

Q:

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)

Question:

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?

- i. Civil Society is a place where people come to pursue their common interests and eventually this location evolve into a place where people do conversation, share their personal experience and try to build public opinion by doing analysis. These public opinions are then used to influence both people and public policy making. Sports venues, clubs, reading groups parks etc can be considered civil society.
- ii. This is because it is a place where individuals learn to appreciate the associations they have developed by acknowledging differences, managing conflicts, and tolerating social differences. This helps in developing social trust, leading to a better functioning of society. Therefore, so civil society functions effectively by trusting in one another.
- iii. It means a place where society trusts and respects one another, and work collectively for the purpose of human services or benefits. The proverb "Unity is Strength" resonates well here illustrating the significance of collective actions within society for the

Common good.

iv- By developing these associations, people begin to think their private interests are collective interests of all people and would be better served if they work for them collectively. For instance, formation of neighborhood watch groups to enhance community safety, showing the collective interest in protecting shared resource and well-being. Therefore, society assumes the role of a public stakeholder.

v- Given that people are showing less interest in joining associations and engaging in social interaction, they will not be able to develop trust in one another and build social associations that would help to shape public opinions and influence politicians working for people. Thus, lack of trust leads them towards a stagnation of political institutions.