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Unit V

Social Process

What is social process? Describe.

As we understand society from sociological point of view is a system of *moral norms* and *defined statuses* along with a system in action. Society includes *social interaction* too. Therefore, society has two salient elements:

a. Static element- Moral norms and statuses are the static elements in any society.

b. Dynamic element- Social elements are the dynamic elements in any society.

While analyzing society in terms of its dynamic elements, it can be explained *as a system* *of social relationships* that exist among people, e.g. father-son, employee-employer, teacher-student, etc. Social relationship, broadly speaking, involves *reciprocal obligation*, *reciprocal statuses* and *reciprocal ends and means* between two or more actors. These elements collectively refer to a *pattern of interaction* between the individuals in the particular society.

Therefore, social relationship may be studied by the *kind or mode of interaction they exhibit.* These kinds of interaction are called social processes. *Social processes are the fundamental ways in which men interact and establish relationship.*

Definition of Social Process:

Maciver and Page defines social process as “It is the manner in which the relations of the members of a group, once brought together, acquire a distinctive character.”

Horton and Hunt define social process as “Representative forms of behavior which are commonly found in social life.”

Kinds of Interaction or Social Process: Cooperation, competition, conflict, contravention, accommodation, assimilation, acculturation, socialization, etc. are the types of social processes.

Socialization

Plainly speaking, the process by which individuals learn the culture of their society is known as socialization. As M.Haralambos and RM Heald argue that primary socialization takes place within the family and it is the most important aspect of the socialization process. Without socialization, an individual would exhibit little resemblance to any human being defined within the boundary of normal standards of society. For example, two females (of two and eight years) were reportedly found in a wolf den in Bengal in 1920. They walked on all fours, preferred a diet of raw meat, they howled like wolves and lacked any form of speech. This event of lack of socialization is popularly known as ‘wolf- children of Midnapore’. This and other examples indicate that socialization needs prolonged interaction with adults. Interaction with adults is prerequisite not only for fitting new members into society but also to the process of actually becoming human.

Horton and Hunt argue on the matter of socialization that the infant enters this world as a selfish little organism preoccupied with its physical needs. It soon becomes a human being, with a set of attitudes and values, likes and dislikes, goals and purposes, patterns of responses, and he becomes the norms abiding person. Every person gets these through a process we call socialization- the learning process which turns him or her from an animal into a person with a human personality. Socialization, therefore, can be described *as the process whereby one internalizes the norms of the groups among whom one lives so that a unique ‘self’ emerges.*  In another word, the process by which individuals learn the *culture of their society* is known as socialization. How the need of the socialization is important in human life can be illustrated through the presentation of a true historical event: once Akbar, an emperor in India from 1542 to 1602, ordered that a group children be brought up without any instruction in language in order to test the belief that they would eventually speak the Hebrew, the language of the God. The children were raised by deaf mutes. They developed no spoken language and communicated solely by gestures.

Definition:

Bogardus defines the socialization as, “the process of working together, of developing group responsibility, or guided by the welfare needs of others.”

Harry M.Johnson describes socialization as, “learning that enables the learner to perform social roles.”

Process of Socialization

Every man has capacity to adjust himself to the conditions of his social environment. This process of adjustment to social environment is itself socialization and the social order is maintained by socialization. In this regard, individuals learn to conform to the norms of the group. Man, as an organism, has some internal factors or forces which limit or help his socialization. Now, these internal forces relevant to the process of socialization are:

1. Reflexes
2. Instinct
3. Urges
4. capacities
5. Comprehension and educability.

The above stages are responsible for making the socialization process possible. Besides these factors, the development of ‘Self’ and concept of ‘generalized others’ are the important aspects for an individual getting socialized.

The Concept of ‘Self’ and ‘Generalized Others’:

The concept of self is developed through a gradual and complicated process which continues throughout life. The concept is an image that one builds only with the help of others. For example, a girl is told by her parents and relatives how pretty she looks. If this is repeated often enough, consistently enough and by enough different people, she eventually comes to feel and acts like a beautiful person. In this way, she develops ‘self’ and this self which is discovered through the reactions of others has been labeled the “looking glass self” by C. H. Cooley. Interestingly, he may have been inspired by the words in Thackeray’s Vanity Fair, “the world is a looking glass and gives back to every man the reflection of his own face. Frown on it and it will in turn look sourly upon you; laugh at it and with it, it is a jolly, kind companion”. There are three steps in the process of building the looking- glass self:

1. Our perception of how we look to others
2. Our perception of their judgment of how we look
3. Our feelings about these judgments.

Thus, we are constantly revising our perception of how we look.

