
UNIT 2 APPROACHES AND PARADIGMS

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2.0 OBJECTIVES

In the Unit 1, we discussed about social transformation and problems. After going through the Unit 1, you must have understood these two concepts and their relationship.

Now, in the Unit 2, we are going to discuss the various approaches to the study of social problems and the paradigms of transformation. After reading this Unit, you will be able to:

- understand different approaches to the study of social problems;
- explain the basic formulations of the Functionalist, the Marxist and the Gandhian approaches;
- examine the inadequacies of these approaches;

- grasp the dysfunctional aspects of socio-economic development at the global, national and the local levels and the need for alternative approaches;
- describe the different paradigms of transformation; and
- elucidate the roles and limitation of the state intervention.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In the Unit 1, the concept of transformation is already introduced to you. All Societies, in one or the other form, experience slow or rapid transformation. The Societies which experience slow process of transformation find little difficulties in adjusting to the changed conditions. By and large, the slow process of social transformation is visible in the tribal and agrarian structures, whereas, it is more rapid in the urban-industrial social structure characterised by cities, high technology, modern production, consumerism, rapid means of transport and communication, migration, mobility, anonymity, secondary groups and impersonal relationships.

The strains caused by the rapidity of social transformation and even a partial inability on the part of the society to recast its structural frame in accordance with the changed conditions either strengthen the existing challenges to the social order or generate new tensions and problems.

This point can be explained by taking the example of urbanisation. Urbanisation, as a process, is an important indicator of social transformation. At the same time, this process produces social problems such as poverty, unemployment, overcrowding in cities, shortage of housing, lack of civic amenities, impersonal relationship, slums and a social environment which leads to delinquency, crime and other anti-social activities. Man, as a social being, encounters rapid social transformation on the one hand and constantly endeavours to find out appropriate solution to social problems generated by social transformation on the other.

Social problems afflict societies and to understand their nature and find answer to them, it is relevant to discuss different sociological approaches which emerged in the course of the understanding of the nature and genesis of social problems. This point has to be kept in view that the society has concerns for the normal as well as the abnormal conditions of society. It is concerned with happy families as much as unhappy or problem families. A Student of Sociology studies social problems in order to arrive at a better understanding of the abnormal social conditions which adversely affect social functioning. There is a close relationship between social and personal problems. The problems which appear to be personal in nature such as sickness, personal violence, malnutrition etc. are linked with social conditions that afflict thousands in similar life situations.

2.2 EARLY APPROACHES

Historically, starting from the 17th Century upto the beginning of the 19th Century when law and order was the major concern of the state and the ruling elite, crime was the main social problem which attracted the attention of the early social thinkers. There were several exercises either in the form of beliefs and superstitions or in the form of serious and systematic understanding of

the problems of famine, epidemics and crimes. For the purpose of understanding, they may be classified as follows:

- beliefs and superstitions,
- classical approach,
- physical-constitutional approach.

2.2.1 Beliefs and Superstitions

Starting from the primitive phase of human life till today, man has been facing famines scarcity, epidemic, violence, homicide and crimes. These problems, in many societies in the early periods or in some segments of human society even today, are considered to be the outcome of the influence of spirits, ghosts and witches. Such beliefs are based on the lack of proper understanding between the cause and effect relationship.

2.2.2 The Classical Approach

Starting from the 18th Century, some attempts were made to understand crime in a more systematic manner. Cesare Beccaria (1764) an Italian and Jeremy Bentham (1823) an Englishman were the pioneers who did serious exercise to explain the causation of crime as a social problem. Their formulations are known as the classical theory or approach which stressed on the hedonistic or the pleasure seeking nature of men which motivate them to violate accepted social norms and thus resulting in crimes. In other words, some men commit crimes in order to gain pleasure or crimes are utilitarian for them.

