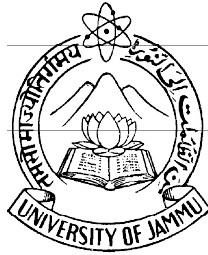


**DIRECTORATE OF DISTANCE EDUCATION  
UNIVERSITY OF JAMMU  
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**SELF LEARNING MATERIAL  
B.A. SEMESTER - III**

**SUBJECT : SOCIOLOGY  
COURSE NO. SO-301**

**UNIT I-V  
LESSON NO. 1-17**

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# FOUNDATIONS OF SOCIOLOGICAL THOUGHT

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## AUGUSTE COMTE : POSITIVISM

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**B.A. Semester–IIIrd**  
**Sociology**

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**Lesson No. 1**  
**Unit - I**

### STRUCTURE

- 1.1. Objectives
- 1.2 Introduction
- 1.3 Comte : Life Sketch
- 1.4 Positivism
  - 1.4.1 Law of three stages
  - 1.4.2 Order and progress
- 1.5 Social Statics
  - 1.5.1 Individual
  - 1.5.2 Collective Phenomenon
- 1.6 Social Dynamics
  - 1.6.1 History

### 1.1 OBJECTIVES :

After going through this chapter the learner will be able to

- \* know about Auguste Comte
- \* Concept of Positivism
- \* Social Statics and Social Dynamics

### 1.2 INTRODUCTION

Though society was studied prior to 1839. But Auguste Comte, for the first time, gave way to the scientific study of society and coined the term ‘Sociology’.

Isidore Auguste Marie Francais Xavier Comte was born in Montpellier of south France on January 1st, 1798, in a middle class family which was religious (Staunch Roman Catholic) and aristocratic (Royalist in politics) in nature. His father was a local tax collector with hopes for his son in politics.

Comte was a brilliant student but he never received a college level degree. He joined the respected Imperial lycee in his home town at the age of nine. Soon, he gained the attention of others for his intellect and mischievousness. Encouraged by his peers and teachers, Comte entered into leadership and took interest in both i.e. academics and rebelliousness.

Proving his worth at the lycee, Comte sat for the competitive entrance examination for admission in Ecole Polytechnique in Paris.

Ecole was a centre of intellectuals without any study area of human affairs and society. Rather, its distinguished reputation throughout Europe rested upon its mathematics and natural sciences. Though champion in abstract science and mathematics, Comte was more concerned about the liberation of society through a scientific development of human consciousness.

Comte, due to his rebelliousness and determination i.e. not to compromise the issue nor his own ideals, was involved in controversial activities regarding national politics as well as disputes over policy issues at the Ecole itself. Due to this reason, he and his whole class were dismissed from the Ecole Polytechnique in 1814. This expulsion had an adverse effect on Comte's academic career. In 1817, at the age of 19 Comte became secretary of Claude Henri Saint-Simon, an elder social idealist who had a profound and lasting impression upon Comte and his works. Comte, under his guidance, was convinced that science was a new spiritual power of the age and soon both morals and politics would become positive sciences. Soon, Comte coupled his own ideas with Saint-Simon so much that it became difficult to distinguish their individual contributions. Moreover, it had been suggested that Comte's major ideas which were later developed into complex theories actually emerged during these years with Saint-Simon. They both worked together for several years but this partnership ended in 1824. Reason behind this partition was the co-

authored manuscript which Saint Simon want to publish in his own name entitled, 'Catechisme des Industrie,' whereas Comte was interested in his own name under this co-authored manuscript with title, 'System de Politique Positive.' In the end, Saint-Simon, because of his influence, got one thousand copies published under his name and Comte got only one hundred copies. This event gave break to the partnership between these intellectuals. Comte later wrote about his relationship with Saint-Simon as 'Catastrophic'.

In February 1825, Comte married 'Caroline Massin', a Parisian street walker. She was an illegitimate child whom Comte later called a 'Prostitute'. This marriage ended in 1842, out of misunderstandings, confusions and incompatibilities.

Comte's work was still unnoticed and he was without any income and was dependent on family. For him, in all his writings, the family constituted the basic social unit. Living in poverty, he did some paid writing for the journal 'Producteur' – a periodical established by disciples of late Saint-Simon.

Comte, in an attempt to gain some recognition and money, offered a series of lectures on his "positive Physic" in April 1826. The series of lectures offered by Comte as a private course attracted several distinguished scholars from Ecole and numerous industrial workers from factories who were influenced by Comte's writing on blue-collar literature. But under economic strains and the burden of explaining his system to scholar and workers at one time, he fell ill and suffered from nervous breakdown. After extended care in his mother's home, Comte regained his strength and the course was resumed in 1829.

Between 1830 and 1842, he wrote "Opus Cours De Philosophie Positive." But he could not get a regular post in Ecole Polytechnique. After his restless efforts, Comte got the minor position as a teaching assistant in 1832. In 1837, comte was given the additional post of admissions examiner, and this, for the first time, gave him an adequate income. Comte, in his six volumes of 'Course de Philosophie Positive' outlined his view that sociology was the ultimate science. He also attacked the Ecole Polytechnique in his book, and the result was that his assitanship was not renewed in 1844.

At the age of forty he stopped reading the works of others in order to concentrate on his own work.

In 1844, Comte fell in love with 'Clothide de Vaux,' an upper class woman in her mid-thirties who had been abandoned by her husband. She died within a year of tuberculosis. He dedicated his life to the love of her memory and his "System de Politique Positive" carried a dedication to 'Clothide de Vaux'. In his "System de Politique Positive", he had a more practical intent offering a grand plan for the reorganisation of society. Four year after the death of Ms. de Vaux, Comte founded the 'Society Positive', an organization of his disciples which included membership fees and regular meetings under his leadership. He began to devise a "Religion of Humanity" and considered himself as a high Priest. Interestingly, inspite of such outrageous ideas, Comte eventually developed considerable followers in France, as well as in number of other countries.

Auguste Comte died on September 5th, 1857.

#### **1.4 POSITIVISM**

Positivism is usually used to mean the search for invariant laws of both the natural and the social world. The life-long aim of Auguste Comte was establish 'Sociology' as the abstract theoretical science of social Phenomena. According to him, this science was to be the culmination of all sciences. He explained in his "System of Positive Policy" that there is already Celestial Physics (Astronomy), Terrestrial Physics (Geology and Geography), mechanical and chemical (Engineering and Chemistry), Physics (Botany), animal Physics (Zoology). But still in need of one physical science Social Physics (Sociology) in order to complete the natural sciences. He further argues that this new science is to study social pheonmena in a positivistic manner.

Comte developed a hierarchy of positivistic sciences :- Mathematics, Astonomy, Physics, Biology, Chemistry and in the end Sociology. This hierarchy descends from the sciences that are most general, abstract and remote from people to those that are the most complex, concrete and interesting to people. In Comte's view Sociology builds upon the knowledge and procedure of science and is most difficult and important of all subjects.

But man (basic element of society) cannot be, by instinct, a positivist (scientific). His emotions are more likely to be governed by superstition and fear than by logical description. He is not naturally scientific but becomes gradually, through the evolution and progress of society and human mind. To be positivist, is to discover the law governing phenomena that requires time for observation and experimentation. According to Comte, these laws can be derived from doing research on the social world and from theorizing about that world. Positivism requires facts derived from research and these facts should be subordinated with theory.

Comte believed that there is a real world and it is the task of the scientist to discover the true state of things and reproducing it with all accuracy in their theories.

Comte explained three basic methods of Sociology for doing social research and to gain empirical knowledge of real social world which are as follows :-

### **Methods of Sociological Enquiry**

1. Observation
2. Experimentation
3. Comparison

In relation to observation, Comte puts forth that isolated and a theoretical observation of the world is of no use. Without theory it would be difficult, what to look in the social world and to understand the significance of facts.

Experimentation is better suited to other sciences than it is to Sociology. It is virtually impossible to control social phenomena. The one possible exception would be a natural experiment in which the consequences of something that happens in one setting are observed and compared to the conditions in settings in which such event did not occur.

Finally, there is comparison, which Comte divides into three sub-types.

1. Comparison of humans to lower animal societies,
2. Comparison of societies in different part of the world.
3. Comparison of the different stages of societies over time.

Comte found last sub-type particularly important, in fact, he labelled it the “Chief scientific device” of sociology. It is so important that it is separated from other comparative methods and is accorded independent status as Comte’s fourth major methodology- “historical research”.

Although Comte was interested in empirical research but at the same time he gave equal importance to theory in order to get at the invariant laws of the social world. Depending on both, observation and theory, Comte created a number of general positivistic laws which he applied to the social world.

#### **1.4.1 Law of three stages**

Comte established Sociology with the background of positivism i.e. in search of social laws such that when applied to society, its past can best be understood and its future predicted. Comte in his “Politique Positive”, explains that each branch of our knowledge passes successively through three different stages i.e. from the fictitious stage to some final stage of perfection. Comte’s law of three stages is based upon intellectual development and belief in social evolution which he considered as most important. Each stage involves the search of human beings for an explanation of things around them.

**1. The theological or fictitious stage :** The first stage in Comte’s law of three stages is the theological stage. This stage was dominated by priests and the military. In this stage, human mind is searching for the essential nature of things, particularly their origin and their purpose in life. It is assumed that all phenomena are created, regulated and given their purpose by supernatural forces or beings.

Comte further divided this theological stage into three stages.

1. Fetishism – The worship for an object such as tree.
2. Polytheism – The worship for many gods
3. Monotheism – According to Comte, the ultimate development in the theological stage is monotheism *i.e.* the worship of a single god which explains every thing.



**2. The Metaphysical Stage :** Comte believes that an immediate jump from the theological stage to positivism will give way to vagueness and it would be difficult for people to handle it. Metaphysical stage is a transitional stage between theological stage and the positivistic stage. It started at about 1300 A.D. and was short lived. To Comte, this stage is the least important of three stages. This stage is dominated by churchmen and lawyers, a stage in which abstract forces replace supernatural beings as the explanation for the original cause and purposes of things in the world. While numerous entities can be seen as causes in the metaphysical stage, its ultimate point is reached when one great entity nature, is seen as the cause of every thing.

**3. The Positivist Stage :** The stage where “Observation predominates over imagination,” started with the dawn of nineteenth century. This stage is the final and most important stage in the Comte system. In this stage, the main search for original causes is abandoned or in other words, people drop nonscientific ideas as super beings and mysterious forces. Instead, they look for invarinat natural laws that govern all phenomena. The search involved both emperical research and theorizing. Comte further differentiated between concrete and abstract laws. “Concrete laws” must come inductively from emperical research, while “abstract laws” must be derived from theory. Comte was more interested in creating abstract laws than concrete laws. Comte believes that evolution of three stages is parallel to mental progress. So, corresponding to the three stages of mental progress there are three epochs of society. The theological and metaphysical are dominated by military values. The positive stage is the advent of Industrial society. Thus, Comte identified two major type of societies :

1. Theological - Military Society
2. Scientific - Industrial Society

According to Comte, a certain type of society was dying another being born before his eyes. The dying type is theological military and the type being born is scientific-industrial. Scientists are replacing priests or theologians as the social category providing the intellectual and moral foundation of the social order. The scientists are inheriting the spiritual power of the priests. Spiritual power, according to Comte, is the model of pre-dominant ways of thinking

and the ideas which serve as the basis of the social order.’ Moreover, just as the scientists are replacing the priests, the industrialists are replacing the warriors i.e. the war of man against man. Comte believed that modern society was in crisis because one social order was being disappearing and another social order was being born. The norms of earlier social order are not applicable in modern society and the norms of modern society are still to be born. Comte was the observer of the contradiction between two social type. He believes that this contradiction can be resolved only by the triumph of social type which is scientific and industrial. The victory is inevitable, but it can be retarded or accelerated.

Comte applied the law of three stages in number of different arenas,. He saw child as theologian, the adolescent as metaphysician and the adult as positivist. He also saw all the sciences in his hierarchy going through each of these stages. According to Comte, Sociology is a new science and it had not yet gone through the positivistic stage. Comte devoted much of his life to the development of positivistic Sociology.

#### **1.4.2 Order and Progress :**

Comte was a positivist, believes that positivism is possible only through the search for invariant laws. But he also used positivism as the opposite of negativism. More specifically, negativity was the moral and political disorder and chaos that occurred in France and throughout western Europe in the wake of French revolution of 1789. Comte’s positive Philosophy was designed to counter the negative philosophy. Comte also found source of disorder *i.e.* negativism in intellectual anarchy. Comte traced that intellectual anarchy to the co-existence, during his life time, of all three “incompatible” philosophies—theological, metaphysical and positivism. Due to the co-existence of three different philosophies at one point of time, there was a confusion in society. Though theology and metaphysics were in decay and positivism was still to develop perfectly, this intellectual crisis can be solved only when one of such philosophy will emerge as dominant ideology of the society. According to Comte law, the one that was destined to emerge supreme was positivism. Positivism had already become bread and butter with in the sciences and had brought order

to each where previously there was a chaos.

Comte held the issue of positivism in terms of two of his great concerns 'order' and 'progress'. For Comte, theology offered a system of order without progress, it was a stagnant system. Metaphysics offered progress without order, he associated it with the anarchy of his time in which things were changing in a dizzying and disorderly ways. Because of the co-existence of theology and metaphysics, Comte's time was marked by disorder and lack of progress. Positivism was the only system that offers both order and progress. On one hand, it will bring progress through increase in knowledge and through perfection of the relationship among the parts of the social system so that society would move nearer. Thus, positivism is the only stage in the history of humankind that offers us both order and progress.

Comte saw order progress in dialectical terms. He refused to see order and progress as separate entities but viewed them as mutually defining and interpenetrating. Progress may be regarded simply as the development of order, for the order of nature necessarily contains within itself the germ of all positive progress. Progress then in its essence identical with order and upon as order made manifest.

Above discussion on order and progress clearly shows that, though Comte's aim was to establish sociology with positivism as its base but he was also interested to use positivism to counter negativism that prevailed in society during his time. He clearly shows that both order and progress can go hand in hand only in positive stage.

**Comtean Positivism** has the following points which as a student has to remember : August Comte

1. Described the history of human thought through three states : theological, metaphysical, positive.
2. Claimed there was a unity and hierarchy of sciences moving from the most abstract and mathematical to the most complex and organic.
3. General scientific method involves observation, comparison and experiment, but methods should be discipline specific.
4. Science proceeds from theories which are tested against observation (*i.e.* deductive, not inductive).

5. Aim of science is to develop laws which can resist prediction and intervention.  
(Ray : 43)

**Let us Sum up :**

Comte was the first thinker to use the term Sociology and defined it as a positivistic science. Majority of contemporary Sociologists continue to see sociology as a positivistic science and believed in the search of invariable laws.

While Comte’s work is badly dated in many respects, it is surprisingly contemporary in terms of its methodological pronouncements. Comte articulated three major methods for Sociology-observation, experiment and comparison which continues to be widely used in sociology. He believed that positivism should be used to stabilize the society or to counter the negativism with in the society. He argued that both order and progress are necessary for society. He applied his positivism on the evolution of society based on evolution theology, metaphysical and positivism. Comte shows that both order and progress is possible only in positivistic stage which is the ultimate stage of his scheme of “Law of Three Stages”.

**Check Your Progress**

1. “Positivism is a search of invariant laws,” comment?

Ans, \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. Explain law of three stages given by Comte and show, how the positivism is the ultimate stage?

Ans, \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. “Every Branch of knowledge including sciences passess through the laws of three stages.” Comment?

Ans, \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. What is the methodology given by Comte which can be used in search of invariant laws?

Ans, \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Social statics and Social dynamics are the two basic categories of Auguste Comte’s Sociology. Statics consist of analysing the social consensus. A society is comparable to a living organism. It is impossible to study the functioning of an organ without placing it in the context of living creature. Thus, social statics consist of society’s structure at one hand and on the other analysis of elements which at given movement determine consensus.

Dynamics consists of the description of the successive stages through which human society pass. Social dynamics retrace the successive and necessary stages of the development of human mind and of human society. As social statics has revealed the essential order of human society, social, dynamics will ultimately retrace the viccizitudes through which its fundamental order has passed before arriving at final goal of positivism.

### **1.5 SOCIAL STATICS**

Comte defined sociological study of social statics as “the investigation of the

laws of the action and reaction of the different parts of the social system”. Deriving his thoughts from biology. Comte developed a perspective on parts of society, the way in which they function and their relationship with the larger social system. Comte also saw the parts and the whole of the social system into the state of harmony. Mythologically, Comte recommended that since we know about the whole, we start with it and then proceed to the parts. For these and many reasons Comte is often seen as a forerunner of structural functionalism.

The system of social statics conceived by Comte never really existed, it was an idealized model of the social world at a given point in time.

Comte explicitly defined sociology as the macro-level study of “collective existence”. This statement is manifested in his treatment of social statics i.e. the inter-relationship among the parts and the whole of the social system.

### **1.5.1 Individual and Social System**

In Comte’s work, ‘individual’ is the major source of energy in the social system. It is the emotions in the individual that gives energy and direction to people’s intellectual activities. It is the product of that intellectual activities that leads to change the larger social system. So Comte’s thoughts on individuals are important not only to understand social statics but also for comprehending many other aspects of his work.

Comte sees the individual as imperfect, dominated by “lower” forms of egoism rather than “higher” more special form of altruism. In fact, Comte sees this dominance of egoism as rooted in the brain, which is viewed as having both egoistic and altruistic regions. To Comte, the chief problem of human life is the need for altruism to dominate egoism. He sees all social science as being concerned with this problem and with the development of various solutions to it.

Because of egoism, people are left to themselves and act in a selfish manner. To create a better world, the selfish motives of individuals must be controlled so that altruistic impulses will emerge. Since egoism cannot be controlled from within the individual, the controls must come from outside the

individual, the society. Comte argues that “true liberty is nothing else than a rational submission to the laws of nature.”

Comte distinguish four basic categories of individual instincts nutrition, sex, destruction and constructions, and pride and vanity. Clearly, all but the constructive instincts are in need of external control. Larger social structures like the family and society are needed to restrain individual egoism and to bring forth individual altruism.

Comte concludes, “this need for conforming our acts and our thoughts to a necessity without us, for from hampering the real development of our nature, forms the first general condition of progress towards perfection in man.”

### **1.5.2 Collective Phenomena**

Comte explain “As every system must be composed of elements of the same nature with itself, the scientific spirit forbids us to regard society as composed of individuals.” Here Comte focus on “Collective Phenomena” and clearly shows that his sociology begins at macro-level with family as “fundamental institution”. Comte believes that individual constitute a different level of analysis than families which are nothing but our smallest society. These “smaller societies” form the natural building blocks of larger society. Methodologically, a system can only be formed out of units similar to itself and differing only in magnitude. Individual constitute microscopic units and society cannot be formed out of them. Families are similar and smaller macroscopic units and therefore they can be the basis of larger society. The family is not only the building block of the society but also serves to integrate the individual and society, since it is through family that people learn to be social.

Thus, it is the family that must play a crucial role in the control of egoistic impulses and the emergence of individual altruism. Since family is such a pivotal institution, a change in it will have a profound effects, on both individuals and the larger society.

Another important social institution of Comte interest is religion. He identifies two basic function of religion.

1. It serves to regulate individual's life by subsiding egoism and elevating altruism.

2. Fostering social relationships among people, thereby providing the basis for the emergence of large-scale structures.

About language Comte argues that language promotes unity among people. Language is also crucial to religion, it permits the formation, transmission and application of religious ideas.

“Division of labour” according to Comte enhances social solidarity in a system in which individuals are dependent on others. This also makes people to occupy positions on the basis of their abilities and training.

All above discussion shows that Comte was more interested in collective phenomena than individual but it is also important to know about individual, to understand social statics, their egoism and altruism..

## **1.6 SOCIAL DYNAMICS**

According to Auguste Comte, ‘Social dynamics’ is the “theory of natural progress of Human society”. The goal of Comte’s social dynamics is to study the laws of succession of social phenomena. Comte believes that there is a evolutionary process in which society is progressing in a steady fashion to its final harmonious destiny under the law of positivism. In his view, society invariably follows this law of progressive development only its speed from one time period or one society to another may vary.

Comte theory of evolution of society is based on his theory of mind through the three stages. He further focuses on the study of world history and offered a dialectal sense of history of the world. Comte saw the roots of each succeeding stage in the history in its prior stage. In addition, each stage prepared the ground for the next stage. In other words, each stage is dialectically related to past and future stages. Comte concluded, “the laws originally deduced from an abstract examination of human nature have been demonstrated to be real laws explaining the entire course of the destinies of human race.”



### **1.6.1 History :**

Comte focus on history is important to understand Comte's Sociology especially social dynamics. He found, how changing nature of ideas leads to successive stages in the human history.

He beings with theological stage, which he traces to antiquity. He divides the theological stage into three succeeding periods-fetishistic, polytheistic and monotheistic. In the early fetishistic stage, people personify external objects, give them lives like their own, then defy those objects. Much later polytheism in Egypt, Greece and Rome developed. Finally, Comte analysis the rise of monotheism. Although all of these are part of the theological stage, but they possess the germs of the positivism that was to emerge at much later point in history.

Comte sees the fourteenth century as a crucial turning point, when Catholicism was undermined and replaced by protestantism, which Comte sees a nothing more than a growing protest against the old social order's intellectual basis i.e. theology. This, for Comte, represents the beginning of the negativity that he sought to counter act with his positivism. For Comte, negative doctrine was developed by French thinkers like Voltaire (1649–1778) and Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778), to whom Comte did not sees as systematic thinkers. More generally, this entire period was the transitional period, the metaphysical stage, between theology and positivism.

Comte saw this period as focus on individual and the metaphysical notion of individual rights. He argued, “a focus on individual rights furthered the tendency towards disorder and choose”. Comte was interested in society based on positive ideas of duties rather than on individual rights. The idea of duties was seen as a positive notion both because it was more scientific and because it had influence on people egoism as well as negativity of the day. Instead of focusing on their individual rights, people will urged to concentrate on their duties to larger society.

### **Let us Sum Up**

Comte's concept of Social Statics and social dynamics laid down the foundation

of future theoretical concepts of Structure and Function. In social statics be focused on both micro and macro social elements i.e. both individual and collectivity. Though Comte Sociology begins with collectivity but it is also important to understand individual and how individual (micro) lays the foundation of small society like family (building blocks of society) and ultimately of society (macro).

In social dynamics, Comte retraces the world history on the basis of his law of three stages. He founds that society begins with the theological stage and through metaphysical, reaches to the ultimate stage of positivism.

### **Check Your Progress**

1. Identify Social statics and Social dynamics with Comte's concept of order and progress.

Ans, \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. Which is the fundamental institution of society according to Comte how it forms the building blocks of society?

Ans, \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. How world history is related with social dynamics in Comte's theory.

Ans, \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Biographical Sketch

## HERBERT SPENCER : SOCIAL DARWINISM

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**B. A. Semester–IIIrd**

**Lesson No. 2**

**Sociology**

**Unit - I**

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### STRUCTURE

- 2.1 Biographical Sketch
- 2.2 Main Works
- 2.3 Spencers Theory of Evolution
- 2.4 Spencer's Theory of Organic Analogy
- 2.5 Social Darwinism
- 2.6 Types of Society
- 2.7 Check Your Progress

#### 2.1 BRIEF BIOGRAPHIC SKETCH

**Herbert Spencer** (1820-1903) was a prominent British social thinker of the 19th century. He is often called "the second founding father of sociology". he is known to the world as a great social philosopher, a famous evolutionist, a strong defender of individualism and a prolific writer. It is said that Spencer undertook to create what Comte envisaged to do. he made sociology an all encompassing science.

Spencer who is considered one of the most brilliant intellects of modern times was a British engineer and an editor, a philosopher and a sociologist. Spencer was a selftaught man and hence his learning was highly selective.

Spencer was born on April 27, 1820, in Derby in England in a middle class family. He was the oldest of the nine children and the only survivor in George Spencer's family. Due to his all-health he could not go to any conventional school. He received

some education from his father. His family members were highly individualistic in their outlook and Spencer also inherited the same tradition. At the age of 13, he went to the home of his uncle from whom he received his further education. The education which he received from his father and the uncle was more scientific than anything else. Hence, Spencer decided to pursue his scientific interest. In 1837, he joined the staff of the London and Birmingham Railway as an engineer. But he gave up the work within a short time and returned home to Derby.

Spencer shifted his attention to journalism and became an editor of the *Economist*, one of the greatest English publications. During the five years of his stay within '*Economist*', he developed relations with a number of people in the world of advanced journalism. Even while working as a journalist, he found time to finish his first book, '*Social Statics*'-1851. The book was well received by the radical public. In 1853, he resigned from his post and decided to earn his living as an independent writer. A sizeable sum of money which he got from his uncle soon after his death, also provided him the courage to take risk of resigning from his job. He remained all through his life a private scholar without regular job or institutional attachment. He also remained a lifelong bachelor with strict discipline.

Spencer slowly resorted to writing career. By 1850, he had completed his first major work "*Social Statics*". During the writing of this book, Spencer began to suffer from insomnia. His physical and mental problems mounted over the years. He continued to suffer from a series of nervous breakdown throughout the rest of his life.

Spencer never earned a university degree or held an academic position. Surprisingly, Spencer's productivity as a scholar increased in spite of his isolation and physical and mental illness. In 1855, Spencer published his second book, "*The Principles of Psychology*". This, however, did not become popular. In the meantime, Spencer suffered from a nervous illness. He could hardly overcome it completely. He had to remain as a psychic cripple throughout his life. He used to take often a heavy dose of opium to overcome his insomnia. Since then he could read and write only for a few hours a day. In spite of his unfavorable mental conditions he produced scholarly books such as *First Principles*, *Principles of Biology*, *Principles of Ethics*, *Principles of Sociology*, *The Study of Sociology*, etc.

Spencer earned international reputation for his scholarly writings. Leading thinkers of the day such as J.S. Mill, Thomas Huxley, Tyndall, Charles Darwin and others had great appreciation for his writings and thoughts. Like his predecessor Comte, he too was unwilling to read the works of other people in order to preserve the purity of his thought. He even ignored those ideas that did not agree with his. His contemporary, Charles Darwin said of Spencer: "If he had trained himself to observe more, even at the expense of.....some loss of thinking power, he would have been a wonderful man."

Spencer also wrote on the most controversial issues of the day such as - opposition to Boer War, proposal for the introduction of the metric system in England etc. He used to write on political issues also. Due to his deteriorating mental conditions Spencer had to live the last few years in almost complete isolation from human society. He died on December 8, 1903, at the age of 83.

## **2.2 MAIN WORKS OF SPENCER**

### **\* On Philosophy and Religion**

1. The Nature and Reality of Religion, 1885 [withdrawn from publication].

### **\* Series of Books on Synthetic Philosophy**

2. The Principles, 1862.
3. The Principles, of Biology, 2 volumes, 1864-67.
4. The Principles of Psychology, 1855.
5. The Principles of Sociology, 3 volumes, 1876-96.
6. The Principles of Ethics, 2 volumes, 1892-93.
7. Descriptive Sociology, 2 volumes, 1873-94.

### **\* On Political and Social Matters**

8. The Proper Sphere of Government, 1843.
9. Social Statics, 1851.
10. Education: Intellectual, Moral, Physical, 1861.
11. The Study of Sociology, 1872.
12. The Man Versus The State, 1884.

13. Data of Ethics, 1893.
14. Facts and Comments, 1902.

\* **Other Works**

- (a) Essay : Scientific, Political and Speculative, 3 volumes, 1891.
- (b) Autobiography, 1904, an intellectual rather than a personal autobiography.

[Source: The New Encyclopaedia Britannica. Vol 11. Page : 83]

### **2.3 SPENCER'S THEORY OF EVOLUTION**

"Evolutionary Theory" or "The Laws of Evolution" is often regarded as the greatest contribution of the British sociologist Herbert Spencer to the realm of social thought. Spencer's ideals have left an indelible impression on the succeeding writers. It is true that his social theories have caused more controversy than those of any other writer in the sociological field. The controversies that his ideas created, of course, will not obscure the important role that he had played in enriching the field of social thought.

#### **"Evolution" - The Most Exciting Concept of the 19th Century**

"Evolution" was one of the most exciting ideas of the 19th century. Its most influential sponsor was the naturalist Charles Darwin. Darwin developed the concept of "Evolution" in his "Origin of Species - 1859" Spencer, the sociological giant of the second half of the 19th century, was enamoured by the ideas of evolution. He applied the principle of evolution to the social world and called it "social evolution" He saw social evolution as "a set of stages through which all the societies moved from simple to the complex and from the homogenous to the heterogeneous."

#### **Meaning of the Concept of "Evolution"**

The term "evolution" comes from the Latin word "evolvere" which means "to develop" or to "unfold". It closely corresponds to the Sanskrit word "Vikas". Evolution literally means gradual "unfolding" or "unrolling". It indicates changes from "within" and not from "without", it is spontaneous, but not automatic.

It must take place on its own accord. It implies continuous change that takes

place especially in some structure. The concept applies more precisely to the internal growth of an organism.

### **Meaning of "Social Evolution"**

The term "evolution" is borrowed from biological science to sociology. The term "organic evolution" is replaced by "social evolution" in sociology. Whereas the term "organic evolution" is used to denote the evolution of organism, the expression "social evolution" is used to explain the evolution of human society. Here the term implies the evolution of man's social relations. It was hoped that the theory of social evolution would explain the origin and development of man. Anthropologists and sociologists wanted to find a satisfactory and significant explanation of how our society evolved. They wanted an explanation in this regard rather than a description. They were impressed by the idea of organic evolution which could convincingly explain how one species evolves into another, and wanted to apply the same to the social world. Hence the concept of social evolution is quite popular in sociological discussion. It was Herbert Spencer who made the concepts of "evolution" and "social evolution" the central concepts in his sociological theories.

### **Spencer's Theory of Evolution**

As L.A. Coser has pointed out the "evolutionary principles" or "the law of evolution" constitutes the very basis of Spinterism. Spencerian interpretations relating to "evolution" could be divided into two parts **(A) General Theory of Evolution, and (B) Theory of Social Evolution.** In his book "First Principles"-1862 we get his views about the first theory, and information and interpretations about the second theory, are available in his sociological treaties namely, "The Study of Sociology" and "The Principles of Sociology".

#### **A. GENERAL THEORY OF EVOLUTION**

Spencer's Theory of Social Evolution" is grounded in his "General Theory of Evolution." But the evolutionary perspective as such, Spencer borrowed from Charles Darwin's "Theory of Organic Evolution".

### **Spencer's Concept of "Universal Evolution"**

Spencer made "evolution" a universal principles in is treatise "First Principles." The fundamental principle behind every phenomenon or every development whether it is physical or social in nature, there is the supreme law of evolution operating. The law of evolution, according to him, is the supreme law of every becoming.

According to Spencer, "evolution is a change from a state of relatively indefinite, incoherent homogeneity to a definite coherent heterogeneity."

For Spencer, this law of evolution was universal in character for it was applicable to the physical, organic and the social world. Spencer was of the opinion that this universal process of evolution would explain the "earliest change which the universe at large is supposed to have undergone....."It also explain the law of evolution "as a master key to the riddles of the universe."

### **Three Basic Law as Proposed by Spencer**

Within the framework of universal evolution, Spencer developed his "three basic laws" and his "four secondary prepositions"- each building upon each and all upon the doctrine of evolution.

#### **The Three Basic Laws**

**1. Law of Peristence of Energy or Force :** There is a persistence of force in the world. There is the persistence of some sustaining energy in which all phenomena are rooted and upon which all phenomena rest. But this force or energy itself lies beyond our knowledge. This is a major, irreducible fact which we cannot explain, but which we are obliged simply to accept.

**2. The Law of Indestructibility of Matter :** The basic elements of matter and energy in the world are neither created nor destroyed, ut conserved. It means there is a basic "indestructibility" of the elements of matter.

**3. The Law of Continuity of Motion :** There is a continuous motion in the world. All things continue in motion. As it is in the case of matter, motion also cannot be stopped or destroyed. When the form of the matter changes, motion also changes. Though energy passes from one form to another, it always persists, and never disappears nor does it get extinguished.

#### **Four Secondary Propositions or Laws**



In relation to the evolutionary process, Spencer has mentioned four secondary propositions or laws in addition to the three basic laws. They are as follows .

**(a) Uniformity of Law :** There is a persistence of certain relationship among the forces in the world. The world is an order of elements. Recurring manifestations of events in the natural world, the forces, elements of matter and relations of motion existing among them have a definite regularity.

**(b) Law of Transformation and Equivalence of Forces :** The force, the elements of matter, the motion, are never lost or dissipated entirely in a process of change. They are merely transformed into the manifestation of some other event or some other form of existence.

**(c) The Law of Least Resistance and Great Attraction :** There is the tendency of every thing [all forces and elements] to move along the line of least resistance and of greatest attraction.

**(d) The Principle of Alternative or Rhythm of Motion :** All phenomena in nature have their own particular rate and rhythm of movement, of duration and development. Force, matter and motion, each of these, has its appropriate pattern of transformation.

### **Evolutionary Theory - A Joint Product of the Seven Laws**

It is significant to note that Spencer derived from these basic propositions his "laws of evolution". According to Spencer, when we examine the nature of both order and change in any kind of phenomena in the world we find that the pattern of transformation is the same, and could be formulated in the following words.

"Evolution is an integration of matter and concomitant dissipation of motion, during which the matter passes from relatively indefinite incoherent homogeneity to a relatively definite coherent homogeneity."

"According to Spencer, all the phenomena of nature, the stars and planetary systems, the earth and all terrestrial phenomena, biological organisms and the development of species and all the changing psychological and sociological process of human experience and behaviour - followed this pattern of change. All process of change are similar, in that they emerge out of the physical stuff of the world.....in this condition

of organised complexity; from a condition of indefiniteness to a condition of definiteness....."1 This we how Spencer made evolution a universally applicable system of analysis. Spencer thus made applicable the laws of evolution to analyse the development and evolution o the human society. It is in this context he gave birth to "the theory of social evolution."

## **B. SOCIAL EVOLUTION THEORY**

Two of the main books written by Spencer namely,(i) "The Study of Sociology", (ii) "The Principles of Sociology", provide us more details about his "theory of social evolution" Just as "the theory of organic evolution" analyses the birth, development, evolution and finally death of the organism, in the same manner "the theory of social evolution" analyse the genesis, development, evolution and finally the decay (?) of the society.

Spencer was of the opinion that the evolutionary principle could be applied to the human society for he treated human society as an organism. Both the organism and the society grow from simple to complex and from homogeneous to heterogeneous.

As Abraham and Morgan have pointed out "Spencer's Theory of Evolution" involves two essential but interrelated trends or strains of thought.

(i) Change from simplicity to complexity or movement from simple society to various levels of compound societies, and

(ii) Change from military society to industrial society.

### **(i) Change from Simplicity to Complexity, or Movement from Simple Society to Various Levels of Compound Society**

As Spencer repeatedly argued all phenomena in all fields proceed from simplicity to complexity. Societies also undergo evolutionary stages of development. Spencer identified four types of societies in terms of stages of their evolutionary development - simple, compound, doubly compound and trebly compound.

