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10.0 OBJECTIVES

Human beings have always lived in societies, and as members of their societies, they have pondered about their nature. This is like saying that human beings have their own bodies and they always had some idea of the organism. The knowledge about different parts of the body, its anatomy, and its working or physiology developed as a special discipline much later. Thus scientific knowledge about our body and other things around us developed along with new methods of acquiring the same. This method began to be called the scientific method. Now we try to get knowledge about society, its working, its modifications and changes through a scientific method. In bringing scientific approach to the study of society, Durkheim played an important part. So we try to know what he did and how he did it. When you study this unit, you will be able to

- locate the characteristics of science
- identify the bases for defining social facts
- point out how sociology is different from some other subjects of study
- describe the types of society
- classify social facts
- list the rules of observation of social facts
- identify the rules for explaining facts.

10.1 INTRODUCTION

Emile Durkheim (1858-1917) is best remembered for his efforts in making sociology accepted as an autonomous academic discipline. He won recognition for the idea of a science of society, which could contribute to the study of moral and intellectual problems of modern society. While discussing Durkheim’s conception of Sociology we shall focus on three important aspects (a) general conditions for establishment of **social science** (b) sociology as a study of ‘social facts’ and (c) the sociological method.

10.2 GENERAL CONDITIONS FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF SOCIAL SCIENCE

Sociology was just emerging as a distinctive discipline in Durkheim’s lifetime. To the vast majority of educated people including scholars in the universities, sociology was just a name. When Durkheim was a student at the Ecole Normale there was not a single professorship in sociology in France! It was only in 1887 that the first chair in social science was created for Durkheim by the French Government at the University of Bordeaux. It was many years later that he received the title of Professor of Sociology at Sorbonne in Paris.

Given the existing situation, Durkheim was explicitly concerned with outlining the nature and scope of Sociology. Durkheim considered social sciences to be distinct from natural sciences because social sciences dealt with human relationships. However the method used in the natural sciences could be used in the social sciences as well. He was concerned with examining the nature of Sociology as a social science distinct from Philosophy and Psychology. Philosophy is concerned with ideas and conceptions whereas science is concerned with objective realities. Philosophy is the source from where all sciences have emerged (see figure 10.1).

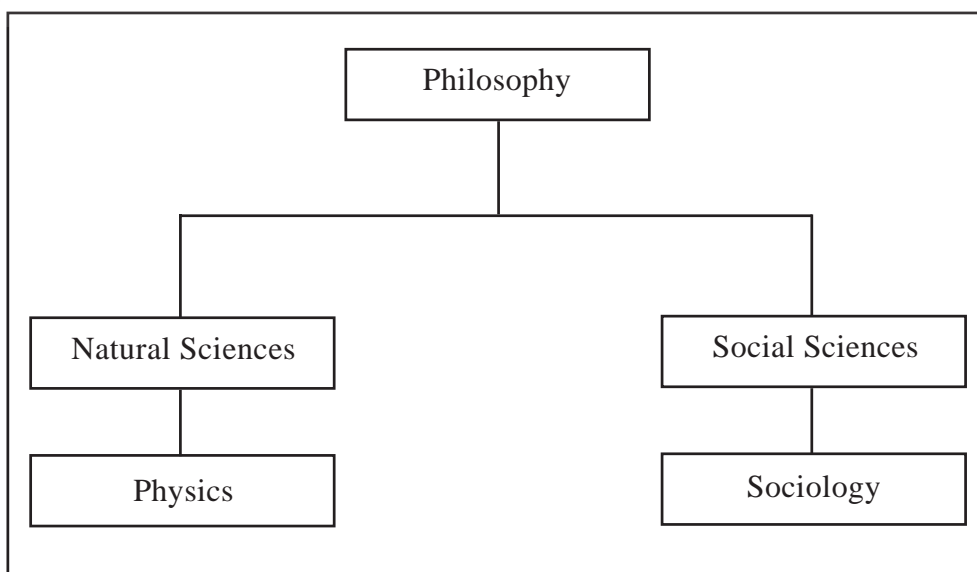


Fig 10.1: Philosophy as a source of all sciences

In his book *Montesquieu and Rousseau*, published in 1892, Durkheim (1960: 3-13) laid down the general conditions for the establishment of a social science (which also apply to Sociology). Let us look at them.

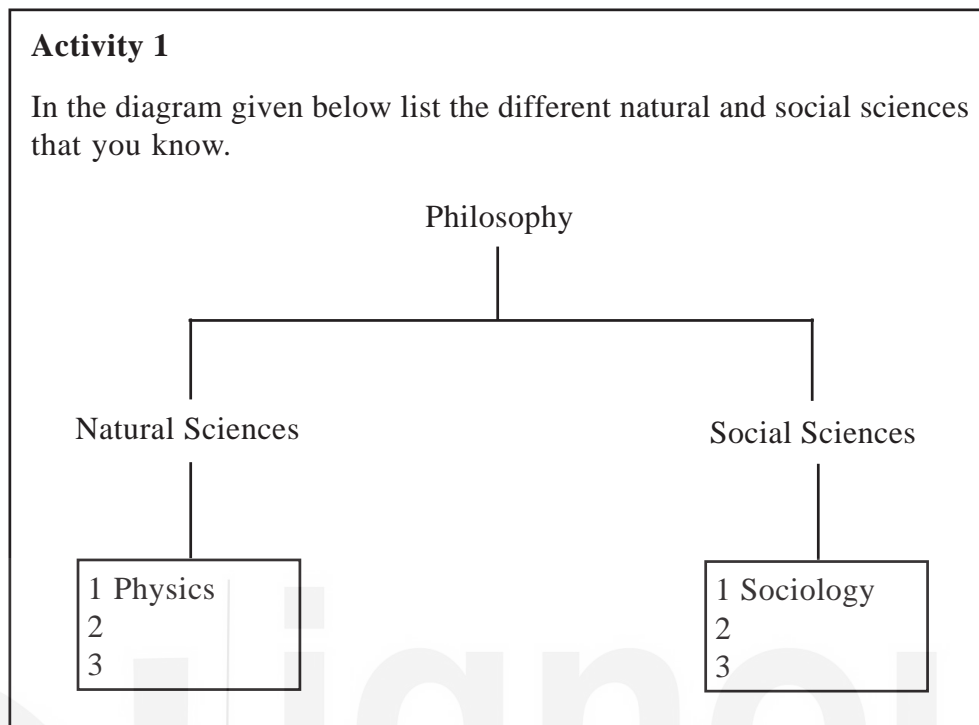
- i) Science, he pointed out, is not coextensive with human knowledge or thought. Not every type of question the mind can formulate can be tested by science. It is possible for something to be the object of the philosopher or artist and not necessarily the stuff of science at all. Thus, science deals with a specified, area — or a subject matter of its own, not with total knowledge.
- ii) Science must have a definite field to explore. Science is concerned with things, objective realities. For social science to exist it must have a definite subject matter. Philosophers, Durkheim points out, have been aware of ‘things’ called laws, traditions, religion and so on, but the reality of these was in a large measure dissolved by their insistence on dealing with these as manifestations of human will. Inquiry was thus concentrated on the internal will rather than upon external bodies of data. So it is important to look things as they appear in this world.
- iii) Science does not describe individuals but types or classes of subject matter. If human societies be classified then they help us in arriving at general rules and discover regularities of behaviour.
- iv) Social science, which classifies the various human societies, describes the normal form of social life in each type of society, for the simple reason that it describes the type itself; whatever pertains to the type is normal and whatever is normal is healthy.
- v) The subject matter, of a science yields general principles or ‘laws’. If societies were not subject to regularities, no social science would be possible. Durkheim further points out that since the principle that all the phenomena of the universe are closely interrelated has been found to be true in the other domains of nature, it is also valid for human societies, which are a part of nature. In putting forth the idea that there is a continuity of the natural and social worlds, Durkheim has been strongly influenced by Comte.
- vi) Although there is continuity between the natural and social worlds, the social is as distinctive and autonomous a sphere of subject matter as either the biological or the physical.

Durkheim was very much against the view held by some scholars that everything in society should be reduced to human volition. Categories of human will and volition, he points out, belong to psychology not social science. If social science is really to exist, societies must be assumed to have a certain nature, which results from the nature and arrangement of the elements composing them.

- vii) Finally, to discern the uniformities, types and laws of society we need a method. The methods of science applicable in the field of the natural sciences are valid within the social field.

The criteria of a social science which Durkheim set forth at the beginning of his first published work remained to the end of his life the fundamental

criteria of social science and the identifying attributes of the field he called 'sociology'.



10.3 SOCIOLOGY AS A STUDY OF 'SOCIAL FACTS'

In defining the subject matter of sociology two tasks are involved (a) defining the total field of study and (b) defining the sort of 'thing' which will be found in this field. In his book, *The Rules of Sociological Method*, published in 1895, Durkheim (1950: 3) is concerned with the second task and calls social facts the subject matter of sociology. Durkheim (1950: 3) defines social facts as "ways of acting, thinking and feeling, external to the individual, and endowed with a power of coercion by reason of which they control him".

To Durkheim society is a reality **suigeneris** (see the meaning of this term in Key Words). Society comes into being by the association of individuals. Hence society represents a specific reality which has its own characteristics. This unique reality of society is separate from other realities studied by physical or biological sciences. Further, societal reality is apart from individuals and is over and above them. Thus the reality of society must be the subject matter of sociology. A scientific understanding of any social phenomenon must emerge from the 'collective' or associational characteristics manifest in the social structure of a society. While working towards this end, Durkheim developed and made use of a variety of sociological concepts. Collective representations is one of the leading concepts to be found in the social thought of Durkheim. Before learning about 'collective representations' (subject matter of Unit 12) it is necessary that you understand what Durkheim meant by 'social facts'.

10.3.0 Social Facts

Durkheim based his scientific vision of sociology on the fundamental principle, i.e., the objective reality of social facts. Social fact is that way of acting, thinking or feeling etc., which is more or less general in a given society. Durkheim treated social facts as things. They are real and exist independent of the individual's will or desire. They are external to individuals and are capable of exerting constraint upon them. In other words they are coercive in nature. Further social facts exist in their own right. They are independent of individual manifestations. The true nature of social facts lies in the collective or associational characteristics inherent in society. Legal codes and customs, moral rules, religious beliefs and practices, language etc. are all social facts.

10.3.2 Types of Social Facts

Durkheim saw social facts as lying along a continuum. First, on one extreme are structural or morphological social phenomena. They make up the substratum of collective life. By this he meant the number and nature of elementary parts of which society is composed, the way in which the morphological constituents are arranged and the degree to which they are fused together. In this category of social facts are included the distribution of population over the surface of the territory, the forms of dwellings, nature of communication system etc.

Secondly, there are institutionalised forms of social facts. They are more or less general and widely spread in society. They represent the collective nature of the society as a whole. Under this category fall legal and moral rules, religious dogma and established beliefs and practices prevalent in a society.