Similarly, the process of internalizing the attitudes of others has been described by George Herbert Mead. This generalized other is a composite of the expectations one believes other hold toward one. When one says, “Every one expects me to …” one is using the concept of the generalized other. Awareness of generalized other is developed through the process of ‘role taking’ and ‘role playing’.

Agents of Socialization

Man has no instinct to develop the human personality. They are molded or shaped through the process of socialization. The process of socialization does not cease to operate after childhood life but continues throughout the life. But it is the fact that child’s and other’s socialization is not mere an accident. The socialization becomes possible only with some agents which are described as below:

1. Family and Parents: The process of socialization begins in family. The family members, especially the mother, are responsible for primary socialization of a child. Therefore, family is an important agent in socialization process.
2. Peer group: Peer group is made up of the contemporaries of the child, in play ground and the street. They learn facts and facets of culture from these children that they have previously learnt at different times from their children.
3. Teachers: The teachers also play role in socialization process when the child enters the school. It is in the school that the culture is transmitted and acquired, in which the science and art of one generation is passed on to the next.
4. Mass media: It is the way that large mass listen to news, views and reviews at the same time and the fact is that the people listen to ‘ thousand tongues of conscience’ and learn so many facets of culture at the same moment.

Freudian Theory of Socialization:

Sigmund Freud, an Austrian Psychiatrist and the founder of Psychoanalysis, centralized his works on ‘Human Mind’ rather than the process of socialization. However, his divisions of mind’s function into three dimensions give the suggestion that mental process and function of mind play an important role in socialization. The division of function of mind has been described as follows:

1. *Id*- The *id* is concerned only with satisfying the animal impulses of man.
2. *Ego*- The *ego* serves as the mediator between desire and action. It represents the urges of *id*.
3. *Super ego*- The super ego always holds up the behavior norms of society. It provides the *ego* the idea of moral and immoral and this in turn intervenes with the *id*.

Freud contends that the individual’s super ego is a reflection of his parent’s standards of right and wrong. The individual internalizes these into his own personality with his parents. Here, the parent’s standards are the society’s or its sub group’s standards in which the individual happens to live. Therefore, it can be concluded that the child, in its socialization process adopts the norms of conduct of the society through *super ego*.

Stages of Socialization:

Cooperation

It is the most basic social process and aims at working together for the pursuit of common goal. The term ‘Cooperation’ is derived from the two Latin words: ‘Co’ meaning together and ‘operari’ meaning to work. Etymologically, cooperation is the joint work or working together for common rewards.

Definitions:

A.W. Green, “It is the continuous and common endeavor of two or more persons to perform a task or to reach a goal that is commonly cherished”

Fair Child, “Cooperation is the process by which the individuals or groups combine their effort, in a more or less organized way for the attainment of common goal.”

Thus cooperation is the mutual working together for the attainment of common goal. It implies a regard for wishes, needs and aspirations of other people.

Nature of Cooperation:

1. Cooperation may be found in groups as small as the dyad (group of two persons) and as large as modern countries.
2. People may cooperate for self centered gain or for self protection or to do good for others.
3. Cooperation requires sympathy and identification.
4. Mutual aid is the prerequisite for cooperation.
5. Cooperation is possible only when there is like mindedness, similarity of purpose, mutual understanding, mutual helpfulness and selfless attitude.

Types of cooperation: Cooperation can be categorized into the following division:

1. Direct Cooperation- It is the cooperation for identitical function. For example, playing together, worshipping together
2. Indirect cooperation- People work individually for the attainment of common end. For example, spinner, weavers, dyers, tailors engaged in producing clothes.
3. Primary cooperation- It is especially found among close relatives, such as family, neighborhood, friends, for the betterment of all.
4. Secondary cooperation- It is the characteristic feature of modern society, found mainly in secondary group. It is highly formalized and specialized in political, economic, religious, commercial, educational and other group.
5. Tertiary cooperation- It occurs between two or more political parties, castes, tribes, called accommodation.

Competition

Competition is the oppositional social process which may be defined as a struggle against another or others for a commodity, goal or value. *Competition* and *conflict* are the oppositional social processes. Competition is a less form of opposition in which two or more persons struggle for some end or goal. While defining the competition, attention or analysis is focused on the reward or the goal rather than on the competitor.

Competition is the most fundamental form of struggle which has been emerged as a result of the universal struggle for existence. It is based upon the principle that people can never satisfy all their desires and competition takes place whenever there is an insufficient supply of things that human beings commonly desire. Furthermore, whenever and wherever commodities which people want are available in a limited supply there is competition.

Definition:

Horton and Hunt define competition as, “the struggle for the possession of the rewards- goods, status, power, and love and anything- which are limited in supply.”

