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## UNIT 1 BASIC SOCIAL CONCEPTS

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### Contents

- 1.0 Objectives
- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Society
- 1.3. Community
- 1.4 Associations
- 1.5 Institutions
- 1.6 Primary Groups and Secondary Groups
- 1.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 1.8 Key Words
- 1.9 Suggested Readings
- 1.10 Answers to Check Your Progress

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### 1.0 OBJECTIVES

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After reading this unit you will be able to:

- understand the concepts of society;
- describe the different ways in which individuals relate to each other;
- identify the differences in the concepts; and
- explain ways in which these concepts are used in social work.

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### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

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In this unit you will be introduced to the basic concepts used in sociology. Social work and sociology are related disciplines and social work borrows liberally from sociological theory and sociological concepts to understand social problems and society. *Community, association, institutions* and *groups* are concepts that you will frequently come across in your theory as well as your field work. Therefore, it is important that you know these concepts and their usage at this stage itself.

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### 1.2 SOCIETY

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Before we understand these concepts, it is important that we clarify what a concept means. A concept is expressed in one or more words. Also concepts are abstractions, which means that these are derived from experience and are mentally created. Once the scientific community accepts a concept, all those who use it accept the meaning assigned to it. For example, in everyday language a road means a way.

Sometimes there is need for further clarification of the concept. For example, a road can be a street, a *pukka* road or *kacha* one or even a highway. In scientific language also, we qualify concepts, when we want to say something more specific. For example, communities can be further classified into rural community, urban community and tribal community. In some cases, social scientists do not agree with the meaning attached to a specific concept and after a debate among them, meanings attached to the concept undergo a change.

According to Horton and Hunt, concepts are used for the following reasons. One, it enables scientific discussion to take place. Concepts help social scientists find common ground for initiating discussions on theories. Secondly, new knowledge is also created when concepts and theories are debated and its limitations are identified. Thirdly, concepts allow easy communication by reducing need for elaborate description. Otherwise, the communicator would have to explain the social phenomena every time he/ she has to use it.

### Society

According to Horton and Hunt society is an organization of people whose associations are with one another. MacIver describes society as a web of relationships. There are a number of definitions of society. Most of them point to the following characteristics of society.

***Society involves mutual awareness:*** The first condition for calling a set of individuals a society is the awareness among them about each other. It is only when individuals are aware about the presence of others that they can form a social relationship.

***Society consists of social relationships:*** Any two individuals or objects are said to be in relation with each other when there is mutual interaction and when the actions of one effects the other. Thus in a society individuals are effected by the ways others behave.

***Society has values and norms that guide these social relationships:*** Social relationships are guided and controlled by the values and norms of a society. Every individual has a specific role assigned to him/her by the society. The performance of these roles is guided by the values and norms of the society associated with the particular role. These values are taught to the individuals through the process of socialization. They become part of the individual personality. Apart from this, there are informal and formal agencies of social control which apply positive and negative sanctions on the individual for making him/her conform to the societal values and norms.

***Society has general goals:*** Every society wants to perpetuate itself. Certain functions have to be performed if the society has to maintain itself and prevent its own destruction. These are called *functional prerequisites*. Some of the most common functions identified are the following; common goals; common orientation towards environment; communication; set of common values; reproduction and rearing of children, socializing the children, attaining food and other resources required for its members' survival, protecting its members from natural and man-made disasters and specific ways to deal with conflicts and disagreements within the members. The way these functions are performed vary from society to society.

***Society has a number of complementary social processes:*** We find a variety of social processes and attributes in the society. We find instances of association, cooperation, competition and conflict in society. Similarly we find that in many ways the members of society are alike and in many other ways they are different. There are groups and subgroups with these groups that have their respective dynamics. All these different social processes make up the society.

***Society has division of labour:*** One individual cannot perform all functions required to maintain a society. The work has to be divided among the members. The criteria by which the function are divided among the members and its social consequences are important part of study for the sociologist. Division of labour can be based on sex, education, profession, ethnicity, caste or class. Division of labour depends on the level of complexity of the society.