Thirdly, there are social facts, which are not institutionalised. Such social facts have not yet acquired crystallised forms. They lie beyond the institutionalised **norms** of society. Also this category of social facts have not attained a total objective and independent existence comparable to the institutionalised ones.

Also their externality to and ascendancy over and above individuals is not yet complete. These social facts have been termed as social currents. For example, sporadic currents of opinion generated in specific situations; enthusiasm generated in a crowd; transitory outbreaks in an assembly of people; sense of indignity or pity aroused by specific incidents, etc.

All the above mentioned social facts form a continuum and constitute social milieu of society.

Further Durkheim made an important distinction in terms of normal and pathological social facts. A social fact is normal when it is generally encountered in a society of a certain type at a certain phase in its evolution. Every deviation from this standard is a pathological fact. For example, some degree of crime is inevitable in any society. Hence according to Durkheim crime to that extent is a normal fact. However, an extraordinary increase in the rate of crime is pathological. A general weakening in the moral condemnation of crime and certain type of economic crisis leading to anarchy in society are other examples of pathological facts.

10.3.2 Main Characteristics of Social Facts

In Durkheim's view sociology as an objective science must conform to the model of the other sciences. It posed two requirements: first the 'subject' of sociology must be specific. And it must be distinguished from the 'subjects' of all other sciences. Secondly the 'subject' of sociology must be such as to be observed and explained. Similar to the way in which facts are observed and explained in other sciences. For Durkheim this 'subject' of sociology is the social fact, and that social facts must be regarded as 'things'.

The main characteristics of social facts are (i) externality, (ii) constraint, (iii) independence, and (iv) generality.

Social facts, according to Durkheim, exist outside individual consciences. Their existence is external to the individuals. For example, domestic or civic or contractual obligations are defined externally to the individual in laws and customs. Religious beliefs and practices exist outside and prior to the individual. An individual takes birth in a society and leaves it after birth death, however social facts are already given in society and remain in existence irrespective of birth or death of an individual. For example language continues to function independently of any single individual.

The other characteristic of social fact is that it exercises a constraint on individuals. Social fact is recognized because it forces itself on the individual. For example, the institutions of law, education, beliefs etc. are already given to everyone from without. They are commanding and obligatory for all. There is constraint, when in a crowd, a feeling or thinking imposes itself on everyone. Such a phenomenon is typically social because its basis, its subject is the group as a whole and not one individual in particular.

A social fact is that which has more or less a general occurrence in a society. Also it is independent of the personal features of individuals or universal attributes of human nature. Examples are the beliefs, feelings and practices of the group taken collectively.

In sum, the social fact is specific. It is born of the association of individuals. It represents a collective content of social group or society. It differs in kind from what occurs in individual consciousness. Social facts can be subjected to categorisation and classification. Above all social facts form the subject matter of the science of sociology

Check Your Progress 1

The following are a few statements based on what you have learnt so far. Fill in the blanks with suitable words.

- i) Society is a mere sum of individuals. It is a system formed by the of individuals.
- ii) Society is a reality
- iii) In society there are legal codes, customs, moral rules, religious beliefs and ways of feeling, acting thinking etc. Durkheim called them

- iv) Durkheim treated social facts as
- v) Social facts are of the will or desire of individuals.
- vi) Social facts are to individuals. They are capable of exercising upon them.
- vii) There are normal social facts in society. Also there arefacts in society.

10.3.3 Externality and Constraint

We shall examine the criteria of 'externality' and 'constraint' in some detail.

- A) There are two related senses in which social facts are external to the individual.
 - i) First, every individual is born into an ongoing society, which already has a definite organisation or structure. There are values, norms, beliefs and practices which the individual finds readymade at birth and which he learns through the process of **socialisation**. Since these social phenomena exist prior to the individual and have an objective reality, they are external to the individual.
 - ii) Secondly, social facts are external to the individual in the sense that any one individual is only a single element within the totality of relationships, which constitutes a society.

These relationships are not the creation of any single individual, but are constituted by multiple interactions between individuals. To understand the relationship between the individuals and the society, Durkheim draws a parallel to the relationship between chemical elements and the substances, which are composed of combinations of them. According to Durkheim (1950: X), "whenever any elements combine and thereby produce, by the fact of their combination, new phenomena, it is plain that these new phenomena reside not in the original elements but in the totality formed by their union".

A living cell consists of mineral parts like atoms of hydrogen and oxygen; just as society is composed of individuals. Just the living beings are more important than their parts, the whole (society) is greater than the collection of parts (individuals). The whole (society) differs from individual manifestations of it. You must have seen quite often in daily life that there is a difference between individuals and the group, especially when demands are made by a group. Individually members may agree on a thing, but collectively they may not. In wider society, we find a number of rules of behaviour which "reside exclusively in the very society itself which produces them, and not in its parts, i.e. its members" (Durkheim 1950: x/vii-x/viii). In putting forward this criterion Durkheim wanted to show that social facts are distinct from individual or psychological facts. Therefore their study should be conducted in an autonomous discipline independent of Psychology, i.e. Sociology.

- B) The second criterion by which social facts are defined is the moral 'constraint' they exercise on the individual. When the individual attempts to resist social facts they assert themselves. The assertion may range from a mild ridicule to social isolation and moral and legal **sanction**. However, in most circumstances individuals conform to social facts and therefore do not consciously feel their constraining character. This conformity is not so much due to the fear of sanctions being applied as the acceptance of the legitimacy of the social facts (see Giddens 1971: 88).

Durkheim (1950: 4) concedes that to define the social in terms of constraint and coercion is to "risk shocking the zealous partisans of absolute individualism. It is generally accepted today, however, that most of our ideas and our tendencies are not developed by ourselves but have come to us from without. How can they become a part of us except by imposing themselves upon us?" Durkheim put forward his view to counter the utilitarian viewpoint, which was prevalent during his time, that society could be held together and there would be greatest happiness if each individual worked in his self-interest. Durkheim did not agree. Individual's interest and society's interest do not coincide. For social order, it was necessary for society to exercise some control or pressure over its members.

To confirm the coerciveness of social facts in their effects on individuals, Durkheim (1950: 6) looks at education's efforts "to impose on the child ways of seeing, feeling, and acting which he could not have arrived at spontaneously.... the aim of education is, precisely, the socialisation of human being; parents and teachers are merely the representatives and intermediaries of the social milieu which tends to fashion him in its own image".

Durkheim (1950: 7) adds that social facts cannot be defined merely by their universality. Thus a thought or movement repeated by all individuals is not thereby a social fact. What is important is the corporate or "collective aspects of the beliefs, tendencies and practices of a group that characterise truly social phenomena". What is more, these social phenomena are transmitted through the collective means of socialisation.

Thus social facts can be recognised because they are external to the individuals on the one hand, and are capable of exercising coercion over them on the other. Since they are external they are also general and because they are collective, they can be imposed on the individuals who form a given society.

Activity 2

Give some examples of social facts, which are external to individuals and can be defined in terms of constraint and coercion. How does an individual know about these? Write a one-page note on these questions and compare it with that of other students at your Study Centre.

10.4 THE SOCIOLOGICAL METHOD

Having defined the subject matter of sociology, Durkheim describes the method to study it. His sociological method rests firmly on the experience of biology, which had emerged by then as a science of living beings.

10.4.0 Rules for the Observation of Social Facts

The first rule that Durkheim (1950:14) gives us is: “consider social facts as things”. Social facts are real. However instead of being dealt with as things, as concrete realities worthy of direct attention and study, they have been dealt with by other writers in the light of concepts or notions. This is true of all sciences before they emerge as disciplines — thought and reflection precede science. The pre-scientific stage is broken by the introduction of the **empirical** method and not by conceptual discussion alone. This is perhaps even more important in social science than in natural science because there is a strong tendency to treat social facts as either lacking in substantive reality (as creations of the individual will) or, on the contrary, as already wholly known words like ‘democracy’, ‘socialism’ etc. are freely used as if they denoted precisely known facts, whereas actually “they awaken in us nothing but confused ideas, a tangle of vague impressions, prejudices and emotions” (Durkheim 1950: 22). To counter these tendencies, Durkheim said that social facts must be treated as ‘things’. As ‘things’ they have to be studied by the empirical method and not direct intuition; and also, they cannot be modified by a simple effort of the will.

While studying social facts as ‘things’ the following three rules have to be followed in order to be objective.

- i) All preconceptions must be eradicated. Sociologists must emancipate themselves from the common place ideas that dominate the mind of the layperson and adopt an emotionally neutral attitude towards what they set out to investigate.
- ii) Sociologists have to formulate the concepts precisely. At the outset of the research the sociologists are likely to have very little knowledge of the phenomenon in question. Therefore they must proceed by conceptualising their subject matter in terms of those properties which are external enough to be observed. Thus in Division of Labour the type of solidarity in a society can be perceived by looking at the type of law — repressive or restitutive, criminal or civil — which is dominant in the society.
- iii) When sociologists undertake the investigation of some order of social facts they must consider them from an aspect that is independent of their individual manifestations. The objectivity of social facts depends on their being separated from individual facts, which express them. Social facts provide a common standard for members of the society. Social facts exist in the form of legal rules, moral regulations, proverbs, social conventions, etc. It is these that sociologists must study to gain an understanding of social life.

Social facts are seen in “currents of opinion”, which vary according to time and place, impel certain groups either to more marriages, for example,

or to more suicides, or to a higher or lower birth rate, etc. These currents are plainly social facts. At first sight they seem inseparable from the forms they take in individual cases. But statistics furnish us with the means of isolating them. They are, in fact, represented with considerable exactness by the rates of births, marriages and suicides....” (Durkheim 1950: 7).

Social currents are theoretical variables, while statistical rates are the means of obtaining verification for propositions referring to these variables. Recognising the fact that social currents are not observable he insists that ‘devices of method’ must be introduced in order that empirical verification be made possible. It must be noted here that the case of the ‘suicide rates’ is the best example given by Durkheim of the way in which social facts can be studied.

10.4.1 Rules for Distinguishing between the Normal and the Pathological

Having given us rules for the observation of social facts, Durkheim makes a distinction between ‘normal’ and ‘pathological’ social facts. He considers these aspects important because, as he points out, the scientific study of human beings has been held back to a large degree by the tendency of many writers to consider as ‘pathological’ forms of behaviour, which were different from their own. But Durkheim (1950: 64) explains that the social fact is considered to be normal when it is understood in the context of the society in which it exists. He further adds that a social fact, which is ‘general’ to a given type of society, is ‘normal’ when it has utility for that societal type.

As an illustration he cites the case of crime. We consider crime as pathological. But Durkheim argues that though we may refer to crime as immoral because it flouts values we believe in from a scientific viewpoint it would be incorrect to call it abnormal. Firstly because crime is present not only in the majority of societies of one particular type but in all societies of all types. Secondly, if there were not occasional deviances or floutings of norms, there would be no change in human behaviour and equally important, no opportunities through which a society can either reaffirm the existing norms, or else reassess such behaviour and modify the norm itself. To show that crime is useful to the normal evolution of morality and law, Durkheim cites the case of Socrates, who according to Athenian law was a criminal, his crime being the independence of his thought. But his crime rendered a service to his country because it served to prepare a new morality and faith, which the Athenians needed. It also rendered a service to humanity in the sense that freedom of thought enjoyed by people in many countries today was made possible by people like him.