Characteristics:

1. Scarcity is the major condition of competition.
2. Competition and affluence, sometimes, may go hand in hand- Competition may be found even in circumstances of abundance or affluence. For example, even in the time of employment, competition may take place for acquiring top ranking status. In this regard, the competition would not be only for getting food, shelter and other basic needs.
3. Competition is continuous for receiving social status, wealth, and fame and is prevalent everywhere.
4. It is universal at every field.
5. It is dynamic, stimulates achievement and contributes to social change. For example, it lifts the level of aspiration from lower level to higher level.
6. Competition may be personal or impersonal- Normally, it is directed toward goal and not against any individual. Sometimes, it takes place without the actual knowledge of other’s existence. It is impersonal as in the case of civil service in which the contestants are not even aware of one. But, it may be personal as when two persons contest for an election to an office. As competition becomes more personal it leads to conflict.
7. It may be constructive or destructive, healthy or unhealthy- If one tries to win only at the expense of others, it will be destructive, and e.g., big industrialists resort to such kind of competition and make the small petty business men become bankrupt whereas constructive competition may occur among the farmers, students, workers.

Types of Competition: Types of competition are given below and you are requested to explain it on the basis of my explanation and class discussion.

1. Social competition
2. Economic Competition
3. Political Competition
4. Cultural Competition.

Conflict

Conflict is an ever-present process in human relations. It is one of the forms of struggle between individuals or groups. *Conflict takes place whenever a person or group seeks to gain a reward not by surpassing other competitors but by preventing them from effectively competing.*

Definitions:

Horton and Hunt define conflict as, “Conflict may be defined as a process of seeking to monopolize rewards by eliminating or weakening the competitors.”

Gillin and Gillin define conflict as, “a social process in which individuals or groups seek their ends by directly challenging the antagonist by violence or threat of violence.”

Karl Marx is the architect of conflict theory and has designed the theory of communism, a human stage in the history as classless society. Regarding the occurrence of conflict in the history he explains, “History of hitherto existing human society is nothing but the history of the class struggle.” His analysis of class struggle is due to the ever- present conflict at the different stage of the history.

Characteristics:

1. It is a universal social process.
2. It is a conscious action created against the oppositional group.
3. It is a personal and when competition is personalized it leads to conflict.
4. It is continuous but intermittent.
5. Conflict defines issues about which individuals differ a lot and it may be between social classes, religious groups, and social groups. However, pattern of conflict may change as a result of changes in values, ideas, goals, national interests, etc.
6. Conflict is conditioned by culture. It is affected by the nature of the group and its particular culture. For example, *sectarianism* is the manifestation of conflict. That is , the culturally determined values of a society will set the stage for its struggle.
7. Conflict is caused by frustration and insecurity.

Ways of resolving Conflict: The ways of resolving conflict are widely applied in various forms of conflict which are given below (You are requested to describe these points on the basis of my class discussion and take it as a part of our objectives to make you skilled to deal with the particular topic):

1. Accommodation
2. Assimilation
3. Negotiation
4. Redistribution of the rewards to different groups on more or less equal footing.

Adaptation

Culture is adaptive means that most of the *learned* and *shared* behaviors that make up a culture are thought to have developed and spread through a group of people because they help that group of people survive in a given environment. Thus cultural behaviors may be

favored by natural selections just as genes are. Since culture is learned and shared rather than innate, humans can develop new behaviors quickly and adapt to diverse and changing conditioned with relative case. Adaptation, then, is perhaps the most significant process of culture.

It is argued that some cultural behaviors that, if carried to an extreme, would decrease the chances of survival of particular society. For example, *certain tribes in New Guinea view women as essentially unclean and dangerous individuals with physical contact should be as limited as possible.* Men in one such tribe was found to avoid contact, including sexual contact, with women completely. This suggests that such society would not survive for long. In this sense, the customs that diminish the survival chances of a society are not likely to persist. Therefore, maladaptive customs should be replaced by adaptive ones which would help society persist for long. However, customs which are adaptive in one society may not be adaptive in another society.

An example would reveal how cultural adaptation should be adaptive culturally, socially and biologically. In some of the societies postpartum sex taboos that prohibit women from engaging in sexual intercourse until their 2 years olds are ready to be weaned. If there were no such taboo and a mother had another baby soon, she could no longer continue to nurse the older baby and the baby would be affected by *kwashiorkor*, a severe protein deficiency disease. To sum up the matter, cultural adaptation represents an adjustment to the *physical environment, biological environment and social environment*.

Definition:

William P. Scott defines cultural adaptation as, “those aspects of culture ( the culture traits and complexes), that represent a society’s adjustment to its physical environment and enable it to survive. According to this definition, adaptive culture would include methods of agriculture and manufacturing, technical knowledge, norms regulating economic organization, and so forth”

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