***Society is more than the sum total of its members:*** The society influences individuals in many ways. It is the environment along with hereditary factors that determine the personality of the individual. Thus the society comes to have a force of its own by which it influences the members. This force is applied through social institutions like laws, religion and family.

### **Classification of Societies**

Sociologists have classified societies according to different criteria.

***Societies classified on their geographical location:*** Examples of this classification are Western society, Indian society, Chinese society and so on. This kind of classification is used broadly like in western societies. It is felt for example that all societies in the west share certain common and significant characteristics. It can also be used narrowly when we want to refer to a regional group, for example we talk of Manipuri society or Rajasthani society.

***Societies classified on the basis of the language:*** Examples of this classification are Tamil society and Telugu society. Language is a medium which unites people and one of the modes by which the culture of the people is expressed. So language is sometimes used to distinguish societies from each other.

***Societies classified based on core values:*** Sometimes opinions regarding the nature of the society are based on essential core-values which the members adhere to. For example, Western society is considered modern, rational, individualistic and consumerist while Indian society is considered to be traditional, religious, group-oriented and spiritual. In most cases such classification is the result of stereotyping and labeling. It is based on insufficient and inaccurate information on the societies other than one's own. Social workers should be able to see how such images, often negative, about other societies, influence the behaviour of members.

***Societies based on level of complexity of social life:*** Simple societies are those societies that have the following characteristics: small-sized with fewer members; relatively isolated from other societies-spatially, culturally and economically, means for obtaining food is hunting and gathering; low level of technology used in production of articles; division of labour is limited and based on age and sex; barter and gift taking and giving are the major ways for exchange of goods between the members; political system is based on hereditary principle and traditional authority; group consciousness dominates individual

consciousness and unity in the group is maintained by the likeness among the members.

On the other hand, complex societies are based on the following characteristics: large numbers of members and, therefore; close relationship with other societies, mainly due to advanced technology used in communication and transport; high level of technology used in producing all goods including foodstuffs; division of labour is highly diversified; market is the main form of exchange of goods while other forms of exchange like barter play a marginal role; political system is highly advanced with different competing interests; a large bureaucracy based on rational-legal values; individual consciousness and individual freedom is promoted; diversity in life-styles is encouraged and unity is based on interdependence of members.

***Societies based on its economic system:*** Sociologists influenced by Marxism maintain that economic factors have predominant influence on how the society is structured and how society functions. Based on this criteria societies are classified as capitalistic societies and socialistic societies. Both these societies are complex in nature, but in capitalistic society, the forces of production (land, factories) are privately owned. Workers working in these factories are paid wages in exchange of the labour they contribute. Markets determine the costs of the goods and services that are produced. Private property-ownership and profit-making are encouraged. The state has no or minimal role in the economy of the country.

In a socialistic society, all or significant part of the forces of production are owned by the state in different forms. The state uses its ownership of industries to influence the economy. Equally important is the role of planning in a socialistic economy. The market is only allowed to have limited influence on the economy. The supply of goods and services are determined by the plan which the government prepares after assessing the needs and demands of different sections of the society. The government through its policies tries to ensure that the differences in income between various sections of the society are not very large. After the collapse of the Socialist, bloc planning has lost much of its appeal for governments around the globe. Most countries have started giving significant role to market and private entrepreneurs in their economies. Nevertheless, it is also true that classical capitalist society no longer exists as all governments in the modern times play a significant role in the economy of the country.

***Societies based on the political system:*** Societies can be classified also on the basis of the nature of political system into *democratic* or *authoritarian*. A democratic society has a state whose leaders are elected by popular vote. Regular elections are held to elect the leaders. Though free and fair elections are important, other conditions needed for democratic society are: freedom of association, freedom of speech, tolerance of different opinions, protection of minority rights, equality before law and respect for human rights. Authoritarian society neither allows dissent nor freedom of association. No other organization is allowed to challenge the authority of the state.

***Societies classified based on historical periods:*** Ancient societies, medieval societies and modern societies are some of the societies based on historical periods in which they existed.

## Check Your Progress I

- Note :** a) Use the space provided for your answer.  
b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of this unit.

1) What are the major characteristics of a society?

