UNIT 14: VILFREDO PARETO

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14.1 LEARNING OBJECIVES

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

- know about the contribution of Vilfredo Pareto in building up the discipline of sociology
- understand the definition of social action as defined by Pareto
- understand the definitions of residues and derivations
- understand the application of concepts given by Pareto in the analysis of social change.

14.2 INTRODUCTION

Vilfredo Pareto has made immense contribution in the development of sociology as a discipline. He has discussed about the nature of sociological theories, the subject matter of sociology as well as the nature

of sociological investigation. In his book 'Treatise on General Sociology' 1912, he incorporates his ideas on the nature of sociology. Pareto chose the mechanical analogy rather than the organic analogy to describe the model of society. Hence society for Pareto was a system of mutually interacting particles which move from one status of equilibrium to another. The elements of this social system are psychological states behind social action such as motivation, interest, residues and derivation; social heterogeneity and stratification and social change. In the previous unit we have learnt about Max Weber's analysis of the relationship between Religion and Capitalism. In this unit we shall discuss Pareto's contribution to Sociology.

14.3 SUBJECT MATTER OF SOCIOLOGY

Different sociologists have emphasized on different kinds of subject matter of sociology. Durkheim had stressed the importance of the study of social facts whereas Weber has highlighted that sociology is the study of meaningful social action. In his works, Pareto has focused on the study of different kinds of social action. He is particularly analysing the actions that has socio-political consequences. However Pareto's method of analysis of social action is very different from Weber's Verstehen or any other sociologist. Rather than the overt form of social action, Pareto gives emphasis on the study of the underlying principles of action. Therefore Pareto considers it essential to understand the principles on the basis of which people act in social behaviour or engage in particular kinds of group behaviour. Pareto not only interprets these principles through the understanding of their social consequences but uses psychological explanations to highlight the underlying causes of these actions. His understanding of action also incorporates the study of rationality and logic behind these principles on which action is based.

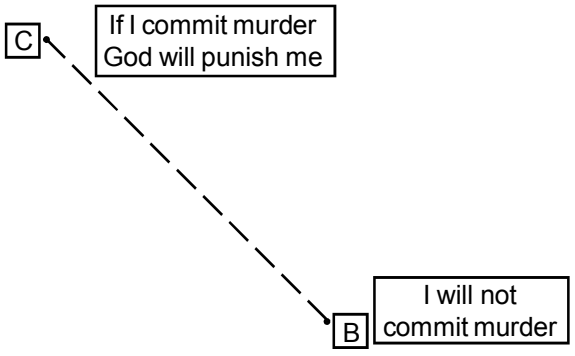
In order to understand the different principles behind the socio-political action of humans in society Pareto classified actions into three types: instinctive action, rational action and non logical action. Among these the two major forms of actions that are the concern of sociological investigation are Logical actions or the actions having overt reason and Non-Logical

actions. Let us now understand the definitions and characteristics of these two types of actions in detail:

14.3.1 Logical Actions

Logical actions are actions which are logically linked to an end. It means that an actor has a rational behind the action performed by him. In logical action the actor uses means that are appropriate to ends and which logically links the means with the end. In logical actions the relationship of the action to the desired end or goal of the action must be established in the actor's mind by a scientifically variable theory. For example if a person wants to travel to a particular location by a train, he must first ascertain that there are railways or stations at that particular location. If there are no railways and station in that location it is futile to board any train for reaching that destination. Further this positive means-end relationship should be also observable for a scientific observer. Logical actions thus are comprehensible not only for the actor but also for the detached scientific observer.

The theory behind a logical action should explain why the actor is performing the action ex-facto. The theories behind the logical actions are confirmed only after the action has already happened. This process is the verification of whether the proposed course of action has or not met the desired end. Thus any action that confirms the means-end relationship through a rational explanation can be considered as a logical action. The following diagram illustrates logical actions.



If abstinence from murder (B) is the action than the logic behind the action is that the person fears that God will punish him (C). Thus a person may establish a logical connection between the action and the cause of that action.

