

SEMESTER II (PG)

CDOE-SOC-001-CC-4110: SOCIAL THINKERS – II

Course Content

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COURSE INTRODUCTION

The aim of this course is to have a broad introduction to the discipline of sociology. It familiarizes the students with the meaning, definition, history of the development of Sociology, its relationship with related disciplines of the social sciences and some of the fundamental concepts and theories of the discipline. There are five Units (Chapters) in this course. **The first Block** which is titled “*Introduction to General Sociology*” deals with the meaning, definition, nature, scope and emergence of Sociology and discusses the relationship of Sociology with other Social Sciences, specifically, with Anthropology, Psychology, History, and Political Science. **Block**

2 which is titled “**Basic Concepts**” deals with explains some of the basic concepts used in Sociology. They comprise “Society, Culture, Institution, Association, Social change, social mobility and social stratification. **Block 3** titled “**Talcott Parson’s theory of social system and pattern variables**”. **Block 4** is titled as “**G.H. Mead and Erving Goffman’s theory**” of interaction self and presentation of self, respectively. **Block 5** titled as “**C Wright Mills and his theory of sociological imagination**”.

Therefore, in order to help the learner to comprehend the text, the Units have been arranged thematically under successive blocks. The Units under each Block have also been structured in order to help the learner. Every Unit begins with the “Structure” of the Unit and is followed by “Objectives”, “Introduction”, main content, Summary (“Let us sum up”), and “References”. In order to make it engaging, exercises are inserted as “check your progress” wherever required. This exercise could also be useful as sample questions in examination point of view. The other important components for better comprehension of the Units are “further reading” and “glossary” which are appended at the end of the course.

COURSE INTRODUCTION

Sociology is a science based on the study of humans and their culture. It is a combination of the organized study of the growth, architecture, relationships and attitudes of systematic groups of human beings. Sociology paves the way for scientists, social thinkers and activists in understanding the society. It also helps them in improving the quality of life of the people living in the society. The basic principles of sociology are as follows:

- The behaviour of individuals in social groups is different than that when they are independent.
- Individuals who are part of a social group follow the rules of that social group.
- These rules are created and implemented socially.
- Some people have more authority in the creation of rules than others.
- Those who follow the rules are awarded and those who break them are penalized.
- The rules of social groups have a scientific base. In a society, culture is responsible for giving an identity to the individual. Culture is imbibed in an individual at the time of his birth and persists till his death.

This book that is **Social Thinkers-II** focuses on the introduction to sociology, basic concepts and some important sociological theories. This book is written in a self-instructional format and is divided into different need based units. Each unit begins with an Introduction to the topic followed by an outline of the Unit Objectives. The content is then presented in a simple and easy-to-understand manner, and is interspersed with Check Your Progress questions to test the reader’s understanding of the topic. A list of Questions and Exercises is also provided at the end of each unit, and includes short-answer as well as long-answer questions. The Summary and Key Terms section are useful tools for students and are meant for effective recapitulation of the text.

COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES.

LO 1: The course seeks to enable the students to have the basic knowledge of Sociology as a discipline and familiarized the learners with its basic concepts.

LO2: The students will gain and comprehend modern sociological thinkers and theoretical perspectives.

LO 3: To understand the basic methodological approaches of the thinkers, through some original texts and their role in building sociological knowledge.

COURSE OUTCOMES

CO 1: Understand the emergence and relevance of modern sociological thinkers.

CO 2: Enable the learner to understand contemporary or advanced theories and theoretical perspectives

CO 3: Understanding the basic methodological approaches of the thinkers, through some original texts and their role in building sociological knowledge.

CO 4: Appreciating the relevance and limits of contemporary theories or theoretical approaches to make sense of social reality.

COURSE ORGANISATION

There are Five units in this course. Each unit is incorporate with a view to enables the student to have comprehensive knowledge in relevant topics. Further, for the convenient purpose each unit is divided into sub-headings. The themes focus on the following:

- Introduction to General Sociology
- Basic Concepts
- Some important Sociological theories.

UNIT 1: SOCIOLOGY: DISCIPLINE AND PERSPECTIVE

1.0. Introduction

1.1. Unit Objectives

1.2. Understanding Sociology

1.2.1. Nature, Scope & Emergence of Sociology as an independent social science.

1.3. Relation of Sociology with Other Social Sciences.

1.4. Summary

1.5. Key terms

1.6. Answer to check your progress

1.7. Further reading

UNIT 2: BASIC CONCEPTS

2.0. Introduction

2.1. Unit Objectives

2.2. Society

2.3. Culture

2.4. Institution

2.5. Association

2.6. Social Change

2.7. Social mobility

2.8. Social stratification

2.9. Summary

2.10.. Key terms

2.11. Answer to check your progress

2.12. Further reading

UNIT 3: TALCOTT PARSONS

3.0. Introduction

3.1. Unit Objectives

3.2. Action systems and Pattern Variables.

3.3. Summary

3.4. Key terms

3.5. Answer to check your progress

3.6. Question and exercises

UNIT 4: G.H. MEAD AND ERVING GOFFMAN

4.0. Introduction

- 4.1. Unit Objectives
- 4.2. Interactional Self
- 4.3. Presentation of Self
- 4.4. Summary
- 4.5. Key terms
- 4.6. Answer to check your progress
- 4.7. Further Reading

UNIT 5: C Wright Mills

- 4.0. Introduction
- 4.1. Unit Objectives
- 4.2. Sociological Imagination
- 4.3. Summary
- 4.4. Key terms
- 4.5. Answer to check your progress
- 4.6. Further Reading

UNIT 1: SOCIOLOGY: DISCIPLINE AND PERSPECTIVE

1.0. Introduction

1.1. Unit Objectives

1.2. Understanding Sociology

1.2.1. Nature, Scope & Emergence of Sociology as an independent social science.

1.3. Relation of Sociology with Other Social Sciences.

1.4. Summary

1.5. Key terms

1.6. Answer to check your progress

1.7. Further reading

1.0. INTRODUCTION

The basic premise of sociology is that human behavior is largely shaped by the groups to which people belong and by the social interaction that takes place within those groups. The main focus of sociology is the group not the individual. The sociologist is mainly interested in the interaction between the people - the ways in which people act towards respond and influence each other. Sociology is characterized by its approach to phenomena (the approach to science) and by its subject matter (human interaction). It is rightly defined as scientific study of human interaction. Sociology is about society, its constituent institutions, their inter relationship and the actors. Sociologists study the patterns in social interactions.

According to **Bogardus** sociology has a long past but only a short history. The earliest attempts at systematic thought regarding social life in the west may be said to have begun with the ancient Greek philosophers Plato and his disciple Aristotle. Plato's Republic is an analysis of the city community in all its aspects and in Aristotle's Ethics and Politics the first major attempt to deal systematically with the law, the society and the state. In 16th century writers like Hobbes and Machiavelli provided more clear distinctions between state and society. 'The Prince' of Machiavelli is an objective discussion of the state that he formulated on the basis of historical data. Sir Thomas Moore who in his book Utopia published in 1515 tried to deal with every day

social problems by means of depicting an ideal social order out what really meant for emulation. Italian writer Vico and French writer Montesquieu contributed towards the scientific investigation of social phenomenon. Vico in his book *The New Science* contended that society was subject to definite laws that can be observed through objective observation and study. Montesquieu in his famous book *The Spirit of Laws* had analyzed the role that external factors especially climate play in the life of human society.

Sociology emerged in the context of twin revolution that is, the Industrial and French Revolution and of course the intellectual movement which brought and raised fresh questions about their society in general. **Auguste Comte** (1798-1857), **Emile Durkheim** (1858-1917), **Herbert Spencer** (1820–1903), **Karl Marx** (1818-1883) and **Max Weber** (1864-1920), etc. has given significant contribution towards the emergence of **Sociology as an independent social science**. All these men were reacting to the crisis brought about in society by the flood of ideas upon which the revolutions were borne. Each searched for the dynamics that would explain the underlying causes of social change and in doing so they were also searching for the basis of social order. Therefore, while considering all such facts it is utmost necessary for us to understand the sociology in more in-depth manner. Therefore, in this chapter we will try to understand the meaning, definition, scope of Sociology along with its relations to other social sciences.

1.1. UNIT OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Explain the meaning and Scope of Sociology.
- Analyze the historical background for the emergence of sociology in 19th Century.
- Can summarize the impact of French and Industrial Revolution in the emergence of sociology as an independent social science.
- Explain the relation of Sociology with Other Social Sciences.

1.2. UNDERSTANDING SOCIOLOGY

Sociology is one of the significant subject to study. As it is significant because it is one of the branch of social science which study the Human Society in systematic and scientific manner. In short, we can say that, Sociology plays a significant role to understand human society their social relationships, social action, interrelation and institutions, etc. in more in-depth manner. Thereby, Sociology is also known as “science of society”. However, the subject matter of Sociology subject is diverse, ranging from crime to religion, from the family to the state, from the divisions of race and social class to the shared beliefs and values of a common culture, and from social stability to radical change in whole societies, etc. Unifying the study of these diverse

subjects of study is purpose of the Sociology “to understanding how human action and consciousness both shape and are shaped by surrounding cultural and social structures” in a very relevance manner.

Etymology

The quest for understanding human society has begun centuries ago by many Philosophers, Scholars, Intellectuals, etc. since time immemorial. People have been thinking like sociologists long before sociology became a separate academic discipline: Plato and Aristotle, Confucius, Khaldun, and Voltaire all set the stage for modern sociology.

The term sociology was first coined in 1780 by the French essayist Emmanuel-Joseph Sieyès (1748–1836) in an unpublished manuscript (Fauré et al. 1999). In 1838, the term was reinvented by Auguste Comte (1798–1857) The word “sociology” was first coined by Auguste Comte in his *The Course in Positive Philosophy* (1838). Where the term “Sociology” was derived from the **Latin** word *socius* (companion) and the **Greek** word *logos* (study of), meaning “the study of companionship.” The reason why we called “Sociology as the Science of society”.

While this is a starting point for the discipline, sociology is actually much more complex. Comte originally studied to be an engineer, but later became a pupil of social philosopher Claude Henri de Rouvroy Comte de Saint-Simon (1760–1825). They both thought that society could be studied using the same scientific methods utilized in natural sciences. Comte also believed in the potential of social scientists to work toward the betterment of society. He held that once scholars identified the laws that governed society, sociologists could address problems such as poor education and poverty (Abercrombie et al. 2000). Comte named the scientific study of social patterns positivism. He described his philosophy in a series of books called *The Course in Positive Philosophy* (1830–1842) and *A General View of Positivism* (1848). He believed that using scientific methods to reveal the laws by which societies and individuals interact would usher in a new “positivist” age of history. While the field and its terminology have grown, sociologists still believe in the positive impact of their work. In simple we can define sociology as the systematic study of society and social interaction. However, it uses many different methods to study a wide range of subject matter and to apply these studies to the real world.

Sociology is a social science that focuses on society, human social behaviour, patterns of social relationships, social interaction, and aspects of culture associated within everyday life. It uses various methods of empirical investigation and critical analysis to develop a body of knowledge about social order and social change. Following definition will enhance your understanding on Sociology as;

DEFINITION: some of the important definitions of Sociology are as follows:

1. Auguste Comte: Sociology is the science of social phenomena 'subject to natural and invariable laws, the discovery of which is the object of investigation'.
2. Max Weber : 'Sociology is a science which attempts the interpretative understanding of social action in order thereby to arrive at a causal explanation of its course and effects.
3. Emile Durkheim: According to Durkheim "Sociology is the study of social facts thereby the study of social institution".
4. Morris Ginsberg: 'In the broadest sense, sociology is the study of human interactions and interrelations, their conditions and consequences.'
5. Henry Fairchild 'Sociology is the study of man and his human environment in their relations to each other.'

1.2.1. NATURE, SCOPE & EMERGENCE OF SOCIOLOGY AS AN INDEPENDENT SOCIAL SCIENCE.

1.2.1.0. NATURE OF SOCIOLOGY

Sociology is a scientific discipline that systematically studies social actions and social events. As a branch of knowledge, it possesses its own distinct characteristics and differs from other sciences in several ways. The main nature of sociology is explained below:

1. Sociology as an Independent Science

Sociology stands as a separate discipline and is not considered a subdivision of other subjects such as philosophy, political science, economic, and history, etc. it has its own methods and area of study.

2. Sociology as a Social Science

It is a social science rather than a physical science. Its primary focus is on human beings, their social behavior, activities, and patterns of social life, etc.

3. Sociology as a Categorical, Not Normative Discipline

Sociology deals with facts and realities that what actually exists rather than what should or ought to exist. It avoids value judgments and aims to remain ethically neutral.

4. Sociology as a Pure Science

The main objective of sociology is to gain knowledge and understanding of society. It does not primarily concern itself with the practical application of this knowledge.

5. Sociology as an Abstract Science

Sociology studies general patterns and relationships within society rather than focusing on specific institutions or individual cases. It deals with abstract concepts like social relationships and structures.

6. Sociology as a Generalizing Science

Instead of examining isolated events, sociology seeks to identify general laws and principles governing social interactions, group structures, and societal organization. It draws broad conclusions from specific observations.

7. Sociology as a General Science

The scope of sociology is wide and not limited to a single aspect of human life. It studies human interactions and activities in a broad and comprehensive manner rather than focusing on specialized areas.

8. Sociology as Both Rational and Empirical

Sociology combines two approaches to knowledge as an **Empirical approach** it based on observation, experience, and evidence and as a **Rational approach** it based on reasoning and logical analysis. Both approaches are essential in sociological research, as facts are collected through observation and then organized and interpreted through reasoning.

Conclusion

From these characteristics, it is evident that sociology is an independent and scientific discipline. It is social, categorical, pure, abstract, general in scope, and relies on both rational thinking and empirical evidence to understand society and human behaviour.

1.2.1.1. SCOPE OF SOCIOLOGY

The scope of sociology is extremely wide ranging one, from the analysis of passing encounter between individuals on the street up to the investigation of global social processes. The discipline covers an extremely broad range that includes every aspect of human social situations; various types of human relationships and forms of social behavior, etc. The major systems or units of interaction that interest sociologists are social groups such as the family or peer groups; social relationships, such as social roles and dyadic relationships, and social organizations such as governments, corporations and school systems to such territorial organizations as communities and schools (Broom and Selzinki, 1973). And According to the British sociologist Morris Ginsberg, the scope of sociology includes a broad study of human interactions, their conditions and consequences. Thus, Sociology can be defined as the study of social life. Sociology comprises a variety of apprehensions and interests. It is aimed at providing classified forms of relationships

within societies, institutions and associations. These relationships pertain to economic, political, moral, religious and social aspects of human life. Although, so far no collective agreement has been reached on the essence of sociology, so far yet it is established that sociology deals with the study of interaction systems, which shape social institutions, the state and the non-native order. Therefore, in sociology, we study about social organization, social structure, institutions and culture

Sociology was defined differently by two schools of thought, pertaining to its range and theme:

- (i) Formal school or The Specialistic School of thought
- (ii) Synthetic school or The Generalistic School of thought

A). Formal school

The formal school defined sociology as a social science that has definite characteristics. This school was advocated by eminent sociologists including George Simmel, Ferdinand Tonnies, Alfred Vierkandt and Leopold Von Wiese. On the other hand, the synthetic school with well-known sociologists, namely, Durkheim, Hobhouse and Sorok attempted to bring together a type of coordination among all social sciences. The formal school supported the idea of giving sociology a suitable subject matter to make it a distinct discipline. It stressed on the study of form so social relationships and considered sociology as independent. Simmel defined sociology as a specific social science that describes, organizes, analyses and visually explains the forms of social relationships. To put it in a different way, social interactions should be classified into various form, types and analysed. Simmel argued that social interactions have various forms. He conducted researches on formal relationships such as cooperation, competition, sub and superordinate relationships, and so on. He said, 'however diverse the interests are that give rise to these associations, the forms in which the interests are realized may yet be identical.' His main emphasis was to conceptualize these forms from human relationships which are not affected by different scenarios. Henceforth, there opinion various scholars are given below to understand its scope in more better manner;

1.Simmel's view:

According to Simmel, the distinction between Sociology and other special sciences is that it deals with the same topics as they from a different angle from the angle of different modes of social relationships. Social relationships, such as competition, subordination, division of labour etc. are exemplified in different spheres of social life such as economic, the political and even the religious, moral or artistic but the business of Sociology is to disentangle these forms of social relationships and to study them in abstraction. Thus, according to Simmel, Sociology is a specific social science which describes, classifies, analyses and delineates the forms of social relationships.

Max Weber's view:

Max Weber also makes out a definite field for Sociology. According to him, the aim of Sociology is to interpretor understand social behaviour. But social behaviour does not cover the whole field of human relations. Indeed no tall human inter-actions are social. For instance, a collision between two cyclists is in itself merely a natural phenomenon, but their efforts to avoid each other or the language they use after the event constitute true social behaviour. Sociology is thus, according to him, concerned with the analysis and classification of types of social relationships.

Von Wiese's view:

According to Von Wiese, the scope of Sociology is the study of forms of socialrelationships. He has divided these social relationships into many kinds.

Vierkandt's view:

He defined Sociology is 'the study of the ultimate form of mental and psychic relationship which link one to another'. He gives important to emotional relationship.

Tonnie's view:

He believes Sociology to be pure science. He said that Sociology is pure and independent. He divided society into two groups 1. Society and 2. Community. He said society is urban society whereas community is rural society and in Sociological terms he called it as Gescelschaft and Gescelschaft.

Criticism:

- 1) P.A. Sorokin says that it isn't necessary to say it is a science and not correct to study scientifically.
- 2) What is Society? There are difference aspects in society and all these combined make society. These different social sciences are studied in different ways or by other social sciences. These social sciences are specialized in studying these aspects.
- 3) George Simmel separated forms from content but this too is not correct. It may be correct in other sciences such as the physical sciences. If the form change the content also changes. There is a difference in the ideasofthe supporters of this group or school.

B). Synthetic school:

The school of thought believes that sociology should study society as a whole and not confine itself to the study of only limited social problems. The syntheticschool wants to make sociology a synthesis of the social sciences or a generalscience, Durkheim, Hob-house and Sorokin subscribe to this view.

Durkheim's view:

"Sociology is a science of collective representation". He believes in the collection of people in society. When there is collection there must be wider scope for collective representation there must be majority of people hence it will be social facts. Since it has a social fact they are instrumental in guiding and controlling the behavior of society. (Those collective symbols accepted by the majority and what they say become social facts. These will help). These social facts will later become a part of society. When we study a collective representation the whole picture of society comes before us.

Sorokin's view:

"Sociology is the generalizing science". He is the proponent of systematic study. In his book 'contemporary sociology' he observes that social is a general science. It studies the general characteristics of the society of the relationship of social and non-social phenomena.

Hobhouse's view:

"Social is the synthesis of various social sciences". He means social is a general study which studies society as a whole from all aspects i.e. the combination of all social sciences – Sociologist must pursue his study from a particular part of society (social friend). When he studies thus he must interconnect his result with the results arrived from other social sciences and then he should interpret society as a whole.

Ginsberg's view:

Ginsberg has summed up the chief functions of sociology as follows. Firstly, Sociology seeks to provide a classification of types and forms of social relationships especially of those which have come to be defined institutions and associations. Secondly, it tries to determine the relation between different parts of social life, for example, the economic and political, the moral and the religious, the moral and the legal, the intellectual and the social elements. Thirdly, it endeavours to disentangle the fundamental conditions of social change and persistence and to discover sociological principles governing social life.

CONCLUSION:

Thus, the scope of Sociology is very wide. It is a general science but it is also a special science. As a matter of fact, the subject matter of all social sciences is society. What distinguishes them from one another is their viewpoint. Thus economics studies society from an economic viewpoint; political science studies it from political viewpoint while history is a study of society from a historical point of view. Sociology alone studies social relationships and society itself. MacIver correctly remarks, what distinguishes each from each is the

selective interest. Green also remarks, "The focus of attention upon relationships makes Sociology a distinctive field, however closely allied to certain others it may be." Sociology studies all the various aspects of society such as social traditions, social processes, social morphology, social control, social pathology, effect of extra-social elements upon social relationships etc. Actually, it is neither possible nor essential to delimit the scope of sociology because, this would be, like "A brave attempt to confine an enormous mass of slippery material into a relatively simple system of pigeon holes." However, Currently, sociology has got quite several specific sub- divisions or fields of specialization in it: some of these include the following: criminology; demography; human ecology; political sociology; medical sociology; sociology of the family; sociology of sports; sociology of development; social psychology; socio- linguistics; sociology of education; sociology of religion; sociology of knowledge; sociology of art; sociology of science and technology; sociology of law; urban sociology; rural sociology; economic sociology; and industrial sociology, etc.

1.2.1.2. EMERGENCE OF SOCIOLOGY AS AN INDEPENDENT SOCIAL SCIENCE

Sociology as a social sciences emerged from a tradition of reflection of social phenomena; interest in the nature of human social behavior and society has probably always existed; however, most people in most past societies saw their culture as a fixed and god-given entity. This view gradually was replaced by more rational explanations beginning from the 17th century especially in Western Europe (Rosenberg, 1987). The sociological issues, questions and problems had been raised and discussed by the forerunners starting from the ancient Greek and Roman philosophers' and Hebrew prophets' times.

Sociology as an academic science was thus born in 19th century (its formal establishment year being 1837) in Great Britain and Western Europe, especially in France and Germany, and it greatly advanced through out 19th and 20th centuries. The development of sociology and its current contexts have to be grasped in the contexts of the major changes that have created the modern world (Giddens, 1986). The major conditions, societal changes, upheavals and social ferments that gave rise to the emergence and development of sociology as an academic science include the Industrial Revolution which began in Great Britain, the French Political Revolution of 1789, the Enlightenment and advances in natural sciences and technology. These revolutions had brought about significant societal changes and disorders in the way society lived in the aforementioned countries. Since sociology was born amidst the great socio-political and economic and technological changes of the western world, it is said to be the science of modern society.

