

Q. 3. What do you know about the term society? Explain the characteristics of Pakistani society.

Ans.

Meaning of Society

The English word "society" emerged in the 15th century and is derived from the French société. The French word, in turn, had its origin in the Latin "societas" a "friendly association with others" from socius meaning "companion, associate, and comrade or business partner." The Latin word is probably related to the verb sequi, "to follow", and thus originally may have meant "follower"

Society

Society or human society is the manner or condition in which the members of a community live together for their mutual benefit. By extension, society denotes the people of a region or country, sometimes even the world is taken as a whole. Used in the sense of an association, a society is a body of individuals outlined by the bounds of functional interdependence, possibly comprising characteristics such as national or cultural identity, social solidarity, language or hierarchical organisation. Human societies are characterised by patterns of relationships between individuals sharing a distinctive culture and institutions. Like other communities or groups, a society allows its members to achieve needs or wishes they could not fulfill alone.

A society, however, may be ontologically independent of, and utterly irreducible to the qualities of constituent individuals; it may act to oppress. The urbanisation and rationalisation inherent in some, particularly Western capitalist, societies has been associated with feelings of isolation and social "anomie".

Legal Definition of Society is as

"A group of people formed as a separate organisation and which has as a stated purpose some charitable or benevolent purpose either in regards to the public at large or in regards to the common interests of the members, and which operates as nearly as possible at cost."

More broadly, a society is an economic, social or industrial infrastructure, made up of a varied collection of individuals. Members of a society may be from different ethnic groups. A society may be a particular ethnic group, such as the Saxons; a nation state, such as Bhutan; a broader cultural group, such as a western society. The word *society* may also refer to an organised voluntary association of people for religious, benevolent, cultural, scientific, political, patriotic, or other

purposes. A "society" may even, though more by means of metaphor, refer to a social organism such as an ant colony.

CHARACTERICS OF PAKISTANI SOCIETY

Pakistani society is, largely, multilingual, multi-ethnic and multicultural. Though cultures within the country differ to some extent, more similarities than differences can be found as most Pakistanis are of mainly 'Aryan' heritage and/or have lived side by side along the Indus River for the past several thousand years and coexisted. However, over 60 years of integration, a distinctive "Pakistani" culture has sprung up especially in the urban areas. Education is highly regarded by members of every socio-economic stratum. Traditional family values are highly respected and considered sacred, although urban families increasingly form nuclear families, owing to socio-economic constraints imposed by the traditional culture of the extended family. Following are some characteristics of Pakistani society:

1. Religion - the Basis of Pakistani Society

The influence of religion can be seen dominating all aspects of Pakistani society. Pakistan was made in the name of Islam. The people are usually religious minded and they get united when there is a matter of religious importance. Islamic education is considered mandatory for the children from the beginning. Though some families have adopted western ways of life yet majority of the families in all the classes of the society have Islamic colour in their routine activities of life. Festivities of Islamic culture like celebration of Ramadhan and Eids, are the essential part of Pakistani society. The colour of religion is stronger in the villages of Pakistan than in its city life.

2. Male Dominated Society

In Pakistani culture, the male member of the family enjoys the key position. Family is headed by a male member and in most cases, he is the sole source of income for other members of the family. Women are usually taken as the symbol of men's honour. They are not allowed to enjoy the life as in the other societies of the world. They are not even allowed to cast their votes in most of the northern areas of Pakistan. They are not given equal opportunities to have better lives. They are killed in the name of Honour. In some families, the girls are not given proper food and the boys are given more share in the food. The girls are not sent to schools and even if they are sent they are made overburdened both with the school work as well as household chores.

Pat matriarchal
Mat matriarchal

3. Joint Family System

In Pakistan, mostly, there is a joint family system in which there are grand parents, uncles, aunts and lot of cousins. Although, this family system is undergoing a radical change with a greater influence of media and education but people of Pakistan do not feel this change a good one. Because while living in a joint family system a lot of emotional attachments enhance and they feel that by separating in neutral family system, their relations will be damaged and family ties will be weakened. Lot of research work has been done in this regard in Pakistan. Researchers highlighted various issues at household level which create disturbance and unrest in the society. Joint family system is basically a form of organisation. In this organisation, there are defined norms and values to be followed strictly by all the members. All the members have their defined tasks and responsibilities to perform. There is equal share of each and every member of the family in the available resources in the form of money, food and other requirements. If all the requirements and regulations of this organisation are fulfilled impartially then it is the most successful system but unfortunately this does not happen. Definitely, it is impossible for any human being to stuck with defined strict norms and values even in his/her own home where he/she wants to take rest and live freely according to his own will after completion of his/her duties which are in current era are as much tough and busy.

4. Conservatism

Pakistani society is very conservative in its approach. There is very low ratio of adaptability towards change. The people are reluctant to adopt new techniques of education and living. They are still clinging to the old methods of living. A large segment of society think that if they take anything from west they will be doing sin as they consider west as the enemy of Islam. Especially, the people in the villages are very conservative in their approach. They are against any change in their established patterns and customs. Sir Charles Metcalf once wrote about conservatism of the villages as: "Dynasties tumble down, revolution succeeds revolution. Hindu, Pathan, Mughal, Sikh, English all the masters change in turn but the village communities remain the same."

