

SOCIOLOGY

DSC – SOC – IB

COURSE TITLE: SOCIOLOGICAL THOUGHT

SEMESTER – 2ND

➤ UNIT – 1ST : AUGUST COMTE

- Father of sociology, French Philosopher (1798 – 1857)
- At 9 joined Imperial Lycee, at 16 joined Ecole Polytechnique (Paris)
- Course de Philosophie Positive (Positive Philosophy) – Magnum Opus (1830-1842)
- System of Positive Politics (1851-1854)
- Discourse on the Positive Spirit (1844)
- Religion of Humanity (1856)

➤ POSITIVISM :

- Refers to doctrine formulated by August Comte which asserts that the only true knowledge is scientific

knowledge, I-e; which describes and explains the co-existence and succession of observable phenomenon including both physical and social phenomena.

- Positivism denotes any sociological approach which operates on the general assumption that the methods of physical sciences can be carried over into the social sciences.



Positivism – Search for Invariant Laws :

- In his version of positivism these laws can be derived from doing research on the social world or from theorizing about the world.
- There is real world – task of scientists is to discover and report on it.
- Aim - to ascertain the true state of things and reproducing it with all possible accuracy in their theories.
- Also called as “Copy theory of Truth”.
- His interest in Positivism is intimately related to his interest in sociology – Positivistic Science: A science of social phenomena subject to natural and invariable laws, the discovery of which is the object of investigation. Also, called Sociology as “Social Physics” – most Positivistic Science.

- He explicitly identified three basic methods of sociology to gain empirical knowledge :
 1. **Observation:** should be directed by some theory and when made, should be connected to some law – use of powerful senses – powerful method to yield wide and rich array of data.
 2. **Experimentation:** practiced scientific procedure – controlled group – what effects are produced by a particular variable (Controlled Observation).
 3. **Comparison:** three sub-types :
 - a) Compare humans to lower animal societies;
 - b) Compare societies in different parts of world;
 - c) Compare different stages of societies over time – reject Absolutism. This one he find important and labeled it as the chief scientific device of sociology.
- He claims positivism is neither aesthetic nor in any way concerned with the supernatural. It is concerned with the real rather than fanciful, with useful knowledge rather

than all knowledge, with facts that are certain to the degree of precision is possible.

- The greater aim of Positivism was to liberate human mind from the sphere of Theological and Metaphysical conceptions to scientific approach – what is observable is a reality. So mind should concentrate only those that are observable or verifiable.
- Positivism or Positive Science would reveal that the evolution of society followed invariable laws. It would show that the behavior of man was governed by the principles of cause and effect which were just as invariable as the behavior of matter, the subject of natural sciences.
- The Positivistic approach to human behavior applies a similar logic as natural scientists inquire into the matter – reaction to the external stimuli. Humans also react to the external stimuli and their behavior can be explained in terms of this reaction. For example; they enter into marriage and procreate children in response to the demands of the society. Society requires such behavior for its survival and its members simply respond to this requirement. The meanings and purposes they attach to this behavior are largely inconsequential.

➤ **Positivism – the search for order and progress :**

- August Comte used Positivism in another way also – as opposite of the Negativism that in his view, dominated the social world of his day.
- More specifically, that negativity was the moral and political disorder and chaos that occurred in France and throughout Western Europe.
- Among the symptoms of malaise were intellectual anarchy, political corruption and incompetence of political leaders.
- His positive philosophy was designed to counter negative philosophy and its symptoms that he found around him.
- Comte put his issue in two of his great concerns – order and progress. From his point of view, theology offered order but without progress, it was a stagnant system. Metaphysics offered progress without order; he associated it with anarchy of his day, in which things were changing in a dizzying and disorderly way.
- Positivism is the only system which offered the both – on the one hand, it would bring order through the restraint of intellectual and social order; and on the other hand, it would bring progress through an increase in knowledge and through the perfection of

the social system, so that society would more nearer although never fully attain, its determinate end.

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

➤ **Criticism :**

- Not influential at present.
- Methodological between the physical sciences and social sciences.
- Problem of verification.

➤ **LAW OF THREE STAGES:**

Although Comte wrote about research, he most often engaged in speculation or theorizing in order to get at the invariable laws of the social world – deduced law – general positivistic laws, applied to social world.

Law of three stages is his most famous law. He identified three basic stages and proceeded to argue that the human mind, people through the maturation process, all branches of knowledge and history of the world, all pass successively through these three stages. Each stage involves the search by human beings for an explanation of things around them.

