

Social Customs

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Social Customs guide behaviour and can replace the need to make choices. For example, it is a social Custom in many countries that a man should open a door for a women. A social Custom is a traditional practice or behaviour that is widely accepted and followed within a particular society or culture. These Customs shape the daily lives of individuals and reflect the values, beliefs and norms of the community, serving as a means of social cohesion and identity.

Social norms and Customs refer to the unwritten rules and behaviours that are accepted and expected within a particular society or group. They dictate how individuals should behave, dress, communicate and interact with others.

Related terms are cultural values, etiquette, taboos , examples of custom :-

1. Ceremonies is a class of customary, collective action.
2. In some countries it is okay to burp while eating food.
3. In some countries bowing to older people is polite and respectful.
4. You take off shoes before entering the house.
5. People sit on the floor and eat.
6. Shaking hands, bowing, kissing - methods of greeting.

Social customs are traditional practices, habits, and norms followed by members of a society over a long period of time.

They represent the shared behavior patterns that regulate social life and maintain social order.

Customs are deeply rooted in culture and are passed down from generation to generation.

MacIver and Page : “Custom is the habitual course of conduct followed generally by the members of a group.”

Social customs are collective practices accepted by society as proper ways of behavior .

Characteristics of Social Customs

1. Social in nature – practiced collectively by members of a group.
2. Transmitted – passed from one generation to another.
3. Regulative – control human behavior and guide actions.
4. Stable yet dynamic – remain for long periods but can change with time.
5. Diverse – vary across regions, religions, and cultures.
6. Identity-giving – provide continuity and belonging to a community.

Types of Social Customs

1. Folk Customs – festivals, dress, food habits, music, art.
2. Religious Customs – rituals, ceremonies, pilgrimages, prayers.
3. Marriage Customs – rules of courtship, wedding ceremonies, dowry, gift exchange.
4. Funeral Customs – rituals and practices after death.
5. Occupational Customs – traditions related to professions or caste-based work.
6. Hospitality and Social Interaction – greetings, visiting, gift-giving, eating habits.

Functions of Social Customs

- * Maintain social order and discipline.
- * Promote unity and social solidarity .
- * Help in cultural transmission .
- * Guide individual behavior .
- * Provide identity and belongingness .
- * Work as a form of informal social control .

Merits and Demerits of Social Customs

Merits

- * Strengthen cultural identity .
- * Provide stability and continuity .
- * Encourage social harmony and cooperation .

Demerits

- * Some are rigid and outdated , hindering progress.
- * Can perpetuate social evils (e.g., dowry, untouchability).
- * Restrict individual freedom and creativity .

Changing Nature of Customs

- * With modernization, education, and globalization , many customs have changed.
- * Some outdated customs are discarded , while others are adapted to modern needs.
- * Customs continue to evolve, balancing tradition and change .

Conclusion

Social customs are an integral part of society , shaping individual behavior and community life.