Durkheim was impressed by the way study of medicine had become scientific. The doctors study the normal working of the body and its pathological features. The study of both of these features helps one identify the nature of the body. He applied this method to study social facts. In his study of division of labour in society, he explained the normal features in the first two parts, and the abnormal features in the third part of the book. He considered crime and punishment both as normal.

How is a social fact normal? When the rate of crime exceeds what is more or less constant for a given social type, then it becomes an abnormal or pathological fact. Similarly, using the same criteria, suicide is a normal social fact (though it may be regarded as 'wrong' or 'immoral' because it goes against a set of values that makes preservation of life absolute). But the sudden rise in the suicide rate in western Europe during the nineteenth century was a cause for concern for Durkheim and one of the reasons why he decided to study this phenomenon.

10.4.2 Rules for the Classification of Social Types

There have been two opposing conceptions of collective life among scholars. Some historians hold that each society is unique and so we cannot compare societies. On the other hand philosophers hold that all societies belong to one species - the human species and it is from the general attributes of human nature that all social evolution flows.

Durkheim takes an intermediary position. He speaks of social species or social types. Though there is so much of diversity in social facts, it does not mean that they cannot be treated scientifically i.e. compared, classified and explained. If on the other hand, we speak of only one species we will be missing out in important qualitative differences and it will be impossible to draw them together.

Classification of societies into types is an important step towards explanation as problems and their explanations will differ for each type. It is also needed to decide whether a social fact is normal or abnormal, since a social fact is normal or abnormal only in relation to a given social type. Durkheim uses the term 'social morphology' for the classification of social types. The question is, how are social type constituted? The word "type" means the common characteristics of several units in a group e.g. "bachelors" and "married persons" belong to two types, and Durkheim was able to show that suicide rates are found more among the 'bachelors'. Please do not apply this to individual cases.

We must study each particular society completely and then compare these to see the similarities and differences. Accordingly, we can classify them. Durkheim (1950: 78) asked, "Is it not the rule in science to rise to the general only after having observed the particular and that too in its entirety?" In order to know whether a fact is general throughout a species or social type, it is not necessary to observe all societies of this social type; only a few will suffice. According to Durkheim (1950: 80), "Even one well made observation will be enough in many cases, just as one well constructed experiment often suffices for the establishment of a law" (see Unit 11 on comparative method). Durkheim wants societies to be classified according to their degree of organisation, taking as a basis the 'perfectly simple society' or the 'society of one segment' like the '**horde**'. Hordes combine to form aggregates which one could call 'simple **polysegmental**'. These combine to form polysegmental societies simply compounded'. A union of such societies would result in still more complex societies called 'polysegmental societies doubly compounded' and so on.

Within these types one will have to distinguish different varieties according to whether a complete fusion of the initial segments does or does not appear.

Regarding Durkheim's procedure of classifying societies into social species or types, John Rex examines the usefulness of this 'biological approach to sociological investigations'. He finds out cases where biological approaches would be useful in sociological investigations, and where it could become difficult. Cases of the first type are exercises in description, classification and formulation of average types. Difficulties occur in the use of biological approach to sociological investigations when history of societies becomes the subject matter of study. In such cases 'species' are discovered by authors out of the historical process; and a theory of evolution is therefore less helpful here (see Rex 1961: 14).

10.4.3 Rules for the Explanation of Social Facts

There are two approaches, which may be used in the explanation of social facts - the causal and the functional.

- i) **Why:** The former is concerned with explaining 'why' the social phenomenon in question exists. The latter involves establishing the "correspondence between the fact under consideration and the general needs of the social organism, and in what this correspondence consists" (Durkheim 1950: 95). The causes, which give rise to a given social fact, must be identified separately from whatever social functions it may fulfil. Normally, one would try to establish causes before specifying functions. This is because knowledge of the causes, which bring a phenomenon into being, can under certain circumstances allow us to derive some insight into its possible functions. Although 'cause' and 'function' have a separate character this does not prevent a reciprocal relation between the two and one can start either way. In fact Durkheim sees a sense in the beginning of his study of division of labour with functions in Part I and then coming to causes in Part II. Let us take an example of 'punishment' from the same work. Crime offends collective sentiments in a society, while the function of punishment is to maintain these sentiments at the same degree of intensity. If offences against them were not punished, the strength of the sentiments necessary for social unity would not be preserved. (It may be pointed out here that functionalism which was dominant in sociology, particularly in the USA in the 1940s and 50s owes a lot to Durkheim's conception of function; we shall come to this point in the last two blocks of the course).
- ii) **How:** Having distinguished between the two approaches to explain social facts, Durkheim's next concern is to determine the method by which they may be developed. The nature of social facts determines the method of explaining these facts. Since the subject matter of sociology has a social character, it is collective in nature, the explanation should also have a social character. Durkheim draws a sharp line between individual and society. Society is a separate reality from the individuals who compose it. It has its own characteristics. There exists a line between psychology and sociology. Any attempt to explain social facts directly in terms of individual characteristics or in terms of psychology would make the explanation false. Therefore in the case of causal explanation "the determining cause of a social fact should be sought among the social facts preceding it and not among the states

of the individual consciousness". In the case of functional explanation "the function of a social fact ought always to be sought in its relation to some social end" (Durkheim 1950: 110).

The final point about Durkheim's logic of explanation is his stress upon the comparative nature of social science. To show that a given fact is the cause of another "we have to compare cases in which they are simultaneously present or absent, to see if the variations they present in these different combinations of circumstances indicate that one depends on the other" (Durkheim 1950: 125).

Since sociologists normally do not conduct laboratory-controlled experiments but study reported facts or go to the field and observe social facts, which have been spontaneously produced, they use the method of indirect experiment or the comparative method.

Durkheim, following J.S. Mill's System of Logic, refers appreciatively to the 'method of concomitant variations' as the procedure of the comparative method. He calls it 'the instrument par excellence of sociological research'. For this method to be reliable, it is not necessary that all the variables differing from those which we are comparing to be strictly excluded. The mere parallel between the two phenomena found in a sufficient number and variety of cases is an evidence that a possible relationship exists between them. Its validity is due to the fact that the concomitant variations display the causal relationship not by coincidence but intrinsically. It shows them as mutually influencing each other in a continuous manner, at least so far as their quality is concerned. Constant concomitance, according to Durkheim, is a law in itself whatever may be the condition of the phenomena excluded from the comparison. When two phenomena vary directly with each other, this relationship must be accepted even when in certain cases, one of these phenomena should be present without the other. For it may be either that the cause has been prevented from producing its effect by the action of some contrary cause or that it is present but in a form different from the one previously observed. For example, if a plant receives direct sunlight it grows straight but when the same plant is given indirect sunlight it bends towards that light. This shows the concomitant variation of plant growth and its relation to sunlight. Of course we need to reexamine the facts but we must not abandon hastily the results of a methodically conducted demonstration.

Concomitant variation can be done at different levels - single society, several societies of the same species of social type, or several distinct social species. However to explain completely a social institution belonging to a given social species, one will have to compare its different forms not only among the societies belonging to that social type but in all preceding species as well. Thus to explain the present state of the family, marriage, property, etc. it would be necessary to know their origins and the elements of which these institutions are composed. This would require us to study this institution in earlier types of society from the time domestic organisation was in its most rudimentary form to its progressive development in different social species. "One cannot explain a social fact of any complexity except by following its complete development through all social species" (Durkheim 1950: 139). This would show us the separate elements

composing it since we could see the process of accretion. We would also be able to determine the conditions on which their formation depends.

The comparative method is the very framework of the science of society for Durkheim. According to Durkheim (1950: 139), “comparative sociology is not a particular branch of sociology; it is sociology itself, in-so-far as it ceases to be purely descriptive and aspires to account for fact” (for a clarification of this method, see Unit 11 on Comparative Method).

Check Your Progress 2

- i) What rules have to be followed to observe social facts objectively? Answer in about eight lines.

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- ii) What are the two aspects of the explanation of social facts? Answer in about eight lines.

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10.5 LET US SUM UP

To sum up our discussion of Durkheim’s conception of sociology we may say that Durkheim clearly considered sociology to be an independent scientific discipline with its distinct subject matter. He distinguished it from psychology. He identified social facts, laid down rules for their observation and explanation. He stressed on social facts being explained through other social facts. For him explanation meant the study of functions and causes. The causes could be derived through the use of the comparative method.

He demonstrated the nature of these studies through the study of division of labour in different types of solidarities, of suicide-rates in different types of societies, and the study of Religion in a single type. His life and works are regarded as a sustained effort at laying the legitimate base of sociology as a discipline. Further, it follows the empiricist method, which is valid in the natural sciences, biology in particular, observation, classification and explanation through the help of 'laws' arrived by means of the comparative method.

10.6 KEY WORDS

Collective	A combined action, idea or norm formed by people interacting with each other.
Empirical	Use of observation and other testable methods for gathering data objectively.
Horde	Small band of people related through kinship ties. They are found among nomadic hunters and food gatherers.
Norm	It is a specific guide to action. It defines what is appropriate and acceptable behaviour in specific situations.
Polysegmental	More than one segment
Sanction	Reward or punishment to enforce norm. Former is called positive sanction, the latter negative sanction.
Socialisation	The process by which individuals learn the culture of their society
Social Science	In the context of this unit, social science refer to application of scientific method to the study of human relationships and the forms of organisation which enable people to live together in societies.
Sui generis	That which generates itself; that which exists by itself; that which does not depend upon some other being for its origin or existence. Durkheim considered society as sui generis. It is always present and has no point of origin.

10.7 FURTHER READING

Aron, R. 1967. *Main Currents in Sociological Thought*. Volume 2, Penguin Books: London.

Durkheim, E. 1950. *The Rules of Sociological Method*. (translated by S.A. Solovay and J.H. Mueller and (Ed) E. G. Catlin), The Free Press, of Glencoe: New York.

10.8 SPECIMEN ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

- i) not, association
- ii) sui generis
- iii) social facts
- iv) things
- v) independent
- vi) external, constraint
- vii) constraint
- viii) pathological

Check Your Progress 2

- i) To study social facts objectively as things, Durkheim formulated the following three rules.
 - a) All preconceptions must be eradicated.
 - b) The subject matter of every sociological study should comprise a group of phenomena defined in advance by certain common external characteristics, and all phenomena so defined should be included within this group.
 - c) When the sociologist undertakes the investigation of some order of social facts he/she must try to consider them from an aspect that is independent of their individual manifestations.
- ii) The two approaches used in the explanation of social facts are causal and functional. Causal is concerned with explaining 'why' the social fact exists. Functional explains a social fact by showing the need of the society (social organism) that it fulfils. Both are required to give a complete explanation of a social fact. Logically causal explanation should come before functional explanation because under certain circumstances the cause gives us some insight into the possible functions. Though they are separate there is a reciprocal relationship between the two. For example, the existence of punishment (which is a social reaction) is due to the intensity of the collective sentiments, which the crime offends. The function of punishment is to maintain these sentiments at the same degree of intensity. If offences against them were not punished, the strength of the sentiments necessary for social stability would not be preserved.

