

## 4. Social Institutions

### 4.1 Social Institutions: Definitions and characteristics

#### 4.2 Family

#### 4.3 Marriage

#### 4.4 Economy and Work

#### 4.5 Education

### Introduction

Sociology as a discipline is interested in understanding the mutual link between individual and society. All our founding scholars like Comte, Durkheim, Marx and Weber have illustrated that the specificity of human species lies in its social nature. The fundamental element of human reality is our social existence and our mutual interrelations with each other. Society and individual are inseparable entities. Society forms through interactions between individuals, and individuals carry society within them - in the form of roles they perform, statuses they occupy, values they cherish and norms that they follow.

To explain the mutual relation between individual and society, sociologists use a fundamental concept of social institutions. Social institutions are an important component of society. Society comprises various social institutions like family, marriage, education, religion, State, mass media, law and economy. Individuals interact with each other as members of these institutions.

In this unit, we will try to understand the concept of social institution by considering some simple examples, how family and kinship networks carry out

reproduction and socialization; economy and labour market - provide for the production and distribution of goods and services; while State, law and political systems ensure social order. In short, social institutions coordinate individual behavior for the ultimate purpose of social well-being.

### 4.1 Social Institutions: Definitions and characteristics

#### 4.1.1 Definitions

1. **Horton and Hunt** : An institution is an organized system of relationships which embodies certain common rules and procedures and meets certain basic needs of the society.
2. **E. S. Bogardus** : A social institution is a structure of society that is organized to meet the needs of people chiefly through well established procedures.
3. **H. E. Barnes** : Social institutions are the social structures and machinery through which human society organizes, directs and executes the multi-farious activities required for human needs.

#### 4.1.2 Characteristics of Social Institutions

- (1) Social institutions refer to a system of well-defined, stable patterns of behaviour
- (2) Institutions depend upon the collective activities of people.
- (3) Social institutions develop a firm

normative structure, i.e. network of rules and regulations.

- (4) Through their stable patterns and regulative structures, institutions facilitate as well as regulate individual behaviour
- (5) Institutions are formed to satisfy primary needs of individuals.

In Sociology, social institutions are understood differently from two basic sociological perspectives, functionalist and conflict perspective. The **functionalist perspective** looks at social institutions as playing number of specific roles in facilitating human social life. Social institutions are also understood as functioning to fulfill society's needs in a particular domain. A functionalist view understands institutions as a complex structure of roles and status, accompanied by a set of social norms, values and beliefs that arise in response to the diverse needs of society. Institutions, from this perspective, are themselves dependent on one another, for performance of their respective functions. They also have a capacity to adapt to the changing needs and perform different functions at once or over a period of time.

The **Marxist or Conflict perspective** holds that all individuals are *not* placed equally in society. The distribution of privileges and opportunities is skewed and mostly in favour of the affluent sections of society. Social institutions, from this perspective, contribute in persistence of social divisions and inequalities. They operate in the interest of the dominant sections of society.

## 4.2 Family

Family is the most important primary

unit of human society. It is regarded as the cornerstone of society. It forms the basic micro (small) social institution and it is difficult to imagine how human society could function without it. Family is significant for both, the individual and society as a whole. In general, family is seen as a universal social institution, an inevitable part of human society. Family, as a part of society, has many different roles to play in the lives of people who inhabit it. There is an economic role the family plays; an emotional role, a role to socialise children and to parent them. Family appears to be the ideal unit – a source of affection and encouragement. Sometimes however, the way family operates, may not provide to all members what is due to them. It is also true that the family can be a place of violence and pain. In recent years, new perspectives have emerged that challenge both, the universality and inevitability of family. Recent research demonstrates that composition of family varies from society to society, and that traditional functions and forms of family are substantially changing.