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## 1.3 COMMUNITY

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Like society, different sociologists have also defined 'community' differently. Horton and Hunt define a community as a local grouping within which people carry out a full round of life activities. Explaining it in greater detail they include the following characteristics.

**Community is a grouping of people:** Community consists of a number of people living together and sharing a common life. They interact with each other frequently and purposefully.

**A fixed geographical area:** This is an important characteristic of the community. A community has well-defined boundaries that are recognized by the members of the community as well as outsiders. To become a member of the community, one needs to have some relationship with the specific geographical area. In some cases, membership of the community can be had if one's parents belong to the specific community.

**Division of labour:** In every group, many functions have to be performed, so that the group survives. No individual or group can do all these functions by themselves. There are also differences in the skill and aptitude of the individuals. These factors lead to division of labour and occupational specialization .

**Members are conscious of their unity and of belongingness to the community:** Members are aware of their membership in a particular community. It affects their behaviour in many ways. They take pride in the achievements of their fellow-members and are concerned when undesirable things happen to them.

**Members act collectively in an organized manner to achieve common goals:** Members live in a particular area and share common interests. Therefore, they can be easily organized to achieve common objectives. This condition enables the practice of social work method — community organization. Also, many programmes are implemented because it is felt that the community as a whole will participate and benefit from the programme, for example, the community development programme.

**Common culture:** Culture of any group develops as a result of group living. A common way of thinking about the different aspects of life develops and this is transmitted from one generation to other. Cultural influences from outside the group are accepted or rejected collectively by the group. As a result of common experiences, a common culture develops and regulates the group behaviour.

#### **Use of the Concept 'Community'**

The concept also helps in describing and differentiating existing communities. The most commonly used classification is to distinguish between urban community and rural community. Rural communities are characterized by the following attributes: strong community sentiment; importance of neighbourhood; relatively high incidence of extended families; predominance of primary relationships; majority of community members' occupations are related to the primary sectors like fishing, agriculture, hunting, etc; high degree of informal social control; greater degree of homogeneity. On the other hand urban community is defined as characterised by the following: weak community sentiments and lesser importance of neighbourhood; predominance of lower degree of informal social control; major occupations of the members are related to industry and services sector and heterogeneity.

Further when the community is taken as a unit for action, it simplifies the formulation and implementation of programmes. Without delineating the boundaries of the community and understanding its structure it would be difficult to analyze the needs of the community.

#### **Limitations in the Use of the Concept 'Community'**

Though the concept is quite clear on paper, in real life its application is confusing due to these reasons. Firstly, no community seems to fulfill all the characteristics required to be termed as a community. Also, the distinctions between different types of communities are not clear. We find that characteristics that are attributed to the rural characteristics are also found in the urban areas and vice versa. Secondly, in some Indian villages, there is less or even no 'We feeling' among the members because the community is divided on the basis of caste. Thirdly, it is observed that when people say 'community' they seem to have in their minds only the male members of the community. In many village communities, women do not have a public voice and sometimes are not even seen. In the coming lessons, you will learn how these factors influence the practice of social work methods.

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## **1.4 ASSOCIATIONS**

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Modern societies are characterized by presence of numerous associations. These associations are of different varieties, of different types, of different sizes and with different objectives. MacIver defines an association as 'an organization deliberately formed for the collective pursuit of some interest or set of interests, which its members share'. The following are the characteristics of associations:

**Associations are groups of individuals:** Associations consist of a number of individuals who share common interest or common interests. They relate to

each other so that they can promote the group's interests. Attaining group interests will eventually mean that the individual member's interests are also promoted.

**Associations have objectives:** These interests are specific and all the members are aware of these interests. In most cases, the objectives of the association will reveal those interests of the members, which it wants to pursue.

Objectives are framed after taking into consideration the reality of the situation. The success and failure of the association depends on whether it attains its objectives or not.

**Association has formal rules and regulations:** A small association may not have any formal rules as members may be functioning based on the personal relationship they have with each other. But if the association grows larger and its functioning becomes complex, then normal rules and regulations are formulated. Formal rules and regulations of the association determine how the members will act in specific situations. In many associations, these rules and procedures are written down. In your fieldwork agency you can request the officials to allow you to show the 'Memorandum of Association'. This document will show you the objectives of the agency, its mode of functioning and other relevant information.