UNIT 11 COMPARATIVE METHOD

Structure

- 11.0 Objectives
- 11.1 Introduction
- 11.2 Comparisons in Daily Life
- 11.3 Comparisons in Social Sciences
- 11.4 Types of Comparisons Attempted by Durkheim
 - 11.4.0 Comparisons within a Society
 - 11.4.1 Comparisons among Different Societies at a Point of Time
 - 11.4.2 Comparisons over a Period of Time
- 11.5 Indirect Experiment
- 11.6 A Single Case as Experiment
- 11.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 11.8 Keywords
- 11.9 Further Reading
- 11.10 Specimen Answers to Check Your Progress

11.0 OBJECTIVES

Durkheim used comparative method to explain how one set of social facts explains the others. As an example in his study of Suicide Rates, he found the types of social groups in which these rates were high and low. He compared these groups to know their differences, and how these differences could explain the different rates. The method of organising the explanation of facts and the facts that are explained in this way is called comparative method. When you study this unit you will be able to

- point out the use of comparisons in daily life
- locate where comparisons have no special meaning
- find out where comparisons are useful
- identify the uses of comparative methods proposed by Durkheim and Weber
- try out the use of the method through some examples of your own.

11.1 INTRODUCTION

In this unit we begin by looking at events in our daily life and see how comparisons are made. It is pointed out where these are useful and where they are unnecessary e.g. when we say 'these two are not comparable'. Then from daily life, we move to sociology and take examples of comparability from social situations and social science literature. The use

of comparisons by Durkheim is explained and the logic or procedure of reasoning is linked with these studies. Durkheim's use of differential rates of **suicide** and their 'explanation' are pointed out here. Finally, we shall clarify how a comparative method becomes an exercise in indirect **experiment**.

11.2 COMPARISONS IN DAILY LIFE

In our daily life we come across many situations when we have to decide if a thing (called A) is more suited for us than any other (B or C). Then we compare A, B and C. For instance which Sari has to be purchased? Colour of A may be more appealing than of B or C; border of B may be the best; perhaps C may have a combination of colour and the border and we opt for it. All the time what have we been doing? We have been comparing the merits and suitability of the three items. Comparisons help us to take appropriate decisions in daily life, where alternatives are available. Hence the first requirement of comparisons is that alternatives are available. The second is that these things should belong to the same category or class of objects. We do not compare cotton with silk or wool. Thirdly there should be some difference among the objects; and finally this difference should be within narrow limits. There is no point in comparing a silk sari of Rs. 300 with one of Rs. 3,000. In common day usage we will say the two are not comparable. Our proverbs too state the same point "where is *Raja Bhoj* and where the *Gangu Teli*"; or simply where is the Raja and where the oilman, Bhoj and Gangu being just proper names. So comparisons to be useful have to be within the same class, and there has to be some difference, which is meaningful. When the difference is minor, it is called a distinction, and the logicians say, "this is a distinction without a difference". The idea in such cases is that the distinction is too small to influence our decision. A politician referring to such a smallness of distinctions in the other two parties thought they were really of one hue - that one was "*Sarp Nath*" and the other "*Nag Nath*". Thus we come across three situations:

- 1) The difference among two or more objects or social facts is meaningful and needs an explanation.
- 2) The difference is too small to deserve attention.
- 3) The difference is too large to need any attention.

The second situation is a case of "distinction without a difference". If a Cricket team wins over the other side by 210 runs or 220 runs, the difference of these 10 runs is hardly a difference to be accounted for. At times, we find difficulty in picking a team and are unable to decide which of the three players A, B or C can become a member of the playing team. We then tend to say that one is as good as the other. There is hardly a difference. In the third case, the difference could be as large as among Gavaskar and some other opening batsman; or a Kapil and any other opening bowler. Then we will say, for the sake of logic, Gavaskar or Kapil is not comparable with other opening batsmen or bowlers.

11.3 COMPARISONS IN SOCIAL SCIENCES

The meaningful or relevant difference is important in scientific discussions. The experiences of daily life are refined. The differences can be studied in the same phenomenon over a period of time. For example urbanisation in India can be studied from 1901 to 2001, fall in death rate from 1931 to 2001 or increase in literacy over the same period; or a rise in the expectation of life at birth. Durkheim studied the social rates of suicide in France over the later part of the nineteenth century. Likewise the phenomenon can be studied at different places. Within India same social facts can be studied for different States. We may ask, “How is it that party A succeeds in State X but not Y?” or “How is it that literacy exceeds fifty per cent in one part of the country, but remains around twenty in some other parts?” In the Asian or the Third World context we may as well ask, “How does the democratic form of Government last in some States, but not others?” On the other hand Lipset and Bendix studied social mobility among the industrial societies. A phrase ‘industrial democracies’ indicates the category of nations that are comparable.

Check Your Progress 1

- i) Give one example of differences in the same phenomenon over a period of time.
.....
- ii) Give one example of variations in the same phenomenon at different places.
.....

11.4 TYPES OF COMPARISONS ATTEMPTED BY DURKHEIM

Durkheim wants it to be understood that comparisons can be made

- i) of variations of a phenomenon in different parts of a society
- ii) of variations of a phenomenon in different societies at a time
- iii) of variations of a phenomenon among different societies at different times corresponding to their levels of development.

Let us now discuss each type of comparison.

11.4.0 Comparisons within a Society

Durkheim in his study of Suicide (1897) demonstrated the illustration of the first type. He compared the different rates of suicides among various sections of the French society. (Suicide rate is calculated by the number of persons committing suicide in one year in a population of one million.) Durkheim asked the question: How is **suicide rate** distributed among the males and the females, rural and urban populations, persons following Catholic and Protestant faiths, and married and unmarried persons? He

processed data according to the categories in the question. He has examined the data on differences according to seasons and ‘cosmic’ factors and came to some conclusions other than those already proposed. He found that the rate of suicide had very little to do with the seasons and cosmic factors, such as daytime, evening or night, etc. The rate increased where the social bonds were either too weak (as in the case of **egoistic suicide**) or too strong (as in the case of **altruistic suicide**) in a social group.

Activity 1

Obtain from the 2001 census of India the different rates of birth among various sections (i) the male and the female, (ii) rural and urban population (iii) working and non-working classes of Indian society. Write your conclusions on the nature of differences (based on this comparison) of birth rates in Indian society. Compare your findings with those of other students at your Study Centre, if possible.

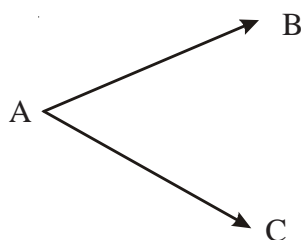
11.4.1 Comparisons among Different Societies at a Point of Time

The second type of study relates to the examination of the data from different countries of Europe. Durkheim took the case of Germany as a Protestant country and of Spain as a Catholic country. He found that suicide rates were higher in Germany than in Spain, hence the idea that Protestants commit more suicides than the Catholics. The Jews came still lower. Now we with this kind of comparison move to a new stage in comparative studies. Durkheim studied variations in two phenomena not one, (i) suicide rates and (ii) religions. Variations or changes in the first are accompanied by changes in the second. That is, they vary or change together. This is called concomitant **variation**, i.e. variation or change occurring together. Do you remember a nursery rhyme of “Mary had a little lamb....” The important line for our present purposes is “And everywhere that Mary went, the little lamb was sure to go”. This is a case of two living beings moving together. Some people think that sports and discipline are found together; the rise of the middle class opens the habit of questioning etc. These would also be examples of things changing together. They provide examples of concomitant variation. Thus comparative method tries to see

- i) what are the variations in a phenomenon?
- ii) which other variations occur along with those under examination?

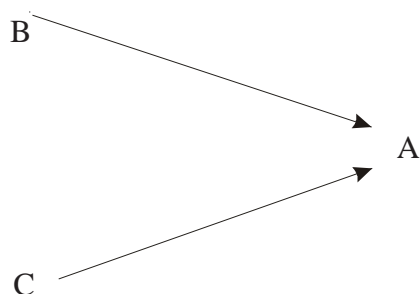
This means that comparative method attempts to find out a possible cause for the phenomenon under study

There can be some problems here. More than two things may change at a time. This can be stated in a diagram or a statement.

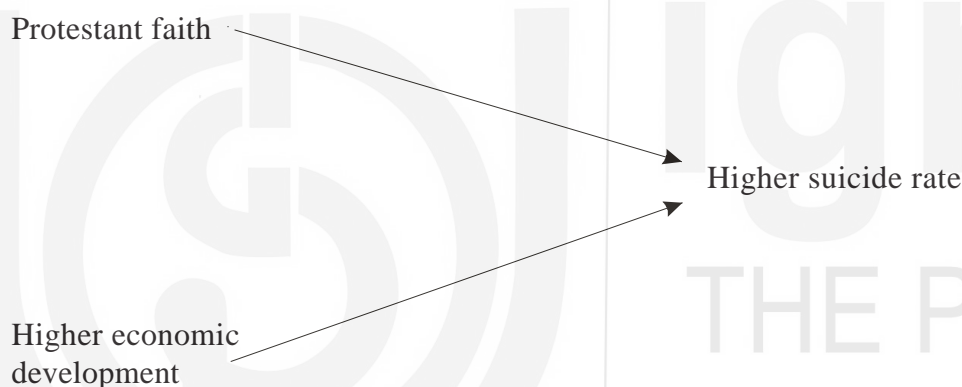


A change in A leads to a change in B as well as C... may be even D and E. Then how shall we say A is related to B? We can now put the arrows in the other direction and see even more clearly. Suppose B can lead to A, and C can also lead to A.

Then we have the situation



Can A then be called a consequence of B, or of C? Durkheim's example can be put here:



This was the case in Germany. Catholic faith and low level of economic development were found in Spain. What shall we do? Shall we say it is the religious difference that is crucial or the level of economic development?

Durkheim attempted a solution. He took only one country; so the question of difference in the level of economic development did not arise. Then the study was designed thus:

Level of economic development	Religious faith	Suicide rate
1) High	Protestant	High
2) High	Catholic	Low

Through this design, it is possible to say that the difference in religious faith is accompanied by difference in the suicide rate; that is, the two vary together. This is concomitant variation. This remains true even when the level of economic development is the same. Keeping this the same, or constant, or controlled (these words are similar in meaning), we get the result that religious faiths have an impact on the differential social suicide rates.

