

Paper name: Social and Political Geography

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Topic: Society: Meaning and Types

A **society** is a group of individuals involved in persistent social interaction, or a large social group sharing the same spatial or social territory, typically subject to the same political authority and dominant cultural expectations. Societies are characterized by patterns of relationships (social relations) between individuals who share a distinctive culture and institutions; a given society may be described as the sum total of such relationships among its constituent of members. In the social sciences, a larger society often exhibits stratification or dominance patterns in subgroups.

The different types of society are discussed below:

1. Foraging Societies

When human beings did not know how to dominate land and domesticate the animals, they had to live together, share work, use fresh water carefully and also migrate gregariously if anything went wrong, for example, if rivers dried up or they run out of animals. Usually men were hunters and women were gatherers in those societies and this caused matriarchy because men were always in danger during hunting and generally hunter members returned home -cave- with limited numbers. Labour in hunting and gathering societies was divided equally among the members because they were so small and mobile. There was not any political organization compared to understanding of today's diplomacy but their decision making body included every person who live in the society and equality conducted it. Certainly some foraging societies have their own tribal leaders but even the leader could not decide anything about tribe, everything in those societies was decided by all members. Their technologies were almost nothing in comparison with today but they could do what they needed, hunting big and small animals and using their hides in order to make cloths and gathering plants. Somehow they learned cultivation and they did not need to relocate anymore and they were divided into two parts as animal domesticators and plant cultivators. Both of them started to live in a certain domain.

2. Pastoral Societies

In this type of societies, approximately 12,000 years ago, people lived in a certain place and started to pasture animals for transportation and permanent food. Those types of societies still exist in Somalia, Ethiopia and North Africa countries where horticulture and manufacturing are not possible (*Samatar, 1989: 35*), hunter-gatherer society did domesticate animals because they realized that using animals' wool, milk, and fertility was more beneficial than hunting and wasting them. Consequently, not only trade had started, but also non-survival class had aroused such as the spiritual leaders, healers, traders, craftspeople. This new formation held society together in a certain domain and nomadic did not migrate so far, circulate around the pasture –primitive version of urban- and also difference of people came out for the first time; the nomadic and settled people. These are the first forms of people who live in rural and urban areas. Moreover, as they had to domesticate animals and use them, people need some tools and they invented what they needed. By this means technology developed rapidly. Trade improved easily and differences between nomadic and settled people grew up, consequently concept of social inequality started to appear compared to hunter-gatherer societies.

3. Horticultural Societies

Similar to pastoral societies, horticultural societies first appeared 10,000 to 12,000 years ago but these societies cultivated vegetables, fruits and plants. Depletion of the land's resources or dwindling water supplies, for instance, forced the people to leave. Since, they were mobile and small like hunter-gatherer societies; there was not a non-survival class and not trade as well. Division of labour continued, social structures did not develop and because of this, horticultural societies did not differ from foraging societies. They could not develop because agricultural materials invented about 8,000 years ago and they could not relocate rivers and water sources, their plants dried up. It is easily realized that why development of technology is so important and how it affects to shape societies, at the same time in the other parts of the world, people could invent and develop what they needed but for agriculture, technology was not enough.

4. Agricultural Societies

What cause horticultural societies to extinguish, were the late agricultural inventions around the 8,000's. With the new inventions, food supplies increased and people settled together.

Population grew up rapidly, villages came up and farmers, land owners and also warriors who protect farms in exchange for food against enemies aroused firstly. In these societies, social inequality solidly showed itself. A rigid caste system developed; slavery and ownership started to be too different concepts in those lives. Caste system developed the differentiation between the elite and agricultural labourers including slaves. Lands started to be so important, especially from ninth to fifteenth centuries, after the understanding of feudalism developed, every small land owners saw themselves as kings and owners of people who live for them as well. Concept of social classes spread through the Europe and not only land owners, but also religious leaders did not have to try to survive because workers had to give them everything that they had. Art, literature and philosophy were in religious leaders' hands because of this, time of feudalism is known as the dark ages. Due to existing monarchy, owners set up their own rules in their lands and each lord led the society with different rules and all of them depended on the King. This stratification prevented slaves from rebellion, workers were sweated and classes and inequalities in Europe continued until *the industrial revolution*.

5. Industrial Societies

With usage of the steam power, human beings started to use machines and advanced technologies to produce and distribute goods and services. Industrial revolution process began in Britain and then spread through Europe and to the rest of the world, industrial societies started to develop. The growth of technologies led to advances in farming techniques, so slavery lost its significance, economy developed quickly and understanding of social charity and governments' aids grew up. Feudal social classes removed but then societies divided into two parts as workers and non-workers. Karl Marx explained that non-workers are composing capitalist class and they hold all money and also set up rules. Considering this explanation, it is easily understood that non-workers are the same with non-survivors like lords and religious leaders in preindustrial societies. Thus, the industrial revolution brought only the slavery extinction and there is only worker class. Learning from previous mistakes rulers gave more opportunities for social mobility and also gave more rights than they gave to the slaves. With changes in social inequalities people started to want their rights and freedom as citizens and then kingdoms and autocracy lost their power on citizens. Democracy seemed more beneficial and necessary with French and American Revolutions, nationality became more important and so, citizens won their rights and classes existed as just

economic differences. Politically everyone seemed equal but, of course, inequalities between money owners and sellers of their own labours to survive, unstoppably increased. Villages lost their significance and towns became places where occupation opportunities were supplied.

6. Postindustrial Societies

The countries that the industrial revolution began, -Britain, France, the USA and Japan- now became the postindustrial countries. These countries are users of advance technologies like developed computers, satellites, microchips. In short, those societies are affected by the technologies at first hand. In comparison with horticultural societies, it can be easily understood that how technology is important to shape and characterize a society. “If you want to build new sociology, read about technology. If you want to build new technology, read about sociology. “If you want to since they are trailblazers of technologies, they are now holding all world’s economy in their hands. There is not rural and urban areas difference as well as people who are economically at the top and middle. According to common view, in those societies, there is neither social inequality nor classification. People won their own freedom by working hard, if there are any differences or discrimination, this is caused by capitalist and global world, not the governments’ mistakes. That is, rather than being driven by the factory production of goods, society is being shaped by the human mind, aided by computer technology. Although factories will always exist, the key to wealth and power seems to lie in the ability to generate, store, manipulate, and sell information. Sociologists speculate about the characteristics of postindustrial society in the near future. They predict increased levels of education and training, consumerism, availability of goods, and social mobility. While they hope for a decline in inequality as technical skills and “know-how” begins to determine class rather than the ownership of property, sociologists are also concerned about potential social divisions based on those who have appropriate education and those who do not. Sociologists believe society will become more concerned with the welfare of all members of society. They hope postindustrial society will be less characterized by social conflict, as everyone works together to solve society’s problems through science. (Andersen & Taylor, 2006: 118).
