UNIT 5   BASIC CONCEPTS OF SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

Contents

5.0   OBJECTIVES

In Unit 2, you have gone through some of the important basic concepts relevant for understanding human behaviour. In this unit, we will present to you a general introduction to the basic concepts of social psychology. After its completion you may be able to understand:

● nature and scope of social psychology;

● leadership and role of a leader in a group;

● crowd and its characteristics;

● mob and mob psychology;

● public opinion: its impact and relevance to society;

● propaganda: methods and implications; and

● relevance and importance of social psychology for social workers.

5.1   INTRODUCTION

Social psychology attempts to understand an individual's thoughts and behaviour in interaction with others.

Social psychologists focus on factors that shape the actions and thoughts of the individual human being within different social settings. They are mainly

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concerned with understanding the wide range of conditions and circumstances that shape the social behaviour and thought of individuals, their actions, feelings, beliefs, memories and influences with respect to other persons. A large number of different factors play an important role in this regard. Factors influencing and responsible for social interaction and behaviour may be either biological, cognitive, ecological, and cultural characteristics and behaviour patterns of other people. Social psychologists study all these aspects carefully with the help of different tools and techniques of modern scientific research methodology, draw inferences from their findings and develop theories pertaining to them.

5.2   NATURE AND SCOPE OF SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

In order to understand the rel vance and importance of social psychology for social workers one should know the nature and scope of social psychology. Social psychology has been defined by different social psychologists and their definitions clarify its nature and scope. Let us go through some of the definitions of social psychology.

i)   Social Psychology may be broadly defined as a science of the behaviour of the individual in society (Krech D. and Richard Crutchfield).

ii)   The primary concern of the sociology is group behaviour, and that of social psychology is the behaviour of the individual in the group situation (Otto Klienberg)

iii) Social psychology is the scientific field that seeks to understand the nature and causes of individual behaviour and thoughts in social situations (Rober Barons and Donn Byrne).

iv)   Social psychology is the scientific study of the influence process. It attempts to understand, explain and predict how the presence of another person, a group of people and environmental factors influence a person's thoughts and behaviour (G.W. Allport)

Social psychology is the study of persons in their interactions with one another with reference to the effects of this interplay on the individual's thoughts, feelings, emotions and habits. Social psychology is concerned with the ways in which a person's conduct and dispositions are influenced by the conduct and dispositions of other people. Social psychology is a branch of psychology, , which aims at understanding one's thinking and interaction with others. It describes factors that shape and formulate the actions and thoughts of indidividuals within different social settings.

Social psychologists are mainly concerned with understanding the wide range of situations that structure the social behaviour and thoughts of individuals - their actions, feelings, habits, memories and influence with respect to other persons. A number of different factors play a vital role in this regard. Factors affecting social interaction may be divided in to five categories.

i)   The actions and characteristics of others — what others say and do;

ii)   Basic cognitive processes such as memory and reasoning that underline our thoughts, ideas and judgments about others;

iii) Ecological variables — direct and indirect influences of the physical environment such as temperature, privacy, crowding and related factors;

iv) The cultural context in which social behaviour and thought occur and

v) Biological factors and processes that are relevant to social behaviour, including certain aspects of our genetic inheritance[1].

Let us try to clarify the nature and importance of the above mentioned factors in shaping social thought and social behaviour.

● Suppose you are talking to a friend and somebody else suddenly joins you both;

● You are in a line to purchase an application form for admission and suddenly another person cuts into line in front of you;

● After your speech, some one in the audience remarks 'it was a wonderful speech'.

Would these actions of others influence your behaviour and thought? You will find that these actions of other people have a definite impact on your thought and behaviour and therefore it is a truth that quite often we feel affected by the actions of other persons. We are also quite often influenced by the visible characteristics and appearance of others.

Cognitive processes like memory, inference and judgment etc. should be carefully considered in order to understand aspects of social behaviour.

For example, we feel irritated when a friend comes late and says only 'sorry' for it. But if the friend explains the reason for coming late, we become less annoyed and cool down. If he is a habitual latecomer we may not believe his explanation. But if the friend comes late for the first time, we may accept his explanation. Your reaction in this situation is dependent on your memory pertaining to your friend's past behaviour and involves your inferences concerning the explanation.

Ecological variables and physical environment also influence our thoughts and behaviour. Studies show that in full moonlight people are more prone to be wild and impulsive than at other times; in hot and steamy weather we become more aggressive and irritated than in cool and comfortable weather. A noisy, polluted and crowded environment impacts on our performance and social behaviour. Physical environment influences our feelings, emotions, thoughts and behaviour.

Social and cultural norms and taboos strongly influence our behaviour and thought. choice of a partner for marriage, one's ideas on number of issues and the expression of emotional reactions depend on socio-cultural factors. Cultural factors have become more significant and important for modern social psychologists.

Biological processes and genetic factors influence our social behaviour. Many social psychologists believe that our performances, behaviour, emotional reactions, values and attitudes are influenced by our biological inheritance. Social psychologists assume that every aspect of social behaviour is open to change. For example, millions of people have inherited poor vision problem but they correct this by the use of lenses.

