

B.A.PART-I(SOCIOLOGY)

Paper-I(Principles of Sociology)

Topic- Social Group

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❖ **Introduction:**

Man is a social animal: No man lives alone. He is basically a social creature. The great Greek Philosopher- Aristotle said long back that man is a social animal. He further remarked that he who does not live in society is either a beast or a angel. With the exception of hermits, shepherds, lighthouse keepers, prisoners in solitary confinement and possibly a few others, all human beings live in groups. Men everywhere live in groups. Man's daily life is made up largely by participating in groups. Not only our life becomes boring and unbearable without fellow human beings but also our very survival becomes problematic. Total ostracise from one's group is probably the cruelest punishment – short of only death. Throughout his life, the individual belongs to temporary and permanent groups which are organised for specific or general goals.

❖ **Definitions of Group:**

- **According to Bogardus-** “A social group may be thought of as persons who have some common interests, who are stimulating each other, who have common loyalty and who participate in common activities.”
- **According to Maclver and Page-**“By group we mean any collection of human beings who are brought into social relationship with one another.”
- **According to Ogburn and Nimkoff-**“Whenever two or more individuals come together and influences influences one another another they may be said to constitute constitute Social Group”.

❖ **Characteristics of Social Groups:**

The main characteristics of social groups are as follows:

1. **Collection of individual:** Social groups consists of people. Without individuals there can be no groups. Just as we cannot have a college or a university without students and teachers we cannot have a group in the absence of people.
2. **Interaction among members:** Social interaction is the very basis of group life. Hence mere collection of individuals does not make a group. The members must have a interaction. A social group, is in fact a system of social interaction. The limits of social groups are marked by the limits of social interaction.
3. **Mutual Awareness:** Group life involves mutual awareness. Group members are aware of one another and their behaviour is determined by this mutual recognition.
4. **'We – feeling':** We feeling refers to the tendency on the part of the members to identify themselves with the groups. It represents group unity. 'We – feeling creates sympathy in and fosters cooperation among members. It helps group members to defend their interests collectively.
5. **Group Unity and solidarity:** Group members are tied by the sense of unity. The solidarity or integration of a group is largely dependent upon the frequency, the variety, and the emotional quality of the interactions of its members. A family or a friends group, or a religious group is highly united and integrated, because its members are related by several common interests and have frequent social contacts with one another and express a high degree of morale and of loyalty. Unity is maintained more often by conscious efforts.
6. **Common Interests:** the interests and ideals of group are common. Groups are mostly formed or established for the fulfillment of certain interests. Form of groups differs depending upon the common interests of the group. Hence are political groups, religious groups, economic groups, and so on.
7. **Group Norms:** Every group has its own rules or norms which the members are supposed to follow. These norms may be in the form of customs, folkways, mores, traditions etc. They may be written or unwritten norms or standards. Every group has its own ways and means of punishing or correcting those who go against the rules.

- 8. Size of the groups:** Social groups vary in size. A group may be small as that of dyad (two members' group e.g. husband and wife family) or as big as that of a political party having lakhs of members.
- 9. Groups are Dynamic:** Social groups are not static but dynamic. They are subject to change whether slow or fast. Old members die and new members are born. Whether due to internal or normal pressures, groups undergo changes.
- 10. Stability:** Groups are stable or unstable; permanent or temporary in character. Some groups like the crowd, mob, audience, spectators' group etc are temporary and unstable. But many groups are relatively permanent and stable in character.

❖ **Conclusion:**

Therefore we can say that a social group is any number of people who share common goals and beliefs. A true group exhibits some degree of social cohesion and is more than a simple collection or aggregate of individuals, such as people waiting at a bus stop, or people waiting in a line. Characteristics shared by members of a group may include interests, values, representations, ethnic or social background.