**(a) Simple Society :** This is the most primitive society without any

complexities and consisting of several families.

(b) **Compound Society** : A large number of above mentioned simple societies make a compound society. This is clan society

(c) **Doubly Compound Society** : These consist of several clans compounded into nation tribes or tribal society.

(d) **Treble Compound Society** : Here the tribes are organised into nation states. This is the present form of the world.

The master trend in this process of universal evolution is the increased differentiation of social structures which leads inevitably to better integration and adaptation to environment.

## (ii) **Change From Military [Militant] Society to Industrial Society**

According to Spencer, evolution proceeds from military society to industrial society. The type of social structure depends on the relation of a society to other societies in its significant characteristics.

(i) Thus while the military society is characterized by compulsory co-operation, industrial society is based on voluntary co-operation.

(ii) While the military society has a centralized government, the industrial society has a decentralized government.

(iii) Military society has economic autonomy whereas it is not found in industrial society.

(iv) There is the domination of the state over all other social organisations in the military society whereas in the industrial society the functions of the states are very much limited.

## **Some Observations Relating to Spencer's "Theory of Social Evolution"**

**1. Social Evolution is also as Rigid as Organic Evolution** : It can be said that Spencer had a belief in the unilinear evolution of mankind. It means "The mankind's progress through stages of development is as rigidly determined as the evolution of individuals from childhood to maturity." "As between infancy and maturity

there is no short cut.....so there is no way from the lower forms of social life to the higher, but one passing through small successive modification.....The process cannot be abridged and must be gone through with due patience." - Spencer wrote in his "Study of Sociology."

**2. Is Evolution Bound to Move Towards Progress :** It could be questioned whether Spencer believed that evolution, the law of becoming, was directed towards progress. Spencer had claimed that the ever-present process of evolution was inevitably leading towards progress. He believed that "man by nature was pre-destined to progress." Spencer in his earlier writings pictures the process of evolution as unremitting, unrelenting, and ever present. "The change from the homogeneous to the heterogeneous is displayed in the progress of civilization as a whole, as well as in the progress of every nation; and it is still going on with increasing rapidity."

Though Spencer very strongly asserted in the beginning that evolution is inevitably and unremittingly heading towards progress, the political developments that took place in England at the fag end of the 19th century made him suspect the power of evolution to promise progress always. He felt that "Evolution is not endless progress.....There is a limit to it after which distintegration and death take place. Moreover, distintegration is also gradual and involves a process of evolution in reverse. Evolution is thus cyclical in nature."1.

**3. The Process of Equilibrium involved in Evolution :** According to Spencer, evolution is a process heading towards equilibrium. He wrote: "A social organism like an individual organism, undergoes modifications until it comes into equilibrium with envioning conditions; and thereupon continues without further change of structure....."2 The so called equilibrium will be established through what Darwin called "The struggle for existence." Once the equilibrium is established societies will obtain greater freedom and peace. Since societies and institutions are subjects to the "automatic process of" evolution they do not have the capacity to alter the conditions but will have no adjust to the conditions.

## **CRITICAL REMARKS**

**Comments in Appreciation.....**

**1. As Bogardus has** pointed out, "Spencer emphasised the laws of evolution and natural ausation. He described social evolution as a phase of natural evolution"<sup>3</sup>.

**2. Spencer has** made the principles of evolution universal in character. It is indeed, remarkable intellectual exercise.

**3. Spencer's** work inspired the British social thought to a great extent. "L.T. Hobhouse, G.C. Wheeler, and in later generation, Morris Ginsberg continued work in his general evolutionary addition while rejecting his anti-reformist individualism. In America, W.G. Summer.....may be said have been a disciple of Spencer, Ward, Cooley, Veblen, Giddings, Ross and Park, whether agreeing with his ideas or using them as a springboard for dissent, were all in Spencer's debt."<sup>4</sup>.

**4. According to Bogardus,** "Spencer deserves credit, however, for developing the concept o social evolution as a phase of natural evolution and for stressing the idea of natural sequences in ceitary matters."<sup>4</sup>.

**5. Abraham and Morgan** have rightly commented: "No one after Spencer ever matched either sheer volume of sociological writing nor made more significant contributions to the science of man society."<sup>6</sup>

### **Comments Against Spencer's Views**

1. No modern sociologist subscribes to the "theory of social evolution" in its original form as put forward by Spencer. His attempt to equalize evolution with progress is totally rejected. But its modified form known as "Theory of Neo-Evolution" advocated by the anthropologists like, Leslie White, V. Gordon Childe and others, is getting some publicity in the anthropological circles.

**2. Bogardus is unhappy** with Spencer's theory of social evolution for it underestimates the importance of man. He writes; "The emphasis upon 'man' as a primary unit neglects the importance the 'group' in the social evolutionary process. Moreover, Sweeper underrated the intellectual structure of primitive man; he denied to early man the qualities involving exclusiveness of thought, agination, and original ideas."<sup>7</sup>

**3. Spencer** had spoken of uniformity in the process of evolution. He "did not realise that societies the same stage of evolution do not necessarily posts identical politics, ethics, art and religion."<sup>1</sup>

4. "While Spencer believed that social part exists for the social whole, today, society is believed exist for the welfare of the individuals."2

## **2.4 SPENCER'S THEORY OF ORGANIC ANALOGY**

Spencer is popularly known for his treatment of the organic analogy. The evolutionary doctrine no doubt the foundation of Spencer's sociological theory. He, however, presented the organic analogy, as a secondary doctrine which also played a vital role in his thought system. "He established the hypothesis that society, is like a biological organism and then proceeded to defend it against all objections with great logical force." But his logic proved to be his sociological downfall, for it spoiled his scientific insight.

Herbert Spencer came to sociology via biology. Therefore he drew analogy between the society great detail the organic analogy which is the identification of society with a biological organism. Indeed, he regarded the recognition of similarity between society and organism as a major step towards a general theory of evolution. He concentrated on bringing forth wonderful parallels between organic fact, biological analogies occupy an important role in all of Spencer's sociological reasoning.

### **Similarities Between Biological and Social Organism - As visualised by Spencer**

**1. Similarity in Visible Growth :** Both society and organism are distinguished from inorganic matter by means of their visible growth. Thus both society and the organism are subject to growth. Example : A child grows up to be a man ; a tiny community becomes a metropolitan area; a small state becomes an empire, and so on.

**2. An Increase in the Complexity of Structure :** As both society and organisms grow in size they also increase in complexity of structure. Primitive organism [like amaeba] are simple whereas the highest organisms [like the mammals] are very complex, Primitive community was very simple whereas the modern industrial society is highly complex.

**3. Differentiation of Structure Leading to Differentiation of Functions:** In societies and in organism progressive differentiation of structure is accompanied by progressive differentiation of function. It is quite obvious. The primitive living organism was a unicellular creature; but with the increase in the cells, differentiation of organs

resulted, at the highest levels of evolution the structure of the body is quite complex. Similar is the case with society. In the case of an organism that has very complex organs, each organ performs a specified function. Similarly, in the case of complex society subdivided into many different organisations, each organisation carries on a specified function.

**4. Change in Structure Leads to Change in Function :** When change takes place in the structure of organs and communities, there results a change in their functions. The function becomes more and more specialised. This applies to the body of a living creature as well as to the society.

**5. Differentiation as well as Harmony of Organs :** Evolution establishes for both societies and organisms, differences in structure and function that make each other possible. Evolution leads to development or greater differentiation of the organs of society as also that of an individual. Along with this differentiation there is also the harmony between various organs. Each organ is complementary to the other and not opposed. This holds true both in the body of a living organism and society.

**6. Loss of an Organ does not Necessarily Result in the Loss of Organism :** Both society and the individual are organisms. It is common to both that a loss of one organ or the other does not necessarily result in the death of an organism. For example, if an individual loses his leg he does not necessarily meet with his death. Similarly, in society if some association or a political party disintegrates it does not invariably lead to the decay of the society.

**7. Similar Process and Methods of Organisations :** In discussing the organic analogy further Spencer compared-

(i) The alimentary system of an organism to the productive industries, or the sustaining system in the society.

(ii) There is a strong parallelism between the circulation system of an organism and the distributing system in society with its transportation lines and with its commercial classes and media of exchange.

(iii) In both the cases there are developed regulating system. In society, there is the social control mechanism to fulfil the regulative function. In an organism there are

dominant centres and subordinate centres, the senses, and a neural apparatus to perform the tasks of the regulating system.

These parallelisms throw only a small measure of light upon the nature of society. But they become ridiculous when carried to an extreme.

### **Differences Between Organism and Society - As Visualised by Spencer**

Spencer had recognised important differences between societies and organisms. He said, "the parts of an animal form a concrete whole, but the parts of society form a whole which is discrete. While the living units, composing the one are bound together in close contact; the living units composing the other, are free, are not in contact, and are more or less widely dispersed. "In simple words, the organism is a concrete, integrated whole whereas society is a whole composed of discrete and dispersed elements.

The main differences between the society and a living organism which cannot be overlooked were noted by Spencer. They are listed below :

#### **1. Organs are Organised, but parts of Society are Independent**

As Spencer has observed various organs of the body are incapable of independent existence, whereas various parts of society can exist independently. Example : Limbs of the organism such as legs, hands, face, etc. cannot have existence outside the physical body of the organism. But the parts of society such as family, school, army, police, political parties, etc. are relatively independent and are not organically fixed to the society. The movement of the parts is relatively free here.

#### **2. Society does not have a Definite Form as does the Organism**

Unlike organisms, societies have not specific external form, such as a physical body with limbs or a face. Organisms have an outward form or shape [for example, dog, donkey, monkey, deer and so on] whereas societies such as Indian society or American society do not have any definite and externally identifiable form. Society is only a mental construct. It is abstract and exists in our mind only in the form of idea.

#### **3. Manner of Difference in the Dependence of Organ or Parts on the**



## **Organism or Society**

According to Spencer, parts or organs of the body [such as legs, hands, nose, eyes, heads, etc.] of the organism are dependent upon the body itself. They exist for the sake of the body. On the other hand, in the case of society the parts [such as individuals, families, groups, etc.] are more important than the society. In fact, society exists for the benefit of its parts, that is, individuals. Spencer as a champion of the philosophy of individualism very strongly felt that the state and society exist for the good of the individual and not vice versa.

### **4. Difference Regarding the Centrality of "Consciousness".**

In an organism, there exists what is known as "consciousness" and it is concerned in a small part of the aggregate. The parts of the body do not have this. But in the case of the society consciousness is diffused throughout the individual members.

### **5. Differences Regarding the Structure and Function**

In the case of organism each of its parts performs a definite and fixed functions. The parts perform their functions incessantly. This certainty relating to the functions of the parts, we do not find in society. Functions of the parts of society such as institutions, often get changed. Some of the functions of family, for example, have changed. On the contrary, the eyes, heart, nerves, ears, tongue and other organs of the organism cannot change their functions.

It is quite interesting to note that Spencer made an elaborate effort to establish the similarities and differences between organic and social Life. He persistently endeavoured to establish the organic analogy as the central theme of the second part of his "Principles of Sociology". But at one stage he denied that he held to this doctrine of organic analogy. Replying to critics he made statements such as the following : "I have used analogies, but only as a scaffolding to help in building up a coherent body of sociological induction. Let us take away the scaffolding: the induction will stand by themselves."<sup>1</sup>.

## **Critical Comments**

1. Spencer used his analogy in a ridiculous manner when he compared the King's Council to the medulla oblongata, the House of Lords to the cerebellum, and the

House of Commons to the cerebrum. He failed to understand the limitations of his analogy.

2. Spencer used his analogy in a very dogmatic manner, but later referred to it as merely a scaffolding for buildings a structure of deductions. He actually proceeded as if the scaffolding were the real building. "Unfortunately, he consistently and conspicuously used the terminology of organicism. Moreover, one chapter of Principles of Sociology is entitled "Society Is an Organism."2.

3. The organic analogy was used by thinkers in their discussions even prior to Spencer. But Spencer was the first to give that analogy the value of scientific theory. But he was very definitely taken a prisoner by the ghost he had evoked.

4. If a society is like an organism, it experiences a natural cycle of birth, maturity, old age, and death, But the death of a society does not come with organic inevitableness. A society need not die.

5. Whether we accept or reject Spencer's comparisons between the human society and the organism, we are bound to acknowledge the fact that he popularised the concept of "system" in our sociological discussion. Present-day sociology profusely uses Spencer's concept of "system", of course, in a modified form.

## **2.5 SOCIAL DARWINISM**

### **Meaning of the Concept of "Social Darwinism"**

"**Social Darwinism**" a 19th century adaption of Charles Darwin's theory of evolution is a theoretical explanation of human social life in general and social inequality in particular."1.

"The term Social Darwinism refers to any doctrine which makes use of misuse of Charles Darwin's biological evolutionary principles to explain or justify the existing forms of human social organisations."2

**Herbert Spencer** of Britain and **W.G. Sumner [1840-1910]** of America can be considered the two prominent advocates of the theory of "Social Darwinism." There is an attempt in this theory to extend the principles of evolution to explain the developments taking place in the social world.

Spencer's "Social Darwinism" centred around two fundamental principles:

## **1. The Principle of "Survival of the Fittest:**

According to Spencer, nature is endowed with a providential tendency to get rid of the unfit and to make room for the better. It is the law of the nature that the weak should be eliminated for the sake of the strong. He believed that the rapid elimination of unfit individuals from society through natural selection would benefit the race biologically. It is for this reason that the state should do nothing to relieve the conditions of poor, whom Spencer assumed to be "less fit". By less fit, Spencer meant less healthy and less intelligent than the social norm. According to Spencer, stupid persons, people with vices and idleness, people who become victims of sickness and deformity and such other persons belong to the category of less fit. Due to the operation of the laws of evolution only the "more fit" persons will survive and the "less fit" ones will decline on their own. By this, Spencer did not however, mean that "widows and orphans should be left to struggle for life or death." He was only opposed to governmental assistance to the "less fit". But he did not oppose individual philanthropy. As a strong supporter of individualism Spencer maintained that "the economic system works best if each individual is allowed to seek his own private interests and that consequently the state should not intervene in the economy."<sup>3</sup>

## **2. The Principle of Non-Interference**

Spencer who championed the ideology of Social Darwinism also became a very strong advocate of individualism and laissez-faire politics. Spencer opposed almost all forms of state interference with private property. "He insisted that the state had no business in education, health and sanitation, postal service, money and banking, regulation of housing conditions or the elimination of poverty. Money used for such activities could better be spent "to support labourers employed in new productive works - land - drainage, machine building etc."<sup>4</sup> According to Spencer, state was just like a joint stock company, whose primary business was protection of the rights of individuals and defending the interests of its citizens against external aggression.

Views of Comte were different in this regard. He was of the opinion that the sociologist-priests should be actively involved in the social world - "to reform and to change it." Spencer on the other hand, argued - "sociologists should convince the state and the citizens not to intervene in the natural process of selection operative in society. Nature is more intelligent than man, he argued, and "once you begin to

interfere with the order of nature there is no knowing where the result will end."5 The good society, according to Spencer, is thus, based completely upon contracts between individuals pursuing their respective interests unhindered by the state interference.

### **Critical Remarks**

1. The theory of "Social Darwinism" got wide publicity during the second half of the 19th century especially in Europe and America. The theory was being used to justify the imposition of the politico-economic domination of the whites over non-whites. It thus became an ideological theory for justifying the exploitation of exploiters and for protecting the vested interests of the imperialists.

2. This theory "had racial overtones with the belief that some races, being innately superior, were bound to triumph over inferior ones."1

3. The principle of the "survival of the fittest" indirectly supports the status quo, inactivity and idleness. As per this principle, nature itself plays the role of the selector. It supports the fittest and leaves the less fit to decadence.

4. The theory does not take into account an enormous increase in the population especially in the Asian nations like India, China, Bangladesh and the like. In these nations, we find a large number of people being born in the category of poor, and the labour class. Why the principle of the "survival of the fittest" is not operating in these nations -? There is no answer.

5. This theory does not take into account that people in the category of the poor and labour class are suffering from problems and seem to be "less fit ones", not because they are basically incapable and less fit, but they have become the victims of socially organised coercions.

6. "As an argument, Social Darwinism is deeply flawed and has little, if any, credibility among contemporary social scientists.....As such, it could always be used to justify the status quo, beginning with racial and other forms of social oppression and imperialism"2.

7. In the circle of social theorists, the theory of Social Darwinism, exists only pejoratively.

8. The views of "Social Darwinism", however, are occasionally continued in the form of "socio-biology."

## **2.6 TYPES OF SOCIETY - CLASSIFICATION AND COMPARISON**

Spencer's clear conception of the nature of society helped him develop models to classify and compare societies. Two models which he followed could be identified from this analysis.

### **A. Classification of Societies on the Basis of the "Degree of Composition:**

1. Simple Society.
2. Compound Society.
3. Doubly Compound Society.
4. Trebly Compound Society.

### **B. Classification Based on the Method of Constructing**

#### **"Models" or "Types" of Society**

According to **Ronald Fletcher**, Spencer also classified societies into (i) Military Society, and (ii) Industrial Society, on the basis of the relative preponderance of one or the other of the "Regulating", "Sustaining" and "Distributive" System.

#### **Military Society and Industrial Society**

Spencer thought of constructing two extremely dissimilar "types or 'models' to classify societies into two categories. He called the types as "militant societies" and "industrial societies". The first was a type in which the "Regulating System" was dominant over all the other aspects of society. The second was one in which the "Sustaining System" was emphasized, and all the other aspects of society were subordinated to its service. Spencer developed the construction of "two polar types" mainly for the sake of a clear understanding of societies which possessed a relative preponderance of one or other of the two systems.

### **A. The Militant (Military) Society**

Military Society is any form of society in which the military exerts a dominant pervasive role. Its main characteristics may be noted below :

**1. Organisation for Offensive and Defensive Military Action:** The militant society is a type in which organisation for offensive and defensive military action is predominant. It is the society in which the army is the nation mobilised and the whole nation is regarded as a silent army. Here, the entire structure of society is moulded into military structure. It reflects a military organisation.

**2. Centralised Pattern of Authority and Social Control :** Here the military head is also the political head. He has a despotic control over life and property of all his subjects. Absolute control of the ruler makes necessary a clear, precise and rigid hierarchy of power throughout society. The officials at each level are completely subservient to that above. Spencer wrote: "All are slaves to those above and despots to those below."<sup>1</sup>

**3. Rigid Social Classes :** This rigid hierarchy of power necessarily involves a rigid grading of social statuses. Hence it gives rise to rigid social classes in economic life. The distribution of property, and the distribution of property, and the distribution of material rewards in society, are meticulously linked with the order of social ranks.

**4. Religious Beliefs and Doctrines relating to the Hierarchical Power of Gods :** This authoritarian and hierarchical nature of the society is also reflected in the prevailing system of ideas and beliefs. There exists a set of doctrines, myths, and rituals which portray a supernatural authority and government. The gods are also pictured in terms of a hierarchy of power. The religion itself, is a hierarchical organisation, and the Ecclesiastical Head himself possesses supreme, despotic authority. In such a society, the despotic head is, at the same time, not only the military and political head, but also the Ecclesiastical one. His central power over government, army, and all civil and economic affairs, is sanctified and given justification by religion. Here, the societies are normally in antagonism with other societies. Thus Spencer said : "Ever in antagonism with other societies the life is a life of enmity and the religion a religion of enmity."<sup>2</sup>

**5. Life is Subject to Rigorous Discipline :** The whole tenor of life in a military society is characterised by rigorous discipline. Virtually there is no difference between the public life and the private life. No elements of the private life of the citizen is closed to the state. The state can invade and interfere in the private lives of

citizens whenever it is felt necessary to desirable todo so. There is the lack of individual rights in the relationship between individual and the state. Thus the prevailing belief is - "that its members exist for the benefit of the whole and not the whole for the benefit of its members."<sup>3</sup> The loyalty of the individual to the state has to be unquestioning.

**6. Human Relationship Based on Compulsory Co-operation :** Human relationships are characterised in this kind of society by a state of "compulsory co-operation." Spencer, however, has not elaborated this point much.

It is clear from the above description that Spencer's "Militant type" of society could be used as a basis of interpretation not only to the despotic societies of the ancient world, but also to the totalitarian societies in the contemporary world. As **Ronald Fletcher** says, as a "tpe", the "militant society" could be seen to be of wide use of the purpose of comparative societies. It is relevant to the societies of both the past and the present.

## **B. THE INDUSTRIAL SOCIETY**

The concept of "Industrial society" refers to "that form of society or any particular society, in which industrialisation and modernisation have occured."<sup>1</sup>

The general term "industrial society" originates from **Saint Simon** who chose it to reflect the emerging central role of manufacturing industry in 18th century Europe, in contrast with the previous pre-industrial society and agrarian society.

Spencer's "Industrial Society" is one in whcih military activity and organisation exists but it is carried on at a distance. It takes place in the periphery of the society and the greater part of the social organisation is peaceful. It concentrates upon the increase and improvement of all aspects of human production and welfare, upon economic and civil acitivities.

The characteristics of "industrial society" in this way contrast strongly with those of the "militant type". They are briefed below.

**1. Recognition of Personal Rights :** In the industrial society the members hold "personal rights" as citizens of the community. There is also an active concern on the part of the members for the maintenance of these rights. Hence they insist upon an

effective means of representative government. Any dispute or mutual claims and counter-claims relating to the rights are to be resolved here through an impartial procedure or institutional arrangement.

**2. "Sustaining System" Possessing a Large Degree of Freedom :** In this society, the "sustaining system" possesses a large degree from the "regulatory system". Here the control and governance of the economic affairs is deliberately separated from the political government. It is assumed here that the intelligent individuals concerned with their own economic activities are more capable of making their own decision than the administrative officials. They are not only allowed, they are actively encouraged, to do so.

**3. Opportunity for the Growth of Free Association and Institutions :** The growth of agriculture, commerce and industrial manufacture within a fixed geographic territory is given military security. The peaceful atmosphere leads to the growth of free association and institutions. In all such associations, forming committees, laying down rules and procedures, conducting elections, etc. become a common practice.

**4. A Less Rigid Class Structure :** "These factors bring about a much less rigid and less tyrannical class structure....." [**Ronald Fletcher-285**]. In this type of class structure human precisely marked. As Spencer puts it "There is a growth.....of" combination of workmen and employers" to resolve, particular disputes, quite separately from central authority of law."2

**5. In the Industrial Society, Religious Organisations and Religious Beliefs Lose their Hierarchical Structure and Power :** Individual faith and sectarian discrimination, enters into religion. Religion instead of working as a means of social control remains only as a matter of individual faith and commitment. Religious institutions and practices become more and more secular in nature.

**6. Here the members of the Society do not Exist for the Good of the State; but the Well-being of the Individuals becomes the Supreme Objective of the Government.** The doctrine that the members of the society exist for the good of the state slowly disappearing. The idea that the will and the well being of the individual citizens which is of supreme importance in the society, prevails upon the previous one. Hence all forms of governmental control, exist merely to manifest their wishes and to



serve them.

**7. Awareness of the Duty to Resist Irresponsible Government :** In such a society the despotic government is considered to be irrelevant and wrong. It becomes a positive duty on the part of the citizens to resist the irresponsible government. "There is always a tendency to disobedience amongst minorities and individuals, and such a critical tendency is positively encouraged."

**8. Dominance of Free and Contractual Type of Human Relationships:** It is clear from the above explanation that the "Human relationships in the industrial society are, therefore, wholly different from those in the militant society. Free, responsible, contractual relationships between individuals require voluntary co-operation, not the compulsory co-operation which characterises relationships in the militant type."

### **Check Your Progress**

1. Describe the theory of organic analogy given by Herbert Spencer in details?

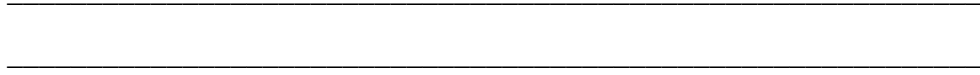
Ans. \_\_\_\_\_  
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2. Explain the differences and similarities between biological and social organism as visualised by Herbert Spencer ?

Ans. \_\_\_\_\_  
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3. Describe the concept of social Darwinism ?

Ans. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



## **EMILE DURKHEIM : A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH**

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**B. A. Semester–IIIrd**

**Lesson No. 3**

**Sociology**

**Unit-II**

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### 3.3 Methodology

#### **STRUCTURE**

Emile Durkheim was born on April 15, 1858, in France. He was descendant from a long line of Rabbis and himself studied to be a rabbi (Jew), but by the time he was in his teens, he had rejected his heritage and become an agnostic. From that time on, his life long interest in religion was academic rather than theological. He was dissatisfied not with his religious training but also with his general education and its emphasis on literary and aesthetic matters. During school times his main interest was in scientific methods and in the moral principles needed to guide social life. He rejected a traditional academic career in philosophy and sought instead to acquire the scientific training needed to contribute to the moral guidance of the society. Although he was interested in scientific sociology, there was no field of sociology at that time. So between 1882 and 1887 he taught philosophy in number of Provincial Schools in the Paris Area.

His interest for science was further motivated by a trip to Germany, where he was exposed to the Scientific Psychology being pioneered by Wilhelm Wundt. In the years immediately after his visit to Germany, Durkheim published a good deal, basing his work, in part, on his experience there. These publications helped him to gain a position in the department of philosophy at the University of Bordeaux in 1887. There Durkheim offered the first course in Social Science in a French University. This was a particularly impressive accomplishment because only a decade earlier, a problem had erupted in the French University by the mention of Auguste Comte in the student dissertation. Durkheim's main responsibility,

however was the teaching of the course in education to school teachers and most important course was in the area of moral education. His goal was to communicate a moral system to the educators, who, he hoped would then pass it on to young people in an effort to help reverse the moral degeneration, he saw around him in French society.

The years that followed were characterised by a series of personal successes for Durkheim. In 1893, he published his French doctoral thesis, "The Division of Labour in Society." "The Rules of Sociological method", appeared in 1895, followed by his empirical application of those methods in the study of Suicide in 1897. By 1896, he had become a full Professor at Bordeaux. In 1902, he was summoned to the famous French University, the Sorbonne, and in 1906 he was named Professor of the science of education, a title that was changed in 1913 to Professor of the science of education and sociology. The other of his most famous works, "The Elementary Forms of Religious life", was published in 1912.

Durkheim is most often thought of today as a political conservative and his influence within Sociology certainly has been a conservative one. But in his time, he was considered a liberal, and this can be observed by the active public role he played in the defence of Alfred Dreyfus, the Jewish army captain whose court-martial for treason was felt by many to be anti-semitic.

Durkheim's interest in socialism is also taken as evidence against the idea that he was a conservative, but this kind of socialism was very different from the kind that interested Marx and his followers. In fact, Durkheim labelled Marxism as a set of disputable and out-of-date hypothesis. To Durkheim, Socialism represented a movement aimed at the moral regeneration of society through scientific morality, and he was not interested in short term political method or the economic aspects of socialism and he was greatly opposed to agitation or violence. Socialism for Durkheim simply represented a system in which the moral principles discovered by Scientific Sociology were to be applied.

Durkheim had a profound influence on the development of sociology, but his influence was not restricted to it. Much of his impact on other fields came through the Journal *L'Année Sociologique*, which he founded in 1898. An intellectual circle arose around the Journal with Durkheim at its centre.

Through it, he and his ideas influenced such fields anthropology, history, linguistics and somewhat ironically, considering his early attacks on the field-psychology. Durkheim died on November 15, 1917, a celebrated figure in French intellectual circles, but it was not until over twenty years later, with the publication of Talcott Parsons, 'The Structure of Social Action' (1937), that his work became a significant influence on American Sociology.

### **3.3 METHODOLOGY**

Students, now after knowing about the life history of Durkheim you all must be clear about his emphasis an science, particularly on Scientific Sociology.

Now I would like to make you understand his methodology on sociology and would also like to show that how he applied his methodology in all of his works. After understanding all this, you all will be in a position to understand Durkheim and his works in real sense.

For Durkheim, the study of society involves the study of not individual but social facts. These social facts or facts of society must be treated as things, then only things can be studied in a scientific way. The two main characteristics of social facts according to Durkheim are (1) that they were external to the individual and (2) that they exercised constraint over his conduct.

He classified social facts into material social facts and non-material social facts.

Material social facts are those facts which are represented in a society in a material form but all such material entities do not have any meaning until or unless social value is attached to it, this social value is known as non-material social facts. This non-material social fact is not visible to the naked eyes but they are the part of the society. Durkheim's real sociology lies in non-material social facts. The verification of these social facts is the real job of the sociologists according to Durkheim which he proved in his different works like, 'Division of Labour in Society', 'Suicide' and 'Elementary Forms of Religious Life', which you will study in detail in next few lessons.

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### **DIVISION OF LABOUR**

**STRUCTURE**

- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Dynamic Density
- 4.3 Law
- 4.4 Anomie
- 4.5 Collective Conscience
- 4.6 Collective Representations
- 4.7 Check Your Progress

**The Division of Labour in Society**

**4.1 INTRODUCTION**

A highly polemical work, Durkheim's first book 'The Division of Labour in Society' (1893) was based on his doctoral thesis submitted at the Sarbonne, France. The main proposition developed in the book is that modern complex society, inspite of the declining significance of traditional moral beliefs, is not inevitably tending towards disintegration. The reason for this can be understood in the courses and effects of the expansion of the division of labour.

The division of labour existed in traditional societies as well, but in these it was usually confined to a sexual division. In the modern society, the rudimentary and simple form of division of labour is taken over by a high degree of specialization. This diversification of work is the result of the increasing social differentiation in modern society, and seen not only in the economic or industrial sphere, but can be observed in all spheres of contemporary societies

– in government, law, science and the arts.

How does this division of labour in modern societies take place? What are its causes and functions? There are important questions which Durkheim deals with in his book. To answer these, it is necessary to understand changes in the nature of social solidarity in society. Durkheim identified two types of solidarity the mechanical and the organic. Mechanical solidarity is solidarity of resemblance. People are homogeneous mentally and morally. The solidarity which comes from likeness according to Durkheim is at its maximum when the collective conscience completely envelops our whole conscience and coincides in all its points with it. Thus a society having a mechanical solidarity is characterized by strong collective conscience. Collective conscience is the sum fold of beliefs and sentiments common to the average members of society forming a system in its own right. This collective conscience, a distinct reality which persists through time and unites generations, is a product of human similarities which is strongest in primitive societies.

Organic solidarity, on the other hand does not develop from likeness and similarities of individuals, but out of differentiation. Thus society having organic solidarity is characterized by differentiation based on division of labour and specialization of work. It is held together by the inter-dependence of parts rather than by the homogeneity of elements and is characterized by weakening of the collective conscience. The two forms of solidarity correspond to two types of laws. The ‘repressive law’ is associated with the mechanical solidarity. This law is punitive and severely punishes any breach of social evils because the crime committed is considered to a violation of collective conscience. The ‘institutive law’ is the characteristic of organic solidarity and is cooperative with the main aim being the restoration of things to order when a misdeed has been committed. This is so because the society now is based on co-operation and morality and the more specialized division of labour.

This division of labour in modern societies takes place through the process of social differentiation with the increasing population and size of society – the volume, with the increasing number of people in a given area – the material density, and the increasing contacts and frequency of such contacts between

individuals the moral or the dynamic density. Thus growth in volume and density is the cause of the division of labour. In Durkheim's words, 'the division of labour varies in direct ratio with the volume and density of societies, and if it progresses in a continuous manner in the course of social development, it is because societies become regularly diverse and generally greater in volume' (The Division of Labour in Society, 1893). In this way, differentiation allows diversity to survive and this diversity allows different types of occupations to co-exist in the present society, each with its own specialization and co-operation with the whole. Thus, maintenance of co-operation and social order becomes the function of division of labour in the modern society.

The important concepts discussed by Durkheim in the 'Division of Labour in Society' will be dealt with in more detail now.

#### **4.2 DYNAMIC DENSITY**

The division of labour was a material social fact to Durkheim because it is the pattern of interaction in the social world. Another, and closely related, material social fact is the major causal factor in Durkheim's theory of the transition from mechanical to organic solidarity—*dynamic density*. This concept refers to the number of people in a society and the amount of interaction that occurs among them. Neither population increase nor an increase in interaction, when taken separately, is a significant factor in societal change. An increase in numbers of people *and* an increase in the interaction among them (which is dynamic density) lead to the change from mechanical to organic solidarity because together they bring about more competition for scarce resources and a more intense struggle for survival among the various parallel and similar components of primitive society. Because individuals, groups, families, tribes, and so forth perform virtually identical functions, they are likely to clash over these functions, especially if resources are scarce. The rise of the division of labour allows people and the social structures they create to complement, rather than conflict with, one another, and this, in turn, makes peaceful coexistence more likely. Furthermore, the increasing division of labour makes for greater efficiency, with the result that resources increase, and more and more people can survive peacefully.



Although Durkheim was interested in explaining how the division of labour and dynamic density lead to different types of social solidarity, he was interested primarily in the impact of these material changes on, and the nature of, nonmaterial social facts in both mechanically and organically solidified societies. However, because of his image of what a *science* of sociology should be, Durkheim felt that it was impossible to study nonmaterial social facts directly. Direct consideration of nonmaterial social facts was, for him, more philosophical than sociological. In order to study nonmaterial social facts scientifically, the sociologist would have to seek and examine material social facts that reflect the nature of, and changes in, nonmaterial social facts. In *The Division of Labour in Society* (1893) it is law, and the differences between law in societies with mechanical solidarity and law in societies with organic solidarity, that plays this role.

### 4.3 LAW

Durkheim argued that a society with mechanical solidarity is characterized by *repressive law*. Because people are very similar in this type of society, and because they tend to believe very strongly in a common morality, any offense against their shared value system is likely to be of significance to most individuals. Because most people feel the offense and believe deeply in the common morality, an offender is likely to be severely punished for any action that is considered an offense against the collective moral system. The theft of a pig must lead to the cutting off of the offender's hands; blaspheming against God or gods might well result in the removal of one's tongue. Because people are so involved in the moral system, and offense against it is likely to be met with swift severe punishment.

In contrast, a society with organic solidarity is characterized by *restitutive law*. Instead of being severely punished for even seemingly minor offenses against the collective morality, individuals in this more modern type of society are likely simply to be asked to comply with the law or to repay—make restitution to—those who have been harmed by their actions. Although some repressive law continues to exist in a society with organic solidarity (for example, the death penalty), restitutive law is more important. There is little or no powerful and coercive common morality; the vast majority law is largely in the hands of the masses in a society with mechanical

solidarity, but the maintenance of restitutive law is primarily the responsibility of specialized agencies (for example, the police and the courts). This is consistent with the increased division of labour in a society with organic solidarity.

Changes in a material social fact like the law are, in Durkheim's theoretical system, merely reflections of changes in the more crucial elements of his sociology—nonmaterial social facts such as mortality, collective conscience, collective representations, social currents, and, most questionably from a modern sociological perspective, the group mind. (All these concepts will be discussed in this chapter.)

