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QUESTION PAPER

June – 2024

(Solved)

SOCIOLOGICAL THEORIES AND CONCEPTS

MSO-1

Time: 3 Hours]

[Maximum Marks: 100

Note : Answer any five questions in all, selecting at least two from each section. All questions carry equal marks.

SECTION – A

Q. 1. Discuss the role of enlightenment in the special relationship of early growth and development of Sociology.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-1, Page No. 2, 'Context of Social Theory', 'Individual vs. Collectivity and Durkheim and the Enlightenment'.

Q. 2. Critically explain Levi-Strauss' understanding of social structure as social construct.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-5, Page No. 23, 'Social Structure is a Model: Contributions of Claude Levi-Strauss and Edmund Leach' and Page No. 24, Q. No. 2.

Q. 3. Elaborate the basic premises of functionalism.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-6, Page No. 28, 'The Premises of Functionalism, Functionalism in Social Anthropology: Radcliffe-Brown and Malinowski' and Page No. 29, 'Functionalism of Talcott Parsons (1902-1979) and Robert K. Merton (1910-2003)'.

Q. 4. Discuss the dynamics of power in local communities as elaborated by Miller and Dahl.

Ans. The focus of community power is on decisions that are crucial to the people in a community. The basic question, therefore, is who wields the power to say about things which are important to many people in the community. The concern is with the ability to and the practice of deciding what is to be done in, for, by the community. Two scholars who have contributed significantly to the subject of community, power are Delbert Miller and Robert Dahl. They have initiated a debate based on their own studies and research. The basic issue of contention is, who holds power on local communities. Miller asserts that the business elite makes decisions in local communities. Dahl, on the other hand, argues that rather than being monolithic, power structure

is pluralistic. Delbert Miller chose knowledgeable informants from the community. He asked them to select out of a prepared list of important, well-known people belonging to different organisations and institutions those whom they thought were powerful in getting things done. Now, Miller interviewed the people who were selected by the knowledgeable informants. He also asked them whose help they would seek if they wanted to get something done. This was referred to as the 'Reputational Technique'. Miller concluded that most of the knowledgeable informants said businessmen were the ones who could get things done. They do influence policy making in local communities to a large extent. Here, local governments are not strong bodies and elected officials are often businessmen, lawyers and politicians of the community, itself. This was true of the 'Pacific City. A study of the 'English City' however suggested on Miller that not businessmen but labour is significant as also leaders from the domain of education, religion, and welfare and status groups. Based on two of the above-mentioned studies, Miller concluded that power pattern is not essentially identical in all American Communities. Robert Dahl studied New Haven. His methodology of research differed sharply from that of Miller. Dahl found out the specific decisions on specific issues. What is more important is that he looked for specific decision makes in specific situations two. This technique was referred to as 'Event Analysis'. He concluded that the role of businessmen in decision-making was minor in contrast to the assertion of Miller. He explained that while there is no denying that businessmen have lot of resources of their disposal, but it is equally true that they have several liabilities by which they are constrained and because of which they cannot emerge as the major contributors in decision-making process. Therefore, not one centre

of power but many loci of power exist. Dahl believes that mayors and their staff have increasingly become the initiators and organisers of important community decision. Miller insists that the political leaders are uncertain about themselves and wait for the cues from others, while businessmen have a clearly defined image and act with more assertion.

Q. 5. What do you mean by legitimacy? Discuss its various bases.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-9, Page No. 41, 'Concept of legitimacy', Page No. 42, 'Bases of Legitimacy: Traditional, Legal-Rational and Charismatic', Page No. 43, Q. No. 1.

SECTION – B

Q. 6. Discuss the characteristics of sovereignty and its external dynamics.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-18, Page No. 92, 'External Sovereignty and Characteristics of Sovereignty'.

Q. 7. Explain Weber's view on class, status and party as source of power.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-25, Page No. 132, 'Max Weber'.

Q. 8. Elucidate the relationship between state and civil society in a democracy.

Ans. The term 'civil society' was used by writers such as Locke and Rousseau to describe civil government as differentiated from natural society or the state of nature. The Marxist concept derives from Hegel. In Hegel, civil or bourgeois society, as the realm of individuals who have left the unity of the family to enter into economic competition, is contrasted with the state, or political society.