14.3.2 Non-Logical Actions

In contrast to logical actions, non-logical actions are those actions that have an objective, but the means-end relationship cannot be ascertained scientifically. All those actions not falling within Pareto's explicit definition of the logical action will fall under the residual category of Non-Logical actions. The course of steps involved in achieving the end result of non-logical action is not explained relationally. Pareto distinguishes them from illogical actions that do not have any end. In continuance with the above example Non-logical actions can be explained as follows, a person may simply abstain from murder without being sure of the cause as to why he or she is abstaining from it. The person may abstain from murder because of the fear that god will punish, or because of the fear that he or she might be punished by law or for any other cause.

Non-logical action is therefore an action where the logical link between the means and the end is yet not established. Since this relationship is not yet stated, the objective end of a non-logical action can be different from the subjective end. It means that the motives behind a Non-logical action may not be clearly related to the end result of the action. In fact the motives may be hidden or may appear contrary to the end result.

From the above example we can also understand that similar actions may have different kind of explanations for different actors. Therefore the theories regarding the means- end relationships cannot be uniform in each occurrence of the action. The scientific uniformity of the means-end relationship cannot be confirmed and it cannot be predicted on the basis of the overt theory alone. Most of our actions are therefore classified by Pareto as non-logical action since the

cause of the actions can only be explained through the investigation of each individual case and then comparing them with other individuals. Therefore only an inductive procedure can reveal the sequencing of events in a non logical action.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.1: Define Logical actions.

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Q.2: Define Non-Logical actions.

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Q.3: What are the three different types of actions found in society according to Pareto?

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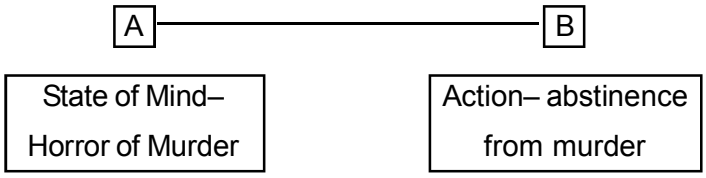
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14.4 RESIDUES

Theories or the explanation behind an action are considered by Pareto as masks. For Pareto it is a marked tendency of the humans to make their behaviour as logical or logicalize it. These theories are merely the manifestation of the state of mind of the actors. Therefore the root cause of a particular action is not what is explained about the action but the underlying state of mind of the actor. The state of mind is hence the true social force of the social equilibrium in a social system. A sociologist must therefore try to recognise and understand these states of mind while observing social action. These states of mind also display a certain amount of uniformity with regard to similar actions. They are the constants in the composition of any actions. Thus if you strip from a theory, its variable part, you are left with a residuum

or the constant. This constant element in actions that are similar to each other is termed by Pareto as a residue. In other words the residue is the underlying definitive principle in an action.

The relationship between the state of mind and the action can be depicted by the following diagram.



Residues are similar to that of instincts and interest but they are not one and the same. Instincts are related to the bio-chemical reactions to a certain situation but residues are not biochemical but mental elements that have a social origin. Residues are related to a person's instincts but they do not cover all of them. Residues are related to only those instincts that give rise to rationalization in theories while other instincts remain hidden. Again, interests are goals that are logical but residues define the Non-logical part of action. Thus residues are states of mind that are different from instincts and interest. Nevertheless Pareto conceived of residues as manifestations of sentiments or corresponding to them. Residues are intermediary between sentiments we cannot know directly and the belief systems and acts that can be known and analysed.

14.4.1 Types of Residues

The underlying principles behind different actions will be different. Similarly different people will also have different states of mind behind the performance of similar action. Based on these two propositions Pareto has classified residues into six major types:

Class I : Instincts for combinations
Class II : Group persistence or persistence of aggregates
Class III : Need of expressing sentiments by external acts (activity, self expression)
Class IV : Residues connected with sociality
Class V : Integrity of the Individual and his appurtenances
Class VI : The sex residue

The above classes are further divided into sub classes and their varieties. Although all these residues are given equal emphasis by Pareto, the first two classes of residues are particularly elaborated by him in the analysis of political action in the maintenance of social equilibrium. The class I residues or the Instincts of combinations refers to the inclination of all human beings to combine certain things with other things. For Pareto, this instinct is general to all human beings and occurs in generic forms. People may combine things that are contradictory or rare things and unusual events. They combine good things with fortunate events and bad things with unfortunate events. People may not derive any logic behind this combination.

