UNIT 1: EMERGENCE OF SOCIOLOGY AND SOCIOLOGICAL THOUGHT: INTELLECTUAL FORCES– ENLIGHTENMENT, POSITIVISM, GROWTH OF TWO DIFFERENT TRENDS IN SOCIOLOGY

UNIT STRUCTURE

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1.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through unit, you will be able to–

- identify the important forces for the emergences of Sociology and Sociological thought in Europe
- understand what is Enlightenment
- understand some of the intellectual developmenst during the Enlightenment

- understand the relation between Scientific Revolution and the Enlightenment
- discuss Auguste Comte's concept of "Positivism"
- discuss Structural Functionalists and Conflict Perespective.

1.2 INTRODUCTION

Sociology as an academic discipline emerged only in the early part of 19th century. It was Auguste Comte (1798-1857), a Frenchman, who coined the term "Sociology'. The term appeared first in his book "Positive Philosophy" in about 1839. The term 'Sociology' is derived from two words, ''socius" and "logos". "Socius" is a Latin word meaning "companion" or "association" or "society", while "logos" is a Greek word, which more precisely means "study of" or "science". Thus, the etymological meaning of Sociology is the "study of society". He defined sociology as a positive science, a subject in search for "invariant laws of social world". In this unit we will try to study how sociology and sociological thought emerged.

1.2.1 Emergence of Sociology and Sociological Thought

The tradition of studying "Society" is not new. Sociology is often referred to as "having a long past, but only a short history". Some assert its origin with Greek philosophers like Aristotle (388-327 B.C.) and Plato (427-347 B.C). Some consider Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406), an Arab Islamic scholar from North Africa, to be the first sociologist. His work on social cohesion and social conflict, discussed in *Muqaddimah,,* is considered to be the first work to advance social-scientific understanding. However, the emergence of Sociology in current context has to be understood in the context of the major changes that took place during 17th and 18th century Europe. Tom Bottomore stated, "The conditions which gave rise to sociology were both intellectual and social". What were those intellectual and social conditions? The intellectual force refers to the age of Enlightenment which emerged in 17th and 18th century while the social forces include the French Revolution of 1789 and the Industrial Revolution.

The Enlightenment (discussed in more details in next section) refers to the, 17th and 18th century intellectual movement in Europe. During this period European thought had remarkably changed. Church, which was the dominant source for knowledge, was being questioned and challenged. Enlightenment emphasised "experiences" and "reasoning" rather than 'beliefs' and 'superstitions' and altogether, Enlightenment brought new vision towards the society. In other words, it was the 'age' of new way of thinking. The Enlightenment thinkers in Britain, in France and throughout Europe were critical about the traditional beliefs and authority and advocated for secular, liberal and democratic societies. George Ritzer said, "a number of long-standing ideas and beliefs, many of which were related to social life, were overthrown and replaced during Enlightenment".

The French Revolution (discussed in more details in Unit 2), started in 1789 and continued until 1799, was a period of social and political movement, which brought about vital changes in the socio-economic and political aspects of the country. The French Revolution was very much influenced by the Enlightenment ideas; the revolution caused an upheaval of the "old regime" characterized by absolute monarchy, feudal economy, social inequality, alliance of church and the state etc. and created new political ideals, summarized in the French slogan, "liberty, equality and fraternity". Edward Royce referred to the revolution as, "a revolt against royal despotism, hereditary privilege, and economic oppression and a revolt in the name of democratic government, political equality, and human rights". However, the revolution also passed through a most violent phase of "regime terror", for which the revolution was also seen as one of the sole causes for subsequent "social disorder" in the French society.

The Industrial Revolution (discussed in more details in Unit 2) of late 18th and 19th centuries was an important event in the economic history of Europe. It was started in England and spread incrementally to other parts of European countries like– Germany, France, Belgium, Italy etc and then to America (particularly Northern

America). It was the period when the European society was largely changing from predominantly agricultural economy to industrial or factory economy, from rural to increasingly urban and industrial society, from handicraft or human labour to increasing use of machines, advancement in communication and transportation, mass production and so on. Industrial revolution resulted in mass production, economic growth and increase in income, improved standard of living (although for certain section of people) etc. However, the Revolution also had some major impacts which were of great concern, such as migration from rural to urban cities, problem of living and working conditions, child poverty, class inequality, declining status of women etc.

Each of these events brought remarkable change in Europe; however the direction of change was unclear as to which way the society was moving, and therefore there was an urgent need for understanding "what was happening". The pioneer Sociologists were very much concerned about these sweeping changes and therefore felt the need of a discipline that could systematically interpret and analyse the social phenomena . Thus, the thinkers in France like Auguste Comte (1798-1857), Henri Saint-Simon (1760-1825), Alexis de Tocqueville (1805-1859), Emile Durkheim (1858-1917), German thinkers like Karl Marx (1818-1883), Max Weber (1864-1920), Georg Simmel (1858-1918), British thinkers like Herbert Spencer (1820-1903) and many more, came up with different theoretical understanding about the society.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.1: A) When did the French Revolution took place?

