
UNIT 5 SOCIAL CONTROL

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5.0 OBJECTIVES

After studying this unit you should be able to know:

- the meaning and definition of social control, self control, socialization and maladjustment;
- the purpose of social control, need and importance of social control; and
- the forms, means and agencies of social control.

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In the early prehistoric days, men used to lead an isolated nomadic life in caves, rock-shelters, forests and stations of river banks. They lived in small groups in solitude in the midst of unfriendly environment and often indulged in relentless wars against the tyrannies of nature. In their quest to overpower the nature, they wanted to form the human association. The human beings saw the ferocious and gigantic animals as their enemies and constant threat to their safety and security. In neolithic stage, men could succeed in forming larger human congregations. A sort of stability in socio-economic life could be established with the invention of agriculture and domestication of useful animals. The formation of larger congregations could instill a sense of safety and security in human beings but unforeseen problems did accost the human beings every now and then. Group conflicts and clashes became an everyday affairs. Human beings by their very nature are selfish individualistic, barbarous, hedonistic, power hungry and conflicting. If they are allowed to act freely, no group or society can function. This gives rise to the need on the part of society

to frame certain rules and regulations to restrain the undesirable human conduct and promote the desirable ones. By effective enforcement of the societal rules and regulations every society controls its human force.

5.2 MEANING AND DEFINITION OF SOCIAL CONTROL

The term social control is used in many ways. To compel the individuals to conform to societal norms and standards is generally thought to be the be-all and end-all of social control. However, it is a narrow meaning of social control. In broader sense, social control encompasses the regulation of entire social order aiming to achieve social ideals and objectives.

Social control has been defined as “the way in which the entire social order adheres and maintains itself- how it operates as a changing equilibrium” (MacIver & Page), “the patterns of pressure which a society exerts to maintain order and establish rules” (Ogburn and Nimcoff), the process by which social order is (i) established, and (ii) maintained” (Landis), “a collective term for those processes, planned or unplanned, by which individuals are taught, persuaded, or compelled to conform to the usages and life values of groups”(Roucek).

Thus social control may be defined as any social or cultural means by which systematic and relatively consistent restraints are imposed upon individual behaviour and by which human beings are persuaded and motivated to behave in accordance with the traditions, patterns and value framework thought necessary for the smooth functioning of a group or society.

Social control operates at three levels: group over group-when one group determines the behaviour of the other group; the group over its members-when the group controls the conduct of its own members, and individuals over their fellows- when the individuals influence the responses of other individuals.

5.3 SOCIAL CONTROL, SELF-CONTROL, SOCIALIZATION, AND SOCIAL MALADJUSTMENT

Although social control and, self-control are closely related, yet they differ and can be clearly distinguished. While at the individual level, social control refers to attempts made to influence others according to the established social norms and standards, self-control refers to the individual's attempts to guide and regulate his own behaviour-obviously in the light of some previously established ideal, goal or purpose. Undoubtedly, the goal is determined by the values and folkways of the group of which the individual is a member. The two also differ in their approach. Self-control relates to the individual and, therefore, is individualistic in nature, while social control relates to the whole society and is institutional in nature. Social control and self-control should be treated as complimentary to each other and latter may be treated as a small

part of the former because self-control is derived from and originates in social control.

Social control and socialization are closely interrelated. Social control plays a vital role in the socialization process and socialization helps in maintaining social control. In the process of socialization, individuals are motivated to behave in accordance with the social values, ideals and standards and they are prepared in such a way as to be ready to shoulder their responsibilities as per society's expectations. This process continues throughout the life. The socially undesirable human behaviour is discouraged and sometimes also punished. Thus the social control acts during the socialization process itself. Social control is an extension of the socialization process. Socialization with the accompanying internalization of social norms and values provides an essential sources of social control. Sometimes, both social control and socialization use common techniques to regulate the human behaviour (appreciating and rewarding the socially desirable human behaviour and actions and condemning and punishing the undesirable human behaviour and actions are common to both).

