

Comprehension:

Civil society refers to all of the places where individuals gather together to have conversation, pursue 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 any 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 work, 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.

Questions: (4 marks each)

- 1 How does the author characterize the concept of civil society?
- 2 Why does civil society strive towards better socialization drive 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?

1. Civil society refers to the places like public parks, sport clubs and reading groups where people gathered and they discuss their issues of work, community events, racial issues and politics. They all pursue common interest and influence the public policy.

2. Civil society strive towards better socialization driven by tolerance as it create a space for cooperation of multicultural nation. It tend to appreciate valuable skills and put up with social difference. It develop a sense of trust and mutual obligation which makes society functioned more efficiently.

3. In this passage social capital a general sense of social trust and mutual obligation that paved a way to make sure that public interest is safe and secured.

4. Civil society assume the role of public stake holders in the sense that in association people considered their private interest as collective interest. They also influence the public policy.

5. When state of civil society became weak, people lose their interest in joint associations that create a sense of distrust and less social connections. ~~that~~ It ultimately makes the functioning of political institution less efficient.