11.4.2 Comparisons over a Period of Time

Durkheim clarifies the significance of the time factor in social science studies. Some people try to compare events happening at the same time in different countries. Durkheim objects to this procedure. His view is that different societies may not be at the same level of development at one point of time. The youth of one cannot be compared with the grown-up stage of another. Thus at one point of time, Spain and Germany were not comparable. We can add other examples from our experiences. We do not compare the capacities or abilities of a primary school boy with those of those of university students. Likewise some writers think that nineteenth century Europe or Japan is comparable to the developing societies of late twentieth century; (others would have objections to this procedure) and that developing countries of today cannot be compared to the developed ones of the present.

Check Your Progress 2

- i) State in three lines the types of comparison attempted by Durkheim.

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- ii) Describe concomitant variation in about two lines.

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11.5 INDIRECT EXPERIMENT

In natural sciences, it is possible in a laboratory experiment to use the controls effectively. We can check one factor from operating, or allow it to become ineffective in an experiment. In social situations it is not feasible that way. If we want to know what would have happened if free India had Vallabhabhai Patel as Prime Minister, we have no method of removing Nehru and putting Patel instead. Of course neither of them is available; but even if they were, they would not have obliged the social scientist to undertake the experiment. If we want to know the possibilities of a State being ruled by some other party than the one ruling it, the situation cannot be created by us for study. At best, we can make a guess work, or talk indirectly. Indirectly in the sense that a party has worked elsewhere in a particular way, and it might try to repeat its performance at a different place or time. Thus social scientist cannot order events to happen in a particular way to study the situation; i.e. the scope of experiment is very-very limited. What is he to do then? To attempt a scientific study or to give it up? Durkheim would not give up the method of science. He would find situations that provide comparisons and explanations of the type mentioned about suicide rates. Even without a laboratory, social facts can be so arranged as if that had been done in an experiment. Thus economic differences were not allowed to come in the way of studying the relationship

of religion with suicide. This comparison among two religions in the same region i.e., in the, same economy, amounts to an experimental situation, discovered by the social scientist, though not created by him in the laboratory. Therefore Durkheim calls for such use of comparative method an indirect experiment.

Now we have used three sets of words (i) comparisons; (ii) comparative method; (iii) indirect experiment. As we move from an account of comparisons to explanations of events, we move to the second position. The set of words 'comparative method' and 'indirect experiment' convey the same meaning; the second clarifies explicitly the power of explanation. So we recollect: it is not useful to put things or events in parallel lines in a table without first asking, are things comparable? Yes, things are comparable when they belong to the same category, and have differences that need an explanation. So things or social facts should belong to the same **Genus** but to different Species. Try the following exercise.

Activity 2

Do you agree with the formulation of Durkheim that if we can find an example of a social institution in its simplest and purest form we can understand the essence of that institution? If yes, give two reasons for your acceptance of Durkheim's view. If no, give at least one reason for your disagreement with his view. Compare your answer, if possible with those of other students at your Study Centre.

11.6 A SINGLE CASE AS EXPERIMENT

Lastly we invite your attention to one more situation. Can an experiment be done by taking up one case only? One experiment conducted in a satisfactory manner can be decisive under certain conditions. Suppose we take the view that social objects were simple in the beginning, and have become more complex with the passage of time.

Then the true form of the thing was in the beginning. Persons who go on pilgrimage to the Gangotri in search of the fountainhead of the purest river act on this principle. Water at the source is the purest, and as we proceed from the sky to the ocean, more and more rivers mix up with the stream, and perhaps the Hooghly word itself signifies dirty water, and the river near Calcutta is the least pure. Thus Allahabad may have purer water than Varanasi, and Haridwar purer than Allahabad. Then by this logic the purest form of water is to be found at the Gangotri. That is the purest at the point of origin, "the simplest and the purest". If we can find an example of a social institution in its simplest and purest form we can understand the 'essence' of that institution. Thus Durkheim studied the social institution of religion among the Australian tribes and traced the essential characteristics of religion in their existing practices. In such cases, the single study acquires an experimental character. It clarifies the 'essentials' without bothering about dilutions. In India, the followers of the Arya Samaj act on the same principle considering the vedic religion as pure, and later growth as an admixture of the wrong practices added on to it.

Check Your Progress 3

i) Tick mark YES or NO for following question.

Are the following social situations comparable?

a) the ruler and the ruled

Yes	No
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b) the priest and the cobbler

Yes	No
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c) Chundawat Rajput and Shaktawat Rajput

Yes	No
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d) Soviet Union and the U.S.A.

Yes	No
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e) Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh

Yes	No
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ii) Explain in ten lines how comparative method amounts to an 'indirect experiment'.

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11.7 LET US SUM UP

We may summarise now. Comparisons are undertaken by people in everyday life for making proper choice among the alternatives. The alternatives are usually comparable, i.e. they belong to the same genus,

but different species. There is no point in going for ‘comparisons’ among different species. In sociology, we use these words ‘genus’ and ‘species’ for social facts like customs, institutions and social currents. Best results are obtained when classifications of these facts are made, and differences within each class are then taken into consideration. The differences in one set of social facts are then tried in relation to another set. If two sets change together, we say this is a case of concomitant variation. We may find more than one case of these variations. Then, we try to ‘control’ one set of variations; that is, keep it constant. (Remember how the level of economic development was kept constant by Durkheim.)

Then we see if one set of variations goes along with changes in the other. If yes, we say there is a sort of a cause-effect relationship among them; or the closeness of relationship is not by chance alone. This exercise resembles an experiment; but as the situation cannot be ordered like in a laboratory, it is called an ‘indirect experiment’. This is the most effective use of the comparative method — to bring it to the level of an indirect experiment. An exceptional use of the indirect experiment through one study can be seen in the study of the purest and the simplest case.

Durkheim developed these ideas in his book *The Rules of Sociological Method* (1895), and practised them in the study of the *Suicide* (1897). The exceptional case was mentioned in *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1911). He maintained that the possibility of the use of scientific method in studying societies is not a matter of philosophical debate: it can be demonstrated, and he did that in his studies spread over two decades with rare consistency. Finally, let us understand that any study gives us (i) significant results and (ii) an account of the method followed — the method can later be used in other studies — yes, by any one of us.

11.8 KEY WORDS

Altruistic Suicide In societies where the individual consciousness is so submerged with the collective consciousness of the society, the kind of suicide found is altruistic in nature. For example, sati or jouhar of women in India.

Egoistic Suicide In societies where the individuals are not properly integrated in society and where a person gives too much importance to his or her ego the kind of suicide found is egoistic suicide.

Experiment The word is used in natural sciences. It is usual to divide a group into two parts: one is kept in its original state (control group); in the other a change is introduced (experimental group). After some time the results are compared. Any difference is then taken as a result of the change introduced. If there is no difference, the new thing is not effective. Experiment thus proves which is the case — is the new thing

effective or useless. It is a method for arriving at a conclusive proof.

Genus

The broad category to which living beings of different types belong. In social sciences, the broader category or class of facts to which a number of facts belong. Genus is a wider category than species. Species are the first order to which facts belong. A number of species sharing some common characteristics belong to one Genus.

Suicide and Suicide Rate

The act of killing or ending one's own life is suicide. When a number of people commit suicide in a society, suicides are calculated according to the proportion of suicides per 1,000,000 (one million) population per year. This is the suicide rate.

Variation

Different scores of one item under study e.g. variation in literacy rates like 20 per cent, 30 per cent, 50 per cent; different scores of suicide rates e.g. 8 per 10,000 per year, 9 or 10. Concomitant variation means changes in two selected items, which go together e.g. as urbanisation increases the rate of suicide also increases.

11.9 FURTHER READING

Aron, R. 1967. *Main Currents in Sociological Thought*. Volume 2. Penguin Books: London

11.10 SPECIMEN ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

- i) Urbanisation in India 1901 to 1981
- ii) Literacy in different states of India in 1951

Check Your Progress 2

- i) Durkheim attempted comparisons of one phenomenon spread over different groups in a society (suicide rates among the rural and the urban); comparisons among different societies (Spain and Germany); and those among two groups within a society (using one as a control group).
- ii) Concomitant variation means changes which take place in one item leading to changes in the other item.

Check Your Progress 3

Comparative Method

- i) No for a & b
Yes for c, d and e
- ii) See Section 11.5



UNIT 12 COLLECTIVE REPRESENTATIONS

Structure

- 12.0 Objectives
- 12.1 Introduction
- 12.2 Society and Individual Consciousness
- 12.3 Collective Conscience
- 12.4 Collective Representations
 - 12.4.0 Collective Representation—Definition
 - 12.4.1 Individual Representations
 - 12.4.2 Process of Constituting Collective Representations
- 12.5 Cognition and Collective Representation
- 12.6 Religion and Collective Representation
- 12.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 12.8 Keywords
- 12.9 Further Reading
- 12.10 Specimen Answers to Check Your Progress

12.0 OBJECTIVES

By the time you complete the study of this Unit, you should be able to

- explain the relation between society and individual consciousness
- discuss Durkheim's concept of 'collective conscience'
- describe the meanings of 'collective representations'
- explain the 'collective' nature of 'concepts' or 'categories of thought', and
- illustrate collective representations through religion.

12.1 INTRODUCTION

In Unit 10 you have already learnt about Durkheim's break with philosophy. You have also studied that he made efforts to raise sociology to the status of science. Now we come to the central theme of Durkheimian thought: the relation between individuals and collectivity. Durkheim wanted to develop a scientific comprehension of this relation in its various forms. However, he was not satisfied with all earlier social theories, which considered 'individual' as their starting-point. He rejected theories of society built upon the 'will', 'desire' or 'volition' of the individual and held that scientific understanding of all social phenomena must emerge from the collective nature of a social group, community or society.

In order to explain Durkheim's concept of collective representations, this unit covers five main areas of discussion. First, it tells you about society and individual consciousness. Then it mentions the concept of **collective conscience**. Next it discusses at length the main theme i.e. collective representations. Lastly, it speaks about collective representations in terms of cognition and religion.

12.2 SOCIETY AND INDIVIDUAL CONSCIOUSNESS

Society has a nature, which is peculiar to itself. It is different from individual nature. Society pursues ends which are special to it. The compulsion of collective existence is such that individuals must forget their particular interests. Individuals must submit to some sort of inconvenience or sacrifice without which social life would be impossible. Thus society imposes upon individuals the nature of its collectivity. For example, at every moment in our life we are obliged to submit ourselves to the rules of conduct or behaviour, which we have neither made nor desired. Such rules of conduct are sometimes even in opposition to individual's instincts and interests. However, we are supposed to obey and follow them. For instance, you may want to lead a completely care free life, without work, studies or family responsibilities. But society forces you to behave in a responsible manner and fulfil your various obligations. In this process, the special reality of society moulds the thinking, acting and consciousness of an individual.

Society exercises the moral authority over individuals. This moral authority provides society venerable respect. The ideas, beliefs, emotions etc. which society imposes upon individuals are marked out for respect. Since such ideas, beliefs and moral codes etc. are upheld by the collectivity, an individual breach is liable to invite societal action or punishment. Thus everything which is good for the health of society is cultivated by it as something **sacred**. Religious dogma, totemic symbols or modern flag etc. are all sacred things. They inspire in the individual at once a feeling of awe and reverence. In opposition to sacred things there are **profane** ones. Profane things are not accorded similar reverence as given to sacred ones. Moreover society keeps profane things apart from sacred things. Durkheim held that sacred things are those, which the interdictions protect and isolate. Profane things are those to which respect is denied and at times people are told to keep a distance from them. Finally there are always rules of conduct, which prescribe how men should behave in relation to sacred things.