**Membership is voluntary:** Associations are product of modern societies. Membership is voluntary, that is, members join the association out of their own desire. The association can set standards for allowing members to join. Once the aspirant meets these standards he or she is allowed to join the association.

**Associations survive as long as it has members:** Unlike families, associations survive even if the original members leave or expire. The only condition is that new members should join the association and replace those who're leaving.

**Associations and their relevance in modern society:** Modern societies freely allow and even encourage the formation of the associations. Therefore, we find that there are associations that have serious objectives like influencing government policy and there are associations that want to promote bird watching. Tocqueville, a prominent social thinker, who studied the American society in the eighteen century, was the first to point out that associations promote democracy. Modern thinkers have agreed with these observations. Associations allow citizens to organize themselves, articulate their demands, thereby restricting the authority of the government. This prevents the government from accumulating all authority in itself at the cost of individual freedom. Two, associations allow for plurality of opinions. Associations also provide a number of services, which improve the quality of life of the people.

In traditional society, individuals become part of the groups on the basis of their ascribed status. For example, medieval cities had merchant guilds whose membership was based on the caste of the individuals. In modern India, there is a proliferation of caste associations. These associations have characteristics of both traditional groups and modern associations. Its objectives are related to that of a modern society like influencing government policies and building educational institutions. However, membership is based on primordial considerations like caste and religion. So these associations cannot be called

fully modern or fully traditional. However, they play a significant role in the lives of most Indians.

### Check Your Progress II

- Note :** a) Use the space provided for your answer.  
b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of this unit.

1) What are the characteristics of modern associations?

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## 1.5 INSTITUTIONS

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In every day language, people use institutions to mean organizations. For example, college is called educational institution. But in sociology the concept 'institution' has a specific meaning. According to MacIver, institutions are 'established forms or conditions of procedures characteristics of group activity'. According to Horton and Hunt, an institution is a system of norms to achieve some goal or activity that people feel is important, or more formally an organized cluster of folkways and mores centered around a major human activity. Institutions have the following characteristics.

***Institutions emerge out of social interactions within a group:*** According to Sumner there are two types of institutions — crecive institutions and enacted institutions. Crescive institutions are those norms that emerge unconsciously in society. Its origin is unclear and cannot be dated. On the other hand, enacted institutions are consciously created for specific purposes. Modern day laws, which are rationally formulated, are an example of enacted institutions.

***Institutions are structural processes that control human behaviour:*** Any member of society is expected to follow the rules, regulations and usages prevalent in the society. These rules, regulations and usages can be informal or formal. If it is formal, then it is codified and in most cases will have an organization responsible to see that individuals follow these rules.

For example, in Indian society if a person wants to get married she can do so only under one of the Marriage Acts formulated by the government. There will be an agency for conducting marriage and to see that conditions needed for marriage are fulfilled. The male and female agree to perform the duties of husband and wife respectively. In cases of conflict between the partners, there are police and courts to deal with them. The totality of these processes can be called the institution of marriage in India.

***All institutions have roles and status:*** Every institution gives a particular role and status to the individuals involved in it. Role is a set of behaviour expected of an individual in particular social context. Status is the position of the individual in society. In an educational institution, for example, there are



individuals who come to learn and are given the status of students, and the individuals who teach are given status of teachers. In his/her role as a student he or she has to attend class, maintain discipline, obey the teachers and participate in the class discussions. In his/her role as a teacher as her/she has to take classes, evaluate students' notebooks, control the students and follow the principal's instructions. Institutions operate through the means of roles.

***Institutional roles are learnt by socialization:*** Every institution prescribes specific roles for the particular individual. The different roles individuals perform are learnt through the process of socialization. Main agencies of socialization are family, educational institutions, peer group, state and religion.

***Institutions influence each other:*** There are many institutions in a society and they influence each other. For example, the school teaches the students how to behave like a good citizen. When they grow up they become good citizens who are aware of the laws and their responsibilities.