5.3 LEADERSHIP AND ROLE OF A LEADER IN A GROUP

Leadership is a social phenomenon that exists throughout the world. It is seen in one form or the other in every sphere of life. Leadership is a process of influencing the activities of the group for the achievement of set organizational targets. The group member who exerts more positive influence over others is a leader. Any effort of a group member to influence the behaviour of one or more group members is an attempt at leadership. The member of the group who is more open to risky options, influences other members and hence performs leadership functions. The term leadership has three main attributes:

i) An attribute of position,

ii) A characteristic of a person,

iii) A category of behaviour.

These refer to a person who possesses certain qualities, occupies a certain position and behaves in a certain way. An individual who is in a leadership position tries to influence the group and the group, in turn, allows itself to be influenced by him. Apart from influencing the group members, a leader communicates with other groups on behalf of his group and serves as a channel of information. Leadership is a behaviour that affects the behaviour of other people more than their behaviour affects that of the leader. Some common **behavioural characteristics** of leaders are as follows:

i) *Intelligence* — Quite often a leader whether he has been nominated or elected is more intelligent than a common group member,

ii) *Dominance* — A leader dominates others and influences members of the group.

iii) *Adjustment* — A leader is more capable than others in adjusting with the group he leads.

iv) *Non-conformity* — A leader is comparatively more independent and free of group pressures and is able to use his ability to take decisions without

depending on others. He is more concerned with group solidarity than
others. While expressing non-conforming ideas and behaviour, the leader
maintains the cohesiveness of the group.

v) *Social distance* — The leader avoids closeness and intimacy with group
members. He maintains social and psychological distance from other
members of the group. This is normally found in work group situation.

vi) *Ability to inspire others* — This is considered an innate quality, a kind of
an internal 'charisma' and not something that can be learnt.

vii) *Problem-solving capacity* — The leader has the patience and ability to
look at the problem from various angles and resolve it.

viii) *Emotional maturity* — Emotional stability and maturity are significant
ingredients of an effective leadership. Emotional maturity is reflected in a
stable adjustment with life situations and a calm, cool and calculated
reaction to unfavourable circumstances. A leader accepts both success
and failure in a balanced manner. The leader is a self-confident, open-
minded and rational person and functions calmly even when there are
differences and opposition. He enjoys a balanced outlook towards life
and the world. The leader is a warm, sensitive and kind person without
malice.

(ix) *Ability to understand human behaviour* — The leader understands the
needs, desires and behaviour of his group members and respects them as
individuals. He supports the emotions and feelings of the group members
and obstructs their ego-threatening actions.

x) *Verbal assertiveness* — The leader is a good orator and confident of his
views and opinions. He communicates his opinions honestly and in a
straightforward manner.

xi) *Willingness to take risks* — A good leader accepts new challenges. He
bears full responsibility for failure and does not blame others for it. He is
able to overcome frustration and defeat.

xii) **Dedication to organisational goals** — The leader is a person dedicated
and committed to the objectives and goals of the organisation. He makes
his followers aware of the organizational mission and objectives and
motivates them to work for attaining the same.

xiii) *Compromise* — Resolving differences is an important function of
leadership. The leader achieves it by utilizing the processes of compromise
and consensus.

Types of Leadership

Psychologists have offered different classifications of leadership. Bogardus
(1940) has described five types of leadership: (i) Direct and indirect, (ii) Partisan
and scientific, (iii) Social, executive and mental leadership, (iv) Autocratic,
charismatic, paternal and democratic and (v) Prophet, Saint, Expert and Boss.

● A direct leader keeps direct contact with the group and remains in touch
with the members. He listens to their problems in a face-to-face situation.
Indirect leaders influence the thoughts of followers through their

propounded concepts, theories and guidelines. Under this category we include scientists, authors and philosophers etc.

- A partisan leader favours his group and does not accept the weaknesses of his group members. Politicians and religious leaders are examples of a partisan leadership. A scientific leader appraises the group's performance critically. He discusses both the positive and negative aspects of the group's performance.

- A social functions publicly for his group. The mental leader requires a peaceful and private atmosphere. Social workers are mental leaders. Executive leadership is a combination of social and mental leadership. A executive leader possesses the qualities of a social worker and at the same time capability to influence the thoughts of his group.

- An autocratic leader holds absolute power and formulates plans and policies for the group himself. He does not require any justification for either rewarding or punishing any group member. A charismatic leader possesses a God gifted personality. His appeal is emotional and he helps the recipient group to resolve the problem. A paternal leader is a like a fatherly figure. Members of the group respect the leader as a father. A democratic leader discusses all aspects of the group functioning with his members and power in the group is decentralised.

- A prophet is of representative of a supernatural power and his followers believe that he possesses the strength and power of God. The expert leader acts as a consultant. He acts as a commentator, critic and resource person in an organisation at the time of planning and policy formulation.

  i) A political leader embodies the qualities of various types of leaders described above. He works as a policy maker, ideologist, entrepreneur and sometimes, as a charismatic person. A political leader makes an effort to gain honour, dignity, status and wealth for himself, his friends and the people whom he represents.

  ii) A bureaucrat is one who occupies the higher level positions in the administrative hierarchy in any organisation.

  iii) A diplomat is a representative of a country in some other country. He functions in accordance with the policies and programmes of his native country.

  iv) A reformer is an idealistic leader who observes the evils of the social order and an makes effort to remove them.

  v) A theorist is confined only to theories and seek the help of logic to support theories.

