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CO-OPERATION, COMPETITION AND CONFLICT

By now, you are familiar with some of the basic concepts used in sociology such as society, community, group, individual and association. Infact, they provide the basic structure to the society. Society is not static. It is ever changing. Changes came through interaction among members of the society. The interaction reflects in the activities of human being in society through contact and communication. In this context, there are certain mechanisms by which individuals and groups carry out activities according to their needs and requirements which are known as 'social processes'. Co-operation, competition and conflict mark the basic principles of various types of activities performed by the individuals in a given social context.

Did you ever realize that you can not see society? You can only see the individuals interacting with one another. Behind these interactions, there is a meaning or purpose. This is expressed in a variety of ways in inter-personal relationship with friends, family members, neighbours, acquaintances and strangers in the term of co-operation, competition and conflict.

OBJECTIVES

After studying this lesson you will be able to:

- explain the concept of social processes;
- identify the manner in which individuals and groups carry out their activities;
- describe the nature and types of social interactions;
- state the basic concept of co-operation and its nature;
- explain the basic concept of competition and its nature;
- describe the basic concept of conflict and its nature; and
- explain co-operation, competition and conflict as a social continuum.



10.1 SOCIAL PROCESS AS SOCIAL INTERACTION

Social process has a wider connotation. It comprises of events that took place in the past. It is also based on traditions, mores, morals and instincts. These may be abstract and unconscious in nature, where as social interaction is concrete, based on reciprocity, real and social contact situation.

Social process is concerned with different changes in life of the group. It depends upon the nature of interaction, which may include the historical, cultural, political and economic, religious and social aspects. Interaction refers to an action done in response to another action. It becomes social process when interaction is repeated.

When a husband and wife help each other out of love, affection and sympathy, it assumes the form of co-operation and it becomes a social process.

Social interaction and social processes are inter-related. One does not exist without the other.

Thus, "social processes mean various modes of interaction between individuals or groups including co-operation and conflict, social differentiation and integration, development, arrest and decay." In other words "social process is a manner in which the relations of the members of a group, once brought together acquire a certain distinctive character."

Social interaction, as distinguished from social process, is concrete, real and based on communication, social contact and reciprocal relationship. The members of a society, bound together in a system of mutual influence is described as social interaction. It refers mostly to the contemporary social situation and thus considered as concrete and real.

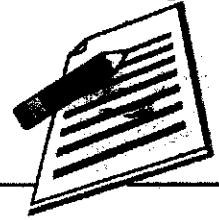
Thus, social interaction is a complex process and comprises three major forms of interaction : co-operation, competition and conflict.

10.2 CO-OPERATION

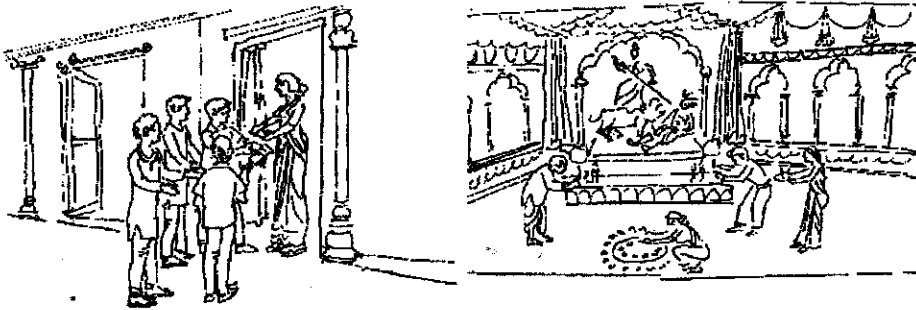
Co-operation generally means working together for a common objective .

Have you ever noticed the behaviour of the people in your village or neighbourhood, when a community festival like Christmas, 'Durga Pooja', Guru parb, Eid, 'Jansmasthami' or Ramlila is organized. Some volunteers move from house to house, from shop to shop to collect donations from the members who belong to their own community, neighbourhood or village. All these donations are pooled together and the members of celebration group decide the manner in which these

should be spent. Celebration of such festivals is not possible unless the members co-operate with one another at every level. Decoration of the festival place, and sacred observance of the rituals, etc., are examples of co-operation. Such a co-operation is a regular feature, which takes place every year. The volunteers and organisers might change from year to year but the observance of the activity continues.