The pioneering sociologists were very much concerned about the great changes that were taking place and they felt that the exciting sciences could not help understand, explain, analyze and interpret the fundamental laws that govern the social phenomena. Thus sociology was born out of these revolutionary contexts.

The founders or the pioneering sociologists are the following;

1. Auguste Comte, French Social Philosopher (1798- 1857)
2. Karl Marx (German, 1818-1883)
3. Herbert Spencer, British Social Philosopher,(1820-1903).
4. Emile Durkheim, French Sociologist, (1858-1917)
5. Max Weber, German Sociologist (1864-1920)

❖ Impact of French and Industrial Revolution

A). French Revolution

The French Revolution of 1789 marked a turning point in the history of human struggle for 'liberty, fraternity and equality' had contributed lots to the emergence of Sociology as an independent Social Science. It put an end to the age of feudalism and ushered in a new order of society. An important contribution of this revolution was the far reaching changes that it brought, not only French society, but in societies throughout Europe. Even distant countries in other continents such as, India, were influenced by the ideas generated during this revolution. Ideas like liberty, fraternity and equality, which now form a part of the preamble to the Constitution of India, owe their origin to the French Revolution.

France, like other European countries during the eighteenth century, had entered the age of reason and rationalism. Major philosophers, whose ideas influenced the French people, were rationalists who believed that 'all true things could be proved by reason'. Some of these thinkers were, Montesquieu (1689-1755), Locke (1632-1704), Voltaire(1694-1778), and Rousseau (1712-1778).The ferment created by these ideas along with the prevailing social conditions in the French society led to the French Revolution which marked an end of despotic monarchy. It changed the political structure of European society and replaced the age of feudalism by heralding the arrival of liberal democracy.

The long series of political revolutions that were ushered in by the French Revolution in 1789 and carried over through the nineteenth century was the most immediate factor in the rise of sociological theorizing. The impact of these revolutions on many societies was enormous, and led to many positive and negative changes. These writers were particularly disturbed by the resulting chaos and disorder, especially in France and wanted to restore order in the society. The more rational thinkers recognized that social change had made such a return impossible. Thus they sought instead to find new bases of order in societies that had been overturned by

the political revolutions of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This interest in the issue of social order was one of the major concerns of classical sociological theorists, especially Comte, Durkheim, and Parsons, etc. which contributed immensely for the growth of Sociology as a scientific discipline.

B). Industrial Revolution

Another development of the late 18th and early 19th century, which also greatly shaped up the context for Sociology to emerge was the Industrial Revolution. The early sociologists were greatly disturbed by the changes taking place in the society with the onset of industrialisation, which, with its massive rural to urban migration changed patterns of living, hardened an exploitative class structure all such themes which rose questions fundamental to the development of many sociological theories like Karl Marx's critique to Capitalism.

The Industrial Revolution was not a single event but refers to a set of interrelated developments that led to the transformation of the western world from a largely agrarian system to an overwhelmingly industrial one. It began around 1760 A.D. in England and brought about great changes in the social and economic life of the people, initially in England, and later spread to other countries of Europe. In Europe, especially England, the discovery of new territories, explorations, growth of trade and commerce and the consequent growth of towns brought about an increase in demand for goods. Within this system, a few profited greatly while the majority worked long hours and for a paltry amount of money.

During Industrial Revolution, new tools and techniques were invented, which could produce goods on a large-scale. Spinning Jenny, invented in 1767 by James Hargreaves, led to speeding up of production activity. Arkwright in 1769, invented another tool, called Arkwright's Water Fame which was so large that it could not be kept in one's home and a special building was required to set it up. On account of this, it is often said that the factory system was introduced. This led to a change in economy from a feudal to a capitalist system of production. Subsequently, a new class of capitalists emerged who controlled this new system of production. Due to this revolution society moved from the old age of handmade goods to the new age of machine-made goods. This shift heralded the emergence of Industrial Revolution.

Impact of the Industrial Revolution on Society With the change in the economy, several changes in the society followed. As capitalism became more and more complex, the developments of banks, insurance companies, and finance corporations took place. New class of industrial workers, managers, capitalists emerged. The peasants in the new industrial society

found themselves with thousands of other people like themselves, winding cotton in a textile mill. Instead of the open and bright countryside, they were now living in dirt and squalor.

With the increase in production, population started increasing. Rise of population accompanied by massive rural to urban migration led to urbanisation. The industrial cities grew rapidly. These industrial cities were marked by huge socioeconomic disparities.

These changes concerned both conservative and radical thinkers. The conservatives feared that such conditions would lead to chaos and disorder, while radicals like Friedrich Engels felt that the factory workers would initiate the working class revolution leading to social transformation. Though the concerns were very different from one another, yet social thinkers of that time were united in the impact the Industrial Revolution would possibly cause. They also agreed upon the importance of the new working class.

Thus, important themes of the Industrial Revolution, which concerned the early sociologists were the condition of the labour, transformation of property, urbanization and technology, etc which play significant role in the emergence of Sociology as an independent Social Science.

Sociology as science employs perspectives or theories to understand, explain, analyze and interpret social phenomena. To interpret social facts, they must be subjected to a theoretical framework. A theory may be defined as a general statement about how some parts of the world fit together and how they work (Macdonald, 1997).

The major conditions, societal changes, upheavals and social ferments that gave rise to the emergence and development of sociology as an academic science include the **Industrial Revolution** which began in Great Britain, the French Political Revolution of 1789, the **Enlightenment** and advances in natural sciences and technology. These revolutions had brought about significant societal changes and disorders in the way society lived in the aforementioned countries. Since sociology was born amidst the great socio-political and economic and technological changes of the western world, it is said to be the science of modern society. Let's discuss twin revolutions which contributed to the emergence of Sociology as an independent Social Science in the below;

The pioneering sociologists were very much concerned about the great changes that were taking place and they felt that the existing sciences could not help understand, explain, analyze and

interpret the fundamental laws that govern the social phenomena. Thus sociology was born out of these revolutionary contexts.

1.3. RELATION OF SOCIOLOGY WITH OTHER SOCIAL SCIENCES.

Sociology occupies an important position among the disciplines, usually called the social sciences. These include sociology, anthropology, psychology, economics, political science, history and human geography. These disciplines are sometimes also referred to as behavioral sciences, as they study the principles governing human social behavior.

How is sociology related to other sciences? What are the similarities and differences? These are important questions. Sociology is similar with all other sciences in that it employs the scientific methods and its major aim is production of scientific knowledge. Sociology is related to other social and behavioral sciences in that all of them have more or less similar subject matter; they all in one way or another study society, human culture, social phenomena; and aim at discovering the laws that govern the social universe.

1.3.1. Relation of Sociology with Anthropology

Sociology and social anthropology are closely related in many aspects. Sometimes, it is rather difficult to differentiate sociology from social anthropology in some areas of enquiry and methodology. There are also certain differences that can also be observed between the two subjects in terms of the areas and thrust of enquiry, methodology, practice and tradition.

Sociology is the youngest of the social sciences. It is also one of the fastest growing academic disciplines. The word 'sociology' is derived from the Latin word – 'socius' ('companion' or 'associate') and the Greek word 'logie'/ 'logos'('knowledge'). The term 'sociology' was coined by Auguste Comte in 1838. Sociology is a scientific study of human society which tries to explain the contexts of social phenomena. It emphasizes on the collective aspects of human behaviour.

Whereas, Anthropology is a general science like sociology. The word Anthropology is derived from two Greek words —Anthropology meaning 'man' and logos meaning 'study'. Thus, the etymological meaning of 'Anthropology' is the study of man. Precisely, it is defined by Kroeber as 'the science of man and his works and behaviour'. Anthropology is "concerned not with particular man but with man in groups, with races and peoples and their happenings and doings".

Anthropology seems to be the broadest of all the social sciences. It studies man both as a member of the animal kingdom and as a member of the human society. It studies the biological as well as the cultural developments

of man. Anthropology has a wide field of study. Kroeber mentions two broad divisions of anthropology: (i) Organic or Physical Anthropology and (ii) the Socio-cultural Anthropology.

Similarities:

1. The relation between Sociology and Anthropology is widely recognised today. Anthropologist Kroeber pointed out that the two sciences are twin sisters.
2. According to Hoebel, "Sociology and Social Anthropology are, in their broadest sense one and the same". Evans Pritchard considers social anthropology a branch of sociology. Sociology is greatly benefited by anthropological studies.
3. Sociologists have to depend upon anthropologists to understand the present-day social phenomena from our knowledge of the past which is often provided by anthropology. The studies made by famous anthropologists like Radcliffe Brown, B. Malinowski, Ralph Linton, Lowie, Raymond Firth, Margaret Mead, Evans Pritchard and others, have been proved to be valuable in sociology.
4. Sociological topics such as the origin of family, the beginning of marriage, private property, the genesis of religion, etc., can better be understood in the light of anthropological knowledge. The anthropological studies have shown that there is no correlation between anatomical characteristics and mental superiority. The notion of racial superiority has been disproved by anthropology.
5. Further, sociology has borrowed many concepts like cultural area, culture traits, interdependent traits, cultural lag, culture patterns, culture configuration etc., from socio-cultural anthropology.
6. The knowledge of anthropology, physical as well as socio-cultural, is necessary for a sociologist. An understanding of society can be gained by comparing various cultures, particularly, the modern with the primitive.
7. Anthropology as a discipline is so closely related to sociology that the two are frequently indistinguishable. Both of them are fast growing. The socio-cultural anthropologists today are also making a study of the present peoples and their societies. In a number of universities anthropology and sociology are administratively organised into one department.

The conclusions drawn by sociologists have also helped the anthropologists in their studies. For example, anthropologists like Morgan and his followers have come to the conclusion regarding the existence of primitive communism from the conception of private property in our moder

Differences

1 Sociology and social anthropology are related but different fields with dissimilar origins. While sociology has its roots in philosophy and history, anthropology began as a study of physical measurements of humans. However, the two subjects have developed hand-in-hand, especially when it comes to concepts and scientific methods.

2 Social anthropologists generally study small societies that are often considered primitive, such as in the Pacific Islands. They tend to live in the particular community they are studying, witnessing their daily activities and almost becoming a part of the community themselves.

Sociologists, on the other hand, study facets of a society, such as family or social mobility, and their organization and processes. A sociologist uses methods that are loaded with values, therefore, their conclusions are lined with ethical considerations.

3. Perhaps, the biggest difference between sociology and social anthropology is in their method of research. A social anthropologist uses qualitative methods to collect information, usually by immersing oneself into the society that is being studied. Sociologists generally collect quantitative data based on which they make their conclusions. However, not specific lines drawn with regards to its methodological perspective between the both disciplines.

4. Sociologists study, “small” as well as vast societies. It studies dynamic aspects society and processes. Anthropology, on the other hand, studies small society culture, which are relatively static in nature. They study tribal communities like Na Gonds and Bhils etc. which are small self-contained groups of communities. However, certain continuum or overlaps practices could be found between both the disciplines at certain level.

1.3.2. Relation of Sociology with Psychology

Psychology:

Psychology is an applied and academic study of perception, behavior, and mechanisms. It works on human analysis and can be used on animals and intelligent systems. It is a scientific study of the mind, thinking, behavior and personality. The aim is to seek to understand the individual's behavior and interpretation and work to solve its problems. (for sociology go the page where relationship between sociology and political science have been mentioned).

Similarities

1. The basic point of similarity between the two is that both deal with human beings.

2. It has been argued that many sociological explanations could be made firmly established through psychological explanations i.e. human behavior can be explained clearly in the social context.
3. Social psychology serves as a bridge between psychology and sociology.
4. Social psychology helps to face social problems.
5. Social psychology is a branch of general psychology. It is concerned with studying the social behavior of individuals in their social situations, i.e. the scope and social system, in which the individual lives, and the extent of his influence on thinking, behavior, feelings, and patterns of interaction with all external stimuli.
6. Psychology is the study of mind. It leads with the psychological process of human like thinking, learning and remembering. Modern psychologists also studies motivation, emotion and feelings of a person. Sociology and social psychology are inter-related in using such terms.
7. Sociology studies the socialization of man and the psychological factors responsible for personality development. It deals that how a person behaves in society, learn and adopt symbols from others. All these things are measured in psychology, which gives a definite shape to social structure. Sociology is a special aid to psychology while psychology is also a special aid to sociology.
8. Social psychology is concerned with the study to understand the psychological processes, psychological ways in which they interact with social influences and variables, and psychological extent in which they contribute to the development and formation of the individual personality.
9. Social psychology also examines the situations of individuals and their social and behavioral patterns through experience and observation in the personality and social framework.
10. The importance of social psychology appears in all the interactive aspects of the individual's social life and all the environments in which he coexists. It can affect the individual's interactions and character-building and highlight the importance of social psychology directly in everyday life situations; national and international issues experienced by people in the form of war, slavery, freedom, and security.
11. Social psychology also plays an important role in spreading the highest human ideals among Individuals within a society.
12. Despite the differences between sociology and psychology, there are commonalities between them. Psychology examines the behavior of the individual, the experience conducted

by the individual with the surrounding social environment, and examines the individual through attention to the characteristics and processes that grow in human, and how to do his functions, While sociology is concerned with the experience and social behavior that is produced through things, work, and social organizations, and works to develop them, and the psychological state is reflected on the social side. There is a direct relationship between the two parties, and also the community and culture, both of them determine how the individual thinks, how he behaves, and how he expresses himself. People living in cities differ from those living in villages. Social factors affect the personality of the individual.

Thus, above mentioned shown that there is a close relationship between psychology and sociology. Hence social, and psychological states and human lifestyle are interrelated.

Differences

1). It is the science that is based on the study of all aspects of behavior in a scientific way, it includes all forms of behavioral responses; kinetic and verbal, which appear on the individual during the interaction with the environment, in addition to the study of emotional activity, sensory experience, unconscious, mental activity and mental processes such as thinking, perception, remembering, and others. Whereas Sociology more focus on Social aspects.

2). Sociology is the science that studies human interaction primarily, it may affect the interpersonal relationships in the social environment, it influences trends, actions, as well as studying the social system in which all forms of human relations exist, In addition to understanding and studying the social phenomena in human society and all social patterns, and the relationship of man to society and culture. on the other hand Psychology more focus on psychological perspective.

3). Psychology and sociology are two important branches of the humanities, and although these two fields are intertwined by the overlap of human sciences in general, each of them follows different principles and laws, and the difference and similarity between the two branches is apparent through the issues dealt with by each In particular when studying the specific axes of them carefully, when comparing their definitions, the topics they discuss, the goals they aim at, and the historical context of their origin.

4). It is difficult in sociology due to the complex nature of the problem sociologists' deal with. So they often use survey, etc to investigate the matter. In spite, both have the differences, psychology study individuals while sociology is interrelated in society and group life.

Sociologists study society from the viewpoint of communities while psychologists study it from psychological factors

Conclusion

Regardless of the apparent differences between the two sciences, they meet in the interests of many similar topics such as studying incidents and suicidal thoughts, for example, to identify the causes, motives, and objectives of this behavior. The social attitude in which behavior occurs is interested in the study of the group because it affects the behavior of individuals. Several branches of psychological studies concerned with the study of individual personality affected by environmental events.

1.3.3. Relation of Sociology with History

Sociology and History are closely and intimately related to each other. Sociology cannot be separated from History and History cannot be isolated from sociology. That is why Professor G.E. Howard remarked “History is the past Sociology and Sociology is the present History”, John Seely says that” History without Sociology has no fruit, Sociology without History has no root”.

Herodotus (484 BC– 425 BC), a Greek historian, is often considered as the “father of history”. And The foundations of modern-day sociology were laid through the works of Auguste Comte (January 19th, 1798 – September 5 1857).

History is mainly concerned with past events. It is systematic record of the story of mankind. History presents a chronological account of past events of the human society. It is the social science, which deals with past events and studies the past social, political and economic aspects of the country, According to Gettle “History is the record of the past events and movements, their causes and inter-relations”. It includes a survey of conditions, or developments in economic, religious and social affairs as well as the study of states, their growth and organization and their relation with one another.

Similarities

1. Both Sociology and History depend upon each other and can influence one another. Sociology depends upon History in order to study past events and situations. Say for example, if Sociology would like to study about family, marriage, religion, etc. it has to studies or depend upon the past or historical backgrounds of family, marriage and religion, etc. which directly or indirectly reflect the historical support to understand the said topics. As present knowledge could be more worthwhile if it’s take historical support or sources.

2. History of cultures and institutions is helpful in the understanding of sociology and on the collections of materials. In order to understand the past society and activities, we have to take the help of History.

3. Sociology concerned with the study of the historical development of human society. It studies ancient customs, modes of living, various stages of life and past social institutions through the historical analysis. This information about the past is of great importance to sociologists. For instance, if a sociologist has to study family and marriage as social institutions he has to study their historical developments also. Owing to this reason, Arnold Toynbee's book "A Study of History" and Spengler's book "Decline of the West" are very valuable of the study of sociology.

4. In the same way, Sociology provides social background of the study of History. History is now being studied from the sociological viewpoint. History supplies facts, which are interpreted and coordinated by the sociologists. The historians need social background for writing and analyzing history and this is provided by the sociologists. The study of History would be meaningless without the appreciation of sociological significance. History becomes meaningful in the social content.

Difference between Sociology and History:

The two social sciences History and Sociology are different. The points of difference between the two may be noted.

1. Sociology is interested in the study of the present social phenomena with all their complexities. But History deals with the past events of man. It is silent regarding the present.
2. Sociology is relatively a young social science. It has very short history of its own. It is not even two centuries old. But history is an age-old social science. It has a long story of 2000 years or even more.
3. Sociology is an analytical science. But history is a descriptive science.
4. Sociology is abstract in nature. It studies mostly regular, the recurrent and the universal. For example, the sociologist does not study all the wars or battles Waged by the mankind. But History is concrete. The historian is interested in the unique, the particular and the individual. For example, the historian studies all the wars waged by mankind in the past-the wars, the world wars, the Indo-Pak war, etc. For him each war is unique and significant.

5. Sociology is a generalizing science. Sociology seeks to establish generalizations after a careful study of the social phenomena. But History is an individualizing science. History rarely makes generalizations. It seeks to establish the sequence in which events occurred.

6. Sociology follows the sociological approach. It studies human events from the sociological point of view, i.e., from the viewpoint of social relationship involved. But History studies human events in accordance with the time and order. Its approach is historical.

Conclusion

Sociology and History are closely related to each other. It is said that “History without Sociology has no fruit, while Sociology without History has no root”.

Yet for all their closeness, both the branches of social science are distinct from one another. Sociology can be defined as a general science of human society as it uses various methods of empirical investigation and critical analysis to develop a body of knowledge. History includes the academic discipline to analyze a sequence of past events, investigate the patterns of cause and effect that are related to them. Hence, both are supplement and complement to each others.

1.3.1. Relation of Sociology with Political Science

Similarities

1. Sociology and political science are so closely and deeply related to each other that one becomes meaningless without the other. According to Morris Ginsberg “Historically, Sociology has its main roots in politics and philosophy of history”. The state, which is the center of political science in its early stage, was more of a social than political institution.
2. Sociology is the fundamental social science, which studies man’s social life as a whole and attempts to discover the facts and the laws of life as a whole which include Political life. Political science, on the other hand, is concerned with the political life of a man, which is one part of his total life.
3. Sociology is the science of society where as the political science is mainly concerned with the state and government which (State&Govt) are also parts of Society. These two social sciences are very common in certain spheres.
4. Political Sociology is a branch of sociology, which deals with the principles of organization and government of human society. The subject matter of political science thus comes within the field of sociology.

5. Sociology depends very much on political science in every respect. The state and governments make laws for the welfare of the society; the government removes social evils such as poverty, unemployment, dowry and so on from the society. Social institutions and social organizations are regulated by the state and government. Sociology studies various aspects of political activities through the help of political science. The government can bring about changes in the society with the help of laws. In the same way, political science depends upon sociology and sociology provides material to political science that is the political life of the people. Therefore, some sociologists regard political science as a special branch of sociology, it can be said that without sociological background the study of political science is quite impossible.
6. Political science deals with the social group organized under the sovereignty of the state. The forms of government, the nature of governmental organs, the laws and sphere of the state activity are chiefly determined by the social processes. The laws which are formed by the government are based on the social customs, traditions, mores, norms, etc. of the society. Most of the changes which have been taken place in the political theory, during the past times have been possible due to sociology. For understanding of political problems, some knowledge about sociology is very essential because all political problems are mainly corrected with a social aspect. In this connection F.H. Gidding says “To teach the theory of the state to men who have not learn the first principle of sociology is like teaching astronomy or thermodynamics to men who have not learnt Newton’s laws of Motion”.

Differences between Sociology and Political Science:

In-spite of the above relationship, both sociology and political science are however different from each other in certain respects,

1. Sociology is the science of political science; on the other hand, it is the science of state and government. Sociology studies society as a whole and man as a social being where as political science deals with a particular aspect of society, which is regarded as a politically organized unit. Therefore, political science is a more specialized science than sociology.
2. Sociology has wider scope than that of political science. Sociology deals with social, political, economic, cultural and other aspects of society and studies will be the social institutions such as family, marriage, religion, kinship, caste and so on. But political science deals with political aspect and studies a specific political institution like state

and government only. Thus, sociology is regarded as a general science while political science is viewed as a specialized social science.

3. Sociology studies forms of associations and institutions where as political science deals with the state and government which are known as specific forms of association. That is why professor Garner remarks “Political science is concerned with only human form association such as state, sociology deals with all forms of association.”