1) THE THEOLOGICAL STAGE:

- Human mind searching for the essential nature of things, particularly their origin, their purpose.
- There is search for absolute knowledge.
- It is assumed that all phenomena are created, regulated and given their purposes by supernatural forces.
- Social and physical world were seen as produced by God.
- While Comte included Fetishism and Polytheism in this stage, and Monotheism which explains everything is the ultimate development in this stage.
- This stage was characterized the world prior to 1300A.D.
- Dominated by Priests and Military.
- Nature of society – Military.
- Basic unit of society – Family.
- Basic principle or type of order – Love of family or domestic order.

- Prevailing sentiment – Affection or Attachment.

2) THE METAPHYSICAL STAGE:

- Least important- only transition preceding theological stage and ensuing positivistic stage.
- In this stage Abstract forces replace Supernatural beings.
- Mysterious forces such as Nature are invoked to explain why things are the way they are.
- Reason occupies human thinking.
- Men start reasoning for themselves instead of accepting authoritative revelations.
- It was characterized the world between 1300 to 1800 A.D.
- Dominated by Churchmen and Lawyers.
- Nature of society – Legal.
- Unit of society – Nation.
- Basic principle or order – Mutual coexistence or collective order.
- Prevailing sentiment – Mutual respect or Veneration.

3) POSITIVISTIC STAGE:

- Final and most important.
- People drop non-scientific ideas as supernatural beings and mysterious forces.

- Instead they look for the invariable natural laws that govern all phenomena.
- Characterized by belief in Science.
- Intellectual way of looking world.
- Dominated by Industrial administrators and Scientists.
- Industrial society – Men inquires into nature and utilizes the natural resources and forces.
- Main stress is on the transformation of material resources of the earth for human benefit and the production of material inventions.
- Nature of society – Industrial.
- Unit of society – Entire humanity.
- Basic principle or order – Universality or Universal order.
- Prevailing sentiment – Kindness or Benevolence.

Comte argues, the constitution of the new system cannot take place before the destruction of old.

Although he recognized an inevitable succession through three stages, he also acknowledged that at any given point of time all the three might be operant.

➤ SOCIAL- STATICS AND SOCIAL- DYNAMICS:

We do not use the term today, the basic distinction remains important in the differentiation between social structure and social change.

The distinction is not between two classes of facts but between two aspects of theory. It corresponds with the double conception of order and progress: for order consists in a permanent harmony among the conditions of social existence, and progress consists in social development. It seems statics and dynamics, order and progress are interrelated to each other. This division comes from biology.

➤ SOCIAL STATICS:

- ✓ Comte defines the sociological study of social statics as the investigation of the laws of action and reaction of the different parts of social system.
- ✓ In his social statics, he was anticipating many of the ideas of later structural functionalists. Deriving his thoughts from biology, he developed a perspective on the parts of society, the way in which they function and their relationship to the larger social system. Comte also parts and whole of the social system in a state of harmony.

- ✓ S.S. studies the conditions of the coexistence of society what Comte calls the Social Consensus. It is related to social order.
- ✓ S.S. deals with the simple positive analysis of the anatomy of institutions of a particular collectivity.
- ✓ S.S. studies about the balance of mutual relations of elements within a social whole.

➤ THE INDIVIDUAL IN COMTE'S THEORY/HUMAN NATURE:

- Comte sees the individual as imperfect, dominated by lower forms of egoism rather than higher, more social forms of altruism.
- According to him, in a very real sense, people do not create the social world rather the social world creates people at least those animated by the nobler altruistic motives.
- Individual is guided by “subjective principle”, which involves the subordination of the intellectual to the heart.
- There should be “objective principle”, which entails the immutable necessity of the external world without us.

➤ THE COLLECTIVE PHENOMENA IN COMTE'S THEORY / SOCIAL NATURE:

- In- spite of his clear ideas on the individual, his sociology overtly begins at a macro-level with the following institutions:

1) Family – the fundamental institution.

- It is the smallest society.
- It is not only building block, but also serves to integrate the individual and society.
- It is through the family that people learn to be social.
- It is the school of the society.
- Plays a crucial role in the emergence of individual altruism rather than egoism.

2) Religion – the most important institution.

- It is the universal basis of all society.
- It seems to regulate individual life by elevating altruism and subduing egoism.
- It has microscopic function of fostering social relationship among people thereby providing the basis for the emergence of large scale social structures.

3) Property and Language –

- Property is the accumulation of goods transmitted from one generation to another, whereas language is the vessel in which the thought of preceding generation is stored.

- Language helps in interaction and promotes unity among people.
- Both are essential agents of human civilization which are necessary to maintain the continuity of thoughts of various generations.

4) Division of labor – holds people together.

- Social solidarity is enhanced in a system in which individuals are dependent upon others.
- Society should have division of labor, so that people can occupy the positions for which they qualify on the basis of their abilities and training.

5) Government – In his view is based on force.

