



LESSON 11 PRIMARY CONCEPTS: ASSOCIATION & INSTITUTION

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11.0 Objectives

By the end of this lesson, you will be able to understand and learn about:

- Meaning of Association
- Elements of Institution
- Relevance of both in Society

Introduction

We use the words association and institution very commonly in our daily talks. Sometimes, these words are used interchangeably to mean one and the same. But these words are used in a specific way in sociology. Hence it is necessary for us to know the meaning and nature of and difference between these two terms.

Association and Institutions as a Means of Pursuing Ends

Men have diverse needs, desires and interests and ends which demand their satisfaction. They have three ways of fulfilling their ends. Firstly, they may act independently, each in his own way without bothering about others. This is unsocial and has its own limitations. Secondly, men may seek their ends through conflicts with one another. One may clash with another or others to snatch things or objects which one wants from others. Finally, men may try to fulfil their ends through co-operation and mutual assistance. On the basis of this co-operative effort each individual will be contributing to the ends of his fellow-men. This co-operative pursuit has a reference to association. When a group or collection of individuals organizes itself expressly for the purpose of pursuing certain of its interests together on a co-operative pursuit, an association is said to be born.

Certain human functions are essential to the survival of the individual and the group. One essential function is control of the process of reproduction. A society



must ensure a continuous supply of societal members and must provide these new members with a nurturing environment.

Other essential functions include maintenance of law and order in society. All human societies have had to perform these functions. To make sure that reproduction proceeds in an orderly fashion and that infants are well taken care of until they are able to be independent, every society has some kind of family institution.

To make sure that every member can support himself, every society has some kind of economic institution. To make sure that the young of each generation are taught, what is important in their society, every society makes provision for supplying an education through the educational institution. Similarly, every society provides for some kind of religious experience through its religious institution. Ex: Education, Religion, Family and Entertainment.

Association : Meaning and Definition

An association is a group of people organized for a particular purpose or a limited number of purposes. To constitute an association there must be, firstly, a group of people; secondly, these people must be organized one, i.e., there must be certain rules for their conduct in the groups, and thirdly, they must have a common purpose of a specific nature to pursue. Thus, family, church, trade union, music club all are the instances of association.

Associations may be formed on several bases, for example, on the basis of duration, i.e. temporary or permanent like Flood Relief Association which is temporary and State which is permanent; or on the basis of power, i.e. sovereign like state, semi-sovereign like university and non-sovereign like club, or on the basis of function, i.e. biological like family, vocational like Trade Union or Teachers' Association, recreational like Tennis Club or Music Club, Philanthropic like charitable societies.

Some of the definitions of association are mentioned below:

- According to **MacIver**, "An organization deliberately formed for the collective pursuit of some interest or set of interest, which the members of it share, is termed as association.
- **Ginsberg** writes, "An association is a group of social beings related to one another by the fact that they possess or have instituted in common an organization with a view to securing specific end or specific ends."
- **G. D. H. Cole** says, "By an association I mean any group of persons pursuing a common purpose by a course of corporative action extending beyond a single act and for this purpose agreeing together upon certain methods of procedure, and laying down, in however, rudimentary a form, rule for common action."



Characteristics of Association

The basic characteristics of association are as follows:

i) It is a concrete form of Organization:

Association is a group of persons collected together with some particular aim. It is, thus, a concrete group which can be seen; while at work. Thus, in contrary to society' Association is a concrete form of organization of human beings.

ii) It is established:

Like community, association does not grow spontaneously. It has no natural growth and it does not grow itself. They are created by men to satisfy some motive or cause Rules and regulations are formed to run a particular kind of association and the member of the association run it on the basis of these rules and regulations.

There, we find a 'code of conduct' to be followed by the office-bearers and other members of the association. Moreover, their rules and regulations are subjected to drastic changes if the creator of association desire so.

iii) Its aim is determined:

No association is formed without any aim. First, there is the problem and the solution of which, becomes the aim of the association formed to solve such problems. For example, if it is a dramatic association, then its aim will naturally be to stage dramas and plays. No association can maintain its identity without any distinct aim and object.

iv) Followers of rules and regulations are the only members:

Every association floats on the ground of certain rules and regulations. It also contains code of conduct for the members. Those who follow the rules and regulations provided for and participate in the pursuit of the aim of the association are only called as the members of it.