In spite of the similarities visible in social control and socialization, differences are not missing. Socialization relates to the persons who are made to learn the culture of the group and society. Social control is related to all persons, groups and entire social system, and thus its approach is wider than that of socialization. Primary groups play an important role in shaping the human personality while secondary groups and state apparatus assume major responsibility in maintaining social control. Socialization is more concerned with the development of 'self' of the human beings while social control is directed to regulate the external behaviour of individuals, even if the individual is internally unwilling. In the process of socialization, a person himself informally and unconsciously learns many things which become a part and parcel of his personality but in the process of social control, persons are forced to behave in accordance with the formally and consciously described norms and values of society. Socialization is always in line with social and cultural values of a particular society but social control quite often may not be akin to the values of the established socio-cultural milieu. Though there is a marked commonality in many of the means and agencies of socialization and social control, yet the provisions for regulating the human conduct of non-followers may vary. In the socialization, maximum punishment for a person may be his social boycott but in the process of social control, a person of deviant behaviour may be given rigorous imprisonment or even may be hanged to death.

Social control and social maladjustment have been closely interrelated. Whenever the agencies of social control are unable to discharge their functions effectively, the behaviour of individuals and their groups change threatening the stability and continuity of the established social order. Since society is dynamic, changes do take place-sometimes planned and sometimes un-planned, as also sometimes these changes are noticed or remain unnoticed in the behaviour of the individuals and their groups.

Maladjustment indicates a condition or process which involves the inability or unwillingness of an individual or group to fall in line with prevailing psychological, social or cultural standards – either their own or those of an external system. Maladjustment of an individual, group or institution is not necessarily an absolute condition. While maladjustment may result in conflict

or conditions that are destructive of the cherished feelings and values, it must be accepted that maladjustment is as constant a social phenomenon as adjustment is. Social and psychological life is a process of continual change. Adjustment is an illusory condition following a preceding spell of maladjustment or a threat of maladjustment.

Individuals' failure to cope with the existing social system leads them to maladjustment. Since pressure of societal norms and standards on various groups of society is not uniform, the possibility of individuals'/groups' unequal response towards existing means of social control increases. Moreover, if the agencies of social control are too harsh in their use of control mechanisms or are supportive of the exploitative nature of the state, the chances of maladjustment in society are probably more. On the contrary, if the agencies of social control are soft towards individual/group behaviour and give reasonable and fair chance to mould their behaviour as per changing norms and standards of society, the chances of inverse relationship between social control and maladjustment are likely to be more perceptible.

5.4 PURPOSE OF SOCIAL CONTROL

Social control aims at bringing about conformity, solidarity and continuity of a particular group or society. Social control attempts to achieve the following purposes.

- To bring the behaviour of individuals and groups in tune with the established norms of society.
- To bring solidarity and uniformity in the social organizations.
- To establish stability in the social relations.
- To exercise control over social tensions and conflicts.
- To provide fair and equal chances for cooperation and competition to all individuals, groups and institutions to realise their goals.
- To facilitate appreciation and rewarding of champions of social cause and take punitive actions against anti-social elements.
- Bringing desired modifications in the social milieu, especially effecting required changes in the means and agencies of social control.
- Establishing primacy of social and humanitarian values over individualistic and separatist list ends.
- Providing for the protection and promotion of the interests of the weak and vulnerable sections of society.
- Forging alliance among the various groups and institutions of society.

5.5 NEED AND IMPORTANCE OF SOCIAL CONTROL

The progress of any society depends upon the effective functioning of its various groups, organizations and institutions, which is often jeopardized by

the clash of interests of its members. Individuals as well as groups want to serve their interests without caring for others. The lack of opportunities for all aggravates the problem further and the dominant group members/ groups want to monopolize and maintain their hegemony over limited societal resources. Also, the various types of 'isms' prevailing in society hamper the smooth social system, and therefore, exercise of some sort of control on the part of society to limit the fissiparous and selfish tendencies of human beings become imperative. It will be difficult to maintain social equilibrium without proper adjustment among various social units and therefore, arises the need to control the deviant behaviour of people and promote the socially desirable actions of others. Social control helps us to achieve stability in the social organization, as individuals are not allowed to act contrary to the norms of society. They are persuaded and motivated to behave in accordance with the established social norms and values. Consequently, the instability and uncertainty make room for the regularity and continuity in the society.

Social control is also necessary to maintain the healthy traditions of our society and to transfer them from one generation to another. Traditions are the safe custodians of our heritage and culture. Through social control people are motivated and compelled to follow the traditions.

The unity in group can only be maintained by the effective system of social control. The group members belong to different socio-cultural backgrounds and want to achieve different personal objectives. To keep all the members united by striving towards group goals is made feasible by social control which does not allow selfish interests of the individuals to come in the way of group goals.