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B) Sociology is derived from which two words?

.....

1.3 THE ENLIGHTENMENT

Now let us discuss the two key concepts of Sociology and Sociological thought, namely Enlightenment and Possitivism. The Enlightenment or "Age of the Enlightenment" refers to the period of intellectual movement in Europe (17^{th}-18^{th} centuries) which brought dramatic revolutions in science, philosophy and politics. These revolutions swept away the medieval worldview, based on Church or Bible, and provided new framework to look into the world, base of experiences and reasoning. It was the period when the "divine right" of kings, privilege of nobility and clergy were questioned and then occurred the gradual emergence of the ideals of liberal, secular, democratic societies. Altogether, it was an age marked by a new way of thinking. With the publication of *Encyclopédie*, Enlightenment movement got a great momentum, as it was the first work to collect all the contributions and make them accessible for the readers. The Enlightenment ideas had great influence during French Revolution as, summarized in the French slogan "liberty, equality and fraternity" and in the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen. It championed the protection of man's "natural and imprescriptable rights" i.e. "liberty, property, and resistance to oppression". The leading figures of Enlightenment, among others, included: from England Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), John Locke (1632-1704), from France Voltaire (1694-1778), JeanJacques Rousseau (1712-1778), Baron de Montesquieu (1689-1755); Denis Diderot (1713-1748); from Scotland David Hume (1711-1776), Adam Smith (1723-1790) and from Germany Immanuel Kant (1724-1804).

Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) in his assay entitled "*What is Enlightenment*?" stated, "Enlightenment is man's emergence from his self-imposed immaturity. Immaturity is the inability to use one's understanding without guidance from another. This immaturity is self-imposed when its cause lies not in lack of reason, but in lack of resolve and courage to use it without guidance from another". Thus, his understanding on Enlightenment lies on the concept "maturity". By it, he means "freedom" –freedom for thoughts, freedom for reasoning. Kant described "immaturity" as relying on

teaching of authorities, such as Church and State. Therefore, in order to achieve maturity, one must overcome such teaching of traditional authorities and have freethinking or use one's own reasoning. Thus, the motto of Enlightenment, as Immanuel Kant expressed, is "Sapere aude!" (Dare to Know!).

1.3.1 Scientific Revolution and Enlightenment

The Enlightenment was shaped and originated with the "scientific revolution" of 16th and 17th centuries. During the scientific revolution, there was a great advancement in scientific enquiry, particularly in the field of astronomy. Initial challenge against the Church's opinions was on the notion of "geocentric" theory. Geocentric theory advances the understanding that the motionless earth is at the centre of the universe and all other planets revolved around the earth. During the scientific revolution, the geocentric theory came under several criticisms, starting with Nicolaus Copernicus's (1473-1543) "Heliocentric theory". Copernicus in his book "On the Revolutions of the Heavenly Spheres" or "Heliocentric theory" suggested that it is the sun and not the earth, is at the centre of the universe and accordingly all planets revolved around it. Copernicus' work and ideas influenced others in the field of science, like Johannes Kepler (1571-1630), Galileo Galilei (1564-1642) and Isaac Newton (1642-1727).

Johannes Kepler in his "three laws of planetary motion" improvised the heliocentric theory of Copernicus. He explained how the planets revolved the sun in elliptical orbits, rather than circular orbits, and in varied speeds. Nevertheless, Galileo Galilei with the help of newly invented telescope reinforced and confirmed the Copernicus's heliocentric theory. Isaac Newton, one of the most influential figures of the scientific revolution, syntheses the works of Copernicus, Kepler and Galileo and developed the theory on "Laws of gravitation" or "Laws of motion". Newton, in his book "Principia Mathematica" (1687), explained that there are certain mathematical

laws under which the solar system functions. Newton's mathematical laws of motion or gravitation explained that all the planets in the universe is attract each other and revolved with the same basic force of gravitation. Such advancement in science showed that the universe operated by certain natural laws and it only can be understood by scientific investigation and thus the orthodox Church's opinions were challenged.

1.3.2 Age of Enlightenment

The rise of new science not only undermined the geocentric conception of the universe but also influenced many others to see in new light the social, political and economic structures of the society. The dramatic success of the new science, from Copernicus to Newton, in explaining the natural world created doubt among many European thinkers about both the ancient and medieval worldview taught by Church. This inspired many enlightenment thinkers to believe that since the natural world was rational, the social world too should be rational. They believed that by using scientific methods, rather than superstition, the human society could be studied as well. They were optimistic about solving all the problems prevailing in society- social, political and economic and improving the prevailing condition to create a progressive and better society. Some of the major intellectual development in the field of political thought, religion and economy, are summarized below.

