

Preface

Sociology studies social aspects of human beings with scientific methods and being a science, it uses certain concepts-theories-approaches and methods to observe, examine and interpret social events.

Friends, do you want to understand sociology appropriately? Do you want to observe-understand events occurring in society? Then it is essential for you to obtain clear understanding of sociological concepts and theories-approaches. Earlier, you learnt about the concepts of community, social norms, social control etc. In this chapter we will learn about social processes and social change.

If you want to understand about society correctly then some questions should crop up in your mind, such as

- What is that which constitute society ?
- How do people form human culture ?
- How does system get complicated in society ?
- Why is mobility found in society ?
- How do people fulfil their needs ?

Definition of social process

MacIver : "Social process is the manner in which the relations of the members of a group are established and they acquire a distinctive character. Social process is ever changeable, i.e. relations continue to change".

Max Lerner : "Pace, flow of change and constant change in society are implicit in the root of social process. Through social processes, members of society realize their aims / purposes."

Social process is linked with cultural diversity and because of that each society has a different form. Take for example, tribal society or western society.

Social action

Through the concept of social action, which provides a sort of structure, any event or social change can be understood. All actions form a social world through certain meaning. The concept of social action was developed by Max Weber. According to him, sociology is a science which obtains a meaningful understanding of social action in a scientific manner. As conceived by him, meaningful action of an individual which is influenced by other individual is social action.



Social action

Social actions of people keep the society active. When an individual acts in a certain context, with focus on certain purpose, it becomes a social action. For example, the action or behaviour of the student who increases study hours in order to get better results in examination.

According to Parsons, "Goal-oriented action of an individual is social action which leads to the formation of social system". For example, one gets admission in college to obtain a degree. In brief, social action is influenced by others; it may be in the form of response, it may be in the context of some action, it may be in the context of other individual or individuals, and the actor of the action gives meaning to it.

Elements of social action

Parsons has mentioned four elements of social action which are as follows :

(1) Self or actor, (2) Goal or aim, (3) Conditions or circumstances and (4) Means

According to Parsons, in order to understand human behaviour, it is essential to understand these four elements as they jointly play their roles in any action of an individual.

(1) Self or actor : 'Self' is the main driving force of action. The actor of an action is not merely a human body but also a social entity. This individual has distinct characteristic of its own. An individual is a separate entity, having self and social consciousness.

'Self' can also be termed as personality or character. Personality of an individual is the center of actions and reactions. The actor uses the body for the purpose of performing action and through it, attains the aim. Self is the prompter of action and it is shaped by the society.

The main base of the behaviour of an actor depends on how s/he perceives other individuals, things and situations, what meaning s/he draws from them and therefore it is most essential to understand the self. Only through understanding the self we can know about subjective experiences of the actor, such as, how s/he perceives the world and what s/he thinks, etc. For example, how men perceive women.

(2) Goal or aim : Goal is individual's imagination or assumption. The goal has reference to the future, i.e. it doesn't exist in the present and is future state of affairs which can be known by imagination and realized through efforts and will. Each social action is goal oriented and the goal is an important element in the interpretation of individual's behaviour. Selection of goal is influenced by the values and norms of the actor's society. For example, A Jain or a Brahman youth will not work in a slaughter house. Goal continues to influence human thinking, practice and behaviour. An individual continues to do efforts to attain the goal. It is a driving force for human behaviour. Goal is both motive and incentive for an individual. For example, a student forgets everything and concentrates on studies to get first rank in the examination. In deciding individual's goal, personal values, needs, norms and socio-cultural values play an eminent role.

(3) Conditions or circumstances: Those social conditions which cannot be overcome are usually referred to as social obstacles. In other words, such conditions or circumstances come in the way of realization of a goal. As will and efforts are needed for the attainment of a goal, there is also a need to overcome the obstacles which come in the way of the realization of goals. For example, one has to spend three years in order to get a degree. An individual faces many obstacles in the way of goal attainment. These obstacles or conditions limit or restrict the field of an individual's activity. These conditions persist in or outside the human body. There are three types of obstacles in the way of goal attainment :

- (a) **Physical strength of the actor :** Wants to be a pilot but suffers from poor vision, deafness, etc.
- (b) **Geographical environment:** Wants to reach somewhere at stipulated time but interrupted by rainfall or cyclone
- (c) **Social environment :** A *dalit youth* wants to be a priest but the society doesn't sanction it

Thus, three types of conditions are to be faced for goal attainment. These conditions, sometimes, are also known as means. However, it depends upon the situation whether they are conditions or means.