On the other hand Class II residues refer to the persistence of aggregates. Pareto explains that certain combinations constitute an aggregate of closely associated elements. The residue of the class II tries to protect this unity from disintegration. For example the mechanical inertia acts in order to protect the unity of matter. The residue then opposes movement produced by other instincts. If disintegration cannot be avoided, the instinct tries to disguise the break up by preserving the external features of the aggregate. Again, all human beings show this class II type of residues. Therefore people try to preserve the relations of individuals with other individuals, relations with family or community and even persistence of abstractions and persistence of uniformities.

The above two kinds of residues have been elaborated in relation to the socio political behaviour of the governing elites that would be discussed later in section 14.6.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.4: What are Residues?

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Q.5: Name the two classes of residues elaborated by Pareto?

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Q.6: What is the difference between residues and instincts?

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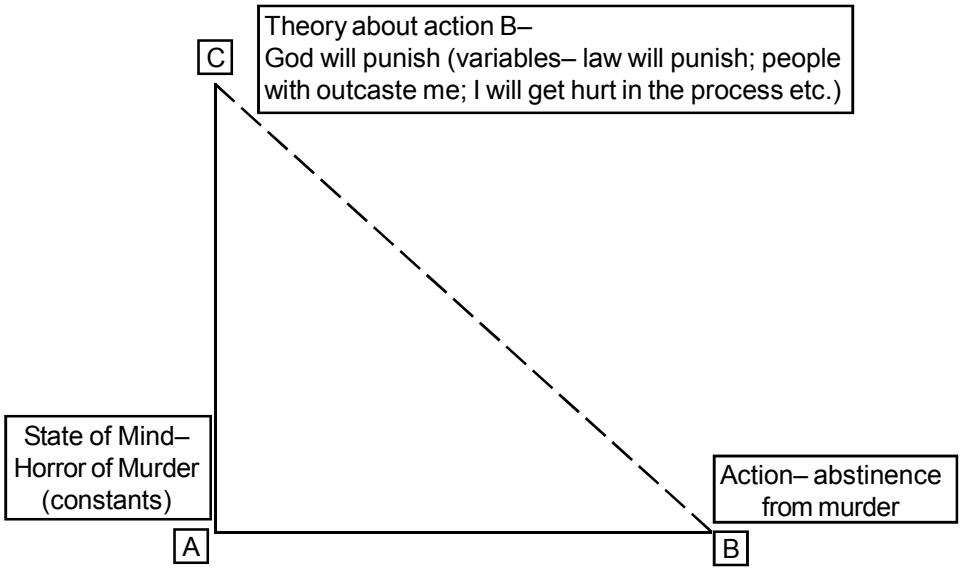
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14.5 DERIVATIONS

Residues are thus the constant elements or the state of mind of the actors behind a particular action. From these constant elements we can derive certain variable arguments, explanations and justifications of an action. These variables help in explaining the rationality or logic behind a particular action. They form the final part of the theory of a particular action. Pareto calls these variable deductive elements of theories as derivation. The entire theory along with the residue and the derivations is called as a derivate or derivative. The relation between action, residue behind it and the obvert explanation or the derivation is depicted in the following diagram.



Similar to that of the residues Pareto has also classified the derivations into four classes:

Class I : Assertion of facts, experimental or imaginary, sentiments. These comprises of simple relations

Class II : Authority of individuals, traditions, usage and custom or divine beings or personification. It is used as a mode of persuasion.

Class III : Accord with sentiments or principles. Accord basically refers to consensus of people regarding an idea or an action. For example the universal consensus on the existence of a divine power like god

Class IV : Verbal Proofs or verbal derivations obtained through the use of terms the meaning of which is indeterminate, doubtful and equivocal and which do not correspond to reality.

Thus the above four classes of derivations depict the four major classes of logic or rationale that people use to justify as the cause of their actions. Derivations are modes of intensifying the activity of the residues.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.7: Give the definition of Derivation.

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Q.8: What is the function of derivations in defining social action?