2.2.3 The Physical Constitutional Traits

Later on, some empirical or positivist efforts were made to explain the occurrence or crimes as a social problem. Cesar Lombroso (1836-1909) an Italian viewed crimes in relation to physical-constitutive traits, therefore, this approach is known as physical constitutional approach or the Italian School of the theory of crimes. Since, he tried to verify his assumptions by empirical methods, this is also known as the Positivist approach to the explanation of crimes. According to Lombroso:

- criminals are born with certain physical traits,
- the physical traits of criminals are different from the normal persons.

2.2.4 Critical Review

A critical review of these approaches reveal their limitations which are as follows:

- the first approach was based only on superstitions and ignorance,
- the latter two approaches are only of historical importance today,
- they are not based on the scientific analysis of crimes,
- the focus of the classical and the physical constitutional approaches is on individuals,
- they have not kept in view the social, economic and cultural factors.

Check Your Progress 1

i) Describe major characteristics of the Urban-industrial social structure in three lines.

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ii) Mention the names of the two main propounders of the classical approach to crime with countries of their origin.

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iii) Indicate the name of one main propounder of the Physical-Constitutional approach to crime as a social problem with country of his origin.

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iv) Discuss the limitations of the early approaches in eight lines.

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2.3 CONTEMPORARY APPROACHES

The 19th Century European Society experienced a great social transformation which is characterised by the decline of the hold of church, monarchy, feudalism and the rise of secular ideology state and the industrial revolution. Accordingly, there was a shift in ideas, methods of analysis and conceptualisation.

The distinct intellectual trends were visible during this century in the field of social sciences:

- in the first trend, the major emphasis was on the centrality of ‘social order’ with major components of preservation, solidarity, cohesion and integration,
- in the second trend, the central theme was social dynamics with its components of contradictions and conflict.

Out of the two intellectual trends there was the emergence of the functionalist and the Marxist approaches.

In the 19th Century the Indian society was fully subjugated by the British power. The Gandhian approach to eradicate problems of subjugation, colonial cultural domination, decline of village-industries, hold of superstitions, fear and untouchability can be grasped in the light of this socio-political background.

In contemporary period, a definite shift is visible in the analysis of social problems. Briefly, this shift in analysis can be explained in the following manner:

- earlier social problems and their causation were explained in terms of individuals. Now, the emphasis is on the social, economic, political, cultural or on structural factors.
- earlier emphasis was on the maintenance of social order and preservation of equilibrium which used to make social change a suspect phenomenon. Now, it is accepted that strains and social problems emerge due to contradictions existing in the social system which can be sorted out by removing these contradictions.

There are different perspectives to explain in the nature and genesis of social problems in contemporary sociology. These perspectives have given birth to two major theoretical approaches which are as follows:

- the Functional approach,
- the Marxist approach.

In the Indian context, out of his experiments on political movements and social reconstruction, Gandhi tried to develop a framework to eradicate social problems and to reorganize Indian society. Thus, the third approach which we have to explain is:

- the Gandhian approach.

2.3.1 The Functional Approach

The functional approach views society as a system, that is, as a set of inter-connected parts which together form a whole. The basic unit of analysis in society and its various parts are understood in terms of their relationship to the whole. Thus, social institutions, such as family and religion, are analysed by functionalists as a part of the social system rather than as isolated units. As parts, they contribute to the integration and maintenance of the system as a whole.

Thus, parts of society are functional insofar as they maintain the system and contribute to its healthy survival. The functional approach also employs the concept of dysfunction to refer to the effects of any social institution which detracts from the maintenance of society. The concept of dysfunction is of vital significance in the modern study of social problems.