Social control is also required to bring compatibility in thoughts, ideas, behaviour patterns, attitudes and perceptions of the individuals, because devoid of it, society cannot function effectively.

Cooperation is the key of all success. If society is to survive, the desired cooperation of all people is required. In case of lack of this cooperation, no unit or group can function. It is indeed the strength of the human groups. Social control helps us in achieving the cooperation of all.

Social control provides social security to the people. Human beings are so helpless and weak that their existence is not possible without the help of others. Social control keeps a check on the forces endangering the safety and security of the people and prepare them to face the realities of the world. Social control is badly needed to bring the selfish nature of man under control because normally, nobody feels happy being controlled, subordinated and directed by others. Everyone wants to control, exercise authority on the subordinates and direct as many persons as possible, but the fact of the matter is that society is a mix of persons who direct and those who are directed, those who guide and also those who are guided. In fact, social control, by keeping the 'free will' of people under a corrective restraint, facilitates the smooth functioning of society.

It is vividly clear that because of social control society comes into existence, social order is maintained and aspirations of the people are fulfilled.

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 do you understand by social control ?

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2) What is the importance of social control ?

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5.6 FORMS OF SOCIAL CONTROL

Every society exercises control over its members in order to maintain the social order. However, forms of social control are not uniform in all the societies due to inherent differences in their cultural background, in the nature of personal relations, social relations and social conditions. As members of society have different objectives, interests and ideology, regulations of their behaviour by one set of means of social control becomes almost impossible. We have urban as well as rural societies; closed and open societies; traditional and modern societies; societies following democratic as also the autocratic norms. Therefore, variations in the types of social control is but natural. Society keeps its grip over the members sometimes by rewarding and sometimes by punishing them, at times society uses its formal and organised means while at times it adopts informal and unorganised means to exercise its power. Based on the classification given by various authors, following forms of social control can be described.

i) Conscious and Unconscious Control

The American sociologists C.H. Cooley and L. L. Bernard have described the forms of social control as *conscious* and *unconscious*. The human behaviour can be mainly categorised as conscious and unconscious. The conscious behaviour of human beings refers to such acts and actions as are done deliberately and in a planned way e.g. a subordinate employee does not sit in the chair of his boss and also, while talking to his boss he remains alert and attentive. On the other hand, some human actions are done unconsciously and the person himself does not know why he is doing so because repeated

behaviour pattern becomes a part and parcel of his personality, e.g. while putting on our clothes, we follow a certain pattern (eg. we put on our undergarments first and not after having put on upper garments). In short, in the situation where we behave cautiously and deliberately, the system is termed as conscious social control, and in the situations we behave spontaneously and unconsciously, the system of control is termed as unconscious social control. In the first type, we can include the prevalent patterns of eating and taking water, untouchability, and marriage within the caste system. In the latter type, we can include the control which is exercised under the influence of traditions, *sanskars* and religious prescriptions.

ii) Direct and Indirect Control

Karl Mannheim has discussed the direct and indirect forms of social control. Whenever control on human behaviour is exercised by very close persons such as parents, friends, teachers, neighbours, etc. it is direct type of social control. Indirect social control refers to the control which is done by the social and physical environment, different groups and institutions. The impact of direct type of social control is more and durable while the impact of indirect type of social control is less and short lived.

iii) Positive and Negative Social Control

Kimball Young has described positive and negative forms of social control. Positive social control depends on the positive motivation of the individual to conform. Such type of control can be effected through promise of rewards ranging from tangible material benefits to the social approval. A more fundamental form of positive social control depends on the individuals' internalization of social norms, value and role expectations during the process of socialization. The individual's belief in social norms motivates him to conform. Appreciation letters given to the students teams on their success in the examination/games, conferment of gallantry awards to soldiers vigilantly engaged in guarding national boundaries against enemies from across the borders, kissing babies by parents for understanding their signals are, examples of positive social control.