Durkheim (1858/1917) was a sociologist of morality (Mestrovic, 1988; Turner, 1993). Indeed, Ernest Wallwork (1972:182) argued that Durkheim's sociology is merely a by-product of his concern with moral issues. That is, Durkheim's interest in the moral problems of his day led him as a sociologist to devote most of his attention to the moral elements of social life. At its most basic level, Durkheim's great concern was with the declining strength of the common morality in the modern world. In Durkheim's view, people were in danger of a "pathological" loosening of moral bonds. These moral bonds were important to Durkheim, for without them the individual would be enslaved by ever-expanding and insatiable passions. People would be impelled by their passions into a mad search for gratification, but each new gratification would lead only to more and more needs. Durkheim held the seemingly paradoxical view that the individual needs morality and external control in order to be free.

#### **4.4 ANOMIE**

Many of the problems that occupied Durkheim stem from his concern with the decline of the common morality. In the concept of *anomie*, Durkheim best manifested his concern with the problems of a weakened common morality (Hilbert, 1986; Bar-Haim, 1997). Individuals are said to be confronted with anomie when they are not faced with sufficient moral constraint, that is, when they do not have a clear concept of what is and what is not proper and acceptable behaviour.

The central "pathology" in modern society was, in Durkheim's view, the *anomic* division of labour. By thinking of anomie as a pathology, Durkheim

manifested his belief that the problems of the modern world can be “cured.” Durkheim believed that the structural division of labor in modern society is a source of cohesion that compensates for the declining strength of the collective morality. However, the thrust of his argument is that the division of labour cannot entirely make up for the loosening of the common morality, with the result that anomie is a pathology associated with the rise of organic solidarity. Individuals can become isolated and be cut adrift in their highly specialized activities. They can more easily cease to feel a common bond with those who work and live around them. But it is important to remember that this is viewed by Durkheim as an abnormal situation, because only in unusual circumstances does the modern division of labour reduce people to isolated and meaningless tasks and positions. The concept of anomie can be found not only in *The Division of Labour* but also in *Suicide* (Durkheim, 1897/1951) as one of the major types of suicide. Anomic suicide occurs because of the decline in collective morality and the lack of sufficient external regulation of the individual to restrain his or her passions.

#### **4.5 COLLECTIVE CONSCIENCE**

Durkheim attempted to deal with his interest in common morality in various ways and with different concepts. In his early efforts to deal with this issue, Durkheim developed the idea of the *collective conscience*, which he characterized in *The Division of Labour in Society* in the following way :

The totality of beliefs and sentiments common to average citizens of the same society forms a determinate system which has its own life; one may call it the *collective* or *common conscience*.....It is, thus, an entirely different thing from particular consciences, although it can be realized only through them. (Durkheim, 1893/1964: 79–80)

Several points are worth underscoring in this definition, given our interest in the collective conscience as an example of a nonmaterial social fact. First, it is clear that Durkheim thought of the collective conscience as occurring throughout a given society when he wrote of the “totality” of people’s beliefs and sentiments. Second, Durkheim clearly conceived of the collective conscience as being an independent,

determinate cultural system. Although he held such views of the collective conscience, Durkheim also wrote of its being “realized” through individual consciousness. (That Durkheim did *not* conceive of the collective conscience as totally independent of individual consciousness will be important when we examine the charge that Durkheim holds a group-mind concept.)

The concept of the collective conscience allows us to return to Durkheim’s analysis, in *The Division of Labour*, of material social facts and their relationship to changes in the common morality. The logic of his argument is that the increasing division of labour (brought on by the increasing dynamic density) is causing a transformation (a diminution but not a disappearance) of the collective conscience. The collective conscience is of much less significance in a society with organic solidarity than it is in a society with mechanical solidarity. People in modern society are more likely to be held together by the division of labour and the resulting need for the functions performed by others than they are by a shared and powerful collective conscience. Anthony Giddens (1972; see also Pope and Johnson, 1983) performed a useful service by pointing out that the collective conscience in the two types of society can be differentiated on four dimensions—volume, intensity, rigidity, and content. *Volume* refers to the number of people enveloped by the collective conscience; *intensity* to how deeply the individual feel about it; *rigidity* to how clearly it is defined; and *content* to the form that the collective conscience takes in the two polar types of society. In a society characterized by mechanical solidarity, the collective conscience covers virtually the entire society and all its members; it is believed in with great intensity (as reflected, by the use of repressive sanctions when it is violated); it is extremely rigid; and its content is highly religious in character. In a society with organic solidarity, the collective conscience is much more limited in its domain and in the number of people enveloped by it; it is adhered to with much less intensity (as reflected in the substitution of restitutive for repressive laws); it is not very rigid; and its content is best described by the phrase “moral individualism,” or the elevation of the importance of the individual to a moral precept.

#### **4.6 COLLECTIVE REPRESENTATION**

The idea of the collective conscience, while useful to Durkheim, clearly is

very broad and amorphous. Durkheim's dissatisfaction with the character of the concept of the collective conscience led him to abandon it (at least explicitly) progressively in his later work in favour of the much more specific concept of collective representations (Nemedi, 1995; Schmaus, 1994). *Collective representations* may be seen as specific states, or substrata, of the collective conscience (Lukes, 1972). In contemporary terms, we may think of collective representations as the norms and values of specific collectivities such as the family, occupation, state, and educational and religious institutions. The concept of collective representations can be used both broadly and specifically, but the critical point is that it allowed Durkheim to conceptualize nonmaterial social facts in a narrower way than the all-encompassing notion of the collective conscience. Despite their greater specificity, collective representations are *not* reducible to the level of individual consciousness : "*Representations collectives result from the substratum of associated individuals ... but they have sui generis characteristics*" (Durkheim, cited in Lukes, 1972;7). The Latin term *sui generis* means "unique." When Durkheim used this term to refer to the structure of collective representations, he was saying that their unique character is not reducible to individual consciousness. This places them squarely within the realm of nonmaterials social facts. They transcend the individual because they do not depend on any particular individual for their existence. They are also independent of individuals in the sense that their temporal span is greater than the lifetime of any individual. Collective representation are a central component of Durkheim's system of nonmaterial social facts.

#### 4.7 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.1. Discuss the causes of change from Mechanical solidarity to Organic solidarity.

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Q.2. Write a brief note on the structure of society in Mechanical solidarity and

Organic solidarity?

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Q.3. Write a note on :

Collective Conscience.

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Repressive Law

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Restitution Law

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### **SUICIDE**

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**B. A. Semester-IIIrd**

**SUICIDE**

**Lesson No. 5**

**STRUCTURE**

- 5.1 Introduction
- 5.2 Types of Suicide
- 5.3 Let us Sum up
- 5.4 Ask yourself
- 5.5 Suggested Readings

**5.1 INTRODUCTION**

Durkheim's third book, *Suicide* (1897), is cited as a monumental landmark in which conceptual theory and empirical research are brought together. He used a lot of statistical analysis. His use of statistical analysis was for two primary reasons :

1. to refute theories based on psychology, biology, genetics, climatic and geographical factors, and
2. to support with empirical evidence his own sociological explanation of suicide.

In this study, Durkheim displayed an extreme form of sociological realism. He speaks of suicidal currents as collective tendencies that dominate some very susceptible individuals and catch them up in their sweep. The act of suicide at times, Durkheim believed, is interpreted as a product of these currents. The larger significance of suicide lies in the demonstration of the function of sociological theory in empirical science.

Durkheim tended to assume that biological, psychological, and social-psychological factors remain essentially constant from one group to another or from

one time period to another. If there is variation in suicide rates from one group to another or from one time period to another, Durkheim assumed that the difference would be the consequence of variations in sociological factors, in particular, social currents.

Committed as he was to empirical research, Durkheim was not content simply to dismiss other possible causes of differences in suicide rates; instead he tested them empirically. He began *Suicide* with a series of alternative ideas about the causes of suicide. Among these are individual psychopathology, alcoholism (Skog, 1991), race, heredity, and climate. Although Durkheim marshaled a wide range of facts to reject each of these as crucial to differences in suicide rates, his clearest argument, and the one that was most consistent with his overall perspective, was on the relevance of racial factors to the differences. One of the reasons that race was rejected is that suicide rates varied among groups *within* the same race. If race were a significant cause of differences in suicide rates, then we would assume that it would have a similar impact on the various sub-groups. Another piece of evidence against race as a significant cause of variations in rates is the change in rates for a given race when it moves from one society to another. If race were a relevant social fact, it should have the same effect in different societies. Although Durkheim's argument is not powerful here, and is even weaker on the other factors that he rejected, this does give us a feel for the nature of Durkheim's approach to the problem of empirically dismissing what he considered extraneous factors so that he could get to what he thought of as the most important causal variables.

In addition to rejecting the factors discussed above, Durkheim examined and rejected the imitation theory associated with the early French social psychologist Gabriel Tarde (1843-1904). The theory of imitation argues that people commit suicide (and engage in a wide range of other actions) because they are imitating the actions of others who have committed suicide. This social-psychological approach to sociological thinking is foreign to Durkheim's focus on social facts. As a result, Durkheim took pains to reject it. For example, Durkheim reasoned that if imitation were truly important, we should find that



the nations that border on a country with a high suicide rate would themselves have high rates. He looked at the data on the significance of this geographical factor and concluded that no such relationship existed. Durkheim admitted that some individual suicides may be the result of imitation, but it is such a minor factor that it has no significant effect on the overall suicide rate. In the end, Durkheim rejected imitation as a significant factor because of his view that only one social fact could be the cause of another social fact. Because imitation is a social-psychological variable, it cannot, in his system, serve as a significant cause of differences in social suicide rates. As Durkheim put it, “the social suicide-rate can be explained only sociologically” (1897/1951:299).

To Durkheim, the critical factors in changes in suicide rates were to be found in differences at the level of social facts. Of course, there are two types of social facts—material and nonmaterial. As usual, material social facts occupy the position of causal priority but not of causal primacy. For example, Durkheim looked at the significance of dynamic density for differences in suicide rates but found that its effect is only indirect. But differences in dynamic density (and other materials social facts) do have an effect on difference in nonmaterial social facts, and these differences have a direct effect on suicide rates. Durkheim was making two related arguments. On the one hand, he was arguing that different collectivities have different collective consciences and collective representations. These, in turn, produce different social currents, which have differential effects on suicide rates. One way to study suicide is to compare different societies or other types of collectivities. On the other hand, Durkheim was arguing that changes in the collective conscience lead to changes in social currents, which, in turn, lead to changes in suicide rates. This leads to the historical study of changes in suicide rates within a given collectivity. In either case, cross-culturally or historically, the logic of the argument is essentially the same: differences or changes in the collective conscience lead to differences or changes in social currents, and these, in turn, lead to differences or changes in suicide rates. In other words, changes in suicide rates are caused by changes in social facts, primarily social currents. Durkheim was quite clear on the crucial role played by social currents in the etiology of suicide :

Each social group has a collective inclination for the act, quite its own, and the source of all individual inclination rather than their result. It is made up of *currents of egoism, altruism or anomy* running through... society.... These tendencies of the whole social body, by affecting individuals, cause them to commit suicide.

(Durkheim, 1897/1951:299-300; italics added)

## 5.2 THE FOUR TYPES OF SUICIDE

Durkheim's theory of suicide, and the structure of his sociological reasoning, can be seen more clearly if we examine each of his four types of suicide—egoistic, altruistic, anomic, and fatalistic (Bearman, 1991). Durkheim linked each of the types of suicide to the degree of integration into, or regulation by, society (Thorlindsson and Bjarnason, 1998). *Integration* refers to the degree to which collective sentiments are shared. Altruistic suicide is associated with a high degree of integration and egoistic suicide with a low degree of integration. *Regulation* refers to the degree of external constraint on people. Fatalistic suicide is associated with high regulation, anomic suicide with low regulation. Whitney Pope (1976:12–13) offered a very useful summary of the four types of suicide discussed by Durkheim. He did this by interrelating high and low degrees of integration and regulation in the following way :

	Low	→	Egoistic suicide
Integration	High		Altruistic suicide
	Low		Anomic suicide
Regulation	High		Fatalistic suicide

**(a) Egoistic Suicide.** High rates of *egoistic suicide* are likely to be found in those societies, collectivities, or groups in which the individual is not well integrated into the larger social unit. This lack of integration leads to a sense of meaninglessness among individuals. Societies with a strong collective conscience and the protective, enveloping social currents that flow from it are likely to prevent the widespread occurrence of egoistic suicide by, among

other things, providing people with a sense of the broader meaning of their lives. When these social currents are weak, individuals are able rather easily to surmount the collective conscience and do as they wish. In large-scale social units with a weak collective conscience, individuals are left to pursue their private interests in whatever way they wish. Such unrestrained egoism is likely to lead to considerable personal dissatisfaction, because all needs cannot be fulfilled, and those that are fulfilled simply lead to the generation of more and more needs and, ultimately, to dissatisfaction—and, for some, to suicide (Breault, 1986). However, strongly integrated families, religious groups, and polities act as agents of a strong collective conscience and discourage suicide. Here is the way Durkheim puts it in terms of religious groups :

Religion protects man against the desire for self-destruction... What constitutes religion is the existence of a certain number of beliefs and practices common to all the faithful, traditional and thus obligatory. The more numerous and strong these collective states of mind are, the stronger the integration of the religious community, also the *greater its preservative* value.

The disintegration of society produces distinctive social currents, and these are the principal causes of differences in suicide rates. For example, Durkheim talked of societal disintegration leading to “currents of depression and disillusionment” (1897/1951:214). The moral disintegration of society predisposes the individual to commit suicide, but the currents of depression must also be there to produce differences in rates of egoistic suicide. Interestingly, Durkheim was here reaffirming the importance of social forces, even in the case of egoistic suicide, where the individual might be thought to be free of social constraints. Actors are *never* free of the force of the collectivity: “However individualized a man may be, there is always something collective remaining—the very depression and melancholy resulting from this same exaggerated individualism. He effects communion through sadness when he no longer has anything else with which to achieve it” (Durkheim, 1897/1951:214). The case of egoistic suicide indicates that in even the most individualistic, most private of acts, social facts are the key determinant.

**(b) Altruistic Suicide.** The second type of suicide discussed by Durkheim is altruistic suicide. Whereas egoistic suicide is more likely to occur when social integration is too weak, *altruistic suicide* is more likely when “social integration is too strong” (Durkheim, 1897/1951:217). The individual is literally forced into committing suicide.

One notorious example of altruistic suicide was the mass suicide of the followers of the Reverend Jim Jones in Jonestown, Guyana. They knowingly took a poisoned drink and in some cases had their children drink it as well. They were clearly committing suicide because they were pushed, either forcefully or gently, into giving their lives for the tightly integrated society of Jones’s fanatical followers. More generally, those who commit altruistic suicide do so because they feel that it is their duty to do so.

As was the case with egoistic suicide, the degree of integration (in this case, a high degree) is not the direct cause of altruistic suicide. Rather, different degrees of integration produce different social currents, and these different currents affect suicide rates. As with egoistic suicide, Durkheim saw melancholy social currents as the cause of high rates of altruistic suicide. Whereas higher rates of egoistic suicide stem from “incurable weariness and sad depression,” the increased likelihood of altruistic suicide “springs from hope, for it depends on the belief in beautiful perspectives beyond this life” (Durkheim, 1897/1951 : 225).

**(c) Anomic Suicide.** The final major form of suicide discussed by Durkheim is *anomic suicide*, which is more likely to occur when the regulative powers of society are disrupted. Such disruptions are likely to leave individuals dissatisfied because there is little control over their passions, which are free to run wild in an insatiable race for gratification. Rates of anomic suicide are likely to rise whether the nature of the disruption is positive (for example, an economic boom) or negative (an economic depression). Either type of disruption renders the collectivity temporarily incapable of exercising its authority over individuals. Such changes put people in new situations in which the old norms no longer apply but new ones have yet to develop. Periods of disruption unleash currents of anomie—moods of rootlessness and normlessness—and

these currents lead to an increase in rates of anomic suicide. This is relatively easy to envisage in the case of a depression. The closing of a factory because of an economic depression may lead to the loss of a job, with the result that the individual is cut adrift from the regulative effect that both the company and the job may have had. Being cut off from these structures or others (for example, family, religion, and state) can leave the individual highly vulnerable to the effects of currents of anomic. Somewhat more difficult to imagine is the effect of an economic boom. In this case, it might be argued that sudden success leads individuals away from the traditional structures in which they are embedded. Economic success may lead individuals to quit their jobs, move to a new community, perhaps even find a new spouse. All these changes disrupt the regulative effect of extant structures and leave the individual in boom periods vulnerable to anomic social currents.

The increases in rates of anomic suicide during periods of deregulation of social life are consistent with Durkheim's views on the pernicious effect of individual passions when freed of external constraint. People thus freed will become slaves to their passions and as a result, in Durkheim's view, commit a wide range of destructive acts, including killing themselves in greater numbers than they ordinarily would.

**(d) Fatalistic Suicide.** There is a little-mentioned fourth type of suicide—fatalistic—that Durkheim discussed only in a footnote in *Suicide* (Besnard, 1993). Whereas anomic suicide is more likely to occur in situations in which regulation is too weak, *fatalistic suicide* is more likely to occur when regulation is excessive. Durkheim described those who are more likely to commit fatalistic suicide as “persons with futures pitilessly blocked and passions violently choked by oppressive discipline” (1897/1951:276). The classic example is the slave who takes his own life because of the hopelessness associated with the oppressive regulation of his every action. Too much regulation—oppression—unleashes currents of melancholy that, in turn, cause a rise in the rate of fatalistic suicide.

### 5.3 LET US SUM UP

Durkheim's work on suicide is an expression of his methodology which

emphasizes on the study of social facts in sociology. Social facts must be studied as things in order to undertake an objective analysis of the phenomenon to be studied. This as explained earlier can only be done by identifying the two characteristics of social facts, i.e. their exteriority and coerciveness. 'Law' for instance can be studied like this as it has an existence separable from individual acts of law enforcement, so that it can be studied apart from the individual. But there are some social facts which do not have this quality. In these cases the individual's conduct is influenced by a more diffuse 'collective current' and the best that the sociologist can do is to record its effects in the form of a statistical rate.

Durkheim's major empirical investigation aimed at doing this in his monumental work, suicide. In this work, as we have seen. Durkheim studies the variation in the suicide rate between different groups and seeks to explain in terms of the different collective currents or form of social solidarity to which individuals are subject. Thus the greater frequency of suicides amongst soldiers than civilians and amongst officers than other ranks leads him to conclude that this is altruistic suicide in which the individual sees his own life as unimportant than conformity to group norms. But the greater frequency of suicide amongst Protestants than Roman Catholics is seen as due to a social order in which the individual is required to work his own salvation. In this case the individual commits egoistic suicide.

The analysis of the types of suicide and understanding the variations in the suicide rates in this lesson help us to comprehend that for Durkheim, collective conscience was a strong force that binds society and as it declines or becomes loose, the individualistic tendencies begin rising. The danger of anomie and acts like suicide become prominent. It is the importance of society or collectivity over individual that comes out forcefully in suicide, like in all other works of Durkheim.

#### **5.4 ASK YOURSELF**

1. What is Durkheim's theory regarding suicide?

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2. Describe the typology of suicide as given by Durkheim.

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3. What, according to Durkheim, are the social dimensions of suicide? Discuss.

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**5.5 SUGGESTED READINGS**

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2. Coser, L. (1996) **Masters of Sociological Thought** : Rawat Publications, Delhi.
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**RELIGION**

**STRUCTURE**

- 6.1 Introduction
- 6.2 Sacred and Profane
- 6.3 Totemism
- 6.4 Collective Effervescence
- 6.5 Let Us Sum up
- 6.5 Check Your Progress

**6.1 INTRODUCTION**

Durkheim's views on religion are found in his book 'The Elementary Forms Religious Life' (1919). As we have seen, Durkheim felt the need to focus on material manifestations of nonmaterial social facts (for example, law in *The Division of Labour* and suicide rates in *Suicide*). But in *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, Durkheim felt comfortable enough to address nonmaterial social facts, in particular religion, more directly. Religion is, in fact, the ultimate nonmaterial social fact and an examination of it allowed him to shed new light on this entire aspect of his theoretical system. Religion has what Durkheim calls a "dynamogenic" quality; that is, it has the capacity not only to dominate individuals but also to elevate them above their ordinary abilities and capacities (R. Jones, 1986).

In *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, Durkheim used ethnological evidence from the Australian tribes, mainly the Arunta. Durkheim felt it important to study religion within such a primitive setting for several reasons. First, he believed that it is much easier to gain insight into the essential nature of religion in a primitive setting than in more modern society. Religious forms



in primitive society could be “shown in all their nudity,” and it would require “only the slightest effort to lay them open” (Durkheim, 1912/1965:18). Second, the ideological systems of primitive religions are less well developed than those of modern religions, with the result that there is less confusion. As Durkheim put it, “That which is accessory or secondary ... has not yet come to hide the principal elements. All is reduced to that which is indispensable, to that without which there could be no religion” (1912/1965:18). Third, whereas religion in modern society takes diverse forms, in primitive society there is “intellectual and moral conformity” (Durkheim, 1912/1965:18). As a result, religion can be studied in primitive society in its most pristine form. Finally, although Durkheim studied primitive religion, it was not because of his interest in that religious form per se. Rather, he studied it in order “to lead to an understanding of the religious nature of man, that is to say, to show us an essential and permanent aspect of humanity”. More specifically, Durkheim examined primitive religion to shed light on religion in modern society.

Given the uniform and ubiquitous character of religion in primitive societies, we may equate religion with the collective conscience. That is, religion in primitive society is an all-encompassing collective morality. But as society develops and grows more specialized, religion comes to occupy an increasingly narrow domain. Instead of being the collective conscience in modern society, religion becomes simply one of a number of collective representations. Although it expresses some collective sentiments, other institutions (for example, law and science) come to express other aspects of the collective morality. Although Durkheim recognized that religion per se comes to occupy an ever narrower domain, he also contended that most, if not all, of the various collective representations of modern society have their origin in the all-encompassing religion of primitive society.

## **6.2 SACRED AND PROFANE**

The ultimate question for Durkheim was the source of modern religion. Because specialization and the ideological smoke screen make it impossible to study directly the roots of religion in modern society, Durkheim addressed the issue

in the context of primitive society. The question is: Where does primitive (and modern) religion come from? Operating from his basic methodological position that only one social fact can cause another social fact, Durkheim concluded that society is the source of all religion (Ossio, 1997). Society (through individuals) creates religion by defining certain phenomena as sacred and others as profane. Those aspects of social reality that are defined as *sacred*—that is, that are set apart and deemed forbidden—form the essence of religion. The rest are defined as *profane*—the everyday, the commonplace, the utilitarian, the mundane aspects of life. The sacred brings out an attitude of reverence, respect, mystery, awe, and honour. The respect accorded to certain phenomena transforms them from the profane to the sacred.

The differentiation between the sacred and the profane, and the elevation of some aspects of social life to the sacred level, are necessary but not sufficient conditions for the development of religion. Three other conditions are needed. First, there must be the development of a set of religious beliefs. These *beliefs* are “the representations which express the nature of sacred things and the relations which they sustain, either with each other or with profane things” (Durkheim, 1912/1965:56). Second, a set of religious *rites* is necessary. These are “the rules of conduct which prescribe how a man should comport himself in the presence of these sacred objects” (Durkheim, 1912/1965 : 56). Finally, a religion requires a *church*, or a single overarching moral community. The interrelationships among the sacred, beliefs, rites, and church led Durkheim to the following definition of a religion: “*A religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices which unite one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them*”.

### **6.3 TOTEMISM**

Durkheim’s view that society is the source of religion shaped his examination of totemism among the Australian Arunta. *Totemism* is a religious system in which certain things, particularly animals and plants, come to be regarded as sacred and as emblems of the clan. Durkheim viewed totemism as the simplest, most primitive form of religion. It is paralleled by a similarly primitive form of social organization, the *clan*. If Durkheim could have shown that the clan is the source of totemism, he could have demonstrated his argument that society is at the root of religion. Here is the way that

Durkheim made this argument.

A religion so closely connected to a social system surpassing all others in simplicity may well be regarded as the most elementary religion we can possibly know. If we succeed in discovering the origin of the beliefs which we have just analyzed, we shall very probably discover at the same time the causes leading to the rise of the religious sentiment in humanity. (Durkheim, 1912/1965 : 195)

Although a clan may have a large number of totems, Durkheim was not inclined to view these as a series of separate, fragmentary beliefs about specific animals or plants. Instead, he tend to view them as an interrelated set of ideas that give the clan a more or less complete representation of the world. The plant or animal is not the source of totemism; it merely represents that source. The totems are the material representations of the immaterial force that is at their base. And that immaterial force is none other than the now-familiar collective conscience of society :

Totemism is the religion, not of such and such animals or men or images, but of an anonymous and impersonal force, found in each of these beings but not to be confounded with any of them... Individuals die, generations pass and are replaced by others; but this force always remains actual, living and the same. It animates the generations of today as it animated those of yesterday and as it will those of tomorrow. (Durkheim, 1912/1965 : 217)

Totemism, and more generally religion, is derived from the collective morality and becomes itself an impersonal force. It is not simply a series of mythical animals, plants, personalities, spirits, or gods.

#### **6.4 COLLECTIVE EFFERVESCENCE**

The collective conscience is the source of religion, but where does the collective conscience itself come from? In Durkheim's view, it comes from only one source—society. In the primitive case examined by Durkheim, this meant that the clan is the ultimate source of religion : “Religious force is nothing other than the collective and anonymous force of the clan”. How does the clan create totemism ? The answer lies in a central but little discussed component

of Durkheim’s conceptual arsenal—*collective effervescence*.

The notion of collective effervescence is not well spelled out in any of Durkheim’s works. He seemed to have in mind, in a general sense, the great moments in history when a collectivity is able to achieve a new and heightened level of collective exaltation that in turn can lead to great changes in the structure of society. The Reformation and the Renaissance would be examples of historical periods when collective effervescence had a marked effect on the structure of society. Durkheim also argued that it is out of collective effervescence that religion arises : “It is in the midst of these effervescent social environments and out of this effervescence itself that the religious idea seems to be born” (1912/1965:250). During periods of collective effervescence, the clan members create totemism.

## **6.6 LET US SUM UP**

In sum, totemism is the symbolic representation of the collective conscience, and the collective conscience, in turn, is derived from society. Therefore, society is the source of the collective conscience, religion, the concept of God, and ultimately everything that is sacred (as opposed to profane). In a very real sense, then, we can argue that the sacred (and ultimately God, as something sacred) and society are one and the same. This is fairly clear-cut in primitive society. It remains true today, even though the relationship is greatly obscured by the complexities of modern society.

## **6.6 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

Q1. Write a note on

a) Collective Effervescence

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b) Sacred and Profane

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**STRUCTURE**

- 7.1 Objectives
- 7.2 Introduction
- 7.3 Max Weber : A Biographical Sketch
  - Family Background, Socialization and Schooling
  - Higher Education and Other Influences
- 7.4 Major Contribution
  - The years of Scholarly Work
  - Important Academic Writings
- 7.5 Weber's Methodology
  - Relation between History and Sociology
  - Sociology as Science: Verstehen and Value Relevance.
  - Causality and Probability
- 7.6 Let us Sum up
- 7.7 Check your Progress
- 7.8 References

**7.1 OBJECTIVES**

After going through this lesson, you should be able to :

- know the social and educational background of Max Weber, a great thinker and theorist in the field of Sociology.
- to understand his major contributions and scholarly works.

- to explain the Methodology used by Max Weber that played an important role in the growth of social sciences.

## **7.2 INTRODUCTION**

Max Weber (1864-1920) is perhaps the best known and the most influential figure in the discipline of sociology. He is considered as one of the founding fathers of sociology and various schools of thought and perspectives are drawn from his work. Weber's initial training was in law and legal history, but later he developed interest in many other fields of arts and social sciences. Weber's childhood was a disturbing one and this influence can be seen in his later life and work as well.

This lesson traces the social and academic life of Weber, the influence of various factors on him, his interests not only in academic but in politics and later in religion. The works and the methodology developed by him occupy a profound place in social sciences in general and sociology in particular.

## **7.3 MAX WEBER : A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH**

### **Family Background, Socialization and Schooling**

Max Weber was born in Erfurt, Germany on April 21, 1864 into a middle-class Protestant family. He was the eldest of the seven children of Max Weber (senior) and his wife Helene. He came from a family of merchants of western Germany, driven away from Catholic Salzburg because of their Protestant conviction. Weber's father took the government job in Berlin and later became Magistrate in Erfurt (where Max Weber was born). However, he soon embarked upon a political career being an important member of the National Liberal Party. In Berlin, he was a City Councillor and later, a member of the Prussian House of Deputies and of the German Reichstag. He belonged to the right wing liberals and was of fairly typical German bourgeois politician. Very much a part of the political establishment, the senior Weber lived a self-satisfied and pleasure-loving life. Max Weber's Mother Helene Fallenstein came from a similar background but was a pious and religious lady. With her strong religious commitments and Calvinist sense of duty, she has little in common with her husband whose personal ethic was hedonistic rather than Protestant. The deep differences between the parents led to marital tension and had an immense impact on Weber, as could

be seen in the life throughout. Equally troubling at that time was political turmoil in Germany which troubled Weber's mind. Weber received an excellent formal education in languages, history and the classics. Exceptionally bright Weber was nevertheless a difficult student. He was sickly, shy, withdrawn and rebellious at times in the face of authority. His teachers complained about his lack of respect for their authority and his lack of discipline. But he was an intelligent child and avid reader. He had extended knowledge of Goethe, Spinoza and Kant before he entered university studies.

### **Higher education and Other Influences**

In 1882, Max Weber went to the University of Heidelberg at the age of eighteen and joined law, his father's profession, Here he became active and popular, which showed his identification with his father, even though, he was a strong authoritarian. Weber also studied medieval history and philosophy as well as read a great deal in theology. After three terms, Weber left Heidelberg for military service in Strasbourg. There he came under the influence of his uncle, the historian Hermann Baumgarten and his wife Ida, his mother's sister. The Baumgartens soon became a second set of parents for Weber and had a strong and decisive influence on Weber. His uncle regarded him as an intellectual peer unlike his father who treated young Weber with patronizing authoritarianism. His Aunt, contrary to his Mother, generated interest in religion and led him to immerse himself in religious reading. It is probably in the Strasbourg period that Weber acquired his life-long sense of respect for the Protestant virtues, even though he was unable to share the Christian belief on which they were based.

In the fall of 1884, his military service over, Weber returned to his parent's home to study at the University of Berlin. For the next eight years of his life, he stayed at his parent's house. During these days, Weber developed greater understanding of his mother's personality and religious values, at the same time developing antipathy towards his father. In these years, Weber submitted himself to a rigid and ascetic life completing his PH.D On the topic "History of Commercial Societies in the Middle Ages" in 1889. He also did his post-doctoral thesis on the "Roman Agrarian History" which was necessary for a university teaching position. Soon he started teaching at the University of Berlin and in the process his interests shifted more

toward his life-long concerns-economics, history and sociology.

Weber married Marianne Schnitger in 1893, the daughter of a physician (a cousin on his father's side) and was appointed to a chair in economics at the University of Freiburg. From then on, Marianne and Max Weber enjoyed a very intense intellectual and moral companionship. Here at Freiburg, Weber demonstrated his superb scholarship giving various lectures and addresses. His inaugural address of 1895 on "The National State and Economic Policy" was greatly appreciated. This new renown led to his being called to Heidelberg in 1896 as Professor of Economics. Here he re-established old contacts and made new ones. His home soon became a place of intellectual gatherings of academic discussions.

Besides his scholarly concerns, Weber also pursued his political interests and was settling down to an active and creative life. But suddenly, this promising career came to a halt in 1897 when his father died following a heated and violent clash in which Weber defended his mother and accused his father for treating his mother brutally. In 1899, he suffered from a nervous breakdown and did not recover for more than five years. During the next few years, Weber was unable to work. He tried to recover and resume his work, but when he realized he could not do so he resigned from the chair at Heidelberg. Doctors advised him to travel and exercise and slowly Weber began to recover after his visits to Italy and Switzerland. In 1902 he returned to Heidelberg and resumed writing but returned to teaching only in the last few years of his life.

## **7.4 MAJOR CONTRIBUTIONS**

### **The Years of Scholarly Work**

Weber resumed his full scholarly activities in 1903 upon his return to Heidelberg. In 1904 he went to America to deliver a lecture on the 'Social Structure of Germany'. Weber travelled through America for over three months and was deeply impressed with the character of American Civilization. The roots of many of his writings later, on the role of protestant ethic in the emergence of capitalism and on the bureaucracy, can be traced to his stay in America.

Weber's methodological writings, the most important of which are translated



are Max Weber On the Methodology of Social Sciences date from these years. The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism was published in 1905. In 1908 and 1909, Weber did a major empirical study in the social psychology of industrial work and of factory workers. In these years, he participated actively in academic conventions and spoke at political meetings. In 1910, he became the co-founder of the German Sociological Society with Toennies and Simmel and remained its secretary for several years influencing its initial programme of study.

Weber was a nationalist and when the First World war broke out, he volunteered for services. As a Reserve Officer, he was commissioned to establish and run nine military hospitals in Heidelberg area. He returned from his position in the fall of 1915. However, despite serving in the war, he was dissatisfied with the war policy of German leaders and consequently attacked Germany's leadership. In fact, his advice and ideas like change in the whole political structure of Germany, the development of responsible Parliamentary Government, restrictions on the powers of the Kaiser and the Chancellor led the government to consider prosecuting him. However, inspite of these threats, Weber kept on advocating for a liberal political system in Germany.

### **Important Academic Writings**

In the period between 1918-20, Weber participated in active political life. He wrote a number of major newspapers articles and papers on the politics of the day and addressed student assemblies and academic groups. Together with active politics, Weber contributed a great deal to the academic field. During the war years, Weber put the finishing touches to his work on the sociology of religion. *The Religion of China: Confucianism and Taoism and the Religion of India: The Sociology of Hinduism and Buddhism* were published in 1916 and *Ancient Indianism* appeared a year later. In 1919, Weber delivered his famous lecture *Science as a vocation* and *Politics as a Vocation* in the University of Munich which depicted his attempt to define his political and intellectual orientation in the time of revolutionary upheaval in Germany.

During this period, and in the immediate postwar years, Weber also worked on

his Magnum Opus, *Wirtschaft and Geselloschaft* (Economy and Society). However, he was not able to bring out this work which was published posthumously entitled *General Economic History* in 1920.

Early in June 1920, Weber developed a high fever leading to pneumonia. He died in June in the same year.

## **7.5 MAX WEBER'S METHODOLOGY**

### **Relation Between History and Sociology**

The relation between history and sociology lies underneath Weber's methodology. Weber explained the difference between the two as follows : "Sociology seeks to formulate type concepts and generalized uniformities of empirical processes." This distinguishes it from history, "Which is oriented to the casual analysis and explanation of individual actions, structures, and personalities possessing cultural significance (Economy and Society, 1921/1968; p. 19)." Despite this difference, Weber was able to combine the two in his works. His sociology was oriented to the development of clear concepts so that a casual analysis of historical phenomena would be made. Weber defined his ideal procedure as the sure imputation of individual concrete events, occurring in historical reality to concrete historically given causes through the study of precise empirical data which have been selected from specific points of view (The Methodology of Social Science 1903/1917; p. 69).