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Q.9: What is a derivate?

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14.6 CIRCULATION OF ELITES

The theory on the circulation of elites is a major contribution of Vilfredo Pareto in sociology. The explanation of circulation of elites encompasses almost all important theoretical concepts defined by Pareto. It explains the operation of residues and derivations in the performance of socio-political actions and functioning of the political organization of society. The circulation of elites also describes the process through which equilibrium is maintained in the social system. Further the circulation of elites is Pareto's contribution to the study of social change and its dynamics.

The social system is characterised by heterogeneity for Pareto. This heterogeneous nature is an important element in the functioning of the social system and also in the maintenance of equilibrium in the system. People are heterogeneous in their nature and social behaviour. Not only are individuals and groups different from each other they are also unequal in terms of their talents, capabilities and their functioning. Even within social groups, some people will be more capable than others. Pareto therefore defines elites as those people who are most capable in any peculiar branch of activity. They are the select persons of their particular groupings.

On the other hand all other people who do not meet the above criteria are referred as non-elite by Pareto. The non-elite therefore do not possess these exceptional qualities and can be classified as the lower stratum of the society and the elites form the upper stratum of any society. The circulation of elites is further related to the concepts of Governing and Non-Governing elites.

14.6.1 Governing Elites and Non-Governing Elites

Pareto further divides the superior stratum or the elites into two groups. The elites who directly or indirectly take part in governing are called as governing elites and the elites who do not have any role to play in the government are called the non governing elites. The governing elites are the people with most suitable qualities of governance. They are the most capable for governing whereas the non governing elites do not posses these qualities.

A group of the governing elites may be characterized by its closeness or openness to social mobility. It means that membership in the group of governing elite may be open to all members of a society, as in case of a democracy, or it may be closed as in the case of an oligarchy. Pareto further explains that people from the non-elite can accede to the group of elites from time to time depending on their refinement of qualities and on the social situation. Similarly members of the governing elite can sink into the mass of non-elite. This is one of the ways in which the circulation of elites takes place. Therefore by the phrase 'circulation of elites' Pareto referred to the process by which elites and non-elites replace each other periodically due to the need of change in governance.

14.6.2 Foxes and Lions

Another way in which the circulation of elites takes place is through the replacement between the two kinds of governing elites. Pareto explains that people within the governing elite have the choice of two means of governance in a society. The first is force and the second is consent. A governing class tends to use one or the other of these methods of governance but not both. A governing class may also be ejected from its position because it lacks the ability and will to use one of these methods in sufficient degree. Based on the use of these two exclusive means of governance, Pareto has again divided the governing elite into the foxes and the lions. These terms were originally coined and used by Niccolo Machiavelli. However Pareto remodelled these two concepts by associating them to two major types of residues.

One section of the governing elites uses the means of persuasion to obtain consent of the masses for the support of the formation of government and its continuity. Persuasion is a non violent means of governance which uses appeal to the interests and the sentiments of the masses for their consent. Class I residues or the residues of combinations are in correspondence to persuasion and

guile. Therefore Pareto is comparing these elites to that of Foxes. The group having these residues are concerned about the use of the consent of the people of a society at a present moment. Therefore they are open to change or can accommodate change in their policies for governance.

The other section of governing elites, on the other hand, applies violence or coercion to gain the consent of the masses. However the use of violence cannot be regularized. Only in exceptional circumstances and in small circle of groups violence can become a means of governance. For Pareto Class II residues or the persistence of aggregates has a correspondence to coercion. Coercion is therefore considered as an important means to maintain the existing social order. The elites having this kind of a residue resist innovation and preserve old forms and traditions. Because of these qualities Pareto calls them as Lions.

Similar categorization was done by Pareto in case of the elites who were responsible for the maintenance of the economy of a society. Hence he distinguishes between the speculators and the rentiers. The speculators posses Class I residues and can devise innovative measures for the increase of income whereas the rentiers are responsible for maintaining economic stability.

In order to maintain social equilibrium, both of the above classes of residues are required in governance. The continuance of one kind will create disequilibrium in the long run without the balanced induction of the other. The foxes at one point of time may be responsible for the instability and corruption of power when they grow in strength. On the other hand the lions may be responsible for social stagnancy and decadence because of the lack of innovation. When such situation arises each of these groups are replaced by the other and a new socio-political order emerges that helps to restore social equilibrium.