Firstly, the Enlightenment period saw the birth of some new political thoughts, particularly questioning the notion of the "Divine right" of the kings or the monarchs. The "Divine right" theory is a doctrine that defends monarchical absolutism, asserting that the kings derive their power and authority directly from God and are accountable for their actions to God alone, not to their subjects. The Divine right theory came under several criticisms which emphasised more on the kings rather than the subjects.

Thomas Hobbes, to defend his philosophical absolutism, came up with one of the most controversial works "*Leviathan*" (1651), written in the backdrop of the bloody "English civil war" (1642-1649). Hobbes stated that men in "state of nature" (pre-government society) was inherently evil, competitive, selfish, quarrelsome and turbulent and engaged constantly in "war". Because of this nature Hobbes preferred to term the "state of nature" as "state of war" or *bellum omnium contra omnes* (war of all against all). Hobbes says that the life in the state of nature was "solitary, nasty, poor, brutish, and short". Thus, he believed that in the absence of an invincible absolute ruler, people in "state of war" would kill one another. Therefore, to prevent men from destroying themselves, a powerful ruler was necessary. Thus, man enters a social contract to surrender his freedom to an absolute ruler in order to maintain law and order. The subject could never rebel and the monarchs had the right to put down any rebellion by any possible means. It is important to note that although Hobbes supported absolute monarchy at the same time he rejected Divine Right of the Kings. Hobbes's idea never won great popularity and was overshadowed by later thinkers.

John Locke developed his political theory on representative government in the book *"Two Treatises Government"* (1690). Like many other political theorists of the Enlightenment era, Locke too was critical about the "Divine Right theory". He wrote the book in response to the Glorious Revolution (1688-1689), a bloodless revolution that ended absolutism in England. John Locke believed government to be a contract between the rulers and the subjects. He says that men are born with certain natural rights– "life, liberty and ownership of property" and to protect these natural rights, men enter into a social contract and form a government. The task of the government was to protect these natural rights and if the government fails to protect or does not work for the wellbeing of the subjects, then the subjects had the right to overthrow the government. Thus, according to Locke the origin of government was not divine, rather it came from the subjects created by a social contract.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau was critical on the social and political structure of France. Rousseau wrote the book "*The Social Contract*" in 1762, in which he provided a critical analysis of French political system. Like many other political thinkers of his time, he too believed that government is not divine but comes from a social contract. Although he supported individual rights and freedom, he suggested community based government representing "general will". Rousseau maintained that the collective grouping or the choice of all citizens represent "sovereign"; the individual might have some particular will that aims for his/her individual interest, while the "sovereign" expresses the will for all ("general will") that aims for the common good. Thus, some time individuals might have to sacrifice their individual will, for the general will.

Baron de Montesquieu wrote his book "*The Spirit of the Laws*" in 1748. Montesquieu was critical about the absolutism in French monarchy. In the "The Spirit of the laws" he discussed about the division of state and separation of powers. He believed that in order to maintain balance among the branches of government i.e. executive, legislative and judicial, powers needed to be separated, so that each branch would check the other branches and thus prevent despotism and preserve freedom.

Secondly, though the Enlightenment is sometimes represented as the "enemy" of religion, however, it is more accurate to refer to it as critically against various (arguably) features of religion, such as superstition and supernaturalism. But, the "truth-value" or rationality of religious belief and the proper place for religion in the society remained a central point of debate during the Enlightenment. Broadly, among others, two important perspectives emerged during the Enlightenment: "rational supernaturalism" and "deism". Thinkers associated with "rational supernaturalism" like John Locke, William Chillingworth (1602-1644), John Tillotson (1630-1694), more or less had a moderate standpoint. They believed that revelation can be followed, but should be reasonable. For instance, if miracles occur,

as recorded in revelation, there must be reasonable explanations for accepting them. They also stood for the reduction of revelation into a few essential doctrines, which can serve for "morality". On the other hand, the Deists, more or less, believed in God, the creator of the universe, and view "Him" as the "clockmaker". They hold that God originally created the universe with certain "natural laws" and left it like a machine to run itself and God no longer tampered in its working, thus believing that God does not perform miracles. The Deists were typically against reliance on revelation as a source of religious doctrine and belief and support for "natural religion". Some of the leading Deists figures, among others, were Voltaire, John Toland (1670-1722) and Matthew (1655-1722). Some of the thinkers also raised questions against the privilege enjoyed by the Church representatives, and the Church's exorbitant tax collection from the commoners.