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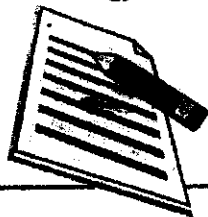


Collecting funds for organising social activities

10.2.1 Types of Co-operation

Co-operation can be of direct or indirect type. When individuals perform similar activities together – such as praying or worshipping together, farming, moving a pile of stones or pushing a motor car out of mud – the co-operation among them is called direct co-operation. On other hand, indirect co-operation is obtained when people perform dissimilar tasks towards a common end. Each has its specialized role to play. For example, when carpenters, plumbers, masons, architects and unskilled labourers work together to construct a house, this type of co-operation is based on the principles of specialized knowledge and skills of each individuals. In modern society, one comes across more and more of indirect co-operation due to technological progress leading to role specialization.

Co-operation can also be classified into (i) primary co-operation, (ii) secondary co-operation, and (iii) tertiary co-operation. The co-operation found in **primary groups such as family and peer groups (friends) is called primary co-operation where people have to choose face to face relations**. In these cases, the interests of the individual merge with the interests of the primary group. **Secondary co-operation** is found in the secondary group such as **government, industrial houses, voluntary organization and trade union**, etc where people co-operate for certain interests. The tertiary co-operation is found when individuals or groups who otherwise compete with one another, come together and co-operate



with each other for a specific purpose. For example, the co-operation obtained between different political parties for a short time span.

Co-operation is a process, which is highly essential for the maintenance of social order. Therefore, co-operation is considered as associative social process. It is a universal phenomenon. If we are to live as members of the society, we can not do without co-operation.

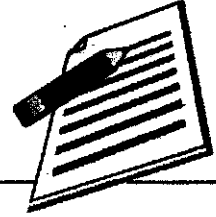
Co-operation is goal-oriented and conscious form of social interaction. It involves two elements:- (i) Common end, and (ii) organized effort. All the individual members have a common end, i.e. celebration of the festival. But they can do it only when all members co-operate with one another in an organized manner. This is an example of co-operation at the level: for example, family, community and nation. Family members co-operate with each other in terms of sharing economic, emotional and social requirements of one another. If one of the members falls sick or comes under mental tension for certain reasons, all other members, leaving aside their routine work, give special attention to the ailing member. If one is busy in seeking appointment with the doctor, and taking the ailing member to the doctor or getting medicine for her, others are busy in making the prescribed diet or are with her and attend to her routine requirements. It is due to the cooperation of family members, the person in distress is able to cope up with the stressful situation.

Co-operation at the level of family is not necessarily to be understood at the time of crisis. In the everyday life, the members co-operate with one another in terms of meeting day-to-day household requirements. Collection of fire-wood or arranging for other sources of fuel, grinding of the cereals, buying of vegetables, cooking, taking care of children, looking after domesticated animals, watering the plants and fetching or storing the water-all are smoothly possible when the family members cooperate on a daily basis. The underlying principle of division of labour makes this kind of co-operation possible.

INTEXT QUESTIONS 10.1

From the given options choose the right answer by filling the blank or putting a tick (✓) mark.

1. Co-operation involves
 - (a) Common end and organized effort.
 - (b) Differential end and organized effort.



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- (c) Two ends and one action strategy.
- (d) None of the above.
2. The activity of _____ characterize co-operation.
- (a) participating in debate.
- (b) building a house.
- (c) appearing in the examination.
- (d) contesting the election.
3. Celebration of festivals say for e.g, Dussehra, Eid or Janamasthami etc. needs a group effort which symbolise
- (a) competition
- (b) conflict
- (c) co-operation
4. Co-operation is _____ form of social interaction.
- (a) Disjointed.
- (b) Goal-oriented.
- (c) Culture specific.
5. Sociologists have classified co-operation into _____.
- (a) Direct and indirect type.
- (b) Primary, secondary and tertiary type.
- (c) Both the above (a and b).
- (d) None of the above.
6. In modern society, one comes across more and more of _____ kind of cooperation.
- (a) indirect
- (b) straight forward
- (c) direct
- (d) only competition.
7. The principle of division of labour refers to a situation when:-
- (a) Each individual or a group has its specialized role to play.



- (b) All individuals and groups performs the same task.
- (c) Both of the above (a and b)
- (d) None of the above.

