

Economy, Polity and Religion

Lesson No.	Title	Activity
15	Economy, Polity and Religion	Make a list of changes in religion that you perceive due to influence in contemporary times

Summary

All societies have four basic institutions such as kinship, economy, polity and religion. As societies evolve their institutions also get differentiated. Not only do they multiply in number but also become more and more specialized and complex.

Concepts of Economy, Polity and Religion

- **Economy:** Economy is concerned with production, exchange, distribution and consumption of goods and services. None of the activities in the economy are carried out in isolation. Economic institution is one which is concerned with the social relations that are built in the systems of production, distribution, exchange and consumption.
- **Polity:** Polity is concerned with the distribution of power in society. From a sociological perspective, power is the ability of a person to exercise his will on others and obtain compliance. It is the ability to take decision for one and for others. For example the head of the household exercises power. Political power is closely connected with governance. Political power cuts across different institutions and groups. It runs the government, which takes major decision about society and affairs.
- **Religion:** Religion is a universal phenomenon. In every religion, there is a certain feeling of reciprocal relationship between man and supernatural power. This feeling is expressed through rituals.

Characteristics of Economic Organization

Division of Labour: Societies differ in terms of complexity and diversity of division of labour. In advanced societies, there is maximum division of labour and role specialization as compared to simple societies. Tribal and peasant societies have a simple division of labour meaning near absence of specialization.

Industrial Economy: Sociologists divide an industrial economy into three sectors: the primary, secondary and tertiary sectors.

Primary Sector

- Includes the collection or extraction of natural resources
- Consists of agriculture, mining, forestry and fishing etc.

Secondary Sector

- concerned with the conversion of raw materials into manufactured goods.

Tertiary Sector

- includes occupations that offer services to others.
- Medicine, teaching and managerial and clerical jobs are examples

Types of Economic System

There are two types of economic system: Food collection and food production.

Food Collection

- ⑩ Food collection may be defined as deriving food from naturally occurring resources, such as wild animals and plants. At one time, the entire society consisted of food collectors.
- Ex Bushmen of South Africa's Kalahari Desert, Australian tribes, Eskimos and tribes in Andaman Islands

Food Production

- Food production (3 Types of food production systems)
- (a) Horticulture
- (b) Intensive agriculture
- (c) Pastoralism

Economic Systems of Simple and Complex Societies

- There are two broad types of societies-Simple societies (subsistence-oriented) and Complex societies (market-oriented). In simple societies, production is mainly for consumption where as in complex societies; the processes of production and distribution are centred in the market and are complex in nature.
- Exchange in primitive society does not have the same role as economic flow in modern industrial society. The three principles of exchange are: Reciprocity, Redistribution and Market. Reciprocity is an exchange relationship between people who are placed at an equal level in their society and redistribution is a relationship between people who are unequally placed. Market has two aspects Market site (assembly for buying and selling) and Market principle (forces of demand and supply)
- Market predominantly performs social, rather than economic functions in simple societies where as in complex societies market is essentially an economic institution.
- Simple societies have the barter system, that is, a type of exchange in the absence of money, where goods are exchanged for goods.

Economic Development

- A progressive change in economy is called economic development.

The basic goals of economic development are :

- to destroy or reduce to the maximum the phenomenon of hunger and scarcity
- to make people self-reliant

To achieve these two goals, community in which change is to be brought must be involved

Political System

- Political institution refers to the distribution of power, authority and influence within a society. Power refers to the ability of a person to exercise his will on the others and obtain compliance. Power is an aspect of social relationship. An individual or group do not hold power in isolation. They hold in relation to others and therefore, it is called as social power.

Power and Authority: Power is different from authority. What distinguishes these two is legitimacy. The meaning of legitimacy is 'rightfulness', whether the individual has been given the right to exercise power. When the exercise of power is legitimate, it is termed as authority.

Types of Authority: There are three types of authority distinguished by their respective sources of legitimacy.

Traditional authority: When legitimacy is derived from the existing conventions and customs, it is called traditional authority.

Rational legal authority: Authority in the system is according to legal order. The persons do not matter but it is the legal system that demands obedience on the part of people, for example, a Bureaucracy.

Charismatic authority: Charisma means personal charisma, personal qualities. Here a person has authority on the basis of personal qualities. A charismatic leader comes into existence if s/he is able to tackle the problems faced by the society immediately. This way they can win the support or passive obedience of many people. Eg. chairman Mao Zedong of

Religion

- Religion is a universal phenomenon. In every religion, there is a certain feeling of reciprocal relationship between man and supernatural power. This feeling is expressed through rituals. One of the most popular definitions of religion is given by Emile Durkheim – it is “a unified system of beliefs and practices related to sacred things, that is to say, ‘things are set apart from the ordinary and are forbidden’.
- Religion is based on this division – of sacred and profane. Both these categories reflect the sort of attitudes human beings have towards these entities. Sacred is superior in dignity and express a superior seriousness
- Two main forms of religion are found in simple societies. One is animism and other is totemism. Animism is defined as belief in the existence of soul.
- The oldest of all great religions is Hinduism, the principal beliefs of which date back some 6000 years.
- There are various factors that led to change religion in its form such as reduction in rituals, the hold of religion on social life has become weak due to secularisation and coexistence of different religions

Evaluate Yourself

1. Compare the market in simple and complex societies.
2. State different goals of economic development.
3. Describe how power is different from authority?
4. List out different functions and dysfunctions of religion.