Thirdly, while others developed theories on political and religious field, there were also thinkers who provided their thinking for economic betterment. One of the famous figures was Adam Smith (1727-1790), a Scottish economist. In his *Wealth of Nations*, published in 1776, Smith provided his critical stand against the strict government control of "mercantilism". Mercantilism was an economic system that dominated during the sixteenth to eighteenth century. The main aim of the system was to increase nation's wealth by imposing government regulations concerning all of the nation's commercial interests. However, Smith was critical about the government intervention and supported "laissez-faire" or free market. Thus, according to him the individuals should be left free to pursue their own economic interests.

"Overall, the Enlightenment", as George Ritzer summarized was "*characterized by the belief that people could comprehend and control the universe by means of reason and empirical research... because physical world was dominated by natural laws, it was likely that social world was, too. Thus, it was up to the philosopher, using*

reason and research, to discover these social laws. Once they understood how the social world worked, the Enlightenment thinkers had a practical goal- the creation of a 'better', more rational world."

1.3.3 Conservative Reaction to the Enlightenment

However, there was also conservative reaction to the Enlightenment. The most extreme form of opposition came in response to French revolution, particularly the "regime of terror", which was the most violent phase of the revolution. Counter-revolutionary conservatives like Joseph de Maistre (1753-1821) and Louis de Bonald (1754-1840), were reacting not only against French Revolution, but also against Enlightenment; Enlightenment thinking which they blamed for fomenting revolution, thereby undermining the traditional beliefs that sustained the *old regime.* They were very much disturbed by the "social disorder" created by the revolution. They glorify all those traditions and beliefs as vital components or parts of society, which serves for maintaining "social order".

Thus, while talking about the influences of the Enlightenment on sociological in general, French Sociology in particular, there always been, as Ritzer stated, "mix of Enlightenment and counter-Enlightenment ideas". One of the pioneer French scholar who was directly influenced by the Enlightenment was Alexis de Tocueville. While Auguste Comte and Emile Durkheim had mix influences; firstly they advocated for science or scientific investigation and secondly, they emphasised on "social order".



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.2: A) Who wrote the book "The Social Contract"?

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B) When was Adam Smith's book 'Wealth of nations' published?

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1.4 POSITIVISM

In Sociology, Positivism is a doctrine founded by Auguste Comte, having a theoretical and methodological orientation. Possitivism refers to application of the method of natural sciences method for investigating social world. Comte's interest in positivism was intimately related to his interest in sociology. It was the time, when Comte was struggling to develop a subject that would systematically study the social world. Moreover, it was also the time when the study of natural sciences– mathematics, astronomy, physics, biology and chemistry was advancing at a fast pace. He believed that as the natural world is guided by certain natural laws, the society is also guided by certain societal laws, which are scientifically discoverable. It is the task of the social "scientists" to discover and report on them. Comte was much influenced by the methods of natural sciences (particularly physics) and asserted that same methods can be applied to study the social world. In his "Positive Philosophy", he first used the term "social physics" to define the science that would study the social world. Later it was renamed as Sociology. Comte stated, "Sociology... is the term I may be allowed to invent to designate Social physics". Nevertheless, Comte in his hierarchy of the positivistic sciences, maintained that among the "sciences"- mathematics, astronomy, physics, biology, chemistry, including sociology, the subject matter of Sociology is the most complicated and thus it is "the most difficult and important subject of all". It is difficult and important because it deals with human beings and their social life, which is not static as the natural world.

Comte provided three bases for his positivistic Sociology i.e. the three way of doing social research and finding facts of the social world. They are: *observation, experiment and comparison*. ***Observation,*** Comte maintained, should be directed by some theory; otherwise "we would not know what to look in the social world and we would not understand the significance of what we find". Observations should be also connected to some societal laws. ***Experiment,*** although, unlike the natural world, it is difficult to experiment with the social phenomenon (one possible would be a "natural experiment", i.e. the consequences of a particular phenomenon

happening in one setting can be observed and compared with the conditions in another setting in which such phenomenon does not occur). ***Comparison*** is divided into three more subtypes. First, comparison can be done between the human society and that of the lower animals. Second, comparison among as the societies as parts of the world. Third, comparison of different historical stages of the societies. For Comte the last subtype is the most important. He classified historical comparison as a method for comparing the present with the past for the future predictions. Here it is important that by positivism Comte meant the science of inquiry into the 'laws of phenomena' physical, biological and social. According to him there are mainly two sets of laws: i) Laws of co-existence, and; ii) Laws of succession.