(4) Means: Means are helpful in attaining the goal. They are also known as the aspects or factors of the situation over which the individual has control. Means are essential for goal attainment and they may have simple or complicated form. For example, one needs pen for writing and phone for communication. It is essential that means should be in accordance with the goal. Sometimes, more than one mean are needed to attain the goal. Sometimes, the actor needs to select a means from among many and if s/he commits an error in selection of means, goal is not attained. According to situation, means may become the object to be attained. What is a means for one may be a condition for another.

All these four elements are necessary for action. Absence of any one of these will not let social action happen.

Social Interaction

In a society, people link with each other through multiple forms of relationships, such as shopkeeper-customer, lord-servant, teacher-student, etc. This interweaving of multiple social relations leads to the formation of society. In mutual social relations, a certain pattern or regular mode of mutual interaction persists. Knowledge about the major forms of interaction which is expressed through social relations is very important for the understanding of society.

The concept of social interaction can be understood only in the context of social action. Social interaction can be referred to as mutual social action between two or more than two persons. Conscious and meaningful mutual action between two individuals, between individual and group or between two groups is social interaction. Examples are conversation between two friends, discussion of question-answer between teacher and students.

Explaining social interaction, Davis mentions that, 'Contact is necessary for social interaction and for contact physical and sensorial mediums are required'. That is, in social interaction, individuals or groups engaged in mutual action use some medium for their action. This medium can be language, speech, gesture, expression, any type of body language etc. In addition, mediums such as radio, TV, newspapers, films and social media can also be used. However, such mediums should have social meaning.

Definition of social interaction : According to Sorokin, "Interaction is the process in which one party influences the overt behaviour or state of mind of other party".



Social interaction

On the basis of above discussion, it can be said : "Social interaction is such a process in which two or more individuals or groups, directly or indirectly, through mediums of communication, influence the covert or overt behaviour of each other". Examples are a teacher teaching the students or two individuals engaged in a clash.

Features of social interaction : Knowledge about features of social interaction will make the understanding of social interaction more clear. They are as follows :

(1) Two or more than two parties, (2) Medium and (3) Mutual impact

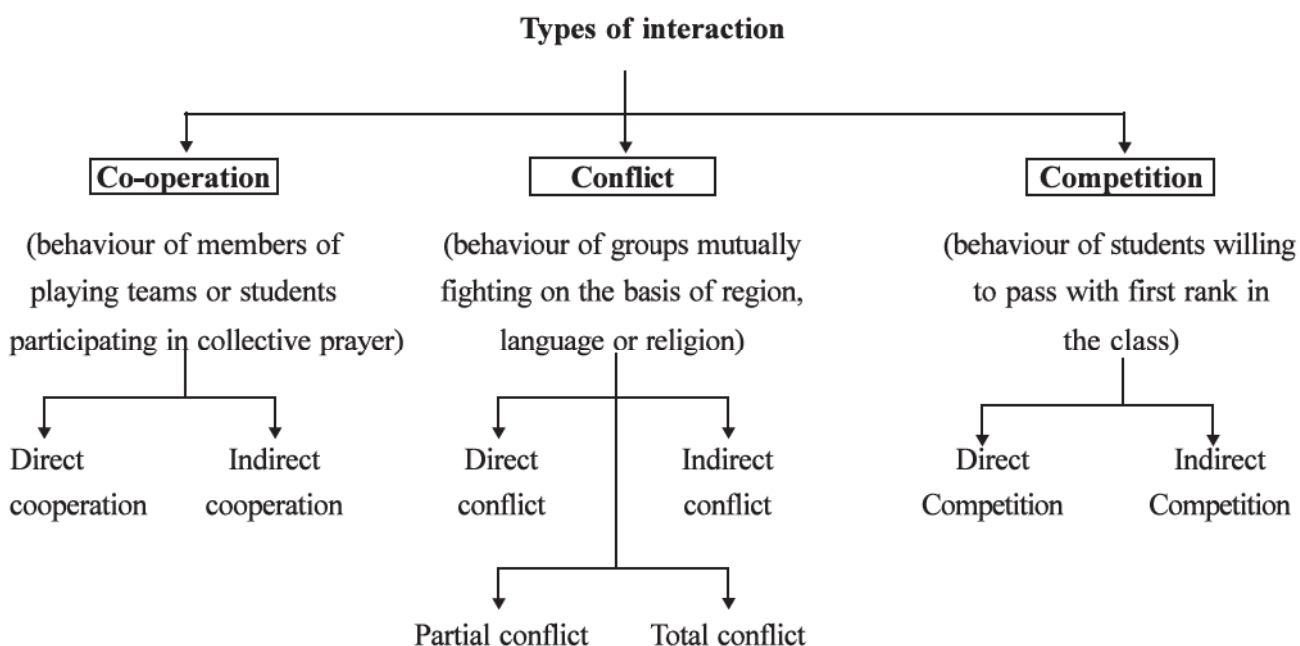
(1) Two or more than two parties : Social interaction doesn't occur with one person. It requires at least two persons or groups. Example is the interaction between husband and wife. It is between two individuals. Interaction between teacher and students or between writer and readers is interaction between individual and group. Action between two cricket teams is an interaction between two groups. Interaction can occur face to face or directly and also indirectly with those who live at distant places. In the latter, means of communication are used.