At times various institutions give contradictory norms, which result in confusion in the individual. For example, feudalism and modern democracy co-exist in some parts of India, each of which makes opposing demands on the individual. Democracy advocates equality while feudalism advocates structured inequality.

The major institutions which are the subject of the sociological study are political, economic, family, educational and religious. Other important institutions in society are bureaucracy, welfare institutions and military.

***Relationship between an institution and organization:*** As mentioned in the start of the section, institutions and organizations are different conceptually. Institutions are recognized way of thinking while organizations are formal groups created to achieve specific objectives. At the same time they are related to each other as every organization has an institutional framework, which allows it to survive.

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## 1.6 PRIMARY GROUPS AND SECONDARY GROUPS

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According to Horton and Hunt groups are described in many ways. Some define a group as a collection of individuals who live in close physical proximity. Other definition emphasizes the need for common characteristics among the members if a collection of individuals has to be called a group. Yet another set of definitions require the members to have common consciousness and regular interaction in order to be called a group. We will describe a collection of individuals as a group if it is marked by the following characteristics:

***A group should have a given number of individuals:*** One or two members cannot be called a group. Similarly a very large number of individuals cannot be called a group. It would be more appropriate to call it a community, crowd, mob or a society. You will learn about these concepts later.

***The group members should have regular interaction between themselves:*** Interaction between the members should be purposeful and considered as such by the members. Thus individuals waiting for a bus and having casual conversations cannot be called a group by these standards.

**Awareness about each other:** The members are conscious about other members' behaviour, emotions, needs and their own behaviour is influenced by this consciousness.

**Members are aware of themselves being a unit:** Group members see themselves as distinct from others. They acknowledge that their membership in the group makes them different from others.

**Common goals:** A group, if it has to sustain itself has to have goals. Goals can be same for all members or in some cases goals can be different. It is also possible that the stated goals of the group may be different from the actual goals. A group may declare that its aim is to help the poor but members may join it primarily to meet and socialize with each other.

**Common ideals and values:** When the above conditions are met it is likely that as far as the group purpose is concerned, the members will have shared values. In matters not concerned with group, the members can have different views. For example, members of group dedicated to promoting wildlife photography will agree with each other on the importance of promoting such a cause. But, they may belong to different political parties and adhere to different ideologies.

**Established group patterns:** Regular purposeful interactions give rise to group patterns. These interactions can be formal or informal depending on the nature of the groups. In case of formal interactions, rules, regulations and procedures are followed while in case of informal relations, there is spontaneity.

### **Primary Groups**

Primary groups are those groups whose members have face to face contacts, intimate, personal and non-formal relationship with each other. They have the following characteristics:

**Primary groups are of small size:** The size of the group is important as in larger groups it is difficult for the member to have intimate contacts with every one. Small groups allow qualitatively and quantitatively better interactions. Therefore, members have personal relationship with each other.

**Primary group members share common goals:** Members of a primary group may have different characteristics. For example, a family may have an adult male and adult female and their children. Though they are different in many ways they share common goals, which they all think are important and contribute towards their happiness.

**Primary group offers its members a total experience:** Total experience means that it affects the members in a number of ways. Individuals are accepted as total personalities. For example, the family is a primary group, which has face-to-face and intimate relationship. It is also a total relationship in the sense that members benefit in a number of ways. Children are given love and affections, provided with education and taken care of when there are sick etc. The husband and wife help each other in more than one way. Hence a very important part of the lives of the members is spent in the family. Peer groups are another example of primary groups.

**Primary group has relationship as an end in itself:** Primary group members see the relationship as an end in itself. In other words, the relationship is valued for what it is i.e., more than any specific benefit the members may get because of their membership. For example, if a man marries only because he wants somebody to cook for him then it cannot be called a 'genuine marriage'.

**Primary groups generally have long life:** Families and peer groups exist as long as the members of the group live. If any member dies or leaves the group the group itself ends. For example, if the father of the family dies, the group in its original form also come to an end. The surviving members may continue to act as group but roles and interaction patterns undergo a major change. It is, therefore, correct to call it a new group.

