***Characteristics and Causes of Social Problems***

**Characteristics of Social Problems:**

On the basis of the above definitions, we can identify the following char­acteristics of social problems:

1. All social problems are situations which have injurious conse­quences for society.

2. All social problems are deviations from the ‘ideal’ situation.

3. All social problems have some common basis of origin.

4. All social problems are social in origin.

5. All social problems are caused by pathological social conditions.

6. All social problems are interconnected.

7. All social problems are social in their results, that is, they affect all sections of society.

8. The responsibility for social problems is social, that is, they require a collective approach for their solution.

9. Social Problems occur in all societies.

**Causes of Social Problems:**

Social problems arise out of pathological social conditions. They occur in all societies—simple (that is, small, isolated and homogeneous with a strong sense of group solidarity, and which change slowly) as well as in complex (which are characterized by impersonal secondary relations, anonymity, loneliness, high mobility and extreme specialization, and where change is faster), that is, wherever and whenever a relationship is affected between a group of individuals leading to maladjustments and conflicts.

Three factors are important in the understanding of the causal fac­tors in social problems:

(1) The causal conditions are numerous.

Broadly, the potential causes of social problems found in social environ­ment are:

(a) Contradictions in social systems,

(b) Malfunctioning of economic systems

(c) Lack of change in religious systems, and

(d) De­fective functioning of political systems.

(2) Social problems provide a strong basis of common causal factors.

(3) Social problems are interre­lated and interdependent in the sense that they are cumulatively pro-motive and provocative, that is, they foster and encourage one an­other.

**Reinhardt (1952:7-12) has referred to three factors in the develop­ment of social problems:**

**(1) Differentiation and Multiplication of Interests and Functions:**

The principle that the greater the number of parts in a machine or an or­ganism, the greater the probability of maladjustment among the parts holds good for human societies too, where there is increased opportunity for the collision of interests of various individuals, groups, institutions and systems. Untouchability, communal riots and political crimes, are the social problems which are the result of the clash of interests of differ­ent castes and classes.

**(2) Accelerating Frequency of Social Change or Growth of Civilization:**

This has been made possible due to the multiplication of scientific and mechanical innovations. For example, the invention of machines has de­stroyed many old forms of employment resulting in the migration of millions of people, and has given rise to class conflicts. It is, thus, the structural and functional maladjustments arising from revolutionary in­ventions which create many social problems.

**(3) Man’s Developed Insight to Make a Scientific Analysis:**

Ever since man has developed his social insight of looking into the working of nature, issues which were formerly regarded as simple are now perceived as the result of various kinds of natural conditions which influence man and society.

**Types of Social Problems:**

Case (1964:34) has given four types of social problems on the basis of their origin:

(i) Which are rooted in some aspect of the physical environ­ment?

(ii) Which are inherent in the nature or distribution of the population involved?

(iii) Which result from poor social organization; and

(iv) Which evolve from a conflict of cultural values within the society?

Fuller and Myers (1941:367) have given three types of problems:

(i) Physical problems’, though these are problems for the society but their causes are not based on value conflicts, for example, floods and famines;

(ii) Ameliorative problems: there is consensus about the effects of these problems but there are differences pertaining to their solutions, for ex­ample, crime, poverty, and AIDS; and

(iii) Moral problems’, there is no consensus pertaining to the nature or causes of these problems, for ex­ample, gambling, alcoholism, drug abuse and divorce.