Lippitt and Whites have listed three types of leadership:

i) Authoritarian   ii) Democratic and   iii) Laissez-faire leadership.

i) An Authoritarian leader keeps full control in his hands and shoulders full responsibility for his actions. He assumes that his leadership is due to the authority conferred upon him either by his position, knowledge, strength or power.

ii) A democratic leader provides an opportunity to all members for exchanging views on any matter pertaining to the group. The leader only moderates the decisions of the group members, and accepts responsibility for the results.

iii) In laissez-faire leadership, the leader delegates his authority to members for planning, motivating, controlling and shouldering responsibility of their own actions. He only acts as a liaison between the group and external forces. He provides the requisite material and information to group members. He behaves in the group just like a common member. This type of leadership may be observed in research laboratories where researchers are free to take decisions and conduct research. In university or colleges, the head of the department only assigns to the teachers, the courses to be taught by them and does not interfere in their teaching methodology.

To be a successful leader one should possess certain traits and qualities. A leader should have a desire to achieve, ambition, energy, tenacity and initiative. He should be trustworthy, reliable and open-hearted. A willingness to exercise influence over others to achieve shared goals, self-confidence and trust in one's own abilities are necessary for a good leader. Intelligence and ability to integrate and interpret various pieces of information account a lot for good leadership. A good leader should be creative, an original thinker and flexible towards changing situational requirements. He should also be an expert and adequately aware of the group's activities and relevant technical matters.

Role of Leader in a Group

The role of the leader in a group depends upon the nature, requirement and potentiality of the group as well as the type of leadership. A boss type of leader can function well in an organisation with a hierarchical arrangement of functionaries and members. A charismatic leader may play his role more influentially in a religious group of faithful members. A democratic leader may be more effective in a group with a decentralised power structure. A reformer plays an effective role in guiding and launching movements for a struggle against social evils like alcoholism, untouchability, communal disharmony, and human rights abuse, etc.

By and large, a leader plays the following roles:

i) *As a planner and policy maker* — The role of a leader as the policy maker and planner is very important. He has to develop an appropriate policy. plan, programme and activity either by himself or through a dialogue and discussion with the group members. This may be based on guidelines and orders of the organisational heads or suggestions from the group members. He should be goal-oriented and enable the smooth functioning of the group.

ii) *As an executive* — A leader shoulders the responsibility of executing the policies of the group and he assigns responsibilities for different tasks to group members.

iii) *As an expert* — The leader as a specialist in a certain field, provides technical assistance and advice to the group.

iv) *As a representative* — In a situation where members of the group are not in position to deal directly with other groups or people outside the group, the leader assumes the role of representative of the group in its external relations.

v) *As a purveyor of reward and punishment* — A leader offers reward for desirable action and punishment for undesired behaviour among the members of the group.

vi) *As a controller of internal relations* — The group leader governs specific details of the group structure and functions as the controller of internal group relations.

vii) *As an arbitrator and mediator* — The leader may play the role of a conciliator and judge to resolve intra-group conflict. He has the power to reduce or encourage activities of members in the group.

viii) *As an exemplar or role model* — Sometimes the leader becomes a model of behaviour for the group members indicating to them what they should be and what they should do.

ix) *As the symbol of the group* — Sometimes the leader provides cognitive focus for group unity such as the Royal family of Great Britain.

x) *As the substitute for individual responsibility* — Sometimes the leader plays a role for the individual member relieving him of his responsibility for a personal decision or act that he wishes to avoid. The leader frees the individual from the compulsion of decision-making.

xi) *As an ideologist* — In some circumstances the leader furnishes the ideology of the group and serves as the source of beliefs, values and norms of the individual members.

xii) *As a father figure* — The leader may be an ideal object of identification for group members.

xiii) *As a scapegoat* — The leader may serve as a target for the aggression of the disappointed, frustrated and disillusioned group.

The roles of the leader described above may be considered further as primary and ancillary roles. The primary roles includes the role of an executive, policy maker, planner, expert, external group representative, controller and guide of internal relations, purveyor of reward and punishment, arbitrator and mediator. The ancillary roles includes role of an exemplar, external symbol of a group, substitute for individual responsibility, ideologist, father figure and scapegoat.

Check Your Progress II

Note :   a)   Use the space provided for your answer.

b)   Check your answers with those provided at the end of this unit.

1)   Describe eight behavioral characteristics of the leader.

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2)   Describe some important roles of the leader in a group.

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5.4   CROWD AND ITS CHARACTERISTICS

Quite often we use the word crowd for any type of gathering of people. Usually we assume that the gathering of people to purchase a ticket for a cinema at the ticket window, people coming out of the cinema hall when the show is over, school children coming out of classes and school gates on the closure of school and people assembled and sitting in a hall are a crowd. But these situations do not qualify to be called as crowds though they may become crowds. The only common element of the crowd in these gatherings is that they are unorganised groups. The psychology of crowd as a field of social psychology came up in the last two decades of the nineteenth century when psychologists in France undertook related studies.