(2) Medium : Mere presence of two parties doesn't lead to interaction as it also requires some medium to create mutual impact. Medium can include any form of gesture, language or pictures. Example is action and reaction that occur between deaf and dumb individuals. The mediums used in interaction should contain social meaning. The meaning, sentiment and emotion expressed by mediums should be clear to all. Examples are national flag, Red Cross etc.

(3) Mutual impact : Social interaction is a process that creates impact and this impact is created through speech, language, books, TV, films etc. on individuals or groups. This impact may be in form of overt behaviour. There may also be internal impact in terms of attitude, belief, expectation, interest etc. For example, when a student bows to his teacher, the latter feels good. This is an internal impact.

In brief, interaction is reciprocal in nature; it is a process of mutual stimulation and is inter-dependent.

Types of social interaction



Davis has mentioned three types of social interaction: (1) Cooperation, (2) Competition and (3) Conflict

(1) Cooperation : Group or social life is not possible without cooperation. It is a universal process of human life in which all work together for the achievement of common goal. Example is players of a hockey team. Cooperation is also reflected when the number of objects or the means required is lesser and people jointly use that object or means, cooperating each other. Example is joint use of a vehicle.

Man needs help of others in fulfilling his multiple needs as he cannot do it alone. Cooperation emerges from such a situation. Patterns of behaviour of helping in a reciprocal way are found in all groups or societies. These patterns of behaviour are shaped through the process of socialization. Therefore, cooperation is a learned behaviour.

Definition : According to Fair Child, "Cooperation is the process by which the individuals or groups combine their efforts, in an organized way, for the attainment of common objective".

You can see in the following picture that all persons are engaged in making a world record holder *jalebi* (a kind of sweet).



Cooperation

MacIver has mentioned two types of cooperation :

(a) Direct cooperation : When individuals and groups cooperate directly with each other for the attainment of goal, it is called direct cooperation. It involves direct and joint efforts for the attainment of goal. Examples are children playing any game together, or labourers collectively lifting some heavy object. Direct cooperation lies at the center in primary groups. Direct cooperation also provides social and mental satisfaction to individuals and groups involved.

(b) Indirect cooperation : When two or more than two groups, for the achievement of common

goal, help each other indirectly, it is called indirect cooperation. In this type of cooperation, different individuals perform different activities. These activities are divided according to specialization. For example, in a school teacher teaches, peon rings the bell, the principal takes care of administrative work.

Indirect cooperation is found among distant groups. It has become a characteristic of modern industrial society. It, however, leads to the feeling of loneliness and sometimes creates numerous mental problems.

(2) Competition: Competition is such a form of interaction in which two or more than two groups contest to attain the common goal earlier than each other. Both the groups make attempts to attain the goal and deprive each other of the same. For example, students compete to attain first rank in the board examination. The second example, as shown in following picture, is of race competitors who are participating in a race competition with goal in mind. Competition emerges when there are many individuals or groups who want to attain the goal or reward which is in limited number. Competition is a sophisticated form of conflict. There are rules for competition and if they are broken competition results in conflict. Example is candidates contesting for election.