- While force can hold together society, if the force gets out of hand, the govt. will be more a destructive than an integrating factor in society.
- To prevent this from occurring the govt. needs to be regulated by a broader and higher society – this is the missions of true religions which represses or remedy the evils of govt.

➤ SOCIAL DYNAMICS:

He devoted more attention to it. It is more interesting and far important than S.S.

- ✓ S.D. studies continuous movement or laws of the succession of social phenomena or individual stages of society.
- ✓ S.D. is the description of the successive stages through which human societies pass.
- ✓ S.D. is also called as “Theory of social progress”.
- ✓ It amounts to the fundamental development of evolution of society.
- ✓ Society is always changing but change is ordered and subjected to social laws. There is evolutionary process in which society is progressing in a steady fashion, to its final harmony destiny under the laws of positivism – we are always becoming more intelligent, more active, and more loving.
- ✓ Overall Comte sees us evolving toward our noblest dispositions, towards the dominance of altruism over egoism.
- ✓ He offered a dialectical sense of the history of the world. What this means in particular, that he saw the roots of each succeeding stage in history in its prior stage or stages. In addition, each stage prepared the ground for the next stage or stages.
- ✓ S.D. affords a perfect interpretation of the past of human society – at least in its principal phases.

- ✓ He concluded – The laws originally deduced from an abstract examination of human nature have been demonstrated to be the real laws, explaining the entire course of the human race.

In brief, S.S. and S.D. are simply the study of coexistence on the one hand and succession on the other. They are interrelated and interconnected to each other. If S.S. examines how the parts are interrelated, S.D. focuses on whole societies as the unit of analysis and reveals how they developed and changed through time.

➤ UNIT – 2: EMILE DURKHEIM: (1858 – 1917)

- First Professor of sociology.
- Graduated at Ecole Normale .
- Taught sociology at the university of Bordeaux and then in Sorbonne from 1902 till death.
- Division of Labor in Society – 1893 (His Doctoral thesis).
- The Rules of Sociological Method – 1895.
- Suicide – A Study in Sociology – 1897.
- The Elementary Forms of Religious Life – 1912.

➤ SOCIAL FACT:

- ✓ Those ways of acting, thinking and feeling which are capable of searching an external constraint on the individual, which are generally diffused throughout a given society and which can exist in their own life independent of their individual manifestation.
- ✓ Social Facts are social structures and cultural norms and values that are external to and coercive of actors.

➤ TYPES:

- MATERIAL SOCIAL FACT – crystallized, tangible, real and material entities. For example; structural components of society and morphological components of society.

- NON – MATERIAL SOCIAL FACT – not have concrete existence, are abstract. For example; morality, collective representations, social currents etc.

➤ CHARACTERISTICS:

- ✓ S.F.'s must be regarded as things – as empirical facts from the outside, we must discover them as we discover physical facts.
 - S.F.'s are not reducible to individual facts. Things – he meant are all that is given, all that is offered to or rather force upon our observation.
- ✓ S.F.'s are external – society is a reality (Sui-generis) - above and apart from the individual.
 - There is heterogeneity of individual and a collective state of mind- e.g.; in times of national danger the intensity of collective feeling of patriotism is much greater than that of individual feeling.
 - There is also difference in individual attitudes and behavior which results from group situation, which shows the external character of the S.F.'s.
- ✓ S.F.'s exercise constraints on the individual - condition human beings that it makes them behave in a particular manner.

- He gave a series of examples such as moral laws, legal rules, penal system and the crowd behavior in support of this view.
- In a crowd situation, an individual feels constrained to behave in a particular manner. Laughter for example, is communicated to all. Such a phenomena is social because its subject is the group as a whole and not the individual.
- Similarly, Fashion is social in nature. Everyone dresses in a certain manner in a given year, because everyone else does so. It is not an individual who is the cause of fashion; it is society itself which expresses itself in these ways.

➤ CRITICISM:

- L.A. Coser – He completely ignores the importance of the individual and places too much premium on society.
- H.E. Barnes – he has not made it clear as to what he means by the term “things” in the context of social facts. This term can mean many things to many people.
- Gabriel Tarde – it is difficult to imagine and appreciate his analysis of society bereft of individuals.

➤ SUICIDE:

He began working on the problem in 1888 while he was at Bordeaux. His interest aroused while he was looking on an article related to Suicide and Birth rate.

- ✓ Suicide refers to “every case of death resulting directly or indirectly from a positive or negative death performed by the victim himself and which strives to produce this result” – Emile Durkheim.
- ✓ It is clear that suicide is conscious act and person concerned is fully aware of its consequences.
- ✓ The person, who shoots himself to death or drinks severe poison, or jumps down from the 10th storey of a building, is fully aware about the facts.

