manifests inequality in every aspect, it allocates a secure and definite place to each individual and caste group. For example, the potter makes clay pots to earn his living. It is his secure way of earning money, because no other caste or sub castes has right to interfere in his trade.

Pluralism, as a value, implies tolerance of others' style of life while preserving one's own. For example, Hinduism, was essentially tolerant and instead of abruptly



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converting, it gradually assimilated other faiths. Hindus believed in the existence of multiple paths leading to the same ultimate goal. Thus the faiths of other relations not only survived but also prospered for centuries in India. In spite of the differences at the level of doctrine and rituals, the followers of different religions lived in relative harmony in India. This value system was important for the caste society. Each caste had its own occupation, custom, rituals, and tradition. While each caste was different at one level, it was interdependent at several others. For example, the barber served the agriculturist by cutting hair and in turn the agriculturalist gave the barber a certain amount of grain after the harvest.

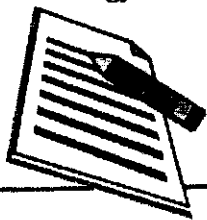
Holism assumed a relationship between individual and group in which the latter had primacy over the former; the individual is expected to perform his duties and claim his rights, always keeping in mind the wider interests of the community. For example, in traditional India, the extended and joint families consisted of a large number of kin, including dependents—the aged, widows, unmarried ones, physically handicapped, etc. Although each contributed according to his ability, yet one was expected to draw from the familial store of wealth only according to one's need. This called for self-restraint of one's own wants in the interest of fellow beings, and the community at large.

From the above discussion, we have an idea of importance of values in traditional society. Let us now discuss the values in modern society. The fundamental values that the modern Indian state pursues are embodied in the Constitution of India. These values are of democracy, secularism and socialism. Although this value package is Western in origin, it is applied to the Indian context with the necessary adaptation and indigenization.

Democracy emphasizes the equality of opportunity. Democracy assumes the existence of autonomous and independent individuals capable of participating in the decision making process. For example, the citizens of our country give votes to select the leaders for local, state and central governance.

Secularism means respecting and tolerating the practices of other communities, particularly religious communities. India is a multi-religious nation. Such a situation called for the recognition of distinctiveness of other religious groups and the importance of secularism as a value. Secularism meant not only non-interference in the affairs of other communities but also developing a positive appreciation of their distinct life style.

Socialism The word socialism means that the production, distribution and exchange of material resources of community are arranged in such a way that they can serve the common good. It is opposed to the concentration of wealth in few hands and decries monopoly.



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8.4.3 Characteristics of Values

From the above discussion we may reveal the following characteristics of values.

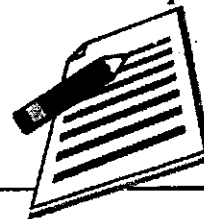
- Value is a matter of faith and belief.
- Values are abstract as they have cognitive elements.
- Values are normative in nature
- Values are general ideas which people share.
- Values are related to the emotions and sentiments.
- Values are the bases for the choices of things.
- Values are relatively permanent.
- Values bring cohesiveness in society.
- Values are motivated for public welfare.
- Values have hierarchy in order.

8.4.4 Value Conflict

From the above discussion, it is clear that values have evolved through ages and they have an important role in all societies. But one of the chief tasks of the contemporary Indian society is to bring about a synthesis between the traditional social value and the modern social value. In this section we will see that although the value sets have conflict among them, similarity among these sets is also possible.

We may say that there is no basic contradiction between the traditional value of pluralism and the modern value of secularism, since the tolerance of others' style of life is basic to both. But there is a difference between the two. The pluralism of the past was associated with distinct traditions for each of the groups, which often provided legitimacy for special privileges. But secularism calls upon the advantaged groups in such a way as not to handicap the less privileged.

Hierarchy was an important value of the traditional order. The important point is that the allocation of resources and distribution of rewards was based on birth. For example, the Brahmin used to enjoy high status than any other caste. The definition of status in modern society is however based on an individual's potential to contribute to the system.



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The traditional principle of holism required that the individuals should stay away from self-interest, pursue collective goals. However democracy implies individuals to be autonomous entities, pursuing their independence and self-interest often at the cost of collective orientation. The principles of holism and individualism (democracy) are thus quite different. Here is apparently clear that congruence between traditional and modern values is possible only in case of **pluralism** and **secularism**.