Anyone acting contrary or disowning the obligations as members may be expelled from the membership; as per procedure framed for the purpose. For example, if the member of "political association" stops believing or start criticizing the policies of the association of which he has been, hitherto the supporter, shall cease to be the member.

It also becomes obligatory for every member to co-operate with other in the achievement of the goals of the association. Otherwise, what for else is he the member? What is his aim of joining such an association? The answer



is; it is useless for him to be the member of such an association, and it is equally useless for an association to keep such an individual on the membership list.

v) Its membership is voluntary:

An association is not an essential organization like State or society. Neither is it a natural organization in which every one's contribution can be asked for on natural grounds. Neither there is any common instinct among the persons based on common and unified ideology to become the member of a particular association. And, also there is no 'whips' from the heaven or State to every citizen to form an association and to become its member.

But the membership of an association is voluntary. A person becomes the members because he wants it and only because he likes it and if he grows a feeling of dislike he is absolutely free to disown any such association. "Mr. A is free to become the member of Arya Samaj and shift its memberships from Arya Samaj to Sanatan Dharam Samaj." There are no restrictions, no law and no suppression of Mr. A for his changes.

vi) An association exists for its aims and objects:

The life of an association is up to the achievement of the aim for which it has been created. The existence of association after his achievement of the aim becomes, immaterial and irrelevant. It becomes nominal and lifeless body of formalities only. "The aim is the soul of the association.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN ASSOCIATION AND COMMUNITY

An association is not a community but a group within a community. The differences between them are as follows:

Firstly, F. Tonnies remarks that community is a form of grouping which arise spontaneously or naturally and on a type of will which is deeply rooted in the entire personality. Association, on the other hand, is artificially formed, reflective or deliberate, resting on a type of will which consciously means to attain given ends. Community is organic, spontaneous, and creative but association is mechanical, artificial and held together by ties which belong to the world of rivalries, bargaining, and compromises.

Secondly, as used by **MacIver**, the community is "a focus of social life". It is regarded as integral or whole because it fulfils all the needs of its members. One's life may be lived wholly within it. An association, on the other hand, is "an organization of social life". It is regarded as partial because it is formed for the pursuit of specific interests or aims.



Thirdly, associations exist within community. An association is formed by the individuals for their own interests. There are a number of associations within a community. According to MacIver, association is not a community but an organisation within a community.

Fourthly, the membership of an association has a limited significance. Membership is voluntary. They withdraw their membership when they lose interest in it. But the community membership has a wider significance and compulsory. People are born into community but they choose their associations.

Lastly, community sentiment is necessary to constitute community without which the existence of community cannot be imagined. There can be no community without the sense of “we-feeling”. But sentiment is not at all a basic factor to form an association.

The distinctions between community and association were very much clear in primitive societies. But due to the rapid of urbanization, development of transportation and communication, it becomes very difficult to distinguish between them.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN ASSOCIATION AND SOCIETY:

The following are the points of differences between association and society:

Firstly, society is a system of social relationships which are invisible and intangible. It is the result of natural evolution and on the other hand association is a group of people. It is deliberately created or is artificial.

Secondly, society is older than association, it is in existence since man appeared on the earth while association arose at a later stage when man learn to organise himself for the pursuit of some particular purpose.

Thirdly, man cannot live without society. Society will exist as long as man exists. The membership of society is compulsory. On the other hand, man may live without being a member of any association at all. Association may be only transitory. The membership of association is voluntary.

Lastly, society comes into existence for the general wellbeing of the individuals. Hence, the aim of society is general. It is marked by both co-operation and conflict. It may be organised or unorganised. But association, on the other hand, is formed for the pursuit of some particular interest or interests. Hence, the aim of association is particular. It is based on co-operation. It must be organised.



Institution: Meaning and Definition

In Sociology, recognized usage and procedures are known as institutions. These come up as social expedients in the interest of harmony. They operate as the springs and shock absorbers in the social mechanism. It is the recognized and established rules, usage and traditions. There exist to discipline and control individual behaviour.

Institutions are the established ways of doing things. Institution is an abstract thing which refers to those rules and regulations, norms and values which come into being through social interaction and subsequently regulate the behaviour pattern of the members of the society. The established ways of doing things not only bring unity among the members of the society but also help the members to predict the behaviour of others.

Each institution has a member of folkways, mores and laws which all members of society are expected to follow to make their life in society easier. These folkways, mores and laws, vary from society to society because institutional forms themselves are different. All individuals follow these norms to some extent.