In Weber's views, history is composed of unique historical events, there can be no generalization at the empirical level. Sociologists must, therefore, separate the empirical world from the conceptual universe that they construct. The concepts never completely capture the empirical world, but they can be used as heuristic tools for gaining a better understanding of reality. With these concepts, sociologists can develop generalization, but these generalizations are not history and must not be confused with empirical reality. Nevertheless, Weber was keen to combine the two, history and sociology and feel that history was understood as historical sociology appropriately concerned with both individuality and generality. The unification was accomplished through the development and utilization of general concepts (called 'ideal types' - explained ahead) in the study of particular individual, events or societies. These general

concepts must be used to identify and define the individuality of each development, their characteristics and the causes. In doing this kind of causal analysis, Weber rejected, atleast at a conscious level, the idea of searching for a single causal agent throughout history. Weber sought to combine the specific and the general in an effort to develop a science that did justice to the complex nature of social life.

### **Sociology as Science — Verstehen and Value Relevance**

Weber considered that the advantage sociologists have over natural scientists in the former's ability to 'understand' social phenomena. It is this ability to 'understand' or *verstehen* (Weber used this German word) the subjective meaning which people attach to their actions and events that makes sociologists different from a naturalist scientist who emphasizes on objective analysis and application of uniform laws (earlier sociologists, especially the positivists also focussed on this).

Weber thus defines sociology as "a science which aims at the interpretive understanding" of social action and thereby with a causal explanation of its course and consequences' (Economy and Society, 1921/1968; p. 4). This means that, sociologists can understand (*Verstehen*) human action by penetrating to the subjective meanings that actors attach to their own behaviour and to the behaviour of other. The subjective meaning that actors give to their actions becomes important and the task of the sociologist is to understand this for a systematic and scientific study.

However, the difference that Weber makes between the natural and the social science must be kept in mind at this stage. What distinguishes the two is not so much an inherent difference in methods of investigation, but rather the differing interests and aims of the scientists. Weber argues that the attraction of a particular problem and its explanation depends on the values and interests of the investigation. In this sense, the choice of problem is always 'Value Relevant'. The choice of the subject matter, as distinct from the choice of interpretation stems from the value orientation which may be the case with the natural scientists as well. Weber insisted that a value element

inevitably entered into the selection of the problem an investigator chooses, but this in no way invalidates the objectivity of the social sciences.

‘Value Relevance’ or Wertbeziehung (in German) touches upon the selection of the problem. Not upon the interpretation of phenomena which can pursue a scientific path. Thus, ‘Value Relevance’ must be distinguished from ‘value neutrality’ which implies that once the social scientist has chosen his problem in terms of its relevance to his values, he must hold values—his own or those of others—in abeyance while he follows the guidelines his data reveal. To put it simply, a sociologist must not make ‘value judgement’ but conduct research in the most scientific manner i.e. follows science as a vocation rigorously and systematically.

### **Casualty and Probability**

Weber’s definition of Sociology (Given above) besides focussing on ‘interpretive understanding’ also implies that there must be a ‘casual explanation of the courses and consequences of social action as well as events taking place in society. Weber emphasizes that interpretative explanation must become a casual explanation if it is to reach the dignity of a scientific proposition. Verstehen and causal explanation are correlative principles of method in the social sciences. In social science, causality is understood in terms of probability unlike the natural science where the precision could be more accurate.

There are two directions in Weber’s view of casualty—historical and sociological. Historical causality determines the unique circumstances that have given rise to an event. Sociological causality assumes the establishment of a regular relationship between two phenomena, which need not take the form ‘A makes B inevitable, but may take the form ‘A is more or less favourable to B’. The quest for historical causality for example, ask the question: what are the causes of French revolution? The search for sociological causality involves questioning the economic, the demographic or specifically social causes of all revolutions or of particular ‘ideal types of revolutions.

By causality, Weber simply meant the probability that an event will be

followed or accompanied by another event. The researcher has to look not only at the repetition, analogies and parallels like many historians, but has to look at the reasons for, as well the meanings of historical changes. And since for Weber, meaningfully interpretable human conduct, 'action' is identifiable by reference to valuations and meanings, the causal explanation of natural scientist remain different from the causal explanation of the social scientists.

The quest for historical causes, Weber pointed out, was facilitated by what has been called mental experiments. For instance, if we ask a question related to the mutiny of 1857 when the first shot was fired by the revolutionary Mangal Pandey that-whether the revolt would have been successful and history taken a different course in India, had he not fired the shot. If we conclude that it would have resulted in a similar situation then we can rule out the firing of shots as cause of the failure of mutiny. On the other hand, we can conclude as to the probability that the firing of shot was the major causal factor which led to the failure of revolt and India following a different path in the road to freedom.

To determine sociological causality, according to Weber, also require operating within a probabilistic framework. This type of generalization attempts to establish, for example, that the emergence of capitalism required a certain type of personality largely shaped by the preachments of Calvinist doctrine. The proof of the proposition comes when either through mental experiment or through comparative study in other cultures, it is established that modern capitalism could probably not develop such personalities as happened in other countries like China and India where dominant religious doctrines of Confucianism and Hinduism did not favour this combination. Therefore according to Weber, Calvinism must be considered a cause of the rise of capitalism in Western Europe.

Sociological causality thus, seeks to establish a regular connection between a set of variables or phenomena, 'the casualty between a situation and an event is adequate when we feel that the situation made the event, if not inevitable, atleast very probable. In a similar way, causality does not explain the entire reality but a partial one. In this sense, Weber's causal

explanation in sociology explains reality in partial and probable sense and not like Durkheim in objective and universal from.

## 7.6 LET US SUM UP

In this lesson we discussed biographical sketch of Max Weber, his life work and methodology. Weber was an intelligent student but led a disturbed childhood due to the prevailing tension at home which had its impact throughout his life. He was interested in law, history, sociology, politics and religion and taught at various universities.

In sociology, Max Weber is regarded as the most important and influential figure because of his major contributions. It goes to the credit of Max Weber to formulate a subject matter and methodology of social science different from that of natural sciences of that time. He conceived of sociology as a comprehensive science of social action. Many of the later perspectives and thoughts like phenomenology and ethnomethodology were drawn from Weber's writings and his methodology.

## 7.7 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISE I

**Note :** Use the space given below for your answers. Use separate sheet if space is not sufficient.

1. Give an account of Weber's years of scholarly work and his major contributions.

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2. What were Weber's important academic writings in the period between 1918-1920.

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**Check Your Progress Exercise II**

**Note :** Use the space given below for your answers. Use separate sheet if space is not sufficient.

1. Analyse briefly the relationship between History and Sociology.

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2. What is Sociology according to Max Weber? What is the significance of the concept 'value relevance'?

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3. How is historical causality different from sociological causality. Explain through examples.

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4. In what way you think methodology developed by Weber is a contribution to the discipline of sociology?

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## **SOCIAL ACTION**



**STRUCTURE**

- 8.1 Objectives
- 8.2 Introduction
- 8.3 Social Action
  - (a) Meaning and Definition
  - (b) Types of Social Action
- 8.4 Check your progress

**8.1 OBJECTIVES**

This lesson deals with the concepts, Social Action and Ideal Types in Max Weber's work. After going through this lesson you should be able to :

- understand the meaning and relevance of the concept of 'Social Action' in Max Weber's work.
- know the meaning, characteristics and relevance of 'Ideal Type' as an important component of Weber's Methodology.
- explain how Weber used the concept of Ideal Type in most of his Major contributions.

**8.2 INTRODUCTION**

'Social Action' is a central concept in Weber's definition of sociology. Therefore, Weber's views on the subject matter of sociology cannot be understood without knowing the meaning of 'Social Action'. This concept also

tells us the contribution of Weber to the Methodology in social sciences that emphasizes on the 'subjective meaning'.

The concept of 'Ideal Types' as conceptual tool in Weber's work further facilitates our understanding of sociology. This is a clear from Weber's construction of a number of Ideal Types like Western Capitalism or Bureaucracy. It goes to the credit of Weber to show that in social science we need not study the entire social reality which is so complex and dynamic, but abstraction from it to develop an understanding of social phenomena would suffice our purposes. For this Ideal type is logically constructed useful device. This lesson focuses on our understanding of the concepts of 'Social Action' and Ideal Types-both extremely important in Weber's work and analysis.

### **8.3 SOCIAL ACTION**

#### **(a) Meaning and Characteristics**

Weber's entire sociology is based on his conception of 'Social Action', as sociology is defined by him as the interpretive understanding of social action in order thereby to arrive at a causal explanation of its course and effect. Weber differentiated between action and purely reactive behaviour which involves not thought processes. The behaviour which requires only stimulus to occur was not of interest to Weber. He was concerned with action that clearly involved the intervention of thought processes between the occurrence of a stimulus and the ultimate response, which finally lead to a meaningful action. This means that for Weber, action was said to occur when individuals attached subjective meanings to their action.

According to Weber, 'Action is social in so far as, by virtue of the subjective meaning attached to it by the acting individual, it takes account of the behaviour of others and is thereby oriented in its course (Max Weber, The Theory of Social and Economic Organization, 1964, P. 88). To Weber the task of sociological analysis involved, the interpretation of action in terms of its subjective meaning. (Max Weber Economy and Society, 1921/68, p.8)

'Meaning' according to Weber, may be of two kinds : One, the actual

existing meaning in the given concrete case of a particular actor or to the average meaning attributed to a given plurality of actors, and second, the theoretically conceived 'pure type' in a given type of action. In no case does it refer to an objectively 'correct' meaning or one which is 'true' in some metaphysical sense. It is this which distinguishes the empirical sciences of action, such as sociology and history from the dogmatic disciplines in that area, such as logic, ethics etc., which seek to find out the 'true' and 'valid' meanings associated with the objects of investigation. Therefore, it is more important to understand how and what meaning an individual actor or actors attribute to their social action in a given situation than to origin of the qualities of truth and logic. Thus we can say that the important elements of social action are : (i) it includes all human behaviour (ii) it attaches a subjective meaning to it (iii) the acting individual or individuals take into account the behaviour of others (iv) it is oriented in its course.

We can outline certain characteristics of social action. First, according to Weber, social action may be oriented to the past, present, or expected future behaviour of others. Thus, it may be motivated by revenge for a past attack, defence against present, or measures of defence against future aggression.

Secondly, according to Weber, not every kind of action is social and 'subjective attitudes constitute social action only so far as they are oriented to the behaviour of others. (Max Weber, 1964, P. 112). For example, religious behaviour is not social if it is simply a matter of contemplation or of solitary prayer. The action, then becomes social when the action behaviour is meaningfully oriented to that of the others or it is social if, and in so far as, it takes account of the behaviour of others. The economic activity of an individual is social when the actors actual control over economic goods is expected by others.

Thirdly, not every type of contact of human being has a social character. Weber has given many examples to show this and the difference between 'action' and 'social action' or when does an action becomes a 'social action'. He says, 'a mere collision of two cyclists may be compared to a natural event. On the other hand, their attempt to avoid hitting each other, or whatever insults, blows, friendly discussion might follow the collision would constitute 'social action'.

Fourthly, Weber says 'social action is not identical either with the similar

action of many persons or with action influenced by other persons'. For example if at the beginning of a shower a number of people on the street put up their umbrellas at the same time this would not ordinarily be a case of action mutually oriented to that of each other, but rather of all reactions in the same ways to the like need of protection from the rain. The present action cannot be called 'social' as it is merely a result of the effect on the people of the existence of a crowd. As such, the action is not oriented to that fact on the level of meaning. All such acts and initiations are not social according to Weber, as they are purely reactive and there is no meaningful orientation towards others.

### **(b) Types of Social Action**

Weber utilized his ideal-type methodology to clarify the meaning of action by identifying four basic types of action according to their modes of orientation. These are: (i) Rational action with reference to goals which Weber called *Zweckrational*. (ii) Rational action with reference to value called *Wertrational*. (iii) Traditional Action (iv) Affective Action.

#### **Rational Action with reference to goals (*Zweckrational*)**

This type of rational action is classified in terms of the conditions or means for the successful attainment of the actor's own rationally chosen ends. According to Weber, 'action is rationally oriented to a system of discrete individuals' ends when the end, the means and the secondary results are all rationally taken into account and weighed'. This involves rational of alternative means to the end. Of the relations of the end to other prospective results of employment of any given means, and finally of the relative importance of different possible ends. (Max Weber. *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization* 1947, P. 117) Thus rational action is the one chosen with all care and calculation of available means in a given situation to achieve the desired result.

#### **Rational Action with reference to values (*Wertrational*)**

Rational Action with reference to value is classified in terms of rational orientation to an absolute value, that is, action when is directed to overriding ideals of duty, honour or devotion to a cause, In the words of Weber, *Wertrational* is oriented to an 'absolute value involving a conscious belief in

the absolute value of some ethical, aesthetic, religious or other form of behaviour, entirely for its own sake and independently of any prospects of external success' (Weber, 1947 Ibid, P.15).

Examples of pure rational orientation to absolute values, according to Weber, would be the action of persons who, regardless of possible cost to themselves act to put into practice their convictions of what seems to them to be required by duty honour, the pursuit of beauty, a religious call, personal loyalty, on the importance of some 'cause no matter in what it consists. When action is oriented to absolute values, it always involves 'commands' or 'demands' to the fulfillment of which the actors feel obligated. It is only in cases where human action is motivated by the fulfillment of such unconditional demands that it will be described as oriented to absolute values.

### **Traditional Action**

Traditional action is classified as one which occurs under the influence of long practice, customs and habits, or which is oriented 'through the habituation of long practice.

Strictly traditional behaviours are guided by those norms and customs which have been passed through generations usually in a hereditary manner emphasizing on the ascriptive criteria. People occupying positions of power and authority based upon the belief in the sanctity of age old customs, follow traditional action. The examples could include actions of people as tribal's chiefs. Panchayat leaders, a feudal landlord or monarch. Moreover, besides these people in power positions, actions of them who are oriented towards customs related to their caste, clan or lineage also come under traditional action.

However, pure type of traditional action, according to Weber becomes a matter of almost automatic reaction to habitual stimuli which guide behaviour in a course which has been repeatedly followed. Therefore, such actions which become reactive type of initiation, often lie very close to the borderline of meaningfully oriented action.

### **Affectual Action :**

Affectual Action is classified in terms of affectual orientation, especially emotional, determined by the specific states of feeling of the actor. Since this type of action is determined by the emotional state of the actor, it is far away from rationality and hence, is of the concern to Weber. However, at times when affectually determined action occurs in the form of conscious release of emotional tension, it comes closer to rationality.

According to Weber the examples of affectual action are the satisfaction of a direct impulse to revenge to renewal gratification, to devote oneself to a person or ideas, to contemplate bliss or finally, towards the working off of emotional tensions. Such impulses belong to the type of affectual action.

These four types of action are pure types but exist in combination in reality. The construction of the ideal types of action helps in understanding the existing situation by seeing to what extent the particular empirical action diverts or approximates to which ideal type. Weber himself agrees that it is very unusual to find concrete cases of social action only in one or another way. The main purpose has been to formulate in conceptually pure form certain sociologically important types to which actual action is more or less closely approximated. Weber emphasizes in the end that, the usefulness of the classification of types of action can only be judged in terms of its results.

#### **8.4 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISE I**

**Note :** Use the space given below for your answer. Use separate sheet if space is not sufficient.

1. What do you mean by 'Social Action'?

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2. Define the three types of action mentioned by Weber and explain the two

types of rational action in defact.

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3. In what sense Weber's classification of types of social action relate to Ideal Type.

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**Check Your Progress Exercise II**

1. What is the meaning of 'Ideal Type' as given by Max Weber? How are they constructed ?

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2. Explain the essential characteristics of Ideal Types.

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3. Analyse the relevance of Ideal types in sociological study.

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**STRUCTURE**

9.1 Ideal Types

Meaning and Characteristics

Essential Characteristics of Ideal Types

Relevance of Ideal Types

9.2 Ideal Types in Weber's Work

Ideal types of Historical Particulars

Abstract Elements of Social Reality — Bureaucracy, Authority and Social Action

Reconstruction of a particular kind of behaviour

9.3 Check your progress

9.4 Let Us Sum Up

9.5 References

**9.1 IDEAL TYPES**

**(a) Meaning and Characteristics**

The 'Ideal Type' is an important component of Weber's methodology and one of his best known contributions to contemporary sociology. Sociology Weber believed as the responsibility of sociologists to develop conceptual tools which could be used later by historians and sociologists. The most important of such conceptual tools is the 'Ideal Type. At the most basic level, an ideal type is understood to be a concept constructed by a social scientist on the basis of his or her interests and theoretical orientation to



capture the essential features of social phenomenon or to make intelligible the social reality. According to Weber, Ideal Type is an analytical construct and its function is the comparison with empirical reality in order to establish its divergences or similarities, to describe them with most unambiguously intelligible concepts, and to understand and explain them causally (Max Weber *The Methodology of Social Science*, 1903-17/ 1949, p. 43).

Weber argued that no scientific system is even capable of reproducing a concrete reality, nor can any conceptual apparatus ever do full justice to the infinite diversity and complexity of particular phenomena. Therefore, all sciences involve selection as well as abstraction. Construction of ideal type refers to this process where by a social scientist selects a certain number of traits from the whole to constitute an intelligible entity. In this sense, ideal type refers to selection of certain elements, traits or characteristics which are distinctive and relevant to the study undertaken. Therefore, Ideal Type represent the typical and essential characteristics and not the common or the average ones. Though ideal types are constructed by abstraction combination of elements from social reality, it is not mirror image of the world, nor represent or describe the total reality. It is a pure type in a logical sense and according to Weber in its conceptual purity, the ideal mental construct cannot be found empirically anywhere in reality. There has never been a full empirical embodiment of the 'Protestant Ethic', or the 'Charismatic leader' of the 'Exemplary Prophet'. (Weber, methodology in Social Sciences 1903 17/ 1949, P.90)

Ideal Type, thus, is an analytical concept that serves the investigator as a measuring rod to ascertain similarities as well as deviations in concrete cases. However, the use of word 'ideal' does not mean in any sense the best of all possible words nor it is meant to refer to moral ideals. Infact, Weber argued that the ideal type need not be positive or correct, it can as easily be negative or even morally repugnant (Max Weber Methodology in Social Science, 1903-17/ 1949). Its aim is to make sense out of the real world and assist in understanding the phenomena and the reason in their occurrence.

#### **(b) Essential Characteristics of Ideal Types**

Some of the essential characteristics of 'ideal types' can be drawn from the above discussion.

1. Ideal Types do not explain the total reality or explain everything but portray the partial conception of the whole.

2. Ideal Types are not average or general types, i.e. they are not defined by the characteristic common to all phenomena or objects of study. They are formulated on the basis of abstraction of certain typical traits essential for the study of social phenomena. In this sense, it is purposely selective and of the nature of experiment.

3. Ideal Types do not refer to moral ideas or what is ethically good or bad and negative or positive. One can make an ideal type of 'brother' or 'chapel' with equal ease. Therefore, they are ideal and rational only in the sense of being a conceptual and logical reality computing a pure rationality of means-end actions.

4. Ideal Types are not an exhaustive description of any definite concept of reality, but they aid both in description and explanation.

5. Ideal Types are not hypothesis but they enable one to construct hypothesis linking them with the conditions that brought the phenomenon or event into prominence, or with consequences that follows from its emergence.

6. In this sense, ideal types are also related to the concept of causality, though not in deterministic terms, but partial and probable sense, as has been explained in the previous lesson.

7. Ideal Types are not developed once and for all but they are constantly modified and reformulated in accordance with the changing reality.

8. Ideal Types are not a basis of comparative experiment for the purpose of setting up 'general laws'. On the contrary, they are a limiting case for the explanation of a specific configuration.

These characteristics of 'Ideal Types' can be better understood by referring to the examples in Weber's own work as is done later in the lesson.

### **(c) Relevance of Ideal Types**

Ideal Types are constructed to facilitate the understanding and analysis of empirical questions. Many researchers are not aware of the concepts they use or use them without defining them. As a result of this, their formulations often tend to be imprecise and ambiguous. According to Weber, the language which the historians talk contain hundreds of words which are ambiguous constructs created to meet the unconsciously conceived need for adequate expression, and whose meaning is definitely felt, but not clearly thought out (Weber, 1949: 92-93). Thus, Ideal Types came to guide empirical research by emphasizing on the necessity to define and formulate concepts used in the study.

Ideal Types help in rendering the subject matter intelligible by avoiding obscurity and confusion. Weber's construction of ideal types of authority for example into-legal traditional and rational with a rigorous definition of each one of them, was done to understand how they operate though in reality they are found in ambiguous and overlapping manner.

As Ideal Types are derived inductively from the real world which is constantly changing, they are often modified and sharpened through the empirical analysis of concrete problems. This, increases the precision of that analysis.

In this sense, it can be said that ideal types' advantage is also realized to the systematization of data on historical and social reality.

Another relevance of Ideal types can be visualized in the way-it not only helps in formulation of hypothesis but also in testing them thereby in reaching to several propositions and making comparative analysis.

## **9.2 IDEAL TYPES IN WEBER'S WORK**

Weber used ideal types in different ways and recognized several varieties. According to George Ritzer. They can be classified as :

- 1. *Historical Ideal Types*** relating to phenomena found in some particular historical epoch, for example, the modern capitalism.
- 2. *General Sociological Ideal Types*** which relate to phenomena that act across a member of historical periods and societies bureaucracy' for instance.
- 3. *Action Ideal Types*** are pure types of action based on the motivations

of the actor, for example, affectual action.

4. ***Structural Ideal Types*** : Which are forms taken by the causes and consequences of social action, for example traditional authority. (Ritzer, G. Sociological Theory, 1992; 121).

Coser talks about the three distinctive ideal types encompassing all the above mentioned ones as well. These are : (1) ideal types rooted in historical particularities. Such as the 'Western City' the Protestant Ethic or 'modern capitalism'. These refer to phenomena that appear only in specific historical periods and in particular cultural areas (2) those which involve abstract elements of social reality, like 'bureaucracy', 'feudalism' that may be found in a variety of historical and cultural contexts. (3). 'rationalizing reconstructions of a particular behaviour.' (Coser, Lewis A. Masters of Sociological Thought, 1996; 224)

#### **Ideal Types of Historical Particulars**

The best known example of this ideal type can be seen in Weber's work on 'Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of capitalism', which is explained in detail ahead. In trying to understand the rise of capitalism in western Europe, Weber showed that there is a close affinity between capitalism and Protestantism. The Protestant ethic, and in particular Calvinist doctrine, emphasizes on greatness and strength of God who would be pleased if only men did their work regularly, rationally and consistently without wasting their time, money and energy in idleness, luxury and laziness.

Capitalism also emphasizes on the objective of making maximum profit and to accumulate more. However, for this, there should be a rational pursuit organized effort and hardwork. There is no room for wrong alternatives or unlawful means. It is the conjunction of desire for profit and rational discipline which constitutes the historically unique feature of western capitalism.

The affinity between this form of capitalism with Protestant and Calvinist ethic existed only in the west and made the emergence of capitalism in western Europe as historically unique phenomena. As explained ahead, to prove the historical uniqueness of this phenomenon, Weber made a comparative study of

other world religions and showed that modern capitalism did not come in other countries because the uniqueness of the combination between the capitalistic spirit and protestant ethic was not present there. This weber could only do by conceiving both modern capitalism and protestantism in ideal typical terms.

### **Abstract Elements of Social Reality**

The abstract elements of social reality are found in a variety of historical and cultural context. The examples of these types used by Weber are bureaucracy, types of authority, and types of action. Here, we will take two examples, leaving out the types of action which has already been discussed before.

According to Weber, 'Bureaucracy refers to a hierarchical organisation designed rationally to co-ordinate the work of many individuals in the pursuit of large scale administrative tasks and organisational goals.

**1. Bureaucracy :** Weber's interest in bureaucracy is related to his belief in the system of modern capitalism which required the rationalist order and a legal administration essential for the state to function. Earlier bureaucracies like China or Egypt were essentially partimomial and were largely based upon the payment of officials in kind. Weber constructed an ideal of rational legal bureaucratic organisation and insisted that bureaucracies in modern industrial society are moving towards this pure type. Weber's Ideal Type of bureaucracy consists of the following features.

- (a) High degree of sepecialization and a clearly defined division of labour with task distributed as official duties.
- (b) Mechanical structure of authority with clearly circumscribed areas of command and responsibility.
- (c) Establishment of a formal body of rules to govern the operation of the organisation and administration based on written documents.
- (d) Impersonal relationship between organization members and the clients.
- (e) Recruitment of personnel based on ability and technical knowledge.
- (f) Long-term employment, promotion on the basis of seniority

and merit.

(g) Fixed salary and the separation of private and official income.

This bureaucratic co-ordination is a form of organisation found in most modern capitalist societies. Only through this organizational device large scale planning, both for the modern state and modern economy, is possible. Though Weber also noted certain disfunctions of bureaucracy like: curtail of freedom and creativity, he regarded it as the essential and technically superior form of administration.

It is possible that bureaucracy, in reality may occur in different form from the above constructed ideal type of Weber. But it is precisely this divergence or approximation of the real situation with ideal typical form that suggest the motive and type of bureaucratic system operating in any given society. In this many ideal type of abstract elements help a researcher to understand the social phenomenon as it exists in a given situation.

**2. Types of Authority :** Weber's discussion of authority relations illustrates his use of ideal type as an analytical tool. He claims three modes of claiming legitimacy on which are based his typology of authority. Weber constructed three ideal types of authority. These are traditional, rational-legal and charismatic.

Traditional authority is based upon belief in the sanctity of tradition of 'the eternal yesterday'. It is not modified in impersonal rules but is inherent in particular persons who may either inherit it or be invested with it by a higher authority. This type of authority predominate in pre-modern societies. Traditional Panchayats in rural India or tribal councils in primitive societies are examples of the traditional type of authority.

Rational-legal type of authority is based on rational grounds and established in impersonal rules that have been legally enacted or contractually established. It is maintained by laws, decrees and regulations and found in most modern societies. Bureaucracy is the machinery which implements rational legal authority.

Charismatic authority rests on the appeal of leader who claim allegiance

because of their extraordinary virtues and qualities. It is based on extraordinary devotion to an individual and to the way of life preached by him. In India some of the charismatic leaders have been Guru Nanak and Mahatma Gandhi. However, the person who follows them may not have similar charismatic powers and in order to transmit their preachings certain organization is formed. The original charisma gets transformed either into either traditional authority or rational-legal authority. Weber calls this routinization of charisma.

### **Reconstruction of a Particular kind of behaviour**

This type of ideal type includes those elements that constitute rationalizing reconstructions of a particular kind of behaviour. According to Weber, all propositions in economic theory, for example, fall into this category. They are ideal typical reconstructions of the ways men would behave if they were pure economic subjects. These include laws of supply and demand, marginal utilities etc. supply of commodity in the market governs prices in relation to demand. Similarly, utility of a commodity for consumption is higher or lower depending upon the units available for consumption. Economic theory rigorously conceives economic behaviour as consistent with its essence which is defined in precise manner.

### **9.3 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISE-I**

**Note :-** Use the space given below for your answer.

Use separate sheet if space is not sufficient.

1. What are the three distinctive ways in which Weber used Ideal Types?

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2. In what way Weber used the concept of Ideal Type to show the relationship

between Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism?

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3. What are the main characteristics of ideal type of bureaucracy as outlined by Weber?

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4. What are the different Ideal Types of authority given by Weber, Explain them with examples.

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#### **9.4 LETS US SUM UP**

In this lesson we dealt with the concepts of 'Ideal Types' used by Weber in his works.

Weber formulated ideal types of social action which helped in the study and analysis of social phenomena in society. This lesson explains the concept of ideal type as a conceptual tool which is used in understanding social events : historical or general; help in precision; in formulating and testing hypothesis and guiding research in a systematic way. The lesson also examines the way in which Weber used ideal types in his works and how



they are significant to his methodology.

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## THE PROTESTANT ETHIC AND THE SPIRIT OF CAPITALISM

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**B. A. Semester–IIIrd**

**Lesson No. 10**

**Unit-III**

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### STRUCTURE

10.1 Objectives

10.2 Introduction

10.3 The Protestant Ethic and Spirit of Capitalism

Inter-relationship between Religious Ethics and Economy

The Spirit of Capitalism

The Protestant Ethic-Calvinism

10.4 Weber's Comparative Studies on Religion

Confucianism in China

Hinduism in India

10.5 Let us Sum up

10.6 References

### 10.1 OBJECTIVE

After going through this lesson you should be able to :

- understand the relationship between Protestant Ethic and the spirit of capitalism or that between Religion and Economy as given by Weber.
- know in what way Weber constructed the ideal types of both and explain their casual links.

- analyse and comprehend his studies on other religions of the world, especially, Confucianism, Judaism and Hinduism.

## **10.2 INTRODUCTION**

In this lesson, Max Weber brings out the inter-relationship between religion and economy by showing the affinity between the Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism. It is stated what Weber means by the 'spirit of capitalism' and how the contrast is made between it and 'traditionalism.' Certain aspects of the 'Protestant ethics' are then discussed which, according to Weber, contributed to the development of capitalism in the west.

An analysis of Weber's comparative analysis on religions is made by focussing in details about the religions like: Confucianism, Judaism and Hinduism. This is done to show the relationship between the religion and economy and give an understanding of Weber's use of ideal types and the causal explanation in Weber's work.

## **10.3 THE PROTESTANT ETHIC AND SPIRIT OF CAPITALISM**

### **Inter-relationship between religious Ethics and Spirit of capitalism**

Max Weber traces the relationship between the religious ethic and spirit of capitalism in his best known work '*The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*' (1904-05/1958). In this book, Weber tried to show that there was a spiritual affinity between Calvinism, a doctrine of the protestant sect of Christianity, and the economic ethics of modern capitalist activity. For this, he identified three components of Calvinist doctrine which he considered as of particular and significant importance in the formation of capitalist spirit. In their sense Weber showed the uniqueness of the historical event and explained it in terms of historical casual analysis.

Weber's main interest was in the rise of distinctive rationality in the west and capitalism with its rational organisation, of free labour, its open market and rational book keeping system, was considered as an important component of that system. Capitalism was also linked to the parallel development of natural science, law politics, art, architectve, literature and the polity, therefore, Weber linked the protestant ethic to the 'spirit of capitalism' and not to the structure of the capitalist

system as such. Thus, the book, *the protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism* is not so much about the rise of modern capitalism as it is about the origin of peculiar 'spirit that eventually made capitalism possible, Such elements of both 'the protestant ethic' and 'the spirit of capitalism' are explained ahead in this lesson.

Weber began by examining and rejecting alternative explanations of why capitalism arose in the west in the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries. Some authors supported the idea that capitalism arose because the material conditions of that time. To this Weber said that material conditions were also like at other times and capitalism did not arise. Weber also rejected the psychological theory that the development of capitalism was due simply to the acquisitive instinct, which in his view has always existed, but did not produce capitalism.

Weber examined various religions of the world to prove his hypothesis. He showed that in Calvinist ethic, religion and economic activities are combined in a way not found either in Catholicism or in any other world religion like: Islam, Hinduism Confucianism, Judaism and Buddhism of which Weber made a comparative analysis.

### **The spirit of Capitalism**

The essence of capitalism according to Weber, is embodied in that enterprise whose aim is to make maximum profit or to accumulate more and more. It is based on the rational organisation of work and production. It is the conjunction of desire for profit and rational discipline which constitutes the historically unique feature of western capitalism. The desire for profit is satisfied not by speculation or conquest or adventure, but by discipline and rationality. Which is possible with the help of legal administration of the modern state or rational bureaucracy. In this sense, capitalism is defined as an enterprise working towards unlimited accumulation of profit through the rational organisation production under a legal system.

The emphasis on rational organisation of production made capitalism different from its earlier form known as traditional or adventurist capitalism. Adventurist capitalism existed in many places, like in the Italian cities. It was a risky business, involving the import of luxury items from distant

places. Foreign silks, spices, ivory etc. were sold to buyers at exorbitant prices.

The aim was to extract as much profit as possible because no one knew when and where next business deal would occur. Rational capitalism, on the other hand, depends on mass production and distribution of goods. This became possible with the Industrial Revolution and factory production. Unlike adventurist capitalism, rational capitalism does not deal with only a few luxury items but with almost all the daily material requirements. Rational capitalism is constantly expanding looking for new networks, new inventions, new products and new customers, and in this way it is qualitatively and quantitatively different from traditional capitalism.

Thus, when traditional capitalism or adventurist capitalism gave way to rational capitalism, the emphasis shifted from a much less disciplined and efficient system to the others on individualism, innovation and the relentless pursuit of profit. Intrinsic to this form of rational capitalism was its 'spirit'. According to Weber 'the Spirit' of 'Capitalism' is not defined simply to be economic greed, but it is moral and ethical system, an ethos, that among other things stresses economic success. In fact, it was the turning of profit making into an ethos that was critical in the west. In other societies, the pursuit of profit was seen as an individual act motivated at last in part by greed, and therefore, morally suspected. It was Protestantism which turned the pursuit of profit into a moral crusade. It was the backing of the moral system that led to the unprecedented expansion of profit seeking and ultimately, to the capitalist system.

The spirit of capitalism can be seen as a normative system that involves a number of inter-related ideas. For instance, its goal is to instill an 'attitude which seeks profit rationally and systematically. (Max Weber 1904-05/1958:53). In the spirit certain other ideas included are : 'Time is money,' 'be industrious', 'be frugal,' be punctual', be fair and 'earning money is legitimate end in itself. Above all, there is the idea that it is people's duty to ceaselessly increase their wealth. This takes the spirit of capitalism out of the realm of individual ambition and into the category of ethical imperative. The adventure capitalism that

existed in China, India, Babylon, and during the classical Middle Ages was different from western capitalism, primarily because it lacked “this particular ethos.” (Max Weber, 1904-55/1958:52).

The spirit of modern capitalism is, thus, characterized by a unique combination of devotion to the earning of wealth through, legitimate economic activity, together with the avoidance of the use of this income for personal enjoyment. This is rooted in a belief in the value of efficient performance in a chosen vocation as a duty and a virtue.

### **The Protestant Ethic-Calvinism**

Protestantism, a sect of Christianity, literally means ‘a religion of protest’. It arose in the sixteenth century in Europe in the ‘Reformation’ period, Its founding fathers like : Martin Luther King and John Calvin broke away from the Catholic Church as they felt that the church had become too immersed in doctrine and rituals. It has lost touch with the common people and greed, corruption and vice had gripped the church. The priests led a luxurious life and were more concerned about themselves and their life-style rather about the common people.