4. Sociology studies all kinds of social relationship in a general way. But political science studies only the political aspect of social relationship in a particular way.

5. Sociology studies both organized and disorganized societies. But political science studies only the politically organized societies.

6. Sociology deals with both formal as well as informal relations of the society, which are based on customs, traditions, folkways, mores, norms etc. But political science deals only with formal relations based on laws and order of the state.

7. Sociology is the study of all means of social control. Political science, on the other hand, is the study of only government-recognized means of control.

Conclusion

Thus, both sociology and political science depends upon each other. Both are inter-related and inter-dependent. Truly, it can be said that society is the mirror of politics of the country. According to G.E.G. Catlin, sociology and political science are the two faces of the same figure. In the opinion of EG. Wilson “It must be admitted of course, that it is often difficult to determine, whether a particular writer should be considered as sociologists or political theorist or philosopher.

However, sociology differs from other social sciences in terms of its focus of study, approach of study, and the method of study. The closest discipline to sociology is social anthropology. The two share concepts, theories and methods, and have similar historical background. However, they are different in that sociology is primarily interested in the problems of modern society, whereas anthropology is primarily interested in the problem of traditional, non-western society. (It should be noted here that this conventional distinction between the two is now disappearing.) Further, sociology focuses mainly on quantitative techniques where as anthropology on qualitative research techniques. Perhaps, the methods of research are more important

in differentiating the two. Anthropology's heavy focus on qualitative method and sociology's on quantification are still persistent natures of the two disciplines. Further, one point of difference worth mentioning is that sociology is narrower in scope than anthropology, which has four sub fields; and anthropologists tend to stay in the field for long period (several months to few years) while sociologists prefer brief stay (weeks to few months).

1.4. SUMMARY

The term *sociology* is a combination of two words, *socius* and *logos*, which mean respectively *society* and *study*. Thus, a simple etymological definition of sociology is that it is the science of society. Sociology is a social or behavioral science that originated in the 19th century in Western Europe; its main concern is discovering the basic laws and principles that govern human social life, the social world, the working and development of society and its institutions. It grew out of the great revolutionary contexts, with great concern to address the social changes, disorders and problems of the modern world. Micro-sociology studies the *micro* aspects of human society, that is the social processes and phenomena taking place at small scale levels; macro-sociology studies the *macro* aspects, that is, the overall structure, functioning, change, development and processes of social phenomena at large-scale levels. The six major field of study in sociology are social organization and social theory, social change, social problems, social processes, social groups, and social control. Learning sociology provides us with *sociological imagination*, an illuminating way of understanding the forces and factors that affect our lives as individuals, groups, communities and nations. Sociology provides us with much practical benefit and it contributes greatly to the solutions for contemporary societal problems. Research is very important in sociology. Although some challenge its scientific status, it uses the scientific method to produce, store and disseminate scientific knowledge on society and social phenomena. A typical sociological research may involve seven steps, and each step is very important and has to be carefully followed to do standard and quality research.

Sociology is not an island; it is interdependent with other sciences; and as to its subject matter it is more or less similar with the other social or behavioral sciences such as anthropology, social psychology, political science, economics, and human geography. However, as to its methods, focus, unit of analysis, and approaches, it is

different. The closest discipline to sociology is social anthropology; they share similar historical development, concepts, theories, and approaches; although the former focuses on modern societies and quantitative research and the latter focuses on traditional societies and qualitative research techniques.

1.5. KEY TERMS

Sociology: Sociology is the study of human social relationships, Social process and social institutions, etc. Therefore, Sociology is considered as a 'Science of Society'.

French Industrial Revolution: The French Revolution was a period of radical political and societal change in France that began with the Estates General of 1789 and ended with the formation of the French Consulate in November 1799. Its ideas of *Liberty, Equality and Fraternity* are considered as fundamental principles.

French Industrial Revolution: The Industrial Revolution was the transition to new manufacturing processes in Britain, continental Europe in the period from between 1760 to 1820 and 1840. This transition included going from hand production methods to machines, new chemical manufacturing and iron production processes, steam power, water power, the development of machine tools and the rise of the mechanized factory system.

Anthropology: The term *anthropology* has derived of Greek word '*anthrōpos*', meaning 'human being' and a latin *-logia*, means "study". Therefore, Anthropology is the study of human beings and their ancestors through time and space and in relation to physical character, environmental and social relations, and culture.

Psychology: the scientific study of the human mind and its functions, especially those affecting behaviour in a given context.

History: **History** is the study of past events, particularly in human affairs. In other words, the whole series of past events connected with a particular person or thing.

Political Science: Political Science is the branch of knowledge that deals with the state and systems of government; the scientific analysis of political activity and behaviour.

1.6. ANSWER TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check your progress;

1. what do you mean by Sociology?
2. Give a critical analysis on the nature of Sociology.
3. Critically analyse the scope of sociology.
4. write an essay on the emergence of Sociology as an independent Social Science.
5. Discuss the Relationship of Sociology with Anthropology.
6. Discuss the Relationship of Sociology with Psychology.
7. Analyse the Relationship of Sociology with History.
8. write short note on;
 - 8.1. Relation of Sociology with Political Science.
 - 8.2. Impact of French and Industrial Revolution on the emergence of Sociology.

1.7. FURTHER READING

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UNIT 2: BASIC CONCEPTS

2.0. Introduction

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2.0. INTRODUCTION

Sociology is the study of human society. But such a simple initial definition like Society, culture, Institution, Association, Social change, Social mobility and social stratification, etc. poses the question, ‘What is human society?’ As stated before, sociology has always studied societies in a systematic and scientific manner. Here society refers more specifically to ‘human society’. This unit looks at society, culture, institutions, Association, social change, social mobility and social stratification as units of society. It highlights the relationship between society, institutions and organisations. It further examines in details what is meant by institutions, organisations and organisational behaviour. It also captures the various sociological perspectives on the idea of institutions and organisations, and their relationship with the society. Society is made up of individuals and collectives and a sum total of all the relationships that exist between them. Society, however, needs to order itself through organising its various constituents. One of the ways in which society orders itself is through institutions and organisations. Institutions and organisations provide the society a fair amount of consistency and predictability which is essential for the stability of the society. Institutions are set of rules that structure social interaction (Jack Knight, 1992). Institutions can be understood as code of conduct or a set of rules and guidelines for human activity. Institution’s structure human interaction through stated or implied rules that set expectations. Some examples of institutions are law, education, marriage, and family. Organisations are specific types of institutions with more clearly defined and stated boundary that separate members from non-members. Understanding society isn’t just about observing people, it’s about uncovering the patterns, structures, and forces that shape how we live, think, and interact. This chapter introduces you to the foundational concepts of sociology that help make sense of the social world around you. We begin with the idea of society, the complex network of relationships that binds individuals together. From there, we explore culture, the shared values, beliefs, and practices that give meaning to our everyday lives. You’ll also learn about institutions the organized systems like family, education, and religion that structure behaviour and associations, the groups people intentionally form to achieve common goals.

As we move forward, the chapter examines how societies evolve through social change, highlighting the dynamic nature of human communities. It also sheds light on social mobility, the movement of individuals

or groups within a social hierarchy, and social stratification, the structured inequalities that influence access to resources and opportunities.

By the end of this chapter, you will have a clearer lens to understand not only how society functions, but also your place within it. These concepts are not just theoretical—they are tools to critically analyze real-world issues and navigate an ever-changing social landscape. Therefore, we will discuss the topics like; Society, Community, Culture, Institution, Association, Social Structure, Social Organisation, Social group, Norms and Value, Status and Role and Socialization which will contribute one to enhance their understanding on the said topics. And as a student of Sociology it is utmost necessity to have the basic ideas on the following topics.

2.1. UNIT OBJECTIVES

After going through this Unit, learners will be able to:

- Understand the meaning and nature of **society** as a network of social relationships.
- Explain the concept of **culture** and identify its key elements such as values, beliefs, norms, and traditions.
- Analyze the role of **social institutions** (family, education, religion, economy, etc.) in organizing and regulating social life.
- Differentiate between **institution** and **association**, and understand the purpose of associations in achieving common goals.
- Examine the concept of **social change** and identify the major factors responsible for changes in society.
- Understand **social mobility** and evaluate the factors that influence movement within the social structure.
- Analyze **social stratification** and its forms, and assess its impact on equality, opportunities, and life chances.
- Develop critical thinking skills to interpret social realities and contemporary social issues.
- Build awareness of one's role and responsibility within society.

2.2. SOCIETY

In popular speech the word 'society' has several meanings. Scores of definitions of the word 'society' exist and the word has a range of meanings extending far beyond sociology, including history, economics and political science, etc. In everyday life this term is used for various kinds of social units or social aggregates as if it exists 'out there' and beyond the individual subject such as Indian Society, French Society, American

Society, Capitalist Society, etc. At many times, we associate this term for secondary associations like Indian Sociological Society, The Theosophical Society, Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals or to Children. The reason why Wallerstein, in his World Systems Analysis (1974) writes: "No concept is more pervasive in modern social science than society, and no concept is used more automatically and unreflectively than society, despite the countless pages devoted to its definition."

The term "society" came from the 12th Century French *société* (meaning 'company'). This was in turn from the Latin word *societas*, which in turn was derived from the noun *socius* ("comrade, friend, ally"; adjectival form *socialis*) used to describe a bond or interaction between parties that are friendly, or at least civil. In simple a **society** is a group of individuals involved in persistent social interaction, or a large social group sharing the same spatial or social territory, typically subject to the same political authority and dominant cultural expectations. Societies are characterized by patterns of relationships (social relations) between individuals who share a distinctive culture and institutions; a given society may be described as the sum total of such relationships among its constituent of members. In the social sciences, a larger society often exhibits stratification or dominance patterns in subgroups.

Sociologist **Peter L. Berger** defines society as "...a human product, and nothing but a human product, that yet continuously acts upon its producers." According to him, society was created by humans, but this creation turns back and creates or molds humans every day.

Sociologist **Gerhard Lenski** differentiates societies based on their level of technology, communication, and economy: (1) hunters and gatherers, (2) simple agricultural, (3) advanced agricultural, (4) industrial, and (5) special (e.g. fishing societies or maritime societies).

How sociologists view society?

As against its commonsense usage, sociologists use this term in a specific sense and in a precise way. In social sciences since nineteenth century there is a long debate about the use of the concept 'society'. It was taken to mean as tissues of manners and customs that hold a group of people together. In some sense, 'society' represented something more enduring and deeper than the 'state', less manipulative and certainly more elusive. Therefore, Sociologists have defined society with two angles:

1. **In abstract terms**, as a network of relationships between people or between groups.
2. **In concrete terms**, as a collection of people or an organisation of persons.

DEFINITION OF SOCIETY: Some important definition of Sociology is mentioned below;

L.T. Hobhouse (1908) defined society as "tissues of relationships".

R.M. Maclver (1937) also defined it in more or less the same terms as "web of social relations which is always changing".

Talcott Parsons (Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, 1934) wrote: "Society—may be regarded as the most

general term referring to the whole complex of relations of man to his fellows.”

Anthony Giddens (2000) states; “A society is a group of people who live in a particular territory, are subject to a common system of political authority, and are aware of having a distinct identity from other groups around them.”

CHARACTERISTICS OF SOCIETY:

1. **Society is abstract:** If society is viewed as web of social relationships, it is distinct from physical entity which we can see and perceive through senses. As written earlier, Maclver argued, “we may see the people but cannot see society or social structure, but only its only external aspects”. Social relationships are invisible and abstract. We can just realize them but cannot see or touch them. Therefore, society is abstract. Reuter wrote: “Just as life is not a thing but a process of living, so society is not a thing but a process of associating”.

2. **Likeness and difference in society:** Society involves both likeness and difference. If people are all exactly alike, merely alike, their relationships would be limited. There would be little give-and- take and little reciprocity. If all men thought alike, felt alike, and acted alike, if they had the same standards and same interests, if they all accepted the same customs and echoed the same opinions without questioning and without variation, civilisation could never have advanced and culture would have remained rudimentary. Thus, society needs difference also for its existence and continuance.

Likeness and difference are logical opposites but for understanding likeness, comprehension of its relation to the other is necessary. Society exists among those who have some degree of likeness in mind and in body. F.H. Giddings called this quality of society as “consciousness of kind” (a sense of likeness). Though likeness and difference both are necessary for the society to exist, but difference is always subordinated to likeness in society. Likeness has a predominant share in the constitution of society.

3. **Cooperation and conflict in society:** Cooperation and conflict are universal elements in human life. Society is based on cooperation but because of internal differences, there is conflict also among its members. This is why, Maclver and Page observed that “society is cooperation crossed by conflict”. We know from our own experience that a person would be handicapped, showed down, and feels frustrated if he is expected to do everything alone, without the aid of others. “Cooperation is most elementary process of social life without which society is impossible” (Gisbert, 1957).

Though cooperation is essential for the constitution of society but modern conflict theorists (such as Marx) have highlighted the role of conflict in society. If there is no conflict, even in small measure, society may become stagnant and people may become inert and inactive. However, the expression of disagreement in the form of conflict must always be held within tolerable bounds

4. **Society is a process and not a product:** “Society exists only as a time sequence. It is becoming, not a being; a process and not a product” (Maclver and Page, 1956). In other words, as soon as the process ceases, the product disappears. The product of a machine endures after the machine has been scrapped. To some extent the same is true not only of material relics of man’s past culture but even of his immaterial cultural

achievements.

5. Society as a system of stratification: Society provides a system of stratification of statuses and classes that each individual has a relatively stable and recognisable position in the social structure.

CONCLUSION

When society is viewed from the point of view of persons who constitute it, it takes the shape of ‘a society’ instead of ‘society’ in general terms. A society is the largest number of human beings who interact to satisfy their social needs and who share a common culture. “A society may be defined as a network of interconnected major groups viewed as a unit and sharing a common culture” (J.H. Fichter, Sociology, 1957).

2.3. CULTURE

In sociology, culture refers to the shared way of life of a group of people, encompassing their values, beliefs, norms, customs, traditions, language, and symbols. It is a fundamental concept that shapes how individuals think, behave, and interact within a society. Culture is not innate; rather, it is learned through the process of socialization and passed from one generation to another. Culture can be broadly divided into two types: material culture and non-material culture. Material culture includes physical objects such as tools, clothing, technology, and buildings, while non-material culture consists of intangible elements like ideas, values, beliefs, morals, and social norms. Together, these elements influence human behavior and provide a framework for social life. Culture plays a vital role in giving individuals a sense of identity and belonging. It guides everyday actions, determines acceptable behavior, and helps maintain social order and stability. At the same time, culture is dynamic and continuously evolves in response to social changes, interactions, and innovations. Thus, culture is both a stabilizing force and an agent of change in society.

Culture and Society are mutually interdependent. Every society has a culture which guides its members. In order to understand the relationship between culture and society we need to understand what a society is. **Ralph Linton** defines society as “an organized group of individuals. A culture is an organized group of learned responses characteristic of a particular society” (Linton, 1955:29). Society is a much larger concept and culture is an important part of the society that we live in. A society is a group of individuals who interact and share a common culture. Through culture, the members of society experience their lives. In other words, society refers to persons and groups; culture is the behaviour patterns of these groups which emerge from communal living. Culture distinguishes a man from an animal. It is culture that shapes our attitude, beliefs, values and norms. So, culture and society cannot be separated. **Giddens and Sutton** (2014) say that sociology has always studied culture as bound up with social relations and the structure of society.

Different scholars define culture in different ways. **Alfred Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn** had discovered more than 150 definitions of culture. The first definition of culture was given by **E.B Tylor**. He says, “Culture is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capability acquired by man as a member of society” (Tylor, 1871:1). **Malinowski** when referring to Arunta society, talks about the behaviour patterns like the customs, language, beliefs and also the ways of thinking feeling and acting which are important aspects of culture and also applies to any society. **Abraham** (2006) defines culture as “a total way of life of a social group, meaning everything they are, they do and they have. It is a complex system that consists of beliefs, values, standards, practices, language and technology shared by members of a social group” (Abraham, 2006:64). **Majumdar and Madan** (2008) say that a culture complex is not an institution but is the outcome of interaction between several institutions. They are defined as the pattern of the interrelation of culture traits.

CHARACTERISTICS OF CULTURE

Some of the important characteristic of culture are discussed in the below:

1. Culture is social: Culture is acquired through social life. Human being is a social animal and has a culture of its own. Culture is shaped by our social interaction and is bound up with social relations within the members of a group. Culture regulates the behaviour of the members of a group and fulfils human’s needs like hunger, shelter, clothing etc. Culture is defined as a social adjustment or the means by which man adjusts to his environment.

2. Culture is learned and shared: Culture is a behaviour acquired by man from his birth and as a member of society. When a human baby is born, it is helpless. It does not have the pattern of behaviour that is required for living in society or culture is not innate. The baby learns the behaviour and culture from the elders and is socialized to become a member of society. In course of time, man becomes human by acquiring the culture of a particular society and is thus called ‘culture-bearing animal’. The influence of culture on human beings is hence deep rooted. After man learns a culture, culture is internalized and is shared by the members of the group. Culture is shared through communication and cooperation by the members of a society.

3. Culture is transmitted: Culture is handed down from one generation to the other and also between nations and people within the lifetime. Culture is what we receive from previous generations and subsequently adapt to. Culture is transmitted to humans by parents, teachers, friends through traditions, customs etc. Cultural transmission is different from genetic transmission. One has no control on genetic transmission such as skin color, hair and color of eyes but through culture man acquires the habits, thoughts, attitudes of his or her parents and through this it is transmitted to the group. Ralph Linton (ibid.) appropriately says that the culture

is the way of life of the members of a society. It is the collection of ideas and habits which they learn, share and transmit from generation to generation.

4. Culture is dynamic: It is no longer seen as static, natural, well bounded and independent of political power. Culture is constantly undergoing change and often adapts to external forces. It also undergoes internal adaptation and change. Various parts of culture are integrated with each other to constitute a whole.

5. Culture is symbolic A symbol is something on which some value is bestowed by us or it has a meaning. The meaning of symbols is a matter of cultural intervention. For example, the National Flag is not any piece of cloth but has a culture. Similarly to the Christians the cross is a symbol of salvation.

TYPES OF CULTURE: MATERIAL AND NON-MATERIAL CULTURE

Sociologist William F. Ogburn distinguished between material and non material culture.

1. Material culture refers to the objects which satisfies the material needs of human beings like houses, means of transport, factories, food items etc. They are the tangible aspects of society.

2. Non- material culture on the other hand refers to non tangible aspects of culture like customs, ideas, beliefs, patterns of communication etc.

However, there are a lot of debates as to what should be included in the ambit of culture. Some anthropologists believe, only those aspects which can be communicated can be a part of culture. Many others also include objects in the definition of culture. Giddens and Sutton (2014) say that culture has always dealt with the non material aspect, it had not conventionally included the material artifacts like the buildings, furniture but this has changed as gradually sociologists became interested in 'material culture'. So, both material and non material objects are part of culture. Culture not only includes knowledge, beliefs, Culture and Society and practices but also includes manmade objects like tools, buildings, means of transport and communication or various artifacts. Green (1964) defines culture as "the socially transmitted system of idealized ways of knowledge, practice and belief, along with the artifacts that knowledge and practice produce and maintain as they change in time" (Green, 1964:80).

ELEMENTS OF CULTURE

1. Language: Language is the most important element of culture. The essence of a culture is reflected in the language which facilitates day to day interaction with other people. The use of language distinguishes human beings from other species. It is instrumental in the transmission of cultural tradition from one generation to

another as it is infused with meaning. Sapir- Whorf Hypothesis says that language is not 'given' but is culturally determined and through language reality is interpreted in different ways (Schaefer and Lamm 1999). For example, in the Arab world in which people depend on camels, there are 3,000 words for camels. Similarly, when we describe vegetables like Drumstick, bitter gourd etc. in Indian words we don't use any adjective. But the English words reflect the taste or appearance of these vegetables (Abraham, 2006). Language and culture are intertwined.

2. Belief: Abraham (2006) says that belief is a statement or idea about reality which people accept as true. For example, many people in India believe in God and many auspicious occasions like marriage are scheduled on the basis of auspicious dates. Even marriages are fixed when the horoscopes of the bride and the groom matches. But beliefs are not static and are subject to change over time. We may be practicing a certain belief but by coming in contact with other cultures we may change our beliefs. People migrating to cities may shed off some of the superstitious beliefs. But in many other occasions the beliefs towards something is so strong that we may not be able to let it go.

3. Norms: Norms are the prescribed rules of society which guides the behaviour of the members of a society. Sutherland (1961) says that social norms are group developed and group held standards of behaviour of the groups' members. They direct the conduct of the members of the society or it is the guideline for appropriate behaviour. For Haralambos and Heald (2006) a norm is a specific guide to action which defines acceptable and appropriate behavior in particular situations. For example, in every society there are norms governing dressing patterns. In particular occasions we tend to wear a particular kind of dress. We wear different dresses when we go to a party, a funeral, a office or even a hospital. But norms vary from society to society. For example in a tribal society wearing a particular dress is acceptable but in other societies it is not.

Norms can be both formal and informal. Formal norms are written down and attract punishment when violated. Informal norms are not formally written down but are generally accepted. For Abraham (ibid.), formal norms are explicit norms like the explicit rules imposed by schools about uniforms etc. Implicit norms can be some restriction on the public display of affection or norms governing dress that we discussed above. Norms are further classified into folkways and mores and laws. Folkways are the informal rules which guide our actions. For example, do not poke your nose when elders discuss something, cover your nose when you sneeze etc. Mores are those folkways which are important for the welfare of the group. Sumner (1906) says, when the relation of welfare is added to folkways they are converted to mores. Laws grow out of mores and have a rational element in them or they are formally established rules. Mores are more strictly enforced than folkways but less strictly enforced than laws.

