

Comprehension 1: CSS 2022

Read the following passage carefully and answer the questions that follow: (20)

Civil society refers to all of the places where individuals gather together to have conversations, peruse common interests and, occasionally, try to influence public opinion or public policy. In many respects, civil society is where people spend their time when they are not at work or at home. For example, a group of people gather at a local park every Thursday afternoon for a game of football. Most of them arrive well before the game begins and stay for some time after it ends. Some of them go out for dinner or a drink after the game. In the course of their meetings, they talk about a wide range of topics, including football but also extending to include issues such as works, family, relationships, community events, racial issues and politics. This kind of solidarity can be found in a variety of other places in civil society – such as sports clubs, bowling leagues, reading groups and social movements – where individuals get together to associate on the basis of some shared interest fostering more effective forms of citizenship. Even though people may come together on the basis of an interest they all share in common, they eventually have to develop productive strategies for dealing with conflicts and differences that emerge within the association. Team mates in a bowling league discover, on certain issues, significant differences of opinion. And yet, because they value the association and look forward to participating in its activities, they do not respond to these differences by exiting the scene. Instead, they search for the ways of interacting that will not threaten the solidarity of the group. In the process, they learn to appreciate and to tolerate social differences, a valuable skill to have in an increasingly multicultural nation. They also develop a general sense of social trust and mutual obligation, which makes society function more efficiently (this is what political scientists and sociologists are talking about when they refer to the importance of social capital). Gathering together in an association, people begin to think about their shared private interest as a collective public interest, and they try to make sure that this public interest is safe and secured. For example, the group that gets together for a weekly football game begins to talk about the park as an important community resource; if feel that the park is being mistreated or mismanaged, will organize a 'save the park' campaign to try to influence their local politicians and the other residents of the community. Recently, there has been growing concern that civil society is weaker than it used to be, because people are losing interest in joining associations. As citizens become increasingly disconnected from voluntary associations, they will experience less trust and less social connection, and as a result political institutions will function less efficiently. However, some scholars opine that many people are simply choosing to participate in different kinds of associations with fewer face-to-face meetings but supplemented with 'virtual' interactions facilitated by resources.

(4 Marks Each)

Questions:

1. How does the author characterize the concepts of civil society?
2. Why does civil society strive towards better socialization drives by tolerance?
3. What do you understand by the term 'Social Capital' used in this passage?
4. Why does a civil society assume the role of a public stake holder?
5. What impact is feared by the weakening state of civil society?

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Q # 1

The Author characterizes the civil society concept as the places where individuals having convergent interests combine to have their discussions - These groups try to persuade public policies and opinions - All such places except home and workplace such as sports clubs, libraries and parks etc. can be included in it.

Q # 2

In civil societies, people value their togetherness - They try to maintain solidarity by finding useful techniques to deal with their internal disputes - This inculcates tolerance in them through which they strive towards better socialization.

Q # 3

The group of people with collective interests can efficiently influence the political institutions to meet their public demands by creating pressure on them - Thus, they act as a social capital where they can bring betterment in society ^{functioning} through their strong network -

Q # 4

The social gatherings where people discuss the matters of their common interest lead them toward a collective public stance from their private stance - So, to pursue that public stance, civil societies assume the role of a public stake holder -

Q#5

The civil societies are depleting in the contemporary era - This is due to loss of people interest in such voluntary gatherings - This weakening of civil society consequent the lack of connectedness and, mutual interest and trust of people - This can result in weak functioning efficiency of political institutions as there will be no public pressure on them that can be significant to persuade them for work