According to Fair Child, "Competition means efforts for use or possession of objects which are in short supply". Example is teams playing for the world cup.



Competition

Types of competition :

(a) Direct competition : In direct competition, contestants have face to face contact, physical proximity, awareness about the presence of rivals and they make attempts, according to the rules, to attain the goal earlier than each other. Examples are competition for attaining first rank in the class, attaining rank in a race competition.

(b) Indirect competition : Contrary to above, in indirect competition, there is no face to face contact with rival candidates, no mutual familiarity, and efforts are made to attain the goal earlier than others. Examples are market competition, candidates appearing in exam for bank-job.

Efforts made by people to earn more prestige, popularity or higher status are example of indirect competition.

(3) Conflict : In conflict also, two or more than two groups make attempts to attain the common goal but in this process they go to the extent of injuring or destroying each other to keep each other deprived of goal or to control each other. Example is battle of election for gaining authority.

According to MacIver and Page, "When people contest with each other for the attainment of the same or scarce goal and cause harm to each other that is known as social conflict".

In brief, in conflict, two groups act against each other to attain the common goal.



Conflict

Types of Conflict :

(a) Direct and indirect conflict : When, for the attainment of common goal, two groups create obstacles for each other and try to destroy each other by the use of physical strength that is known as direct conflict. Examples are two individuals fighting or abusing each other or two political parties criticizing each other.

When individuals or groups create obstacles for each other in an indirect way for the attainment of common goal, it is known as indirect conflict. Examples are cold war and the battle of propaganda between two companies.

(b) Partial and total conflict : When two groups act against each other for the attainment of common goal even if there is a possibility of an agreement or consent, it is known as partial conflict. Example is the conflict between owners and labourers which can be avoided by an agreement.

When the two groups involved in conflict attempt to destroy each other, it is known as total conflict. In this type, there is no possibility of agreement or consent. Example is the war between two nations. There can be direct or indirect, partial or total, individual or group conflict or internal or external conflict.

(c) Individual and group conflict : Conflict between two individuals can be termed as individual conflict like that between husband and wife or between two friends.

When two groups are involved in conflict, it is group conflict. Example is conflict between two castes. Both the above conflicts can have the form of direct or indirect or partial or total conflict.

(d) Internal and external conflict : Internal conflict refers to the conflict which occurs among the members of a group. For example, the conflict that occurs between father and son. When one group is in conflict with other group, it is external conflict. Example is communal clash.

There may be variation in the magnitude and intensity of direct conflict and its form may range from noncooperation or not being on speaking terms to harming each other.

Social Mobility

Social mobility indicates change in social status of an individual or group in the social hierarchy.

Each society witnesses changes in relation to population, economic and political situations, social area etc and it becomes necessary for it to adapt to these changes for survival. The process of social mobility emerges from here.

Sociologists study social mobility to estimate the openness of the social structure. Social mobility indicates existence and absence of opportunities in a society. Social mobility is a movement from one social status to other.

Definition of social mobility

According to Sorokin, "Shifting of an individual, social object or a value from one social position to other is social mobility".

Kimball Young mentions, "Social mobility is upward or downward movement in status based on class, reputation or prestige".

In brief, social mobility is a situation of upward or downward change which takes the individual or the group from one level of the hierarchy to other.

Features of social mobility

(1) Universality : Social mobility is universal, found in each hierarchical society, whether it is class-based or caste-based. Though Indian society has a caste-based hierarchy, mobility is visible. Change in women's status in all societies of the world is an example of universal social mobility. In brief, the process of social mobility is universal.

(2) Variation in magnitude: The magnitude or the proportion of social mobility is not similar in all the societies, nor it is similar in a society for all the time. For example, the pace of social mobility was slower in the medieval period as compared to the present time. More social mobility is found in class-based society than in caste-based society. Thus, there is a variation in magnitude of social mobility according to society and time.

(3) Process indicating the change in status : Social mobility indicates upward or downward change in status or position of an individual or a group. In brief, it is a process that indicates upward or downward circulation of individuals or groups.

Types of social mobility

(1) Horizontal mobility : According to Broom and Selznick, "Horizontal mobility is shifting from one place to other having similar status". There is a change in the position of individual or the group with no change in their status.

For example, a teacher who leaves one school and joins the other school. In horizontal mobility, place or position of an individual or a group changes but there is no notable difference in their prestige, income or authority. Other example is a transfer of an IAS officer from health department to education department. The mobility within a caste visible in India is an example of horizontal mobility.