If each individual lives in his own way and did only his “own thing,” we would soon face utter chaos. Without some means of steady support, parents might abandon their infants or let them die, for we cannot be sure that parental love is an instinct and is not rather a responsibility taught by the family institution.

If there were no organized ways of obtaining a livelihood, competition and conflicts would be so fierce that many people would not survive. The law of the jungle would prevail if there were no institutions that maintained order. In other words, institutions enable societies to keep functioning. Institutions are the foundations or pillars of society.

Institutions are also interdependent. The family institution supports the other institutions and is in turn supported by them. The condition of the economy in our society determines whether we can obtain a good job and establish our family. The Government may decide whether we finish college or go into the armed services instead.

It is important to remember that institutions are simply, abstract concepts of organized habits and standardized ways of doing things. We cannot see institutions. What we can see are families, schools, banks, temples, hospitals etc. But these would be nothing but empty symbols without one vital ingredient: individual. The behaviour of individuals gives institutions their form and institutions give form to individual behaviour.

The concept of institution is an important one in the social sciences. Unfortunately, however, it has been used in different ways, and its meaning has become ambiguous.



Some writers use the term “institutions” when referring to large social groups, reserving the term “associations” for small groups. The distinction is then only one of size. But no one knows how large a group must be to become an institution; furthermore, used in this way, the term adds little to our understanding of social structure.

Some writers use “institution” for any constellation of cultural traits, collected around some functions or set of functions. Thus, for example, we might refer to all customs associated with teaching the young as the institution of education, to those related to worship as the institution of religion, and to those related to ruling in all of its forms as Government.

According to MacIver, “an institution is a set of formal, regular and established procedures, characteristic of a group or number of groups that perform a similar function within a society. In short, an institution is an organized way of doing something”

Barnes defines social institution as “the social structure and machinery through which human society organizes, directs and executes the multifarious activities required to satisfy human needs”. The simple language social institutions are the established ways through which the social interaction among the individuals are structured, regulated and controlled for the purpose of satisfying human needs.

Sumner said, “An institution consists of a concept (idea, notion, doctrine, interest) and a structure.” He added, “the structure is a framework or apparatus or perhaps only a number of functionaries set to cooperate in prescribed ways at a certain conjuncture. The structure holds the concept and furnishes instrumentalities for bringing it into the words of facts and action in a way to serve the interests of men in society.” Then he points out that “institutions begin in folkways, become customs and develop into mores by having attached to them a philosophy of welfare. They are then made more definite and specific with respect to the rules, prescribed acts and the apparatus to be used.” In his discussion Sumner implies that an institution has a degree of permanence. It should be added that it also in integrated with the other institutions of the society.

Chapin has given a definition of an institution in terms of the cultural concept. “A social institution is a functional configuration of culture patterns (including actions, ideas, attitudes and cultural equipment) which possesses certain permanence and which is intended to satisfy felt social needs.”

11.5 Features of Institutions

We can understand the concept of social institution more precisely through its characteristics which are discussed as under.

Cluster of Social Usage:



Institutions are composed of customs, mores, rules organized into a functioning unit. An institution is an organization of rules, and behaviour and is manifested through social activity and its material products. In short, the institution functions as a unit in the cultural system viewed as a whole.

Relative degree of Permanence:

Our beliefs and actions are not institutionalized until they are accepted by others over a period of time. Once these beliefs and behaviour get recognition they become the yardstick for evaluation of the beliefs and actions of others. In short, institutions have a degree of permanence.

It doesn't, however, mean that they don't change. As new ways of doing things appear and are found workable, they challenge stability and impel institutions towards change. Thus institutions function in accordance with cultural norms; however, in comparison with associations they have the greater degree of permanence.

Well-defined Objectives:

Institutions have fairly well defined objectives which are in conformity with the cultural norms. The institution of marriage has the objective of regulating the network of social relationships and the members of the society would consciously work for the attainment of the objective. For example, marriage in the same caste or class. Objective has to be differentiated from different functions to which the members may be unaware of e.g. the function of marriage or gratification of sex urge and to have children.

Cultural Objects of Utilitarian Value:

Cultural objects help in the attainment of institutional objectives. The cultural artefacts, beliefs and values system must help the institutions to attain their objectives. Cultural objects of utilitarian value which are used to accomplish the purposes of the institution are usually involved – buildings, tools, machinery, furniture and the like.