### 4.2.1 Definitions

1. **Mac Iver** : “Family is a group defined by a sex relationship sufficiently precise and enduring to provide for the protection and upbringing of children”.
2. **Burgess and Locke** : “Family is a group of persons united by the ties of marriage, blood or adoption; consisting of a single household, interacting and inter-communicating with each other in their respective social roles of husband and wife, mother and father,

son and daughter, brother and sister creating a common culture”.

3. **Webster dictionary:** “Family is a group of people related by blood or marriage”.

In short, family is a key social institution responsible for bearing and raising children, built through social bonds based on blood, marriage or adoption.

### **The kibbutz – is the family really universal?**

Kibbutzism refers to a family form which developed in Israel after the Second World War. The family in Israeli kibbutz presents an exception to the claim of universality of family. The kibbutz is based around principles of communal (shared) living, property ownership and child-rearing. Couples did not share common residence and economic cooperation characteristic of nuclear families. The product of their work was shared among the community. Couples could engage in monogamous sexual relations, but child rearing was a community responsibility. This type of communal living is not the norm in Israeli society but certainly presents an alternative model.

### **4.2.2 Functions of family**

The classic functionalist view of family assumes that as a basic component of society, family plays certain indispensable functions. These **basic functions** of family can be summarised as follows:

(1) **Socialization** – Family is the basic unit of socialization. According to Talcott

Parsons, family fulfils the basic need of primary socialization of children. This involves moulding of the personality of children according to shared norms and values. Family plays a crucial role in the on-going process of socialization. Parents learn as much from raising their children, as their children learn from them. (The role of family as an agency of socialization is further elaborated in Unit 5).

### **(2) Regulation of sexual activity –**

As pointed out by Murdock, family provides scope for expression of sexual desires and drives and sexual gratification for the spouses. At the same time, by framing rules and forbidding sexual activity outside marriage, it provides control and stabilises society. Every culture regulates sexual activity mainly to maintain the kinship organisation, a network of close relations. Sexual relations or marriage between kin is forbidden. (Incest taboo) Precisely which kin falls within this regulation varies from culture to culture. Family and kinship regulate sexual and reproductive activity.

### **(3) Emotional security –**

Family provides physical protection, emotional support and also material assistance to its members. Family as a unit of primary relations, serves as a ‘haven in the heartless world’, a unit characterised by caring, cooperation, support and acceptance. Parsons sees this as the stabilisation of adult personalities. Family provides emotional security and acts as a counterweight to the stress and tensions of modern life.

### **(4) Economic stability –**

The importance of family as an economic unit has lessened, as production is separated

from family. Members of a modern family do not work together as they did in the old system. However, family still provides its members economic security, through sharing of economic and material resources. Property is protected and maintained through family.

**(5) Social identity** – Family provides social identity to its members. Social identity based on race, ethnicity, religion, caste and social class is ascribed to an individual, at birth, through family. Families play a crucial role as agents of stable transmission of social standing, from parents to children.

All these functions taken together explain why family is seen as ‘the backbone of society’.

### 4.2.3 Forms of family

Family is broadly classified into two forms based on its **structure** into -

**(a) Joint Family:** Joint family consists of two or more generations living under the same roof and sharing a common kitchen. Joint family is considered as a very strong feature of rural society in India. Joint family is sometimes called Extended family.

**(b) Nuclear Family:** Nuclear family consists of two generations, parents and their children. Nuclear families are commonly seen in urban areas.



**Nuclear Family**



**Joint Family**

On the **basis of authority** within family, two broad forms of family can be identified,

- Matriarchal family
- Patriarchal family.

<b>Matriarchal family</b>	<b>Patriarchal family</b>
Authority rests at the hands of the mother in a <b>matriarchal</b> family. She is considered the head of the family.	The eldest male is regarded as the head of the <b>patriarchal</b> family. All authority rests at the hands of the male head.
Matriarchal families follow a <b>matrilineal</b> system of lineage i.e. descent through mother’s line.	Patriarchal family is also <b>patrilineal</b> i.e., descent is traced through father’s line.
Residence after marriage is <b>matrilocal</b> i.e. the bridegroom lives with the wife’s family.	Residence after marriage is <b>patrilocal</b> . The married couple lives with the husband’s family.
The name follows the mother’s line. It is <b>matronymic</b> .	The name of the father’s side continues to the next generation. It is <b>patronymic</b>
The Garo and Khasi tribes of North East India and the Nairs of South India follow the matriarchal system.	The most widespread form of family in India and most parts of the world is patriarchal family.