The former indicates to the universally observable relationship between elements or facts of phenomena and the latter indicates to historically observable charges or relationship between elements or facts. In context, he named these two laws as 'statics' and 'dynamics' of a particular phenomenon respectively. Therefore, learners must go through proper understanding of his/her notion of positive science. Significantly as a note of caution it must be mentioned that Comte's positivism should not be understood in the strict sense of the term. We mean that 'positivism' seeks to describe only what 'obviously is, why one can really positive about, that is sense data. The implication of "positivistic" methods can be found in the work of later sociologists like Emile Durkheim on "Suicide". Keeping the notion of positivism in the centre, Comte developed a numbers of general positivistic laws applied to the social world.

1.4.1 Law of Three Stages

August Comte's most famous law is the law of three stages. Comte pointed that there are three main stages through which the human mind, all branches of knowledge and the history of the world pass. According to Comte in every stage humans are involved for an explanation of things around them. These three stages are– a) theological stage, b) metaphysical stage, c) positivist stage. These are discussed below in detail.

a) **The Theological Stage:** According to Comte, the first stage is the theological stage In this stage, the human mind is searching for the essential nature of things, with the assumption that all the events and phenomena are created and regulated by a supernatural power (e.g. gods). The theological stage can also be divided into *three* sub-stage *fetishism*, *polytheism* and *monotheism*.

- Fetishism, human assumed that some spirit or soul (supernatural power) exists in things around them, thus fetishism emerged as a form of religion e. g. worshiping of an object such as a tree.
- Polytheism, with the development of human thinking, fetishism became cumbersome. Now they began to believe in magic and allied activities and assigned specific objects to possess certain supernatural power and started worshipping them as gods.
- Monotheism, in the theological stage, the ultimate development in this stage in which human being began to worship the superhuman power of only one god which would explain everything.

b) **The Metaphysical Stage:** The metaphysics stage is called as 'modification of the first'. In this stage abstract forces, such as "Nature", replaced the supernatural beings. Humans discarded the belief in supernatural forces and developed the thinking that the "Nature" was the sole cause for "why things are the way they are".

c) **The Positivist Stage:** The positivist stage is the final stage and the most important one in Comte's positivistic orientation. It represents the scientific way of thinking. Comte stated, *"In the final, the positive stage, the mind has given over the vain search after absolute notions, the origin and destination of the universe, and the cause of phenomena, and applies itself to the study of their laws– that is, their invariable relations of succession and*

resemblance." In this stage, human beings bypass the "non-scientific" ideas like supernatural beings and abstract forces; rather they search for the invariable natural laws that govern all phenomena.

Comte also acknowledged that in any given point of time all the three stages that is theological, metaphysical and positivistic thinking, might operate simultaneously. However, he was interested in the future of the society and thought that when positive stage would be completely achieved there would be eradication of theological and metaphysical thinking.

Comte also applied the laws of three stages in different aspects: *Firstly*, according to Comte, the individual passes through three stages, such as the child (theologian), the adolescent (metaphysician) and the adult (positivist). *Secondly*, according to Comte's hierarchy of sciences, all the subjects also pass through the these three stages. However, Sociology as a "science" was new in hierarchical arena and was yet to go through positivistic stage and this was the reason for which Comte was fighting to develop Sociology as a "scientific" or "positivistic" discipline. *Thirdly*, Comte also saw the transformation of the history of the world from theological to metaphysical and believed that in the positivistic stage human beings would be able to understand better the invariant laws and to adapt these laws and progress "with fewer difficulties and with greater speed".

This was also one of the notions, for which, Comte also applied the concept of positivism for search of "order" and "progress" in the society. It was the time when the French society was changing as a result of the French Revolution. Comte was very much disturbed with the "negative" impacts of the French Revolution, particularly the bloody "regime of terror". Comte saw the French Society in a state of "social disorder" and noted its "lack of progress". Thus, to overcome these problems, "positivism was the only method which offers both order and progress". On the one hand, he says, positivism

would maintain order through the restraint of social disorder and on the other it would bring progress through an increase in knowledge.

1.5 TWO DIFFERENT TRENDS IN SOCIOLOGY

When dealing with sociological approaches, one need to be clear that there is no "one" specific paradigm or approach in Sociology . Rather it is associated with bundle of theoretical approaches and perspectives such as "Structural functionalism", "Conflict", "Interactionalism", "Feminism" etc. It is difficult to term any of the perspectives as "right" or "wrong",because each approach provides a different framework to view and analyse society. Here, we will be discussing the two major approaches **Structural Functionalism** and the **Conflict approach**, emerged as two distinct approaches within the Sociological enquiry.

1.5.1 Structural Functionalism

Structural functionalism is rooted in the early writings of Herbert Spencer and Auguste Comte, on "organic analogy". Herbert Spencer's "organic analogy" model, view the society as similar to a living body. Herbert Spencer saw similarities between a living body and social structure; as the parts or organs of a living body work together for the functioning of entire biological system, the parts of the society (culture, religion, economy etc.) work together for the functioning of the entire society.