It was this reason that Protestant sect sprang up all over Europe emphasizing on simplicity, austerity and devotion. Calvinism, founded by the Frenchman John Calvin was one such doctrine. The followers of Calvin in England were known as Puritans and they migrated to the continent of North America and became the founders of the American nation. It was a group of these people who made great progress in education and employment, becoming top bureaucrats, skilled and technical workers and the leading industrialists. It was the concept of ‘calling’ that was central to Calvinist doctrine, not found in Catholicism. The ‘calling’ of the individual is to fulfill his duty to God through the moral conduct of his day-to-day life. This implies the emphasis of Protestantism away from the Catholic ideal of monastic isolation, with its rejection of the temporal, into worldly pursuits.

This concept of calling was central to Calvinism and Weber’s main concentration was on this, even though he differentiates other main strains of Protestantism as well like; Methodism, Pietism and Baptist sect. This was so,

because of some of the distinctive tenets of Calvinism, Weber identified three of them as the most important ones.

*Firstly*, the doctrine that universe is created to further the greater glory of God, and only has meaning in relation to God's purposes. 'God does not exist for men, but men for the sake of God,' *Secondly*, the principle that the motives of the Almighty are beyond human comprehension. Men can know only the small morsels of divine birth which God wishes to reveal to them. *Thirdly*, the belief in predestination: only a small number of men are chosen to achieve eternal grace. This is something which is irrevocably given from the first moment of creation; it is not affected by human action, since to suppose that it merely would be to conceive that the actions of men could influence divine judgement.

Calvinism demands from its belief a coherent and continuous life of discipline, thus, eradicating the possibility of repentance and atonement which the Catholic confessional repentance and atonement for sin makes possible. This will lead to his eternal salvation, which the Catholics believed could be done only through church and the sacraments. Thus labour in the material world, for the Calvinist, becomes attributed with the highest positive evaluation, a devotion to his calling. It places a premium upon the duty of the individual to approach his vocation in a methodical fashion as the instrument of God. The accumulation of wealth is morally condemned only to the desire that it forms an enticement to idle luxury, and therefore, material profit must be acquired through the ascetic pursuit of duty in a calling. To wish to be poor was, it was often argued, the same as wishing to be unhealthy, it is objectionable as a glorification of works and derogatory to the glory of God (Ibid : 163)

Thus, the main features of Calvinism which influenced the development of capitalism are :

1. *Image of God* as all powerful in whose glory men should always work devotedly and through proper means.
2. *Doctrine of Pre-destination* which emphasized on the fact that only few are

chosen to reach heaven and other are destined to be damned. To be selected and avoid damnation, men should work for the glory of God on earth which lay in economic pursuit and material prosperity.

3. *Calvinism and 'this-worldly asceticism'*. The focus has been on 'ascetic' life of strict self-discipline, control and conquest of desires, emphasis on hard work and remaining away, from sensual pleasures.

4. *The notion of 'calling'* holds that all work is important and sacred because it is not mere work, but a 'calling' a mission which should be performed with devotion and sincerity.

Weber summarized the 'Calvinist Ethic' in the following points :

(a) There exists an absolute transcendent God who created the world and rules it, but who is incomprehensible and inaccessible to the finite minds of men.

(b) This all powerful and mysterious God had predestined each of us to salvation or damnation, so that we cannot by our works alter a divine decree which was made before us.

(c) God created the world for his own glory.

(d) Whether he is to saved or damned, man is obliged to work for the glory of God and to create the kingdom of God on earth.

(e) Earthly things, human nature, and flesh belong to the order of sin and death and salvation can come to man only through divine grace (Raymond Aron, 1967 : 221-222)

It was these features of Calvinist religious ethic that led to the origin of capitalist spirit. On the basis of this relationship the book 'The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism demonstrate that there is an 'elective affinity'(Wahlver Wandtschaft) between Calvinism and the economic ethics of modern capitalist society. (Anthony Giddens, 1971;131).



#### **10.4 WEBER'S COMPARATIVE STUDIES ON RELIGION**

Weber made a comparative study of major religions of the world to prove his hypothesis that the emergence of rational capitalism in the west has been due to 'electric affinity' between its 'Spirit' and the 'ethic' of Protestantism. He made a detailed study of such religions as : Islam, Hinduism, Confucianism, Judaism and Buddhism to show that national capitalism did not emerge in countries inhabited by the practitioners of these religions because they lack the 'ethic' of Calvinism. Here, we take into account of Weber's studies of Confucianism in ancient China and Hinduism in ancient India.

##### **Confucianism in China**

In traditional China there was an existence of patrimonial bureaucracy i.e. According to Weber, in traditional China there were a number of important developments which were conducive to the rationalization of the economy. These helped the emergence of cities and guilds, the formation of monetary system, the development of law, and the achievement of political integration within a patrimonial state.

However, inspite of this relatively high degree of urbanization achieved in China in ancient times and of the volume of internal trade, the formation of money economy only reached a comparatively rudimentary land. The cities as well as money economy was not developed as in Europe. Also the Chinese. Cities did not acquire the political autonomy and legal independence which possessed by the medieval European urban communities. The Emperor combined both religious and political supremacy which was the important feature of the social structure of traditional China. The citizen of the Chinese city tended to retain most of their primary kinshiptees with their native village, and the city remained embedded in the local agrarian economy unlike in the west.

Despite these differences in material conditions from the west, the most important thing which did not lead to the development of the rational capitalism in China was the lack of 'ethic' similar to Calvinism in the Confucian religion. Confucian ideas can be summed up as follows :

1. Belief in the order of the universe, the cosmos.
2. Man should aim at being in harmony with nature and the cosmos.
3. Behaviour is to be guided by tradition. All wisdom lies in the past.
4. Family and kin ties and obligations were never to be neglected.

Thus, the ethic of Confucianism emphasized on the elements such as harmony traditionalism and ferocity and kinship affiliations as more important than individual pursuit of profit making. The stress on these features made Confucian ethic not conducive to the development of capitalism that aimed at profit and accumulation of wealth through rational and organised means.

### **Hinduism in India**

Like China, or even in many ways better, India had a flourishing civilization which continued despite several upheavals became firmly established, the development of manufacture and trade reached the peak. Merchant and craft guilds in the cities had an importance in urban economic organisation comparable to the guilds in medieval Europe. Rational science was highly developed in India and numerous schools of philosophy flourished at different periods. There existed an atmosphere of tolerance not found anywhere else. Judicial systems were formed which were as mature as those of medieval Europe.

However, the emergence of the caste systems, together with the ascendancy of the Brahmin priesthood and religious beliefs and dogmas effectively prevented any further economic development in the direction. The most important religious beliefs were that of transmigration of souls and compensation (Karma). Both of these are directly bound up with the social ordering of the caste system as the individual's place in it in the present life is tied to his work in the other life. This put insuperable barrenness in the face of any challenge to the existing order. The occupational structure in caste system was ritually italicized and it was not easy for the individual to break free of these vocational perceptions.

All these ideals of 'Karma' (work), 'Dharma' (duty) and 'Punarjanama' (transmigration of soul) made Hindu defeatists and fatalists, according to Weber. Hinduism preached 'other worldly asceticism,' the material world is considered

to be temporary and illusionary and the individual must come above all the illusion or 'Maya Jaal' to attain the goal of 'Moksha' (salvation), In this way, the emphasis of Hinduism on other-worldly asceticism (unlike Calvinist 'this-worldly asceticism') and fatalistic attitude towards material well being and change are responsible for the lack of development of that ethic which promote conducive situation to the rise of rational capitalism. It was because of this reason that, India, despite having sound finance, trade and technology could not promote capitalism as in the west.'

### **10.5 LET US SUM UP**

In this lesson, we tried to understand the important causal relationship between Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism which Weber tried to show in his famous book, the *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. This affinity between the two could be only understood when we understand the important characteristics of both the 'Protestant Ethic' and the 'Spirit of Capitalism'.

In two separate subsections, the features of capitalism and its 'spirit' as well as those of Protestantism and 'Calvinist ethic' were brought out. It was shown that the rationality, discipline and systematic establishment of western capitalism was only possible because of the 'ethic' which emphasized on 'work as duty', devotion or 'calling' and condemned laziness, dishonesty and luxurious life as undesired by God against God's glory on earth.

It was because of 'Ethic' of this Calvinism that rational capitalism could develop in Western Europe and not in other parts of the world where other religions existed. To prove this, Weber made a comparative study of major religions of the world like: Islam, Hinduism, Confucianism, Judaism and Buddhism. The two of these : Confucianism in China and Hinduism in India have been dealt with in greater detail.

### **Check Your Progress – I**

**Note :-** Use the space given below for your answer.

Use separate sheet if space is not sufficient.

1. Bring out the relationship between Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism.

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2. What were the main characteristics of Rational Capitalism and what constituted the 'Spirit of Capitalism'.

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3. What are the important features of Protestant Calvinist ethic?

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## AUTHORITY

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**B. A. Semester-IIIrd**

**Lesson No. 11**

**Unit-III**

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### STRUCTURE

- 11.1 Introduction
- 11.2 Theory and Types of Authority
- 11.3 Bureaucracy

#### 11.1 INTRODUCTION

The unified system of social stratification was not acceptable to Max Weber. He therefore, critically rejected the Utilitarian theory of class. The ruling class and its domination as explained by Marx was improvised by Weber to give a complex system of stratification in society. The fundamental complexes of social stratification manifest themselves in form of legitimate authority and then particularly in bureaucratic organization. Thus, Weber moved from class to authority to bureaucracy in relation to the nature and function of power. Legitimate authority was of special interest to Weber as expressed in conventional social action. (You have been discussed about different types of social action in a previous lesson). From the above three important concepts can be of interest to us : (1) Power, (2) Authority (domination) and (3) Legitimation. Let us define them before we continue with the discussion on authority and the bases of legitimation.

#### **Power :**

Weber understood social relations as basically conflict relations. The key determinant in social relations was power. He defined power as the “probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his

will despite resistance, regardless of the basis on which this probability rests.” Weber differentiated between factual and authoritarian power.

### **Domination :**

It is a related concept. Domination, he defined, as the “probability that a command.....will be obeyed by a given group of persons. For Weber, every social sphere was influenced by structures of domination. He distinguished between two types of domination. (1) Indirect and (2) Direct form. The indirect form of domination involved control.....which could be used to constrain the activities of other so that they behaved in the manner required by and in the interest of a social enterprise. For example, Banks could impose conditions for credit to which customer has to submit. In contrast, the direct form of domination involved control over other as an absolute duty to obey, regardless of personal motives or interests. There are a variety of bases of domination Legitimate and illegitimate.

But Weber was interested in legitimate forms of domination or what he called authority.

### **Legitimation and Authority :**

All forms of domination require self-justification legitimation. When power is legitimized it becomes authority. In other words, Authority refers to legitimized power. Weber viewed power as coercion and it is illegitimate. For him, power (the probability that a command will be obeyed) is in itself an insufficient basis for social order. But simple possession of power of anybody or a group will be used to further their own interest and thus will not work for the welfare of society. Here comes the discussion of legitimation. It is through legitimation, the power becomes authority. Weber constructed three pure types of legitimate authority - traditional, charismatic and rational.

## **11.2 THEORY AND TYPES OF AUTHORITY :**

One of the methodological tools, Weber developed is the construction of ‘ideal types’. Weber constructed four types of social action which have been discussed in the earlier lesson. He also constructed three types of legitimate domination or authority.

Weber's interest in the structures of authority was motivated by his political interests. He preferred democracy, which according to him, offered maximum dynamism.

Before we proceed further, let me relate the types of action which are the basis of legitimation and legitimate domination (authority).

**Figure1. Typology of Action and Legitimation**

<b>Action</b>	<b>Legitimation</b>	<b>Example</b>
Habitual (Traditional)	Traditional	Monarchy
Affective	Charismatic	Theocracy
Value-Rational	Substantive	Welfare State
Formal-Rational	Rational-Legal	Democratic Republic

From the above figure—I, the given typology of action and types of legitimate domination one may find that tradition (Habitual) action corresponds to traditional authority, affective action to charismatic authority and formal-rational to legal-rational authority. It has been discussed by critics that there is a lack of conformity between the typology of social action and typology of authority. Weber, in fact, distinguishes four types of social action but three types of authority. Larry J. Ray, however, writes that Weber did hint at a fourth type of legitimation in his introductory discussion of legitimation and his account of substantive rationality. It involves the provisioning of given groups with goods under a criterion of ultimate values such as social dictaorships that distribute welfare to secure the loyalty of cadres (Soviet societies). This mode of legitimation can combine aspects of charisma with rational legality. In the pages that follow, we will discuss the three types of legitimate domination (authority) as is popularly done by scholars.

**Authority Types :**

Weber distinguished between three ideal types of authority – Traditional, Charismatic and Legal-rational. These are all ideal types of domination/legitimation. But in actual historical situation, forms occur in combinations, mixtures, through adaptations or modifications of these pure types.

### **Traditional Domination : (Authority)**

It is based on tradition or custom that justifies over even sacrifices, the position of the ruler. A basic form of traditional domination is particularly centred in the household group or clan. The claim to legitimacy is based on descent from some founding fathers of traditional authority may be mentioned :

1. The person or persons exercising are designated according to traditionally transmitted rules.
  2. The object of obedience is the personal authority of the individual which he enjoys by virtue of his traditional status.
  3. The organized group exercising authority is based on personal loyalty.
  4. The person exercising authority is a personal chief.
  5. No systematic administration staff, but personal retainers who handle the administration.
  6. The commands of the traditional ruler are legitimatised in one of the two ways:
    - (a) Contents of command and objects and extent of authority.
    - (b) Double sphere of competence, (i) traditional action, (ii) no specific rules.
  7. The administration staff recruitment is as following :
    - (a) relations of the chief who have personal ties of personal loyalty known as patrimonial recruitment; Ex-Kinsmen.
    - (b) It can be extra-patrimonial in the sense that those persons who have personal loyalty like all sorts of favourites.
    - (c) Free from patrimoniality but develops relation of loyalty.
    - (d) Finally, the gerens to evats and patriarchalists.
- 1) The number are treated as subjects.
  - 2) The patrimonial receives support in any of the following ways :



- (a) Maintenance at the table and in the household of the chief.
- (b) Allowances from the stores of the chief.
- (c) Right to use land in return to services.
- (d) Appropriation of property, income, taxes.
- (e) By fields.

**Charismatic Authority :**

Charisma, for Weber, was a revolutionary force - one of the most revolutionary forces of social work. A leader with 'charisma' may have outstanding characteristics. The charisma is applied to a certain qualities of an individual personality. But it is not sufficient if he has no set of followers or disciples. According to Weber, if the disciples define a leader as charismatic, then he or she is likely to be a charismatic leader irrespective of her or she actually possesses any outstanding traits. Such a leader is set apart from ordinary people and treated as if endowed with supernatural, superhuman or at least exceptional powers or qualities that are not accessible to the ordinary person. Let us quickly look at some of the important features.

1. the charisma is applied to a certain qualities of an individual.
2. The disciples or a set of followers are to be there to define a leader as charismatic.
3. Charisma is a revolutionary force.
4. The administrative staff of the leader does not consist of officials but the followers do the job. However, they are not trained.
5. The recruitment of such members are done on the basis of again charismatic qualities.
6. There may be territorial or functional limits to charismatic powers.
7. The followers tend to live primarily in a communistic relationship with their leader - as there is no salaries.
8. The means to run such an organization are contributed by voluntary gift.
9. There is no system of formal rules, legal principles.

10. The type of social action that the charismatic authority is related to affective action. The disciples worship their hero.
11. The leader and his assistant do not have a regular occupation and often reject their family responsibilities.
12. Problem of succession arises with the death or disappearance of the leader.

### **Routinization of Charisma :**

After the death or disappearance of the leader, the person who succeeds may not have charismatic powers. The transmission of the message and philosophy of the leader may require some sort of organization. The original charisma gets transformed either into traditional authority or rational-legal authority. Weber calls it routinization of charisma.

If the leader succeeds by a son/ daughter or some close relative, it transforms into traditional authority. On the other hand, if the original message, the charismatic qualities, the sayings of the leader are identified and written down, then the transformation is towards legal rational authority. Weber also discussed various ways of routinization of charisma. (a) Motives of routinization. This may be either because of loss of charm of the leader or that he would like to link up his authority with some kind of traditional authority, structure, etc. (b) Various forms of routinization such as traditional, bureaucratic or combination of both.

There are three methods through which the succession of the leader or routinization of charisma is done.

1. A new charismatic leader is designated on the basis of criteria that are thought to meet the requisite qualities of the chosen one.
2. The original charismatic leader designates his own successor.
3. The disciples and followers of the leader are believed to be the best suited to designate a qualified successor.

So, routinization of charisma is the process by which the charismatic authority (original) is refinalised or traditionalized.

Further, the routinization also takes the form of appropriation of powers of control of economic advantages of the followers.

Thirdly, routinization is not free of conflict especially between charisma of hereditary status and personal charisma.

**Legal-rational authority :**

Rational-legal domination refers to belief in the legality of enacted rules and the right of those elevated to authority to enact them. Formal-rational legitimation is impersonal and procedural in that authority is found on a belief that commands should be obeyed because they are legal. This type of domination is based on the belief in the sanctity of formal rules and laws and thus on the legitimacy of legally appointed leader. Weber listed five mutually interdependent ideas that signify pure type of rational legal domination. (Adam and Sydie : 184).

— Any legal norm is valid on the grounds of “expediency or value rationality or both” and commands the obedience of all within the sphere of power or within the relevant organization.

— The legal norms are a consistent system of abstract rules that have normally been intentionally established and that are then applied to particular cases.

— All are subject to the law, even those who exercise legal authority, and all must behave according to the legal norms.

— Obedience is a consequence of membership in the organization and individuals obey only the law.

— Members of the organization obey the person in authority because he or she is legally designated or elected; they do not owe obedience to him as an individual.

Rational-legal authority is a typical feature of modern society. The basis of rational-legal authority is rational action (formal rational action). A few examples of this type of authority may be mentioned here for your convenience. In day to day routine we meet many functionaries of (who are legally appointed) system and obey them. We stop our vehicles when asked by the traffic police because he has authority for it. In your classroom, you would accept a teacher who is appointed legally for the purpose. A doctor on duty is authorized to operate and treat person because he has the requisite qualification and legally

appointed for the purpose. Modern societies are, therefore, governed by laws and ordinances, not by individuals.

Continuous organization of official functions bound by rules and specific sphere of competence are said to be the fundamental categories of rational-legal authority. For this the following facts are to be observed. (Vasiraju :118)

(a) a sphere of obligations to perform functions which are marked off as part of systematic division of labour.

(b) provision of obligations to perform functions which are marked off as part of a systematic division of labour.

(c) means of compulsions are defined.

**Further, the other categories are :**

1. the administrative staff should be separated from the means of production or administration.

2. The rules which regulate the conduct of an office may be technical rules or norms.

3. The principle of hierarchy in the organization of offices.

4. The rules regulating the conduct of an office show complete absence of appropriation of this official position by the incumbent.

5. Records are written and mentioned.

6. The incumbents are remunerated by fixed salaries by money.

7. The officials are free to resign.

8. The termination of the incumbents should not be arbitrary.

9. The official is subjected to strict and systematic discipline.

From the above discussion, one may find that the different types of social action (ideal types) correspond to the different types of authority or legitimate domination.

To understand as to how rational-legal authority functions, we now discuss a purest form of it which is found in Weber's formulation of ideal typical bureaucracy. Before we proceed further let me make some quick prints for you.

1. Unlike traditional and charismatic domination and authority which are finally male-power, rational legal domination is, in the pure type, gender neutral. Technical qualifications and merit are the basic entry stipulations.

2. Conduct in the office is regulated by impersonal, formal rules and regulations, which are not subjected to gender discrimination. Also, let me reproduce a comparative distinction between charisma and rationalization. (Ray : 185)

Distinction between Charisma and Rationality :

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<b>Charisma</b>	<b>Rationalization</b>
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- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1. Personality forces its way into history | Intellect and impersonality            |
| 2. Non-bureaucratic                        | Bureaucratic                           |
| 3. Creative                                | Adaptation to values or material goals |
| 4. Revolutionary                           | Routinized                             |
| 5. De-differentiating                      | Differentiating                        |
| 6. Often religious                         | Disenchanted                           |
| 7. Ephemeral (Becomes Routinized)          | Persistent                             |

Example: Puritan asceticism      Example: spirit of rational accounting

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Thus, by way of summing up the following points may be made for your convenience in relation to formal-rational organization :

- Hierarchical authority in which lower offices are supervised by higher ones. Once fully developed, hierarchy is monocratically organized with a single command center, from which orders emanate and are acted upon.
- Impersonality and separation of office from the office holder. The workplace will be separated from the official's receive a salary, are graded according to hierarchy, and unlike patrimonial bureaucracy, cannot use the office for personal benefit.
- Written rules of conduct. The modern office is based on written documents, which are preserved in original form, which requires a staff of subaltern officials and scribes of all sorts.

### **12.3 BUREAUCRACY :**

As said earlier, the purest type of rational-legal authority was bureaucracy. Weber defined bureaucracy in its ideal type by these characteristics :

1. Official business is conducted on a continuous basis.
2. Business is conducted in accordance with stipulated rules.
3. Every official's responsibility and authority are part of a hierarchy of authority.
4. Officials do not own the resources necessary for them to perform their assigned functions, but they are accountable for the use of those resources.
5. Offices cannot be appropriated by their incumbents in the sense of property that can be inherited or sold.
6. Official business is conducted on the basis of written documents.

Bureaucracy fits to the spirit of rational-bourgeois capitalism. It promotes a rationalist way of life. The bureaucracy is dehumanized, the more completely it succeeds in eliminating from official business, love, hatred and all purely personal and emotional elements which escape calculation.

Rational-legal domination through bureaucracy was the basis of the development of modern capitalistic Western state. However, Weber also pointed out that socialism would not eliminate the bureaucratization of life. On the contrary, it would increase the scope and power of bureaucracy.

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## **KARL MARX : A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH**

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**B. A. Semester-IIIrd**

**Lesson No. 12**

**Unit-IV**

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### **STRUCTURE**

- 12.1 Introduction
- 12.2 Biographical Sketch
- 12.3 Historical Materialism
- 12.4 Dialectical Materialism

Karl Marx the founder and chief exponent of Communism was born in Prussia. At the age of seventeen he joined Bonn University as a law student. In 1841, Marx submitted his thesis of Jena University and obtained the degree of Masters of Philosophy. His ambition to join as a university lecturer did not materialize because of his radical views Journalism was his second preference and in 1842 he got a job of an editor in some newspaper. It brought him closer to politics and subsequently to economics. It was during this period that Marx came under influence of young Heglian school of Philosophy which criticized Bible and virtually made Marx anti-religious. His actions and writings reflected anti-government attitude and the government banned his newspaper to make Marx jobless. In 1843 he left Prussia and made France the centre of his activity. At this time he studied French socialism and studied Saint Simon in detail. The impact of French revolution made mark on him and he began to realize clearly the role of workings classes in the runing of states. In 1845 he had to leave France, as the French government expelled him on the insistence of Prussian govenment. However, in France he came in touch with Frederic Engels who remained a close companion to Marx for the rest of his life. Both

Marx and Engels now settled in Brussels and wrote the “German Ideology”, which became the basis of his political philosophy namely that of class struggle. It was here that he preached, the over throwing of capitalist government and of capturing power by the working class.

Between 1845 and 1847 Marx and Engels formed different working men association and in 1847 a Congress of these associations was held in London and the outcome was the formation of International Communist League. Marx and Engels were assigned the job of writing the communist Manifesto they believed and preached that capitalism was bound to end and on its debris working classes are bound to come to power. The publication of Communist Manifesto and propagation through it was considered to be a danger and Belgium government arrested Marx and deported him from his own territory. On account of this radical and revolutionary views, in 1849 Marx was expelled from Germany.

French revolution convinced him about the ruthless suppression of working classes by the ruling classes. He was fully convinced that unless working classes seized power no change could come in their working conditions and social status. Unfortunately the man who so deeply and firmly tried to protect the workers of the world was himself a victim of this system. During his short stay in London the couple lost three children. Only because they could not be properly fed and nourished. The family was the greatest victim of capitalist system. It was in this dismay that Marx, studied English Economic system and analyzed that in his contribution to the critique of Political Economy. Marx from 1861 continued with his study of the political and social conditions and the outcome was his famous and immortal “Das Kapital”, the first volume of which was published in 1867. This publication made the world think of him, his ideas and philosophy.

The second and third volume of Kapital was published in 1885 and 1894 respectively, only after every thing including his family life and personal comforts has been lost. The world was obliged to give serious thought to the philosophy of man who has been turned out from county to country and place to place. The man was poverty stricken. That was the man who made it a point to fight for the toiling



masses of the world. Though Marx was fighting all odds analyzing the causes of world poverty, yet his personal life was not happy. In 1881, his wife expired and in 1883 his eldest daughter died. Both these deaths gave a heavy blow to the health of this great philosopher who lost much of his initiative. Under great distress he himself died on March 14, 1883. On his death one of his admirers thus said, “The greatest man in our party had ceased to think, the strongest heart that we had ever known had ceased to beat.”

The brief sketch of the life carrier and contributions of Karl Marx outlined above, makes it clear that Marx was a great philosopher. Some of points you need to remember are the following :

1. His personal life was full of struggle.
2. He was not a careerist, in the sense, that he never compromised with the system.
3. Some of the important works and writings of Marx are of follows.
  - a. The German Ideology (1845), which form the basis of his political Philosophy namely that of class struggle.
  - b. The Communist manifesto (1847) wherein he predicted the end of capitalism.
  - c. The contribution to the critique of political economy (1859), in which he discussed the dialectics of the development of productive process and also their relation with the production.
  - d. Das Kapital (1867) volume-1 was published during his life time but the subsequent 2 volumes were published in 1885 and 1894 after his death.

Through these volumes Marx brought forth the theory of surplus value and idea that it is to be measured in term of labour involved in it.

The important contributions of Karl Marx are :

1. The analysis of mode of production.
2. His methodology through dialectics and historical materialism.

3. The analysis of the classes, and struggle.
4. The theory of alienation.
5. Labour theory of value and surplus value.
6. His prediction about the classless society through proletarian revolution.

A brief outline of some of the above conceptual and methodological contribution of Marx is given here to help you to understand them. We will discuss those, in detail, later.

### **12.3 HISTORICAL MATERIALISM**

This is otherwise known as materialistic vision of history. The emphasis Marx gave here that people “must be in a position to live in order to make history”, and that consciousness is “a social product,”

This presupposition was against general philosophy and historiography which gave primacy to ideas or consciousness and ignored the role of material factor in political and cultural factors.

This primacy of historical relation and thereby the major contribution on historical materialism as method to understand the mode of production will be discussed in greater detail in subsequent lessons.

#### **Mode of Production**

As discussed above men must be in a position to live in order to make history. For his living he has to produce his needs. In the production of needs, man uses productive forces and thereby enters into a social co-operation known as relationship of Production. So the forces and relation of production form the basic structure of the society upon which the superstructure which includes modes of intercourse and ideology. In simple words, a mode of production is the relationship between the forces of production and relations of production.

The mode of production determines the super structure and all of them together helps us to understand a social formation.

## **Classes and Class struggle**

Marx, in the opening statement of Communist Manifesto maintained that the history of all existing societies is the history of classes and class struggle. For Marx, social classes arise out of relations of production in the way work is organized. Some people own land, other are tenant farmers; some work for wages, other are employers. By examining social structure of production, it can be determined who depends on whom, who dominates whom, who has what resources and so on. Marx did not identify class with occupation, so social class is a more general phenomenon rooted in key roles, such as employer and employee that cut across most industries and occupations and that characterize a period of economic history. In his discussion of class struggle he is of opinion that since time immemorial in every society there has been a class which dominates other classes. He believes that this tendency gave birth to class war which was bound to continue unless a classless society on communist lines is established. Karl Marx's theory of class struggle is closely inter linked with his theory of historical and dialectical Materialism.

### **12.4 DIALECTICAL MATERIALISM**

The conception of Dialectical is not the original idea of Marx in fact he borrowed it from Hegel. This term was known to denote a method of disputation. Plato used this conception for resolving conflict of diverging ideas or in other words it was a system by which Hegel before Marx believed that dialectics was a process under which all the ideas in the world develops and thus he used it as the solution for apparent confusion in the world. He believed that in the universe reality could not be achieved by primarily seeing the things but by contrastings in each other. Thus goodness will be realized only with confrontation with badness and so on.

Hegel presumed the first assertion as thesis and its contradiction of antithesis. Thesis and antithesis produced a new idea or something new which combines the qualities of both and he call it synthesis. Thus assertion, negotiation and reconciliation were the cycles of like. Unlike Hegel, Marx

believed that thesis, antithesis and synthesis of dialectical materialism were nothing but struggle of economic classes. Thus dialectical materialism should ultimately lead to classless society.

The above discussed life and works of Marx stood at the confluence of wide variety of European theme of thoughts. The genius of the man can be understood through his extensive reading of the different works of the Philosopher of the time and final synthesis he brought to focus of the world. A new philosophy which was entirely different from that existed before. He was not an armchair philosopher but was involved in practice.

A omnivorous reader throughout his life. Marx managed to fuse in his thought a variety of previous intellectuals. He has above all a synthesizing mind, it has often been said that Marx finished his doctorate out of three major elements i.e. German ideology, (2) French Socialist tradition and (3) British Political economy. Through not incorrect this is hardly the whole truth because the German and the French enlightenment was equally important to him.

Among the significant themes in the works of his predecessors that are important for understanding Marx, four major ones stand out : the idea of progress, whether peaceful or conflictive; the idea of alienation; the idea of perfectibility and the holistic view of society and of historical epoch.

The different stages of development of society or social formation were explained. But the most important question is as to how the changes occur from one social formation to the other e.g. from feudalism to capitalism and further to socialism. The methodology that was developed by Marx to explain the change is through the process of dialectics. He, therefore, developed the theory of dialectical materialism. The thoughts of dialectical materialism is embedded to historical materialism i.e. a dialectical process of understanding of the materialistic history of societies. His theory can therefore be said as dialectical historical materialism. For Marx himself there was, strictly speaking, no distinction between “Dialectical Materialism” and “Historical Materialism”. “It was one of Marx’s major emphases.”

1. That man was part of nature;
2. That human society was a developmental outcome of material activity of man in nature; and
3. That the history of society was determinate sequence of these material activities and the institutional fabric built around them.

As said earlier, if historical materialism is a system of conceiving and explaining society and its development, Dialectical Materialism is a system of conceiving and explaining the world (nature).

### **Dialectic**

The concept of dialectic is not original to Marx. The philosophers like Plato and Hegel have used it before. This term was known to denote a method of disputation. Hegel had used the concept of dialectic systematically and for him, it was a process under which all ideas in the world developed. In fact Hegel used dialectic as the solution for apparent confusion in the world. He was of the view that the whole world was moving towards a definite object. For him the reality, in the universe, could not be by *prima facie* seeing the things but by contrasting with each other. Thus for example goodness could be realized only when compared with badness and so on. Hegel presumed the first assertion (goodness) as *thesis* and its contradiction (through badness) as *antithesis*. *Thesis* and *antithesis* produced a new idea which combined the qualities of both and he called it “*synthesis*”. Thus assertion, negation and reconciliation were the cycle of life. This is also known as “*Negation of Negation*”. What is *Negation of Negation*? Here is an example of it taken from F. Engels who wrote on dialectics of nature.

If you negate A, you have minus A; if you multiply minus A you get  $A^2$  which is apparently the negation of negation.

An example of it in the human world. The capitalist regime is the negation of the feudal ownership, and public ownership under socialism will be negation of negation i.e. the negation of private ownership. In other words, changes are in a relationship of contradiction to one another and that this contradiction

takes the following form. At moment B, there would be contradiction of what existed at moment A, and moment C would contradict what existed at moment B and would in a sense represent a return to the original state of moment A, but on a higher level (Raymond Arm : P. 155).

### **Dialectical Materialism :**

Unlike Hegel, who used dialectical method as explanation to the progress of society and its various institutions. Marx used it while formulating his theory of social revolution. For Marx, the units for organizing the humanity were not nations but economic classes and therefore he concluded that history was nothing but evidence of economic class struggle. He, therefore, believed that thesis, anti-thesis and synthesis of dialectical materialism were nothing but struggle of economic classes.

While we have tried to distinguish the Marxian dialectical Materialism from others like Hegel, the most common positive theories of Marxian dialectic are :

1. as a conception of the world
2. as a theory of reason; and
3. as essentially depending upon the relations between them (or thought and being ; subject and object, theory and practice etc.)

Contrary to Hegelian ideational dialectic, Marx's dialectic is scientific because it explains the contradictions in thought and the crises of socio-economic life in terms of the particular contradictory essential relations which generate them (ontological dialectic). And Marx's dialectic is historical because it is both rooted in, and an agent of the changes in the relations and circumstances it describes (relational dialectic). (Bottomore : 147). In particular dialectic as a process or the dialectic of nature offers three universal theorems :

- 1) Thesis - antithesis – synthesis or negation of negation as the law of all development.
- 2) The transformation of quantity into quality as an explanation of how evolutionary change becomes revolutionary change; and

3) The interpretation of opposites as a fundamental dialectical relationship.

The law of negation of negation has been explained to you, now let us concentrate on the other two important laws of development i.e. quantity vs quantity and unity and struggle of opposites.

### **Quantity Vs Quality**

In fact, Marx, derived this conception from Hegel that, in nature and history, additive elements of a quantitative nature reached certain nodal points at which they become qualitatively newly emergent substances. Marx used this conception in capital and wrote of social transformations of this kind. Further Engels in his 'Dialectics of Nature' wrote : 'In physics every change is a passing of quantity into quality..... For example the temperature of water has at first no effect on its liquid state : but as the temperature of liquid water rises or falls, a moment arrives when this state of cohesion changes and the water is converted in one case into steam and in the other into ice.'"

Thus just as quantitative change must at a certain point give rise to qualitative change, so if wish to bring about qualitative change we must study its qualitative basis and know what must be increased.

### **Unity and Struggle Opposites**

Development takes place through the unity and struggle of opposites. The reason, for Marx, why in any particular case a quantitative change leads to qualitative change, lies in the very nature in the content, of the particular process involved. Let us again take the same example of water i.e. the case of the qualitative change which takes place when water boils.

When you apply heat to a mass of water contained in a kettle, it increases the motion of molecules (H<sub>2</sub> and O) composing the water. Go on increasing the heat and at a boiling point (nodal point) the motion of the molecules becomes sufficiently violent for large numbers of them begins jumping clear of the mass (the liquid state). A qualitative change is therefore observed. The water begins to bubble and the whole mass (of water) is rapidly transformed into steam (the

gaseous form). The steam or the gaseous form, if cooled down in a controlled method, with the application of the antithesis i.e. cooling agent, the form will change into again water. In the language of dialectics, the heat was the antithesis of the water i.e. the first negation. Subsequently the application of cooling agent is the second negation i.e. negation of negation to produce a new thesis—a qualitatively new type of water.

In the process of the above experiment the old form of water (a thesis) when was applied to heat there was a struggle between the opposites (Hydrogen and Oxygen) which were in unity as water. The struggle was that the old wants to remain as water but heat, as antithesis, to bring in the new would not allow it to remain in its earlier form. This struggle between the old and new continues till at a nodal point when the old gives way to the new and both form a synthesis to be further negated with maturation for the emergence of new and death of the old order.