**Primary groups play an important role in determining the individual's personality:** The family and the peer group are important agencies of socialisation. Both of them are primary groups and apart from the services they provide they also give the members emotional support and education. While other agencies of socialisation do play an important role, it is the unique experiences that the individual experience in the primary groups which becomes basis of his or her personality.

**Primary groups sometimes compete for individual loyalty:** Primary groups seek high degree of loyalty from its members and in certain cases may advocate, different values. In such a situation, the individual may be in a dilemma as to which group value to adopt. For example, a teenager's family may want the individual to dress conservatively while his peer group may want him to dress according to the latest fashion and style. This can lead to personality conflicts.

Some sociologists have held that primary groups must have members living in close proximity with each other and having face-to-face relationships. But it need not be so as even when there is physical distance between the members, if they can still be emotionally close to each other and thus satisfy the criteria of the primary group.

## Secondary Groups

Secondary groups are generally larger than primary groups. Members in secondary groups have formal, impersonal, and need based relationship with each other. A secondary group has the following characteristics:

**Secondary groups have relatively large number of members:** Secondary groups consist of many members who share common interests. Some secondary groups may have lesser number than a large joint family. But the manner in which they relate with each other is different, as we will see now. The members can also be spread over large distances. Now a days, there are secondary groups whose members are all around the globe. They interact through the web and conduct effective global campaigns without meeting each other face-to-face.

**Secondary groups have specific interests:** While primary groups have relationship as an end in itself, in secondary groups, relations are maintained so that some other ends can be achieved. Members are also aware of this condition and as such, their emotional involvement is much less as compared to secondary groups.

***Secondary group has clear objectives:*** The aim of forming a secondary group is to attain some objectives which the members feel are important. In most cases, the objective is such that an individual cannot attain it alone. He/she needs the cooperation from others. A secondary group is conceptually closer to the concept of association.

***Secondary group members relate to each other formally:*** Since secondary members have specific objectives in mind there is no need for them to know each other intimately. There is no need of meeting each other face-to-face either. A common newsletter or a website as is the case now a days, is all that is needed to share information and pool resources. Once the objective is attained, the secondary group may end its existence.

***Secondary groups play an important role in furthering members' interest:*** In democratic societies like ours, there is a need for mobilizing people on the basis of common interests. People can influence decision making at different levels only if they organize themselves and make their voices heard. Secondary associations are used to articulate the demands of various groups.

### **Relationship Between Primary and Secondary Groups**

Primary and secondary groups are related in more ways than one. Firstly, primary groups like family provide the secondary groups with members. They also prepare them to cooperate and interact with others. Some behavioural problems among individuals occur when families do not prepare their children to deal with the demands of secondary groups. Secondly, primary groups like sub-groups and cliques which are part of secondary groups play a vital role in their decision making process. Their influence on the performance of the secondary groups may be positive or negative depending on their intentions, their power and the power of those who may oppose them. Thirdly, primary groups within the secondary group give emotional support to the members. Most secondary groups cannot give its members a real sense of identity and nor can they give them individual attention. This can be seen in a college or even in the army and in such places, the primary groups of peers give support to the member.

### **Differences and Similarities in Concepts**

You have been introduced to the basic sociological concepts. You would have noticed that these concepts have some similarities and some differences. Any social group is seen as being more than sum total of its members and in that way comes to have a distinct life of its own. You should keep in mind that a sociologist's major interest is in the way human collectivities function as a whole and exercise their influence on the behaviour of the individuals.

The difference between the various collectivities are due to the following factors: size of the group, that is, the number of members; geographical area over which the members are located; type of relationship between the members; relationship of the members to the collectivities; the nature of goals of the collectivities the duration of their life and finally collectivities, influence on the individual members.

We shall differentiate the various concepts based on these factors as it will help in better understanding of the same.

**Size:** The society is the largest collection of individuals. It consists of a number of communities, associations, institutions, primary groups and secondary groups. A community is always a part of the larger society. Associations and secondary groups are often smaller than a community. The primary group is the smallest social unit.

**Geographical location:** The society is spread over the largest area, followed by the community and primary group. Associations and secondary groups may have members from a wide area but all people living in the area need not be members of the association. For example, everybody living in India is an Indian and every body living in a village is part of the village community. But a political party while having members from all over India cannot claim that all Indians are its members.