A crowd is a gathering of a large number of persons on account of a matter of common concern. When a considerable number of individuals respond to some common object within a limited space collectively, their presence is considered as a crowd. A crowd is a transitory, contiguous group, it is unorganised and formed for some common interest. A crowd is a group of individuals, temporarily experimenting a unity of feeling and action, owing to the fact that their attention is concentrated on the same object, ideal and material. Mental unity is the essential and fundamental characteristic of a crowd. A crowd happens to be more primitive than the normal individual member of the crowd.

A crowd has been classified in various ways by different social psychologists. First of all a crowd has been divided into two groups:

i)   Audience: The audience is a passive crowd. A passive crowd includes a gathering for worship in a religious place (Gurudwara, Temple, Church and Mosque); a gathering to listen to the speech of any leader and gathering of people to see a film or a circus.

ii)   Active crowd. An active crowd can take four forms: (a) Escape-panics in an organised and/or unorganised crowd, (b) Acquisitive, (c) Expressive and (d) Aggressive that is manifest in Lynching, Terrorization and Riots.

In an escape crowd, emotion plays a significant role. Any active crowd may be converted into an escape crowd with the interruption of an outside force. Any crowd active in destruction and loot gets converted into an escape crowd

when the police beat them or explode tear gas shells or begin firing in the air. In this situation the crowd becomes a fear-flight crowd. This fear-flight crowd may be of two types i.e. (i) Organised and (ii) Unorganised. In the unorganised fear-flight crowd, its members get scattered and run away in different directions. In this situation the members of the crowd are concerned with saving only their own lives without taking care of anybody else. In the organised fear-flight crowd, the crowd remains organised while running away out of a panic situation. In such a situation the crowed faces the outside force for a short while and then gets scattered because of a persistent attack on it.

On the railway ticket window, rationing shops, ticket windows of cinema halls we observe crowd where people push each other to get a ticket or rations on knowing that there is shortage of tickets or rations in proportion to the demand. This type of crowd is known as an **acquisitive crowd**.

When members of the crowd express their emotions openly and celebrate the occasion, the crowd is known an **expressive crowd**. Groups of singers and dancers and twisting of boys and girls in a band come within the purview of the expressive crowd.

In an **aggressive crowd**, the members of the crowd become too much emotional and act with hatred to harm the other. This type of crowd may be involved in loot, murder, destruction, arson, lynching, sexual abuse and rioting etc. The situation is known as a riot when two violent groups brutally attack each other. A terrorist crowd can easily harm governmental and private properties and may set fire to buses, trains or any building and openly loot markets. A lynching crowd is a type of attacking crowd and may go to the extent of killing any person to attain its goal.

Characteristics of Crowd

Some important characteristics of a crowd are as follows:

i) *Gathering* — This is the most important characteristic of the crowd. In a crowd, people gather at a place in large numbers and remain there for sometime. If members of the crowd continue moving here and there, a crowd can not be formed.

ii) *Polarisation* — Members of the crowd concentrate themselves on the focal point of the incident or object. For example, in a road accident people gathered around the wounded person pay attention towards the accident victim. All take an interest in knowing how and why it happened, etc.

iii) *Transitoriness* — Instability is a basic nature of the crowd. The crowd remains together till it has polarisation. When polarisation is over, people disappear and there is no crowd. It is difficult to find out who were the members of the crowd, as it is unstable. For example, there is no gathering after disappearance and removal of vehicle and accident victim in a road accident. Crowd may remain for a few hours but not for a few days.

iv) *Unorganised* — Crowd neither has predetermined objective nor it is preplanned. It does not have any prefixed leader or member. Crowd does not have any formality or any type of organisation. It has no prefixed rule and regulation for its formation. Crowd does not have any pattern. Crowd, though, may be fully provoked.

v) *Common emotion* — Majority of the members of the crowd have same emotion. All members of the crowd take an active part in the common sloganeering.

vi) *Mutual influence* — Individuals in the crowd influence behaviour of each other. One member of the crowd gets excited on seeing another excited member. Individuals follow the behaviour of others in the crowd. Due to this mutual influence they have more receptiveness towards suggestion.

vii) *Spatial distribution* — The area in which crowd is spread is its limit and spatial distribution. Crowd is confined to a limited field or place and therefore we cannot call people scattered in the whole city a crowd.

viii) *Mass strength* — Members of the crowd feel mass strength observing huge gathering with them. Since one member of the crowd gets excited following another's excitement, that member may feel mass strength. In a crowd individual does not have his/her own distinct existence and behaves according to the mass behaviour. It is often found that a physically weak person comes forward to beat a healthier person in the crowd.

5.5 MOB AND MOB PSYCHOLOGY

A mob is a form of crowd. When a crowd becomes aggressive and violent it turns into a mob. A mob consists of people in an aggressive mood. A mob may commit rape, murder, manhandling, arson, loot, riot etc. In a mob the atmosphere is highly charged. The members of the mob loose a sense of proper behaviour and reasoning.

People in a mob behave only on the basis of their emotions. They happen to be in a highly excited mood. People in a mob shout in a loud voice. In a mob the members run around one another and push each other. They engage in unwanted activity and imitate each others behaviour.