In the process of negative forms of social control, deviant behaviour of individuals is discouraged and punished. Violation of societal rules and regulations often invites the wrath of law protecting agencies and infliction of punishment may range from simple threat to threat of life, imprisonment and fines. At times, negative social control is very useful as persons know that if they are caught, they will be surely punished for their wrong doings. Punishment, ridicule, criticism, excommunication, imprisonment, fine and capital sentence are the examples of negative social control.

iv) Organised, Unorganised and Automatic Social Control

Gurvitch and Moore have discussed the forms of social control as *organised*, *unorganised* and *automatic*. Under the process of organised social control human behaviour is influenced by a set of social agencies having clearly defined 'do's and don'ts' for individuals. Educational institutions, family, state, etc. exercise such type of social control. Unorganised social control influences the personality of human beings through the means of rites and rituals, customs and traditions, folkways and mores, etc. In the automatic social control,

individuals are themselves motivated to act in order to meet their felt needs. Persons themselves embrace control over their immediate and long-term needs based on their experiences, values, ideals, thinking and mores. Religious prescriptions are examples of such type of social control which are not imposed upon individuals but are willingly and automatically adopted by them. Such type of control is enduring.

v) **Autocratic and Democratic Social Control**

Lapierre has identified autocratic and democratic forms of social control. Whenever any administrative agency or the authority uses its force to attain the objectives other than those defined and recognized by society, autocratic form of social control comes into picture. Authorities often exploit the material and human resources to serve their vested interests and do not hesitate to indulge in inhuman acts. Military ruled states under despotic leadership are the living examples of autocratic social control wherein people's wishes are crushed. If the control is exercised by the agencies or authorities established by the people themselves and if their wishes are taken into consideration while framing rules and regulations, the democratic social control comes into effect. People are motivated to behave in accordance with the democratic norms. Persuasion, motivation, discussion, consultation and participation are the commonly used techniques in democratic social control as compared to autocratic social control wherein compulsion, intimidation, exploitation, threat and torture are the often used techniques.

vi) **Formal and Informal Social Control**

Some sociologists have categorized the forms of social control as *formal* and *informal*. In fact, the classification of social control-organized and unorganized as given by Gurvitch and Moore can be termed as formal and informal. The formal social control has the sanction of state whose authority is used to regulate the human behaviour. It adopts written and well defined set of rules and regulations, lays down a formal system of punishment for those who do not conform and establish the laws, police, jails and judicial institutions for the trial and punishment. Informal social control influenced by belief, customs, traditions, criticism, public opinion, religion etc. is exercised by society. In the primitive tribal and simple rural societies, informal social control has been more influential while in the modern and complex societies, formal social control is more effective and visible.

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) Write in brief about formal and informal forms of social control.

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5.7 MEANS OF SOCIAL CONTROL

Social control is exercised in a number of ways by the authorities concerned. The ways or methods used by the authorities to implement their rules and regulations are known as the means of social control. Customs, traditions, mores, folkways, ridicules, sarcasm, propaganda, public opinion, law, reward and punishment etc. are the means of social control by which society maintains the social order. An attempt is made here to describe some of the notable means of social control.

1) Belief

Beliefs approved by society play an important role in the control of human behaviour. To abide by social rules is a belief valued by the people because those who abide by the social rules get appreciation and reward while those who do not are punished. It is also believed that some supernatural force keeps an account of the good and bad deeds of human beings, and that soul is immortal and people get pleasure and pains according to their performance (*Karmas*) in the previous birth. That, people are rewarded and punished according to their actions in their present life, is also believed. Likewise, people also believe in heaven and hell. The persons doing good deeds are supposed to join heaven after their death and the persons doing bad deeds are believed to be dumped into the hell. People also undertake good actions as they believe their good actions will bring name and fame to their forefathers. Thus, belief is one of the potent means of social control.

2) Social Suggestions

Society regulates the behaviour of its members by giving many types of suggestions e.g. society publicizes the good deeds of great leaders and wishes its members to follow suit. The statues of great leaders are installed and people are told that they should internalize the values and life philosophy of the great leaders. People are also suggested that they should develop their personality in a healthy way. Social suggestions are also given through verbal means (words) as also through writings (articles and books). Since, people find *social suggestions* worthwhile, they take inspirations from these suggestions to regulate their behaviour.

3) Social Ideals

Social ideals regulate the conduct of human beings. The life stories of great leaders and the paths shown by them become ideal for us. The call given by Mahatma Gandhi, Jawahar Lal Nehru and Subhash Chandra Bose aroused a feeling of patriotism in the hearts of the people of India. People accord a great value to social ideals. In fact a country like India inhabited by people who follow different religions, speak different languages have developed and followed the notion of 'unit in diversity' as an ideal.