You have been discussed with the help of above illustrations the dialectics of nature. Let us now try to understand the application of dialectics in relation to society or social formations.

Marx viewed dialectical materialism as a phase of history of conflict between two opposing forces — thesis and anti-thesis. This conflict is resolved by the formation of a new force — synthesis. This conflict is due to class struggle between capitalists, whose aim is to maximisation of private property and workers who resists exploitation. According to Marx, everything in the world (including society) has a dialectic necessity through three steps of differentiation, affirmation or thesis, negation or antithesis. As has been already discussed this (the dialectical necessity) has been explained with the help of three basic laws i.e.

1. Law of transformation of quantity into quality which considers development as a transition from an old to a new state — simple to complex.

2. *Law of unity and struggle of opposite.* According to this, things are connected, are dependent on and determined by each other. So they are to be understood as being inseparably connected with each other and as being conditioned by them.



3. Law of Negation of Negation — In the clash of opposites one opposite negates the other and is in turn negated by a higher stage of historical development.

It thus considers everything to be in a state of continuous movement and change. In this process of development something is always arising and developing while something is always disintegrating. The historical process, for Marx, is a dialectical process of thesis, antithesis and synthesis and the essence of historical development lies in the origin of human freedom which was possible in original society (primitive communism) due to absence of private property, classes and class conflict, division of labour and inequality. Subsequently, however, with the emergence of private property and division of labour, the society disintegrates and is transformed into its antithesis. This creates new relations of domination and subjugation, class formation and class struggles. The new forces of production (new talent) and subsequent division and disintegration get infected with alienation. Marx, therefore, visualizes a new classless society (representing synthesis) will be only realised with de-alienation; where there is no class conflict and dominant – subordination.

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## HISTORICAL MATERIALISM

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**B. A. Semester-IIIrd**

**Lesson No. 13**

**Unit-IV**

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### STRUCTURE

- 13.1. Introduction : Conception of History and Matter.
- 13.2. Conception of Society in Marxian Sociology.
- 13.3. Historical Materialism.
- 13.4. Mode of Production/Social Formations.
  - 13.4.1 Asiatic Mode of Production.
  - 13.4.2 Ancient Mode of Production.
  - 13.4.3 Feudal Mode of Production.
  - 13.4.4 Capitalist Mode of Production.
  - 13.4.5 Socialism/Communism.
- 13.5. Critics on Marx's determinism.
- 13.6. Summing up.
- 13.7. Glossary of terms.
- 13.8. References and Readings.
- 13.9. Questions to consider.

### **13.1. INTRODUCTION : CONCEPTION OF HISTORY AND MATTER**

Sociology is the study of society. You as a student of Sociology (in B.A. Part-I) are acquainted with different perspectives or approaches used in studying society. You are well aware about the structural-functional approach in understanding society. The structuralist, in general examine the structure of human societies at

a given point of time. This is a static way of understanding. Marxian views of structural perspective is dynamic in nature in the sense that in his efforts to understand society in its entirety, Marx did not confine himself to examining the structure of human societies at a given point of time, he has explained the societies in terms of future of mankind. His sociological thinking is largely concerned with mechanism of change. According to the materialistic conception of history, the ultimate determining element in history is the production and reproduction of real life. In general, therefore, Marx contributed to the writing of history of the structure of societies.

Just as Darwin discovered the law of development of organic nature, so Marx discovered the law of development of human history. Following Darwin, Marx criticized the earlier enlightenment ideas of social science which spoke too generally about man and paid little attention to the actual activities and variations of historical peoples. Marx formulated general principles parallel to Darwin's theory to assess the specific conditions of differentiated forms of life as well as overall development.

Commenting upon Materialism, we can start with the most important statement given by Marx and Engels. They asserted that "it is not consciousness that determines life, but life that determines consciousness". Like Darwin, they stressed the fundamental centralizing of material activities and struggles. They suggested that social science should take account of the unequally creative and diverse ways in which human groups produce for their basic animal needs and in the process give rise to new human needs and capacities. Further in this process, the human groups also produce distinct patterns of social development which we call history. Engels, after the death of Marx, asserted that "the ultimate determining element in history is production and reproduction of real life". Marx and Engels' Materialism focuses on human society or social humanity. But they considered the historical life process to be two-fold— natural as well as social. Our physical needs link us to nature, but the ways and means by which we meet them are mediated and structured socially (For example by co-operation, organization, language, ideas and customs).

### **13.2. CONCEPTION OF SOCIETY IN MARXIAN SOCIOLOGY :**

Distinguishing the human society from other animal groupings, Marx held that the productive process of human groupings are socio-cultural in nature and subjected to historical development.

Marx stressed 'real' 'active' and 'definite individuals' entering 'definite' social and political relations'. In this way they produce themselves in specific ways and thus act as agents of their own history but these active agents or definite individuals do not create themselves on their own accord. Rather people operate under definite material limits, supposition and conditions independent of their will. For Marx, we are born into readymade hierarchical socio-cultural worlds which fix our ideas.

A world about Marx as a sociologist is perhaps important since we are dealing with sociology—the study of society. Marx was not a sociologist and did not consider himself to be one. His work is too broad to be encompassed by the term sociology. But there is a sociological theory to be found in Marx's work. We will, therefore, delimit ourselves to only the sociological aspect of Marx's work.

### **13.3. HISTORICAL MATERIALISM**

The general ideas of Karl Marx about 'Society' are known as his theory of historical materialism. This theory is about the material conditions, which essentially comprises of technological means of production and human society is formed by the forces and relations of production. The theory is called historical because Marx traced the evolution of human society from one stage to another. It is called materialistic because Marx has interpreted the evolution of history of societies on terms of their material or economic bases. Materialism, for Marx, means that it is the material or economic activity which is the basis for any change. Marx was influenced by Feurbach while using the concept of materialism but with a difference. He also borrowed dialectic from Hegel. Thus Marx extracted two elements from these two thinkers Hegel's dialectic and Feurbach's materialism and fused them into his own distinctive orientation, dialectical materialism, which focuses on dialectical relationship within the material world. You will be explained about it later in the next section.

### **Box-A**

In his speech at Marx's graveside, Engels, the friend, comrade and co-author, said :-

“Marx discovered the law of evolution in human history, .... hitherto concealed by an overgrowth of ideology; that mankind must first of all eat and drink, shelter and clothing, before it can pursue politics, science, religion, art, etc.; and that therefore the production of the immediate material means of subsistence and consequently the degree of economic development attained by a given people or during a given epoch, form the foundation upon which the state, institutions, the legal conceptions, the art and even the religious ideas of the people concerned have been evolved, and in the light of which these things must therefore be explained instead of vice versa as had hitherto been the case”.

And further Engels wrote :

“History was for the first time placed on its real basis, the obvious but previously totally overlooked fact that men must first of all eat, drink, have clothing and shelter, therefore must work, before they can fight for domination, pursue politics, religion, philosophy, etc.”

Historical materialism is thus a dialectical theory of human progress. It regards history as the development of man's efforts to master the forces of nature and hence, of production. Marx believed that people are basically productive. In simple words, in order to survive people need to work in, and with, nature. In so doing, they produce the food, clothing, tools, shelter and other necessities that permit them to live. Their productivity, therefore, is a perfectly natural way by which they express. Furthermore, these impulses are expressed in concert with other people which proves that people that inherently social. They need to work together to produce what they need to survive. For Marx, history is progressive because human beings' ability to produce their 'forces of production' continually increase. It is also regression because in perfecting the forces of production they create more and more complex and of oppressing social organization. The natural productive capacity through which

people express their basic creative impulses has been subverted throughout the history. This happened first by the mean conditions of primitive society and later by a variety of structural arrangements erected by societies in the course of history. In various ways these structures interfered with the natural productive process.

We can, thus identify three important premises in understanding the theory of historical materialism of Marx :

**1. Human existence :** Man must be in a position to live in order to be able to make history. So men have to produce means to satisfy their essential needs i.e. the production of material life itself. This, indeed is a historical act—a fundamental condition of all history at all times.

**2. New Needs :** The second fundamental point for Marx is that as soon as a need is satisfied new needs are made, and this production of new needs is also a historical act.

**3. Local organization (family) :** While daily making their own life men begin to make other men to propagate their kind through the relation between men and wife, parents and children— the family.

By now it must have been clear to you that historical materialism is nothing but a material conception of history. The matter is to be understood through economic activity (or technically known as economic structure). The understanding of economic structure which for Marx is the base for change is to be done through the conjunction of forces of production and relation of production. The nature and form of ownership of forces of production gives rise to the relationship. The forces and relations of production together helps us in understanding a mode of production which determines the superstructure-politics, science, literature, religion, culture and so on. All these together, i.e. mode of production and superstructure, helps us to understand a particular social formation in the history of societies. Further, Marx is of opinion that the base (infrastructure or material economic structure) determines the ideational superstructure. This is contrary to Hegel's formulation that consciousness (superstructure) determines the being. You will come to know more about it in the next block on dialectical materialism. According to the material conception of history

(Historical materialism) only economic relationships are ultimately determining. Let you look at Box 'B' which is based on the original writings of Marx to have a clear conception of what has been said in the above.

**Box 'B'**

In the social production of their life, men enters into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will-relations of production which correspond to definite stage of development of their material productive forces. The mode of production of material life conditions the social, political, and intellectual life processes in general. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but on the contrary their social being that determines their consciousness. At a certain stage of development, the material productive forces of society come in conflict with the existing relations of production and this results in an epoch of social revolution. With the change of economic foundation the entire immense superstructure is more or less rapidly transformed.

From the Box 'B' it can also inferred that the dialectical relationship between the forces and that of the relations of production also provides a theory of revolution. This was not acceptable to the conservative sociologists who, however, could not finally stop Marx to be considered as a sociologist. In Marx's reading of history, revolutions are not political accidents. They are treated as social expression of the historical movement. Revolutions are necessary manifestations of the historical progress of societies. For Marx, no social order ever disappears before all productive forces for which there is room in it have been developed and new higher relations of production never appear before the material conditions of their existence have matured in the Womb of the old society. Marx has described five stages. He, however, distinguished primitive communal societies which had a minimal social differentiation and then societies characterized by slavery, serfdom, and wage-slavery (capitalism) followed by a transition through socialism to communism.

**13.4. MODE OF PRODUCTION/ SOCIAL FORMATION :**

Marx believed that western society had developed through four main epochs :

1. Primitive Communism — No classes
2. Ancient Society — Master and slaves
3. Feudal Society — Lords and serfs
4. Capitalist Society — Bourgeoisie and Proletariat

Further, he, in his lifetime, predicted and worked for a revolutionary change in capitalist society to usher in what has been predicted him as —

### **Socialism / Communism – No Exploitative Classes.**

However, beside the above popular stages of human history, some scholars would like to use the following categorization : of modes of production. They are : the Asiatic, Ancient, Feudal and Capitalist.

#### **13.4.1 Asiatic Mode of Production**

The first human society for Marx is Asiatic Mode of Production but in Western society's context it is primitive communal mode of production. Marx wrote this possibly to include the existence of typical village communities in India but he did not leave behind any systematic presentation of the history of India. The concept of Asiatic mode of production, it is believed to be inadequate for an understanding of Indian history and society.

The Asiatic mode is characteristic of primitive communities in which ownership of land is communal. It corresponds to the undeveloped stage of production of hunting, fishing and food gathering societies or in the higher stage— agriculture. The division of labour is at this stage elementary and is confined to a further extension of the natural labour imposed by family. The social structure is therefore limited to an extension of the family, patriarchal family chieftains, below them the members of the tribe, finally slaves. The slavery latent in the family only develops gradually with increase in population, the growth of wants and, with the extension of external relations of war or trade.

The tribal or primitive communities in this mode of production are still partly organized on the basis of kinship relations. The imaginary unity of these communities are maintained by state power which also controls the use of essential economic resources. This mode constitutes one of the possible forms of transition from classless to class



societies and the transition is most ancient. The contradiction of this transition is the combination of communal relations of production with emerging forms of the exploiting classes of the state.

#### **13.4.2 Ancient Mode of Production**

In western society's context it can be characterized as slave mode of production. This form of ancient communal and state ownership proceeds especially from the union of several tribes into a city by agreement or by conquest. Besides communal ownership, movable and later also immovable private property developed but as an abnormal form subordinate to communal ownership. It is only as a community that this citizen holds power over their labouring slaves. The division of labour is already more developed. The class relations between master/citizens and slaves in this type of society is completely developed. (We have used the concept of private property and division of labour here to understand the emergence of classes and class formation. You can look at these concepts in the glossary of terms at the end of the chapter).

In this society, master has right of ownership over the slaves and appropriates the products of the slave's labour. The slave is not allowed to reproduce. The slave works on master's land and receives his subsistence in return. The master's profit is constituted by the difference between what the slave produces and what he consumes. The slave is deprived of his own means of production. The reproduction of slavery depends on the capacity of the society to acquire new slaves, that is, on an apparatus which is not directly linked to the capacities of demographic reproduction of the enslaving population.

#### **13.4.3 Feudal Mode of Production**

Feudal society was seen by Marx as intermediate between the slave society of the ancient mode and the capitalist society of modern era. The form of ownership is estate-property. The basis of feudal economy consists of small peasants, agriculture involving the bonded serf. This is supplemented by domestic industry and handicraft production. So serfdom is the synonym of the feudal social formation. You must remember that serfs are not slaves. The slaves were not free from their masters. But the serfs enjoy freedom to work with any land. As such land belonged to the lords in the forms of feudal estate and therefore

the serfs are indirectly bonded to the feudal lords. In serfdom, although the worker must surrender a certain amount of his produce to the lord, there is only a low degree of alienation (see glossary of terms at the end of this chapter) between producer and the product. Serfs may otherwise called as land-slaves.

The relations between the serfs and feudal lord is such that the serfs or tenants were obliged to surrender their labour or product of their labour after, however keeping what was needed for family subsistence and simple reproduction of the peasant household economy. Further feudal rent in the form of services or taxes are another important aspect of this mode of production.

The continual of the feudal system brought about the exchange of agricultural and manufactured products in regional markets. The special need of the ruling class and nobility gave an impetus to the development of international trade routes and mercantile centres. East India Company is the best example in case of European mercantile interest in India, which subsequently helped in the establishment of British rule. It laid the foundation for capitalist relations of production which were to become the main contradiction of the feudal system and cause of its downfall. In the course of this transformation from feudal to capitalistic mode of production, peasants and serfs were to be expropriated from their lands and were forced to become wages labourers. The introduction of wages system gave rise to capitalism.

#### **13.4.4 The capitalist mode of Production**

The fourth society in human history is based on capitalist mode of production. Capitalism refers to a mode of production in which capital is the dominant means of production. Capital can be in the various forms. It can take the form of money or credit for the purchase of labour power and materials of production. It can be money or credit for buying physical machinery. In capitalist mode of production, the private ownership of capital in its various form is in the hands of a class of capitalists. The ownership by capitalists is to the exclusion of the population.

As a mode of production, capitalism, has the following characteristic :

1. Goods are produced for sale rather than own use.
2. The capacity to do useful work or labour work is bought and sold in a market. For a period of time or for a specified task, labour power is exchanged for money wages. In ancient mode of production, labourers enter into a contract with employers.
3. The use of money as a medium of exchange. This gives an important role to banks and financial intermediaries.
4. The production process is controlled by the capitalist or his manager.
5. Financial decisions are controlled by the capitalist entrepreneur.
6. Individual capitalists compete for control over the labour and finance.

#### **Capitalist Society : (Structure)**

Unlike Emile Durkheim, (about whom you have studied in this course) who treated 'social facts' as things. Marx used a dynamic/dialectical perspective to understand the large scale-structures on the basis of social relations. He thought of social structures as being composed of a large number of continuing social relationships. The structure of capitalist society has been analysed by Marx with the help of the following components-commodities and commodity fetishism, analysis of capital, concept of private property, exploitative division of labour and social class.

The conception of commodity is rooted in Marx's materialist orientation. In their interaction with nature and with other actors, people always produce the objects they need in order to survive. This objectification is a necessary and universal aspect of human life. These objects are produced for use - so they are of use values. However, in capitalism this process of objectification takes a dangerous form. With the introduction of wages- system, the actors (as wage labourers), instead of producing for themselves or their immediate fellowmen, produce for the capitalist. The products, instead of being used immediately, are exchanged in open market for money (exchange values). This is the process of production of commodities through exchange value.

The actors produce value but due to the market oriented commodity formation, the actors forget that it is their labour which gives the commodities their value. This is what Marx has called as commodity fetishism.

Marx wrote three volumes of 'Capital' and the fourth volume of 'Capital' has been divided into three volumes of 'Theories of Surplus Value'. So commodity, capital, surplus values are the important concepts in Marxian analysis. For Marx, like commodities, people tend to reify capital by believing that it is natural for the capitalist system to be external to, and coercive of, them. Let us recall our discussion of commodities to understand how its circulation in and extended reproductive form helps the system (capitalism) to produce and increase 'Capital'.

### **Understanding Capital :**

Marx distinguishes between two forms of commodity production - use value and exchange value (discussed earlier). Thus to be a commodity, a product must have use-value. Exchange value refers to the value a product has when offered in exchange for other products. This concept of value can be understood by Marx's analysis of the market where he explains transition in the sphere of circulation.

**1. C-M-C :** (Selling commodities in order to purchase different ones). The two commodities here are of equal value in terms of exchange value. This is known as simple commodity production which is nothing but qualitative transformation of use value.

**2. M-C.M. and M-C-M** (buying commodities in order to subsequently sell). This is quantitative expansion of exchange value, where the capitalist buys labour power as a commodity to be used in the production process for a certain length of time. The labour in the process reproduces his own labour (equivalent to wages received) in a lesser duration than he works. In the subsequent hours, the labour produces also value which is over and above the value of his labour i.e. surplus value.

It is, thus, clear that the workers are exploited everyday through appropriation of surplus value as he works partly for himself and partly for this buyer - employer. Subsequently he is lost in the production process. So the existence classes of exploiters and the classes of exploited (majority) leads to class antagonism when means of production cannot be adopted to relations or production. Social relations imposed by the ruling capitalists deprives the workers of all opportunities to obtain psychological satisfaction from their work. Marx called it as the alienation of human labour. At the same time there is increasing disparity between the earnings of the working class and the income of the capitalist class. With the greed of accumulation of more and more wealth by the capitalists, the wages of the working class remain at the subsistence level. This process is called by Marx as pauperization or impoverishment which ultimately because of class consciousness leads to class polarization through working class organization. "The alienation, pauperization, class polarization marked by increasing class consciousness results in conflict among classes terminating in a revolutionary struggle. This leads to a revolutionary reconstitution of society marked by the overthrow of the capitalist class dictatorship to be replaced by dictatorship of proletariat. Let us now look at the further mode of production and thereby the new social formation as predicted by Marx i.e. Socialism and Communism.

Marx therefore has said that man creates own society but will remain alienated until he recognizes himself truly in his creation. Until that time he will assign an independent existence to objects, ideas, and institutions and be controlled by them.

#### **13.4.5 Socialism, Communism and Classless Society**

In case of industrial - capitalist society, the productive forces and the property relations were such that it produces a basic conflict between the two social classes – i.e. the owners of means of production (the capitalists) and those who owned none (the wage earning proletariat).

When through revolution the proletariat demolishes private property and collectivizes the means of production, there would be no subjected class beneath them. All the members of the society would be related to the means of production in the same way. There would be no class-exploitation. The alienation would be eliminated and men could now experience their 'essential creativity freely'.

Through the transition period of socialism, under the guidance of 'dictatorship of the proletariat', a communist society would be achieved in which productivity would make it possible to distribute wealth in accordance with need. While in this society (socialism) men would contribute to the society according to the capability.

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## CLASS STRUGGLE

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**B. A. Semester-IIIrd**

**Lesson No. 14**

**Unit-IV**

### **STRUCTURE**

- 14.1 Introduction
- 14.2 Freedom of Proletariat
- 14.3 Comments and Criticism
- 14.4 References

#### **14.1 INTRODUCTION**

While studying Emile Durkheim on the Division of Labour you have noted that Durkheim considered division of labour as a social fact which contributed to social differentiation. He also stated that the differentiated society and its pathologies could be maintained through organic solidarity. Marx, however has something different to say in relation to the role of division of labour. For him, society has been divided into classes because of its absolute dependence on the division of labour which precipitated dominance among the ruling class and subordination among the subjugated class.” (Abraham and Morgan : 35). On the question of class and class antagonism, let us look at the most classical statement of Marx :

“The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles. Freeman and slave, patrician and plebian, lord and serf, guild master and journeymen in a word, oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another, carried in an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight, a fight that each time ended either in a revolutionary reconstitution of society at large or in common ruin of the contending classes.”

The above statement we have quoted from the “The Communist Manifesto’ (Marx and Engels) and the manifesto is a “propaganda pamphlet in which Marx and Engels presented some of their scientific ideas in collective form” (R. Aron : 116). Its central theme is class struggle to explain the above classical statement in some detail :

1. Human history is characterized by the struggle of human groups which will be called social classes.

2. The society is characterized by an antagonism between oppressors and oppressed and there is a tendency towards a polarization into two blocks.

3. Among the two polarized classes (bourgeoisie and proletariat) the bourgeoisie is incapable of maintaining its ascendancy without revolutionizing the instrument of production.

4. The basis of antagonism is the contradiction between the forces and the relationship of production.

5. By revolutionizing the instrument of production the capitalist system is able to produce more and inspite of this increase in wealth poverty remains the lot of the majority.

6. This contradiction will eventually produce a revolutionary crisis.

7. The proletariat being the vast majority of the population will become a class i.e. a social entity aspiring to the seizure of power and the transformation of social relations.

8. The proletarian revolution will mark the end of classes and of the antagonistic character of capitalist society.

9. According to Marx (in the Communist Manifesto), in place of the old bourgeoisie society with its classes and class antagonisms, we shall have an association in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all.

With the above it has been corroborated by Raymond Aron (P118) that the aim of Marx science is to provide a strict demonstration of the antagonistic



character of capitalist society, the inevitable self destruction of an antagonistic society and the revolutionary explosion that will put an end to the antagonistic character of modern society.

The theory of class conflict and struggle in relation to the analysis of capitalist society may be summarized follows :

1. class origin
2. proletarianization
3. polarization
4. pauperization
5. alienation
6. organization
7. revolution
8. emancipation of proletariat
9. socialization of private property
10. inauguration of the communist society.

(The titling of the points in the above have been done in a metaphorical way for your convenience and easy memory). Let us now discuss the above points in brief.

**1. Origin of classes :** As has been discussed earlier, ‘the physical concentration of masses of people, easy communication among them and growth of class consciousness helps in the origin of classes. With the emergence of wages system, the class of wage earner originated and the ownership of predominant means of production- capital-led to the emergence of a class of capitalists.

**2. Proletarianization :** Proletariat is the political force which would accomplish the destruction of capitalism and transition of socialism. In the communist manifesto, Marx and Engels have outlined the process of its formation or what we call it as proletarianization.

“The proletariat goes through various stages of development. With its birth, begins its struggle with the bourgeoisie. At first, the contest is carried on by individual labourers then by the workpeople of a factory then by the operatives of one trade in one locality. But with the development of industry, the proletariat not only increased in number it becomes concentrated in greater masses, its strength grows.....the workers begin to form combinations.”

**3. Polarization of Classes :** In capitalist society there is an inherent tendency toward polarization of classes. The whole society breaks up more and more into two great hostile camps. i.e. antagonistic classes- bourgeoisie and proletariat. This is not to deny the existence of other classes. Marx also referred to small capitalist the peti- bourgeoisie and the lumpenproletariat. But with the maturation of class consciousness (class for itself) the peti-bourgeoisie and small capitalists will be deprived of their property and drawn into the rank of the proletariat. This is what Aron calls, the process of proletarianization. This means that “the intermediate strata between the capitalists and proletarians will be worn thin and that an increasing number of the representatives of these intermediate strata will be absorbed by the proletariat.” (P.174)

**4. Pauperization :** Poverty is the result of exploitation, not scarcity-says Marx. With the development of capitalism, the greed of the capitalists increases more and more for further creation and accumulation of capital. This they do by lowering the real wages of the workers thus leading to miseraization of the workers. One capitalists kills many others and the wealth of the bourgeoisie is swolled by large profits with corresponding increase in “the mass poverty, of pressure, of slavery of exploitation,” of proletariat. (Abraham and Morgen; 39)

**5. Alienation :** The economic exploitation and inhuman working condition in capitalism lead to increasing alienation of man. “Work instead of being an expression of man himself becomes a degraded instrument of livelihood. It is external to and imposed upon the worker. The product of this labour is alien to him. For example, if a worker of Bombay Dyeing textile factory visit a Bombay Dyeing shop, he can not claim that the cloth is of his produce, since now it belongs to the company. If he says

so, the shop owner may laugh. Further, the worker becomes estranged from himself from the process as well as the product of his labour from his fellow men and from the human community itself.

**6. Class solidarity and Organization (Trade Union) :** With the development of industry, the proletariat not only increases in number, it also becomes concentrated in greater masses. Its strength grows and it feels that strength more. Further, with the growth of class consciousness, the crystallization of social relations into two groups becomes streamlined and the classes tend to become internally homogeneous. There upon the workers begin to form combinations (trade unions) against the bourgeoisie. They club together in order to keep up the rate of wages and working conditions.

**7. Class struggle and Revolution :** For Marx, a violent revolution would break out with the intensification of class struggle which will destroy the structure of capitalist society. This will be due to the economic crises which is the outcome of over production and under consumption, falling rate of profit.

Every class struggle is a political struggle. The organization of the proletarians into a class and consequently into a political party is continually being upset again by the competition between the workers themselves. But it ever rises up again, stronger, firmer, mightier. It compels legal recognition of particular interests of the workers, by taking advantage of the divisions among the bourgeoisie itself.

Finally, in times when the class struggle means the decisive hour, the process of dissolution starts within the ruling class. Even a small section of the ruling class cuts itself adrift and joins the revolutionary class. Of all classes that stared face to face with the bourgeoisie, the proletariat alone is a really revolutionary class. The other classes— the lower middle, the small manufacturer, the shopkeeper, the artisan, the peasant—decay and disappear.

In the above while depicting the phases of development of the proletariat, we traced the more or less the hidden civil war upto the point where that

war break out into open revolution and where the violent overthrow of the bourgeoisies lays the foundation of a new society. It is however, important to remember that the struggle of the proletariat with the bourgeoisie is at first a national struggle. The proletariat of each country must, of course, first of all settle matters with its own bourgeoisie.

#### **14.2 FREEDOM OF PROLETARIAT / SOCIALISM/ COMMUNISM**

Once the industrial proletariat has accomplished the revolution by demolishing private property and collectivizing the means of production. There would be no subjected class beneath them. All the members of the society would be related to the means of production in the same way. There would be no class exploitation. The increased productivity of the collectivized industry and the unrestrained application of science and technology to the industry, would eliminate conditions of alienation. Men could now experience their existence creatively freely. Through the transitional period of socialism, under the guidance of the dictatorship of proletariat, a communist society would be achieved in which productivity would make it possible to distribute wealth in accordance with need whilst asking of men that contribution of society of which they were capable.

With the revolution from industrial capitalism to communism a classless society could be achieved. Since state was the organ of the ruling class in capitalism and now no social classes existed, and the state was no longer necessary and would wither away-predicted Marx.

#### **14.3 COMMENT AND CRITICISM.**

Although many of Marx's predictions have not come true, but his historical structural analysis of society has remained to be very useful for the social scientists today even the worst critics agree that Marxian theory provides an excellent framework for the analysis of conflict and change in modern society. Marx influence on contemporary sociological theory is growing and Marxist Sociology has already become an established branch of the discipline.

However, so far the prediction of Marx for a classless society/communism and withering away of the state is concerned, today's Marxists blame imperialism for the failure. They argue that advanced industrial nations have been able to fortify their capitalist economy by exploitation the rest of the world through neo-colonialist network.

Contemporary Marxian Sociology has accumulated a considerable amount of evidence to substantiate the Marxian postulates that economic position is the major determination of one's life style, attitudes, and behaviour (Abraham and Morgan)

However, some of the criticisms of Marx need to be mentioned in relation to class and class conflict.

1. Marx has been criticized on his class division. Today capitalism has created conditions where the working class can no longer be regarded as totally alienated. Man's condition has improved due to the expansion of social services and security of employment.
2. The growth of new middle contradicts, the polarization model of Marx.
3. The working class remains highly differentiated in terms of skill and occupation. It is, therefore, believed that classes are not homogeneous.

These criticisms qualify but do not discredit the contribution of Marxian thought to Sociology.

#### **14.4. REFERENCES**

(**Note :** In writing this study material, the author has used extensively some of the passages from the books mentioned below. Some of them may not have been properly quoted and therefore regretted).

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## ALIENATION

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**B. A. Semester-IIIrd**

**Lesson No. 15**

**Unit-IV**

### **STRUCTURE**

- 15.1 Introduction
- 15.2 What is Alienation
- 15.3 Concept of Alienation
- 15.4 Aspects of Alienation
- 15.5 Sum up

#### **15.1 INTRODUCTION**

The concept of "alienation" has become very popular in modern literature, political philosophy existentialist philosophy, psycho analysis, psychology and sociology. In the writings of Marx, alienation is a principal term, and hence it has dominated the history of sociological thought.

#### **15.2 WHAT IS ALIENATION**

1. "Alienation refers to the sense of powerlessness, isolation and meaninglessness experience by human beings when they are confronted with social institutions and conditions that they can not control and consider oppressive." (Seema, 1959- as quoted by I. Robertson) "Broadly speaking 'alienation' denotes a psychological condition of individual which involves his estrangement from certain aspects of social existence"1.

It is difficult to provide an adequate analysis of this concept for it has been used differently by different scholars. But it was Karl Marx who introduced to modern sociology "the theory of alienation".

**Due to Alienation Man No More Remains a Man, out becomes an "Improvershed Thing"**

### **15.3 CONCEPT OF ALIENATION**

For Marx, the social arrangement which form the context of work in capitalist society alienated the worker. They failed to provide him with the opportunities for a meaningful and creative existence. The worker is alienated in that neither he receives satisfaction from his work nor receives the full conduct of his labour. The worker is accordingly alienated from "the true nature of man". The conditions that characterise the modern industrial production prevent the worker from "exercising his full creative powers and so releasing the full potentialities of his nature. "Thus, alienation is "that condition when man does not experience himself as the active bearer of his own powers and richness, but as an improverised "thing" dependent on powers outside of himself - (quoted by Duncan Mitchell).

#### **No Control Over the Social World**

According to Marx, alienation results from the lack of a sense of control over the social world. People forget that society and institutions are constructed by human beings and can, therefore, be changed by human beings. The social world thus environs people as a hostile thing, leaving them alien" in the very environment that they have created.

#### **Economic Alienation is More Important**

Marx applied the term "alienation" to many social institutions such as law, government, religion and economic life. But he gives more importance to alienation in the economic field. He writes "religious alienation as such occurs only in the sphere of consciousness, in the inner life of man, but economic alienation is that of 'real life'. Therefore, affects both aspects (mind and action)"<sup>2</sup>.

### **15.4 ASPECTS OF ALIENATION**

Marx took more interest in analysing the process of alienation in capitalist



society. Because of his close association with Engels, Marx became personally aware of the anguish and alienation of urban industrial workers.

According to Marx, alienated labour involves four aspects :

- (i) Worker's alienation from the object that he produces;
- (ii) from the process of production;
- (iii) from himself and
- (iv) from the community of his fellowmen.

According to Marx, "alienation appears not merely in the result but also in the process of production, within productive activity itself."

### **Alienation Leads to Dehumanisation**

Marx, was of the opinion that alienation would lead to dehumanisation and devaluation of human beings. The worker is a victim of exploitation in the world of capitalism. "The more wealth the worker produces, the poorer he becomes. Just as labour produces the world of things it also creates the devaluation of the world of men. This devaluation increases in direct proportion to the increase in the production of commodities".

### **Extreme Division of Labour - A Source of Alienation ?**

An important source of this alienation, in Marx's view, is the extreme division of labour in modern societies. Each worker has a specific, restricted and limiting role. He or she no longer applied total human capacities of the hands, the mind, and the emotions to work. The worker has very less responsibility. He does not own the tools with which the work is done, does not own the final product, does not have the right to make decisions. He becomes a minute part of process, "a mere cog in a machine". Work becomes an enforced activity, not a creative and satisfying one.

### **Alienation - At its Heights in a Capitalist Economy**

This situation is aggravated in the capitalist economies, in which the profit produced by the labour of the worker goes to some one else. "In short, the worker spends his life and product everything not for himself but

for the powers that manipulate him. While labour may produce beauty, luxury and intelligence, for the worker it produces only the opposite deformity misery and idiocy" - (Abraham and Morgan)

### **"Alienation" - In the Words of Marx....**

Marx's summary of the nature of alienation at work, written well over a century ago, seems as relevant today. It runs like the following2 :

Marx's then, constitutes the alienation of labour? First, the fact that labour is external to the worker, that is, it does not feel content but unhappy, does not develop freely his physical and mental energy but mortifies his body and ruins his mind. The worker, therefore, only feels himself outside his work, and in his work feels outside, himself. He is home when he is not working, and when he in working he is not at home. His labour, therefore, is not voluntary, but coerced, it is forced labour. It is therefore, not the satisfaction of a need.: it is merely a means to satisfy the needs external to it. Its alien character emerges clearly in the fact as soon as no physical or other compulsion exists, labour is shunned like the plague. External labour, labour in which a worker alienates himself is a labour of self-sacrifice. Lastly, the external character of labour for the worker appears in the fact that it is not his own, but someone else's that it does not belong to him; that he belongs, not to himself but to another".

### **15.5 SUM UP**

The term alienation pervades the beginning works of Marx, but it is not found in his later writings. On the basis, we cannot generalise as some commentations have done, that Marx abandoned the idea. The idea gets its expression again in the "Das Kapital". As Lewis Coser points out, "Explicitly stated or tacitly assumed, the notion of alienation remained central to Marx's social and economic analysis".

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## PARSONS (AGIL SOCIAL SYSTEM); PATTERN VARIABLES

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**B. A. Semester-IIIrd**

**Lesson No. 16**

**Unit-V**

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- 16.1 Introduction
- 16.2 The Parsonian system
- 16.3 Functional Pre Requisites
- 16.4 Pattern Variables
- 16.5 Subsystems of Action System
- 16.6 Critical Evaluation
- 16.7 Ask yourself.

### **16.1 INTRODUCTION**

One of the most important contributions to the social action perspective is that of Talcott Parsons. Talcott Parsons is undoubtedly the most outstanding exponent of social action theory. In 'The structure of social Action' Parsons focussed on unit act and in 'The social system', the emphasis shifted from unit act to institutional order, and the system was the primary unit of analysis. Parsons 'social system' is a constructed type an analytical conceptual framework and not an empirical referent. It is an open system in contains balancing and its crucial elements are conditions, 'needs' and functions which manifest themselves in total action processes. The following definition of the social system offered by parsons and still seems to be the most comprehensive.