Although Gramsci continues to use the term to refer to the private or nonstate sphere, including the economy, his picture of civil society is very different from that of Marx. It is not simply a sphere of individual needs, but of organisations, and has the potential of rational self-regulation and freedom. Gramsci insists on its complex organisation, as the 'ensemble of organisms commonly called 'private' where 'hegemony' and 'spontaneous consent' are organised. He argues that any distinction

between civil society and the state is only methodological, since even a policy of non-intervention like *laissez-faire* is established by the state itself. The metaphors he uses to describe the precise relationship between the state and civil society vary. A fully developed civil society is presented as a trench system able to resist the incursions of economic crises and to protect the state. Whereas Marx insists on the separation between the state and civil society, Gramsci emphasises the inter-relationship between the two. The state narrowly conceived as government is protected by hegemony organised in civil society while the coercive state apparatus fortifies the hegemony of the dominant class. Yet the state also has an ethical function as it tries to educate public opinion and to influence the economic sphere. In turn, the very concept of law must be extended, Gramsci suggests, since elements of custom and habit can exert a collective pressure to conform in civil society without coercion or sanctions. In any actual society the lines of demarcation between civil society and the state may be blurred, but Gramsci argues against any attempt to equate or identify the two. And while he accepts a role for the state in developing civil society, he warns against perpetuating statolatry or state worship. Gramsci redefines the withering away of the state in terms of a full development of the self-regulating attributes of civil society. In Marx's writings civil society is portrayed as the terrain of individual egotism. Gramsci refers to Hegel's discussion of the estates and corporations as organising elements, which represent corporate interests in a collective way in civil society, and the role of the bureaucracy and the legal system in regulating civil society and connecting it to the state.

Q. 9. Distinguish between natural and social inequalities and their sociological relevance.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-25, Page No. 129, 'Natural and Social Inequality' and Page No. 131, Q. No. 1.

Q. 10. Discuss various theories on the origin of caste system.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-28, Page No. 147, 'Definition of Caste and Theories of Origin of Caste System'.



Sample Preview of The Chapter

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SOCIOLOGICAL THEORIES AND CONCEPTS

APPROACHES TO SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY

Social Theory and its Context



INTRODUCTION

The emergence of sociological theories is traced to two great events of Western Europe, namely, the French Revolution and the Industrial Revolution. These theories are in these particular social contexts. These contexts had a great impact on the emergence of sociology. Thus, the social conditions of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were of the utmost significance to the development of sociology.

The chaos and social disorder that resulted from the series of political revolutions ushered in by the French Revolution in 1789 disturbed many early social theorists. While they recognized that a return to the old order was impossible, they sought to find new sources of order in societies that had been traumatized by dramatic political changes.

The Industrial Revolution was a set of developments that transformed Western societies from largely agricultural to overwhelmingly industrial systems. Peasants left agricultural work for industrial occupations in factories. Within this new system, a few benefitted greatly while the majority worked long hours for low wages. A reaction against the industrial system and capitalism led to the labour movement and other radical movements dedicated to overthrowing the capitalist system. As a result of the Industrial Revolution, large number of people moved to urban settings. The long list of urban problems that attracted the attention of early sociologists.

Socialism emerged as an alternative vision of a worker's paradise in which wealth was equitably distributed. Karl Marx was highly critical of capitalist society in his writings and engaged in political activities to help engineer its fall. Other early theorists

recognized the problems of capitalist society but sought change through reform because they feared socialism more than they feared capitalism. The ensuing problems affected social thinkers deeply and Karl Marx, Weber and Durkheim set out to find a solution to these problems.

CHAPTER AT A GLANCE

PROMINENCE OF SOCIALISM

Socialism emerged as a direct critique of capitalism and was supported by some thinkers while a majority of them were indeed hostile to it. Socialism literally sprang from observing the success of capitalism, while believing that condition for workers could be improved if the control of production were moved from capitalists to the state. A top-down control system, such as that used in large business, was the model for socialist society.