But the synthesis between the traditional and modern values can be acquired. A couple of examples will clarify the situation. Traditionally castes emphasize the ritual dimension of status. In modern India, the castes are increasingly becoming secularized in that they perform instrumental functions for their members. Thus caste association opens educational institutions, establishes financial agencies to provide funds for housing, etc. These associations also field candidates in the elections through political parties. This secularization of castes in terms of functions, particularly in urban India, changes their substance while retaining the traditional forms. The traditional caste pluralism, which was based on ritual purity, is no more functional. In this way the gap between traditional and modern values has been bridged.

8.4.4.1 Kinds of values

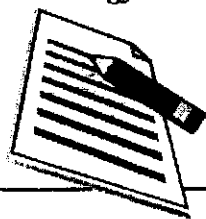
Values may be classified as they have hierarchy in order. We generally say that values are found everywhere. Values are humanistic in nature. They are varied. Radhakamal Mukherjee discusses two types of values related to the Indian Society.

First instantaneous values are worldly in nature which may be observed in day to day life. Second, supernatural values are related to the salvation of the human being. However, we would like to discuss general types of values. They are:

- (1) **Moral Values**- Every society has different types of moral values. They are not scientific. They are related to the religion and different situations of society. For example, respect to the parents, do not steal things, don't tell a lie. Society does not allow for the violation of such values.
- (2) **Rational values** are scientific and logical in nature viz. Hard working is a rational value of modern society.
- (3) **Aesthetic values**- are related to the literature, art, culture. Music white in colour are the signs of beautiful women in Indian society.

However all these values represent tow categories of values:

- (i) **Dominant value**- The value which has strong impact in the mind of a person and violation of such value is not possible for him, is called dominant value.



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- (ii) Variant value- the value in which a person has freedom to behave according to his desires and choices is called variant value.

8.5 RELATION BETWEEN NORM AND VALUES

Values may be defined as a measure of goodness or desirability. They provide general guidelines for conduct. In this sense they are often referred to as "higher order norms". But norms are given much more specific meaning. They define appropriate and acceptable behaviour in particular situations. Values are cherished only through the observance of norms. The relationship between the two can be made clear by the following example. A society may cherish the value of "privacy". This value provides only a general guide to behaviour. Norms define how the value of 'privacy' is translated into action in particular situations and circumstances. For instance, norms relating to privacy may insist that person's letters must not be opened without permission etc. A person's private life or individual life is his own concern and others must not interfere into the personal matters. In this way a series of norms direct how people should behave in terms of the value of 'privacy'.

INTEXT QUESTIONS 8.3

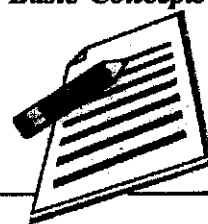
Fill in the blanks with the appropriate words from the brackets:

- i) Any change in social structure will take place with changes in social _____ (institution, values, Action).
- ii) Indian socialism is based on the principle of allocation of resources and roles based on _____ (birth, merit, class)
- iii) _____ emphasizes the equality of opportunity (socialism, holism, democracy)
- iv) In case of holism, individuals should pursue _____ goals (individual, collective)
- v) Socialism is based on the principle of _____ distribution (merit based, status based, need-based)



WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNT

- You have read the concept of norms especially of social norms and how they are important for all societies.



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- Now it is clear to you that norms are the guidelines, which direct conduct in particular situation.
- You have also learnt about values and how they are playing important roles in every society.
- It is very clear that value is concerned with what is good and desirable, which is indispensable for the survival of society;
- Values have evolved through ages;
- Norms can be seen as a reflection of values.
- Norms are unwritten laws.
- variety of norms can be seen as an expression of a single value.
- Thus now we can say that, an ordered and stable society is not possible without shared norms and values.



TERMINAL EXERCISE

Answer the following questions in 100 to 250 words

- 1) Define the following terms: a) Norms and b) Value and explain them in your own words.
- 2) State the relationship between norms and values.
- 3) What are the different types of norms? Describe in your own words.
- 4) What is the importance of values in our society? Explain with example.
- 5) What do you mean by normlessness? Explain with example.

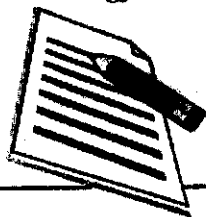


ANSWER TO INTEXT QUESTIONS

8.1 1-d 2-b 3-b

8.2

1. Group shared
2. Sanction
3. Mores
4. Cohesion

**Notes****8.3**

- 5. Maintain
- 6. Normlessness
- 7. Ineffective
- 8. Disorganization

- 1) Values
- 2) Merit
- 3) Democracy
- 4) Collective
- 5) Merit-based