5. Group Feelings

In Pakistani society, there is a strong feeling of belonging to a specific group. Especially, in the villages, group feeling is more pervasive than in the cities. The Panchayat system is also the outcome of the group feeling in the villages of Punjab, same is the status of Jirga

in Balochistan and Khyber PK. The decisions of Jirga or Panchayat are happily obeyed and welcomed by the people.

6. Poverty

Poverty is widespread in Pakistani society and is particularly predominant in rural areas. Nearly two third of the population, and 80 per cent of the country's poor people, live in rural parts of the country.

Agriculture is at the heart of the rural economy, and most rural people rely on agriculture for their livelihoods. But, for many of the poorest rural people income depends on non-farm sources.

The incidence of poverty varies between rural and urban areas, and from one province to the next. Poverty is widely and evenly distributed in many mountainous parts of the country where communities are small, scattered and isolated, and where there are few major urban centres. The rugged, terrain and fragile ecosystems make cultivation difficult. Lack of access to markets and services has contributed to chronic poverty in these areas.

Although, women play a major role in the household economy and in providing care for their families, they are particularly vulnerable. Despite improvements in economic conditions after recent reforms, there are still broad discrepancies in social standing between men and women. Women own fewer assets, they have limited economic options and less access to social services. They have high rates of illiteracy, and their burden of labour increases significantly when poor levels of agricultural productivity force men to migrate to find work.

7. Illiteracy

Illiteracy is one of the prominent characteristics of Pakistani society. Main causes are that urban areas in Pakistan are less whereas rural areas are more, rural areas are not developed and most of the areas don't have schools and if they do then they are of very low standards. In many areas people don't send their daughters to schools as they believe it is worthless to send them, it is just waste of money. Some people are brain washed who believe that education is against Islam, basically they are following the Muslims who had said this before independence of Pakistan.

8. Simplicity

The people in the villages of Pakistan lead a very simple life. Their needs and necessities are not very complex and complicated. The people are away from the hustles and bustles of city life. Overall the people in Pakistani society are very simple and peace loving. They are very hospitable and caring.

9. Caste system

Caste barriers have mostly relaxed in Pakistani large cities, though they persist in rural areas of the country. Nevertheless, the caste system, in various forms, continues to survive in modern Pakistan strengthened by a combination of social perceptions and divisive politics. The caste system is largely used as a vote bank during elections.

Those who are referred to as "Ashrafias" are presumed to have a superior status. Some of the backward or lower-caste Muslim communities include Ansari, Kunjra, Churihara and Dhobi. The upper caste Muslim communities include Syed, Sheikh, Pathan, Khan and Malik. Genetic data has also supported this stratification. Interactions between the "oonchi zat" (upper caste) and "neechi zat" (lower caste) are regulated by established patron-client relationships of the jajmani system, the upper castes being referred to as the 'Jajmans', and the lower caste as 'Kamin'. Unlike the Hindu caste system, the caste system found amongst Muslims was never rigid. The social stratification among Muslims in the "Swat" area of North Pakistan has been meaningfully compared to the caste system in India. The society is rigidly divided into subgroups where each "Quom" is assigned a profession. Different Quoms are not permitted to intermarry or live in the same community. These Muslims practice a ritual-based system of social stratification. The Quoms who deal with human emissions are ranked the lowest.

In spite of the fact that there are certain benefits in a caste system, the caste-like features in South Asian Muslim society are a "flagrant violation of the Qur'anic of the world view."

10. Mixed Culture

Pakistani culture is a mixed culture. Although, majority of people are Muslims by birth and faith yet there is great influence of Hindu and British culture on the present Pakistani society.

11. Respect for Elders

In Pakistani society, we find that there still exist the love and respect for elders. Unlike the western societies, where the old parents are sent to the old homes, old people are respected and taken care of in Pakistan. They enjoy the family life with their grand children. Their daughters and sons do not consider them a burden. No doubt, these values are shattering now a days especially in the cities but in villages we find old people are respected and valued as ordained by our religion.

12. Observance of Moral Norms

Our society still observes the certain values and norms. Despite of the fact that women are not given the due rights as asked by Islam yet they are given more respect as compared to the western societies. Parents are respected and obeyed. Children are brought up by the mothers and grand mothers. Guests are warmly welcomed. They don't have to take time from the hosts. Family ties are strong in our society.

13. Stress on Neighbourly Relations

Another significant feature of our society is that stress is laid on neighbourhood relations especially in the villages. It is primarily due to two main factors. First, the life in the villages is not very fast and neighbours can not be ignored. Secondly, people in the villages live in a small proximity and as such they have face to face familiarity and can not altogether ignore feelings and sentiments of each other.

Drawbacks of Pakistani Society

Pakistan's society have drawbacks at all levels hence it is important to catch the roots of such problems. Fortunately, now Pakistan has independent media and judiciary. Both play a vital role in improving the upper social and political setup of Pakistan. But there is also a need to understand the problems at bottom line social groups which mostly include middle and lower income class families. The behaviours and attitude of these two classes also underpin and create lot of hindrances in the developmental process of Pakistan. There is a lack of tolerance, lack of compromising attitude, lack of responsible nature, lack of impartial behaviours in the individuals of these classes. This type of behaviour and attitude of individuals are generated and developed in their early grooming stages through their families