(2) Vertical mobility : Vertical mobility takes place when with the change in place or position of an individual or a group their status is also changed. For example, a clerk becomes a principal. In vertical mobility there is a considerable change in prestige, income and authority.

According to the direction, there are two sub-types of vertical mobility: (a) Upward vertical mobility and (b) Downward vertical mobility.

a. Upward vertical mobility : If an individual or a group shifts to a higher status, it is upward vertical mobility. This type has two forms:

(I) Individual oriented upward vertical mobility : This happens when an individual of lower status shifts to a higher status. For example, a peon becomes a clerk.

(II) Group oriented upward vertical mobility : This takes place when a group of lower status shifts to a higher status. In this type of mobility the whole group gets a higher status. For example, the status of heroes and heroines in the present time.

b. Downward vertical mobility : This is contrary to upward vertical mobility, where an individual or a group shifts to lower status. In other words, individual or group is relegated to lower status. This type also has two forms:

(I) Individual oriented downward vertical mobility : This happens when an individual shifts from a higher status to a lower status. For example, a millionaire becomes a beggar or an industrialist becomes a poor man.

(II) Group oriented downward vertical mobility : This takes place when a group shifts from a higher status to a lower status. Status of the whole group comes down. For example, compared to earlier time, the position and the influence of Brahmins have declined nowadays.

Thus, no society is free of social mobility. Vertical and horizontal mobility exists in all societies.

Social Change

Man always longs for change. Not only human society, even nature is not stable. The process of change continues endlessly. Continuity and change are features of society and each society has been passing through the process of change. No society is totally static. Social change is referred to as structural changes such as changes in relations between individuals, resultant group structure, status and role, norms, and values etc. Society needs to adapt to the changing situations which ultimately leads to social change. For example, present political system.

Social change, a characteristic of each society, is a fact and indicates towards the pattern of change in society or group life. However, we find variation in magnitude and form of social change. According to Murray, the change in modern time has been most rapid. Social change leads to new meanings and values and is an event of human experience and feeling.

Definition of social change

According to Davis, "Social change means change in social organization i.e. its social structure and function". For example, change in type of family, from joint to nuclear.

MacIver and Page refer to social change as 'changes in the fabric of social relations'. For example, changes that take place in the relation between husband and wife.

Johnson conceives of social change as 'changes occurring in social structure and values, beliefs and attitudes'. Example is the spread of secular values in India.

Features of social change : Understanding of features of social change will make its meaning clearer. They are described below:

(1) Social change is a social process : The process of social change continues in a persistent manner and it is an inherent characteristic of all societies. Social interactions, relations emerging from them and the resultant social system, all witness change. Thus, social change is a process.

(2) Social change is a universal process : Change is an inherent characteristic of each society. Social change is not confined to any particular society but it is found in all societies, whether it is a tribal society or a developed one. For example, changes occurred in ancient and present time.

(3) Social change indicates change in social structure : It indicates change in different parts of the social structure such as aims, norms, status and role, values etc. For example, in India, imperial system changed to democratic system.

(4) Social change indicates change in functions : Social change indicates changes in functions of social system also. For example, earlier, family used to take care of the recreation of its members. Now it is TV and films which carry out this function. Another example is that now the state not only safeguards its citizens, but also carries out welfare activities for them.

(5) Social change is both a self generated and planned process : As we know, change is an inherent characteristic of society and therefore it is a self generated process. Change emerges from the system's efforts to adapt to the changed situation. These changes are natural and so they are self generated. However, in modern society, there have been efforts to form a desired society and bring about desired changes, through community development programmes which are implemented with intellect and purpose. This is known as planned development. Thus change is a self generated and planned process. For example, population policies for population control and marriage age fixed at 18 years for a girl and 21 years for a boy.

Forms of social change

In order to understand social change and its direction, it is essential to know about its forms, features, forms of mutual relations and the results that emerge from their expression.

(1) Evolutionary or linear change : The change which occurs constantly in one direction and in almost straight but up going line is known as evolutionary or linear change. Human societies evolve in a linear way. This includes changes which occur due to mechanical and scientific developments. In such kind of changes constant development appears to move upward in a straight line. For example, it can be shown as primitive society turning into agricultural society and then industrial society and then turning into today's information society.