4) Sanskars that are Ordained by Religion

In the Indian society, particularly Hindu Society, our life is a chain of a number of **sanskars**. We have to go through many sanskars from womb to tomb. Sanskars motivate people to perform a work in a particular way having acceptance of the concerned society. Since people follow a set pattern of

sanskars, it greatly helps to maintain social order. People willingly follow instructions of sanskars because they fear that if they violate, something unnatural and undesirable will happen. The Hindus in our society perform many sanskars relating to birth, family, marriage and death. In a similar fashion, a number of rites or **sanskars** also characterize the life patterns of other communities like Christians, Muslims, Sikhs, Parsis, etc.

5) **Art**

Art relates to the feeling of individuals and by giving a direction to the feelings, art maintains social control. In art we can include sculpture, painting, drawing, weaving, architecture, pottery, dress designing, metal work, poetry, literature, music and dance etc. Art motivates people strongly to do socially desirable actions and avoid undesirable ones. National anthem and national song are supposed to be sung by every citizen. Cartoons and caricatures too convey a lot of meaning having everlasting effect. Art thus keeps our heritage alive and human civilization is vividly expressed through it. Human actions are, therefore, encouraged and discouraged through art.

6) **Leader**

Leaders are an effective means of social control. They help in various ways because through their experiences, understanding, conduct, intelligence and hard work, they can mould groups of people as per their desires and wishes. Leaders become role models for their followers. Our political leaders played an important role by directing the people to make sacrifices for attaining independence. Likewise, social and religious leaders help in maintaining social control by inspiring their followers to conform to social norms and to eradicate the social vices.

7) **Humour and Ridicule**

Humour and ridicule have been instrumental in maintaining social control from the very beginning of civilization. The humour and ridicule, control human behaviour both indirectly and collectively. The persons are mocked at and ridiculed for their anti-social actions and appreciated for their socially desirable actions. People are much afraid of social scorn and ridicule. Therefore, they conform.

8) **Fashion**

Fashion is an expression of the internal and external desire of the human beings at a particular point of time. Fashion gives an identity to the citizens of a country. It brings freshness and smartness to the people. People get fed up with a particular mode of self- presentation and want to look different and new. Fashion thus helps to maintain social control by changing the old patterns and bringing in the new ones. By representing the emergent human desires, it smoothens the process of social change.

9) **Ahimsa**

Ahimsa (non-violence) means an attitude of not hurting anybody either by words or deeds even if the person troubles you or is your enemy. This is indeed a negative meaning. Ahimsa positively means affection, kindness, generosity, self sacrifice and simplicity. The father of the nation, Mahatma

Gandhi, propounded and experimented with the principle of Ahimsa. He says that the person who kill others with sword is undoubtedly brave but one who faces such attack is braver still, especially when he displays no fear of death even in the face of gravest danger. Thus, one who shows love to everyone, wins wickedness by goodness, is courteous to all beings, does not bow his head before cruelty follows the principles of Ahimsa. It is in this manner that even the attitude or value of Ahimsa acts as a potent mechanism of social control.

10) Language

Language gives medium and meaning to the feelings of people. It is because of language that human beings have advanced on the path of progress. Language keeps a watch on human behaviour. The laws, customs, traditions etc. are all expressed through language. Language helps in social control by socializing individuals, transferring culture, enabling person's adjustment to the society, bringing emotional integration, self controlling and disseminating ideas that express social values, norms and standards.

11) Punishment and Reward

Punishment aims to reform behaviour of individuals for their well-being. Socially unaccepted human actions are discouraged and punished so that persons may not repeat them. Individuals are sometimes punished for not bringing desired improvements in them selves. The severity of punishment depends upon the nature of crime.

Rewards are given to those who imbibe societal norms and values. To desire appreciation and patting for one's good and exemplary work is human nature. Rewards thus act as effective motivator and inspire the persons to put in their mite in the attainment of societal goals. It also works as a tonic for those who fear to initiate any work just because of the fear of failure. Rewards can be given in many ways starting just from the words of appreciation to cash and conferment of medals and honours.

Thus punishment and reward are important means of social control.