4. Sanctions: Sanctions are penalties and rewards for social conduct of a person. Sanctions can be both positive and negative. Conformity to a norm prescribes positive sanction like rewards, praise etc. On the other

hand violation of a norm attracts negative sanctions like fines, imprisonment etc. Schaefer and Lamm (1999) says that the norms and sanctions in a culture reflects that culture's values and priorities The most cherished values will be the most heavily sanctioned, the less critical matters will have light sanctions.

5.Values: Values are the general guidelines regarding the conduct in society unlike norms which provide specific conduct. For Abraham (2006) values are agreements among members of the society as to what is desirable and what is undesirable in society. They are generalized standards that define what is good or bad, ugly or beautiful. Values are the way people conduct themselves in society, it reflects the orientation of individuals, groups towards achieving essential goals of society. For example, paying attention when national anthem is played, respecting elders is a value of the Indian society. Different cultures have different value systems. American value system is different from Indian value system. Certain values are also given importance in a culture over others. Schaefer and Lamm (1999) give the example of Papua culture in which contributing to the public good is much more valuable than making a personal profit. Erasov and Singh (2006) mention families, relatives, older generation as values forming basis of cultural criteria.

SOME KEY CONCEPTS IN CULTURE

1. CULTURAL CHANGE

Culture is dynamic. The elements of culture change from time to time. In today's society, we see a lot of changes in the culture of societies. There is a change in the eating habits, dressing pattern, types of family, education, caste and many changes which are imminent. Cultural changes occur due to innovation, diffusion, acculturation and assimilation.

A. Cultural Innovation:Innovation is something which is newly created by someone. It may be a physical object or an artifact, or social in terms of rituals, stories, new ideas, new knowledge etc. For example, the carvings on the temples, the delicate artistic works or the carvings of the white marble of the Taj Mahal to the orbiting of satellites are all which are cultural innovations which we cherish. Innovation also happens when there is a modification on something that exists beforehand. Innovation is the most important element of cultural change as, if there is no innovation there cannot be diffusion, acculturation, and assimilation.

B. Cultural Diffusion:Cultural diffusion is a process by which the elements of culture spread from one society to another or it is the spread of cultural traits from one group to the other. Due to the development in transportation and communication and the movement of people from one place to another without restriction there is spread of culture in the form of food, dress, lifestyle, education etc. Cultural diffusion happens at two levels – diffusion of material culture and diffusion of non material culture. According to William F. Ogburn (1966) the elements of non material culture are more resistant to change than the material culture. He refers

to the term 'cultural lag' to refer to the maladjustment in which non material culture fails to adjust to the rapidly changing material conditions. For example, it is difficult to adapt to a Western culture and accept foreign ideas than to accept foreign technology. We accept technology much faster as it makes our lives much easier but we are unable to change our ways of life accordingly. In a fast changing society, cultural lag is very prominent as a change in one aspect will bring stress and strains in other parts, there is a time lag before the other part of the culture catches up and restores the equilibrium in society. This sometimes disturbs the balance of society and brings 'anomie'. Anomie is a concept coined by Emile Durkheim which refers to a condition in which the normative order of society is broken down.

C. Acculturation: Cultural diffusion brings with it the question of cultural contact. When two cultures come into contact, there is some interchange of ideas and culture leading to cultural diffusion. But when the way of life of one culture is in the process of change under the influence of another culture it is called acculturation. It may lead to either a least partial modification of one culture or may result in substantial transformation. In acculturation, the minority culture still retains some of its cultural elements.

D. Assimilation: It is the way in which one way of life is being displaced by another or it is a process in which a minority group is absorbed into the dominant culture. For example, with the coming up of development projects leading to the clearance of forests there are many tribal cultures which are getting displaced and the tribals are slowly getting assimilated into the society.

2. CULTURAL DIVERSITY

A society is made up of diverse cultures. It can be said that the culture of one society is distinct from the other society. The societal culture is a broad culture representing a society. But apart from the societal culture there are different subcultures, countercultures which occasionally lead to a culture shock.

A). Subcultures: It is a culture within a larger dominant culture. In many complex societies there are many subcultures. Schaefer and Lamm (1999) say that "a subculture is a segment of society which shares a distinctive pattern of mores, folkways and values which differs from the pattern of the larger society" (Schaefer and Lamm, 1999:81). Abraham (2006) says that these subcultures are not partial or miniature cultures but are complete cultures which are unique to a particular social group. He gives the example of the Todas of Nilgiris, Nairs and Ezhavas of Kerala, Rajputs of Rajasthan; Bodos of Assam have cultures of their own. For him, the distinct subcultures also evolve around occupations, political parties etc. Apart Culture and Society from this, there are deviant subcultures which are associated with the criminals gangs, the mafias, drug addicts. In American Society there may be New Englanders, Southerners, Texans etc. When we talk of subcultures, one issue that has gained prominence is "youth culture" or "youth subculture". Youth subculture implies that

young are socialized into a type of values, standards, and a certain type of behavior pattern that distinguishes it from the adult society.

B). Countercultures: Though there are different subcultures in a society, these subcultures of a particular group are always not compatible with the dominant culture. Some subcultures challenge the prevailing culture and contrast the prevailing culture. For example, a group of dacoits have their own norms and standards which differ from the conventional prevailing patterns. The countercultures are very popular among the youth who generally find it difficult to cope up with the dominant culture which is shared by the older generations. In some countries an exclusive youth culture is being formed consisting of the youth population. This happens due to a lot of factors like the growing importance of technology, emergence of political radicals, hippie culture. Schaefer and Lamm (1999), give the example of a new counterculture that surfaced in Great Britain in 1968 were the skinheads who were young people with shaved heads, often sported tattoos, steel-toed shoes who had very less expectation of being a part of mainstream society. They championed racist ideologies and even engaged in vandalism, violence and even murder. The deviant subcultures can be appropriately called counter cultures.

C). Culture Shock: When people come across a unfamiliar culture and are unable to cope up with it they suffer maladjustment. In this situation they face a cultural shock. As our society has many subcultures we may not be aware of all of them and when we confront the ways of living of some other cultures we get disoriented. For example, when we go to a foreign country we may come across a particular way of life which is different from ours.

3. ETHNOCENTRISM

The term ethnocentrism was coined by William Graham Sumner to refer to a feeling that ones culture is always superior to other cultures. Sumner (1906) says “ethnocentrism is the technical name of this view of things in which ones own group is the center of everything, and all others are scaled and rated with reference to it” (Sumner,1906:13). He further says that it leads people to exaggerate everything in their folkways which differentiate them from others. On the basis of this feeling, other cultures are judged in relation to one’s own culture. The South Indians feel that their culture is superior to the North Indian culture. Similarly, people still feel that Africa is a country only inhabited by primitive tribals and is a Dark Continent. Ethnocentrism gives rise to a feeling of superiority in the sense that we judge other cultures as “wrong” rather than just the “other” or the other way. Ethnocentrism sometimes may lead to xenophobia or the fear of the foreign.

4. CULTURAL RELATIVISM

It is a process in which we evaluate a culture by its own standards or in its own context rather than from our own cultural lens. Abraham (2006) says that every element of the culture has a function unique to the group which shares the culture. Many customs and practices in a culture should not be judged as right or wrong, good or bad but are to be understood in terms of their function. Many Americans wonder why the Indian farmers refuse to eat their cows even if they starve. Cultural relativism may lead to xenocentrism which is the opposite of ethnocentrism. Xenocentrism is the belief that other cultures is superior to one's own culture.

5. MULTICULTURALISM

In order to understand what a multicultural society is we have to understand what an ethnic group is. In today's society there is the existence of multiple ethnic groups. Ethnic group is a community of people who share a common cultural background or they share certain common characteristics such as race, language, religion etc which differentiates them from other groups. Kymlicka (2012) defines multiculturalism as a legal and political accommodation of the ethnic diversity. He says multiculturalism emerged in the West as an attempt at replacing the older forms of ethnic and racial hierarchy with the ideals of democratic citizenship. Abraham (2006) says that "it is a principle of coexistence of different cultures which fosters understanding and appreciation of different cultures" (Abraham, 2012:72). A multicultural society is often equated with a 'salad bowl' in which all communities retain their distinct identities as opposed to a 'melting pot' in which the majority culture swallows up a minority culture. Multiculturalism in recent times has become a highly debated concept with people questioning whether a multicultural society is possible?

6. GLOBALISATION AND CULTURE

Sunanda Sen (2007) says that "globalization is associated with the integration of the world, with the markets breaking open the barriers across nation states in terms of flows of trade, finance, technology, knowledge, culture and even movements of people"(Sen, 2007:1). An improvement in transportation and communication and a global contact between cultures, led to the transmission of values, ideas, meanings and even movement of people around the world. The phenomenon of globalisation has brought in significant changes in the economy, politics, culture etc of the world. Arjun Appadurai discusses about the global cultural flow. Appadurai (1996) mentions five dimensions of global cultural flow as Ethnoscapes – the landscapes of persons such as tourists, immigrants, refugees and the movement of persons who affect the politics of a particular place. Technoscapes – The global spread of technology both material and informational across boundaries. Finanscapes – The rapid flow of money through currency markets and stock exchange. Mediascapes – The distribution of electronic capabilities like television, films to produce and disseminate information. Ideoscapes – The exchange of ideologies and counter – ideologies which consists of notions of freedom, justice, rights, democracy, sovereignty.

CULTURE IN INDIAN CONTEXT:

A). Cultural Diversity in India: The Indian society is very diverse and extremely complex. S.C Dube (1990) says that “the Indian society had covered a span of five thousand years since the period of its first known civilization. During this long period several waves of immigrant representing different ethnic strains and linguistic families have merged into its population to contribute to its diversity, richness and vitality” (Dube, 1990:1). The Indian society consists of a large number of languages, dialects, beliefs, rituals, customs, traditions etc. It has 22 national languages and hundred dialects. It is one of the most religiously and ethnically diverse nations of the world. There are even many languages which are till now not even recognized. Dube (1990) says that in the state of Nagaland itself there are nineteen languages. Religious faiths include Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Sikhism, Buddhism, Jainism, Zoroastrianism, Judaism and even Baha’i faith which is practiced by a smaller number of communities with the Hindus constituting the majority. It has been the dominant religion and has put considerable influence on the Indian culture and society. People in India belong to different castes, subcastes or jati and social classes. Each caste has their unique rituals, rules customs etc. Indian society is also characterized by sharp contrasts or inequalities. On the one hand there are very rich people the elites who are comparatively smaller in number and on the other hand there are vast majority of people who are poor or the working classes. In the middle are certain classes called the middle classes.

Moreover the Indian society is also a home to a number of tribal communities who have their distinct cultural identity and heritage. These diversities can be attributed to the existence of different cultural traditions like the classical, folk and the tribal. In other words these traditions can be divided into little tradition and great tradition, the concepts coined by Robert Redfield. The little traditions are unwritten and are transmitted orally. On the other hand great traditions are written traditions and are found in literature and religious texts. Though in the present context there has been much overlap between traditions and there has been an interaction between the two traditions.

Today's society creates division on the basis of division of labour, specialization of knowledge which separates the highly educated from the less educated. One of the most significant divisions among people is found in the field of educational attainment. Education which should be a great leveler instead it reproduces the existing cultural and social divisions. Pierre Bourdieu (1986) calls this ‘cultural capital’. Apart from this religious, spatial segregation also brings in variability of culture in terms of manners, speech, activities, recreation. Cultural diversity can be best understood when we talk about Indian Society.

B). Cultural Unity and Integration: In spite of these diversities in the Indian society discussed above, the Indian society is characterized by unity and this unity in diversity has become a part of India’s self identity says S.C Dube. India is a secular state and has a constitution which ensures that the identities of different communities are preserved. Moreover the different facets of culture like religion, music, art and architecture,

painting, dance and drama, habits and customs have contributed to the unity and integration of India. Dube (ibid.) says that problems persist and many also have spawned in recent decades like ethnic movements, religious fundamentalism, linguistic conflicts, regionalism which pose a major challenge to the contemporary Indian society. The Indian society has witnessed a lot of invasions. Moreover liberalisation, privatization and globalization also has ushered in a lot of changes. But these have not led to the disintegration of the Indian society. It can be said that despite a lot of diversity, dissent, protests there is an underlying unity derived from its unique culture which is the cornerstone of Indian society.

CONCLUSION

Culture and Society are closely interrelated. Society is a broad aspect and culture is a part of it. Society refers to persons and groups and culture refers to behaviour patterns, the sum total of man's activities, thoughts, beliefs, attitude and all that is characteristic of man as a social being. Culture has been defined by different scholars differently as it is highly variable and differs from society to society. Though animals adapt to their environment, but the adaptation pattern of both humans and animals are very different. As a result of this there is a difference between culture and biology. Culture is learned and transmitted from generation to generation through language, an important element of culture. Culture is also conveyed through customs, beliefs, norms, sanctions, values, laws, institutions. Hence, culture is social, symbolic and dynamic. The distinguishing elements of culture are language, customs, belief, norms, sanctions, values and law. All cultures have basic structure like the cultural traits, complexes, culture area. It is through these structures communication is possible in a society.

2.4. INSTITUTION

The concept of institution is an important one in the social sciences. Unfortunately, however, it has been used in different ways, and its meaning has become ambiguous. Some writers use the term "institutions" when referring to large social groups, reserving the term "associations" for small groups. The distinction is then only one of size. But no one knows how large a group must be to become an institution; furthermore, used in this way, the term adds little to our understanding of social structure. Society is made up of individuals and collectives and a sum total of all the relationships that exist between them. Society, however, needs to order itself through organising its various constituents. One of the ways in which society orders itself is through institutions and organisations. Institutions and organisations provide the society a fair amount of consistency and predictability which is essential for the stability of the society.

Institutions are set of rules that structure social interaction (Jack Knight, 1992). Institutions can be understood as code of conduct or a set of rules and guidelines for human activity. Institutions structure human interaction through stated or implied rules that set expectations. Some examples of institutions are law, education, marriage, and family. Consider the examples of education as an institution and school as an example of organisation. Every known society formulates some ways in which it trains and cultivates the faculties of its young ones, constructs new knowledge and transmits the existing knowledge. In doing so, it organises human interactions and human activity within the society. Education becomes a way in which the young are made to understand their roles, expectations and duties as members of the society. All societies (clans, tribes, agrarian, industrial) have devised some or the other way of transmission of knowledge, values and skills among their younger members.

According to Maclver, “an institution is a set of formal, regular and established procedures, characteristic of a group or number of groups that perform a similar function within a society. In short, an institution is an organized way of doing something”.

Barnes defines social institution as “the social structure and machinery through which human society organizes, directs and executes the multifarious activities required to satisfy human needs”. The simple language social institutions are the established ways through which the social interaction among the individuals are structured, regulated and controlled for the purpose of satisfying human needs.

Sumner said, “An institution consists of a concept (idea, notion, doctrine, interest) and a structure.” He added, “the structure is a framework or apparatus or perhaps only a number of functionaries set to cooperate in prescribed ways at a certain conjuncture. The structure holds the concept and furnishes instrumentalities for bringing it into the words of facts and action in a way to serve the interests of men in society.” Then he points out that “institutions begin in folkways, become customs and develop into mores by having attached to them a philosophy of welfare.

Institutions are components of the society that help to maintain order and stability through structuring human interaction and activity. Institutions manifest themselves in terms of overt or implicit rules that structure human interactions. Institutions function through the members of a society being socialised into them. This makes the study of institutions critical to the field of sociology. Emile Durkheim referred to sociology as the scientific study of principle institutions. Institutions such as religion, family, education et cetera are still critical to the discipline of sociology.

Let us consider a few scholarly definitions of institutions to acquaint with the meaning of institution:

According to Morris Ginsberg (1921), “Institutions are definite and sanctioned forms or modes of relationship between social beings, in respect to one another or to some external object”.

Robert Morrison MacIver¹ defines Institutions as “established forms or conditions of procedures characteristic of group activity”.

William Graham Sumner (1906:53) suggests that “an institution consists of a concept, idea, notion, doctrine or interest and a structure”.

Bronislaw Malinowski² argues that, “every institution centres around a fundamental need, permanently unites a group of people in a co-operational task and has its particular body of doctrines and its technique or craft. Institutions are not correlated simply and directly to new functions. One need not receive one’s satisfaction in one institution.”

Jonathan Turner defines institution as “a complex of positions, roles, norms and values lodged in particular types of social structures and organising relatively stable patterns of human activity with respect to fundamental problems in producing life-sustaining resources, in reproducing individuals, and in sustaining viable societal structures within a given environment” (Turner 1997: 6).

From the above definitions we learn that;

- 1) institutions may not be physical entities but visible in the co-ordinated patterns of behaviour of members of a society.
- 2) Institutions can help explain the behaviour of individual members.
- 3) Institutions have both restrictive and enabling potential in that it both constraints the choices available to an individual and defines the ways in which choices are to be exercised. Consider a situation whereby two individuals decide to live together the institution of marriage both defines and constraints the way in which they exercise their desire to live with each other.
- 4) Institutions function to forge and reiterate solidarity among members of a society.
- 5) It structures the interaction between members.

Institutions can be identified, in terms of the regular and consistent patterns of behaviours that are structured through norms and sanctions. Institutions function well in so far as they maintain stable patterns of expectation, thought and action. The consistency and synchronisation among these elements determine the stability of the institution. It is often argued that institutions have equilibrium like qualities, in that, when disturbed, institutions reinstate their stability by reinforcing order as purpose or preference. Repeated and consistent behaviour that has rule-like qualities assumes normative weight and act in ways that stabilise the equilibrium status of the institution. Sociologists consider institutions not singularly as stable static phenomena but as process. Institutions have been understood in terms of the processes of institutionalisation, de-institutionalisation, and re-institutionalisation. They are generally considered as the “more enduring features of social life” (Giddens, 1984: 24).

TYPES OF INSTITUTIONS

Sociologists generally classify institutions into five clusters of major institutions. They are:

- Economic Institutions: These are the institutions that correspond to production, consumption and distribution of goods and services.
- Kinship, Marriage and Family: These institutions control and regulate reproduction.
- Institutions of Social Stratification: These are the institutions that regulate and control differential access to social status and prestige.
- Political Institutions: They are concerned with regulation and distribution of power.
- Cultural Institutions: They regulate religious, symbolic and cultural practices.

Types of Institutions by Sumner:

Institutions may be classified in several ways. Sumner has classified institutions into two main types.

1. Crescive Institutions such as property, marriage and religion which originate from mores. These are unconscious in origin.
2. Enacted institutions such as credit institutions, business institutions which are consciously organized for definite purposes.

FUNCTIONS OF INSTITUTIONS

There are various important functions of the institutions. Institutions have manifest functions which are easy to recognize as part of the professed objectives of the institution, and latent functions which are unintended and may be unrecognized or if recognized, regarded as by products, says Merton. The primary institutions function in manifest manner. The working is direct and clear. These, however, give rise to the secondary institutions. They function in latent manner.

1. Institutions Simplify Action for the Individual:

An institution organizes many aspects of behaviour into a unified pattern, thus making more or less automatic very complex and sometimes long-continued segments of social behaviour. The participant in an institution is accustomed to pass from one complicated set of behaviour traits to another towards a recognized goal.

One of the most highly integrated institutions in modern society is Military establishment. The soldiers learn to pass in orderly fashion from one type of behaviour to another without hesitation towards the objective of eliminating enemy.

2. Institutions Provide a Means of Social Control:

The institutions are the most important agencies through which the sanctions of the society are brought to bear on the individual. In other words, institutions play a central part in the process of social control. All major institutions, the family, the school, the religious institution, the State inculcate basic values and definitions to the young one. Thus most of the controls that deal with the basic concerns of life are transmitted through the social institutions.

3. Institutions Provide a Role and Status for Individuals:

Some people serve in groups devoted to public welfare. Others find a place in business, in the professions, in public service or in the home. Some shine in sports, others in literature or art. The institutions to a degree provide for the individual the opportunity for the development of his peculiar characteristics and determine his role and status.

4. Institutions Provide Order to the Society:

Besides helping individuals to satisfy their basic needs, institutions provide unity to the society. The law of the jungle would prevail if there were no institutions that maintained order. In other words, institutions enable societies to keep functioning.

5. Institutions act as Stimulant:

The institutions may stimulate certain individuals to react against it and formulate new patterns of behaviour. Sometimes individual feels the disharmony between the various institutions. He seeks some way out of the impasse. He must devise some way whereby his urges may be more fully satisfied. Hence, the institution functions in such cases to stimulate the individual to “break new roads to freedom.” Thus, institution provides the stimulus which starts a revolt against the established order.

6. Institutions act as Harmonizing Agencies in the Total Cultural Configuration:

The institutions are not independent, but are related to each other in a cultural system or configuration. Most of the institutions in the system tend to support one another and the configuration as a whole. Thus, courtship supports marriage which in turn supports the family, all three institutions being mutually interdependent.

7. Institutions Display Tension between Stability and Change:

Workable ways of doing things, repeated over and over, tend to become rigid forms. This is why mere habits become institutions. Looked at from this point of view, institutions tend to maintain stability and the status quo. But as new ways of doing things appear and are found workable, they challenge stability and impel institutions towards change. Function of the institutions also changes, since they are not static. Like any other part of culture, they change through time, Alteration in one institution invariably reverberate throughout the institutional structure of society. With changes in one set of norms bringing in them, make changes in others. The expanding area of State activity, Industrialization and the urbanization has squeezed the function of the primary institutions in certain respects, while the Secondary institutions are on the expansion.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN INSTITUTION AND ASSOCIATION

Sometimes confusion arises between institutions and associations because the same term, in a different context, may mean either one of the other. But there is a much more important distinction to be made between institutions and associations. The differences between institution and association are as follows:

1. Association represents human aspect. An association is a group of people organised for the pursuit of a specific purpose. Institutions, on the other hand, are the rules of procedure. Family is an association organised for the preparation of children, while marriage is its main institution.