(2) Fluctuating form of change : Change that appears to move in one direction fluctuating up and down but eventually leading to development is known as fluctuating form of change.

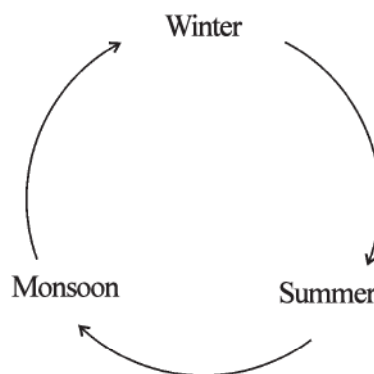
For example, earlier when kings and kingdoms existed in India, certain castes held higher economic status. However, over time, due to increased demand of education and skill their status lowered. But then they again came up in the social hierarchy by acquiring education, skill, industrial entrepreneurship etc. Thus, we find fluctuation in society. Boom and recession in society are its examples.

(3) Cyclical form of change : The change that moves in a cyclical direction, reaches where it starts from, is known as cyclical change. It is also equated with the swing of waves of water which eventually comes back to their original position. Both in the nature and the society there are many events which occur like this. They proceed further on the same surface and are not upward moving. For example, the cycle of seasons.

This also includes changes occurring in fashion and values. Many thinkers include in this the origin, development and decay of human culture. In brief, this form of change persists like hands of a clock.

Like other issues of sociology, social processes and social change are also important. We gained understanding about social processes and social action which will be useful to you in understanding the human behaviour. We also explained social interaction in the forms of cooperation, competition and conflict which you experience in your daily life and also witness them in your surroundings. You also got acquainted with the concept of social mobility which indicates the extent of openness of a society and the persistent process of social change.

After learning about all above mentioned processes, it would be clear to you how important are they in the formation and continuation of society. In the next chapter, we will learn about culture and socialization and how they affect the movement of change in social processes.



Exercises

1. Answer the following questions in detail :

- (1) Explain the elements of social action.
- (2) Specify the features of social interaction.
- (3) Discuss cooperation as a form of social interaction.
- (4) Explain the types of social mobility.
- (5) Describe the features of social change.

2. Answer the following questions concisely :

- (1) Competition as a form of social interaction
- (2) Conflict as a form of social interaction
- (3) Features of social mobility
- (4) Forms of social change

3. Answer the following questions in short :

- (1) Define social process.
- (2) Specify the concept of social action.
- (3) Define social interaction.
- (4) What is meant by social mobility ?
- (4) What is social change ?

4. Answer the following questions in one sentence :

- (1) Which action is mentioned as social action by Parsons ?
- (2) What is necessary for social interaction ?

- (3) What is 'self' ?
- (4) What is goal ?
- (5) What is condition ?
- (6) What is known as direct and indirect competition ?
- (7) What is horizontal mobility ?
- (8) What is meant by vertical mobility ?
- (9) Which issues are important in determining the goal ?

5. Choose the right option from the following and write :

- (1) What makes the society alive and active ?
 (a) Group (b) Social process (c) Social relations (d) Culture
- (2) What emerges from social interaction ?
 (a) Employment (b) Culture
 (c) Social relations (d) None of the three
- (3) With which diversity is social process linked ?
 (a) Cultural (b) Biological (c) Geographical (d) None
- (4) Which is the driving force for human behaviour ?
 (a) Society (b) Means (c) Goal (d) None
- (5) In which group is direct cooperation at the center ?
 (a) Primary (b) Secondary (c) Community (d) None
- (6) What does the process of social mobility indicate ?
 (a) Stability (b) Obstacle (c) Change of place (d) None
- (7) What needs to be studied to know the openness of social structure ?
 (a) Mobility (b) Socialization (c) Culture (d) None

Activity

- Make a list of social processes appeared in this textbook of sociology.
- Make a chart of cultural diversity visible in the society.
- Discuss the examples of different activities for the attainment of educational goal in student life.
- Examine the concepts of status and role through daily interactions.
- Make a list of roles you play in the society.
- Visit a cooperative activity operating in your area.
- Have a group discussion on advantages and disadvantages of competition.
- Prepare an album of photos, which appear in newspapers, explaining the concept of social change.
- Have a group discussion on advantages and disadvantages of changes that have occurred in modern time.