10.3 COMPETITION

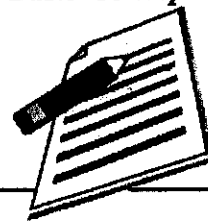
Competition is also a form of interaction. It is a struggle between individual or groups of individuals, who are not necessarily in contact and communication. Competition, however, is continuous, impersonal and unconscious struggle between individuals or groups for satisfaction of their unlimited wants. This is because of their limited supply which all may not have.

Competition is a struggle for position to gain economic status. The status of the individual, or a group of individuals, in the social order is determined by several indicators, such as income, wealth, social, prestige, political power, education, etc. Competition is defined as a contest to obtain something, which does not exist in adequate quantity to meet the demand.

Competition refers to a social process where individuals and groups try to acquire which are scarce, such as goods, commodities, services, social positions, political power, economic and occupational opportunities. There are many takers of these items. Everybody wants to have these items but these are very few. Society believes in giving equal chance to all its members to have access to these scarce items.

Competition is a social process, which characterises the interaction process in formal institutional setup. For example in schools and colleges, the student compete with one another for securing highest marks and top position. They also compete in sports, debate and public speeches, essay writings, drama, painting and exhibition and various other fields. There are rules for all these competitions. A person who performs best following all the rules, wins the competition and gets the award.

A brief discussion with the help of two examples will make our task easier. Have you ever thought of taking various examinations that are held to recruit people in different jobs/services in Banks, Railway, Military and Civil Services. These jobs are not only scarce but also yields lot of respect and honour. The recruitment process involves mechanisms to ensure the processes of selection and elimination. For example, the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) conducts examination for recruitment of persons to Indian Administrative and allied services. One of the main purposes of this test is to select a few and eliminate the major chunk of



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candidates to appear at the main examination. There are definite rules for appearing in such examination: rules pertaining to minimum qualification, combination of optional subjects, certain languages as medium of examination, age limit, limit on number of attempts a candidate can take etc. The candidates appearing in such examination have to abide by these rules. In other words they have to compete with other within the framework of these rules. Such a competition leads to selection of suitable candidates to be appointed against these prized and respectful positions of the society.

The election of municipalities, state assembly or national parliament is a social process, characterized by competition. There are specific rules of election regarding filing of nomination papers, withdrawal of nominations, codes of conduct for electoral campaigning and such other rules. The contesting candidates have to operate within the **framework of electoral rules otherwise their candidature is declared invalid.**

Competition is the fundamental form of social struggle and occurs when demand outruns supply. The basic terms of competition are "a population of insatiable wants and a world of stubborn and inadequate resources". In our society, for example, there are generally more takers of jobs than the jobs available, hence there is competition for available places. Among those who already have employment there is a competition for getting better position and promotions. There is a competition not only for bread, but for luxury, power, social position, name and fame etc.

10.3.1 Characteristics of Competition

- (i) **Competition is impersonal struggle.** Competition is never personalized. According to some sociologists competition refers to interactions without social contact. It is usually not directed against any individual or group in particular.
- (ii) **Competition is mainly an unconscious activity but at times conscious competition also takes place.** Whenever the competitions shift their interest from the objects of competition to other competitors, it is called rivalry or personal competition. Personal competition or rivalry is a conscious activity.
- (iii) **Competition is universal.** No society is devoid of competition. However, the magnitude and the degree of competition might vary from society to society. **Competition is found in all known human society and culture.**
- (iv) **Competition is regarded as conducive to progress.** Fair competition is conducive to economic as well as social progress and even to general welfare because it spurs individuals and groups to exert their best efforts. Its obvious connection with what is called 'progress' has led some sociologists to regard



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it as the essential features of modern civilization. Competition provides the individuals better opportunities to satisfy their desires for new experiences and recognitions.

- (v) At times competition can be vicious both for individuals and groups. It may create emotional disturbances. Unfair competition has the most disintegrating effects. Both co-operation and competition constitute the underlying essence of most of the social interactions in everyday life. No society is exclusively competitive or exclusively cooperative.
- (vi) Competition refers to both associative and dissociative dimensions of social process.

INTEXT QUESTIONS 10.2 & 10.3

From the given options choose the right answer by filling the blank or putting a tick (✓) mark.