Their forms and uses become institutionalized. For example, a weapon in our culture is shaped strictly in accordance with our ideas of efficiency, with few decorations, and those are dictated by aesthetic considerations. But the weapons of the primitive are decorated with symbols which are supposed to ensure the help of powers in the effective use of the weapon.

Symbols are a Characteristic Feature of Institution:

A symbol may be defined as anything which depicts something else. Symbols may be either material or non-material in form. The institutions can have permanency, identity and solidarity if they have some symbols. The member of that institution feels quite closer to each other by sharing the common symbols.

Institution has Definite Traditions:



Each institution has a fairly definite tradition, oral or written. Such tradition refers to the purpose, attitude and the behaviour of the members. The tradition attempts to bring together individuals into functioning whole through established behaviour, common symbols and objectives. The traditions when become rigid, take the shape of the ritual.

Institutions are Transmitters of the Social Heritage:

Social institutions are the great conservers and transmitters of the social heritage. It is in the institutions that individual learns basic values of the life. The child initially plays a role of general receptivity in the basic and multi-functional institution of the family and in this way receives the largest share of the social heritage. In his initial helpless state, culture is passed onto him by his family.

As he learns to adapt himself to the expectations of his parents and siblings, he acquires many of the important elements of culture, which his elders have learned the same way in their time. He learns what is expected of him during the different stages of his life in the family. In this way, he is the personal conservator of an important part of the social heritage.

Other institutions play a more specialized role in the preservation of the social heritage. Next to the family, the school is the most important institutional mechanism engaged in preserving and handing on the knowledge, skills and techniques of the culture. In the field of sacred learning, the educational and transitive function is performed by religious institution. The very life of the institution depends upon the continuity of the generations, with each slowly taking its responsible part and gradually handing its accumulated knowledge on the next.

Institutions are Resistant to Social Change:

As patterned forms of behaviour, social institutions are more resistant to social change than behaviour where such uniformity and regularity do not apply. Institutional behaviour is by definition behaviour invested with social sanctions and structures to carry out these sanctions.

It is natural that behaviour of this kind would be more resistant to social change than behaviour that has neither sanctions nor structures. Social institutions are thus, by their very nature, conservative elements in the social structure. They tend to hold firmly to the patterned behaviour of the past and to resist basic modifications therein.

With the help of above description of the features of institutions we come to the conclusion that institutions are very essential for the purpose of having an established way of living and unity among the constituent members. Social



institutions are thus social patterns that establish the organized behaviour of human beings in the performance of basic social functions.

11.6 types of institution

Institutions may be classified in several ways. **Sumner** has classified institutions into two main types.

- i. **Crescive Institutions** are such as property, marriage and religion which originate from mores. These are unconscious in origin.
- ii. **Enacted institutions** such as credit institutions, business institutions which are consciously organized for definite purposes.

Ballard has distinguished basic institutions from subsidiary institutions.

The **Basic institutions** are those which are regarded as being necessary for the maintenance of social order in a given society i.e. the Family, the Economic institutions, the Religious Institutions, the Educational and the Political Institutions are regarded as basic institutions.

The **Subsidiary Institutions** are complexes of the type which are not regarded as quite so necessary for the maintenance of social order. For example, recreational ideals and activities belong to this class.

Chapin has classified institutions with respect to their generality or restrictions in the society in which they are found. The cultural elements involved in general institutions are usually “universals” while those involved in restricted institutions are usually “specialties.” Religion as such is a general institution, Hinduism is a restricted institution.

Ross mentions two types of institutions

- (i) Operative Institutions
- (ii) Regulative Institutions.

Operative Institutions are those of which the main function is the organization of patterns whose practice is actively necessary for the attainment of the objective e.g. the Institution of Industrialism.

Relative Institutions are organized for the control of customs and other types of behaviour which is not they parts of the regulative institution itself; the Legal Institution is an example.



11.7 functions of institution

There are various important functions of the institutions. Institutions have manifest functions which are easy to recognize as part of the professed objectives of the institution, and latent functions which are unintended and may be unrecognized or if recognized, regarded as by products, says Merton. The primary institutions function in manifest manner. The working is direct and clear. These, however, give rise to the secondary institutions. They function in latent manner.