Society does not confine itself to demanding sacrifices or efforts from individuals. It does not act upon individuals wholly from without. Society exists in and through individual consciousness. Hence societal force must also penetrate individuals and organise itself within them. Thus it becomes an integral part of individual consciousness. This is the reason that societal beliefs, morals and rules etc. are elevated and magnified by individuals. Their source of origin cannot be traced or attributed to single individuals. Rather their perpetuation lies in collective existence. However such beliefs, ideas, emotions become a permanent part of individual consciousness.

Thus on the one hand, there is the sacred world of things. It is elaborated by a collectivity. It fuses individual consciences into communion. It imposes love and respect and transfers society into individual minds. It connects individuals with something beyond them. On the other hand there is the profane world of things. It gives expression to individual organisms. It also expresses all objects to which individuals are directly related. It relates to men's ordinary day to day life. It involves daily personal preoccupations. This way individual consciousness acquires from society a twofold world i.e. sacred and profane. After appreciating the difference between the sacred and profane, it is easy to complete Activity 1.

Activity 1

What is the difference between

- a) *Gangajal* and tap-water
- b) *Prasad* and refreshment?

Answer the above question and discuss, in about 100 words, which is sacred and which is not. Compare, if possible, your answer with those of other students at your Study Centre.

12.3 COLLECTIVE CONSCIENCE

The notion of collective conscience is of paramount importance in Durkheim's thought. Durkheim describes collective consciousness as 'the body of beliefs and sentiments common to the average of the members of a society'. The system of these beliefs and sentiments has a life of its own. It is distributed throughout the whole of the society. It has specific features, which make it a distinct reality. Collective consciousness is independent of the particular conditions in which individuals are placed. It is spread out over the whole of the territory of a society — to large and small towns and villages. It is common to all occupations or professions etc. It links successive generations to one another. Individuals come in and go out of society, however collective conscience remains. Although collective conscience can only be realised through individuals, it has a form beyond a particular person, and operates at a level higher than him/her.

Collective conscience varies in extent and force from one society to another. In less advanced societies collective conscience embraces the greater part of individual consciousness. In such societies the extent of collective conscience is stronger and greater. For example social controls and prohibitions prevalent in primitive societies are imposed upon individual members in strongest fashion and they all submit to it. It is the collective conscience, which governs the existence of individuals. The collective sentiments experienced in common have an extreme force and are reflected in the form of severe punishments on those who violate prohibitions. The stronger the collective conscience of a society, the greater the indignation against crime or against any other violation of the social imperative. Collective conscience is also reflective of the degree of cohesion, integration

or **solidarity** of a society. In primitive societies, collective conscience is strongest and all-embracing. However, in advanced societies there occurs a greater differentiation of individuals. Everyone becomes more and more free to believe, to desire and to act according to one’s own or one’s group preferences in a large number of circumstances. Thus the sphere of influence of collective conscience is reduced. There also occurs a weakening of collective reactions against violations of prohibitions etc.

The concept of collective conscience was originally used and developed by Durkheim in his first major work i.e. *The Division of Labour in Society* (1895). The strength of collective conscience will be later described through the nature of social solidarity which forms part of Unit 13. In his later works, Durkheim developed the concept of ‘collective representations’, which had greater theoretical potential.

Check Your Progress 1

- i) Explain in simple words, in five lines, your understanding of Durkheim’s views on the relation between ‘society’ and ‘individual consciousness’.

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- ii) Define, in three lines, the concept of collective conscience given by Durkheim.

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12.4 COLLECTIVE REPRESENTATIONS

Durkheim looks into the role of collective beliefs and sentiments and especially of morality and religion in all societies. How are they inculcated and how do they exercise control over society? How are they affected by society and how in turn do they affect other features of social life? How do collective beliefs and sentiments change during different stages of a society’s development? To prepare for such answers Durkheim used the French term ‘representations collective’, which translated into English is ‘collective representations’.

12.4.0 Collective Representation — Definition

The concept of ‘collective representations’ is a major contribution of Durkheim’s social theory. In fact, Durkheim’s later work (1897 onwards) can be seen as a systematic study of ‘collective representations’. Initial

definition forwarded by Durkheim (in his book *Suicide*) stated that 'essentially social life is made of representations'.

There is a difference between an object, and the way it is seen, the manner in which it is described, and its meaning understood commonly in a society. The object is thus presented again in terms of meanings, a word is given a meaning. The object or the word is thus 'represented'; for a scientist water is represented as the formula H₂O, for a doctor 'fever' is represented as 'temperature above 99°F., in case of religion a piece of stone may be represented as 'Mahadeva'. College or school teams are represented through their symbolic colours, light blue, dark blue, green and white, pink and blue etc. or in Asiad and the Olympics, national teams through their colours.

Collective representations are states of the collective conscience, which are different in nature from the states of the individual conscience. They express the way in which a particular group of individuals conceives itself in relation to the objects, which affect the social group. Collective representations are socially generated and they refer to, and are, in some sense, about society.

12.4.1 Individual Representations

Durkheim stressed the independent reality of collective representations. He used the example of individual representations. Now the substrata of individual representations are like the brain cells of the body. And they result from the combined activity of this substratum. But they cannot be wholly reduced to or explained in terms of the constituent parts of their substratum. In fact individual representations have their own characteristics and have relative autonomy independent of substratum. Further various individual representations (emerging from different persons) can directly influence one another and combine according to their own convenience.

12.4.2 Process of Constituting Collective Representations

Durkheim states that collective representations result from the substratum of associated individuals. But they cannot be reduced to and wholly explained by features of constituent individuals. They are 'sui generis' that is, they generate themselves. Original and fundamental forms of collective representations bear the marks of their origin. Hence the primary matter of all social consciousness is in close relation with the nature of the substratum. This substratum is constituted by the number and nature of social elements, the way in which they are grouped and distributed over a geographical area etc. However once the primary basis of representations has thus been formed, they become partially autonomous realities. Then they live their own life with the power to attract and repel one another. Further, they form synthesis of all kinds and engender new collective representations. As examples, Durkheim noted the enormous growth of myths, legends, theological systems and religious sects etc. which combine and separate and over a period of time get transformed and give rise to a complex of beliefs, values and morals etc. or concepts or categories of thought.

12.5 COGNITION AND COLLECTIVE REPRESENTATIONS

Cognition is the act of knowing, taking note of things. It is a mental process through which we receive knowledge about events or happenings around us. In group situations people talk about these and thereby increase each other's awareness. Out of the inter play of minds come symbols or products of thought which are mutually owned and mutually proclaimed. Thus collective representation is either a concept or a category of thought held in a sufficiently similar form by many persons to allow effective communication. These collective symbols have force because they have been jointly created and developed. They are independent of any particular mind or set of minds. They possess tremendous force over individuals. They exercise an integrative effect on society, e.g. flag is a political representation; sacred texts are often a religious representation, like the Bible, the Ramayana, the Guru Granth Sahib, and so on.

We will elaborate in some detail the nature of the concepts of thought, and the way they become and act as collective representations.

Concepts of thought are in opposition to sensual representations i.e. sensations, perceptions or images etc. Sensual representations are in a perpetual flux.

They come after each other like waves of a river. Even for a little time they do not remain the same thing. We are never sure of again finding a perception in the same way as we experienced it the first time. On the other hand a concept has a particular stable existence, and it does not move by itself and resists change. It changes only when we discover some imperfection in a concept and rectify it. For example the system of concepts with which we think in everyday life is that which is expressed by the vocabulary of our mother tongue. Every 'word' is representative of a concept. Now language is something fixed. It changes very slowly and consequently it is the same with the conceptual system, which it expresses. Same is true of scientific terminology. After appreciating the relation between cognition and collective representation you can easily complete Activity 2.

Activity 2

Note the words used for father, father's brother, father's father, and mother's brother in your language and in two other languages. See how these terms are common and how people mean the same thing. Also note the words in three or four languages that describe marriage, and birth. These words express the idea of collective representation. Compare, if possible, your answer with those of other students at your Study Centre.

Further a concept is universal or at least capable of becoming so. An individual can hold a concept in common with other individuals. Individuals can communicate through a concept. On the other hand a sensation holds closely to an individual's organism and personality. It cannot be detached

and passed to other individuals. However, conversation and all intellectual communications between individuals are an exchange of concepts. Thus concepts and categories of thought are essentially impersonal representations. It is through these that cognition structure and human intelligence communicates.

Concepts are the work of the community. They bear the mark of no particular mind. They spring from the associational nature of a group or collectivity. Categories of thought are more stable than sensations or images. The reason is that collective representations are more stable than the individual representations. Only slight changes in environment can affect an individual consciousness, however, any change in the mental status of a society can only be effected through events of extreme gravity, e.g. revolutions or political movements, such as the National Movement for Independence.

Language and consequently the system of concepts, which it translates, is the product of collective elaboration. What it expresses is the manner in which society as a whole represents the facts of collective experience. The ideas which correspond to the diverse elements of language are thus collective representations.

Concepts are collective representations and belong to the whole society. If they belong to the whole social group, it is not because they represent the average of the corresponding individual representations. Because in that case collective representations would be poorer than individual representations in intellectual content. However, as a matter of fact, collective representations contain much more that surpasses the knowledge of the average individual.

Concepts as collective representations are more or less general ideas prevalent in a society. They express categories and classes rather than particular objects, because unique and variable characteristics of things only rarely interest society. Collective representations are the work of society and they are enriched by the societal experience. For example in the context of modern nation states, collective representations are social facts located in the constitutions, the national flag, and the national anthem. Before proceeding to the next sub-section let us complete Check Your Progress 2!

Check Your Progress 2

- i) We mention some of the concepts used in Sociology, for example socialisation, community, social system. Mention five other concepts in the subject.
 - a)
 - b)
 - c)
 - d)
 - e)

ii) Fill in the blanks in the following sentence.

The of individual are like the brain cells of the body.

12.6 RELIGION AND COLLECTIVE REPRESENTATIONS

Durkheim considered religion as a reflection of man’s relation with society and nature. Religion cannot be reduced to belief in God. Because there are religions without an apparent God. For example Buddhism denied the existence of God. Further, in all religions there are vital elements, which belong to the day-to-day life like food, drink, body, physical environment etc. which are in no way linked to a deity.

Religion has a foothold in the reality of society. The social basis of religion and the religious basis of society are explained by Durkheim. Religion is a consecration of society. Religion at bottom represents man’s respect for society, which is expressed through a high degree of symbolic intensity. Religion is a reflection of society, more specifically of collective representations.