12) Folkways

Folkways play an important role in social control. These are developed by their repeated use. Folkways are indicative of social norms or standards of behaviour that are socially approved but not considered necessarily of moral significance. Folkways provide traditional definitions of proper ways of behaving in a particular society or group. Individuals conform to folkways automatically without rational analysis. They are based primarily upon customs, passed on from generation to generation through the socialization of children. Folkways are not enforced by law but form part and parcel of informal social control. Since the people in society follow them, the children also follow. Thus, folkways help as a means of social control.

13) Mores

When a feeling of group's well-being is attached to folkways, they take the form of mores. Mores refer to those social norms that provide the moral standard of behaviour of a group or society. Conformity to mores is not optional and

non-conformity is severely sanctioned. Group members feel an emotional attachment to the mores and their safe preservation is thought to be essential to the group's welfare. In common parlance, the term is confined to those standards of behaviour that depend upon informal sanctions and have not been enacted into law. Mores may be categorized as positive and negative. Under the category of positive mores, people are instructed to follow certain things; for example, "always speak truth, take pity on poor, be honest to the core, obey your parents and teachers, etc." Negative mores check us from doing certain things—e.g. "don't commit theft, don't tell a lie, don't hurt anybody, etc". Mores are the means of informal and unorganized form of social control. Individual cannot dare not to abide by mores as they feel that their group's welfare will be in peril. Mores are more influential and powerful to the formally laid down rules and regulations.

14) Propaganda

Today, propaganda is one of the important and effective means of social control. It controls human beings by providing them useful information about good and bad and helps organisation/institution to get feedback from the social groups. Propaganda is a conscious, systematic and organized effort designated deliberately to manipulate or influence the actions, decisions, thinking patterns or beliefs of the people in a specified direction on an important issue. Generally, propaganda is thought to be an exercise in manipulating public opinion by presenting false or rosy pictures, trying to hide the underlying facts. Newspapers, magazines, literature, radio, television, cinema, exhibitions, fairs, meetings, fests, festivals, etc. are the important devices of propaganda. Propaganda can also serve a positive social purpose. For example, by propaganda, we have successfully made the masses aware of the prevalent social evils and contemporary issues. The messages of great leaders are also conveyed to the masses by propaganda. Information about the schemes and projects started by government also reaches the people through propaganda. Human behaviour to a large extent is controlled and regulated by effective use of propaganda.

15) Customs

Custom is a folkway having been in practice for a long time, transferred from one generation to other and well established in human societies. Customs become the habit of people and they spontaneously follow them. Psychologically, customs influence the minds of the people and they unhesitatingly follow them. Customs are often seen as ideal and essential; people perceive a sense of inherent goodness in them and feel morally bound to follow them. Customs constitute a set pattern of group behaviour, practised by a large number of people. Customs are a powerful means of social control. In the informal, unorganised and simple human societies, they have a great bearing on human conduct and behaviour. Anthropologists often give expression to this fact by saying that in simple societies 'custom is the king'.

16) Public Opinion

Public opinion means a conclusion or judgement of the people about a particular event, object or situation. It is a specific manifestation of the people's attitude towards a particular problem. Public opinion can be termed as the most important means of social control. Public opinion has always been a prime concern for the policy makers in all the systems of governance. In fact, the

success or failure of any scheme or plan largely depends upon the favourable/unfavourable public opinion. However, it may be borne in mind that public opinion is not always rational; sometimes it finds expression in opposition to the legal or constitutionally laid down provisions. It may also be mentioned that it is not a conclusive decision of all the people or majority of the people or a single person. But even then, it is important because it affects the collective interests of the group in questions. The press, radio, television, newspapers, magazines, leaders, political parties, religious and educational institutions all play a decisive role in the formation of public opinion. Public opinion by making the wishes of the people known to the policy makers facilitates effective policy making, leading to larger public happiness.