#### 4.2.4 Twenty-first century families

Families, the bedrock of any society, are significantly changing. Many new patterns are in the making. Families are the nexus of activities that include parenting, employment and leisure. As society changes, families must adapt to the new structures and processes resulting from this change. One of the most striking features of modern societies has been rapid growth of divorce. The average age at which people get married is also increasing along with an increasing trend of individuals not getting married. The changing roles of women through increased education and employment, has put additional pressures on the family to adapt to dual-earner households and changing needs of child care. All these changes are affecting family as an institution. These changes may be seen more in western countries and in countries like India, they may still not be emerging as a pattern. But the newer family relations they are giving rise to are certainly worth discussing.

- **Single parent family** : A majority of single parent families are headed by single mothers. This may result from divorce, separation, death or by choice. The plurality in terms of material conditions or social disadvantages makes it difficult to define single-parent family as a uniform category. Some research however suggests that growing up in a single-parent family can be disadvantageous for children.
- **Cohabitation** : Cohabitation is the sharing of a household by an unmarried couple. Live-in relations or cohabitation may or may not lead to

marriage. Younger generations, specially in many parts of Europe and in some urban areas in India are preferring cohabitation as family relation. This is especially true among some same-sex couples.

- **Step-parenting** : The reconstituted or step-families result from the break-up of one family, due to death or divorce. A new family unit is constituted through marriage or cohabitation. Step families may include children from both old and new families. As rates of divorce and remarriage steadily increase, it gives rise to a new family form and relation of step-parenting. The extent of children staying in step families is increasing.

As we discuss these diverse forms of family relations we must understand that the direction of change in family and kinship need not always be similar for all countries and regions. Moreover, change does not mean the complete erosion of previous norms and structure.



Family towards gender equality

### 4.3 Marriage



Marriage is a social institution through which family relations are formed. It refers to a pattern sanctioned by society to enter into sex relations and to procreate. Marriage is regarded as a universal practice.

#### 4.3.1 Definitions

1. **Horton and Hunt** : “Marriage is the approved social pattern whereby two or more persons establish family.”
2. **Robert Lowie** : “Marriage is a relatively permanent bond between permissible mates.”
3. **Webster Dictionary** : “Marriage is the legally or formally recognized union of two people as partners in a personal relationship.” (Historically and in some jurisdictions, specifically a union between a man and a woman)

Few common points can be noted from various definitions of marriage.

- i. Marriage is understood as a socially approved relation to satisfy sexual needs.
- ii. The common purpose of marriage is procreation, i.e. having children.
- iii. The assumption of permissible mates

indicates a norm of heterosexuality. If the basic goal of marriage is assumed to be procreation, it would have to be between a female and a male. Today, the concept of marriage is enlarged to include the homosexual relations. Same-sex or Gay/Lesbian marriage refers to marriage of males or females, respectively, who are physically emotionally and sexually attracted to members of the same-sex.



#### 4.3.2 Forms of marriage

Like family, in almost all societies one or the other form of marriage exists. Historically, marriage as an institution has existed in a wide variety of forms in different societies. These forms exist on the basis of the number of partners and rules governing who can marry whom.

On the basis of the **number of partners**, two major forms of marriage are observed:

1. **Monogamy**: Monogamy denotes marriage to one spouse at a time. In this form, a man can have only one wife and a woman can have only one husband at a given time. Monogamy is the most familiar pattern of marriage for most of us. If we look at our society today, monogamy seems to be the popular and more accepted form of marriage. In monogamy after choosing

a partner, the individual lives with a single spouse throughout his/her lifetime. Most sociological definitions of family highlight the existence of two adults who are in a monogamous relationship. Many societies have laws to uphold this practice.

