

*Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences*

*Department of Human Science*

*Level: 1<sup>st</sup> year LMD Human Science*

*Instructor: Ms. Saci Meriem*

*Module: English*

## **Lesson n°3: Society**

### **I. Introduction**

Society can be defined as a collection of people living in a particular region or territory that are under a common political structure or political authority, and are cognizant of their unique identity as opposed to groups around them. A division of labor among its members, who execute various responsibilities in order to accomplish a common aim, also differentiates society. A society may be conceived of as a group of people that interact with one another focused on their personal needs as well as the requirements of the group or community as a whole. The society offers a framework within which individuals may live together in harmony. Society teaches us how we fit into the world around us and provides assistance when things are tough.

### **II. Definitions of Society**

- Any group of people who have lived and worked together long enough to get themselves organized and to think of themselves as a social unit with well-defined limits (Linton)
- Society is the web of social relationships, which is ever changing (MacIver and Page)
- A society is a large social grouping that shares the same geographical territory and is subject to the same political authority and dominant cultural expectations.

### **III. Types of Societies**

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- ❖ **Professional Societies:** the professionals to enhance their profession and bring out a common code of conduct promote these societies. These societies are also termed as associations.
- ❖ **Charitable Societies:** These are non-profit organizations to help the needy persons of the societies. Sometimes, they are also known as Non-government Organizations, financially supported by corporate and other philanthropists.
- ❖ **Economic Cooperative Societies:** Many societies like housing, agro-processing, credit, marketing etc., help their members in the particular trade, either through their own resources or from the Government. Examples are cooperative housing societies, cooperative banks, district marketing co-operative societies, each helping in marketing specific product like tea, coffee, jute, plantation, etc.
- ❖ **Religious and Cultural Societies:** These societies are formed to revive and maintain specific cultures, traditions and religious foundations. Examples are ISKON, Swaminarayan Temple Trust, Church associations, etc.

#### **IV. Characteristics of Society**

##### ***1. Society is abstract:***

If society is viewed as web of social relationships, it is distinct from physical entity, which we can see and perceive through senses. As written earlier, Maclver argued, “we may see the people but cannot see society or social structure, but only its only external aspects”. Social relationships are invisible and abstract. We can just realize them but cannot see or touch them. Therefore, society is abstract. Reuter wrote: “Just, as life is not a thing but a process of living, so society is not a thing but a process of associating”.

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## ***2. Likeness and difference in society:***

Society involves both likeness and difference. If people were all exactly alike, merely alike, their relationships would be limited. There would be little give-and- take and little reciprocity. If all men thought alike, felt alike, and acted alike, if they had the same standards and same interests, if they all accepted the same customs and echoed the same opinions without questioning and without variation, civilization could never have advanced and culture would have remained rudimentary. Thus, society needs difference also for its existence and continuance. We can illustrate this point through the most familiar example of family. The family rests upon the biological differences between the sexes.

## ***3. Cooperation and conflict in society:***

Cooperation and conflict are universal elements in human life. Society is based on cooperation but because of internal differences, there is conflict also among its members. This is why, Maclver and Page observed that “society is cooperation crossed by conflict”. We know from our own experience that a person would be handicapped, showed down, and feels frustrated if he is expected to do everything alone, without the aid of others. “Cooperation is most elementary process of social life without which society is impossible” (Gisbert, 1957).

## ***4. Society is a process and not a product:***

“Society exists only as a time sequence. It is becoming, not a being; a process and not a product” (Maclver and Page, 1956). In other words, as soon as the process ceases, the product disappears. The product of a machine endures after the machine has been scrapped. To some extent, the same is true not only of material relics of man’s past culture but even of his immaterial cultural achievements.

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### 5. Society as a system of stratification:

Society provides a system of stratification of statuses and classes that each individual has a relatively stable and recognizable position in the social structure.

### V. Advantages of a Society

- It promotes teamwork; teaches cooperation, and it teaches to share and care.
- It brings in synergy and sets norms of behavior for peaceful living.
- In economic society, it reduces the cost of living. It provides physical and psychological Protection.
- It provides a balance between independence and inter-dependence.

### VI. Society and Culture's Relationship:

Sociologists define **society** as the people who interact in such a way as to share a common culture. The **cultural bond** may be ethnic or racial, based on gender, or due to shared beliefs, values, and activities. The term *society* can also have a *geographic* meaning and refer to people who share a common culture in a particular location. For example, people living in arctic climates developed different cultures from those living in desert cultures. In time, a large variety of human cultures arose around the world.

Culture and society are intricately related. A culture consists of the “objects” of a society, whereas a society consists of the people who share a common culture. When the terms *culture* and *society* first acquired their current meanings, most people in the world worked and lived in small groups in the same locale. In today's world of 6 billion people, these terms have lost some of their usefulness because increasing numbers of people interact and share resources globally. Still, people tend to use *culture* and *society* in a more traditional sense: for example, being a part of a “racial culture” within the larger “U.S. society.”