➤ TYPES:

Durkheim divided suicide into two explanatory parts. First - suicide on the basis of Social Integration. It refers to the degree to which collective sentiments are shared or the strength of social bond between the individual and society – (Egoistic and Altruistic). Second – suicide on the basis of Social Regulation. It refers to the restraints imposed by society on individual needs and wants I-e; degree of external constraint on people – (Anomic and Fatalistic).

On the basis of these explanations, there are four types of suicide:

○ EGOISTIC SUICIDE:

- It can be described as the process by which individuals detach themselves from society by turning their activity inward and by retreating into themselves.
- It is characterized by excessive self – reflection on personal matters and a withdrawal from the outside world.
- Social integration is less and tie binding is slacked.
- Too much individuation results in the weakening of the social fabric.
- Lack of social integration leads to sense of meaninglessness.
- Melancholy like social currents causes long lasting sadness.

Durkheim believed that strong integrated families, religious groups and politics act as agent of a strong collective consciousness which discourages suicide.

○ ALTRUISTIC SUICIDE:

- Occurs due to over integration of individual into his social group.
- The bonds between individual and society are developed to such extent that the individual acquires an aptitude for the renunciation for life.

- He observed that social customs played high degree of social honor on individuals who take their lives in the name of social purpose greater than themselves.
- People take lives because a social duty is imposed upon them by society.
- He listed three types of suicides in this category – The suicide of older men threatened with severe illness, Sati, Followers on the death of their chiefs.

He maintained that Altruistic suicide takes several different forms and discussed three distinct types:

- ✓ Obligatory A.S. – Society imposes an explicit duty on individuals to take their own life but this duty may lack specific coercive pressure from the community.
- ✓ Optional A.S – Demand by the community is less explicitly clarified or less expressively required.
- ✓ Acute A.S – Individual renounces life for the actual felt joy of sacrifice.
- ANOMIC SUICIDE:
 - Major form of suicide discussed by him, which is more likely to occur when the regulative powers of society are disrupted.
 - It can be defined as the decline in regulatory powers of the society.
 - He first used the concept in Division of Labor.

- He attributed this to unlimited aspirations and the breakdown of regulatory norms – hence, Normlessness as social current is responsible.
 - The cause of deregulation can be traced to two basic sources – one development of Industrial society, and the dominance of the economy over other institutions.
 - Thus any abrupt transitions such as economic disaster, industrial crisis or sudden prosperity can cause deregulation of the normative structure that is why anomie is a chronic state of affairs in the modern socio-economic system.
- FATALISTIC SUICIDE:
- Mentioned little about it (Footnote of his book).
 - More likely occur when regulation is excessive.
 - Persons with futures pitilessly blocked and passions violently choked by oppressive discipline.
 - Slaves who seeing no alternative to enslavement under master, takes their own life.
- CRITICISM:
- Neglected role of Psychology.
 - Based upon a very small sample of data.
 - Neglected economic, psychological and religious factors – Criminologists.

➤ DIVISION OF LABOUR :

His main focus in Division of labor is social solidarity. It is the condition within the group in which there is social cohesion and cooperation and the collective action is directed towards the achievement of group goal and in which social organization is shown by permanency.

These conditions are changeable according to social conditions. Due to this reason, Durkheim proposes two types of social solidarity:

- MECHANICAL SOCIAL SOLIDARITY - Societies of this type are characterized by:
 - A homogeneous population which is small and isolated.
 - A D.O.L. based on social cooperation, with little or no specialization.
 - A system of social institutions in which religion is dominated.
 - A system of beliefs which is uniformly diffused throughout the society, creating uniformity in attitudes and actions.
 - A low degree of individual autonomy.
 - A social organization in which the individual's place in society is determined by kinship.

- A system of penal law based on repressive sanctions which punish individual transgressions swiftly and violently, serving the function of reaffirming core beliefs and values.
- A system of social cohesion which produces a high degree of consistency in values and beliefs and in individual attitudes and actions.
- A state in which individualism is at its lowest point of development.
- A system of social links between individuals based on custom obligation and sentiments.

○ ORGANIC SOCIAL SOLIDARITY:

Organic solidarity is characterized by an increase in the density of society due to expansion of population, the growth of cities, and the development of transportation and communication. The main characteristics of such type of societies are:

- Larger population spread over broader geographical area.
- An increased complexity of D.O.L, leading to specialized economic functions which they cannot perform themselves.

- A system of social relations in which individuals are linked to each other by contract rather than sentiment and obligation.
- A system in which individuals obtain their place in society by occupation rather than kinship affiliations.
- An increased individual autonomy based on system of laws recognizing rights and freedom of individuals.
- The development of contract law predicted on restitutive sanctions in which judicial rules redress social wrongs by restoring things to the original state.