**Voluntary nature of membership:** The above stated difference is due to the type of membership of the various collectivities. An individual becomes a member of a society and a community naturally, that is, by being physically present in the area and sharing essential characteristics. On the other hand an individual has to formally apply to be a member of an association or a secondary group.

**Nature of interaction:** The interaction between the members are most frequent and intense in a primary group. Community, associations and secondary groups have less frequent and less intense interaction. Individuals are considered in their wholeness in a primary group while in a secondary group and association only a few aspects of the personality are taken into consideration. A political party is not concerned whether a member is healthy or educated as long as he or she performs useful work for the party. The primary group, however is concerned about many aspects of the personality and does not just keep in view the usefulness of the member.

**Goals of the collective:** The goals of secondary groups and associations are specifics while the goals of the society and community are general and broad in nature. Primary groups have many goals and perform many functions for their members. The existence of primary groups is crucial for the continuance of other collectivities of social life.

**Relationship between the members and the larger whole:** The loyalty and sense of identity the members feel in primary groups is greater than the feelings of identification among members in a community or a secondary group. In a society, these feelings are weaker still and more imagined than real.

**Duration of the collective:** The duration of groups and collectivities varies. The family as primary group exists as long as the members are alive or do not leave. On the other hand, secondary groups, associations, community and society exist for long durations even as members die or leave. The persistence of these collectivities is irrespective of the presence and absence of any member or group of members.

### Check Your Progress III

- Note :**
- Use the space provided for your answer.
  - Check your answers with those provided at the end of this unit.

- 1) Give two examples of primary group and secondary group.

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## 1.7 LET US SUM UP

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We have seen that the basic concepts are related to society and the study of society. Some of these concepts will seem confusing mainly because people, including sociologists, use these terms in a general sense. These are used interchangeably. But you must use them with care and without ambiguity.

Society is a larger collection of people who have patterned social relationship with each other as individuals and as groups. Society has values, norms, folkways and mores which guide the members' behaviour. Society has to perform certain functions if it has to maintain itself. Community is relatively a smaller collectivity where the members have more intense interaction between each other. They live in a specific geographical space and have a sense of "we" feeling. While society and community are considered natural in their origin, associations are created purposely by individuals. Their objectives are specific in comparison to those of society and community. Relationships between the members are formal and issue based. Modern society is characterized by presence of numerous associations with different purposes. Groups are smallest social units when compared to society, community and associations. Primary group consists of small number of members who have intimate face-to-face relations with others. Families and peer-groups are examples of the primary groups. They treat members in their totality and perform a number of important functions for them. These groups engage in the primary socialization of the individual. Secondary groups are similar to associations. They help individuals further their particular interests in society. The relationship between members are segmentary in nature.

Social concepts are related to social relationships. Understanding the nature of social relationship and using them to benefit is primary function of the social worker.

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## 1.8 KEY WORDS

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- Roles** : A set of behavioural patterns expected from an individual having a specific status in society.
- Status** : A position an individual occupies in society.
- Socialization** : Process by which an individual learns the values, norms, mores of the society.

- Norms** : Standards of behaviour of particular society.
- “We feeling”** : A feeling of oneness and of having a common identity; a sense of being part of a larger whole and sharing a common destiny.
- Ascribed status** : A position an individual occupies in society by virtue of his/her birth. His/her efforts cannot make any difference in his/her status.
- Achieved status** : A position in society an individual occupies by his/her efforts and not by virtue of his/her birth.

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## 1.9 SUGGESTED READINGS

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## 1.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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### Check Your Progress I

- 1) Society consists of large number of individuals who have mutual awareness of each other. Secondly there exists meaningful and purposeful interactions between them. These interactions are guided by norms and values of society. Division of labour is the third condition. Social processes like competition and cooperation are found in society.

### Check Your Progress II

- 1) Modern associations have the following characteristics: clear objectives which the organization has to achieve; voluntary membership; rules and regulations which govern the functioning of the association.

### Check Your Progress III

- 1) Small-sized peer group and family are examples of primary groups whereas political parties and voluntary association are examples of secondary groups.