Likewise, in Aguste Comte's analysis of "social static" and "social dynamics", we can see a similar approach. Comte called the Sociological study of social statics as "the investigation of laws of action and reaction of the different parts of the social system" Comte, like Herbert Spencer, deriving his thoughts from Biology, developed the perspective on the parts or structure and their functional relationship. Comte also saw the parts and the whole of the social system in a state of harmony and equilibrium.

This early approach later influenced French sociologist Emile Durkheim (1858-1917) who took up Spencer's 'organic analogy' and

established it into a theoretical approach known as structural functionalism or simply functionalism. The structural functionalism views the society as a structure (entity) of interdependent and interrelated parts (family, religion, culture etc.). The functions of these interrelated parts play an important role for the maintenance of the whole society. Wallace and Wolf summarized the major feature structural functionalism as: 1) a social system that consists with interrelated and interdependent parts 2) the social system is in a state of harmony, order or equilibrium, and 3) when disturbed, the system parts reorganize and readjust to bring the system back to a state of equilibrium.

Durkheim's structural functional analysis can be found in his writing on "social facts", "religion" and most importantly on "division of labour". Social facts, which includes various elements or parts of society such as laws, values, religious beliefs, culture, customs etc. are external to individual, but they guide and govern the social life and thus maintain order in society. In his discussion on division of labour, he emphasised social solidarity or social cohesion. Durkheim differentiated two types of social solidarity: "*mechanica*l" and "*organic*". Mechanical solidarity is present usually in "traditional" and small-scale societies and more importantly, based on kinship ties. Mechanical solidarity comes from homogeneity of individuals similar works, religious beliefs, life style etc.

On the other hand, *organic solidarity* is based on differences, characterised in "modern" or "industrial" society. In the modern society with the increasing division of labour, individuals are engaged in various specialised tasks. Moreover, the needs in this stage are diverse, so one cannot produce his need by himself. Despite these differences, Durkheim saw solidarity in the society as coming from interdependence among the individuals. Individuals are interdependent on one another's tasks. Thus, in Durkheim's view society holds the state of equilibrium.

Functionalism has been of great influence especially in America and particularly with writings of Talcott Parsons (1902-1978).

Parsons's functional approach is well known for his grand theory, which came in his several works most notably in "The Social System". In "Social System" and also in other works Parsons tended to emphasise the functions of structure, and how they work towards a dynamic equilibrium. In his analysis, part of "AGIL" (Adaptation, Goal attainment, Integration and Latency) model represented certain societal functions which society must meet for the maintenance of social order. *Adaptation*, includes society's capacity to secure sufficient facilities from the environment, e.g. gathering resources and producing commodities, and then distribute them throughout the system. *Goal Attainment*, a system that decide and achieves its goals. *Integration,* a system must maintain relationship among its parts. *Latency*, or pattern maintenance deals with the problem of insuring appropriate characteristics of "actors" in social system. This can be achieved through institutions like family, which mediates belief and value systems among the actors. Thus, Parsons' emphasis was on maintenance of order in the society.

Parsons remained one of the most influencial figures for his followers, most famous of whom the were Robert K. Merton (1910-2003), Kingsley Davis (1908-1997) and Wilbert Moore (1914-1987). Kingsley Davis and Wilbert Moore together wrote one of the major works in structural functionalism on "social stratification". It is said to be one of the "clearest statements ever made of structural functional" view. In their writings, they asserted that the "social stratification" was a functional condition "necessary" for the maintenance of the society. They were trying to show "positive" side of "social stratification".

In 1949, Robert K. Merton published an essay, in which he took a moderate stand and called his theory as "Middle range". In his Middle range theory he pointed out that social patterns are complex, where different parts of the society fulfil different types of functions. Some are intended, while some are unintended; some are beneficial, while some are undesirable. Under such condition, Merton developed

two types of functions– "manifest" (intended, beneficial etc.) and "latent" (unintended, undesirable). He argued that, structural functionalism should deal not only with positive functions but also with negative consequences, which he called "dysfunctions" or the "latent function". Moreover, it also needs to emphasise on the balance between 'functions' and 'dysfunctions' i.e. whether a structure is overall more functional or more dysfunctional. A simple example of this is: "a car provides transportation and status (manifest function); however, cars also create the problem of pollution (dysfunctions). Such examples can be understood in social setting too.

Critics to structural functionalism accuse it is of being "conservative"; they charge that the functionalists cannot sufficiently explain the social change, as their emphasis is on social static or social order. Critics also argue that structural functionalists while focusing on order and equilibrium overlooked the inequality, conflicts and tensions that exist within society. They have also overlooked such factors as class, gender, social status etc which impact man's social life and social positions.