Socialism arose in the early 19th century, and the key figure among sociologists was Karl Marx who was different from armchair social theorists who were against socialism. They wanted to bring an improvement in the capitalist system and streamline its defects, like the creation of alienation among factory workers (masterfully depicted in Charlie Chaplin's *Modern Times*). For them, socialism was in no way an answer or solution to the problem unleashed by capitalism. Marx's socialism was often seen as a counterpoint from which to develop different theories. Due to the industrial revolution people migrated from rural to urban areas. Hence, problems such as overcrowding, pollution, inadequate transport systems, disparities in income, etc. arose. This influence the system also with a plethora of cults coming up and some of these predicted the 'end of the world' in the

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last years of the 20th century. Early sociologists tried to emulate the physical and biological sciences for giving prestige and creating popularity to their new discipline.

Context of Social Theory

Apart from the outer context of social theory, the role of ideas in the development of social theory can also be analysed. For example, during Enlightenment a number of new ideas were introduced and replaced existing ideas. In fact, the 17th century philosophy and science were the major moving factors which influenced the thinkers/intellectuals of France, such as Descartes and Locke. Thinkers of the later period did not reject the grand theories of these thinkers but tried to find ground reality instead in order to give their ideas social relevance. This proved crucial in the development of sociology. But, the liberalism of the Enlightenment was criticized in the form of the 'Counter- Enlightenment'. The early sociology was a product of an interplay between the ideas of the Enlightenment and the 'Counter- Enlightenment'.

For example, the Counter-Enlightenment ideologues, such as De Bonald wanted to return to medieval times where they felt life and living was far harmonious as compared to the Enlightenment period. These writers were against any progressive ideology as they felt that both the Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution were forces that destroyed law, order, peace and harmony in society.

INDIVIDUAL Vs COLLECTIVITY

As against the ideas of the Enlightenment thinkers emphasising the individual, the thinkers opposed to it wanted to emphasise, the collectivity or the society. These thinkers wanted to show that other than the individual, there was society itself which was viewed as one long flow from past to present and onward to the future. Moreover, there are roles and relationships along with organizations which are its important aspects. The 'wholeness' was vital aspect emphasising showing that parts of a society were interrelated. the conservative thinking did not like the idea of social change which it felt was disruptive and could lead to disorder and chaos in society.

COMTE AND ENLIGHTENMENT

In his famous book, *Sociology*, Comte analyzed and reacted to the Enlightenment and the French revolution. His 'positive philosophy' was an attempt to counter the Enlightenment. His own approach was influenced by various counter-revolutionary ideologues like De Bonald but he ruled out a regression to the medieval period because science had advanced too much.

Comte developed 'social physics' or what he called sociology as a counter to the social anarchy existing in France during his times. He wanted to build sociology on the lines of the rigorous approach of science particularly, physics. Comte's was an evolutionary-law which has three ascending 'stages' which claim universality:

1. **Theological Stage (1300 AD):** Supernatural powers and religious icons are the most important factors influencing the society.
2. **The Metaphysical Stage (1300-1800 AD):** 'Nature' was considered to explain everything about man and society during this period.
3. **The Positivistic Stage (1800 AD):** This was the age of science and the nature and God lost their importance.

Thus, the evolutionary Comte was against violent type of revolutions (Lenzer, 1975).

His work and observations on social structure and social change stressed the relatedness of all the components of a society. He believed in consensus and did not subscribe to the exploitative view of the production processes.

DURKHEIM AND THE ENLIGHTENMENT

Durkheim (1858-1917) believed, unlike Comte, that the Enlightenment was not all negative but in fact did have some positive aspects such as emphasis on scientific method. He opposed anarchy and social chaos, and was largely preoccupied with social order. He has many pioneering works to his credit, such as, *The Rules of Sociological Method* (1895) in which he stressed the study of 'social facts.' These social facts are external to and coercive of individuals in society. He demonstrated this approach in his study of *Suicide* (1897). According to Durkheim there are two types of social facts—material (bureaucracy, law) and non-material (social institutions and culture with which Durkheim was preoccupied).

The Division of Labour

According to Durkheim, *The Division of Labour in Society* (1893), binds the society. While early societies had a moral basis for being integrated, which was known as the collective conscience, in the more advanced society the collective conscience is weak and was it is held together through a division of labour. Durkheim suggested social reforms as the solution to the problems inherent the division of labour.