'A social system is a system of action which has the following characteristics:

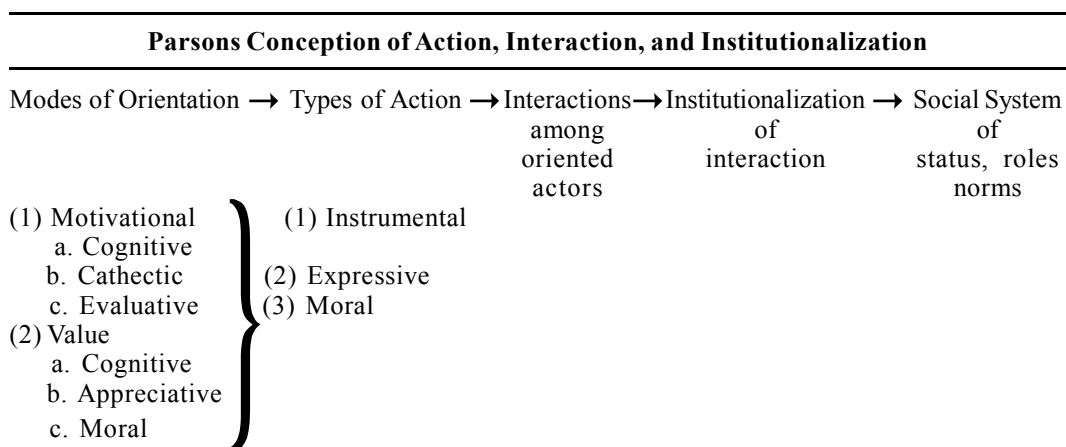
1. It involves a process of interaction between two or more actors ; the interaction process as such is a focus of the observers attention.

2. The situation toward which the actors are oriented includes other actors. These other authors are objects of Calthoxis. Actors actions are taken cognitively into account as data. Actors various orientation way be either goals to be pursued or means for the accomplishment of goals. Actors orientation thus may be objective for evaluating judgement.
3. There is interdependent and in part concerted action in which the concert is a function of collective goals orientation or common values and of a consensus of normative and cognitive expectations.

**16.2 THE PARSONIAN SYSTEM :**

Parsons takes ‘action’ as the building block of the system. He prefers the term ‘action’ to ‘behaviour’ because he is ‘interested not in the physical events of behaviour for their own sake but in their patterning, their patterned meaningful products (physical, cultural, and other), ranging from implements to works of art and the mechanisms and processes that control such patterning. Action consists of the structures and processes by which human beings form meaningful intentions and, more or less successfully, implement them in concrete situations. The social system is one of the primary subsystems of human action systems; the other three are the cultural, personality and biological

**Figure 1**



systems. Because of the interpenetrations, each of the other three action systems constitutes a part of the environment of a social system.

The analytical sorters that delineate the system theory may be summarized as follows :

1. The social system is made up of the interaction of human individuals.
2. Each member is both actor and object of orientation for both other actors and himself.
3. The actor is seeking a goal or set of goals.
4. The actor is confronted with a variety of situational conditions as societal environments and ecological constraints.
5. The actor's orientation to the situation is both motivational and value-orientational.

The motivational orientation which supplies the energy, i.e., 'an urge to get something', is characteristically three-fold :

- (a) Cognitive. Corresponding to belief, cognitive meanings imply what *is* or what the actors perceive.
- (b) Cathetic. This corresponds to sentiments and involves the process through which an actor invests an object with affective significance or perceives what is pleasurable or painful. But the objects that an actor perceives to provide gratification are many and varied. Hunger may be satisfied with a variety of objects including the most exotic foods. Similarly, enjoyment of pleasures may take many forms. However, the actor may not indulge in any type of behaviour in order to maximize gratification. Some things are taboo, others are required, and some are judged appropriate. Hence cultural value patterns induce a third mode of motivation, namely
- (c) Evaluative, that is, judgement and interpretation of alternatives and selection of appropriate ones.

Value orientation, on the other hand, refers to the observance of social norms or standards. 'The value orientation supplies norms or standards of action. Internalized, they are need-dispositions within actors; institutionalized in the social system,

they contribute to integration; abstracted from the concrete situation, they are cultural value-standards. The modes of value-orientation are three-fold

- (a) Cognitive standard—those by which the validity of cognitive judgements is assessed.
- (b) Appreciative standards—those by which selections among the possibilities of cathectic significance can be made.
- (c) Moral standards or ‘evaluative standards which are neither cognitive as such nor appreciative as such but involve a synthesis of both aspects’ and ‘constitute the standards in terms of which more particular evaluations are themselves evaluated.’

Parsons identifies three types of action :

1. *Instrumental action*. This is oriented to the achievement of a goal which is an anticipated future state of affairs, and gives primacy to the cognitive mode of orientation.
2. *Expressive action*. ‘Here the primary orientation is not to the attainment of a goal anticipated for the future, but the organization of the “flow” of gratifications’, action itself is a goal, and gives primacy to the cathectic mode of orientation.
3. *Moral action*. Here ‘the focus is on the system of order itself, not on the goals transcendent to it nor on the gratification interests of the actor. This may be called the “moral” aspect of the ordering of action and the cultural values which have primacy in relation to it, moral values... the social system focus ... may be called the “relational” orientation of action while that to the integration of personality may be called the “ego-integrative.”

The concept of institutionalization is crucial to Parsons conceptualization of the system. Indeed, he regards institutionalization as the fundamental integrative mechanism of social systems. It is viewed both as a process and a structure. Institutionalization builds up and maintains social structure. It also refers to stabilized patterns of interaction which are normatively regulated by the cultural system. It involves both structuralization of value orientations in the social system and the

internalization of value systems in the individual personality. The actor's internalization of the cultural values and beliefs is the primary basis of institutionalization. 'Put in personality terms this means that there is an element of super-ego organization correlative with every role-orientation pattern of the individual in question. In every case the internalization of a super-ego element means motivation to accept the priority of collective over personal interests, within the appropriate limits and on the appropriate occasions.'

### **16.3 FUNCTIONAL PREREQUISITES :**

The types of institutions embodying value orientation patterns are :

1. Relational institutions : the most central institutions directly constitutive of the patterning of interactive relationships.
2. Regulative institutions : the class of institutions facilitating collectivity integration through regulation of instrumental, expressive and ego-integrative interests.
3. Cultural institutions : beliefs, expressive symbols and patterns of moral value-orientations which provide general cultural orientation rather than commitment in action.

Relational institutions define reciprocal role-expectations and thus constitute the core of the social system. Regulative institutions define the legitimate means to be employed in the pursuit of interests. Cultural institutions, peripheral to the social relationship structure, define obligations and value orientations with regard to cultural patterns.

Parsons identifies two analytical concepts that delineate the structure of social action :

1. Dynamic modes of analysis—which refer to equilibrating processes, boundary exchanges and structural changes;
2. Hierarchy of relations of control—which refer to the cybernetic hierarchy that places the cultural system over the biological system. What links structural and dynamic modes of analysis is function, which explains the central place of this concept in Parsons' system analysis. Parsons outlines four fundamental function which every functioning social system must perform :

1. The function of adaptation—to produce and allocate fluidly disposable resources.
2. The function of goal-attainment—to maximize the capacity of the society to attain collective goals.
3. The function of integration—to bring together motivational and cultural or symbolic elements in a certain kind of ordered system.
4. The function of pattern maintenance and tension-management—to maintain adequate motivation to conform with cultural values, to reward conformity and to check disruptive behaviour.,

Bob Jessop has neatly summarized Parsons' framework as follows :

Every Social system is confronted with four functional problems. These problems are those of pattern maintenance, integration, goal attainment, and adaptation. Pattern maintenance refers to the need to maintain and reinforce the basic values of the social system and to resolve tensions that emerge from continuing commitment to these values. Integration refers to the allocation of rights and obligations, rewards and facilities, to ensure the harmony of relations between members of the social system. Goal attainment involves the necessity of mobilizing actors and resources in organized ways for the attainment of specific goals. And adaptation refers to the need for the production or acquisition of generalized facilities or resources that can be employed in the attainment of various specific goals. Social systems tend to differentiate about these problems so as to increase the functional capabilities of the system. Such differentiation—whether through the temporal specialization of a structurally un-differentiated unit or through the emergence of two or more structurally distinct units from one undifferentiated unit—is held to constitute a major verification of the fourfold functionalist schema. It also provides the framework within which are examined the plural interchanges that occur between structurally differentiated units to provide them with the inputs they require in the performance of their functions and to enable them to dispose of the outputs they produce.

In accordance with Parsons schema, a factory as a social system may be



analysed as under :

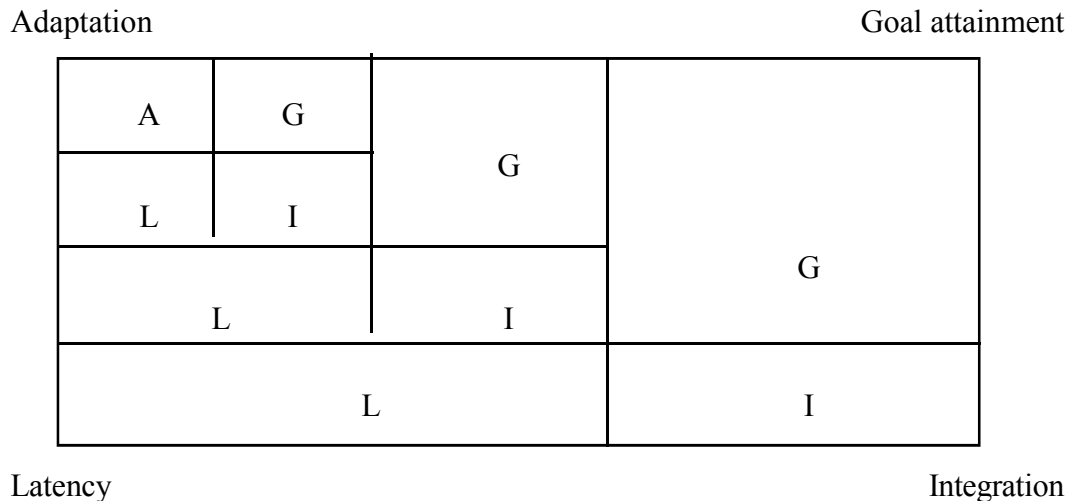
1. Adaptive functions : Proper lighting, air conditioning, suitable machinery, food services and other working conditions;
2. Goal-attainment functions : Processing, manufacturing, marketing, research activities;
3. Integrative function : Management-labour councils, clubs, publications and public relations, recreational and social events, insurance and labour welfare programmes.
4. Pattern-maintenance and tension-management functions : Training, orientation sessions, allocation of rank, salary structure, promotion, increments and bonuses, disciplinary control, mechanism for the redress of grievances.

**FIGURE 2**

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**Parsons Functional Imperativist view of Social Systems (Functional Pre-Requisites)**

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situation. Parsons' typology of action recognizes two more dichotomies :

1. External-internal dichotomy. This depends on whether the action is oriented toward external or internal situation of a social system.
2. Instrumental-consummatory dichotomy. The former indicates activity which represents the means to a goal and the latter an activity which is an end in itself.

The intersection of the two dichotomies together with the four primary functions described above point up several areas of action as illustrated by figure 2.

**FIGURE 3**

		<i>Instrumental</i>	<i>Consummatory</i>		
A				G	
External		Adaptive function	Goal-attainment function		
Internal		Pattern-maintenance and tension management function	Integrative function		
L				I	

*A : Adaptation; G: Goal-attainment; I: Integration; L: Originally called Latent and hence the 'L' but now revised as Pattern-maintenance and Tension management.*

#### **16.4 PATTERN VARIABLES**

In delineating the structure of action Parsons initially followed the lead from Toennies *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*. However, soon he became convinced that a given structure might clearly exhibit attributes suggestive of both the polar types. The professional status-role of the physician is a case in point. In terms of the application of the general principles of medical science, the physicians's relation to his patient is *Gesellschaft*-like but by virtue of the canon that the "welfare of the patient" should come ahead of the self-interest of the doctor, this was clearly

one of *Gemeinschaft*. Therefore, Parsons sought to identify the choices between alternatives that an actor confronts in a given situation and the relative primacies assigned to such choices. Thus he proposed the five dichotomies of pattern variables listed below :

1. **Affectivity vs. affective neutrality** (*The Gratification-Discipline dilemma*) : The pattern is affective when an organized action system emphasizes gratification, that is when an actor tries to avoid pain and to maximize pleasure; the pattern is affectively neutral when it imposes discipline, and renouncement or deferment of some gratifications in favour of other interests. For example, soldiers are expected to ignore immediate gratification and be affectively neutral in their line of duty even if that involves risking their lives. Similarly, unbridled expression of emotions and impulse gratifications are negatively evaluated by cultural patterns.
2. **Self-orientation vs. collectivity-orientation** (*The private vs. Collective interest dilemma*) : This dichotomy depends on social norms or shared expectations which define as legitimate the pursuit of the actor's private interests or obligate him to act in the interests of the group. Salesmen and shopkeepers are expected to glorify their products and give 'sales talk' in accordance with self-orientation but the doctor is expected to tell the patient what is best for him, even if he can make extra money from an expensive operation. This dichotomy has nothing to do with 'selfish' or 'altruistic' motives which are individual character traits but with shared expectations commonly held by a collectivity.
3. **Particularism vs. universalism** : (*The choice between types of value-orientation standard*) : The former refers to standards determined by an actors particular relations with a particular object, the latter refers to value standards that are highly generalized. A teacher is supposed to give grades to all students 'impartially', that is, in accordance

with the same abstract, general, *universal* principles. But if he favours his son or a friend who happens to be in the same class, he is behaving particularistically, for he is treating people differently on the basis of their particular relationship to him. To give another example: a woman on the trial jury has to be universalistic, otherwise she will be dishonest; but as a wife she has to be particularistic, otherwise she will be unfaithful.

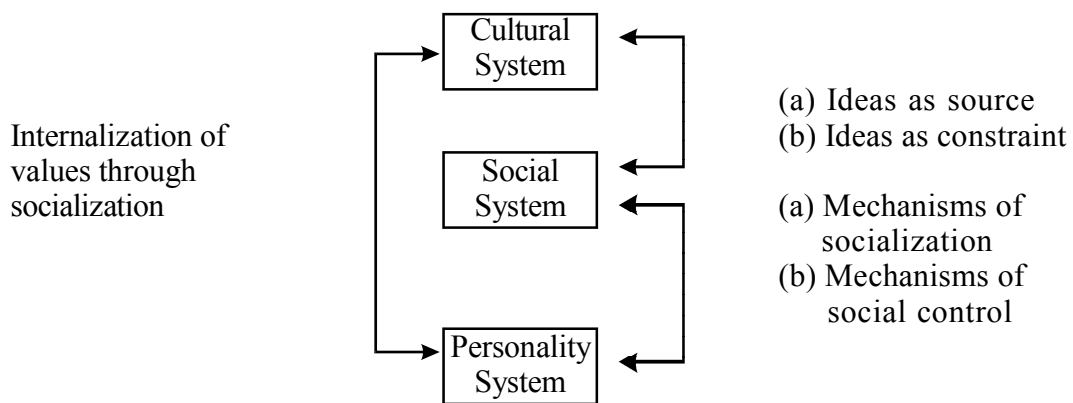
4. **Quality vs. Performance** (*Originally designated as Ascription vs. Achievement : The choice between 'modalities' of the social object*) : This is the dilemma of according primary treatment to an object on the basis of what it *is* in itself, an inborn quality, or what it *does*, and the quality of its performance. The former involves defining people on the basis of certain attributes such as age, sex, colour, nationality, etc.; the latter defines people on the basis of their abilities. Compulsory retirement, racial discrimination and the notion of 'caste superiority' are based on considerations of quality. Recruitment of personnel in a modern bureaucracy based on technical qualifications and standard tests involves consideration of performance.
5. **Diffuseness vs. Specificity** (*The definition of scope of interest in the object*) : This is the dilemma of defining the relation borne by object to actor as indefinitely wide in scope, infinitely broad in involvement, morally obligating, and significant in pluralistic situations (diffuseness); or specifically limited in scope and involvement (specificity). The relationship between the employer and the employees in a modern factory is specific since no obligation is assumed to exist beyond what is specified in the 'contract'. However, certain systems of land tenure such as the semi-feudal and zamindari types are supposed to involve the tenants in an infinite variety of obligations to their 'masters'. Similarly, patterns of friendship and husband-wife relationships are supposed to involve a 'limitless' number of obligations.'

## Sub Systems of Action System

Parsons general theory of system recognizes four different aspects of reality—social, cultural, personality and behavioural organism. Corresponding to these four realms of reality, there are four sub-systems of action : the social, the cultural, the personality and the biological systems which are analytically separable and mutually irreducible. The social system is analytically abstractable from the total interaction process; the other three systems are the environments of the social system but all four are at the same time sub-systems of action.

**FIGURE 4**

Parsons Early Conception of Integration among Systems of Action



*The social system:* According to Parsons :

A social system consists in a plurality of individual actors interacting with each other in a situation which has at least a physical or environmental aspect, actors who are motivated in terms of a tendency to the “optimization of gratification” and whose relation to their situations, including each other, is defined and mediated in terms of a system of culturally structured and shared symbols.

It is generated by the process of interaction among individual units. However, a social system is not made up of ‘the *total* action of concrete persons and collectivities, but only their actions in specific roles’.

The core of a social system is the patterned normative order through which the life of a population is collectively organized. As an order it contains values as well as differentiated and particularized norms and standards. As a collectivity, it displays a patterned conception of membership which distinguishes between those individuals who do and do not belong. And the social system is an open system engaged in processes of interchange (or 'input output' relations) with its environment, as well as consisting of interchanges among its internal units.

What are the units of social systems ? In the most elementary sense the unit is the act. But for most purposes of the more macro-scopic analysis of social systems, Parsons prefers a higher order unit than the act which he calls the status-role. 'Since a social system is a system of processes of interaction between actors, it is the structure of the *relations* between the actors as involved in the interactive process which is essentially the structure of the social system. The system is a network of such relationships.

Hence Parsons regards the *participation* of an actor in a patterned interactive relationship as the most significant unit of the social system. This participation has two principal aspects: the positional aspect or *status*—that of where the actor in question is 'located' in the social system in relation to other actors; the processual aspect or *role*—that of what the actor does in his relations with others seen in the context of its functional significance for the social system. Parsons emphasizes: 'It should be made quite clear that statuses and roles are not attributes of the actor, but *units* of the social system. Next the actor himself, as a social actor or a composite bundle of statuses and roles, is a unit of the social system. Finally, the collectivity is also a unit of the social system.'

The structural components of social systems are delineated in terms of two analytical constructs :

- (a) The normative order which involves norms and values Normal are primarily social whereas values serve as the primary connecting link between the social and cultural systems.
- (b) Collectively organized population which involves collectivity, the category of intra-social structure and the role, the category of boundary-structure.

A social system...may be analysed on four levels of generality so far as its

units are concerned : (1) Individuals in roles are organized to form what we call (2) collectivities. Both roles and collectivities, however, are subject to ordering and control by (3) norms which are differentiated according to the functions of these units and to their situations, and by (4) values which define the desirable kind of system of relations.

Collectivity is the organization of a series of institutions, 'a concrete system of interacting human individuals, of persons in roles. Values are defined as modes of normative orientation of action...which define the main directions of action.'

If a system is to constitute a persistent order and to undergo an orderly process of developmental change, certain functional pre-requisites must be met :

1. A social system must provide for the minimum biological and psychological needs of a sufficient proportion of its component members. It is not the needs of any one, but only a sufficient proportion for a sufficient fraction of the population.
2. The system can only function if a sufficient proportion of its members perform the essential roles with an adequate degree of effectiveness.
3. It must avoid commitment to cultural patterns which either fail to define a minimum of order or which place impossible demands on people and thereby generate deviance and conflict. In other words, it must maintain a minimum of control over potentially disruptive behaviour.
4. There must be minimum social conditions necessary for the production, maintenance and development of cultural systems in general as well as of particular types of cultural systems.

The need to fulfill various functions of the social system gives rise to different structural arrangements. Thus, a total society, as a social system, tends to differentiate into subsystems (social structures) and in terms of the four primary functions discussed earlier four sub-systems of society are identified by Parsons:

- A. The adaptive sub-system. The economy is the primary specialized subsystem in relation to the adaptive function of a society. It functions to produce generalized facilities, particularly commodities and resources, as means to numerous ends and, through the institutions of contract and property, the economic system regulates the processes of production and distribution.
- B. The goal-attainment sub-system. The primary goal-attainment sub-system of society is the polity whose function is the mobilization of necessary pre-requisites for the attainment of given system goals of the society.
- C. The integrative sub-system. All sub-systems that function to marshal agreement out of potential or actual conflict and maintain the institutionalization of value patterns are integrative subsystems of society. They include political parties, interest groups, health agencies, courts, etc.
- D. The pattern-maintenance and tension-management sub-systems. These focus on the institutionalized culture which, in turn, centres on patterns of value-orientations. These sub-systems of the social system articulate most closely with the cultural systems. They include familial institutions, churches, schools, the arts, research activities, etc.

Cultural institutions consist of cognitive beliefs, systems of expressive symbols and private moral obligations. The main function of the cultural system is the legitimation of the society, normative order. Cultural value patterns provide the most direct link between the social and cultural systems in legitimizing the normative order of society. They define what is appropriate and what is not, not necessarily in a moral sense but in accordance with the institutionalized order. As Parsons puts it :

The cultural (or pattern-maintenance) system centers on the institutionalization of cultural value patterns, which, at the general cultural level, may be regarded as moral. Institutionalized societal values, and their specifications to societal subsystems, comprise only part of the relevance of moral values of action; moral values are also involved, through internalization, in structures of the personality and behavioural organism; and,



more generally, they articulate with religion, science, and the arts within the cultural system.

Parsons points out that cultural patterns have a dual relation to action; they may be the object of the situation or they may be internalized to become components of the actor's orientation pattern. This peculiarity of culture, Parsons claims, is the main basis for treating it as a special category. Some culture patterns function primarily as symbolic forms for the organization of the actor's cognitive orientation; others serve a similar function in relation to the cathectic aspect of this orientation and finally there are those which mediate or structure his evaluative orientations. Accordingly, Parsons proposes a typology of culture patterns which includes : systems of cognitive ideas or beliefs; systems of adjustive patterns or expressive symbols; systems of integrative patterns or value orientation standards.

*The personality system:* Parsons views personality as ‘the aspect of the living individual, as “actor”, which *must* be understood in terms of the cultural and social content of the learned patternings that make up his behavioural system. Personality is autonomous as a distinct sub-system of action. It ‘forms a distinct system articulated with social systems through their political sub-systems, not simply in the sense of government but of any collective ordering. This is to say that *the* primary goals output of social systems is to the personalities of their members.’ Parsons also claims that the ‘personality system is the *primary meeting ground* of the cultural system, the behavioural organism and, secondarily, the physical world’.

The main function of the personality system involves learning, developing, and maintaining through the life cycle and adequate level of motivation so that individuals will participate in socially valued and controlled activities. In turn, society must also adequately satisfy and reward its members if it is to maintain the level of motivation and of performance. This relationship constitutes socialization, the process by which individuals become social beings. Since personality is the *learned organization* of the behaving individual, an effective process of socialization is crucial. And successful socialization requires that social and cultural learning be strongly motivated through the engagement of the pleasure mechanisms of the organism.

Whereas the maintenance of adequate levels of motivation involves mainly the social structures concerned with socialization, the individual's value-commitments link primarily with the cultural system. Consensus and intermeshing of interests are not always enough. In addition to rewarding conformity and punishing deviance, motivation must be furnished at different levels.

Parsons also identifies four categories of outputs from the personality to the organism [which] act as both controls and facilities'. These are :

1. Motive force to increase instrumental performance,'
2. Directional output or the control of organic facilities by the motivational structures of the psychological system.
3. Expectation component or attitudinal set, the 'expectation' that organic interests will be served by 'going along' with the psychological system.
4. 'Organic security', or the stability of the whole relationship between organic and psychological systems.

*The Biological system* According to Parsons, 'all relations between the social system and the *physical* environment are mediated through the behavioural organism.' The perceptual processes of the organism are the source of information about the physical environment, which gains cultural organization from its conceptual and theoretical components. The organism is also the source of the 'instinctual' components of the motivation of individuals' personalities.

Parsons lists two fundamental properties of biological 'human nature': the 1. 'Plasticity' of the human organism, its capacity to learn any one of a large number of alternative patterns of behaviour instead of being bound by its genetic constitution to a very limited range of alternatives. It is, of course, within the limits of this plasticity that the independent determinant significance of cultural and social factors in action must be sought; the 2. 'sensitivity', or 'the accessibility of the human individual to influence by the attitudes of others in the social interaction process, and the resulting dependence on receiving relatively particular and specific reactions.' This provides the motivational basis for accessibility to influence in the learning process.

The organism is to be analysed in terms of its relation to the physical world. Primordial problems concern the provision of food and shelter. Parsons considers technological organization as the boundary-structure between society as a system and the organic physical environment because technology is the socially organized capacity for actively controlling and altering objects of the physical environment in the interest of human needs. Parsons defines the organism 'as a fourfold set of "facilities", which, conceived functionally, can be thought of as inputs to the psychological (personality) system. These consist of :

1. Motivational energy;
2. The perceptual or cognitive capacity;
3. "Performance" or "response" capacity, or the capacity to utilize the structures of the organism, notably the skeletal muscular structures; and
4. The mechanisms that integrate these facilities with each other and the needs of psychological system, especially the pleasure mechanism.

Now a word about the interpenetration between the four sub-systems (social, cultural, personality, and biological) of action. The social system is the integrative sub-systems of action in general. The other three principal systems constitute the environments of the social system. The four primary sub-systems of society (adaptive, goal attainment, integrative, and pattern-maintenance and tension management) are functionally specialized around their inter-relations with the three other sub-systems of action (or the environments of a social system), each relating most directly to one of these environments. Each of the four societal sub-systems may also be considered a distinct environment of the sub-system which is the society's integrative core. Looms has effectively summarized the relationship between the systems and sub-systems as follows :

Organization and control are exhibited by one ordering of levels of the four systems. The psychological system organizes and controls the organism (in its behavioural aspects); the social system organizes and controls the psychological system and the cultural system performs similarly in respect to the social system.

By an opposite ordering of the levels, sets of conditions are provided., Social systems provide a set of conditions basic to the cultural systems, psychological systems a set of conditions on which the social systems depend, and the organism provides the conditions underlying the psychological system. There are characteristic interchanges among the four systems. The organism, for example, provides the personality system with inputs of motivational energy part of which is fed back to the organism in the form of control that increases the performance potential of the organism. Between the psychological and cultural systems a mutually integrative interchange takes place in which the psychological system is provided with legitimation by cultural components by which its functioning is made subject to normative patterns. Culture is provided with a ‘motivational commitment’ by the psychological system which transcends an understanding of the norm to become a total internalization of it, so that the norm becomes a part of an internal regulatory mechanism which is part of the personality system itself.

#### SUBSYSTEMS OF ACTION

SOCIAL SYSTEM	CULTURAL SYSTEM	PERSONALITY SYSTEM	BIOLOGICAL SYSTEM
Integrative subsystem	Pattern Maintenance and Tension Management sub-system	Goal-attainment subsystem	Adaptive subsystem
—	—	—	—
Collectivity	Cultural value	Polity	Economy

#### 16.6 CRITICAL EVALUATION

Critics have charged that Parsons system of concepts does not correspond to events in the ‘real’ world. Dahrendorf compares Parsons’ social system with utopia. The absence of change and the existence of universal consensus on prevailing values characterize all utopias. Contemporary system theorist in sociology view

society as a system that is 'self-sufficient, internally consistent, and closed to the outside.' Dahrendorf does not see anything logically wrong with the term 'system' but when it is applied to total societies and is made the ultimate frame of reference of analysis, 'all kinds of undesirable consequences' follow. 'It is certainly true that sociology deals with society. But it is equally true that physics deals with nature, and yet physicists would hardly see an advance in calling nature a system and trying to analysed it as such. In fact, the attempt to do so would probably—and justly—be discarded as metaphysics. Dahrendorf's main criticism of Parsons' system theory is that it portrays a fully integrated utopian society based on universal consensus and no scope for change.

In a similar vien, Buckley argues that Parsons' social system is a vaguely conceptualized amalgam of mechanistic and organismic models, placing excessive emphasis on integration, consensus and stability, and devaluing change, conflict and strife. 'Although he clearly recognizes in many places that structured deviance, tensions, strains, etc., are determinate, *integral parts* of a social system, nevertheless somewhere along his line of exposition the "system" comes to be identified... with the dominant, legitimized, institutionalized structure, or at least with those characteristic structures that *do not include* patterned strains or structured deviance and disorder. And the concept of "institutionalized deviance" now widely recognized in one form or another by many sociologists, could be a contradiction in terms for Parsons. Buckley also claims that the fundamental components of Parsonian system model are only 'those determinate relations making up an "institutionalized" dominant structure of conformity to role expectations.' And since this dominant structure is taken as the fixed point of reference against which other structures or latent consequences are seen as potentially 'disruptive', deviance and strains of various kinds are residual in the model. Buckley also insists that the 'Parsonian model is rife with anthropomorphism and teleology. The system "seeks" equilibrium, it has "problems" and "imperatives" of control, it has "systemic needs"'. Parsons is always careful to enclose such terms in quotes, and explicitly pays lip service to the dangers involved. But unfortunately, as the history of science shows, this is not enough to cover the full price that we may eventually have to pay for using such notions for their presumably heuristic value'.

Some of these criticisms are valid. But it must be borne in mind that Parsons has been primarily concerned with developing an analytical tool for the study of total societies, not with describing empirical realities. In this endeavour he has developed the most comprehensive conceptual framework for the analysis of social systems and their structural components. Parsons critics have often failed to see that his scheme for the analysis of the systematic aspects of social relationships is essentially an ideal-typical construct, not a general descriptive replica of the organization of concrete collectivities. Indeed, Parson's social systems are not concrete; they are conceptual constructs. They are not made up of individuals but social actions and status-role bundles. As Theodore Abel points out, 'since Parsons' intention was to forge an analytical tool for the comparative study of any organized group from the viewpoint of the order manifested in its stability, the abstract character of his conceptual scheme is an asset, not a liability'.

### **16.7 ASK YOURSELF**

1. Explain the Parsonian system in detail.

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2. Describe Parsons theory of social action with a special emphasis on social system.

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3. Write a detailed note on Functional prerequisites.

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4. Explain the concept of pattern variables as given by Parsons.

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5. What are the various subsystems of action system ? Write about each subsystem in brief.

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## **MERTON (FUNCTIONAL ANALYSIS; FUNCTIONAL POSTULATES)**

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**B. A. Semester-IIIrd**

**Lesson No. 17**

**Unit-V**

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### **STRUCTURE :**

- 17.0 Objectives
- 17.1 Introduction
- 17.2 Life sketch
- 17.3 Concept of society and system
- 17.4 Types of social system
- 17.5 Functional analysis
  - 17.5.1 Functional requisites or imperatives
  - 17.5.2 Equilibrium mechanism
- 17.6 Interaction and interpenetration between sub systems
- 17.7 Criticism
- 17.8 Ask yourself
- 17.9 Radcliff Brown - Life Sketch
- 17.10 Concept of function
- 17.11 Function postulates
- 17.12 Mertons paradigm
- 17.13 References
- 17.14 Ask yourself



## **17.0 OBJECTIVES**

Though we have discussed functionalism in the previous blocks, it is Talcott Parsons who has taken functionalism to its logical conclusion as a theoretical legacy. Secondly, Parsons in all his analysis has merged other intellectual traditions from economics, psychology, anthropology and sociology. He sought to cut across disciplines. He has visualized functional analysis as the most fruitful perspective. Thus you will learn in this block:

- The concept of system, social system and systemic types.
- The contrast to anthropological- Individualist functionalism of Malinowski-you will learn here sociological functionalism.

## **17.1 INTRODUCTION**

In the previous block you came across with the concept of function and also functionalism. As such we discussed, B.Malinowski's individualistic functionalism which was based upon the theory of needs and scientific theory of culture. In this unit, you will learn about sociological functionalism for which we will discuss the contribution of Talcott Parsons, an American sociologist, who has powerful influence on sociology after the second world war. His major works, which contributed to sociological theorizing, among others are:-

1. The Social System (1951)
2. The Structure of Social Action (1951)
3. Essays in sociological theory (1954)
4. Economy and Society (1957)
5. The System of Modern Societies (1971)

He was, above all, critical of the Chicago school which was preoccupied with only empirical research, in American sociology. According to him, empirical research tends to be barren unless guided by general theoretical frame. We will in this lesson, concentrate on the functional analysis which has been contributed by his most important work- The social system (1951). His theory, therefore, is known as systematic analysis theory where he argues that:

- a. System is a unified whole made up of interdependent parts called sub-system. Each sub-system can also be treated as a system by itself.
- b. The units or sub-systems must be organized in a relative stable manner so that a definite pattern of relationship come to exist between sub-systems.
- c. Each system has a boundary.
- d. The variation or change occurs in a system in a definite manner-not by choice.
- e. For the maintenance of the system certain elementary needs of the system Universal and derived needs must be met.

### **17.2 LIFE SKETCH**

Parsons was born in the year 1902 and graduated from London school of Economics in the year 1924. In 1927 he got his Ph.D from Heidelberg University. Parsons was a keen student of German social thinkers, which is proved from the fact that he translated Max Weber's work, "Protestant Ethics and the spirit of Capitalism". He also drew inspirations from Pareto's theory of residue and non logical actions.

Parsons started his teaching carrer as a teacher in Emerist college and subsequently joined Harvard university and in 1944 he was appointed as Professor of sociology.

### **17.3. CONCEPTION OF SOCIETY AND SOCIAL SYSTEM**

For Parsons society embraced the entire social field of man. "A society may be defined as the total complex of relationships in so far as they grow out of actions in terms of means-end relationship, intrinsic and symbolic". The society is also effected by environments, heredity, and cultures on the one hand and religions, metaphysical and political system on the other. He, thus, characterized society as a sum total of all human relationship.

Talcott Parson's one of the most important works is on social system. A social system, he defined, is a mode of organization of action elements relative to the persistence or ordered processes of change of the interactive pattern of a plurality of individual actors.

Thus; you may consider the following to understand a social system.

1. It consists of plurality of individuals.
2. Its elementary unit is act, in so far as it is connected with the process of interaction. It involves a process of interaction between two or more actors.
3. As a system of interaction, it involves participation of an actor in the process of interactive relationship.
4. The system consists of inter-dependence of parts.

The participation of actors involves two aspects:

- a) The positional aspect indicates the location of an actor in a social system. You know about the concept of status through the lessons you read in the first semester. Status, thus, represents the position of an actor in a social system. Thus an actor has a high or low status in the system.
- b) The processual aspect represents the functional significance of an actor in relation to the social system. He was to perform certain functions and a definite role to play.

In other words, the positional aspect is called 'status' and processual aspect is called his role. Therefore, when the behaviour of an actor is associated with a particular status, then that is called his role.