1.5.2 Conflict Approach

The other major theoretical approach within sociological doctrine is conflict perspective. Unlike structural functionalism, which focus and view society as "order", "stability", "harmony" or "equilibrium", conflict approach focus on competition and conflict among the social classes. Thinkers within conflict tradition, view society as composition of social relations characterised by "inequality", and engaged in constant competition for unequal distribution of resources, like wealth and power, with the motive to benefit their own interests. Under such circumstance, a few groups control over the resources at the expense of other groups. Thus, the Conflict thinkers try to analyse the society, in terms of inequality and precisely ask the question: "who benefit?" This has provided a different perspective which the structural functionalists does not emphasis.

- **Karl Marx:** Within the Conflict tradition, the contributions of Karl Marx are often cited as the founding ground for this theoretical approach. Marx's works, most importantly, were developed in response to the socio-economic changes that Europe witnessed as a result of Industrial Revolution. European society, in general, was changing from being predominantly characterised by feudalism to one marked by capitalism. Marx, saw society in constant conflict and struggle between "haves" and "have nots" classes (discussed in more details in Unit 9), which occurred because of inequality, exploitation etc. Marx while defining "social class" stated that one's class in a society is determined by his/her relations to "means of production" (production forces: tools, machines, land, raw materials etc.). Thus, those who own the means of production are "haves" class and those who do not own means of production are the "have nots" class. And the "have nots" class has to work for their survival for the "have's" class. In the process, in various form the "have nots" are exploited by the "haves". Throughout human history, as Marx saw, there has been exploitation. Masters exploit the slaves in the slavery stage, feudal lords exploited the serfs and accordingly exploitation also exists in the the modern capitalist society in which the *bourgeoisie* exploits the *proletariat*. Marx also maintained that the control over economic means also provides political powers. Under such condition the result was social conflict as the "have nots" challenged the "haves" and the conflict between these two classes lead to social change. Thus, according to Marx conflict is the very essence of social change.
- **Feminism:** Later on, the followers of Karl Marx, extended the notion of conflict or tension between groups and tried to focus on other aspects, such as gender inequality. One of such approaches which developed in response to existing inequality in the society is the feminist perspective. Feminism, basically focuses on inequality in gender relation and sees women as an

"oppressed" group and thus want to eliminate this oppression. However, the Feminists themselves greatly differ in their views on the issue as to the causes of inequality and the possible solution to overcome it.

A group of Feminists, influenced by Marx's economic analysis (Marxists Feminism), views that the capitalist economic system is the core problem of gender inequality, as the system favours men more than women, for instance- with higher pay jobs. Thus, to them the solution to it lies on overthrowing the capitalist economic system. Liberal feminism believed that the sole cause of inequality is the lack of opportunity and education of women as well as the traditional values of gender that limits women's roles in the society. Thus, the liberal feminists maintain that if there is equality among men and women in all aspects of social life, women would be equally successful, as the men. Likewise, Radical feminism asserts that, regardless of economic system and other inequalities, male domination is the most fundamental factor and male violence is the key method for controlling women. Thus, to them the solution to it lies in eliminating "all forms of sexual violence and enhancing women's culture and lives".

- **Frankfurt School:** In Germany a group of thinkers associated with "critical school of thought", established an institution known as "Frankfurt school", to continue the Marxian tradition. The most famous thinkers associated with "Frankfurt school" were, Max Horkheimer (1895-1973), Theodor Adorno (1903-1969), Erich Fromm (1900-1980), Georg Lukacs (1885-1971), Herbert Marcuse (1898-1979) and recently Jurgen Habermas (1929-). Until 1934, the institute functioned in Germany, but with the growing uncomfortable environment under the Nazi regime, they had to move to America. In America, under Columbia University, New York, the institute reopened and functioned there until the war ended. During its functioning in New York, the school also influenced many sociologists in American soil with Conflict perspective, such as Lewis Coser (1913-2003) a German-

American Sociologists. In his work "*The Functions of Social Conflict"* 1956, he said that "group formation is a result of both association and dissociation, so that both conflict and cooperation serve a social function. Certain degree of conflict is an essential element in group formation".

However, it is stated that initially, those associated with the Frankfurt school, tended to be traditional Marxists and were importantly providing analysis on economic domain. However, by around 1930, a major shift took place, as they shifted their attention from economic to cultural system. Culture was seen as one of the major forces under the modern capitalists society.

Critics on the conflict perspective charged that it has been too politicized by advocating such movements. Critics also claim that the conflict approach downplays the unity and stability of the society by overemphasising conflicts, tensions and coercion.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.3: A) Who introduced the Positivism as a theoretical orientation in sociology?

.....

B) Who used the terms organic solidarity and mechanical solidarity?