Institutions Simplify Action for the Individual:

An institution organizes many aspects of behaviour into a unified pattern, thus making more or less automatic very complex and sometimes long-continued segments of social behaviour. The participant in an institution is accustomed to pass from one complicated set of behaviour traits to another towards a recognized goal.

One of the most highly integrated institutions in modern society is Military establishment. The soldiers learn to pass in orderly fashion from one type of behaviour to another without hesitation towards the objective of eliminating enemy.

Institutions Provide a Means of Social Control:

The institutions are the most important agencies through which the sanctions of the society are brought to bear on the individual. In other words, institutions play a central part in the process of social control. All major institutions, the family, the school, the religious institution, the State inculcate basic values and definitions to the young one. Thus most of the controls that deal with the basic concerns of life are transmitted through the social institutions.

Institutions Provide a Role and Status for Individuals:

Some people serve in groups devoted to public welfare. Others find a place in business, in the professions, in public service or in the home. Some shine in sports, others in literature or art. The institutions to a degree provide for the individual the opportunity for the development of his peculiar characteristics and determine his role and status.

Institutions Provide Order to the Society:

Besides helping individuals to satisfy their basic needs, institutions provide unity to the society. The law of the jungle would prevail if there were no institutions that maintained order. In other words, institutions enable societies to keep functioning.

Institutions act as Stimulant:

The institutions may stimulate certain individuals to react against it and formulate new patterns of behaviour. Sometimes individual feels the disharmony between the various institutions. He seeks some way out of the impasse. He must devise some way whereby his urges may be more fully satisfied. Hence, the institution functions in such cases to stimulate the individual to "break new roads to freedom."



Thus, institution provides the stimulus which starts a revolt against the established order.

Institutions act as Harmonizing Agencies in the Total Cultural Configuration:

The institutions are not independent, but are related to each other in a cultural system or configuration. Most of the institutions in the system tend to support one another and the configuration as a whole. Thus, courtship supports marriage which in turn supports the family, all three institutions being mutually interdependent.

Institutions Display Tension between Stability and Change:

Workable ways of doing things, repeated over and over, tend to become rigid forms. This is why mere habits become institutions. Looked at from this point of view, institutions tend to maintain stability and the status quo. But as new ways of doing things appear and are found workable, they challenge stability and impel institutions towards change.

Function of the institutions also changes, since they are not static. Like any other part of culture, they change through time, Alteration in one institution invariably reverberate throughout the institutional structure of society.

The expanding area of State activity, Industrialization and the urbanization has squeezed the function of the primary institutions in certain respects, while the Secondary institutions are on the expansion.



Differences between Institution and Association:

Sometimes confusion arises between institutions and associations because the same term, in a different context, may mean either one of the other. But there is a much more important distinction to be made between institutions and associations. The differences between institution and association are as follows:

Association represents human aspect. An association is a group of people organised for the pursuit of a specific purpose. Institutions, on the other hand, are the rules of procedure. Family is an association organised for the preparation of children, while marriage is its main institution. Political party is an institution, State is an association. Thus, association represents human aspect, while an institution is a social condition of conduct and behaviour.

- i) An institution is considered as a 'form of procedure'. It has no form and is abstract. On the other hand, association is considered as "an organised group". It is a group of people organised for the purpose of fulfilling a need or needs. It has form and it is concrete.
- ii) Institutions grow, while associations are formed deliberately. Association indicates membership, while institution indicates procedure of work.
- iii) Every association bears a particular name, while every institution is based on cultural symbol.
- iv) An institution is an organised procedure, an association is organised group.
- v) Institutions fulfil all the primary and basic need of people. But association is a group of people organised for the pursuit of some specific purposes.
- vi) The rules of an institution are based on informal mean of social control such as customs, traditions etc., while the laws of association are formed on the basis of formal means of social control.

In spite of the differences between the two, it may be noted that no institution can function without an association. Institutions are impossible without associations' one simple test can help us to understand the difference between institutions and associations. As association has a location. On the other hand an institution does not have a location. For example, a university can be located (in space); education cannot.

Conclusion

An association is established for the purpose of fulfilling some common but definite need or needs of the people. It is hence deliberately created. An association is not a community but an organisation within the community. Institutions are the established ways of doing things. Institution is an abstract thing which refers to those rules and regulations, norms and values which come into being through social interaction and subsequently regulate the behaviour pattern of the members of the society. The established ways of doing things not



only bring unity among the members of the society but also help the members to predict the behaviour of others.

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