The distinction between status and role with reciprocal perspectives are inherent in the process of interaction. The actor is an object of orientation for others as well as the actor is oriented to other actors. Therefore, when the actor is not an object but he is acting, then you may say that he is playing his role. Status and role, in this sense, are not attributes of an actor but one primary ingredients of a social system you may see Box 'A' to know about status and role and its significance in a social system.

### **Box 'A'**

**Statuses:** Every social system has prescribed certain status for its members. It is either acquired by a hereditary manner or as a result of actions of a society. There are certain facilities, power and prestige attached with the status. The arrangement of the status provides strength and stability to the social system.

**Role :** Like status, the society has prescribed different role to different individuals. Every status is attached with a role. Thus role is the external expression of the status. While playing his role every individual keeps in mind his status. Which helps in social integration, organization and unity in the social system.

A social system is thus a system of differentiated roles. Roles are assigned to actors. This process of distribution of roles, Parsons calls as allocation. A social system is, therefore, confronted with the problem of allocation. In the functioning of the system, the allocation of roles must be proper. The criteria adopted for this initial allocation is of ascriptive nature - may be on the bases of age, sex and birth. The other subsequent methods of role allocation is through appointment and competition. The appointment depends on the explicit decision of other persons while competition is a selective process.

The allocation of role and status also involves the problem of allocation of facilities. For Parsons, "Facilities are possessions which are significant as means to further goals in complexes of instrumental orientation. Allocation of facilities are to be done because their supply is limited in comparison to demand. Possession of facilities means to have power-economic and political. The two types of power are integral to the social system.

Then there is problem of reward. By reward we mean those transferable entities or possession which are desired as objects to immediate gratification by actors. The difference between facility and reward is that any possession towards an actors is oriented is facility, but it may be regarded as reward if actors orientation is expressive.

## 17.4 TYPES OF SOCIAL SYSTEM

Parsons presents a classification of four major types :

1. **The Particularistic-Ascriptive:** This type of system is organized around kinship and sociality. The normative pattern of such a system are traditional and dominated by the elements of ascription.
2. **Particularistic-Achievement:** In this type, the continuation of the old religious ethic is inherent but at the same time emergence of a new mode of social integration in which performance becomes more important than qualities. Parsons cite Chinese social structure as an example.
3. **The Universalistic Achievement Type:** When traditional order is challenged and emergence of new norms are derived from the existing relations of social member. The norms become universalistic. Besides, they are related with empirical or non-empirical goals, therefore they are achievement oriented. The most modern society is the example.
4. **Universalistic-Ascription Type:** Under this social type, elements of value orientation are dominated by the elements of ascription. Therefore, emphasis is placed on the status of the actor rather than his performance. Such a system becomes politicized and aggressive. An authoritarian state is the example.

The systems theory, analytically, may be summarized as follows:

1. The social system is made up of the interaction of human individuals.
2. Each member is both actor and object of orientation for both other actors and himself.
3. The actor is seeking a goal or set of goals.
4. The actor is confronted with a variety of situational conditions as societal environment and ecological constraints.
5. The actor's orientation to situation is both motivational and value-orientational.

Before we proceed further, you may note that Parsons in his book the Structure of Social Action, focused on unit act, but in the other book, The Social System, the emphasis shifted from unit act to institutional orders. Thus, the later view emphasized the system as a primary unit of analysis.

The concept of institutionalization, for Parsons, is crucial to the understanding of the system. He considers institutionalization as the fundamental integrative mechanism of social systems. It builds up and maintains social structure.

### 17.5 FUNCTIONAL ANALYSIS

Parsons functionalism moves through two distinct phases. (a) the mechanism-equilibrium and (b) the functional requisite phase. However, the mechanism equilibrium gets incorporated in the requisite phase. Let us therefore discuss the functional requisites. Parsons has outlined four fundamental function which any system must perform.

1. **Adaptation:** This is adaptation to the environment involving production and allocation of disposable resources.
2. **Goal attainment function:** To maximize the capacity of the society to attain collective goals.
3. **Integration:** This is about the ordering of the systems by bringing together the motivational and cultural elements.
4. **Latency or pattern maintenance and tension management:** This fourth function is to maintain adequate motivation to conform with the cultural values. This is function of social control as it is to reward conformity and to check disruptive behaviour. These four functional problems or requisites, or imperatives are abbreviated as A,G,I,L.

For a quick summary of the four functional problems which every social system is confronted with in maintaining a society are:

The pattern maintenance function is to deal with the problem of maintaining and reinforcing the basic values of the social systems. It also resolves the tensions. While the integration function of the system refers

to the allocation of rights and obligations, rewards and facilities. This will ensure a harmonic relation between the members of the social system. Goal attainment involves the necessity of mobilizing actors and resources for the attainment of specific goals and adaptation refers to the production of resources to facilitate the attainment of specific goals. Let us see the functioning of a social system through an example you can read Box 'B' for it.

#### **Box-'B'**

Considering a factory as a social system, Parsons' scheme may be seen as under :

- 1. Adaptive functions:** Proper lighting, air conditioning, suitable machinery, food services and other working condition.
- 2. Goal attainment functions:** Processing, manufacturing, marketing, research activities.
- 3. Integrative function:** Management labour councils, clubs, publications and public relations, recreational and social events, insurance, and labour welfare programmes.
- 4. Pattern maintenance and tension management functions:** Training, orientation sessions, allocation of rank, salary structure, promotion, increment and bonuses, disciplinary control, mechanism for the redress of grievances.

(Reproduced from Abraham : PP. 56-57)

#### **17.5.1 Functional Imperatives and system, sub-systems relations**

In collaboration with Bales and Shils and afterwards with Neil-J- Smelser, the conception of functional imperatives came to dominate in Parsons' writing. Considering the question of survival of the social system, Parsons, thus, conceptualized the four requisites (read requirements) of adaptation, goal attainment, integration and latency. As you already know that all these requisites were viewed under the general problem of integration. In Parsons' discussion of integration within and between action systems,

problem of securing facilities (adaptation), allocation and goal seeking (goal attainment), socialization and social control (latency) were conscious. Parsons, however, did not confine to the general social system. He also viewed a system has different action sub-systems and sub-sub systems. This what Turner has called “functional sectorization”.

“As Parsons’ conceptual scheme became increasingly oriented to function, social systems are divided into sectors, each corresponding to a functional requisite that is, A,G,I, or L. In turn, any sub-system can be divided into these four functional sectors. And then, each of these sub-systems can be divided into four functional sectors, and so on. (Turner: 70)

The system that has been discussed above, the most important development involved four system requisites that all action systems whether cultural, social, personality or organismic – must meet if they are to survive.

#### **17.5.2 Equilibrium Phase**

Parsons, analytically, separates four action systems – (1) the cultural (2) social (3) personality and (4) organismic. The “cultural” is the system of symbols that is created and used by humans. The “social” is the system of relationship created out of interaction among individuals. The “personality” is the system of traits such as needs, dispositions, cognitive states and interpersonal skills that actors possess and draw upon as they interact with each other. The other element of unit acts – biological and physical parameters are the “organismic” system. According to Parsons, all relations between the social system and the physical environment are mediator through behavioural organism. Plasticity and sensitivity are the two properties in it. Parsons then goes on to discuss the integration of the personality system into social system. He identified two mechanisms for this (1) the mechanisms of socialization which involve the processes wherein the cultural symbols gets internalized by the personality and also motives and skills are acquired for role playing. The other mechanism is of social control. These mechanisms include (a) institutionalization of norms (b) informal interpersonal sanctions to reduce deviance (c) ritual performances to release tensions (d) safety value organizations (e) reintegration structures for rehabilitation of the



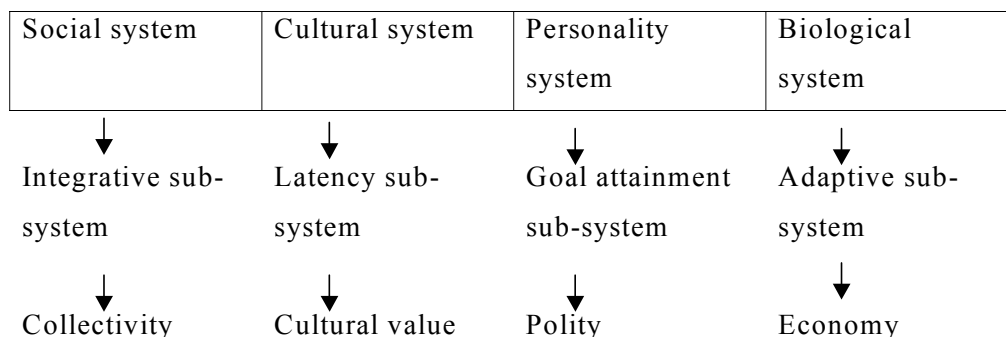
deviants (f) the concentration of power for the restoration of order through coercion.

The above two mechanisms thus resolve the problem of assuring that actors are committed and able to play roles in the social system and that they will continue to conform to the normative expectations. If these mechanisms are ineffective, the social equilibrium will be disrupted. This prompted Parsons to include the cultural patterns – values, beliefs and other symbols with the social system analysis. He further introduced the next action sub-system – the personality system. His concern was to analyse as to how some degree of integration is possible among these systems.

### 17.6 INTERACTION BETWEEN THE SUB-SYSTEMS

The interpenetration between the four action sub-systems (social, cultural, personality and biological) can be seen with following manner. The social system being the integrative sub-system of action, the other three principal sub systems (culture, personality and organisimic) constitute the environments of the social system. The four functional imperatives (primary sub-systems of society) – adaptive, goal-attainment, integrative, and latency – are functionally specialized around their inter-relations with the three other sub-systems (culture, personality, organism) of action, each relating most directly to one of these environments (action sub-systems). Each of these four societal sub-systems may also be considered a distinct environment of the sub-system which is the society’s integrative core.

#### Sub-systems of Action



### **17.7 CRITICISM:**

Criticism of Parsonian functionalism started in the late 1960's and by the early 1970's critiques had dislodged Parsonian theory from its once dominant place.

1. A number of critics questioned whether Parson's emerging concepts correspond to the events in the real world. Dahrendorf compares Parsonian social system with utopia.
2. Buckley argues that Parson's social system does not advocate change. According to him, it is a vaguely conceptualized amalgam of mechanistic and organismic models, spacing excessive emphasis on integration, consensus and stability and devaluates change, conflict and strife.
3. It is teleological : Parsons always considered action to be goal directed. Thus Parson's conceptualization of goal attainment as a basis system requisite would make inevitable teleological propositions.
4. It is tautological: Parsons' conceptualization of four system requisites (AGIL) is based on the assumption that if they are not met, the systems survival is threatened. Turner says that "unless there is some way to determine what constitutes survival and non-survival of a system. The propositions documenting the contribution of items for meeting survival requisites become tautologies i.e. the items meet survival needs of the system because it exists and, therefore, must be surviving.

### **17.8 ASK YOURSELF**

- a) What do you mean by social system ? Discuss its main characteristics.
- b) Discuss the functional requisites of the social system.
- c) Discuss the mechanisms of socialization and social control for the equilibrium of the system.

### **17.9 R. K. MERTON - LIFE SKETCH**

After the initiation of functional theory by Emile Durkheim, B.Malinowski and A.R. Radcliffe-Brown, two American sociologists – Talcott Parsons and

Robert King Merton have given a new shape to functional analysis in the middle twentieth century. R.K. Merton not only provides a critique of the notions and assumptions of functionalism advocated by Durkheim, Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown but also traces the clear etymology of the concept of function, reformulates their inherent assumptions and placed a systematic frame work for functional analysis in sociology. Here, after giving a brief biographic note and selected writings, his critique of assumptions of earlier functionalists is narrated and thereafter his frame work for functional analysis is presented along with what has been derived as a guide (he calls it protocol) for researchers following his functional analysis is described.

Robert King Merton (popularly and mostly known as R.K. Merton) was born on 5 July 1910 in a Jewish immigrant family in a South Philadelphia slum. Here, his father was a carpenter and a truck driver. He grew up with a passion for learning and after schooling won a scholarship at Temple University. At Temple University, he received his B.A degree and became interested in Sociology while taking an introductory sociology course taught by George E. Simpson. Merton himself said, “It was not so much the substance of what Simpson said that did it. It was more the joy of discovering that it was possible to examine human behaviour objectively and without using loaded moral pre-conceptions”. Merton received a doctorate from Harward University where he was one of the earliest and most intelligent students of Talcott Parsons. Parsons stated that of the significant relations he had with students, “The most important single one was with Robert Merton”. For a long time, Parsons and Merton came to be known as leaders of structural functional theory among American Sociologists. At Harward, Merton was also influenced by Pitrim Sorokin who was not sympathetic towards Parsons. After serving for only a small span elsewhere, Merton joined Columbia State University, New York and came in contact with Paul F.Lazarsfeld. Both were closely associated and established Bureau of Applied Social Research. He became active in empirical research under the influence of his colleague Lazarsfeld since 1941. He worked in Columbia till his last and achieved the rare distinction of the title “University Professor Emeritus”. He became president of American Sociological Society in 1957. Though he began his research with

sociology of science but he is a known theorist of sociology of middle twentieth century.

### **Selected Writings**

Some of his writings became very famous and he was the most quoted author not only in social science but also of science in 1960's. On theory, his writings include, "Manifest and Latent Functions", "Theory and Empirical Research – Two Essays", 'theory of status and role', "Reference Group Behaviour" and further "Continuities in the Theory of Reference Group Behaviour". All his essays and papers which are pertinent writings in the area of sociological theory, published in various sources, have been compiled in one volume 'Social Theory and Social Structure' first published in 1949, second edition in 1957 and the third enlarged edition in 1968. This book has been translated into many languages.

### **17.10 THE CONCEPT OF FUNCTION**

R.K. Merton has done a unique exercise by tracing various etymological/contextual meanings of the term function under the heading "Single Term, Diverse Concepts". At first function means 'simple public gathering or festive occasion', usually conducted with ceremonial overtones. Secondly, function is 'equivalent to occupation', tracing a definition of occupation from the writings of Max Weber. At the third place, function refers to the 'activities assigned to the incumbent of a social status', more particularly to the occupant of an office or political position. Fourthly function, as used in mathematics, refers to 'a variable considered in relation to one or more variables' in terms of which it can be expressed on the value of which its own value depends ( $y = fx$ ). In the fifth place, as used in biology, function refers to the 'vital or organic processes considered in respects in which they contribute to the maintenance of the organism'. Merton states that it is this usage, with modifications appropriate to the study of human society, that anthropologists have adopted and clarified the key concept of function.

According to Merton, and that appears to be true, Radcliffe-Brown has been the most explicit in tracing his working conception of social function to the

analogical model found in biological sciences. Durkhem, in his famous work 'Division of Labour in Society' used the notion of 'function' clearly referring to like vital and organic processes when he writes, 'function of a social institution is thus the correspondence between it and the need of the organism'. But it was Radcliffe-Brown who made the explicit use of the term function and more clearly defined. He writes, "the function of a recurrent physiological process is thus a correspondence between it and the needs (i.e necessary conditions of existence) of the organism". He replaces the word needs, as stated by Durkheim, by the terms 'necessary conditions of existence' (the conditions without which the organism will not survive). In the social sphere where individual human beings, 'the essential units', are connected by networks of social relations into an integrated whole (may be termed as society) Radcliffe-Brown clearly defined function as, "the function of any recurrent activity", such as the punishment of a crime, or a funeral ceremony, "is the part it plays in the social life as a whole and therefore the contribution it makes to the maintenance of structural continuity".

Though B. Malinowski defers in some respects from the formulation of Radcliffe-Brown but he joins Radcliffe-Brown in making the core of functional analysis, Malinowski states, "the part which (social or cultural items) play in the society". Further Malinowski states, "Theory aims at explanation of anthropological facts (social or cultural items) by their function, (function) by the part they play within the integral system of culture, by the manner in which they are related to each other within the system. In later writings the notion 'part played in social and cultural system' is used as synonymous with 'inter-dependence' and 'contribution', etc. The difference of notion further blurs between the concept of function as "inter-dependence" and as "process".

R.K. Merton has derived the essence of the concept of function formulated and used by A.R. Radcliffe-Brown and B. Malinowski. Both Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown used the concept of function in the understanding of primitive societies. The essence of their formulations has been examined by Merton in order to use the concept of function in the understanding of complex societies like the American society in early and middle twentieth century. The essence of these formulations on the concept of function has been presented by R.K. Merton

in terms of postulates of functionalism. In his essay “manifest and latent functions” which is reprinted as a chapter in the book “Social Theory and Social Structure”, he reformulates these postulates in the light of the institutions and processes of complex societies so as to make use of these theoretical capsules in the understanding of the society in which he himself was living. Though, the clarification and elaboration of the concept of function will be discussed in detail in the ‘paradigm for functional analysis in Sociology’ in the next section but briefly the meaning of function may be noted here which will be used in the examination and reformulation of the earlier meanings of function given by Radcliffe-Brown and Malinowski.

Defining the word function Merton writes, “functions are those observed consequences which make for the adaptation or adjustment of a given system”. He considers that there has been a tendency to observe only the positive contributions of a sociological item to the social or cultural system in which it is implicated. But there are also some contributions of at least some social or cultural items which, over a period of time, become otherwise i.e. it starts becoming as obstacle/hindrance and thus instead of increasing adaptation or adjustment it decreases/lessens the adjustment or adaptation of a given system. Considering this, he introduced the notion of dysfunction and states, “dysfunctions are those observed consequences which lessen the adaptation or adjustment of the system” There is also the empirical possibility of non-functional consequences which are simply irrelevant to the system under consideration”. He also elaborates the notion further which are apparent and those which are hidden by using the terms ‘manifest’ and ‘latent’ functions. These will be clarified in detail in the paradigm in a later section. Here it should be clearly understood that Merton has considered the notion of function as a positive contribution of a social or cultural item as has been considered by earlier functionalists, namely Radcliffe-Brown and Malinowski. But he does consider that there are also some consequences of such items which may contribute to the contrary i.e. do not contribute to the adjustment or adaptation of a given system that means to integration and continuity of ordered social life. It is not only a logical possibility or utopia but also that

is found to be true in empirical situations. Merton very well convinced of this reality and verified on the role of some social institutions, norms and traditions. It is after this realization that he has further added the concept of 'dysfunction' or negative consequences. This serves as a starting point for examining the concept of function as propogated by early functionalists. He was also aware of the changes that are occurring in western societies, particularly American society. The earlier notion of function assumed that there was no stress but in complex societies stress was an important factor. The stress indicates changes of some or the other variety, let alone the changes in functions of a social institution or social and cultural item. With these considerations, the earlier prominent formulations of 'function' are examined in terms of what Merton has labeled as 'Prevailing Postulates in Functional Analysis' (in Sociology).

#### **17.11 PREVAILING POSTULATES IN FUNCTIONAL ANALYSIS : MERTON'S CRITIQUE**

Mertons states that in anthropology, chiefly the functional analysis has commonly adopted three inter-connected postulates. These postulates, he finds, have proved to be debatable and to some extent unnecessary to the functional orientation in sociology. These three postulates substantially hold at first – 'that standardized social activities or cultural items are for entire (whole) social or cultural system. Second – that all such social and cultural items fulfill sociological functions, and the third – that these social or cultural items are consequently indispensable. He says these three are like 'articles of faith' of earlier anthropologists and ordinarily seen together. He examines these three postulates separately as he considers that 'each gives rise to its own distinctive difficulties'. These three postulates and their examination by Merton in the light of the complex societies are presented here.

##### **1. Postulate of the Functional Unity of Society**

According to Merton, it is Radcliffe-Brown who put this postulate in clear cut terms when he wrote in his essay 'On the concept of Function', "The function of a particular social usage is the contribution it makes to the total social life as

the functioning of the total social system". Merton says this view implies that a social system has a certain kind of unity which we may say as a functional unity. By the social system here Merton means the total social structure of a society with totality of usages, in which that structure appears and on which it depends for its continued existence.

The functional unity, Merton defines, as a condition to which all parts of the social system work together with harmony or internal consistency. That means without producing any persistent conflicts. He further considers that Radcliffe-Brown describes this notion of functional unity as a hypothesis.

This view of 'functional unity' was first criticized by Malinowski when in his essay "Anthropology" (1939) he wrote that the sociological school exaggerated the social solidarity of primitive man. According to Merton, Malinowski does not remove this dubious assumption (of all items and total social system) but has added another to it. Merton says, on the basis of other writings, that there are highly integrated organisms like nervous system or hormones. The loss of anyone may strongly affect the whole system and will cause death. But there are so many lower organisms much more loosely correlated, where loss of a part causes temporary inconvenience till the regeneration of replacement tissues. This view, he considers, is true when we look at small, highly integrated aboriginal tribes. But when we look at highly differentiated, complex societies which have large realm, it does not. Merton examines this assumption of 'functional unity' by tracing several illustrations from numerous sociological and anthropological writings. After reviewing the utility and difficulty Merton says this unity of the total society cannot be posited in advance of observation. The theoretic framework of functional analysis requires that there be specification of the units for which the given social or cultural item is functional. Such a frame requires that a given item has diverse consequences, some are functional and others are dysfunctional, for individuals, for sub-groups and for more inclusive social structure and culture. In scrutinizing the postulate of functional unity, he finds that we cannot assume full integration of all societies, but we should find a



range of degrees of integration. It is developed by him after examining the role of religion in multi-religious complex societies that functional analysis calls for specification of the social units subserved by the given social functions, recognizing that culture has multiple consequences, some are functional and others, perhaps, dysfunctional.

## **2. Postulate of Universal Functionalism**

According to Merton this postulate holds that all standardized social or cultural forms have positive functions. Merton considers that Malinowski advances this view in its most extreme form, when he writes that ‘the functional view of culture insists that in every type of civilization, every custom, material object, idea or belief fulfills some vital function’. Some other anthropologists have also advocated such view with some variation and they attach functional value for all forms of culture. Someone wrote that no culture forms survive unless they constitute responses which are adjustive or adaptive in some sense.

Merton further asserts that this postulate is of course the product of fierce barren and protracted controversy over survivals. The concept had become important for reconstructing ‘stages of development’ for the evolutionary theorists of non-literate societies. As a matter of criticism of the evolutionary theorists early functionalists over-reacted on the concept of survival and thus asserted on every custom, belief, etc. fulfilling some vital function. Survivals are a poor record of history and thus can be ignored by sociologists of complex societies. Because there are functions and dysfunctions of cultural or social items therefore what remains or survives is the net balance of consequences of those items either for the society as a whole considered as a unit or for sub-groups which are powerful to retain these forms intact.

Thus Merton reviews the second postulate of universal functionalism which asserts the view that all persisting forms of culture are inevitably functional. This review for other considerations which he says must be met by a codified approach to functional analysis. Merton thus suggests that we may not remain limited to discovering functions (positive consequences) and dysfunctions (negative consequences) of the cultural forms or items but must develop methods for

assessing net balance of consequences<sup>8</sup>. If we lack in doing so, perhaps merit of functional analysis will be limited.

### **3. Postulate of Indispensability**

This postulate follows from the functional theory of Malinowski. According to Merton, this third postulate, is most ambiguous of all the three. This has been manifest in the above cited declaration of Malinowski. He quotes Malinowski who said, “in every type of civilization, every custom, material object, idea and belief fulfills some vital function, has some task to accomplish, represents an indispensable part within a working whole”. Thus following this assertion, e.g. religion is the institution (cultural item) which is indispensable in a society. It is because religion plays a vital (unique) and indispensable part in society.

But upon examination Merton says that it is not so much the institution of religion which is regarded as indispensable but rather the functions which it performs. For example, it makes the members of a society to adopt ‘certain ultimate values and ends in common’. These are the ‘values and common ends’ which are necessary and indispensable for a society rather the institution of religion. These must appear to the members as a reality. It is the role of religious beliefs and rituals to supply and reinforce the appearance of reality. Through the worship of the sacred objects and the beings they symbolize, and the codes of behaviour, control over human conduct it is exercised. Thus in the course of this for sustaining itself, religion takes the institutional structure. In this way, the indispensability of religion may be based on the assumption that it is through ‘worship’ and ‘supernatural prescriptions’ alone that necessary minimum ‘control over human conduct’ and ‘integration in terms of sentiments and beliefs’ is achieved.

This postulate contains two related but separable assumptions. First that certain functions are indispensable in the sense that unless they are performed (e.g integration) the society will not persist. This, as Merton says, sets forth a concept of functional pre-requisites, or pre-conditions necessary for society. Second that certain cultural or social forms are indispensable for fulfilling each

of these functions. This involves concept of irreplaceable structures. Considering the complex and differentiated societies the same social item may have multiple functions and the same function may be diversely fulfilled by alternative items. Merton considers that there is a range of variation in the structures which fulfill the functional needs which are to be fulfilled.

Thus after reviewing these possibilities in the complex and differentiated societies, Merton states, in contrast to the assumption of indispensability, that there is then the concept of functional alternatives, or functional equivalence or functional substitutes. In this Merton finds, as stated also earlier, two propositions. One asserts the indispensability of certain functions which gives rise to the concept of functional necessity or functional pre-requisites. The other asserts the indispensability of social institutions, cultural forms. This, after examination, gives rise to the concept of functional alternatives, equivalence or substitutes. It is this analysis where lies Merton's contribution.

#### **17.12 MERTON'S PARADIGM FOR FUNCTIONAL ANALYSIS IN SOCIOLOGY**

We have seen so far that Merton has started from clarifying the etymological meanings and uses of the term, and how the term has been borrowed from biological sciences. He distinguishes among various connotations, how it was used by anthropologists and examined how far their notions were correct and applicable. Merton puts all vocabularies, postulates, concepts, ideological imputations, etc. together. In short, he presents a codification of functional theory in sociology till his times. He presents a list of eleven points which he calls a 'paradigm'. This includes the possibility of further use of functional analysis in understanding contemporary societies. In this, he provides a 'codified guide' for adequate and fruitful functional analysis; leads us directly to the crucial postulates and assumptions underlying functional analysis; and he seeks to sensitize the researcher sociologists not only limit to the narrow scientific implications of various types of functional analysis but also to their political and their ideological implications i.e. it pre-supposes an implicit outlook, and points at which it has bearing an "social engineering" (reformulation of society).

### **1. Item(s) to which Functions are imputed**

The items (social or cultural) to whom functions can be imputed includes an entire range of data. But the requirement is that the object of analysis represent a standardized (i.e. patterned and repetitive) item. Such items are institutional patterns, social roles, processes, cultural patterns, etc. Methodologically, it entails that items must be described 'as fully and as accurately'. In this sense, Merton lists a range of items to which functions can be imputed and suggests method of observation in the empirical situation.

### **2. Subjective dispositions (motives, purposes)**

Merton clarifies, as has been the case with earlier writers, that in functional analysis motivation of individuals in a social system is often and erroneously mixed with the related but different conception of objective consequences of these attitudes, belief and behaviour. In functional analysis, it is the objective consequences which is important rather than the motives, beliefs and psychological dispositions as such.

### **3. Objective Consequences (functions, dysfunctions)**

Merton writes that earlier anthropologists used to confine their observations only to positive consequences of social or cultural items. Secondly, they used to mix up motives with objective category of function. He eliminates this distinction by clarifying the concept of the positive and the negative consequences. He clarifies that there are multiple consequences (functions) and a net balance of consequences.

**Functions** – are those observed consequences which make for the adaptation or adjustment of a given system;

**Dysfunctions** - are those observed consequences which lessen the adaptation or adjustment of the system.

There is also an empirical possibility of consequences which are irrelevant to the system. To such, he calls non-functional consequences. At any instance, an item may have both functions and dysfunctions. This gives rise to a problem of assessing the net balance of the consequences. There is another problem of items when the

subjective aim-in-view (motives) concedes the objective consequences and the other in which they are separate. For clarification of this, he has introduced the twin concept of manifest and latent functions.

**Manifest Functions** - are those observed consequences contributing to adjustment or adaptation of the system which are intended and recognized by the participants in the system.

**Latent Functions**- are those which are neither intended nor recognized. From these clear expositions of Merton, a further logical possibility arises. The positive, consequences (functions) may be manifest and also latent; like wise the negative consequences (dysfunctions) may be manifest and also latent. Thus it gives a logical classification one – manifest functions (positive consequences which are intended and recognized), two – latent functions (which make for the adaptation, but neither intended nor recognized); third – manifest dysfunctions (negative consequences which are intended and recognized); and fourth – latent dysfunctions (which are neither intended or recognized but somewhere from behind lessen the adaptation or adjustment of a given system).

#### **4. Unit(s) Subserved by the Function**

This refers to, as stated earlier, the difficulties coming by confining analysis to functions fulfilled for the society. Items may be functional for some sub-groups or individuals and dysfunctional for others. Therefore, this suggests that we consider a range of units for which the item has designated consequences, e.g. individuals in statuses, subgroups or larger social system.

#### **5. Functional Requirements (needs, pre-requisites)**

According to Merton's analysis, every system – social or cultural – has certain needs, which are to be fulfilled. He calls these as the requirements of a system. If these are not fulfilled, the system may not survive or continue. What are these requirements or needs this has always been debatable. But all agree on “the conditions of survival” of a given system like one of the earlier functionalist Malinowski to include “biological and social needs”. Merton further poses a problem on the types of these needs (e.g universal vs specific) which may come at some stage in conflict.

## **6. Mechanisms through which Functions are fulfilled**

In the light of the above analysis of the concept of function, Merton calls for a 'concrete and detailed' account of the mechanisms which operate to perform a designated function. This refers to social mechanism, e.g. role segmentation, hierarchic ordering of values, social division of labour, etc. This consideration of mechanisms by Merton indicates the social structure of a society – namely structural units. By implication it may be stated that the needs of a society are fulfilled through arrangement of units inherent in it. Merton indicates that sociologists need to discover methodological problems in observing the operation of these mechanisms.

## **7. Functional Alternatives (equivalents, substitutes)**

As Merton condemned the postulate of functional indispensability of social items, in particular social structures, we immediately need to look at functional alternatives or substitutes. This he states, focuses attention on the range of possible variation in the items which can fulfill the functional requirements. It indicates the search for identify what exists and may be inevitable. This requires rigorous experimentation.

## **8. Structural Context (or structural constraint)**

The items in a social structure are not unlimited. That means choice of an item as a substitute of earlier one is limited to the range of variation in the items which can fulfill that designated function. The inter-dependence of elements, says Merton, of a social structure limits the effective change or functional alternatives. This limitation of choice operates in a structural context. This is said by someone as "principle of limited possibilities". Failure to recognize this limitation leads to utopian thought. This fundamental rule has been recognized by theorists of various different streams, whether Marxists or Functionalists.

## **9. Dynamics and Change**

Functionalists have been alleged that they neglect change as they always emphasize on stability, maintenance and integration. Merton, by introducing the concept of dysfunctions and functional alternatives, provides sufficient ground to

understand change within the framework of functional analysis. Thus, he has asserted that only statics is not inherent in the functional theory. Concept of dysfunction – implies stress, strain and tension at structural level – provides an analytical approach to the study of dynamics and change. He poses question about procedures to measure tension, stress and strain as well as the probable directions of social change.

#### **10. Problems of Validation of Functional Analysis**

Merton points out that attention has been paid to the specific points at which assumptions, imputations and observations must be validated. He suggest that not only we observe what we assume, but what we observe on that assumption, (eg. parts of structure) must be real (validated) and appropriate. This needs appropriate and rigorous procedures of analysis which nearly approximate the logic of experimentation. Here he suggests, for validation, possibilities of comparative (cross-cultural and cross-group) analysis. It is through these comparisons we may validate the facts and the analysis.

#### **11. Problem of the Ideological Implications**

Though by arguing on the basis of several evidence, he tried to establish that functional analysis has no intrinsic commitment to an ideological position. But this is not the fact that a particular functional analysis may have an identifiable ideological role. It effects the ideas of the researcher to look at the society and its analysis. His assumptions, concepts limit the range of inferences drawn from the data. He poses the questions, how does one detect the ideological tinge of a functional analysis, to extend an ideology stems from the basic assumptions and is the incidents of these assumptions related to the status and research role of sociologists. He leaves this still problematic.

The above narration summarizes, systematizes, clarifies the various assumptions of functionalism as advanced by Merton. He reformulates the concepts, introduces new application of functional analysis in the social contexts and enhances the reputation of functional analysis as the study and explanation of change is also possible in complex and differentiated societies of twentieth century. He also provides a guide for researchers who use functional analysis.

Basically that follows from his frame work of ‘functions and dysfunctions’ and ‘manifest and latent functions’. He provides a descriptive protocol for observation of the social patterns when to analyze by functional perspective. He gives following set of points for observation which facilitates functional analysis (it may serve as a guide for observation).

- (1) Researcher sociologist, to find the locations of the participants within the social structure – that means all participants are not located alike but they are located differently in the social structure – i.e differential participation of the participating persons.
- (2) Researcher sociologist to consider alternative modes of behaviour, excluded by (over) emphasis on the observed pattern that means attention be given not only to what (apparently seems) occurs but also to what is neglected by virtue of the existing pattern (we become used to a pattern which is frequently or repeatedly occurs but forget or neglect what does not come to forefront clearly).
- (3) Researcher sociologist to observe the emotive (sentimental) and cognitive (knowledge) meanings attached by the participants to that pattern (the way the action takes place in open).
- (4) Researcher sociologist to make a distinction between the motivations for participating in the pattern (how certain person or persons psychologically agree to participate) and the objective behaviour (what is apparent and observable by others) involved in the pattern.
- (5) Researcher sociologist to observe the regularities of behaviour not recognized by participants (themselves) but which are nonetheless associated with the central pattern of behaviour.

In this way, R.K. Merton, as critique of the earlier functionalists, reformulates the functional theory by tracing vocabularies, critically evaluating the assumptions, clarifying the terms and introducing new ones, codifying and providing a guide for sociologist who follow functional analysis in sociology. He incorporates change and process. The most important feature of Merton’s analysis, which sets him apart from traditional functionalists, is his treatment of



integration as problematic and contingent, not as given. He visualizes differing degrees of normative integration from complete consensus to complete dissensus. Of course, the extreme poles are only analytical possibilities, rarely occurring in empirical reality.

Despite all these contributions on certain points, he remains limited. He makes little progress in specifying what “functional pre-requisites” are, that can be served in variety of ways. Neither he gives a definitive statement on this nor does he provide any concrete list of his own. For mechanisms to fulfill these requirements there are arrangements of structure and processes but if these mechanisms are destroyed, then there is no clear cut statement but he only writes ‘the observer is sensitized to the need for detecting compensating mechanisms (if any) which fulfill the necessary function. A full functionalist theory of society would require comparable steps; but though Merton clarifies these, he does not himself fulfill it. Another criticism comes from an Indian philosopher who says logically world may be classified in positive and negative or manifest and latent, what remains, it is an over-simplification of the classification principle. But despite some of such limitations and criticism his contribution to functional theory in sociology remains most acknowledged and recognized.

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#### **17.14 ASK YOURSELF**

1. Explain in detail about the functional postulates given by R. K. Merton?

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2. What is meant by latent and manifest functions?

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3. Describe Merton paradigm for functional analysis in sociology?

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