**2. Polygamy:** Polygamy denotes marriage to more than one partner at a given time. Polygamy exists in two different forms:

**i. Polyandry:** wherein one woman marries more than one man at a given time. Polyandry can be a social response to harsh economic conditions and extreme poverty when a single man cannot adequately support a wife and children. Extreme poverty may also pressurize a group to limit its population.

**ii. Polygyny:** wherein one man has two or more wives at a time. Polygyny can be seen as a strategy which allows powerful males to control reproductive resources and to tactically manipulate kin ties.

In some societies, individuals have free choice of mate selection. Family does not play much significant role in deciding when to marry, or whom to marry. In some societies marriages are governed by certain rules and prescriptions. Restrictions regarding individuals who can or cannot be married are specifically defined, thus restricting individual choice. Decisions regarding mate selection are largely made by parents/relatives.

On the basis of rules governing who can marry whom, two major forms of marriage are observed:

**1. Endogamy** denotes marriage within a culturally defined group. (e.g. caste, sect, tribe)

**2. Exogamy**, on the other hand, denotes marriage outside individual's own group. (e.g. Gotra)

### Hypergamy and Hypogamy

Marriages usually take place between partners having similar social status. Hypergamy and Hypogamy are two forms of marriage related to the social status that the bride and groom come from and whether or not they marry 'up' or 'down'.

In **hypergamy**, a man marries a woman of a lower social group or a woman marries 'up' which elevates her position in society. **Hypogamy**, in opposite, is a form when a man marries 'up' or marries a woman of a higher social status group. This type of marriage offers a man from lower rank an entry into the higher rank.

#### ACTIVITY - 1

Discuss why hypogamous marriages are resisted in society. Take help of newspapers, magazines and cinema.

Since the 1980's there has been increasing interest in gay, lesbian, transgender marriages and partnerships. These are 'families of choice' as opposed to the conventional 'families of blood'. In 1989, Denmark became the first country to formally recognise homosexual marriages. Formal recognition meant extending some social legitimacy to gay, lesbian and transgender couples, as well as conferring legal advantages for health

care inheritance, joint property ownership and taxation.

**You should know this :** The Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) is an act that criminalises homosexuality. It was introduced in 1861 during the British rule in India. It regards homosexuality as ‘unnatural offence’ to be punished with imprisonment for life. However, in a historic verdict, the Supreme Court of India, on September 6, 2018 decriminalised Section 377 of the IPC and allowed gay sex among consenting adults in private. The SC ruled out that consensual adult gay sex is not a crime saying that such sexual orientation is natural and people have no control over it.

(Times of India, October 4, 2018)

### ACTIVITY - 2

Divide the class into groups and look at the matrimonial advertisements in newspapers, magazines and internet. Exchange and discuss the findings. Do you think endogamy is still the prevalent norm in India?

### Family, Kinship and Marriage

A family is a group of persons directly linked by kin relations. Kinshipties are connections between individuals, established either through marriage or through lines of descent that connect blood relatives. Marriage as a socially acknowledged sexual union between two adults, not only connects those two individuals but connects a wider range of people.

The family of birth is called the ‘family of orientation’ and the family in which a person is married is called a ‘family of procreation’. The kin related through blood are termed as ‘consanguinal kin’ while the kin related through marriage are called ‘affines’. Even in a rapidly changing world of today, family, kinship and marriage provide primary bonds between individuals.

### 4.4 Economy and Work

Economy is a basic social institution which organises production, distribution and consumption of goods and services. Every society has to fulfill material needs in order to maintain itself. The basic needs of all its members must be aptly satisfied. Adults today, spend most of their day making a living. So, along with a system of production, an efficient distributive system is important and equally important is the normative system regulating economic life.