Political party is an institution, State is an association. Thus, association represents human aspect, while an institution is a social condition of conduct and behaviour.

2. An institution is considered as a 'form of procedure'. It has no form and is abstract. On the other hand, association is considered as "an organised group". It is a group of people organised for the purpose of fulfilling a need or needs. It has form and it is concrete.
3. Institutions grow, while associations are formed deliberately.
4. Association indicates membership, while institution indicates procedure of work.
5. Every association bears a particular name, while every institution is based on cultural symbol.
6. An institution is an organised procedure, an association is organised group.
7. Institutions fulfil all the primary and basic need of people. But association is a group of people organised for the pursuit of some specific purposes.
8. The rules of an institution are based on informal mean of social control such as customs, traditions etc., while the laws of association are formed on the basis of formal means of social control.

In spite of the differences between the two, it may be noted that no institution can function without an association. Institutions are impossible without associations. One simple test can help us to understand the difference between institutions and associations. As association has a location. On the other hand an institution does not have a location. For example, an university can be located (in space); education cannot.

2.5. ASSOCIATION

Association is a group of people, formed to a particular goal. Such a group is not of a permanent type. Its membership is voluntary and it can be dissolved after the attainment of the goal. An association is sort of a cooperative unit having its own organisation, rules and regulations.

In sociology, an association refers to a group of people who come together voluntarily to achieve a specific common goal or interest. It is a formal or organized group, such as clubs, organizations, or committees, where members actively cooperate to fulfill shared objectives. an association is a group of individuals who deliberately come together to pursue a specific goal or set of objectives. It is typically a formal and organized group, formed with clear rules, structure, and roles for its members. Associations are created to fulfill particular interests, such as educational, economic, political, cultural, or recreational purposes. Unlike society, which is broad and abstract, an association is concrete and goal-oriented. Examples include clubs, trade unions, political parties, and professional organizations. Through cooperation and coordination, members of an association work collectively to achieve shared aims and promote common interests effectively. The term 'Association' has been defined in various way by different social scientist some of which are discussed in the

below:

DEFINITIONS OF ASSOCIATION: Some pertinent definitions of an Association is highlights in the below;

1. According to MacIver and Page, “An association is a group organised for the pursuit of an interest or group of interests in common”.
2. To Bogardus, “Association is usually working together or people to achieve some purpose .”.
3. To Ginsberg, “An association is a group of social beings related to one another by the fact that they possess or have instituted in common, an organisation with a view to achieving specific ends”.
4. G. D. H. Cole says, “By an association I mean any group of persons pursuing a common purpose by a course of corporative action extending beyond a single act and for this purpose agreeing together upon certain methods of procedure, and laying down, in however, rudimentary a form, rule for common action.”

KEY FEATURES OF ASSOCIATION

Some key features of Association are mentioned in the below;

1. **Group of People:** An association is a group of people with common goals. It cannot exist without members.
2. **Organization:** It is an organized group, not just any collection of people. Members follow certain rules.
3. **Common Objectives:** Members share common aims and work together to achieve them.
4. **Rules and Regulations:** Every association has rules, written or unwritten, that guide members' behaviour.
5. **Cooperation:** It is based on a cooperative spirit. Members work together to fulfill shared goals.
6. **Voluntary Membership:** People join and leave associations by choice. No one is forced to be a member.
7. **Permanency:** Some associations are temporary, while others are long-lasting.
8. **Legal Status:** Associations have legal recognition. They can take legal action and be held accountable.
9. **Office Bearers:** They have leaders or officials who manage and guide activities.
10. **Artificial Nature:** Associations are man-made and formed intentionally for specific purposes.
11. **Limited Importance:** They exist to serve specific interests and lose importance if goals are not met.
12. **Functions:** Associations perform various roles for members and society.

CONCLUSION

An association is a formal, organized group within society. It plays an important role in modern social, economic, and political life. Therefore, we can say that associations are simply formed for the fulfilment of certain goals and are temporary in nature. Community however, is of permanent type and takes care of different facets of human life.

2.6. SOCIAL CHANGE

Social change refers to the transformation or modification in the structure, organization, and functioning of society over time. It involves changes in social relationships, cultural values, institutions, and patterns of behavior. Social change is a continuous and universal process, as no society remains completely static. These changes may occur in various forms, such as changes in family structure, economic systems, political institutions, technology, and social norms. Social change can be slow and gradual, like the evolution of customs and traditions, or rapid and revolutionary, as seen during major events like industrial or political revolutions.

Several factors contribute to social change, including technological advancements, population growth, cultural interactions, economic development, education, and environmental influences. For example, the growth of digital technology has significantly transformed communication and social interactions in modern society. Social change can have both positive and negative effects. It may lead to progress, development, and improved living conditions, but it can also create challenges such as inequality or social conflict. Thus, social change plays a vital role in shaping the development and future of society, making it an essential concept in sociological study.

Here are some **famous sociologists' definitions of Social Change**:

- **MacIver and Page:** Social change refers to “changes in social relationships or patterns of interaction between individuals and groups.”
- **Kingsley Davis:** Social change is “changes that occur in the structure and function of society.”
- **Samuel Koenig:** Social change means “modifications in the established patterns of social life.”
- **Gillin and Gillin:** Social change is “a change in social organization, such as in the structure and functions of society.”
- **Ogburn:** Social change is “a modification in social structure and cultural patterns over time.”
- **J.L. Gillin:** Social change refers to “variations from accepted ways of life.”

SUMMARY:

In simple terms, most sociologists agree that social change involves changes in social relationships, institutions, culture, and the overall structure of society over time.

FACTORS OF SOCIAL CHANGE

1. **Technological Factors:**

Technological development is one of the most powerful forces of social change. Advancements in science and technology have significantly transformed human life. Innovations such as the internet, smartphones, transportation systems, and artificial intelligence have changed the way people communicate, work, and live. Technology has reduced distances, increased efficiency, and created new job opportunities while also replacing many traditional occupations. It continuously reshapes social relationships and lifestyle patterns.

2. **Economic Factors:**

Economic changes play a crucial role in shaping society. Changes in modes of production, industrial development, trade systems, and income distribution directly affect social structure. For example, the shift from agricultural to industrial and service-based economies has led to urbanization and changes in family and occupational patterns. Economic inequality and development also influence social relations and class structures.

3. **Cultural Factors:**

Culture is a key driver of social change. Changes in values, beliefs, customs, traditions, and lifestyles bring transformation in society. As societies modernize, old traditions may be replaced or modified by new ideas. Cultural diffusion, intercultural interaction, and changing social attitudes contribute to evolving patterns of behavior and social norms.

4. **Educational Factors:**

Education is a powerful agent of social change. It spreads knowledge, awareness, and new ideas among individuals. Education encourages critical thinking, rationality, and openness to change. It also helps in reducing social inequalities by providing equal opportunities and promoting social mobility. Educated individuals often become agents of change in society.

5. **Political Factors:**

Political systems and government actions significantly influence social change. Laws, policies, reforms, and political movements can reshape social institutions and relationships. For example, democratic reforms, civil rights movements, and legal changes in education or gender equality have transformed societies. Political stability or instability also affects social development.

6. **Demographic Factors:**

Demographic changes refer to variations in population size, birth rate, death rate, age structure, and migration patterns. Population growth can lead to urbanization, unemployment, and resource pressure, while migration brings cultural diversity and new social interactions. These changes directly impact social organization and development.

7. **Environmental Factors:**

Natural and environmental conditions also contribute to social change. Events such as floods, earthquakes, droughts, and climate change force societies to adapt and modify their way of life. Environmental challenges can lead to migration, changes in occupation, and new survival strategies, influencing long-term social patterns.

8. **Religious Factors:**

Religion plays an important role in shaping social values and behavior. Religious reforms, movements, or new interpretations of beliefs can bring significant social transformation. At times, religion promotes stability, while at other times, reform movements challenge existing practices and lead to modernization and social progress.

9. **Globalization:**

Globalization has accelerated social change by increasing interaction among countries. It facilitates the exchange of ideas, technology, culture, and economic systems across borders. As a result, societies are becoming more interconnected and interdependent. While globalization promotes development and cultural exchange, it may also lead to the loss of traditional values.

CONCLUSION

All the factors of social change do not work in isolation; instead, they are closely interconnected and influence one another in complex and dynamic ways. Technological, economic, cultural, political, educational, demographic, environmental, religious, and global factors together create a continuous process of transformation within society. When one factor changes, it often triggers changes in other areas as well, leading to a chain reaction of social development. Because of this interdependence, society is always in a state of movement and adjustment. New inventions influence economic systems, economic changes affect social relations, cultural shifts reshape values, and political decisions guide institutional development. In this way, every aspect of social life contributes to ongoing change. As a result, social change is not a sudden or

temporary event but a natural, gradual, and continuous process due to which it is often said that ‘*nothing is permanent only the change is permanent*’. It is an essential feature of human society that ensures growth, adaptation, and progress over time. Societies evolve to meet new challenges, adopt new ideas, and adjust to changing conditions, making social change an unavoidable and permanent reality of social life.

2.7. SOCIAL MOBILITY

Social mobility refers to the movement or change in an individual’s social position within the social structure of a society. It indicates a shift from one social status to another, which may involve moving upward, downward, or remaining at the same level while changing roles. This movement can occur in different directions and forms, such as inter-generational or intra-generational mobility. Importantly, social mobility does not always indicate whether the change is positive or negative; it simply describes a transition in social standing. A person’s position in society may improve or decline depending on various social, economic, and personal factors.

Social mobility is an important concept in sociology that refers to the movement or change in an individual’s or group’s social status within a society. It describes how people shift from one social position to another in the social hierarchy. This movement may be upward, downward, or even within the same level of status. Social mobility helps sociologists understand how flexible or rigid a society is in terms of opportunities, equality, and social structure.

The concept of social mobility was first systematically introduced by the Russian-American sociologist Pitirim Sorokin in his work “Social and Cultural Mobility.” According to him, no society is completely open where everyone can freely move upward, and no society is completely closed where movement is entirely restricted. Most societies exist somewhere in between these two extremes. He emphasized that social mobility depends on various factors such as education, occupation, economic development, and social policies. More developed societies usually offer greater opportunities for mobility compared to traditional or less developed societies. Social mobility can be broadly understood as movement within the social stratification system, which includes different layers or classes such as lower class, middle class, and upper class. When individuals move from one layer to another, it reflects a change in their social position, income, power, and prestige. This movement may be temporary or permanent depending on circumstances.

There are different types of social mobility. Horizontal mobility occurs when a person changes their occupation or role without changing their social status. For example, a teacher moving from one school to another remains in the same social position. Vertical mobility refers to a change in social status, either upward or downward. Upward mobility happens when a person improves their social position, such as becoming a doctor or manager after starting from a lower-level job. Downward mobility occurs when a person loses status

due to unemployment, financial loss, or other reasons.

Another important form is inter-generational mobility, which refers to the change in social status between generations. For example, parents may belong to a working-class background, while their children become professionals like engineers or teachers. This shows improvement across generations. Intra-generational mobility refers to changes within an individual's lifetime, such as a person starting as a clerk and later becoming a senior executive.

Social mobility is influenced by several factors, including education, economic development, industrialization, merit-based opportunities, government policies, and social equality. Education plays a particularly important role as it provides skills and knowledge that help individuals improve their social position. Similarly, economic growth and modernization increase job opportunities, making mobility easier.

Social mobility is important because it reflects the level of equality and fairness in a society. A society with high mobility is considered more open and democratic, as individuals have better chances to improve their lives based on ability and effort. On the other hand, a society with low mobility is more rigid, where social position is largely determined by birth rather than achievement.

In conclusion, social mobility is a key feature of modern societies that explains how individuals move within the social structure. It highlights opportunities for growth, the impact of social systems, and the degree of equality present in society

ORIGIN OF THE CONCEPT OF SOCIAL MOBILITY

The concept of **social mobility** was first systematically introduced by the Russian-American sociologist and political thinker **Pitirim Sorokin** in his influential work *"Social and Cultural Mobility."* Sorokin studied how individuals and groups move within the social hierarchy and how societies differ in allowing such movement. He explained that no society is completely **open**, where everyone has equal opportunity to move freely across social classes, nor is any society completely **closed**, where movement is entirely restricted, such as in the traditional caste system. Most societies exist somewhere in between these two extremes. Sorokin further argued that social mobility varies from society to society and even changes over time within the same society. The degree and speed of mobility depend largely on the level of social, economic, and political development. In more developed societies, mobility tends to be higher due to education, industrialization, and equal opportunity structures.

According to Sorokin, social mobility occurs through continuous social interactions. Individuals move between positions due to education, occupation, wealth, and personal effort. He also noted that mobility provides individuals with motivation to improve their standard of living. People compete and cooperate within society to achieve better social positions, rewards, and recognition.

TYPES OF SOCIAL MOBILITY

Social mobility can be classified into several types. These forms are not strictly separate, as individuals may experience more than one type during their lifetime. They are mainly used for analytical understanding.

1. Horizontal Mobility

Horizontal mobility refers to a situation where a person changes their occupation, role, or position without any significant change in their social status or prestige. In other words, the individual moves within the same social level.

For example, if a doctor leaves clinical practice and becomes a lecturer in a medical college, their role changes, but their social respect and status remain largely the same. According to Sorokin, horizontal mobility includes changes in occupation, religion, location, or political position without any upward or downward movement in social hierarchy. It represents a lateral shift rather than a change in social rank.

2. Vertical Mobility

Vertical mobility involves a clear change in social status, either upward or downward, within the social hierarchy. It refers to movement from one social stratum to another.

When a person improves their position in society, it is called **upward vertical mobility**. This may happen through education, promotion, or economic success. On the other hand, **downward vertical mobility** occurs when an individual loses status due to unemployment, financial loss, or social decline.

For instance, a businessman who becomes bankrupt and loses his wealth experiences downward mobility. Vertical mobility reflects the changing nature of social inequality and opportunity in society.

❖ **Upward Mobility:** Upward mobility occurs when an individual moves from a lower social position to a higher one. It can also refer to improvement within the same social group, such as career advancement.

For example, a person starting as a low-income worker and later becoming a successful entrepreneur represents upward mobility. While it is generally seen as positive and desirable, it also brings challenges.

Individuals experiencing upward mobility often have to adapt to new lifestyles, behaviors, and social environments. They may need to leave behind familiar surroundings, including family traditions or cultural

practices. Adjusting to a higher social position requires learning new norms and expectations, which can sometimes create psychological and social pressure.

- ❖ **Downward Mobility:** Downward mobility refers to a situation where an individual moves from a higher social position to a lower one. This can happen due to job loss, financial crisis, poor decisions, or legal issues.

For example, a person holding a senior managerial position losing their job and becoming unemployed experiences downward mobility. This type of change can be emotionally and socially challenging, as individuals may struggle to adjust to a lower standard of living.

Downward mobility often leads to stress, loss of identity, and difficulty in adapting to a new social environment. It also reflects inequalities and instability within a society.

3. Inter-Generational Mobility

Inter-generational mobility refers to the change in social status from one generation to another within a family. It compares the social position of parents with that of their children.

For example, if parents belong to a working-class background but their children become doctors, engineers, or government officers, this reflects upward inter-generational mobility. Similarly, if the next generation falls to a lower status, it represents downward mobility.

This type of mobility is influenced by factors such as education, access to opportunities, economic development, and changes in social structure. It also reflects how societies allow individuals to improve their status over generations.

4. Intra-Generational Mobility

Intra-generational mobility refers to changes in social status that occur within the lifetime of a single individual. It shows how a person moves up or down the social ladder during their own career or life span.

For example, a person who starts their career as a clerk and later becomes a company director experiences upward intra-generational mobility. This type of mobility highlights personal effort, skills, education, and opportunities as important factors in social advancement.

It can also occur between siblings, where one achieves a higher status than the other due to different levels of education or career success.

CONCLUSION

Social mobility is a key concept in sociology that explains how individuals and groups move within the social hierarchy. It reflects the openness or rigidity of a society and plays an important role in shaping life opportunities. Different forms of mobility—horizontal, vertical, upward, downward, inter-generational, and intra-generational—help us understand how social positions change over time and across generations.

2.8. SOCIAL STRATIFICATION

Social stratification is a fundamental concept in sociology that explains how societies organize themselves into structured hierarchies based on various social factors such as wealth, income, education, power, and status. It shows how individuals and groups are placed in different layers within society according to these determining elements.

This system highlights the unequal distribution of resources, opportunities, and privileges among different sections of society. As a result, people experience different levels of advantage or disadvantage depending on the social group they belong to. These inequalities directly influence an individual's life chances, social mobility, and overall standard of living.

By examining social stratification, sociologists gain a deeper understanding of how inequality is formed, maintained, and passed on from one generation to the next within society. Social stratification is an important idea in sociology that describes how society is organized into different ranked layers or levels. These layers play a major role in deciding how resources, opportunities, and social privileges are distributed among individuals and groups. It also helps us understand how inequality is structured and how a person's social position affects their life opportunities and chances of moving upward or downward in society.

Social stratification refers to the systematic ranking of individuals or groups in society based on factors such as wealth, power, education, income, and social status. It divides society into different classes or hierarchical levels, where each level holds varying degrees of authority, privilege, and prestige. In this system, elements like occupation, earnings, educational attainment, and overall social standing play a crucial role in determining a person's position within the social structure. As a result, it becomes evident that access to resources, opportunities, and benefits is not equally available to all members of society. This unequal distribution creates clear differences in power, influence, status, and social advantages among various groups. Furthermore, social stratification also affects the chances of social mobility, as it influences whether individuals are able to improve or experience a decline in their social position over time. Overall, it helps to explain why inequality

exists in society and why such structured and unequal systems tend to persist across generations.

CHARACTERISTICS OF SOCIAL STRATIFICATION

Social stratification refers to the structured arrangement of individuals and groups in a society into different layers based on factors such as wealth, power, occupation, and social status. It is a universal phenomenon found in all societies, though its form and intensity may vary. The key characteristics of social stratification help us understand how societies are organized and how inequality is maintained and experienced.

i. Hierarchical Layers

One of the most important features of social stratification is that it is organized in the form of **hierarchical layers or strata**. This means that society is divided into different levels or ranks where individuals and groups occupy higher or lower positions based on their socio-economic status. Commonly, societies are divided into upper, middle, and lower classes. Each layer has a distinct level of access to wealth, education, prestige, and opportunities. This hierarchical arrangement creates a structured system where people are ranked in terms of superiority and inferiority, similar to layered structures found in nature, such as rock formations or an onion.

ii. Social Inequality

Social stratification is fundamentally based on **social inequality**, which means that resources and opportunities are not distributed equally among all members of society. Individuals belonging to higher strata enjoy better living conditions, higher income, quality education, and improved healthcare facilities. In contrast, those in lower strata often face deprivation, limited opportunities, and poor living standards. This unequal distribution of resources creates persistent differences in lifestyles, status, and overall quality of life, reinforcing social divisions across generations.

iii. System of Social Status

Another important characteristic of social stratification is the existence of a **social status system**. Every individual or group is assigned a certain status in society based on factors such as occupation, education, income, family background, and social recognition. This status determines how individuals are perceived, respected, and treated by others. Higher social status usually brings greater respect, authority, and access to valuable resources, while lower status often leads to reduced influence and fewer opportunities. Thus, social status plays a key role in shaping social interactions and relationships.

iv. Social Mobility

Social stratification also includes the concept of **social mobility**, which refers to the movement of individuals or groups from one social position to another within the hierarchy. This movement can be upward or downward depending on various factors such as education, income, career growth, and government policies. In open societies, social mobility is relatively easier, allowing individuals to improve their status through effort and achievement. However, in rigid societies, mobility is limited, and social positions are often fixed by birth.

v. Inherited and Achieved Status

In stratified societies, social status can be either **inherited or achieved**. Inherited status is one that an individual acquires by birth, such as belonging to a particular caste, noble family, or wealthy lineage. It is not based on personal effort but on family background. On the other hand, achieved status is gained through individual abilities, education, skills, and personal achievements. For example, becoming a doctor, engineer, or business owner is based on effort and merit. Both types of status significantly influence an individual's position in society.

TYPES OF SOCIAL STRATIFICATION

Social stratification exists in various forms across different societies. The major types include the caste system, class system, estate system, slavery, and social differentiation. Each system reflects a different way in which society organizes inequality and distributes power, wealth, and status.

i. CASTE SYSTEM

The caste system is a highly rigid form of social stratification in which individuals are born into a specific caste that determines their social status, occupation, and lifestyle for life. This system is based on hereditary membership and offers very little or no opportunity for social mobility. It has been historically prominent in traditional societies such as India. Social interactions, occupations, and even marriage are strictly regulated by caste rules, making it one of the most inflexible systems of stratification.

Every society is stratified. It has rightly been said that an “unstratified society, with a real equality of its members is a myth, which has never been realised in the history of mankind. The form and proportions may vary but its essence is permanent.” The Indian social system rests on three pillars: the caste system, the joint family system, and the village community. Among these, the caste system appears to be the most significant feature of the Hindu Society due to its interdependence upon the social, economic and political systems. In fact, the Hindu Society has been described as the caste society par excellence. In India we find a unique system of social stratification based on birth, which is not found elsewhere in the world.

ORIGIN OF CASTE

The term 'Caste' is derived from a Portuguese word 'Casta' meaning breed, race or group. As already mentioned, castes are ascriptive groups. Thus basically caste refers to people belonging to the same breed. An individual is born into a caste, and this status is usually permanent. Though the elements of castes are found outside India, it is only in India that numerous castes are found. The term 'caste' has been defined differently by different people.