Thus Vilfredo Pareto puts forward different concepts like Logical and Non- logical actions, Residues and Derivations and the circulation of elites to explain the functioning of the social system.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.10: Who are the elites?

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Q.11: Define the two types of governing elites.

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Q.12: How are persuasion and coercion related to residues?

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14.7 LET US SUM UP

- From this unit we have learned about the contribution of Vilfredo Pareto in defining the subject matter of sociology.
- Pareto has introduced many new concepts in sociological analysis such as Logical and Non- logical actions, Residues and Derivations and the circulation of elites.
- Society is imagined by him as a system where equilibrium is needed for the proper functioning of the system.
- For Pareto the purpose of sociological analysis is to understand the underlying principles of social action.
- The study of these principles is necessary to understand the mechanisms through which social equilibrium is maintained in a social system.

- He distinguishes between logical and non logical actions.
- The understanding of non logical actions is a major part of sociological analysis.
- The concept of residues helps to understand the state of mind of the actor of the underlying principle of social action.
- Circulation of elites is an example of how social equilibrium is maintained through the operation of different kinds of residues.



14.8 FURTHER READING

1) Coser, Lewis A. (2013); *Masters of Sociological Thought: Ideas in Historical and Social Context*; Delhi, Jaipur: Rawat Publication.
2) Mirfin, Derick (1996). *Vilfredo Pareto: Sociological Writings*; London: Pall Mall Press.



14.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans. to Q. No. 1: Logical actions are actions which are logically linked to an end. It means that if an actor has a rationale behind the action performed by him, it is logical.

Ans. to Q. No. 2: Non-logical actions are those actions that have an objective but the means-end relationship cannot be ascertained scientifically. The course of steps involved in achieving the end result is not explained relationally.

Ans. to Q. No. 3: Pareto classified actions into three types: instinctive action, rational action and non logical action.

Ans. to Q. No. 4: For Pareto the root cause of a particular action is the underlying state of mind of the actor. The states of mind are the constants in any given theory of action. This constant element in actions is termed by Pareto as a residue.

Ans. to Q. No. 5: The two classes of residues elaborately discussed by Pareto in terms of socio-political actions are: Class I residues or

Instincts for combination and Class II residues i.e. Group persistence or persistence of aggregates

Ans. to Q. No. 6: Residues are related to a person's instincts but they do not cover all of them. Residues are related to only those instincts that give rise to rationalization in theories while other instincts remain hidden.

Ans. to Q. No. 7: Derivation refers to the variables that help in explaining the rationality or logic behind a particular action. They form a part of the theory of a particular action along with the residues.

Ans. to Q. No. 8: Derivations are the logic or rationale that people use to justify as the cause of their actions

Ans. to Q. No. 9: The entire theory of a particular social action along with the residues and the derivations is called as a derivate or derivative.

Ans. to Q. No. 10: Within social groups, some people are more capable than others. Pareto therefore defines elites as those people who are most capable in any peculiar branch of activity.

Ans. to Q. No. 11: The two types of governing elites are the foxes and the lions. This classification is an elaboration of a Machiavellian concept. The foxes are possessors of Class I residues or the residue of combination and the lions display the Class II residues or the persistence of aggregates more.

Ans. to Q. No. 12: Pareto describes that there are two modes of governance that help in maintaining social equilibrium. These two modes are persuasion and coercion. Class I residues or the residues of combinations are in correspondence to persuasion and guile. Class II residues or the persistence of aggregates has a correspondence to coercion.



14.10 MODEL QUESTIONS

A) Short Questions: (Answer each question in about 150 words)

Q.1: What is the difference between Logical and Non-Logical actions?

Q.2: What is the difference between Residues and Derivations?

Q.3: Differentiate between the two types of governing elites.

B) Long Questions: (Answer each question in about 300-500 words)

Q.1: Explain the relationship between action and residue according to Pareto.

Q.2: Elaborate on the causes and consequences of the circulation of elites.

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