This section thus attempts to explain economy as part of a complex society. Economy is interdependent with other institutions like family, religion and political system. In fact, in today’s time, economies are more closely interconnected internationally than ever before.

#### 4.4.1 Changing economies

Human society has evolved through various stages, depending upon the way it has evolved mechanisms to adapt to changing material needs. These mechanisms include changing technology, organisation of resources, production and distribution of material goods. What is distinctive about the modern world is the overpowering influence of technology and with it the



accompanying development of a capitalist economic system.

While understanding the changing nature of work and economy, three broad stages of transformation can be outlined:

### **(1) Agricultural Revolution:**

From hunting-gathering and then pastoral phases, human society entered into a new stage with discovery of agriculture. Agriculture involved the use of technology of large-scale farming using ploughs harnessed to animals. This increased the productive power of hunting and gathering more than ten-fold. With the development of agriculture, food production increased, and more specialised tasks developed; like designing tools, creating crafts, raising animals. The economy expanded through agricultural technology, complex division of labour, permanent settlement and advanced trade.

### **(2) Industrial Revolution:**

Industrial revolution which happened around the middle of the eighteenth century, first in England and soon after elsewhere in Europe and North America, transformed social and economic life like never before. Industrialisation brought four notable economic changes:

- (i) New forms of energy:** With the pioneering invention of the steam engine in 1765 by James Watt, the use of animal and human muscle energy was significantly reduced. Surpassing muscle power several times over, steam engines soon operated large machinery with great efficiency.
- (ii) Centralisation of work in factories:** Use of machinery gave rise to a new workplace called factory. This was a

new centralised and impersonal place of work, separate from home. People now 'went out to work' in a new, formal, public economic sphere.

- (iii) Mass production:** Industrial economy developed the manufacturing sector very fast. This involved more and more jobs in manufacturing, which turned raw materials into a wide range of goods. For example, factories transformed timber into furniture and wool into clothing on a mass scale.

- (iv) Division of labour:** Before industrialisation, a craftsperson usually made products from beginning to end. The factory system reduced the importance of human skills. Machines not only took over human skills but also required specialised division of labour. A factory labourer typically, repeats only single specific task over and over again. Thus, as factories increased their productivity, they also lowered the skill level of the average worker.

Industrialisation was not limited to transformation in the production system alone. It gradually transformed the whole society. Industrialisation steadily raised the standard of living with countless new products and services. On the other hand, since the industrial system was based on large-scale capital investment, it also created huge economic gaps in society. The benefits of industrial technology were shared unequally. Some factory owners made vast fortunes, while the majority of industrial workers faced impoverishment. From the late nineteenth century onwards, labour was organised as a force. Governments in the West were forced to

make labour reforms to outlaw child labour, increase wages, regulate working conditions and extend health care, schooling and political rights.

### 3. The Information Revolution:

By the middle of the twentieth century, the nature of production started to change. The use of automated machinery drastically reduced the role of human labour in manufacturing. On the other hand, service industries like public relations, banking and sales, media, advertising and so on, expanded and employed bulk of workers and professionals. Driving this economic change was a third technological revolution. The development of computer and information technology in Europe, United States, and much of newly industrialised Asia changed the character of work. Three key changes were seen:

(i) **Tangible products to ideas** – Before the dawn of the Information Age, the economy was mainly driven by manufacturing of various goods and materials. Today, the tertiary or service sector providing services and dealing with production of ideas and symbols is expanding very fast. A range of professionals from computer programmers, writers, financial consultants, architects, advertising executives to service providers like shop assistants, cleaners, security providers represent the workers of an Information Age.

(ii) **Mechanical skills to literacy skills**  
The Information Revolution demands a new set of skills such as literacy skills – the ability to communicate, to write, to present and use computer technology. New

opportunities are available to people possessing these new sets of skills.

