

INTRODUCTION TO SOCIAL PROBLEMS

MODULE 3

INTRODUCTION

- **. Introduction to Social Problems:**
- India emerged as an independent nation-state on 15th August 1947, after a long struggle against the British colonial yoke. The country is a Sovereign, Socialist, Secular, Democratic Republic with a parliamentary system of government. Though India has shown tremendous growth in all spheres of national life in the years after independence, yet many problems plague the everyday social life; the problems, many a time, are interrelated.
- Poverty, Population, Pollution, Illiteracy, Corruption, Inequality, Gender discrimination, Terrorism, Communalism, Lack of Infrastructure, Unemployment, Regionalism, Casteism, Alcoholism, Drugs Abuse, Violence against Women are the major ones.
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CONCEPT

- **. Concept of Social Problems:**
- Contemporary Indian society is flecked with numerous issues that are labelled as social problems. Some of them are age-old, and some are of recent origin that have erupted owing to the change in global socio-political order.
- A social problem, in general, is the condition which is not ideal and disrupts the balance of a society. A dictionary of sociology defines social problems as, “any undesirable condition or situation that is judged by an influential number of persons within a community to be intolerable and to require group action toward constructive reform”.
- Another widely used definition specifies that “no condition, no matter how dramatic or shocking to someone else, is a social problem unless and until the values of a considerable number of people define it as a problem”.
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DEFINITIONS

- **Some of the other definitions of social problems given by sociologists are:**
- **1. Horton and Leslie:**
- It is often defined as the condition which many people consider undesirable and wish to correct.
- **2. Lindbergh:**
- It is any deviant behaviour in a disapproved direction of such a degree that it exceeds the tolerance limit of the community.
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- **3. L.K. Frank:**
- It is defined as any difficulty of misbehaviour of a fairly large number of persons which we wish to remove or correct.
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TYPES

- **Types of Social Problems:**
- Social problems are of diverse nature.
- **However, these diverse social problems can be broadly grouped under four categories:**
- **1. Economic Factors:**
- These problems arise due to imbalance in economic distribution such as poverty, unemployment, etc.
- **2. Cultural Factors:**
- Problems that arise from established beliefs, values, traditions, laws, and languages of a nation or society fall under this category such as dowry, child marriage, juvenile delinquency, etc.
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OTHER FACTORS

- **3. Biological Factors:**
- The problems that arise due to natural calamities, infectious diseases, famine, etc.
- **4. Psychological factors:**
- Problems that arise from ill mental and neurological health fall under this category.
- **Case (1964) has enumerated four types of social problems on the basis of their origin:**
- (i) Problems that are rooted in some aspect of the physical environment.
- (ii) Problems that are inherent in the nature or distribution of the population involved.
- (iii) Problems that result from poor social organisation.
- (iv) Problems that evolve from a conflict of cultural values within the society.
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CHARACTERISTICS

- **Characteristics of Social Problems:**
- Social problems are serious to the extent that they undesirably alter the existing order of the society.
- **On the basis of the aforesaid discussion, we can identify the following characteristics of social problems:**
 - 1. All social problems are situations which have injurious consequences for society.
 - 2. All social problems are deviations from the “ideal” situation.
 - 3. All social problems have some common basis of origin.
 - 4. All social problems are social and political in origin.
 - 5. All social problems are caused by pathological social conditions.
 - 6. All social problems are interconnected.
 - 7. All social problems are social in their results—they affect all sections of society.
 - 8. The responsibility for social problems is social—they require a collective approach for their solution.
 - 9. Social problems occur in all societies.
- A social problem does not exist for a society unless it is recognised by that society to exist. In not being aware of a social problem, a society does not perceive it, address it, discuss it, or do anything for eradicating it. So the crucial point is, identification of a particular issue by the society as a problem. History changes the definition of social problems. The issues that society considered major in the past are often not that important in the present.
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CAUSES

- **Causes of Social Problems:**
- **The causes of social problems may be three-fold but cannot be treated in isolation:**
 - (i) Individual
 - (ii) Cultural
 - (iii) Structural.
- The social evils that are plaguing our society today could hardly be catalogued. They are very uncountable in the true sense of the assertion.
- Prominent among them are- juvenile delinquency; child abuse; escalating crime waves such as armed robbery; arson; fraud; drug peddling; currency trafficking; bribery and corruption; embezzlement of public funds; student and youth unrest; cultural violence; religious intolerance; boundary disputes; stark dishonesty; election rigging; coups and counter coups; lack of commitment to duty; examination malpractices; filthy and gross indiscipline; result racketeering; disrespect for other species; gross economic inequality; poverty; disease and hunger; widespread illiteracy; lack of gainful employment opportunities; open injustice; ostentatious spending; abuse of authority; hoarding of essential commodities; cheating and exploitation of the masses; discrimination and ethnic jingoism; inordinate ambition; cultism; lack of realisation of human potential; narrow education resulting in ill-informed citizens; civil wars; famine; drought and unchecked desertification; and human trafficking and child labour.

REACTIONS

- **Reactions to Social Problems:**
- Different people react differently to social problems.
- **The differences may be explained in terms of the following four factors:**
- **(i) An Attitude of Unconcern:**
- Many people and the State at times, remain indifferent to a problem, thinking that it does not affect them. At times, their own individual problems like family tensions and job pressures keep them so engaged that they do not find time to be interested in what affects others. It is only when their own interests are involved that they become agitated and start taking interest in the problem. The indifference and passivity of the State only add to the problem further.
- **(ii) Fatalism:**
- Some people are so fatalistic that they attribute everything to destiny. Issues like poverty and unemployment are also explained in terms of misfortune and past karma. They, therefore, suffer the misfortune quietly and wait for some miracle to happen.
- **(iii) Vested Interests:**
- Some people take no interest in the existing problems because they stand to gain so long as the problem exists. Motivated by self-interest, they describe the problem as insoluble and talk about its eradication as a waste of time.
- **(iv) Absence of Expert Knowledge:**
- Some people, though deeply concerned about the problem, do not take much interest in it believing that its solution is impossible unless people change their attitudes and values. As the changes must be initiated by a change in outlook, they remain unconcerned about finding alternative possibilities of treatment. Dowry is one such problem in our society.
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