- 1) When the individuals and groups try to achieve scarce items for which there are many takers it indicates the _____ amongst them.
 - (a) co-operative behaviour
 - (b) competitiveness
 - (c) adjustment
 - (d) social contact
- 2) Whenever the competitors shift their interest from the objects of competition to other competitors it is called _____.
 - (a) indirect competition.
 - (b) treachery.
 - (c) rivalry.
 - (d) peaceful co-existence.
- 3) Members of a society compete with one another when _____.
 - (a) more individuals applying for limited number of jobs.
 - (b) there are less number of individuals and more number of opportunities.

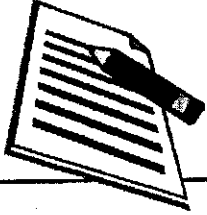


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- (c) Both of the above (a and b).
 - (d) None of the above.
- 4) Competition is regarded as _____ to progress.
- (a) hindrance
 - (b) conducive
 - (c) closed
 - (d) contradictory
- 5) Competition is a struggle mainly carried out at _____.
- (a) personal level
 - (b) conscious level
 - (c) impersonal level
 - (d) none of the above
- 6) Interaction without social contact is called
- (a) co-operation
 - (b) competition
 - (c) conflict
 - (d) none of the above
- 7) A social process is characterized by
- (a) Only co-operation
 - (b) Only competition
 - (c) Both the above (a and b)
 - (d) None of the above

10.4 CONFLICT

Conflict as another form of social interaction is a process of opposition. It is inherent in every society or social system and is reflected in the attitude, behaviour, stereotypes and social distance. The process of conflict arises when the norms and values of one group come in clash with that of the other or when a group struggles for its own values and objects against others. Sometimes conflict is also



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apparently noted when an individual or a group seeks to attain its own ends in ways which obstruct the attainment of the same ends by others.

The process of conflict includes abhorrence, animosity, antagonistic attitude, contempt, enmity, hatred, rivalry and tension, etc. and the expression of these may be found in their stereotypic statement as well as in their action such as in maintenance of social distance, rules of inter-dinning and so on. Besides, conflict also leads to direct confrontation, fight, quarrel, enmity, disagreement and filing suits, etc. Thus, conflict is regarded as a dissociative social process by the sociologists.

In competition the rules are observed but in conflict, there are primarily no rules. Conflicting situations emerge when the interests of interacting individuals or groups clash with one another. The most common examples of conflict which we see in everyday life are: conflict between brothers claiming their individual share in the property after the death of the father, conflict between two caste groups in a village, conflict between different political parties at the local level and so on.

Earlier, sociologists did not consider conflict as a social process as it conveyed primarily an antisocial activity. Later it was pointed out that conflict is not pathological. Sometimes conflict performs certain important functions. Conflict has certain positive consequences for the society. At least, it recognizes the divergent opinions and new points of view and becomes quite instrumental in bringing about social change.

Conflict refers to the deliberate attempt to oppose, resist or coerce the will of others. As a process, conflict is the opposite of co-operation. Conflict might lead to antagonism, violence or threat to peace.

10.4.1 Characteristics of Conflict

- (i) The nature of conflict might vary from society to society but it is found in every society. Therefore, conflict is universal. However, no society is characterized exclusively by conflict.
- (ii) Conflict is a conscious action. The members involved in it deliberately oppose one another to achieve their respective goals.
- (iii) Conflict primarily remains a personal activity. At times it acquires greater intensity and involves many people. In such cases it is manifested at the level of particular social groups or it might involve the entire society.
- (iv) Conflict is a social process, which becomes visible intermittently. It is not a continuous process. For example, conflict between two rival groups in a



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village might take violent form to be followed with a period of peace of tranquillity before it could recur. Therefore, conflict lacks continuity.

- (v) Conflict leads to social change. Conflicting ideas and conflicting opinions are pre-conditions of social change. If a society continues to remain in the state of equilibrium it will remain static unless there is a social disequilibrium. Conflict is an expression of disequilibrium.

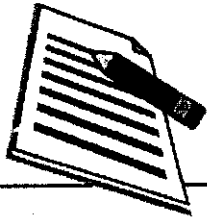
Sociologists mostly trace the origin of conflict in social, political and economic relations existing between individuals or and groups of individuals. Such relations reflect the inherent inequality. Thus, inequality is a basis for the origin of social conflict. A sense of relation or absolute deprivation prevailing at the level of individual or group is a major factor for the origin of the conflict. The conflicting parties are aware of the fact that they are in conflict with their opponents and this awareness is necessary for the conflict to exist. Sociologists do not regard the innate biological nature of human beings as potential source of conflict. On the other hand, they attribute asymmetrical social, political and economic relations coupled with the sense of relative deprivation as the root cause of social conflict.