(iii) **Work from anywhere** – Just as industrialisation organised and centralised work under one roof called factories, computer technology is allowing for decentralisation of work. Laptops, mobiles and accessibility of new information technology can turn any space into a ‘virtual office’.

#### ACTIVITY - 3

Watch the classic movie ‘Modern Times’ made by Charlie Chaplin and have a discussion on the effects of mechanisation on human labour.

#### 4.4.2 Changing nature of work

With advanced industrialisation, the proportion of population engaged in agriculture is declining. In highly developed countries farming has become mechanised with maximum use of machines and high technology. In a country like India, a significant proportion of population is still engaged in agriculture and rural-based occupations. Expansion of service sector is also happening rapidly in India.

One of the main features of modern societies is an enormous expansion of economic interdependence. Today, the world economy operates through the exchange of capital, labour, raw material and technology. We are all dependent on an immense number of workers – stretching all across the world – for the goods and services that we consume. Industrial production was based on a centralised assembly line. Workers were stationed at fixed positions, organised according to the

moving assembly line and strictly monitored through supervision and surveillance. In a globalised economy work is decentralised. It is the growing competition between firms and countries that makes it essential to keep production flexible. This means creation of a global chain of production in which different

## 4.5 Education

The term education literally refers to the actualisation of potentials of an individual. It involves a learning process to gain knowledge and skills not just to survive but to live life more meaningfully. Broadly speaking, education is a life-long

### Do you know ?

#### Where is Barbie actually from?

One illustration of the global commodity chain can be found in the manufacturing of the most popular Barbie doll. It was first made in Japan, in 1959 when wages were low. As Japan developed and wages rose there, Barbie moved to other low-wage countries in Asia.

Barbie begins her life in Saudi Arabia where her ethylene needed for her plastic body is created.

Formosa Plastics based in Taiwan then converts this ethylene into the PVC pellets.

The pellets are shipped to factories in China, Malaysia and Indonesia where

actual moulding of the body takes place.

Barbie gets her nylon hair from Japan and her cotton dresses are made in China. Where is Barbie actually from?

Barbie is designed in United States, where the marketing strategies are devised and where most of the profits are made. But the only physical aspect of Barbie that is made in USA is her cardboard packaging, along with some of the paints and oils that are used to decorate the doll.

(Source: Anthony Giddens: Sociology, Polity, 2008)

activities of the production process take place in different parts of the world. For example, raw material may be processed in one country where it is cheaper; the product may be actually manufactured in another country where labour is cheaper and the product may be marketed for consumption in a totally different country. Transnational corporations like Coca-Cola, Colgate Palmolive, Kodak, General Motors and many more play a crucial role in creating a flexible economy which operates criss-cross the globe.

process engaging both informal and formal ways of learning. In this sense, in primitive societies, education was part of the larger process of socialization and enculturation. The family and local community served the basic function of cultural transmission - passing on culturally learnt behaviour, values and norms, language and basic set of working skills. In pre-industrial societies, when most people lived and worked around home, there was no economic need for education.

With increased industrialisation, the demand for literate and numerate workforce

also increased putting pressure for spread of education. Modern societies are characterised by complex division of labour, separation of work from home, need for specialised learning and skill attainment. In such a context, education needed to be formal and explicit.

Modern societies have evolved a distinct institution of education to fulfill basic goals :

- To create and disseminate ideas and knowledge.
- To develop skills to use existing knowledge for the betterment of society.

Education is thus a broad process of learning that broadens an individual's cognitive horizons and develops in her/him the skills to choose, evaluate and add to existing knowledge.

#### 4.5.1 Types of Education

- 1. Formal Education:** Formal education is planned with a specific end in view. In this way, it involves direct schooling and instruction. Since it is provided to fulfill specific ends, formal education is limited to a specific period. Formal education has a well-defined and systematic curriculum. The curriculum is based on aims designed according to the needs of society.
- 2. Informal Education:** Informal education is a process by which an individual imbibes attitudes, develops skills, cultivates values and acquires knowledge without any systematic organization. Informal education involves efforts by parents and elders to help the young ones to adapt to

the environment. There is no fixed curriculum, time-table or deliberate agency to impart informal education. In this sense, informal education is a continuous process and would include all incidental and spontaneous learning through various possibilities such as work experience, travel or mass media.