DEFINITION OF CASTE:

According to **G. S. Ghurye** "Castes are small and complete social worlds in themselves marked off definitely from one another though subsisting within the larger society."

According to **MacIver** "When status is wholly predetermined so that men are born to their lot without any hope of change in it, then the class takes the extreme form of caste."

According to A. W. Green, "Caste is a system of stratification in which mobility, movement up and down in the status ladder, at least ideally, may not occur."

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CASTE SYSTEM:

1. **Segmental Division of Society:**

Under caste system, society is divided into several small social groups called castes. Each of these castes is a well developed social group, the membership of which is based on birth.

Since membership is based on birth, mobility from one caste to another is impossible. Each caste has its own traditional social status, occupation, customs, rules and regulations. It has its own governing body called the caste council or 'jati panchayat', which enforces the caste rules. Above all, members of a caste are bound together by mutual obligations of help and co-operation in their day to day activities. Thus each caste is a social world by itself.

2. **Hierarchy:**

The caste system is always characterized by a hierarchical arrangement. It implies that there are some castes which are considered superior to the others. Membership in the caste is based on birth and is more or less fixed. Traditionally it is the hierarchical arrangement of caste according to different degrees of dominance and

subordination. The Brahmins in India are placed on the apex of the social ladder. A Brahmin is entitled to whatever exists in this world. In the caste hierarchy the Brahmins are followed by the Kshatriyas and the Vaishyas. At the bottom of the ladder are the Shudras.

3. Restrictions on Interaction

In the caste system, there are several restrictions on interaction. The members of one caste cannot mix or move freely with the members of the other castes. This ban on interaction becomes still more rigid when the question of mixing of a superior caste with an inferior one comes to the front. Every caste abides by well-established customs and well-defined norms of interaction.

4. Social and religious disabilities:

In caste system, the members of a higher caste impose certain disabilities and restrictions on other castes. In the Hindu caste system, the Brahmins are the most privileged caste and the Sudras are the oppressed ones. A Sudra cannot even touch an individual belonging to a higher caste. People belonging to the lowest caste in the hierarchy are not allowed to dwell in the cities and purchase property in the localities inhabited by the high caste people. They are not allowed even to go to the temples and worship there. They are not even permitted to study religious books etc. they are not also allowed to use village wells or ponds, used by the higher castes.

5. Imposition on restrictions on commensality:

Each caste group has its own laws which govern the food habits of the members. Generally, there are no restrictions on fruit, milk, butter, dry fruits etc. But there are some restrictions regarding unfried food. Unfried food has been divided into two classes, 'pacca' and 'kachcha'. This division is based on the use of 'ghee' with or without water. The kachcha food can be accepted only from a person of one's own caste or of a higher caste.

6. The Ideology of purity and pollution:

The higher castes are believed to be pure and the lower caste people as impure. A central point in Hindu ritual is that it is necessary to make offering to the gods in order for human affairs to continue without undue disaster. The Brahmin or the priest acts as an intermediary between the general society and the gods. The lower castes are regarded as less pure and more polluted. This concept of dividing people in terms of pollution and purity was given by the famous Anthropologist Louis Dumont.

7. Restrictions on Occupations:

The different castes are usually associated with traditional occupations. Hindu religious texts determined the

occupations of all 'Varnas'. One's birth into a particular caste determines his occupation during his life time. A Sudra cannot be engaged in the profession of a priest and a Brahmin is debarred to engage himself in impure occupations like making shoes which is the occupation of the lower castes.

8. Marital restrictions:

Caste endogamy is strictly enforced wherein the members of each caste marry only within their own caste. Inter-caste marriage is prohibited.

9. Hereditary status:

Caste system is based on the ascriptive pattern which implies that the birth of a person in a particular caste decided his caste and his status in society. It is usually difficult or rather impossible to change one's own caste despite the acquisition of qualifications or disqualifications, the membership of a particular caste continues and does not undergo any change.

II. CLASS SYSTEM

The class system is a more flexible form of social stratification based mainly on economic factors such as wealth, income, education, and occupation. Unlike the caste system, individuals can move between classes depending on their achievements and resources. This system is common in modern industrial societies, where personal effort, skills, and education play an important role in determining social position. As a result, social mobility is more possible in a class system compared to other forms.

A social class is made up of people of similar social status who regard one another as social equals. Each class has a set of values, attitudes, beliefs and behaviour norms which differ from those of the other classes. According to Giddens (2000), "a class is a large-scale grouping of people who share common economic resources, which strongly influence the type of lifestyle they are able to lead". Horton and Hunt (1968) writes: "A social class is defined as a stratum of people of similar position in the social status continuum." A stratum is a collectivity of people occupying similar positions in the hierarchical order.

Max Weber has defined class in terms of life chances and said, "a class is a number of people sharing one or more causes of life chances". By life chances he meant "the typical chances for a supply of goods, external living conditions, and personal life experience". Karl Marx, an another main theorist of class, has written much about social class but nowhere he has defined it in certain exact terms.

From his writings, it appears that for Marx, “a class is a group of people who stand in a common relationship to the means of production”, to the political-power structure, and to the ideas of the time, a relationship which necessarily brings it into conflict with some other group having divergent ideas and different interests with respect to the economic and political structures” (Lopreato and Lawrence, 1972). This statement presents the Marx’s basic notion of class. Thus, he defined class in economic terms.

Thus, a social class is an aggregate of people who have same status, rank or common characteristics (lifestyle). This aggregate of people is identified on the basis of their relationship to the economic market who have differential access to wealth, power and certain styles of life. Ownership of wealth together with occupation are the chief criteria of class differences but education, hereditary prestige, group participation, self-identification and recognition by others also play an important part in class distinction.

Characteristics of Class System:

The following are the principal characteristics of class system:

1. A system of hierarchy of status.
2. A system of social ranking based primarily on economic position.
3. A system marked by unequal distribution of wealth and power.
4. A system more mobile than caste system.
5. A system in which status is achieved by one’s own efforts rather than ascribed, assigned or inherited.
6. A system having some degree of permanency of the class structure.
7. A system based on stratum (class) consciousness and solidarity.
8. A system having distinctive mode of life (lifestyle) and cultural expressions of each class.
9. A system based on the recognition of superiority and inferiority in relation to those who stand or below in the social hierarchy.
10. A system in which boundaries between classes are fluid and are less precisely defined.
11. A system in which social classes act as sub-cultures—each social class is a system of behaviour, a set of values and a way of life.

Divisions of social classes:

How many classes are there? Classes are not sharply defined status groups like castes. Social status varies along a continuum. The several social classes may be viewed as points on this continuum. Consequently, the number of social classes is not fixed, nor do any definite boundaries separate them.

Earlier scholars of social class broke up the status continuum into three main classes—upper, middle, and lower. Later scholars found this division unsatisfactory and often used a six-fold classification by breaking each of these three classes into an upper and lower section.

iii. Estate System

The estate system was a dominant form of stratification in feudal societies. It divided society into distinct estates such as the nobility, clergy, and commoners. Each estate had specific rights, responsibilities, and privileges. Social position in this system was largely determined by birth and land ownership. Mobility between estates was very limited, and individuals generally remained within the estate into which they were born. This system was characterized by clear social boundaries and unequal distribution of power.

The estate system is a closed form of social stratification, dominant in medieval Europe and Asia, based on rigid, legally defined hierarchies of land ownership, status, and birth. It traditionally divided society into three main tiers: the **clergy** (First Estate), the **nobility** (Second Estate), and **commoners** (Third Estate), including serfs and peasants. In other words, the **estate system of stratification** is a form of social hierarchy that was prominent in **feudal Europe**, especially during the Middle Ages. In sociology, it refers to a structured system where society is divided into **legally defined groups (estates)** with different rights, duties, and privileges. Unlike caste, which is rigid by birth and religion, the estate system is based on **law, land ownership, and political authority**, though mobility was still very limited.

The typical estate system had three main groups:

1. **First Estate** – the clergy (religious leaders such as priests and bishops), who were responsible for spiritual affairs and often enjoyed tax exemptions and significant influence.
2. **Second Estate** – the nobility (kings, lords, and knights), who owned land, held political power, and controlled military forces.
3. **Third Estate** – the common people, including peasants, farmers, artisans, and later the emerging bourgeoisie (middle class), who bore most taxes and had the least privileges.

A key feature of the estate system was that **rights and duties were legally defined and unequal**, often justified by tradition and religion. Social mobility was limited but slightly more possible than in caste systems.

Sociologists view the estate system as a transitional form between rigid feudal hierarchy and modern class-based societies, especially after events like the **French Revolution**, which challenged estate privileges.

Key aspects of the estate system include:

- **Hierarchy and Inheritance:** Social position was typically inherited, with limited mobility between estates.
- **Land Ownership:** The system was closely linked to feudalism, where the nobility owned the land (fiefdoms) and held political/military power, while serfs worked the land.
- **Legal Rights and Responsibilities:** Each estate had defined rights, duties, and obligations, often encoded in law, defining their lifestyle.
- **Functional Division:** Estates were seen as serving specific functions: clergy prayed, nobles fought/ruled, and commoners worked.
- **Transition to Class:** The system began to break down in Europe following the French Revolution, giving way to modern class systems based on wealth and occupation rather than birthright.

iv. Slavery

Slavery is one of the most extreme forms of social stratification in which individuals are treated as property and are forced to work without personal freedom. Slaves have no rights, independence, or opportunity for social mobility. Their social status is fixed and inherited or imposed. Historically, slavery has been associated with severe exploitation, oppression, and violation of human rights, making it one of the harshest forms of inequality in human history.

The **slavery system of stratification** is one of the most extreme forms of social inequality studied in sociology. It is a system in which individuals are **legally considered the property of others** and are deprived of personal freedom. Slavery is based on the idea that one group of people can own, control, and exploit another group for labor and services.

In this system, slaves have **no rights, autonomy, or social mobility**. They can be bought, sold, inherited, or forced to work without consent. Their status is usually **ascribed**, meaning it is imposed on them through birth, war, debt, or capture. Historically, slavery has existed in many societies, including ancient civilizations like **Greece, Rome, Egypt, and parts of Africa and Asia**, as well as in the **transatlantic slave trade** from the 16th to 19th centuries.

Sociologically, slavery is maintained through **coercion, violence, legal systems, and ideology** that justifies domination. It creates a sharp division between **masters (owners)** and **slaves (property)**, making it the most unequal form of stratification.

Modern sociology distinguishes between traditional slavery and contemporary forms like **human trafficking**

and bonded labor, which still reflect similar patterns of exploitation. Although slavery is now legally abolished in most countries, its legacy continues to influence racial, economic, and social inequalities in many parts of the world.

CONCLUSION

Social stratification is a fundamental feature of all societies that organizes individuals into hierarchical layers based on status, wealth, and power. It creates both structured inequality and varying degrees of social mobility. Understanding its characteristics and types helps explain how social systems operate and how inequality is maintained or challenged in different societies.

2.9. SUMMARY

This chapter introduces key sociological concepts that help explain how human societies are structured and how they function and change over time. Society is understood as a system of relationships among individuals who share a common territory, culture, and institutions. It provides the framework within which people interact and organize their lives. Culture refers to the shared beliefs, values, norms, language, and practices that shape a group's way of life. It influences how individuals think, behave, and interpret the world around them. Culture is learned and transmitted across generations, making it central to social continuity. The chapter distinguishes between institutions and associations. Institutions are established systems or structures, such as family, education, religion, and government, that fulfill essential societal needs. Associations, on the other hand, are organized groups formed for specific purposes, like clubs, unions, or organizations, and are often more temporary and goal-oriented. Social change is a significant theme, referring to transformations in social structures and cultural patterns over time. These changes can result from technological advancements, economic developments, political movements, or cultural shifts, and they can be gradual or rapid. The concept of social mobility examines the movement of individuals or groups within the social hierarchy. It can be upward or downward and is influenced by factors like education, occupation, and economic opportunities. Finally, social stratification describes the hierarchical arrangement of individuals into different social layers based on wealth, power, and status. It highlights inequalities within society and the ways resources and opportunities are distributed unevenly. Thus, together, these concepts provide a comprehensive understanding of how societies operate, evolve, and maintain order while also experiencing change and inequality.

2.10. KEY TERMS

Society – Society is a group of individuals who live together in an organized way, sharing a common territory, culture, and system of relationships. It provides structure for human interaction and cooperation.

Culture – Culture refers to the shared beliefs, values, customs, traditions, language, and behaviors that are learned and passed from one generation to another. It shapes how people think and act.

Institution – An institution is an established system or structure in society that fulfills important needs, such as family, education, religion, and government. It helps maintain order and stability.

Association – An association is a group of people organized for a specific purpose or activity, such as clubs, unions, or societies. It is usually voluntary and goal-oriented.

Social Change – Social change means the transformation of social structures, relationships, and cultural patterns over time. It may occur due to technological, economic, or political factors.

Social Mobility – Social mobility is the movement of individuals or groups from one social position or class to another. It can be upward (improvement) or downward (decline).

Social Stratification – Social stratification refers to the division of society into different layers or groups based on factors like wealth, power, and status, leading to inequality among people.

2.11. ANSWER TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check your progress;

1. Define society.
2. Define culture. Discuss the material and non-material culture.
3. What do you mean by Institution in sociology?
4. What is Association. Elaborately discuss the difference between Institution and Association.
5. Define social change. What are the factors of social change?
6. What is social mobility? Discuss the type of social mobility.

7. Discuss Social stratification. What are the types of social stratification?
8. Critically examine the term “Caste system” in India.
9. Critically evaluate Karl Marx and Max Weber perspectives on social class.

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UNIT 3: TALCOTT PARSONS

3.0. Introduction

Objectives

systems and Pattern Variables.

3.1. Unit

3.2. Action

3.3. Summary

3.4. Key terms

3.5. Answer to check your progress

3.6. Further Reading

3.0. INTRODUCTION

Talcott Parsons stands as a central figure in classical sociological theory, particularly known for his systematic attempt to explain how social order is created and maintained in complex societies. Writing during the mid-twentieth century, Parsons was concerned with the problem of stability in social life: how individuals, despite having different interests and motivations, are integrated into a functioning and orderly society. To address this question, he developed a grand theoretical framework known as the **theory of social action system**, which became one of his most significant contributions to sociology.

At the core of Parsons' theory is the idea that human action is not random or purely individualistic, but is structured by shared cultural norms, values, and institutional arrangements. He argued that every social action is embedded within a larger system that guides and regulates behavior. To explain this systematically, Parsons identified four interrelated subsystems: the **behavioral organism**, which refers to biological and physical needs; the **personality system**, which deals with individual motivations and psychological orientations; the **social system**, which includes roles, relationships, and institutions; and the **cultural system**, which consists of values, beliefs, and symbolic meanings. Together, these systems form an integrated framework that ensures social equilibrium and continuity.

Another important component of Parsons' work is the concept of **pattern variables**, which he introduced as analytical tools to understand the value orientations underlying human action. Pattern variables represent basic choices individuals make in social situations, such as whether behavior is guided by emotion or neutrality, personal ties or universal rules, achievement or inherited status, and specific or broad relationships. These

variables help explain differences in behavior across social contexts and between traditional and modern societies.

This chapter will introduce and examine Parsons' theory of the action system and pattern variables, highlighting their importance in understanding social order, role behavior, and value integration within society.

3.1. UNIT OBJECTIVES

- To understand the basic concept of **Talcott Parsons' theory of social action** and its significance in sociology.
- To explain the meaning and structure of the **action system**, including its four subsystems: behavioural organism, personality system, social system, and cultural system.
- To analyse how individual actions are **guided by norms, values, and cultural expectations** in society.
- To study Parsons' idea of **social order and value consensus** as the basis of stable society.
- To understand the concept of **pattern variables** as tools for explaining value choices in social roles.

3.2. ACTION SYSTEM AND PATTERN VARIABLES

3.2.1. ACTION SYSTEM

Talcott Parsons – *The Structure of Social Action* (1937)

Talcott Parsons' **Action Theory** is one of the most comprehensive and influential theoretical frameworks in sociology. It attempts to explain how human behavior is organized, meaningful, and socially integrated within a larger system of norms and values. Parsons developed this theory primarily in *The Structure of Social Action* (1937), where he argued against both purely utilitarian (rational choice) explanations and purely deterministic (biological or structural) explanations of human behavior. Instead, he proposed that **social action is voluntaristic but normatively regulated**, meaning individuals act with choice and intention, but their choices are shaped by cultural values and social expectations.

The Structure of Social Action, first published in 1937, stands as Talcott Parsons's inaugural major work and is widely recognized as laying the theoretical groundwork for his later structural functionalism. In this seminal text, Parsons undertakes an ambitious synthesis of European social theory and contemporary societal dynamics. Rather than treating the individual as a passive recipient of social forces, he reconceptualizes human beings as active, meaning-oriented agents whose actions are normatively structured. This reorientation marks

a decisive shift in the development of sociological theory. Parsons composed *The Structure of Social Action* at a time when American sociology was heavily empiricist, pragmatist, and positivist in orientation. In deliberate contrast to these trends, he drew extensively on European classics—particularly the work of Max Weber, Émile Durkheim, and Alfred Marshall—to construct a theoretical framework that could account for the normative foundations of social order. His project sought to bridge empirical investigation with a systematic theory of action grounded in values and norms. As such, the book is not only a theoretical treatise but also a programmatic call for the institutionalization of sociology as a discipline centered on normative action theory.

Core Argument: The Theory of Action

Parsons's central question is: How is social action possible? He rejects the reductionist, utilitarian model of the homo economics, which reduces action to strategic pursuit of self-interest. Instead, he argues that action is inherently normative, shaped by shared cultural values and symbolic systems. Social actors do not merely calculate utility; they orient themselves to normative expectations that confer meaning and legitimacy on their actions.

For Parsons, social action must be understood as:

- **Goal-oriented** — actors pursue intentional objectives.
- **Contextually embedded** — action is always situated within specific conditions and constraints.
- **Normatively structured** — action is guided by cultural values and social rules.

He conceptualizes action as a systematic relationship among four interdependent elements:

- **Actor:** the decision-making individual with preferences and intentions.
- **Goal:** the intended purpose or outcome of the action.
- **Situation:** the external conditions and resources that constrain or enable action.
- **Normative Order:** the shared values, rules, and cultural frameworks that guide and legitimate action.

This approach integrates subjective motivations with objective social structures, laying the foundation for a normative theory of action that would profoundly influence subsequent sociological thought, including Anthony Giddens's structuration theory.

From Action Theory to Systems Theory: The AGIL Framework

Parsons extended the theoretical premises of *The Structure of Social Action* in his later work *The Social System* (1951). Here, he developed the AGIL scheme, a systemic model that identifies four essential functions that any social system must fulfill to maintain stability and integration:

- **Adaptation (A):** securing resources and adjusting to environmental conditions (e.g., through the economy).
- **Goal Attainment (G):** defining and pursuing collective objectives (e.g., political institutions).
- **Integration (I):** ensuring solidarity, coordination, and conflict regulation (e.g., legal systems).
- **Latency (L):** maintaining and transmitting cultural values and motivational patterns (e.g., family, education, religion).

The AGIL framework represents a direct systematization of Parsons's normative action theory. It translates individual-level normatively guided action into the functional requirements of social systems, thereby providing a comprehensive theory of social order that was highly influential for mid-20th-century sociology.

CONCLUSION

The Structure of Social Action is a key work that reshaped how sociological theory understands its goals and scope. By focusing on how norms shape human action, Parsons developed a broad theoretical framework aimed at bridging individual subjective meanings with the existence of stable social order. He brought together major strands of classical European social thought and combined them with a strong ambition to establish sociology as a rigorous scientific discipline. This synthesis had a long-lasting influence, contributing significantly to discussions in sociology, political science, and organizational theory. Even though his ideas have been revised and debated by later scholars, Parsons' work continues to be a crucial reference for understanding social action as something deeply rooted in cultural meanings and normative structures.

3.2.2. PATTERN VARIABLES

Talcott Parsons' Pattern Variables theory identifies five dichotomous choices (dilemmas) actors face in social interactions, defining how roles are performed and how social systems are structured. These variables, ranging from personal/emotional to impersonal/rational, classify actions and illustrate the shift from traditional (diffuse, ascriptive) to modern (specific, achievement-oriented) societies.

In Talcott Parsons' sociological theory, **social roles are the most fundamental and indispensable components of the social system**, as they structure how individuals behave within society. However, the performance of these roles is not always smooth or conflict-free. Instead, it often generates **pressures, tensions, and strains** for individuals. The intensity of such strain depends largely on two important factors:

first, the extent to which **role expectations are institutionalized** within a society (meaning how clearly and firmly they are established through social institutions such as family, law, education, and religion), and second, the degree to which these expectations and values are **internalized by individuals through socialization**. When individuals deeply internalize social norms, role performance becomes easier; when they do not, tension and conflict increase. While performing social roles, individuals are constantly confronted with **motivational and value-based dilemmas**. These dilemmas arise because people must choose between competing orientations of action that are embedded in social life. These conflicts reflect the tension between personal needs, desires, and social expectations. In many cases, these choices are **binary or dichotomous**, meaning that the actor must select one alternative and reject the other before action can proceed. For example, in certain situations, a person may need to choose between acting according to **universal standards** that apply equally to everyone or according to **particular relationships** such as family or friendship ties. Only one orientation can guide action at a time in such cases.

