

## **Types of Human Society**

Human societies can be broadly classified based on their economic systems, social structures, and modes of subsistence. Here are the main types of human societies, often arranged in terms of historical development and complexity.

### **A. Preindustrial Society**

There are four stages to preindustrial society:

#### **1. The Hunter-gatherer Stage**

- **Description:** Hunter-gatherer societies rely on hunting animals, fishing, and gathering plants for food.
- **Characteristics:** Small, nomadic groups; egalitarian social structure; limited technology; stronger reliance on kinship bonds.
- **Example:** Some indigenous groups in parts of Africa and the Amazon Basin.

#### **2. The Pastoral Stage**

- **Description:** Pastoral societies rely primarily on the domestication of animals for their life livelihood.
- **Characteristics:** Semi-nomadic moving seasonally with herds; often organized into tribes or clans; developing roles and statuses based on herd ownership.
- **Example:** The Masai of East Africa, the Bedouins of the Middle East.

#### **3. Horticultural Stage**

- **Description:** Horticultural societies grow plants for food on small, temporary plots of land using simple tools.
- **Characteristics:** sedentary or semi-sedentary with small to medium-sized communities; less hierarchical than agricultural societies; often supported by hunting and gathering.

- **Example:** Indigenous tribes in parts of South America and Southeast Asia.

#### 4. The Agricultural or Agrarian Stage

- **Description:** Agricultural societies use plows, animals and advanced techniques to cultivate land and grow food on a large scale.
- **Characteristics:** Larger population sizes; development of social classes and labor specialization; permanent settlements; formation of cities and central governments.
- **Example:** Feudal societies in medieval Europe and ancient civilizations like Egypt and Mesopotamia.

#### B. Industrial Society

The Industrial society was famously named after the Industrial Revolution that began in 1760.

- **Description:** Industrial societies are characterized by using machinery and technology in the production of goods and services.
- **Characteristics:** Highly urbanized; complex social and economic structures; greater specialization of labor; reliance on fossil fuels; emergence of social classes based on occupation and wealth.
- **Example:** Western societies post-Industrial Revolution. Example: 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> century Britain and the United States.

#### C. Postindustrial or Information Society

American sociologist Daniel Bell first coined the term postindustrial in 1973 in his book *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society: A Venture in Social Forecasting*, which describes several features of a postindustrial society.

- **Description:** Post-industrial societies focused on services and information technology rather than manufacturing.
- **Characteristics:** Economies dominated by services and information rather than physical goods; high levels of education; focus on research, innovation, and information technology; typically, higher living standards.
- **Example:** Modern societies in the United States, Japan, and much of Europe.

### **C. Digital/ Networked Societies (Emerging Type)**

- **Description:** These societies are increasingly interconnected through digital networks and advanced information technologies.
- **Characteristics:** Heavy reliance on digital infrastructure; virtual communities; increased access to information and global interconnectedness; emerging issues like digital rights, privacy and cybersecurity.
- **Example:** The global community in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, driven by the Internet and mobile technology.

These types of societies reflect the diversity in how humans organize themselves, evolve and adapt to their environment and technology. Each type has distinct cultural practices, social structures, and economic systems, showing how societies adapt to meet human needs and the natural world.

## **The Place of Society in The Social Sciences**

In the social sciences, society is often viewed as the central object of study. Society generally refers to the organized groups of individuals who share common cultural, economic, and social institutions. Social scientists explore the ways in which society influences individual behavior, shapes of social institutions (such as family, education, religion and politics), and structures interactions among individuals and groups.

### **Key Aspects of Society in Social Sciences**

1. **Structural Understanding:** Social scientists examine society's structure, or the complex framework of social institutions, roles, norms and relationships that define the behavior of individuals and groups. Structural functionalism, for example, explores how each part of society contributes to the stability of the whole.
2. **Social Dynamics and Change:** The study of society also includes examining how it changes over time. Social dynamics explore how economics, political and cultural factors shift, influencing societal norms and institutions. Theories like Marxism and conflict theory emphasize how power, class struggles, and economic forces drive societal change.

3. **Individual and Collective Identity:** Society impacts individual identities through socialization, the process by which individuals learn cultural norms, values, and roles. Social scientists explore how people's identities are shaped by their membership in social groups (gender, race, class, etc.), which in turn impacts their social experiences.
4. **Social Interactions and Behavior:** Society influences behavior through norms and rules that guide interactions. Symbolic interactionism, for example, emphasizes how individuals create and interpret symbols within society to make sense of their world and communicate meaning.
5. **Research and Theory:** In social sciences, society is understood both through empirical research (quantitative and qualitative studies that observe and measure social phenomena) and theoretical frameworks (such as functionalism, conflict theory, and symbolic interactionism), providing insight into social order, conflict and change.

In essence, society is a foundational concept in social sciences, providing a context for understanding human behavior, social institutions, and cultural norms. Each social science discipline contributes a distinct lens to understand how society functions, evolves, and influences individuals within it.

## **Historical Roots of the Social Sciences**

Social sciences are the study of human behavior. Thus, it is the scientific study of social, cultural, psychological, economic, and political forces that guide individuals in their actions. The origins of social science can be traced back to the ancient Greeks. Most of the history of the social sciences consists of variations on themes developed in the sixth and fifth centuries B.C. According to McDonald (1993, p.19):

The sixth century B.C. has left only rough, fragmented hints, but they are enough to indicate that the basic notions of social convention, causal relations, and hypothetical knowledge had already been formulated. By the fifth century B.C. there was a fairly sophisticated understanding of many methodological issues.

It did not emerge as a distinct form of research until the eighteenth century (**the Age of Enlightenment**), when social philosophy bearing a “philosophical attitude” gave way to a new scientific emphasis, and by the age of revolutions mainly the **Industrial and French revolution**. This shift from social philosophy to social sciences was given impetus by the emergence of **positivism** as a widely accepted mode of knowledge (knowledge based on actual positive sense of experience). First articulated by **August Comte** and best described in his 1848 work *A General View of Positivism*, positivism moved almost entirely away from metaphysical speculation and instead focused on the scientific method’s ability to produce facts and falsifiable statements about the empirical world.

Burrell and Morgan (1979), in their seminal book *Sociological Paradigms and Organizational Analysis*, suggested that the way social science researchers view, and study social phenomena is shaped by two fundamental sets of philosophical assumptions: **ontology** and **epistemology**. Ontology refers to our assumptions about how we see the world, e.g., does the world consist mostly of social order or constant change. Epistemology refers to our assumptions about the best way to study the world, e.g., should we use an objective or subjective approach to study social reality.