Sometimes people gather on the basis of rumors. If a student has been beaten by a shopkeeper in no time many students gather at the shop to show their solidarity, although they may not be connected with the incident. A mob's members do not listen to reason. The behaviour of members in a mob follows a single track. They do not listen to the arguments of the other party. They are not interested in ascertaining the facts or the truth. It is difficult to change their thinking by logic, argument or reasoning. They go on doing what they have set out to do. Few people by the tactful method succeed in making other people in mob aware of reason of their actions.

The mob is generally composed of people with low social, cultural, economic and educational levels. Leaders play a significant role in provoking the emotions of the members of a mob. They excite them to behave aggressively.

5.6 PUBLIC OPINION: IMPACT AND RELEVANCE TO SOCIETY

Public opinion is the common opinion of people in society. Though individuals have different opinions regarding issues and matters either concerned with

them or society, they come to a common point of agreement. They develop a common perceptive through an exchange of views, interactions, projections and criticism. Public opinion is the outcome of this whole process.

Public opinion consists of the opinions held by the public at a certain time. Public opinion is made up of the ideas of the masses and judgments operative in a community. They are stable for a considerable time and well formulated. Public opinion simply refers to the mass of ideas on a given issue expressed by the people. Public opinion consists of opinions held by the people of a small or large community about a particular problem at a certain time. It is not necessary for the public opinion to be the opinion of all members of the society, but it should be a opinion of a majority of the people. Members of the group or community take it seriously. Public opinion is not static and changes with the situation and time.

Characteristics of Public Opinion

i)   Public opinion always relates to a common subject matter or issues concerning society instead of an individual's or group's interest.

ii) Public opinion is a widely accepted decision of a majority of the people of a particular society.

iii) Public opinion is not formed by any particular individual. It emerges from the collaborative opinion of the people of any society.

iv) Public opinion is an outcome of a social process and emerges through interpersonal interactions of people in a society.

v)   It is not necessary that public opinion be logical. It may be logical or illogical.

vi) Public opinion influences even those people of society who do not agree with it, as it is the opinion of a majority of people.

vii) Often public opinion is an indicator of social culture. Public opinion grows up, expands and depends on the faiths, ideals, assumptions, values, sentiments and past experiences of society.

viii) Public opinion may be influenced by some distinguished, honoured, rich and powerful person of society. Such a personality influences aims, interests and life style of the people of the society.

ix) Quite often public opinion seems to be related to a particular problem or issue at a particular time.

x)   Public opinion pertaining to any issue does not remain the same for a long time and thus it is not stable in nature. It changes with the change in time and situation. It changes on the basis of need of society.

xi) Often public opinion emerges after a wide discussion on the issue or the problem.

xii) Public opinion pertaining to customs, stereotypes and traditions of the community tend to be more constant. Propaganda, projection and extension make it dynamic.

Impact and Relevance to Society

Public opinion has been significant for society since ancient times. It has an important place in modern society. Public opinion is even more significant and important in a large society as compared to a small group or community. The present period is an era of democracy and public opinion has a significant place in the present social order. Democracy cannot function effectively in the absence of public opinion.

Democracy is meaningful only in case of acceptability of public opinion. The strength and power of public opinion is inherent in its acceptance. The concurrence of the people to any law that is to be implemented in society is essential for its effectiveness. Public opinion does not always help the government and people but it controls them. The importance of public opinion is inherent in it power to control. Public opinion controls the feelings, emotions and action of even the influential personalities in society. Public opinion is relevant for the government as the public is *a live fact* of large size. Ignorance of such a *live fact* may result in disaster. A government should function with its people's concurrence on different issues. It may be troublesome for a government to keep people in large numbers unconcerned about its activities. The form of the government in any society depends upon public opinion.

Public opinion is important for the evaluation and appraisal of the working of the government. The shortcomings of the rules and regulations framed by the government can only be judged by the people and not by the government itself. Public opinion, in this respect, becomes quite relevant to society. Public opinion influences the functioning and decision of the people and the government and therefore it has a definite impact on society.

Public opinion educates both the people and the government and enables them to reach a commonly agreed point of solution of the problems in society. Public opinion influences the socialisation of individuals, their thinking and behaviour, as it sets widely accepted norms of behaviour.

Public opinion provides an opportunity to individuals and institutions to frame, develop and moderate their functioning in accordance with society. Any individual or institution, whether religious, educational, social, cultural, economic or political — existing in society, cannot function smoothly by ignoring public opinion. Ignorance of public opinion may make them incapable of achieving their goals and, in an extreme situation, may be disasterous. Since public opinion influences individuals, groups and institutions by shaping their thinking and action, it has a definite relevance for society.

Public opinion is more important in a society ruled by a monarch or a dictator. People enjoy enough freedom in a democracy but in a monarchy or a dictatorship they are bound to obey the orders of rulers, with insignificant intervention in their functioning.