To analyze these structured choices systematically, Parsons introduced **five key pattern variables**, which represent fundamental dimensions of role behavior. Although he acknowledges that other possibilities may exist, these five are central to understanding social action:

1. Affectivity vs. Affective Neutrality

This pattern variable refers to whether an individual expresses behavior in terms of **immediate emotional satisfaction** or instead exercises **emotional restraint in favor of objective or moral considerations**. In affective behavior, individuals seek direct gratification of emotions such as love, anger, or affection. In contrast, affective neutrality requires controlling emotions and acting in a more disciplined or rational manner. Parsons emphasizes that both elements are necessary in social life: individuals cannot survive without emotional satisfaction, yet no social system can function effectively if all actions are emotionally driven without restraint.

2. Self-Orientation vs. Collectivity Orientation

This dilemma concerns whether an individual prioritizes **personal interests and benefits** or the **welfare and goals of a larger group or society**. Self-orientation focuses on individual gratification, achievement, or advantage, whereas collectivity orientation involves acting for the benefit of the group, even at the cost of personal sacrifice. This introduces a moral dimension into social action, as individuals must often choose between egoistic and altruistic tendencies. Parsons notes that this tension exists across all stages of human development—from primitive societies to modern civilizations. Even in systems such as socialism, which emphasize collective welfare, maintaining a strong collectivity orientation consistently is difficult, as individual interests often re-emerge within institutions.

3. Universalism vs. Particularism

This variable describes whether actions are guided by **general, impersonal standards** or by **personal relationships and emotional attachments**. Universalism refers to the application of uniform rules, laws, and criteria to all individuals regardless of identity or relationship. For instance, in legal systems, laws are expected to apply equally to everyone. Particularism, on the other hand, occurs when decisions are influenced by personal connections such as kinship, friendship, or loyalty. For example, giving preferential treatment to a relative despite legal rules reflects particularism. Parsons argues that in modern societies, especially those with bureaucratic and formal institutions, universalism becomes more dominant, although particularistic tendencies continue to exist in everyday social life.

4. Ascription vs. Achievement

This pattern variable concerns the basis on which individuals are evaluated or assigned social status. **Ascription** refers to status determined by fixed characteristics such as birth, caste, gender, age, or ethnicity. Individuals have little or no control over these attributes. **Achievement**, in contrast, refers to status earned through personal effort, skills, education, and performance. Parsons highlights that many traditional societies, such as those influenced by caste systems, rely heavily on ascription. In contrast, modern industrial societies increasingly emphasize achievement-based evaluation, where individuals are judged based on merit and productivity rather than inherited status.

5. Specificity vs. Diffuseness

This variable deals with the **range or scope of social relationships** involved in role performance. **Specificity** refers to narrowly defined, task-oriented relationships where interaction is limited to a particular function or purpose. For example, the relationship between a doctor and a patient, or a buyer and seller in a market, is highly specific and confined to a particular context. **Diffuseness**, on the other hand, refers to broad and multi-dimensional relationships that extend across many areas of life. Such relationships involve emotional, social, and personal dimensions simultaneously. Examples include family relationships, marriage, and close friendships, where individuals interact in a more comprehensive and flexible manner.

Key Aspects of the Theory

- **Social System Analysis:** These variables are used to analyze the institutional patterns of society and how social roles are structured within social systems.
- **Social Change:** Parsons uses these to map the evolution of societies, arguing that modern, developed societies tend to move toward universalism, achievement, and specificity.

- **Bridging Social Action and System:** Pattern variables bridge the gap between individual action (micro) and the social system (macro), explaining how actors navigate roles within structural constraints.

CONCLUSION

In summary, Parsons' pattern variables provide a systematic framework for understanding how individuals navigate complex and often conflicting value choices in social life. These variables highlight that role performance is always shaped by cultural expectations and institutional norms, requiring individuals to balance competing orientations in different social contexts. Through this model, Parsons demonstrates that social behaviour is structured, value-driven, and deeply embedded within the broader cultural system.

In conclusion, Talcott Parsons' theory of the **action system and pattern variables** provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the relationship between individual behavior and the wider social structure. His action system explains that human behavior is not random but organized through four interrelated subsystems—the behavioral organism, personality system, social system, and cultural system. Together, these subsystems ensure that individual actions are guided by shared norms and values, thereby maintaining social order and stability.

The concept of **pattern variables** further strengthens this framework by identifying the basic value choices individuals face in different social situations. These variables—*affectivity vs. affective neutrality*, *self-orientation vs. collectivity orientation*, *universalism vs. particularism*, *ascription vs. achievement*, and *specificity vs. diffuseness*—highlight how cultural expectations shape role performance. They also help explain differences between traditional and modern societies in terms of values and social organization.

Overall, Parsons' contribution lies in presenting society as a **value-integrated system** where individual actions are structured by common cultural standards. Although his theory has been criticized for overlooking conflict and power relations, it remains a foundational approach in sociology for analyzing social order, role behaviour, and institutional functioning. His ideas continue to influence sociological thinking about how societies maintain cohesion through shared value systems and patterned social action.

3.3. SUMMARY

Talcott Parsons developed a comprehensive theory to explain how social order is maintained through structured patterns of action. His approach, rooted in structural functionalism, views society as a system where individual actions are guided by shared norms and values. According to Parsons, every action involves an actor, a goal, a situation, and normative regulations. Actions are not random but shaped by cultural expectations and social systems. To explain how society functions, he introduced the concept of action

systems, organized into four interrelated subsystems known as the AGIL framework. These include Adaptation (economic system), which deals with resource allocation; Goal Attainment (political system), which defines and pursues collective objectives; Integration (social/legal system), which ensures coordination and stability; and Latency or Pattern Maintenance (cultural system), which preserves values and motivates individuals. Together, these systems maintain social equilibrium.

Parsons also introduced pattern variables to explain the choices individuals face in social interactions. These are value orientations that guide behavior in different contexts. There are five key dichotomies: affectivity versus affective neutrality (emotional vs. controlled behavior), self-orientation versus collectivity-orientation (individual vs. group interest), universalism versus particularism (general rules vs. personal relationships), ascription versus achievement (status by birth vs. merit), and specificity versus diffuseness (limited vs. broad relationships). These variables help distinguish between traditional and modern societies and clarify role expectations in different settings. While Parsons' theory has been criticized for being overly abstract and for neglecting conflict and social change, it remains significant for understanding how social systems operate and how individual actions are structured within a stable social order.

3.4. KEY TERMS

Action Systems- Parsons' action system explains society through behavioral organism, personality, social, and cultural systems. The AGIL model—Adaptation, Goal Attainment, Integration, and Latency—maintains stability, order, and social functioning within society.

Pattern Variables- Pattern variables describe choices in social interaction: affectivity-neutrality, self-collectivity orientation, universalism-particularism, achievement-ascription, and specificity-diffuseness. They explain role behaviour, social expectations, and value-oriented actions in society.

3.5. ANSWER TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress

1. Explain the AGIL system theory of Talcott Parsons.
2. Discuss the Action systems theory of Talcott Parsons.
3. Briefly explain Talcott Parsons's theory of Pattern Variables.

3.6. FURTHER READING

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Web link:

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UNIT 4: G.H. MEAD AND ERVING GOFFMAN

- 4.0. Introduction
- 4.1. Unit Objectives
- 4.2. Interactional Self
- 4.3. Presentation of Self
- 4.4. Summary
- 4.5. Key terms
- 4.6. Answer to check your progress
- 4.7. Further Reading

4.0. INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces two foundational thinkers in symbolic interactionism—George Herbert Mead and Erving Goffman—whose ideas profoundly shaped sociological understanding of the self, identity, and everyday interaction. Their theories shift attention from large social structures to the micro-level processes through which individuals develop meaning and construct their social identities in interaction with others.

George Herbert Mead’s theory explains the **formation of the self through social interaction**. He argues that the self is not biological or pre-existing but emerges through communication, language, and the ability to take the role of others. Mead’s distinction between the “I” and the “Me” highlights the dynamic nature of identity, where the “Me” reflects social expectations internalized through interaction, while the “I” represents individual spontaneity and response.

Erving Goffman extends this understanding through his theory of the **presentation of self in everyday life**, using a dramaturgical approach. He compares social interaction to a theatrical performance, where individuals act as performers managing impressions before an audience. Concepts such as front stage, backstage, and impression management explain how people strategically present themselves in different social settings.

Together, Mead and Goffman provide a comprehensive framework for understanding how the self is socially constructed, negotiated, and performed in everyday life.

4.1. UNIT OBJECTIVES

The major objectives of the unit are discussed below:

- To understand the basic concepts of interactional Self and its importance in sociology.
- To study George Herbert Mead’s theory of the development of self through social interaction.

- To explain Mead’s concepts of the “I” and the “Me” and their role in personality formation.
- To study Erving Goffman’s theory of the presentation of self in everyday life.
- To explain the dramaturgical approach, where social life is seen as a stage performance.
- To compare and connect Mead’s and Goffman’s ideas in explaining the social construction of self.

4.2. INTERACTIONAL SELF

G.H. Mead – Self and Identity

Symbolic interactionism is an important sociological framework that explains the relationship between the individual (self) and society through the process of **symbolic communication and interaction**. This perspective is primarily grounded in the intellectual contributions of **George Herbert Mead (1934)**, **Charles Horton Cooley (1902)**, **William Isaac Thomas (1931)**, and other pragmatist scholars associated with the **University of Chicago during the early twentieth century**.

At its core, symbolic interactionism argues that human existence is fundamentally **symbolic in nature**. Human beings do not simply respond directly to physical stimuli; instead, they interpret the world through **symbols that carry socially shared meanings**. These symbols are culturally created objects—such as language, gestures, and signs—that acquire meaning through social interaction and collective understanding. Through the processes of **communication and language**, individuals construct their perception of reality. Thus, reality is not an objective or fixed structure existing independently of humans; rather, it is a **socially constructed product**. All major aspects of human life—including the **self, mind, society, and culture**—**emerge from continuous symbolic interactions**. Even physical objects and environments are meaningful to human beings only when they are interpreted through symbolic systems.

The Central Importance of Meaning

The term “symbolic interactionism” was formally introduced by **Herbert Blumer (1969)**, a student of Mead who significantly systematized and developed his ideas into a coherent sociological perspective.

Blumer identified three foundational assumptions of symbolic interactionism:

1. Human beings act toward people, objects, and situations based on the **meanings those things hold for them**.
2. These meanings are not inherent but are developed through **social interaction with others**.
3. Meanings are not fixed; they are continuously **interpreted, modified, and reshaped** through ongoing social interaction.

The central concern of this approach is **meaning**, which is understood in terms of **human action and its consequences**, reflecting its roots in pragmatist philosophy. Meaning is not abstract; rather, it is embedded in practical activity. A thing acquires meaning based on the kind of response it produces in a specific context.

For example:

- Grass may function as food for a cow
- It may serve as shelter for certain animals
- It may simply be an aesthetic object for humans

Thus, meaning is context-dependent and action-oriented.

In symbolic interaction, meanings are also shaped by **shared or consensual understanding** among individuals. For example, the meaning of a social term such as “husband” depends on collective agreement among those who use it. When consensus is strong, communication becomes clear and effective. However, when agreement is weak or absent, meanings become ambiguous, leading to misunderstandings. Within any cultural system, there is usually a broad level of shared understanding about symbols. However, in real-life situations, meanings are often **fluid, negotiable, and variable**, depending on how individuals interpret and redefine them during interaction.

Interpretation, Role-Taking, and Negotiation

According to Blumer, meaning is produced through an ongoing **interpretive process** rather than being automatically given. A key mechanism in this process is **role-taking**, which refers to the cognitive ability of an individual to imagine and understand the perspective of another person.

Role-taking is essential for effective communication because it allows individuals to:

- Interpret others’ intentions and responses
- Adjust their own behavior accordingly
- Develop shared understandings of symbols

In addition to role-taking, meaning is also shaped through **negotiation**, which involves mutual adjustment between interacting individuals. Through negotiation, people refine and stabilize meanings in social situations.

Therefore, meaning is:

- Not fixed or predetermined
- Continuously emerging through interaction

- Dependent on interpretation and negotiation

Most concepts within symbolic interactionism are directly or indirectly connected to this idea of meaning.

Origins of Symbolic Interactionism: Mead's Social Behaviourism

Symbolic interactionism, though widely accepted, is not a rigid or unified theory. Many sociologists associated with it do not strictly accept the label. However, the term effectively captures the central idea of Mead's social psychology, which emphasizes that human interaction is fundamentally a process of **communication through symbols**.

Mead was concerned with two major questions:

- How did humans develop the capacity for symbolic communication?
- How does this capacity develop in individual human growth?

His answer forms the foundation of **social behaviourism**, which differs from classical behaviourism by emphasizing meaning, interpretation, and social context.

Mead's Concept of the Self

Mead argues that the **human mind or self develops through symbolic interaction**. The self is not biologically pre-given but emerges socially as individuals interact with others. He interprets the development of the self in **Darwinian evolutionary terms**, suggesting that both human biological development and social behaviour are interconnected aspects of evolution.

Mead also maintained that:

- Social life can be studied scientifically
- Human behaviour is observable and not hidden in the mind
- Mental processes are reflected in behaviour

However, he criticized earlier scientific approaches for either:

- Using inadequate methods, or
- Misunderstanding the subject matter of human social life

Human Behaviour and Symbolic Capacity

Mead distinguishes humans from animals by emphasizing the role of **symbolic capacity**.

Distinguishes humans from animals- symbolic capacity	
Animals	Humans
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Respond directly to immediate stimuli.• Rely primarily on instinctive reactions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reflect on past experiences• Anticipate future events• Plan and modify actions consciously.

This ability allows humans to transcend immediate circumstances and control their behavior rather than simply reacting to stimuli.

Meaning of Symbolic Capacity

Symbolic capacity refers to the human ability to:

- Represent past experiences
- Imagine future situations
- Mentally construct events that are not physically present

An essential part of this capacity is **self-representation**, meaning humans can think about themselves as objects of thought.

This ability allows individuals to:

- Reflect on their own behavior
- Evaluate their actions
- Understand how others perceive them

This forms the basis of **self-consciousness**.

The Self as a Social Product

The self is not merely a biological organism but a **social identity formed through interaction**. Mead describes it as a “social self” because it develops through engagement with others.

Children initially learn through **imitation**, where they copy the actions of adults in various roles (e.g., teacher, doctor, parent). Through this process, they begin to understand:

- Social roles
- Behavioral expectations
- Perspectives of others

This enables individuals to gradually shift from a purely personal viewpoint to a **socially informed perspective**.

The Generalized Other

Mead introduces the concept of the **generalized other**, which refers to the internalized attitudes and expectations of society as a whole.

It represents:

- The common viewpoint of the community
- The collective expectations of social groups
- The standard norms of behavior

This generalized perspective helps individuals regulate their behavior and maintain social order.

Self-Identity and Reflexivity

A key feature of the self is **reflexivity**, which allows individuals to:

- Observe themselves
- Evaluate their behavior
- Develop a sense of identity

Two types of social influences are crucial in this process:

- **Significant others** (important individuals like parents, teachers, friends)
- **Generalized other** (society as a whole)

Charles Cooley's concept of the **looking-glass self (1902)** supports this idea, suggesting that individuals develop self-feelings based on how they imagine others perceive them.

Role Identities and Socialization

The self consists of multiple **role identities** such as student, parent, or worker. These identities are shaped through socialization processes in institutions like: Family, School, Peer groups, and Workplace. In this regard, Sheldon Stryker argues that the strength of commitment to these role identities significantly shapes the structure of the self. Thus, Socialization is lifelong, and individuals continuously acquire new roles throughout their life.

Active Nature of the Self

Socialization is not passive. Individuals actively:

- Interpret roles
- Modify expectations
- Create new forms of role behavior

This process is known as **role-making**, where individuals actively shape how they perform roles. Sometimes individuals may also reject or distance themselves from roles that conflict with their self-image.

Language, Play, and Game

Mead identifies three key processes in self-development:

1. Language	2. Play	3. Game
Language enables communication through significant symbols and allows individuals to understand others' perspectives.	Children take on individual roles and begin to understand others' viewpoints.	Individuals learn multiple roles simultaneously and understand structured social systems, leading to the formation of the generalized other and full self-development.

The "Me" and the "I"

Mead divides the self into two parts:

The "Me"	The "I"
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Represents social norms and expectations • Reflects internalized society • Ensures stability and order 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Represents creativity and spontaneity • Produces new responses • Introduces change
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The self emerges from the continuous interaction between the “I” and the “Me.”

CRITICISM OF SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISM

Despite its importance, symbolic interactionism has been criticized for:

- Overemphasizing small-scale interactions
- Ignoring larger structures like class and power
- Failing to explain the origin of meanings
- Being influenced by American cultural ideals

Marxist critics argue that meanings are shaped by **economic and class structures**, not just interaction.

CONCLUSION

G.H. Mead’s theory of self and identity provides a foundational understanding of how individuals develop identity through symbolic interaction. His concepts of meaning, role-taking, generalized other, and the “I” and “Me” remain central to modern sociology. Although criticized for ignoring structural factors, his theory continues to be highly influential in explaining how human beings construct identity through social interaction.

4.3. PRESENTATION OF SELF

ERVING GOFFMAN – THEORY OF PRESENTATION OF SELF (DRAMATURGICAL APPROACH)

1. INTRODUCTION

Erving Goffman (1922–1982) was a Canadian-American sociologist widely regarded as one of the most influential figures in **micro-sociology** and **symbolic interactionism**. His work focuses on how individuals present themselves in everyday life and how social interaction is structured like a theatrical performance.

Goffman's most famous work is “**The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life**” (1956). Published later as a book in 1959 by the University of Edinburgh Social Sciences Research Centre. In this work, Goffman introduces his **dramaturgical model of social interaction**, where life is compared to a theatre performance. According to him, individuals are not just passive participants in society but are **active performers** who manage impressions to influence how others perceive them. His theory explains how individuals construct identity through interaction, emphasizing **impression management, role performance, and social settings**.

2. Intellectual Background of Goffman

Goffman's theory is influenced by the Symbolic interactionism (George Herbert Mead), Pragmatism, Sociology of everyday life, Social psychology and Functional analysis of roles . However, Goffman shifted focus from Mead's abstract ideas of self to **observable behavior in everyday situations**. He was less interested in internal psychological processes and more concerned with:

- What people actually do in social settings
- How they manage impressions
- How they behave in front of others

3. Core Idea of Goffman's Theory

The central idea of Goffman's theory is: Social life is a stage, and individuals are actors who perform roles to create specific impressions on others. He argues that:

- Everyday life is structured like a performance
- Individuals act strategically to control how others see them
- Identity is not fixed but continuously constructed

Thus, self is not something permanent; it is something that is **performed and negotiated in interaction**.

4. Dramaturgical Approach

Goffman uses a theatrical metaphor to explain social life. The key assumption by Goffman is that Social interaction is like a drama or performance in which individuals play roles before an audience. In this metaphor:

- Society = Stage
- Individuals = Actors
- Social situations = Performances
- Others = Audience
- Roles = Scripts

This approach is called **dramaturgical analysis**.

5. The Concept of “Performance”

A performance is: The total activity of an individual during a social interaction designed to influence the perception of others. Features of performance:

- It is intentional or strategic
- It is context-dependent
- It involves communication of meaning
- It requires audience participation

Example:

A student behaves differently in:

- Classroom (formal performance)
- Friends' group (informal performance)

6. Front Stage and Back Stage Behavior

One of Goffman's most important contributions is the distinction between **front stage and back stage regions**.

<p>(1) Front Stage</p> <p>Front stage is:</p> <p>The area where individuals perform in front of others.</p> <p>Characteristics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal behavior • Controlled actions • Following social norms • Impression management <p>Example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher in classroom • Doctor with patient • Employee in office <p>Individuals carefully manage:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appearance • Speech • Behavior 	<p>(2) Back Stage</p> <p>Back stage is:</p> <p>The private area where individuals relax and prepare their performances.</p> <p>Characteristics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informal behavior • No audience • Relaxed expression • Preparation of front stage roles <p>Example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher in staff room • Actor behind stage • Family home environment <p>Here, individuals can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drop formal roles • Express true feelings • Prepare for future performances
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7. Impression Management:

<p>Impression management is the process by which individuals attempt to control how others perceive them.</p> <p>Methods include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dress and appearance • Language use • Facial expressions • Behavior adjustment
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- Emotional control

Purpose:

To create a **desired identity in the minds of others.**

Example:

A job candidate behaves confidently in an interview to create a positive impression.

8. The “Face” Concept and Face-work

Goffman introduces the idea of “face” and “**Face-work**”.

<p style="text-align: center;">Face Concept</p> <p>Meaning:</p> <p>Face is:</p> <p>The positive social identity an individual claims in interaction.</p> <p>People try to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain face • Avoid embarrassment • Protect self-image <p>Losing face:</p> <p>When a person fails to meet expectations, they experience embarrassment or shame.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Face-Work</p> <p>Meaning:</p> <p>Face-work refers to:</p> <p>The actions individuals take to maintain their own face and support others’ face during interaction.</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apologizing • Humor to reduce tension • Avoiding sensitive topics • Saving others from embarrassment <p>Face-work helps maintain:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social harmony • Smooth interaction • Cooperation
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9. Role Performance

Goffman explains that individuals perform roles based on Social expectations, Situational context, and Audience presence. However, unlike structural theories, he emphasizes that Roles are flexible, Individuals interpret roles creatively, and Role performance varies across situations.

10. Regions and Settings

Social life is divided into different **regions of interaction**:

(1) Fixed regions	(2) Situational regions
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Home• Office• School	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Parties• Public transport• Restaurants
Each region demands different types of performance.	

11. Teams and Cooperation

Goffman argues that social performances are often **collective**.

A “team” is: A group of individuals who cooperate in staging a particular performance.

For example: A hospital staff team, A restaurant service team, A theatre group, etc. Here Teams acts based on Coordinate actions, Maintain consistent impression, and Support each other’s roles.