- 3. Non-formal Education:** Non-formal education takes place outside the realm of formal education. But, it is not totally spontaneous and unstructured as informal education. Non-formal education refers to any systematic educational activity carried outside the framework of the established formal system. Non-formal education is designed to serve the learning needs of an identified, homogenous group. Since it is consciously designed and implemented, non-formal education requires flexibility in design of the curriculum and scheme of evaluation.

#### 4.5.2 The importance of education

Why is education an important issue for sociologists? Key figures in Sociology like Emile Durkheim and Talcott Parsons have focussed on the important role of education for both individual and society.

The functions of education can be summed up as follows:

- (i) Children coming from diverse family and community backgrounds gain an understanding of the common values and moral beliefs in society through school education. This unites a multitude of separate individuals.
- (ii) Through education, children learn



self-discipline. They internalise the social rules that contribute to the smooth functioning of society.

- (iii) The education system teaches specialised skills needed for a complex modern economy. For example, technical schools are specially designed to provide technical/vocational training. In contemporary times, the workplace requires a certain level of knowledge and skills. So along with providing individuals with basic intellectual foundations, higher education institutions also cater to this need by accrediting certain levels of knowledge and skills.
- (iv) Schools also instill the value of individual achievement in children. In schools, children are assessed on the basis of universal standards. Their conduct is assessed according to the yardstick of formal school rules; their achievement is measured by performance in examinations. Schools, like wider society, largely operate on a meritocratic basis. Those with ability and talent achieve their just rewards.

### 4.5.3 Education and social division

For sociologists who look at society as unequally divided and differentiated, education – at all levels – becomes a means to reproduce social inequalities. Scholars like **Bowles and Gintis (2002)** argue that workplace inequalities are mirrored in the organisation of schools and that the education system reproduces these inequalities. Scholars like **Bourdieu (1986)** analyse the relationship between education

and economy, and criticise the education system for functioning as the means through which higher classes reproduce their economic domination. Schools are usually organised in such a way that students perceived to be destined for lower levels of work are expected to follow rules and are given simple, repetitive tasks; while for those destined for higher level tasks, there is an emphasis on independent thinking and working. Schools routinely design curriculum according to the social background of students. We go to different kinds of schools depending upon our socio-economic background and we acquire different kinds of privileges and opportunities.

Many studies have pointed out that education as a system also perpetrates gender differences. Although the ‘gender gap’ in education has narrowed in recent decades, gender remains a challenge: for equal access to educational opportunities. Gender difference is evident enough when we consider issues like, preference for a boy’s schooling over a girl’s, or high school drop out rate among girls, or ‘soft’ subject choices for girls.

This chapter has given an outline of

#### Test yourself

In his book, *The Meritocracy Myth* (2004), Stephen McNamee cautions against the presumption that the system operates on the basis of merit in determining who gets what and how much. According to him, a variety of non-merit factors such as inheritance, social and cultural capital, and social discrimination tend to suppress or even negate the effects of individual merit.

### Look into this table!

Literacy Rates (In percentage)

Census year	Persons	Males	Females
1951	18.3	27.2	08.9
1961	28.3	40.4	15.4
1971	34.5	46.0	22.0
1981	43.6	56.4	29.8
1991	52.2	64.1	39.3
2001	64.8	75.3	53.7
2011	73.0	80.9	64.6

1951-1971: Age group 5 and above.  
1981-2011: Age group 7 and above.  
(Data Source: Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, India)

### ACTIVITY - 4

Collect and compile information and make a dossier (file) showing examples of eminent personalities having achieved social prestige and position on the basis of their educational qualification.