At one level Durkheim considered the idea of sacred along with communal as the basis of his interpretation of the character of religion. The division of the world into two domains, the one containing all that is sacred, the other all that is profane is the distinctive trait of religious thought. The beliefs, myths, dogmas and legends are systems of representations, which express the nature of virtues and powers of sacred things. They also represent the relations between sacred and profane things.

Besides the notion of sacred, Durkheim noted the obligatory character of the religious beliefs lying behind religious practices. There was a pressure exercised by a society upon its members to prevent them from deviating from the common religious faith. Thus religious phenomena consist of organised systems and collections of obligatory beliefs united with definite practices which relate to the objects given in the beliefs. Religion is obligatory in nature and what is obligatory has its origins in ‘social’. The individual’s conformity to religion involves his/her deference to the moral power of society. Thus it is society which prescribes to the believer the beliefs and rites which he/she must observe. Hence the rites and beliefs are society’s creation. The determining causes of religious phenomena lie in the nature of society. The change and evolution in religious beliefs and practices etc. in different forms result due to transformations taking place in the social organisation of a society in the course of history.

The true nature of religion, Durkheim held, can be revealed by observing the ‘conditions of collective existence’. Religious representations must be seen as work of the nature of collective conscience. They help in the formation of ideas and developing deeper interest in collective representations in social life.

Out of the commonest object, collective representations can make a most powerful sacred being. The powers thus conferred on an object are based

on idea and yet they act as if they are real. They determine the conduct of men similar to physical force. Thus social thought acquires the imperative authority over and above the individual thought. Social thought can add to reality or deduct from it according to circumstances. This way, an idea becomes a reality within the social kingdom. Hence religious ideas or beliefs are fixed on any material things which symbolise them.

Religious force is primarily the sentiments inspired by the group in its members. It is projected outside of the consciousness of individuals. These religious sentiments get fixed upon some object, which becomes sacred. Any object can fulfil this function. The religious belief has nothing to do with the inherent properties of the object of worship. The world of religious beliefs is added and superimposed on the articles of worship. They are simply the symbolic forms of collective representations.

In a primitive society, members of a clan feel that they are somehow related through a common symbol, like a plant, an animal or an object. One group is called 'Crow' yet another 'Eagle' or a 'Snake'; there are others that take a place name. This name helps them in many ways. Their attitude towards the totem is one of respect. They will not harm that plant or animal. If there is a grave emergency, they will first worship it and offer collective excuse before killing it. They have a system of rituals for preserving their totem symbol. In this way the totem of a clan outwardly is an expression of totemic principle i.e. a superior power. However it is also the symbol of the determined society i.e. the clan. It is the flag of the clan. It is the sign by which the clan distinguishes itself from other clans. It is the visible mark of the personality of the clan. So it is at once the symbol of the supernatural and of the society. The god of the clan, the totemic principle, is therefore, the clan itself. The clan gets personified and represented to the imagination under the visible form of the animal or plant, which serves, as the totem. The collective representation of the sacred is the cult. The idea of religion originates, perpetuates in and through collective representations of beliefs, ideas, values and religious thoughts and practised through cults and rituals by the community of believers (also called a Church in a wider sense).

Durkheim considered the relationship of man, society and nature. He noted that the study of nature had increasingly been taken over by science. Thus the extension of science reduced the sphere of religion. Earlier religion represented all forms of knowledge — sacred and secular. With the growth of science, the sphere of the secular increased. Earlier morality was considered as religious duty. Durkheim rejected the religious part of that duty and expressed his faith in secular morality. In the modern times secular morality would, according to him, provide the basis for the moral order in society. Thus secular morality could become a new form of group conscience. After learning about Durkheim's view on religion and collective representation, it is a good idea to complete Check Your Progress 3.

Check Your Progress 3

- i) What is meant by secular morality? Write your answer in five lines.

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ii) How does religion become the soul of society? Write your answer in ten lines.

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12.7 LET US SUM UP

Durkheim viewed the relation between the society and the individual and started with society, not the individual or his will. Language, grammar, and categories of thought are meaningful when more than one individual uses them. Thus thought is collective in its usage and origin. Religion is also a collective mode of behaviour and thought — best illustrated in the religion of the simplest societies — the tribals of Australia. Common cults represent the collective identity of people organised in clans. The ‘totem’ reflects that identity and religion becomes the soul of society. As man’s knowledge of nature improves, science adds secular vision to the people, and they begin to look to secular morality for maintaining their social order.

12.8 KEY WORDS

Collective Conscience According to Durkheim, collective conscience refers to the totality of belief and sentiments common to average member of a society.

Profane The elements of a social system, which are not connected with religion or religious purposes. In other words, they are secular.

Sacred	Those elements of a social system which relate to religion or are set apart for the worship of deity.
Solidarity	It refers to unity (as of a group or class) that is based on or produces community of interests, objectives and standards.

12.9 FURTHER READING

Lukes, S. 1973. *Emile Durkheim, His Life and Work: A Historical and Critical Study*. Allen Lane and The Penguin Press: London.

Nisbet, R.A. 1974. *The Sociology of Emile Durkheim* Oxford University Press: New York.

Raymond, A. 1979. (reprint). *Main Currents in Sociological Thought-11*. Penguin:

Harmondsworth. See Emile Durkheim, pp. 21-108.

12.10 SPECIMEN ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

- i) Society has an existence of its own which is different from the collective existence of individuals in society. Society imposes certain restrictions on individual consciousness and compels them to conform to social rules of conduct or behaviour. Thus, the compulsion of collective existence due to which individuals conform to social rules is such that individual interests get subordinated to the collective interests of society.
- ii) According to Durkheim, collective conscience refers to the body of beliefs and sentiments, which are found in the average members of a society. It is independent of the particular existence of individuals in society.

Check Your Progress 2

- i) a) function, b) structure, c) stratification, d) social change, and e) conflict
- ii) substratum, representations

Check Your Progress 3

- i) Moral force controls individual's behaviour. This force makes a person obey the social commands or norms. In earlier societies this force was sanctioned through religion. In modern societies, religious force has become weaker. Yet society controls a member's behaviour. Morality continues to be there, but is now delinked from religion. Such morality is secular.

- ii) Society has collective sentiments. Certain objects, places, times are considered sacred, respected and some times associated with worship of deities and Gods. There are other sets of objects that are considered impure like dead body of animals, dirty clothes, and burning ghats (cremation grounds). Contacts with such things or places are considered polluting. The definition of the pure and the impure, the desirable and the undesirable is collective. Thus society creates the idea of heaven or hell, even of God and the Devil. These ideas and practices like cult and worship or purification unite the people into a common group sentiment. The group is then known for its beliefs and cults, and religion thereby expresses the soul of the society.



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UNIT 13 FORMS OF SOCIAL SOLIDARITY

Structure

- 13.0 Objectives
- 13.1 Introduction
- 13.2 Mechanical Solidarity
 - 13.2.0 Collective Conscience
 - 13.2.1 Collective Conscience: On the Basis of Forms
 - 13.2.2 Collective Conscience: On the Basis of Contents
- 13.3 Organic Solidarity
 - 13.3.0 New Forms of Collective Conscience in Organic Solidarity
 - 13.3.1 On the Basis of Forms
 - 13.3.2 On the Basis of Contents
- 13.4 Let Us Sum Up
- 13.5 Keywords
- 13.6 Further Reading
- 13.7 Specimen Answers to Check Your Progress

13.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit you would be able to understand:

- the relationship between mechanical solidarity and its specific social structure
- the repressive law as the means of strengthening the social solidarity in segmental social structure
- the significance of collective conscience in primitive societies
- that organic solidarity, the characteristic feature of complex social structure, is based on division of labour
- the role of **restitutive law** in complex social structure with reference to the solidarity and the changed form of collective conscience in advanced societies.

13.1 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, the economic and **social solidarity** as analysed in *The Division of Labour in Society* by Durkheim is discussed briefly. Durkheim was curious to know the forces, which regulate and control social life. To conceptualise his ideas he established dichotomy between segmental and complex societies. What are the characteristics of these societies and what

types of solidarities are found among them? He answers these questions with reference to forms of solidarities. While explaining these affirmatively, he propounds that two types of solidarities i.e., mechanical and organic, can be identified through the types of law in different kinds of social structures. The detailed description is presented in section 13.2 of this unit. In this regard the repressive forms of the law, painful to the criminals, are analysed with reference to the segmental type of social structure. The sub-sections of this part deal with the importance of the **collective conscience** in the social structure, the definition of collective conscience and its nature. Organic solidarity is shown in section 13.3. In this part the restitutive aspects of law with reference to complex social structure which makes individuals interdependent and the way it unites them in complex society are also discussed. The sub-parts of this part bring out the contents of collective conscience with regard to the changed social conditions. This unit should be seen as a continuation of Unit 12. Finally, the summary of the unit is given.

13.2 MECHANICAL SOLIDARITY

Mechanical solidarity is sui generis i.e. born in the natural course of events based on resemblances of individuals. It directly links them with the society. This type of solidarity has arisen out of a number of common experiences of like members in a given society.

Mechanical solidarity can be characterised by segmental system in which every segment is homogenous and involved in the social structure. Hence the society is divided into quite small compartments which envelop the individual completely. Originally, the segmental society was based on **clans** which were frequently found in less developed societies. But in the process of evolution, the segmental characteristics could not be confined to this one characteristic and started expanding on the bases of territories. Consequently, the division of the society was not solely according to the relation of **consanguinity** (real or fictitious) but also on territorial bases. The segmental social structure is characterised by a low degree of interdependence. What occurs in one segment hardly has any effects on others. Finally, it can be said that the segmental social structure has relatively low volume of moral and material density. This means that interactions take place among limited people (volume). It also means that the number of times people interact is also limited (density). The reason is that what one can do, the other can also do. So he does not need others until more people are needed in a work. If a man has to cut a piece of wood, or catch a bird, or pick a fruit from a tree in a forest, he can do this work by himself like any other. Thus people do the same type of work. They are similar; their inter-dependence is limited. Their density of interactions is low. Then a question arises what forms of **custom** regulate and control the conditions of people bound in mechanical solidarity? Durkheim answers this through collective conscience. Homogeneity of experience leads to the collective conscience. This gives rise to common **beliefs** and practices. The social life blended with religion and economic institutions of such a society, nearer to primitive communism as

differentiations are few. Most of the property is common, the experiences are similar, and rules and regulations too relate to common life. Customs and laws protect the group — its property and its sentiments. The nature of laws is thus collective — a wrong-doer is punished by the collectivity. Penal or **repressive law** is an indicator of mechanical solidarity. Legal sanctions derived from the penal are directly proportional to the number of social bonds, which are regulated and controlled by collective conscience. Thus, we can understand the relative significance of the two. A wrong against the group is punished. On the one hand, punishment is given to the individual; on the other hand, punishment strengthens the beliefs and values of the society. Any wrong brings injury to the group sentiments; every punishment restores the authority of the collectivity.

If a group of individuals are less dependent and conversely more autonomous and if the density of volume of communication is less in such a society, or sect, how is it possible for it to develop collective conscience or social control across individuals or across groups or such sects?