.....



1.6 LET US SUM UP

- Sociology as an academic discipline emerged in the early part of 19th century.
- It was Auguste Comte who coined the term "Sociology'. The term first appeared in his book "Positive Philosophy" at about 1839.
- Three important forces for the emergence of Sociology in the west were the Enlightenment, the French Revolution and the Industrial Revolution.

- The Enlightenment was an intellectual movement in Europe which brought a remarkable in outlook of the world, based on experiment and reasoning rather than mere beliefs and superstitions.
- **French Revolution:** the social and political revolution which swept aside the "old regime" characterized by absolute monarchy, feudal economy, social inequality, alliance of church and the state etc. and created new political ideals, summarized in the French slogan, "liberty, equality and fraternity".
- Industrial Revolution is the period characterized by vast social changes from predominantly agricultural economy to industrial or factory economy, from rural to increasingly urban and industrial society, from handicraft or human labour to increasingly machines, advancement in communication and transportation, mass production and so on.
- The Enlightenment was the intellectual movement in Europe from 17th to 18th century that provided new framework towards society on the basis of experience and reasoning, rather than beliefs and superstitions.
- The Enlightenment originated in Scientific Revolution and challenged the "geocentric theory" by "heliocentric theory".
- Progress in scientific inquiry created doubt among many European thinkers about both the ancient and medieval worldview as taught by the Church.
- It is also replaced the "divine right theory" by "social contract theory" by stressing that government is not divine but created by the subjects.
- According to the Conservative reaction to the Enlightenment, the Enlightenment ideas were responsible for the French Revolution and creating "social disorder" in the society.
- Positivism is application of natural sciences method for investigating social world.
- Auguste Comte wanted to develop a positivistic science that would study the social world.
- There basis for positivistic sociology: *observation, experiment and comparison*.

- The Laws of Three Stages: 1) *The Theological Stage* (beliefs in supernatural power) 2) *The Metaphysical stage* (beliefs in abstract forces like nature) and 3) *The Positivist stage* i.e. the scientific stage.
- Only in the Positivist stage both "order" and "possible"
- There is no "one" specific paradigm or approach in Sociology rather it associated with bundles of theoretical approaches and perspective.
- Structural functionalism is roots in Herbert Spencer and Auguste Comte's theory of "organic analogy".
- The main points of Structural functionalism are: 1) a social system consists with interrelated and interdependent parts 2) the social system in a state of harmony, order or equilibrium, and 3) when disturbed, the system parts reorganize and readjust to bring the system back to a state of equilibrium.
- Conflict perspective, unlike structural functionalism, view society as composition of social relations characterised by "inequality".
- Conflict approach is originated in Karl Marx's writing.
- According to Karl Marx, resources in the society are unequally divided between the "haves" and "have nots", thus throughout history there has been constant class conflict.
- Conflict leads to social change.



1.7 FURTHER READING

1) Abraham, Francis and Morgan, J. H. (2011); *Sociological Thought*; India: Macmillan Publishers India Ltd.
2) Fletcher, Ronald (1972); *The Making of Sociology: A Study of Sociological Theory*, (Vol. I); London: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd.
3) Hadden, Richard W. (1997); *Sociological Theory: An Introduction to Classical Tradition*; Canada: Broadview Press.
4) Ritzer, George (2008); *Modern Sociological Theory*; New York: McGraw-Hill.
5) Saikia & Buragohain (2010); *Sociology: Theories and Issues*; Jorhat: Vidya Bhavan.

1.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans. to Q. No. 1: A) French revolution took place in the year 1789.

B) Sociology is derived from the Latin word 'socious' and Greek word 'logos'.

Ans. to Q. No. 2: A) **Jean-Jacques Rousseau** wrote the book "*The Social Contract".*

B) 1776.

Ans. to Q. No. 3: A) Auguste Comte.

B) Emile Durkheim.

1.9 MODEL QUESTIONS

A) Short Questions: (Answer each question in about 1 or 2 words)

Q.1: What are the major forces for the emergence of Sociology?

Q.2: What are the three stages of law according to Agugust comte?

B) Write Short Notes: (Answer each question in about 150 words)

Q.1: What is the main difference between "geocentric" and "heliocentric" theory?

Q.2: According to John Locke, what are the three important "natural rights"?

Q.3: Discuss Jean-Jacques Rousseau's theory of "social contract".

C) Long Question: (Answer each question in about 300-500 word)

Q.1: What are the major forces for the emergence of Sociology? Discuss.

Q.2: How does Scientific Revolution influence the Enlightenment? Discuss.

Q.3: Discuss the major political theories developed during the age of Enlightenment.

Q.4: Discuss Auguste Comte theory of "positivism".

Q.5: Discuss Structural functionalists approach.

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