12. Misrepresentation and Deception

Goffman acknowledges that social interaction may involve Strategic manipulation, Controlled deception, and Impression distortion. However, this is not always negative; it is part of normal social functioning. Example: Politicians during speeches, and Job seekers in interviews.

13. Interaction Rituals

Interaction rituals refer to: Standardized patterns of behavior that maintain social order in everyday interaction. Examples: Greetings, Handshakes, Politeness, and Respect gestures. These rituals help in maintaining social order, reducing conflict, and strengthening relationships.

14. Social Identity and Self

According to Goffman the self is not a fixed entity but a product of social interaction.

Self is continuously constructed, dependent on audience, and contextual. Thus, identity changes depending on the situation, audience, and role

15. Comparison with Mead and Goffman

The comparison between the Mead and Goffman are discussed in the below:

Mead	Goffman
Focus on internal self	Focus on external behavior
“I” and “Me”	Dramaturgical roles
Abstract theory	Empirical observation
Generalized other	Audience control

16. Applications of Goffman’s Theory

Goffman’s ideas are used in:

- Media studies
- Organizational behavior
- Communication studies
- Political science
- Digital identity studies

Example:

Social media profiles are modern forms of **impression management**.

17. Strengths of Goffman’s Theory

- Explains everyday interaction clearly
- Focuses on real-life behavior
- Introduces useful concepts like front stage/back stage

- Highlights importance of communication
- Shows flexibility of identity

CONCLUSION

Erving Goffman's theory of the **presentation of self** provides a powerful explanation of how individuals construct identity through everyday interaction. His dramaturgical model shows that social life is structured like a theatrical performance where individuals act, manage impressions, and adjust behavior according to audience and context. Although his theory has been criticized for ignoring macro-level structures, it remains one of the most influential frameworks for understanding **identity, communication, and social behavior in modern sociology**. Goffman ultimately shows that the self is not something we simply possess—it is something we continuously **perform, negotiate, and present in everyday life**.

In conclusion, the theories of G.H. Mead and Erving Goffman provide a comprehensive understanding of how the self is formed, maintained, and expressed through social interaction. Mead's concept of the interactional self explains that the self is not an innate or fixed entity but emerges through symbolic interaction with others. Through processes such as language, role-taking, and the development of the "generalized other," individuals learn to see themselves from the perspective of society. The self, therefore, is a dynamic product of communication, where the "I" represents spontaneity and creativity while the "Me" reflects internalized social norms. Building on this foundation, Goffman's theory of the presentation of self emphasizes how individuals actively manage their identities in everyday life. Using his dramaturgical approach, Goffman shows that social life resembles a stage where individuals perform roles, control impressions, and adjust behavior according to audience expectations. Concepts such as front stage, back stage, and impression management highlight how identity is strategically constructed in interaction. Thus, together, Mead and Goffman demonstrate that the self is both socially formed and actively performed. While Mead focuses on the internal development of self through interaction, Goffman highlights its external expression in social settings. Combined, their theories reveal that identity is not stable but continuously created and recreated in everyday social life.

4.4. SUMMARY

The concepts of "Interactional Self" and "Presentation of Self" explain how human identity develops and functions through social interaction. George Herbert Mead focused on how the self emerges through communication and interaction, while Erving Goffman explained how individuals manage impressions in everyday social life. Mead argued that the self is not present at birth but develops gradually through interaction with others. According to him, society and communication shape individual identity. He divided the self into two parts: the "I" and the "Me." The "I" represents spontaneous and creative responses of the individual, while

the “Me” represents the socialized aspect shaped by societal expectations and norms. Mead emphasized role-taking, where individuals learn to see themselves from the perspective of others. Through stages such as imitation, play, and game, children gradually understand social rules and develop a complete sense of self. His theory became an important foundation of symbolic interactionism.

Goffman expanded the interactionist perspective by comparing social life to a theatrical performance. In his theory of the “Presentation of Self,” individuals act like performers on a stage, trying to control the impressions others form about them. People behave differently in different social situations to maintain social acceptance and identity. Goffman introduced concepts such as front stage and back stage behavior. Front stage refers to public performances where individuals follow expected roles and norms, while back stage refers to private spaces where individuals can relax and behave naturally. Impression management is central to his theory, as people use language, appearance, gestures, and behaviour to influence others’ perceptions.

Both Mead and Goffman highlighted the importance of social interaction in shaping identity and behaviour. Mead explained the development of self through communication and role-taking, whereas Goffman focused on the performance and management of self in everyday life. Their ideas remain highly influential in Sociology, especially in symbolic interactionism and the study of social behaviour.

4.5. KEY TERMS

Interactional Self - Mead explained that the self develops through social interaction, communication, and role-taking. The “I” and “Me” represent personal response and social expectations, forming identity within society and symbolic interaction.

Presentation of Self - Goffman compared social life to theatrical performance. Individuals manage impressions through front-stage and back-stage behaviour, using appearance, language, and actions to maintain identity and social acceptance in interactions.

Self - The self is awareness of personal identity developed through social interaction. George Herbert Mead believed individuals understand themselves by viewing their actions and behavior from others’ perspectives within society and communication.

“I” and “Me” - The “I” represents spontaneous and creative behavior, while the “Me” represents socially controlled behavior shaped by norms. Together, they explain how individuals balance personal desires with society’s expectations and responsibilities.

Role-taking - Role-taking is understanding another person’s viewpoint during interaction. Mead explained that individuals develop empathy, social understanding, and appropriate behavior by imagining themselves in others’ social positions and learning expected roles within society.

Generalized Other - The generalized other refers to society’s shared expectations and values internalized by individuals. It helps people regulate behavior according to social norms, promoting cooperation,

responsibility, discipline, and social order within communities.

Symbolic Interaction - Symbolic interaction involves communication through symbols, gestures, and language. Mead believed individuals create meanings through interaction, shaping identity, relationships, and behavior while interpreting social situations and responding according to shared understandings.

Communication - Communication is exchanging meanings through language, gestures, and symbols. Mead considered communication essential for developing the mind, self, and social relationships, enabling individuals to understand others and participate effectively in society.

Socialization - Socialization is learning society's culture, norms, values, and roles through interaction. Mead explained that socialization shapes personality, develops self-awareness, and helps individuals adapt successfully to social expectations and relationships.

Play Stage - The play stage occurs when children imitate significant others like parents or teachers. Through role-playing activities, children learn simple social roles, communication skills, and understanding of behavior expected within society and relationships.

Game Stage - The game stage develops when children understand multiple roles and organized rules simultaneously. Mead explained this stage creates awareness of collective expectations, cooperation, discipline, and the generalized other within society.

Mind and Society - Mind and society are interconnected in Mead's theory. The mind develops through communication and interaction, while society shapes thoughts, meanings, and behavior, enabling individuals to participate effectively in social and cultural life.

4.6. ANSWER TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress

1. Explain in detail Mead's theory of Interactional Self.
2. Discuss the role of "I" and "Me" in personality development.
3. Explain Goffman's theory of Presentation of Self and impression management.
4. Compare Mead's Interactional Self and Goffman's Presentation of Self.

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UNIT 5: C WRIGHT MILLS

4.0. Introduction

4.1. Unit Objectives

4.2. Sociological Imagination

4.3. Summary

4.4. Key terms

4.5. Answer to check your progress

4.6. Further Reading

4.0. INTRODUCTION

C. Wright Mills' concept of the **sociological imagination**, introduced in his 1959 work *The Sociological Imagination*, is one of the most influential ideas in modern sociology. It provides a way of understanding the relationship between individual experiences and broader social structures. Mills argues that many personal problems, such as unemployment, poverty, or family difficulties, cannot be fully understood in isolation because they are often connected to larger public issues shaped by society, history, and institutions. The sociological imagination enables individuals to link their personal biographies with wider historical and social contexts. This perspective helps people move beyond individual explanations and recognize the structural forces influencing human life. Mills criticizes sociology that is too abstract or overly focused on statistics, and instead calls for a more critical and meaningful approach to studying society. This chapter explores his theory, its key concepts, significance, and relevance in understanding contemporary social life.

4.1. UNIT OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this unit are listed below:

- To understand the meaning and definition of C. Wright Mills' concept of sociological imagination.
- To explain the relationship between personal troubles and public issues in society.
- To analyze how individual experiences are connected with larger social structures and institutions.
- To examine the link between biography and history in shaping human life.
- To develop the ability to think critically about social problems using a sociological perspective.
- To explore the importance of sociological imagination in understanding modern social issues like unemployment, inequality, and poverty.

4.2. SOCIOLOGICAL IMAGINATION

C. Wright Mills – Theory of Sociological Imagination

4.2.1. Introduction

C. Wright Mills (1916–1962) was one of the most influential American sociologists of the twentieth century. He is best known for his critical approach to society and for developing the concept of the “**sociological**

imagination”, introduced in his landmark book “**The Sociological Imagination**” (1959). Mills challenged mainstream sociology of his time, which he believed had become overly abstract, overly technical, and disconnected from real social problems. He argued that sociology must help individuals understand the relationship between their **personal experiences (micro level)** and the **larger structures of society (macro level)**.

In simple terms, sociological imagination refers to the ability to relate individual experiences to wider social structures, enabling people to understand personal difficulties in connection with larger societal problems. However, this basic explanation does not fully reflect the depth and complexity of the concept. It raises important questions such as what kinds of personal problems or social issues are involved, and in what ways they are interconnected. A brief overview of sociological imagination helps to introduce the idea in a more meaningful way and highlights the unique perspective that sociology offers. It also provides a foundation for understanding how this way of thinking can enrich both the personal understanding and professional development of individuals who learn to apply it in their lives.

Key Findings: What is Sociological Imagination?

- **Definition and Origin:** The concept of sociological imagination was introduced by sociologist C. Wright Mills. It refers to the ability to link an individual’s personal experiences with wider social structures and broader public issues.
- **Personal Troubles vs. Public Issues:** Mills made a clear distinction between personal problems faced by individuals and larger societal problems. He explained that many personal difficulties are actually connected to deeper structural and systemic conditions affecting society as a whole.
- **Importance of Historical Context:** Sociological imagination requires an understanding of history, as past events and developments play a significant role in shaping present-day social behavior, institutions, and cultural norms.
- **Everyday Applications:** Daily life decisions—such as career choices, consumption patterns, relationships, and marriage—are influenced by social, cultural, and economic forces, which can be better understood through sociological imagination.
- **Benefits and Significance:** Developing sociological imagination improves self-awareness, encourages critical and analytical thinking, and helps individuals question social norms. It also enables people to avoid passive acceptance of social realities and make more informed and reflective decisions

The sociological imagination is not just a theoretical idea; it is a mental quality or way of thinking that enables individuals to understand their personal troubles as part of larger public issues, connect biography with history, and analyze the influence of social structures on individual lives.

4.2.2. Meaning of Sociological Imagination

Mills defines sociological imagination as the ability to see the relationship between individual experiences and the wider society. It helps individuals move beyond personal interpretations of problems and understand

the social causes behind them.

For example:

- Unemployment is not just a personal failure but a result of economic structure
- Divorce is not only a personal issue but influenced by changing family institutions
- Poverty is linked to social inequality, not individual weakness

Thus, sociological imagination allows people to understand that their private experiences are often shaped by public issues.

4.2.3. Core Idea: Linking Personal Troubles and Public Issues

Mills makes a key distinction between Personal Troubles and Public Issues.

(1) Personal Troubles	(2) Public Issues
<p>These are problems experienced by individuals in their daily life.</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Job loss• Family conflict• Financial difficulties <p>These are private matters that occur within the individual's immediate environment.</p>	<p>These are problems that affect large groups of people and are rooted in social structure.</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Economic recession• Unemployment crisis• Social inequality <p>Mills argues that many personal troubles are actually reflections of broader public issues.</p>
<p>Example</p> <p>If a person loses a job:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Personal trouble: "I am unemployed".• Public issue: "The economy is experiencing recession or structural unemployment".	

4.2.4. Biography and History Connection

One of Mills' most important contributions is the idea that sociology must connect: **Biography (individual life)** with **History (social structure and historical context)**. He argues that individual lives cannot be

understood without understanding historical events, institutional changes, economic systems, and political structures.

For example:

- A person's career is shaped by education systems
- Family life is influenced by cultural history
- Opportunities depend on historical inequalities

Thus, individual biography is always embedded in historical and social conditions.

4.2.5. Sociological Imagination as a Quality of Mind

Mills emphasizes that sociological imagination is not just a theory but a **mental capacity**. It is a way of thinking that allows individuals to think critically about society, understand hidden social forces, avoid blaming individuals for structural problems, and recognize patterns in social life. He calls it the **“quality of mind”** that helps individuals see the world more clearly and critically.

4.2.6. Role of Social Structure

Mills argues that society is structured by powerful institutions such as; economy, government, education, military and media and these institutions influence the opportunities, behaviour, beliefs, and life chances. Thus, an individuals often feel free, but their choices are largely shaped by these structures.

CRITIQUE OF MAINSTREAM SOCIOLOGY BY C. WRIGHT MILLS

In *The Sociological Imagination* (1959), Mills sharply criticized what he called **“mainstream sociology”** of his time. His critique mainly targeted two dominant trends and the scholars associated with them.

1. Criticism of “Grand Theory”

Mills used this term mainly for the work of Talcott Parsons.

- He argued that grand theory is **too abstract and complex**, filled with difficult language that is hard to understand.
- According to Mills, it is **detached from real social problems**, focusing more on theoretical systems than actual human experiences.

- He believed Parsons' theory tried to create a **universal system of sociology**, but ignored historical and social realities.

In short, Mills felt grand theory was “**empty abstraction**” with little practical relevance.

2. Criticism of “Abstracted Empiricism”

This critique was mainly directed at Paul Lazarsfeld and similar researchers.

- Mills argued that this approach focuses too much on **data collection, surveys, and statistics**.
- It often studies **small, trivial issues** instead of important social problems.
- He believed it leads to **fragmented knowledge** without broader theoretical understanding.

According to Mills, this type of sociology becomes “**method-driven rather than problem-driven.**”

3. Critique of Bureaucratic and Professionalized Sociology

- Mills criticized the growing **bureaucratization of sociology**, especially in universities and research institutions.
- He argued that sociologists were becoming **career-oriented professionals**, not critical thinkers.
- Research was often influenced by **government and corporate funding**, limiting independent thinking.

4. Lack of Sociological Imagination

- Mills believed mainstream sociologists failed to connect “**personal troubles**” with “**public issues.**”
- They ignored how individual experiences are shaped by **larger social structures and historical forces**.
- As a result, sociology lost its **critical and transformative role**.

5. Over-Specialization

- Sociology had become divided into narrow fields, leading to **fragmentation of knowledge**.
- Mills argued that this prevented a **holistic understanding of society**.

Conclusion

Mills' critique was a call to reform sociology. He wanted a discipline that is; **relevant to real-world problems, balanced between theory and empirical research, and critical of power structures.** His criticism remains important because it challenges sociologists to make their work **meaningful, accessible, and socially engaged.**

ROLE OF THE SOCIOLOGIST

According to Mills, sociologists should:

- Help people understand society
- Reveal hidden structures of power
- Connect personal problems to public issues
- Encourage critical thinking

Sociology should not only study society but also help improve it.

IMPORTANCE OF SOCIOLOGICAL IMAGINATION

The sociological imagination is important because it:

- 1. Develops critical thinking:** It helps individuals question social reality.
- 2. Reduces personal blame:** People understand structural causes of problems.
- 3. Connects individual and society:** It links micro and macro perspectives.
- 4. Promotes social awareness:** People become aware of inequality and injustice.
- 5. Improves sociology as a discipline:** It makes sociology more relevant to real life.

EXAMPLES OF SOCIOLOGICAL IMAGINATION

Example 1: Poverty	Example 2: Education failure	Example 3: Divorce
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal view: laziness or lack of effort • Sociological view: structural inequality, unemployment, lack of education. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal view: student inability • Sociological view: unequal schooling system. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal view: relationship failure • Sociological view: changing cultural values, economic stress.
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APPLICATION IN MODERN SOCIETY

Sociological imagination is highly relevant today:

Social Media: Anxiety may be linked to digital culture, not just individual weakness

Unemployment: Often caused by global economic changes

Mental Health: Linked to social pressure and inequality

Thus, Mills' theory is widely used in modern sociology, psychology, and education.

CRITICISM OF C. WRIGHT MILLS' SOCIOLOGICAL IMAGINATION

The Sociological Imagination (1959) is highly influential, but it has also attracted several criticisms. Here's a clear, exam-ready analysis:

1. Lack of clear methodology

Mills powerfully argued that sociology should link **personal troubles** with **public issues**, but he did not provide a **systematic research method** for doing this. Critics say his approach is more philosophical than practical, making it difficult for researchers to apply consistently.

2. Overly broad and abstract

The concept of "sociological imagination" is very wide and sometimes vague. Because it can be applied to almost any social situation, critics argue it lacks **precision and clear boundaries**, which weakens its analytical strength.

3. Neglect of empirical research

Mills criticized “abstracted empiricism” (overuse of statistics), but in doing so, he seemed to **downplay quantitative research methods**. Critics argue that empirical data is essential, and his stance risks encouraging theory without sufficient evidence.

4. Ideological bias

Some scholars believe Mills’ work reflects a **strong political and moral stance**, especially his criticism of power structures and elites. This raises concerns about **objectivity**, as his theory may be influenced by his personal viewpoints.

5. Limited applicability

While the theory works well for analyzing large social issues (like unemployment or inequality), it is less effective in explaining **micro-level interactions** or everyday social behavior in detail.

6. Critique of other sociologists seen as unfair

Mills strongly criticized scholars like Talcott Parsons (grand theory) and Paul Lazarsfeld (empiricism). Critics argue that he **oversimplified their work** and created a somewhat one-sided critique.

7. Normative rather than explanatory

Mills emphasized what sociology *should be* rather than offering a fully developed explanation of how society works. Because of this, his theory is sometimes seen as **normative (value-based)** rather than strictly scientific.

Despite these criticisms, Mills’ concept remains important because it encourages people to connect individual experiences with broader social structures. However, its limitations lie in lack of methodological clarity, empirical grounding, and precision.

CONTEMPORARY RELEVANCE

Today, sociological imagination is essential in understanding the globalization, inequality, unemployment, climate change, and digital transformation. It helps explain how global forces affect personal life.

CONCLUSION

C. Wright Mills’ theory of sociological imagination is one of the most powerful contributions to modern sociology. It provides a way of understanding how personal experiences are deeply connected to larger social

structures and historical forces. By linking biography with history, Mills encourages individuals to move beyond personal explanations and recognize the broader social causes of their problems.

His theory challenges people to think critically about society and to understand that many personal difficulties are actually rooted in public issues. It also redefines the role of sociology as a discipline that should not only analyze society but also contribute to social awareness and change. Ultimately, the sociological imagination remains a vital intellectual tool for understanding modern life, enabling individuals to see the world more clearly, critically, and socially.

4.3. SUMMARY

The concept of sociological imagination was developed by C. Wright Mills in his 1959 book *The Sociological Imagination*. It is one of the most influential ideas in modern sociology and explains how individuals can understand the relationship between personal experiences and wider social structures. Mills defined sociological imagination as the ability to see the connection between “private troubles” and “public issues.” Private troubles are personal problems faced by individuals, such as unemployment, poverty, or family conflict. Public issues, on the other hand, are those that affect large sections of society and are rooted in social structures, such as economic systems, political policies, or social inequality. Sociological imagination helps individuals understand that many personal problems are not purely individual failures but are linked to larger social forces.

For example, unemployment may seem like a personal failure, but sociological imagination reveals that it may be caused by economic recession, automation, or government policies. Similarly, educational failure may be connected to unequal access to schools, poverty, or discrimination. Thus, individual experiences must be understood in the context of society. Mills argued that sociology should not only study abstract theories but also address real-life problems of people. He criticized traditional sociology for being too theoretical and disconnected from social reality. According to him, sociologists should help people understand how society shapes their lives and how historical and structural conditions influence individual behaviour. Another important aspect of sociological imagination is the link between history, biography, and social structure. History refers to the past events that shape society, biography refers to individual life experiences, and social structure refers to the organization of society. Understanding the interaction of these three elements is essential to fully grasp social life.

Mills believed that sociological imagination empowers individuals. It allows people to think critically, question social norms, and understand the deeper causes of social issues. It also helps in developing awareness

about inequality, power, and social change. In conclusion, sociological imagination is a powerful analytical tool that connects individual lives with broader social realities. It encourages critical thinking and helps people understand that personal experiences are often shaped by larger social, economic, and historical forces.

4.4. KEY TERMS

Sociological Imagination - The ability to connect personal experiences with larger social structures and understand how society influences individual lives.

Private Troubles - Personal problems faced by individuals, such as unemployment, divorce, or stress, seen in individual context.

Public Issues - Social problems affecting many people, rooted in society's structure like poverty, inequality, or economic crises.

Social Structure - The organized pattern of relationships, institutions, and norms that shape society and individual behaviour.

Biography - An individual's life history, experiences, and personal circumstances influencing their social situation.

History - Past events and developments that shape present social conditions and individual experiences.

Power Structure - Distribution of power among institutions like government, economy, and military that influence society.

Social Change - Transformation in social institutions, norms, and relationships over time affecting individuals and groups.

Social Issues - Collective problems arising from societal conditions rather than individual shortcomings.

Critical Thinking - Analytical ability to question social norms and understand deeper causes of social reality.

4.5. ANSWER TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress

1. Explain in detail the concept of sociological imagination.
2. Discuss the relationship between private troubles and public issues with examples.
3. Explain how history, biography, and social structure are connected in Mills' theory.
4. Critically evaluate sociological imagination as a tool for understanding society.

4.6. FURTHER READING

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