### ACTIVITY - 5

Have a discussion on the gender-based distribution of tasks in school. For example, girls are assigned tasks like making Rangoli or receive guests when boys move furniture and help in sitting arrangement during parents' meets or other social functions.

how societies establish subsystems that facilitate their survival. It should help you learn about how each of these institutions contributes to the overall functioning of a society.

### SUMMARY

- Social institutions refer to a system of well-defined, stable patterns of behaviour
- Social institutions are important components of society. Society comprises various social institutions like family, marriage, education, religion, state, mass media, law and economy. Individuals interact with each other as members of these institutions.
- Family is the most important primary unit of human society. Family plays certain indispensable functions such as socialization, regulation of sexual activity, material and emotional security and provision of social identity.
- Family as an institution is significantly changing and many new forms are in the making.
- Marriage is a social institution through which family relations are formed. It refers to a pattern sanctioned by society, to enter into sex relations and procreate.
- Like family, in almost all societies one or the other form of marriage exists. Historically, marriage as an institution has existed in a wide variety of forms in different societies. These forms exist on the basis of the number of partners and rules governing who can marry whom.

- Economy is a basic social institution which organizes production, distribution and consumption of goods and services in order to fulfil the material needs in order to maintain itself.
- The changing nature of work and economy can be understood in terms of three broad stages of transformation, namely, Agricultural Revolution, Industrial Revolution and Information Technology Revolution.
- With advanced industrialization, the proportion of population engaged in agriculture is declining. In highly developed countries farming has become mechanized with maximum use of machines and high technology.

In a country like India, a significant proportion of population is still engaged in agriculture and rural based occupations.

- One of the main features of modern societies is an enormous expansion of economic interdependence. Today, the world economy operates through exchange of capital, labour, raw material and technology.
- Modern societies have evolved a distinct institution of education to fulfil the basic goals of creating and disseminating ideas and knowledge and developing skills to use existing knowledge for the betterment of society.

## EXERCISE

### 1. (A) Choose the correct alternative and complete the statements.

- (1) A rule that prescribes marriage within a group is called \_\_\_\_\_. (exogamy, endogamy, polygamy)
- (2) A family that comprises at least three generations is a \_\_\_\_\_ family. (nuclear, joint, cohabitation)
- (3) The 10+2+3 system is part of the \_\_\_\_\_ system of education. (informal, formal, universal)

### 1. (B) Correct the incorrect pair.

- (1) (i) School - Distance education
- (ii) Peer group - Informal education
- (iii) Health care training - Non-formal education

(iv) Family - Informal education

### 1. (C) Identify the appropriate term from the given options.

Homosexual marriage, Matrilocal, Heterosexual marriage

- (1) A married couple is expected to live at the wife's residence.
- (2) A form of marriage between persons of the same sex.

### 1. (D) Correct underlined words and complete the sentence.

- (1) X married Y. Later she divorced her spouse and married Z. This is an example of polygamy.
- (2) Mass production and factory system are found in agricultural society.

**2. Write short notes.**

- (1) Types of family based on authority
- (2) Stages of economy
- (3) Importance of education

**3. Write differences.**

- (1) Matriarchal family and Patriarchal family
- (2) Agricultural revolution and Industrial revolution

**4. Explain the following concepts with an example.**

- (1) Cohabitation
- (2) Formal Education

**5. State whether the following statements are True or False with reasons.**

- (1) In a modernizing society the role of parents are changing.
- (2) India is in the stage of industrial revolution.

**6. Give your personal response.**

- (1) What are your views about love marriage?

Do you support it? Explain.

- (2) How has the information revolution impacted your life?

**7. Answer the following question in detail (about 150-200 words)**

Show how the role of family has changed in the present times. Illustrate with your own examples.

**ACTIVITY:**

Reflect on your journey from your earliest memories to the present; note how you have changed as a person – in terms of your interests, challenges, successes and failures, relationships. What are the influences of your family, school and religion on your life?

