

## 04. SOCIAL GROUPS

### Social groups

Group is a unit of two or more individuals who are in reciprocal communication and interaction with each other.

In the widest sense the word 'group' is used to designate a collection of items. The consideration of the following terms will give a clear concept of what we generally mean by a 'social group'.

- i) **Category:** means collection of items that have atleast one common characteristic that distinguishes from other items which have other characteristics in common (eg.) individuals between 15 and 20 years of age, for instance, are referred to as an age group.
- ii) **Aggregation:** is a collection of individuals in physical proximity of one another. (eg.) cinema audience, spectators of a football game. There may be some interaction between the individuals in an aggregation but it is generally of a temporary nature and lacks definite pattern of organisation. Interaction will be normally lacking.
- iii) **Potential group:** is a group made up of number of people having some characteristics common but does not possess any recognizable structure. A potential group may become a real group, if it becomes organised and comes to have union or organisation. Students form a potential group as long as they have no union but once they become organised, they form a social group.
- iv) **Social group:** is a collection of two or more individuals in which there are psychological interactions and reciprocal roles based upon durable contacts, shared norms and interests, distinctive patterns of collective behaviour and structural organisation of leadership and followership.

### Social group definition according to different authors

**Bogardus:** It is a number of units anything in close proximity to one another.

**Mac Iver:** Any collection of human beings who are brought into social relationships with one another.

**Sheriff and Sheriff:** A group is a social unit which consists of number of individuals who stand in, more or less, definite status and role relationships to one another and which possess a set of values or norms of its own, regulating the behaviour of individual member's atleast in matters of consequence to the group.

**Williams:** A social group is a given aggregate of people, playing inter-related roles and recognised by themselves or others as a unit of interaction.

### **Meaning of Group**

A social group is

- a collection of individuals
- two or more
- interacting with each other
- who have common set of objectives participate
- in similar activities

### **Characteristics of Social Group**

1. **Relationship:** Members of group are inter-related to each other. Reciprocal relations form an essential feature of a group.
2. **Sense of Unity:** The members of the group are united by a sense of unity and a feeling of a sympathy.
3. **We-feeling:** The members of a group help each other and defend their interests collectively.
4. **Common interest:** The interests and ideas of the group are common. It is for the realisation of common interests that they meet together.
5. **Similar Behaviour:** The members of a group behave in a similar way for the pursuit of common interest.
6. **Group Norms:** Every group has its own rules or norms which the members are supposed to follow.

One must remember that social group is dynamic and not static. It changes its form and expands its activities from time to time. Sometimes the changes may be swift and sudden, while at other times it may occur so gradually that its members are unaware of it.

### **Occasions for group Formation**

- i. Physiological kinship
- ii. Marriage
- iii. Religion
- iv. Common language
- v. Neighbourliness

- vi. Occupational or economic interests
- vii. Attainment of some occasions like school, profession, club etc.
- viii. Common dangers
- ix. Mutual aid and so on.

## **Classification of Group**

Social groups have been classified in various ways by different authors.

### **1. According to Dwight Samderson**

He suggested a three fold classification of social group by structure as involuntary, voluntary and delegate groups.

- a) *Involuntary group* is based on kinship such as family. A man has no choice to what family he will belong.
- b) *Voluntary group* is one which a man joins of his own volition. He agrees to be a member of it and is free to withdraw at any time from its membership.
- c) *Delegate group* is one which a man joins as' a representative of a number of people either elected by them or nominated by some power. Parliament is a delegate group.

### **2. According to Tonnies**

He classified the groups into communities and associations. Both these groups are already defined and discussed.

### **3. According to Cooley**

Cooley classified the groups on the basis of kind of contact into primary and secondary groups. In a primary group there is face to face and intimate relationship such as in the family. In the secondary group such as a political party the relationships are indirect, secondary or impersonal. These groups are defined and discussed separately.

### **4. According to F.H.Giddings**

F.H.Giddings classifies groups into genetic and congregate groups.

Genetic group is a family in which a man is born involuntarily. The congregate group is the voluntary group into which one moves or joins voluntarily.