In *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (1912/1915), Durkheim explained that society itself was the basis for religion itself. This meant that he stood for the status quo. In 1898, Durkheim founded a journal called 'L'annee Sociologique' which promoted his brand of sociology to the other schools and

academics. Hence, Durkheim responded to the context of the French Revolution and rise of industrialisation and helped in establishing sociology as a distinct discipline.

THE MARXIAN IDEOLOGY

In the same span of time, sociology was developing in Germany also. Karl Marx (1818-1883) was deeply influenced by Hegel (1770-1831) but later contradicted him. Hegel stressed upon the 'dialectic' and 'idealism'. Dialectic itself provides a view of the world as well as an 'image' of the world. It stresses the processes including those of conflict. In the same manner, the image of the world is also dynamic. However, Marx accepted the use-value of the processes, he wanted to apply it in the study of economics and not as a concept applied to ideas only. Moreover, Hegel's 'idealism' stressed the mind and ideas, and not the material world. This extreme position was ameliorated by Feurbach. According to Feurbach, it was society that projected God and put him in a hallowed position above them, getting separated/distanced from God himself but nevertheless imbuing God with various uplifting attributes or qualities.

Marx criticized these theories. According to Marx, everything could be reduced to a material base not to mind and its processes. Marx believed that capitalism caused the problems of alienation, polarisation and revolution. The revolution of the proletariat was, thus, the answer to this 'evil'. The work of Ricardo and Smith finalised Marx's approach which pointed out the profit of the capitalist was at the expense or exploitation of the wage labourers. In this manner, the 'surplus value' was the very basis of exploitation and the root of the capitalist system (Marx, 1862).

Marxian Ideology

Within Marx's economic works one can find a sociological theory. Moreover, due to his radical political ideas, ideological leanings and polemical style, his theory has been questioned by conservative thinkers even as he had questioned Hegel and Feurbach.

Marx's sociology attracted many critics. The type of activist orientation that was part of his approach and some other reasons led to an eclipse of Marx's dialectical materialism. However, his ideological aspect was a major area of difficulty for other thinkers and this radical approach was not appreciated by the sociologists who had been bred to hate traces of anarchy in the society, let alone the disturbances of the enlightenment or the industrial revolution. Marx tried to fuel a mood of hostility which would lead to a 'polarization' of classes and exploited proletariat would violently dispossess the factories, industries, banks and so on. After which there would be a societal/community

of ownership of means of production and the exploitation of the 'haves' by the 'haves' would come to an end. Thus, Marx stressed the oppressive nature of capitalism.

WEBERIAN IDEOLOGY

Max Weber (1864-1920) was another major German sociologist. Max Weber developed his theories as a counterpoint to Marxian thought. Weber said that Marx had developed a unicausal theory in which every social aspect was driven or propelled by the economic factors giving rise to 'economic determinism'. Weber pointed out that there were several other factors or causes which operate simultaneously in a society.

In economic determinism, it was the material that determined ideology but in Weber's works, we find that it is the idea that determine the economy. Weber discovered that the effect of religious ideas had a bearing on economic development. He tried to prove through his studies on Protestantism. Weber also studied other religions than Protestantism, including Hinduism. He believed that the lower rate of economic development in Hinduism was due to a constricting segmentation of society into a large number of castes. However, Weber's ideas regarding Hinduism were not found to be true because sociologists in the fifties conducted studies and concluded that Hinduism does not obstruct economic development and that castes adapt to new economic challenges in a positive way.

Weber was also concerned with the process of rationalisation which led to economic development and to the creation and existence of large bureaucracies and social institutions in our society (Weber, 1904). Weber showed how a social actor makes decisions regarding his goals and his decisions themselves were influenced by the existing rules and regulations.

Formal Rationality

Formal rationality was the preoccupation of Weber's discussion of the development of bureaucratization. He pointed out that there are three types of authority in political structures: traditional, charismatic and rational legal systems of authority. Traditional authority derives from the sanctity of belief patterns, like that in monarchy. Rational-legal authority is the basic model of leadership most modern political systems. Most of the system chose their leaders from legal-rational procedures.