13.2.0 Collective Conscience

Now what is collective conscience under mechanical solidarity at the cultural and ideological level? Durkheim defines collective conscience as a set of beliefs and customs, which on an average are common in a society and form a determinate system, which has its own life-style. Collective conscience exists in a general form in society and one can easily differentiate between the characters relating to its form and those to its content.

13.2.1 Collective Conscience: On the Basis of Forms

Durkheim views that the strength of social bonds is the feature of mechanical solidarity and is a function of three variables. They are:

- i) relation between the volume of collective conscience and individual's conscience
- ii) average intensity of the stages of collective conscience
- iii) the greater or lesser firmness of all those stages.

The more the beliefs and sanctions are present in the society, the less are the chances of freedom of an individual. Thus, where the mechanical solidarity is effective, there is strong and extensive collective conscience. It brings harmonious relationships in the activities of the people extensively. In such a social condition, it is difficult to distinguish individual's conscience from the collective one. Hence, collective authority becomes the mode of totality, whether it involves the whole of the community or it incarnates the chief of the community.

13.2.2 Collective Conscience: On the Basis of Contents

With regard to the content of the collective conscience there are distinguishable elements; mainly, its nature is rooted in the totality of a society. It is so because society is controlled by common beliefs and sanctions, which are unanimously accepted by the members of that society.

Indeed, in ancient era, the religious elements were spread in every aspect of the society and everything, which was social, was religious as well. Both words, religious and social, were synonymous in the primitive societies. The source of super human features was deeply rooted in the constitution of conscience. Collective and the social characteristics of the latter were deemed to be transcendental values. These societal conditions lifted people even beyond their own conscience. The stages of the collective conscience were concretely associated with traditional (local) conditions, linking individual to racial and powerful objects in the universe viz., animals, trees and many natural forces such as sun, moon, clouds etc. People have always been linking himself to such objects. These phenomena affect every conscience in the same way Thus, the fusion of the individual's conscience with the collective indicates its form and object. Now it can be said that collective conscience acquires its specific features in different primitive societies.

Check Your Progress 1

Read the following questions carefully and write the correct answers.

- i) Originally the segmental society was based on
 - a) caste
 - b) vama
 - c) race
 - d) clan
- ii) The objective of the repressive law was
 - a) to give freedom to individuals
 - b) to divide society
 - c) to bring solidarity in the society
 - d) to maintain division of labour in society

iii) Define in three lines the collective conscience.
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iv) Give within four lines the meaning of mechanical solidarity.
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13.3 ORGANIC SOLIDARITY

Durkheim viewed that division of labour is an essential condition of organic solidarity, and it gradually replaces that engendered by social likeness. Here individual depends upon those parts, which the society is composed of. In this respect a society is an arrangement of different and specific functions which are linked mutually by social bonds. In this conception the differences among the individuals are visible to the extent that everybody has his specific field of activities and confines himself or herself to that area only. Hence, the individual's conscience is distinct from the collective conscience.

13.3.0 New Forms of Collective Conscience in Organic Solidarity

Even primitive societies are well organised in the society where organic solidarity is greater; the social structure is well organised and has the features opposite that of segmental social structure. Organised social structure is characterised by the system of different organs and each has a specific role. These organs are formed by different components, which are coordinated and subordinated to one another around a single central organ. This central organ influences the rest of the organism within reasonable limits. Organised social structure, in turn, gives rise to the fusion of the segments completely. Hence, an individual extends his sphere of interaction. As this process continues, it increases in its numerical strength and as such its impact is no longer restricted to the local place. The process of fusion of the segments leads to the fusion of markets, which crystallises a single market (city). This virtually embraces whole society, which contains the entire population within its boundary. Thus, the society itself resembles a large city. Now, individuals are no longer grouped according to their **lineage**, but to their specified activities. The existing social conditions and the nature of work do not confine the individual to his birthplace, but also bring him out of it to the place of work.

Organised social structure is thus characterised by high degree of interdependence. The increase in industrialisation corresponds to the progress of division of labour and the latter determine the concentration of the social mass. Any change at one place is rapidly transmitted to the other. Therefore, the intervention of state/legal sanctions is needed. Finally, we can say that organised social structure has relatively high volume (material and moral density). With the above mentioned advancements, societies become more and more voluminous and, in turn, work gets more divided. The population becomes even more concentrated with the advancement of the people as a whole. Whenever the social norms correspond to the organic solidarity, the division of labour gives rise to legal rules. These will determine the nature and relation of specialised functions and any violation is to be entailed through restitutive measures. Law, with sanctions of restitutive or cooperative nature, works as an index of organic solidarity; this index consists of civil, commercial, procedural, administrative and constitutional laws, which had been abstracted from the penal rules, found in the less-advanced societies. Here we find almost similar co-relation as was observed between penal law and mechanical solidarity. The extent of co-operative law is proportional to that part of social life, which consists

in the bond, engendered by the division of labour. Here one can reasonably neglect those interdependent relations, which are regulated by the customs binding the individuals through similarity of work. Nevertheless, the legal and customary rules are essential for organic solidarity. For the existence of such a solidarity it is necessary that different parts cooperate in a determined way (if not in all respects, at least in predetermined conditions). Therefore, the contract is not self-sufficient, but it presupposes a set of regulations, which are as extensive and complicated as the contracted aspects.

13.3.1 On the Basis of Forms

Now we turn to the question of what form the collective conscience takes in the condition of organic solidarity. Having considered the volume of collective conscience, its intensity and determinateness, Durkheim argues about the forms of collective conscience where volume remains constant or probably diminishes, while its intensity and determinate character decline. Advancement of society through progressive development in the division of labour leads to a decline in the intensity and determinateness of collective states. The collective conscience seems to have less strength to carry the individuals in collective directions; as the rules of conduct to that of collective conscience become indeterminate, an individual gets more chances for self-reflection which, in turn, provides more opportunity for self-freedom. In other words, individual conscience no longer remains so tightly enmeshed in collective conscience, it acquires a certain degree of autonomy.

13.3.2 On the Basis of Contents

The content of collective conscience gradually becomes human oriented, secular and rational. These social conditions start weakening the values of collective curiosity from the society. The religious domain contracts in greater degree and the ever strong domain of collective religious beliefs and sentiments starts decreasing with the rise of scientific procedures. The transcendental characters of society, which were superior to the human interests, begin losing their lustre increasingly.

Durkheim has seen the features of collective conscience in the system of beliefs. In advanced societies the supreme values not only bring dignity to an individual but also equality of opportunity. This has been explained in his work *Ethic and social justice*.

Check Your Progress 2

Read the following statements carefully and write the correct answer.

- i) Mechanical solidarity was found in that society where
 - a) the group was based on likeness and repressive law was in practice
 - b) the group was based on differentiation and repressive law was in practice
 - c) the group was based on likeness and restitutive law was in practice

- d) the group was based on differentiation and restitutive law was in practice. ii) Durkheim has described mechanical and organic solidarity in his work on
 - a) the suicide
 - b) the elementary form of religious life
 - c) the division of labour in society
 - e) the rules of sociological method.
- iii) Complete the following statement by filling in the gap:
 Organic solidarity is found in that society where social structure is
 - a) simple
 - b) organised
 - c) mixed
 - d) imaginary
- v) Describe in five lines the organic solidarity.

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13.4 LET US SUM UP

We now present the summary of the unit in a tabular form under three heads. This will help you recall the major differences between mechanical and organic types of solidarity. The first basis for this distinction is structural, the second deals with types of norms, and the third with characteristics of collective conscience — their form and content.

Bases of distinction	Mechanical	Organic
1) Structural bases	based on likeness (predominant in less-developed society)	based on differences and division of labour (predominant in society advanced societies)
	segmental type (firstly, based on clan then on territory)	organised (firstly, fusion of markets and later development of city)

	less volume of interdependence (relatively, weak social bonds)	high volume of interdependence (relatively strong social bonds)
	relatively, low volume of population	relatively, high volume of moral and material density
2) Types of norms	rules with repressive sanctions practices of penal law	rules with restitutive sanctions practices of cooperative law (cooperative, commercial, administrative and constitutional)
3) Characteristics of collective conscience		
a) form	high volume high intensity high determinants absolute collective	low volume low intensity low determinants more chances to individuals for self-reflection
b) content	highly religious (closed for discussion) attaching supreme values to the society concrete and specific	secular, human oriented (open for discussion) attaching supreme values to the individual abstract and general

13.5 KEYWORDS

Clan

Descent from a common ancestry; now, often applied to any group of people who count descent unilineally from a common ancestor (actual or mythical). The ancestor in primitive societies may be represented by totem such as animal, plant or sources of natural forces. Common ancestor signifies a relationship through blood. Hence, marriages within group are prohibited.

Belief

A statement about reality that is accepted by individuals as true and regarded as factual.

Custom

The term refers to the established mode of behaviour, thought and action, which are practised from generation to generation. Violation of this mode of behaviour is socially not accepted because of societal constraints. Customary forces are sometimes more binding than the orders of the state.

Lineage

A group of kin who reckons descent from a known common ancestor, this being conducted in a single line, either exclusively through patrilineal or exclusively matrilineal.

Consanguinity

The relationship of the people who are descended from one. The quality of common ancestors, commonly termed as “relationship by blood”

Collective Conscience

A set of beliefs and customs, which on an average are common in a society and form a determinant system which has its own style of life.

Social Solidarity

The condition within the group in which there is social cohesion and cooperation, and the collective action is directed towards the achievement of group goals and in which social organisation is shown by permanency. These conditions are changeable according to the social conditions. That is why Durkheim proposes two types of solidarity (mechanical and organic).

Repressive Law

Law that punishes the wrong-doer to reestablish the power and authority of the group or the collectivity. The most prevalent type of law in primitive societies.

Restitutive Law

Law which appears no longer a law for punishment but for restitution or reform. Its function is not to expiate but rather to restore to the rightful person what he or she has lost e.g. an amount of money given on loan or a house given on rent.

13.6 FURTHER READING

Bierstedt, Robert 1966. *Emile Durkheim*. Weidenfeld and Nicolson: London

Durkheim, Emile 1893. *The Division of Labour in Society*. Macmillan: London

Lukes, Steven 1973. *Emile Durkheim: His Life and Work*. Alien Lane, The Penguin Press: London

13.7 SPECIMEN ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

- i) d
- ii) c
- iii) The totality of beliefs and sentiments in average individuals of the same society forms a determinant system, which has its own style of life, may be called collective or common conscience.
- iv) When the individual is bound to society without any intermediary which, in turn, gives rise to totality of belief and sentiments, i.e., the solidarity of likeness; because, the segments of the society have no special type of action of their own and the individual's conscience depends upon the collective one.

Check Your Progress 2

- i) a
- ii) c
- iii) b
- iv) In organic solidarity the individual is dependent upon the parts of which society is composed. This, in turn, gives a system of interrelated and interdependent functions, which exhibit a division of labour. In such a society solidarity, however, based on differences is called as organic, because it produces the kind of integration where each organ has its own specific function.

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