5.7 PROPAGANDA : METHODS AND IMPLICATIONS

The importance of propaganda in the modern world is increasing rapidly. It has become a part of our daily life. Politicians, traders, governments,

educationists, spiritual leaders, social reformers and specialists of different professions use propaganda as a tool to reach out to a large number of people. Through propaganda they gain people's favor. Propaganda is a process and a method, which brings about a change in thought, faith and attitude of individuals and groups through persuasive devices. Propaganda is more or less deliberately planned. It uses symbols, mainly through suggestion and related psychological techniques, with a view to alter and control opinions and ideas and bring about a change in pre-determined actions. It is an organised and systematic attempt of a person or a group to influence public opinion and attitudes towards life styles. Through the use of suggestion, it controls the attitude and, consequently, actions of a group of individuals. It simply attempts to influence people's attitudes and opinions and thereby their actions in a desired direction. Propaganda does not depend on facts and logic.

Propaganda may be classified as

i) Conversionary propaganda

ii) Divisionary propaganda and

iii) Consolidatory propaganda

In conversionary propaganda an effort is made to let people understand and then bring about a change in value, thought, attitude and behaviour. This type of propaganda is quite often used in the field of advertising. Divisionary propaganda is based on the 'divide and rule' policy and is used by the political parties or nations at the time of war. In consolidatory propaganda efforts are made to provoke and consolidate popular thoughts, values, attitudes etc. It is being used to bring peace and harmony in society during a period of war.

Propaganda is always motivated by some objective and such objective is related to the people towards whom the propaganda is directed. A propagandist uses different types of symbols for achieving his/her objectives. Advertisers and traders use symbolic words to popularize their products. Political parties have their own symbols to attract the voters. Direction has an important place in propaganda. It has been observed that propaganda may become in-effective if used repeatedly.

Methods of Propaganda

Various methods of propaganda are in practice. A propagandist may make a **suggestion** in his favour through **projection, demonstration, oration** and **narration.** These methods are applied through different techniques and media. The popular techniques are:

i) Name-calling device, (ii) Testimonial device, (iii) Glittering generality device, (iv) Card staking device, (v) Plain Folk device, (vi) Chamber of horrors device, (vii) Transfer device and (viii) Bandwagon device.

In **name calling device** the propagandist uses famous names for his supporters and followers and notorious or non-famous names for his opponents. In **testimonial device the** names of eminent and great personalities are associated with the propaganda material. In **glittering generality device** the propagandist uses justice, unity and friendship etc. to provoke a favourable emotion in the masses. In **card staking device** a propagandist hides the truth and propagates

or puts false facts before the public. Dodging and misleading are commonly used tactics of this device. Political parties often use this device during elections. In **plain folk device** the propagandist tries to prove that he is also a unit of the society like others. He behaves in a manner that attracts people and they consider him their well wisher. In **chamber of horrors device** the propagandist provokes emotion of horror and guaranties the security of people. In **transfer device** the propagandist associates his propaganda material with the supernatural power to gain the concurrence of the public in favour of his policies and in **bandwagon device** the propagandist appeals by highlighting that everybody is saying what he is saying.

The popular media or tools of using these techniques are as follows:

i) *Press and publications* — This is a popular media for propaganda. Through printed matters like newspapers, magazines, booklets, bulletins and brochure etc. the propagandist creates favourable attitude for himself or his ideas in the public. Quite often people read a newspaper of their own liking and develop an attitude in accordance with the views of the newspaper they favour. People believe more in printed matter than in spoken matter. The print media allays or removes anxieties of people.

ii) *Meeting and speech* — In a meeting, the propagandist presents his views before the public. This method becomes more successful if the personality of the speaker is attractive and impressive. The public gathers for the meeting with some pre-conceived views about the speaker. The art and ability of presentation influence the mind of the audience.

iii) *Cultural programme, drama, theatre* — Through cultural programmes, drama and theatre people are influenced in favour of certain products or views.

iv) *Radio* — This is a widely used powerful medium of publicity in modern society. It spreads news throughout the world within seconds.

v) *Television* — Television is a modern audio-visual method of effective propaganda. It is somewhat costly for the people of a developing country and therefore does not cover the range that the radio covers.

vi) *Cinema is also an audio* — visual medium of publicity. It is a powerful and cheap medium of propaganda. Low-income group people enjoy it largely.

vii) *Loud speaker* — Loud speakers are used for publicity directly among people living in their homes, engaged in their jobs or going on the road.

viii) *Demonstration and procession* — Political parties often organise demonstrations and processions to publicise their views in public,

ix) *Rumour* — Through rumour people may be influenced easily for a short while. It results in changing the opinion of the masses in a critical situation.

x) Dance and music groups, concerts, puppet shows, wall writings, hoardings, posters, folk lore, slogans, magic shows, circus etc. are some other media of propaganda in society.

Implications

Propaganda is a method of making suggestions to people and influence them in favour of certain political, social, religious, cultural or economic institution or views or products. Propaganda may make people aware of a certain view of any person or a product of some manufacturing establishment. Sometimes propaganda leads people to adopt harmful suggestions. Powerful propaganda diverts people's minds from logical perception and decision making. Sometimes people become victims of its glamour and adopt undesirable views.

Check Your Progress III

Note : a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of this unit.

1) Describe the main characteristics of a crowd.

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2) Describe in a few lines the relevance of public opinion in society.

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3) Describe three main tools of propaganda in the media.