THE BRITISH SOCIOLOGISTS

The British sociologists emphasized the statistical presentation with little or no theorizing. They collected field based data and combined these findings into a collective picture. Since the statistically oriented sociologists were also extremely close to the

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government, they failed to see any flaw in the overall political and economic systems of their period.

Another basic characteristic in British sociology was the concern for reforming individuals and then keeping them to fulfil larger goals of society. Although they could see the flaws in system but they were very much interested in putting the blame on individual behaviour and attitudes. Their stand was clearly conservative was felt to be necessary to ward off the ogre of Marxian socialism that had gained prominence.

Individual problems of many types were analyzed which included factors like 'alcoholism, 'crime' or 'ignorance'. However, gradually social structure became more prominent particularly in the theories of social evolution. Herbert Spencer was one of the leading figures of this approach. He believed in *laissez faire*. This meant that he wanted social dynamics to be without external interventions and hence did not advocate social reform.

SPENCER'S EVOLUTIONISM

Since Spencer was a 'Social Darwinist', he believed that society would progress by itself. He felt that this evolution should not be interfered with. Spencer supported the idea of 'survival of the fittest' where those people who could adopt to the social and natural environment would live while those could not so adapt had to die (Buttel, 1990).

For Spencer, society as an organism, which had interconnected parts or 'organs' and each had a role or function. Unlike Comte, Spencer's evolutionism was thus the real material world.

Spencer's evolution has at least two-fold. Firstly, the 'size' of society increases so do the various infrastructural and institutional needs. Secondly, differentiation and specialization begin to manifest in giving rise to complexity. Hence, Spencer viewed increase in size from that of a simple to that which is complex or 'compound' society.

Spencer presented yet another scheme where evolution takes place from militant to industrial society. Militant societies are early forms of organisation meant for defense of a society or aggression towards another society. These attitudes were in themselves responsible for increase in the size. However, when industrial societies face war they becomes dysfunctional and their evolution is obstructed. In industrial societies, there is great human interaction and specialization. The state is simply a monitoring agency and its basic function is to maintain law and order in society. According to Spencer, if a society is strongly bonded it will survive or else die out.

SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

Q. 1. Discuss Comte's evolutionary scheme for the progression of society.

Ans. *The Law of Three Stages* is an idea developed by Auguste Comte. It states that society as a whole, and each particular science, develops through three mentally conceived stages: (i) the theocratic stage, (ii) the metaphysical stage, and (iii) the positive stage.

(i) The theocratic stage refers to explanation by personified deities. Comte broke this stage into 3 sub-stages:

A. Animism: Turning everyday objects into items of extreme religious purpose and worship, perhaps with godlike qualities.

B. Polytheism: Explanation of things through the use of many gods.

C. Monotheism: Attributing all to a single, supreme deity.

(ii) The Metaphysical stage refers to explanation by impersonal abstract explanation. Often those who developed metaphysical systems believed they were engaging in scientific activity, but they were not.

(iii) The positivity stage refers to scientific explanation based on observation, experiment, and comparison. Positive explanations rely upon a distinct method, the scientific method, for its justification.

Comte proposed a hierarchy of the sciences based on historical sequence, with areas of knowledge passing through these stages in order of complexity. The simplest and most remote areas of knowledge—mechanical or physical—become scientific first. These are followed by the more complex sciences, those considered closest to us.

The sciences, then, according to Comte's 'law', developed in this order: Mathematics; Astronomy; Physics; Chemistry; Biology; Psychology; Sociology. A science of society is thus the 'Queen Science' in Comte's hierarchy as it would be the most fundamentally complex. Through social science, Comte believed all human social ills could be remedied.

Q. 2. Which were the most important early British sociologists? Give their theories in brief.

Ans. Herbert Spencer was one of the most important early British sociologists. He developed an all-embracing conception of evolution as the progressive development of the physical world, biological organisms, the human mind, and human culture and societies.

Spencer pointed that all structures in the universe develop from a simple, undifferentiated, homogeneity to a complex, differentiated, heterogeneity, while being accompanied by a process of greater integration of the differentiated parts. This evolutionary process could be found at work, Spencer believed, throughout the cosmos. It was a universal law, applying to the stars and the galaxies as much as to biological organisms, and to human social organization as much as to the human mind. It differed from other scientific laws only