The social group according to him may also disjunctive or overlapping. The disjunctive group is one which does not allow a person to be a member of other groups at the same time. (e.g) College or nation which do not allow their members to be the members of other colleges or nations at the same time.

An overlapping group is one whose members also belong to other groups of the same type such as Indian Political Science Association.

## **5. According to George Hasen**

He classified the groups on the basis of their relationships to other groups into unsocial, pseudo-social, anti-social and pro-social.

**Unsocial group** is one which largely lives to itself and for itself and does not participate in the larger society of which it is a part. It does not mix up with other groups and remains aloof from them.

**Pseudo-social group** participates in the larger social group but mainly for its gain and not for the greater good.

**Anti-social group** is one that acts against the interest of society. A group of students that destroys public property is anti-social group. Similarly a political party that plan to overthrow a popular government is anti-social.

**Pro-social group** is the reverse of anti-social. It works for the larger interests of the society. It is engaged in constructive tasks and concerned with increasing the welfare of all the people.

## **6. According to Sorokin**

Sorokin divided the social groups into horizontal and vertical groups.

*Horizontal groups* are large, inclusive of groups such as nations, religions, organisation political parties etc.

*Vertical groups* are small divisions such as economic classes. Since the vertical group is a part of the horizontal group (the larger group) an individual is member of both.

## **7. According to Charles A. Ellwood**

He distinguished among

- i. Involuntary and voluntary groups
- ii. Institutional and non-institutional groups
- iii. Temporary and permanent groups

## **8. According to Leopold**

He classified groups into

- i. Crowd
- ii. Groups and
- iii. Abstract collectives

## **9. According to Park and Burgess**

They distinguished the groups as territorial and non-territorial groups.

## **10. Lewis Gillin and Philip Gillin (*Gillin and Gillin*)**

They classified the groups on the basis of

1. Blood relationship

- ii. Bodily characteristics
- iii. Physical proximity and
- iv. Culturally derived interests

### 11. According to Sumner

He classified the group as ingroup and outgroup.

*Ingroup* is the group with which the individual identifies himself, his family, tribe, sex, college, occupation, religion, etc. by virtue of his awareness of likeness.

It has inclusion of some persons and exclusion of other persons. It has the collective pronoun 'we'. It has some sympathy and a sense of attachment to other members of the group.

*Outgroup* is defined in contrast between 'they' and 'we', like we are democrats and they are communists. We are Hindus and they are Muslims. We are Brahmins and they are Nadars.

Such attitudes that "these are my people" and that "those are not my people", produce a sense of attachment to other members in group, while a sense of indifference and even antagonism to the members of outgroup.

### Primary and Secondary group

They are distinguished from each other with their type of social contact and degree of formal organization. In the primary group there is face-to-face association, contacts are personal, individuals live close to one another socially and do not need the formal framework of a constitution to achieve their purpose. Members of a family, a neighbourhood, friends circle are good examples of primary group. In this type members are loyal to one another because of personal regards and the sharing of many interests. The secondary group is larger, more formal, specialized and indirect in its contact.

### Characteristics of Primary Group

i. Physical proximity	Close proximity because they are close to each other
ii. Small size	Intimate and personal
iii. Stability	To have intimate relationship the primary group should be stable to some extent
iv. Similarity of back ground	Each member come from equally experienced, intelligent, etc.
v. Self interest	They have limited self interest
vi. Intensity of shared interests	In primary group common interests are shared by every member
vii. Association	Close and there is face to face contact

The face to face contact does not mean that it exerts a compelling influence over its members.

#### **Difference between primary and secondary groups**

<b>S.No</b>	<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>Primary group</b>	<b>Secondary group</b>
1	Size	Small	Wide spread
2	Kind of co-operation	Co-operation with other members is direct. Members sit together, discuss together and decide together.	Co-operation is indirect and less. Members co-operate to achieve common goals and objectives.
3	Type of structure	Informal structure. There is spontaneous adjustment in working of the group. No formal or detailed rules. The structure is simple.	Formal structure. Regulated by formal authority. Secondary group is therefore, carefully worked out.
4	Relationship	Direct, intimate and personal. Face to face.	Indirect, less intimate and impersonal. Need to have face to face contact.