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5.8 RELEVANCE AND IMPORTANCE OF SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY FOR SOCIAL WORKERS

By now you would be aware of the nature and tasks of social psychology. We will now discuss the relevance and importance of social psychology for social workers. For this, please recall the linkages that we have drawn up between social work and psychology in Unit 1. As you know, social workers use different methods of social work in various fields of practice to solve the individual's or group's psychosocial and/or psychosomatic problems. Some

times, social work practice aims at the socio-economic development of the individual, group or community. Social work profession helps individuals and/ or groups achieve a positive adjustment with their environment. Here environment includes human and social environment, physical environment, psychological environment and ecological environment.

Factors responsible for a particular human behaviour in a particular social setting when brought to the notice of a social worker by the social psychologist help social workers to plan and execute their actions. A social worker has to always keep in mind the problem, behaviour pattern and thoughts of his client in the social setting in cases where the social worker has to diagnose the case or provide treatment to the client. The client's thought and behaviour quite often influence the diagnosis and treatment process and persuade the social worker to modify them accordingly:

- At the time of interviewing the client, the social worker should be conscious of the undesired presence of anyone else, as that may make the client unwilling to expose the reality or truth to the worker. The feeling of privacy in the kind of environment created – both physical and social – is vital for a frank sharing of indepth or intimate details of the situation under study.

- When members of the group are engaged in their group activities an outsider drops in, the activity of the group ceases for a short while and the social worker has to make arrangements for accommodating the new-comer in the group.

- Excessive bossiness of a leader in a group often disturbs harmonious and smooth group interaction. A social group worker has to be careful of such a tendency in any group member for its proper functioning. Such a tendency may become an impediment to community organisation also. Planning and functioning of community work may be influenced by that, and hence should be taken care of.

- While handling the case of a truant student in a school setting, a social worker has to take into consideration the behaviour and reactions of his peers, authorities and teachers of the school. Their behaviour towards the student may be the cause of truancy. The student may feel uncomfortable in the school atmosphere resulting in his absence from classes.

- The behaviour of a doctor or hospital functionaries influences the patient's response to medical advice. Their rough and impatient attitude to the patient and his disease may cause an unwillingness on the patient's part to follow medical advice. The client may neglect and avoid requisite medical instructions. The social worker has to keep in mind the behaviour of the medical and para - medical staff of the clinic and hospital towards a patient and his family, while helping the patient co-operate with medical personnel.

- In an industrial setting, while a social worker is expected to help the workers to adjust with their employer or seniors, he has to give consideration to the latter's behaviour and thoughts.

- In a family setting, a social worker has to pay adequate attention to the behaviour and thoughts of siblings, parents and other family members of the client as they all influence the thought and behaviour of the client.

- Differences in age, sex, caste, race, religion, education, occupation, income, physical and mental ability, ecological and physical variables and socio-cultural values and ethics, influence the thoughts and behaviour of the individual and therefore all these, should be given due consideration at the time of planning, diagnosing and treating the client.

- Propaganda, public opinion and crowd etc. also influence the individual's behaviour pattern and thoughts. These components of social psychology should also be taken into consideration at the time of social work practice.

Check Your Progress IV

Note : a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of this unit.

1) Describe the relevance and importance of social psychology for social workers.

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5.9 LET US SUM UP

Social psychology attempts to understand, explain and predict how the presence of another, a group of people and environmental factors, influence a person's thought and behaviour.

A social worker has to be careful of the thoughts and behaviour of his clients as they influence diagnosis and treatment.

In this unit, we have gone through some of the most essential social psychological concepts which are required for social work practice. These are summarized as below:

Leadership is a process of influencing the activities of the group to achieve set organisational targets. The main characteristics of a leader are intelligence, dominance, non-conformity, social distance, verbal assertiveness and dedication to organisational goals.

Crowd is a gathering of a considerable number of persons around a centre of common attention.

Crowd has been divided into two groups i.e. (i) audience and (ii) active crowd. Gathering, polarisation, transitoriness, common emotion and spatial distribution are main characteristics of the crowd.

Mob is a form of a crowd. When a crowd becomes aggressive it is called a mob. People in a mob behave only on the basis of emotions. They become irritated and excited easily.

Public opinion is the common opinion of people in society. It is the opinion of the majority of people in a society. Public opinion is not static but changes with the situation and time. Public opinion is more important in a democratic society. Public opinion influences individuals, groups and institutions in shaping their thinking and action.

The process and method to bring about a change in thoughts, faiths and attitudes of individuals and groups through persuasive devices is propaganda. Propaganda has been classified into three major groups i.e. (i) conversionary, (ii) divisionary and (iii) consolidatory propaganda. There are various tools of propaganda and media prevalent in the modern world. Radio, television, cinema, newspaper, loudspeakers, cultural programmes, demonstrations and processions are popular means of propaganda.

5.10   KEY WORDS

Assertiveness : The maintaining of the claim, or right.

Attitude : Manner with regard to a person or thing

Audience : An assembly of listeners or spectators.

Behaviour : The actions or activities of the individual.

Cognitive : To know, to percieve, to think, to judge.

Conformity : Behaviour that is in agreement with that of the others in a group.

Democracy : A form of government in which the supreme power is vested in the people and exercised by their elected agents under a free electoral system.

Device : A plan or scheme for effecting a purpose.

Diplomat : One employed or skilled in negotiations and relations between states.