10.4.2 Types of Conflict

Conflict can be of various types. They are (i) war, (ii) feud, (iii) litigation, and (iv) conflict of impersonal ideals. War is a type of group conflict which all of us know. War results from a deep seated antagonistic impulse in man. Feud is an intra-group form of war caused by some injustice alleged to have been done by one group to another. Litigation is a judicial form of conflict. The best example of the litigation is the court case. Conflict carried out by individuals for an ideal (not for themselves) is called the conflict of impersonal ideas.

Some sociologists have given various classification of conflicts. We shall discuss some important ones :

- (i) Conflict can be either (a) manifest (overt) or (b) latent /covert). The manifest type can be observed but the latent conflict primarily remains invisible.
- (ii) Conflicts can be either (a) corporate or (b) personal. Corporate conflict occurs among the groups within a society or between two societies. Communal riots, war between nations, strike by the industrial labourer are the examples of corporate conflict. On the other hand, personal conflict occurs within the group, due to envy, hostility, jealousy or breach of trust.
- (iii) Conflict can be purely temporary (ephemeral) or perpetual (enduring). Conflict between individuals on a road side, village shop, city buses for small and petty reasons are the best examples of ephemeral conflicts. Such conflicts do not



last over a long period of time. People generally forget and come back to their normal life. On the other hand, conflict between two rival groups of a village or two feuding clans of a tribe are the examples of the perpetual conflict. In such cases conflict is also not continuous. It is stretched over a long period of time and sometimes extends over several generations. However, there are intermittent periods of peace and social harmony followed with turbulent periods of conflict.

10.5 CO-OPERATION, COMPETITION AND CONFLICT AS SOCIAL CONTINUUM

The processes of co-operation, competition and conflict are the basis of all forms of social interaction. However, people can co-operate with one another or could enter into conflict depending on the situation. For example, candidate competing for jobs might do the preparation together co-operating with one another in terms of discussion, exchange of notes and other materials. Or, they could become jealous of one another and even adopt unfair methods, which might involve violence to deprive the competitors of adequate opportunities to do well in the examination. Co-operation, competition and conflict are found in all societies across the world. They are interwoven in such a way that it would be difficult to separate them. The nature and extent of these processes may vary according to distinctive local, social and cultural conditions but their presence is universal and considered as social continuum.

INTEXT QUESTIONS 10.4 & 10.5

State True or False against each statement

- a) Conflict arises when the norms and values of one group comes in clash or struggle with others.
- b) In competition, the rules are observed but in conflict there are no rules.
- c) Conflict never leads to violence or threat to peace.
- d) Conflict never leads to social change
- e) The process of cooperation, competition and conflict lie at the basis of all forms of social interaction.



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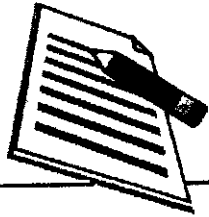
WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNT

- Co-operation, competition and conflict mark the basic principle of various types of activities performed by the individuals in a given social context.
- Co-operation generally means working together for a common interest.
- Co-operation can also be classified into (i) primary co-operation (ii) secondary co-operation and (iii) tertiary cooperation.
- Co-operation is goal oriented and conscious form of social interaction. It involves two elements.
- Competition is a struggle for position to gain economic status.
- Competition is the fundamental form of social struggle and occurs when demand outruns supply.
- Competition is found in all known human society and culture.
- Competition can be vicious both for individuals and groups. It may create emotional disturbances.
- Conflict as another form of social interaction is a process of opposition.
- Conflict is the opposite of cooperation.



TERMINAL EXERCISE

1. Explain the concept and meaning of social process.
2. Describe the characteristics of competitions.
3. Write short notes on:
 - a) Social interaction
 - b) Primary and secondary co-operation.
4. What do you understand by co-operation of goal-oriented and organized. Explain it.
5. State different types of conflict.

**Notes****ANSWER TO INTEXT QUESTIONS****10.1**

1- a

2 - b

3 - c

4 - b

5 - b

6- a

7 - a

10.2

1) a

2) c

3) a

4) b

5) - c

6) b

7) -c

10.3

a) - T

b) - T

c) - F

d) - F

e) - T

**SUGGESTED READINGS**

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