17) Religion and Morality

Religion and morality are closely associated having bearing upon each other. Religion is a universal and pervasive institution in human society. It is a system of beliefs, emotional attitudes, philosophical values and practices, by means of which a group of people attempts to cope with ultimate problems of human life. Religion is viewed as essentially an institutionalized or traditionally believed path to salvation. All human beings in all societies, at one point of time or the other, must face certain life problems, alone and all by himself, despite all efforts from others to help. Religion is a social phenomenon as well as a psychological one, because it underlines fellowship in the development, teaching and perpetuation of certain religious beliefs, insights and knowledge. It is concerned with the common plight of people at all times, regardless of age, sex, or status within a society. The concept of supernatural or a way to salvation binds men to follow the dictates of limited contemporary social values and social groups. Religion not only relates men to men but also relates men to heaven. Religion includes the gods and goddesses, evil spirits, soul, *pap* (evil deeds) and *punya* (good deeds), heaven and hell, etc. All these concepts are greatly valued by the people and they think that their due attention to religious prescriptions will protect their lives and property. People abide by the religious norms because they are afraid that their wrong doings or violation of religious instructions may land them into hell. The practice and form of religion may vary from society to society but generally speaking, human beings are not in a position to disobey some of the basic dictates of the respective religious systems in which they are located. This is also so because, as believed by the people, salvation from the woes of life is possible only by practising some of the basic religious tenets.

Morality also controls human behaviour by directing their actions on appropriate lines. Morality involves the feeling of just and unjust. It is more akin to human psyche. It is considered that a decision based on the voice from within is always right.

Religion and morality both control human behaviour. Both prescribe 'dos' and don'ts and make people conscious about duties and rights. Both inspire human beings for making efforts to attain ultimate goal and thus contribute to the social control.

18) Law

Law is a formal and systematic means of social control. A law is a general rule of external action enforced by a sovereign authority. It refers to the rules

regulating human behaviour. Law is broadly categorised into moral and political laws. If the rules of law relate to motives and the internal acts of the will, they are termed as moral laws. On the other hand, if they relate to external conduct, they are known as social or political rules or laws. Law in its very nature is binding. Laws are backed by the state power and, therefore, individuals and their groups have no option but to abide by them. Even if persons do not repose faith in them or even if the laws are entirely opposed to their interests, they have to follow them. And those who do not, are punished by the laws of the state. Since laws are made keeping in view the welfare of larger sections of the society, they are liked by the people. Law functions positively as well as negatively. When people are asked to do certain acts within the purview of law and for doing so they are rewarded, honoured, decorated with medals, given status and prestige, it is the positive function and control of law which comes in play. However, when people are asked not to do certain acts, but they still continue to engage in those acts they are punished- jailed, fined and even hanged. This is a negative function of law. But, whether law performs a positive or negative function, it continues to act as an important means of social control because it checks people from behaving against the interests of some people in particular, and society in general.

5.8 AGENCIES OF SOCIAL CONTROL

Agencies are the instruments by which social control is exercised. Agency refers to those groups, organisations and authorities that are responsible for implementing social control in an effective manner. They have the ultimate say as to what is to be implemented and what is not to be implemented. Agencies use both the means- formal as well as informal. Agencies have power to reward or punish the individuals. Family, educational institutions and the state are the agencies of social control. A brief discussion of these is attempted below:

1) Family

Family is the most fundamental agency of the social control. Family refers to the smallest social grouping whose members are united by bonds of kinship. Family consists of two mature adults of opposite sex who live together in a union (marriage) accepted by the society, along with their unmarried children. It may also be defined as a social group characterised by common dwelling, economic cooperation and reproduction. Family is universal in the sense that there has never been a society in which family in one form or the other has not existed. Family discharges the important function of institutionalization of mating with its attendant control over sexual outlet, cooperative division of labour between male and female, nurturing of the young in an atmosphere of intimacy and inculcation of some basic values in the coming generation. It is the primary institution of socialization. The person is born in a family and also dies in a family. Family does not only play an important role during an individual's lifetime but also plays its role before the person is born and after the death of the person. Parents in the family control the behaviour of their children by making them learn what is right and wrong. They tell them which behaviour of theirs is desirable and which is undesirable. Family also inculcates the social values in the child. At various stages of life,

family comes to the rescue of a person. Family as a primary group moulds the behaviour of the children as the parents are the first to influence the child's behaviour and development. Appreciating the members for doing good and condemning their ill deeds family teaches a lot of lessons to them. High values of selflessness, sacrifice, tolerance, mutual coexistence, kindness, honesty and hard work are internalized in the personality of children by the family. Children are brought up under the supervision of the parents/guardians who are very affectionate to them. By making many types of bonds compulsory to its members family controls the human beings and directs them to be socially productive.