Ecology : A branch of biology which deals with the relations between organisms and their environment.

Emotion : An affective state of consciousness in which joy, sorrow, fear, hate or the like is experienced.

Ethics : Pertaining to morals.

Excitement : Emotionally stirred state.

Heredity : The transmission of genetic characters from parents to progeny; the genetic characteristics transmitted to an individual by its parents.

Hierarchy : Any system of persons or things in a graded order.

Intelligence : Capacity for understanding and for other forms of adaptive behaviour; aptitude in grasping facts and meanings.

Dictatorship	:	A person exercising absolute power or assuming absolute control in a government without hereditary right or the free consent of the people.
Logic	:	Reasoning or argumentation.
Monarchy	:	A government or state in which the supreme power actually or nominally is lodged in the hands of a person occupying the apex position by heredity — king or queen.
Reasoning	:	The process of drawing conclusions or inferences from facts or premises.
Retardation	:	Delaying progress of an action, process etc.
Spatial	:	Pertaining to space, existing or occuring in space.
Sustainable	:	Maintainable
Stereotype	:	A simplified and standard image often highly evaluative, inaccurate and rigidified, of a group of people.
Transitory	:	Temporary, passing away, lasting but a short time.
Variable	:	Liable to change, alternable.
Suggestion	:	The process through which any individual or agency is motivated directly to act in a specific manner or accept any matter without any instruction, right, pressure or argument with others.
Projection	:	The act of visualising and regarding an idea or the like as an objective reality.

5.11   SUGGESTED READINGS

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5.12   ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress I

i)   Social psychology attempts to understand, explain and predict how the presence of another person, a group of people and environmental factors, influence a person's thoughts and behaviour.

Check Your Progress II

1) i) *Intelligence* — The leader is more intelligent than a common group member.

   ii) *Dominance* — The leader dominates other people and influences them.

   iii) *Adjustment* — The leader is more capable than others of adjusting with the group.

   iv) *Non-conformity* — The leader does not succumb to the pressure of the group and thinks independently.

   v) *Social distance* — The leader avoids closeness and intimacy with group members. He maintains a social and psychological distance from the members of the group.

   vi) *Emotional maturity* — The leader possesses emotional stability and maturity. He behaves in a balanced manner. He is not an oversensitive or vindictive person.

   vii) *Verbal assertiveness* — The leader has the ability to orate effectively. He is confident of his views and opinions.

   viii) *Dedication to the organisational goal* — The leader is a person fully committed and dedicated to the objective and goal of the organisation. He works hard towards its fulfillment.

2) i) *As a planner and policy maker* — The group leader develops an appropriate policy and plan to achieve the objectives of the group.

   ii) *As an executive* — The leader shoulders the responsibility of executing the plans and policies of the organisation.

   iii) *As an expert* — The leader serves the group as a specialised person and provides technical assistance and advice.

   iv) *As an exemplar* — The leader, often, becomes a model of behaviour and indicates to group members how they should function.

v) *As the scapegoat* — The leader may serve as a target for the aggression of the disappointed and disillusioned group.

Check Your Progress III

1) i) *Gathering* — In a crowd people in large numbers gather at a place and after gathering they remain there for some time.

   ii) *Polarisation* — Members of the crowd concentrate themselves the focal point of the incident or object.

   iii) *Transitoriness* — Instability is the nature of a crowd.

   iv) *Common emotion* — A majority of members in a crowd have the same emotion.

   v) *Spatial distribution* — The area in which the crowd has expanded is its limit and spatial distribution.

2) Public opinion controls the feelings, emotions and actions of influential figures in the society. The concurrence of the people to the action of the ruler is essential in a democratic society. The significance of public opinion is inherent in the power of control. Public opinion is important for the evaluation of the working of the government. Public opinion educates both the people and the government and brings them to a commonly agreed platform of thought and action. The form of the government in any society depends upon public opinion. Public opinion influences socialization of individuals, their thinking and behaviour pattern.

3) i) *Print media* — Through newspapers journalists create specific attitude in the public. They attract the attention of the people towards certain things in order to achieve their objectives. The newspaper is an important media of publicity as it influences people in large numbers. People believe more in printed matter than in spoken matter.

   ii) *Radio* — This is a widely used powerful medium of publicity in modern society. It spreads news and views throughout the world within seconds. People use it for entertainment and information.

   iii) *Television* — Programmes and displays on television are the most modern and effective tools of propaganda. In television one listens to and sees the picture simultaneously.

Check Your Progress IV

1) Social workers use different methods of social work profession in its different fields to solve an individual's psycho-somatic or socio-economic problems. Social work profession helps individuals and groups for positive adjustment with their environment. Social psychology brings forward factors that influence the thoughts and behaviour of individuals and groups. A social worker takes note of influencing factor and accordingly plans his process of action. A social worker keeps in mind the thought and behaviour pattern of his client in a particular setting while diagnosing the case he has in his hand and provides treatment accordingly. At the time of an interview with the client, the social worker should be careful of the undesired presence of anybody else. In this situation, other's presence may make the client unwilling to reveal the facts and truth and thus the worker may fail to achieve the objective. In a group situation, the social worker has to understand various group processes and leadership styles to evolve, facilitate or implement programmes.