2) Education

Educational institutions are another important agency of social control. Transmission of knowledge by either formal or informal methods is the function of education. Although education is usually thought of in terms of formal schooling, effective training for the individual's role as both of a group member and independent person is a continuous process. The primary function of the process of education is to pass on the knowledge from generation to generation—a process thought necessary for the development of culture. In all periods of human society, a stimulus to creative thinking and action, which accounts in part for culture change, has been inherent. Education develops individual's personality and makes him/her learn behaviour patterns. Further, it equips an individual to distinguish between just and unjust, right and wrong. Man is what he is only because of his socialization and education. Educational institutions play an important role in children's development. How to interact with their fellow beings, how to present oneself before one's seniors, how to regard family members, teachers and other persons in society, how to develop health, traditional practices and habits, how to make adjustment with others in life, are all learnt through education by the persons. Education also develops power of self-control. It transforms human beings into ideal citizens by acquainting them with the social facts. It rationalizes the human behaviour and increases the analytical capacity of humans. It empowers people to face the hardships of life. In nutshell, the human qualities and traits are developed by education. Thus, education plays an important role in controlling human behaviour throughout the life of the individuals.

3) State

State is one of the secondary agencies of social control. It is a political form of human association by which society is organized under the agency of government that has legitimate sovereignty over a territorial area, authority over all the members of the society and absolute right to use force whenever necessary in order to control the behaviour of its members. State is an organised and formal system of social control. State controls the human behaviour by an arrangement of law, police, jail, judiciary, government, military and intelligence department. It crushes the power of those who do not conform. It gives the welfare of its members as a top priority and arranges for their livelihood-employment. In the complex societies of today, the role of state in maintaining social control is paramount. People obey the state orders because they either know that these are in their interest or that if they don't obey, they will be penalised and punished as per law of the state. Thus they act in conformity with the orders of the state which helps in maintaining social control.

Check Your Progress III

- Note :** a) Use the space provided for your answer.
b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of this unit.
- 1) List out the major means of social control.

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5.9 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, we have given the meaning and definition of social control. The purposes of social control have also been pointed out. Social control viz-a-viz self control, socialization and maladjustment has also been examined. The need and importance of social control i.e. why social control is required have also been discussed. Various forms of social control- conscious and unconscious; direct and indirect; positive and negative; organized, unorganized and automatic; autocratic and democratic; formal and informal have also been described. Lastly, various means and agencies through which social control is exercised and maintained have also been dealt within this Unit.

5.10 KEY WORDS

- Social order** : A condition/situation of a society/group characterized by the predominance of harmonious social relationships.
- Conformity** : Behaviour that is in accord with the expectations of a social group. It reflects compliance to the rules or social norms and is expressed in responses that are prescribed by group customs or norms.
- Human behaviour** : Any response or reaction of an individual i.e. anything an individual does, says, thinks or feels.

5.11 SUGGESTED READINGS

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5.12 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress I

- 1) Social control may be defined as any social or cultural means by which systematic and relatively consistent restraints are imposed upon individual behaviour and by which human beings are persuaded and motivated to behave in accordance with the traditions, patterns and value framework thought necessary for the smooth functioning of a group or society.
- 2) First of all, social control maintains social equilibrium without which proper adjustment among various social units is not possible. Second, there is a need to control the deviant behaviour of the people on the one hand, and promote the socially desirable actions on the others. Thirdly, social control helps us to achieve the stability in the social organization as individuals are not allowed to act contrary to the norms of the social system. Fourthly, social control is also necessary to maintain the healthy traditions of our society and to transfer them from one generation to another. Fifthly, unity in group members belonging to different socio-cultural background can only be maintained by the effective system of social control.

Check Your Progress II

- 1) The formal social control has the sanction of state and state authority is used to regulate the human behaviour. It adopts written and well defined set of rules and regulations, lays down a formal system of punishment for those who do not conform. The state also, establishes the laws, police, jails and judicial institutions for the trial and punishment. Informal social control influenced by belief, customs, traditions, criticism, public opinion, religion etc. is exercised by the society. In the primitive tribal and simple rural societies, informal social control has been more influential while in the modern and complex societies, formal social control is more effective and visible.

Check Your Progress III

- 1) Social control is exercised in a number of ways by the authorities concerned. Some of these are: belief, social suggestions, social ideals, art, leader, humour and ridicule, fashion, language, punishment, rewards folkways, mores, propaganda, custom, public opinion, religion and morality, law.