The functionalist point of view is reflected in the works of Auguste Comte and Herbert Spencer—two of the founding fathers of Sociology. Later, it was developed by Emile Durkheim. It was further refined by Talcott Parsons and Robert K. Merton. The early functionalists drew analogy between society and an organism such as the human body. Just as an organism has certain basic need which must be satisfied if it is to survive, similarly, society has certain

basic needs which must be met if it is to continue to exist. The basic emphasis of the early functionalists is on the following points:

- well-knit relationship between parts (individuals, family, religion, education, law etc.) and the whole (society),
- smooth functioning of the system,
- maintenance of order,
- cohesiveness, and
- social solidarity.

i) **The Functional Pre-requisites**

In this approach certain functional pre-requisites (necessary conditions of social existence) are identified. They are considered to strengthen the processes of integration, adaptation and maintenance and to help in the smooth functioning of society. The major pre-requisites are as follows:

- role differentiation,
- communication,
- normative regulation,
- socialisation, and
- social control.

If there is a breakdown in the functional pre-requisites, society will face social problems and social disorganisation.

ii) **The Concept of Role**

In the functional analysis, the concept of 'role' occupies an important place. It refers to the work which an individual or an institution is expected to perform. The roles are assigned to individuals on the basis of their personal motivations and the social need. People performing on type of role belong to one position, strata or class. In all societies, there are role differentiation of individuals and institutions. As groups of individuals perform different roles, similarly, social institutions like family and religion also perform their assigned and expected role which are different from each other.

According to the functional analysis, if the role differentiation or the role performance is not in accordance with the prescribed norms, the functioning of society is affected and different social problems crop up.

After explaining the general formulations, now, let us consider the views of some major functionalist thinkers in more specific terms.

iii) **Social Facts and Anomie**

In the functionalist analysis, the way the relationship between 'parts' and the 'whole' has been explained, it gives an impression that the 'whole' is simply of the sum total of 'parts'. However, Durkheim in clear terms rejects this formulation in his studies on division of labour, religion and suicide. The major points of Durkheim's analysis are as follows:

- Sui generis nature of society.

- Social facts, and
- anomie

The Society is a self-emergent reality (termed by Durkheim as reality ‘sui generis’) which is out of and above the individuals. The members of a society are constrained by social facts which are defined by Durkheim as ways of acting, thinking and feeling. These are external to the individual and endowed with a power of coercion by reason of which individuals are bound to obey social facts.

In Durkheim’s analysis, social facts may be divided into normal and pathological types. The division of labour, religion, law and morality are normal social facts, whereas, anomie (normlessness) is a pathological condition of society. The extreme form of ‘division of labour’ is characterised by cut-throat competition, interest orientation and the lack of societal consciousness in individual. In such a situation, anomie trends emerge. In Durkheim’s concept, ‘anomie’ is a major social problem. Durkheim feels that the ‘intensity’ of the ‘collective conscience’ decreases with over differentiation and the extreme form of the division of labour. The actions of members of a group cannot be regulated by common social ideals in such a situation. The extreme form of differentiation, lack of common beliefs, morals and ideals create normlessness which has been called by Durkheim as ‘anomie’.

Activity 1

On the basis of personal understanding of your village/locality/office, write a note of two pages and the actual functioning of the division of labour in any one of these three fields.

iv) Social Order and the Value Consensus

As Durkheim’s major concern is ‘social solidarity’, similarly, the emphasis of Parsons is on social order which he has developed in his book ‘Social System’. He observes that social life is characterised by ‘mutual advantage and peaceful co-operation rather than mutual hostility and destruction’. Parsons believes that only commitment to common value provides a basis for order in society.

According to Parsons, ‘value’ – consensus forms the fundamental integrating principle in society. Common goals, unity and cooperation are derived from the shared values. The social values provide a general conception of what is desirable and worthwhile. The goals provide direction in specific situations. The roles provide the means whereby values and goals are translated into action.

According to Parsons, there are two main ways in which social equilibrium (the various parts of the system being in a state of balance) is maintained:

- The first involves socialisation by means of which values are transmitted from one generation to the next and internalised to form an integral of individual personalities. The family and education system in the Western Society are the major institutions concerned with this function.
- Secondly, it is also maintained by the various mechanism of social control which discourage deviance and so maintain order in the system. Thus, the processes of socialisation and social control are fundamental to the equilibrium of the system and therefore to the order in society.

Thus, socialisation and social control inculcate the spirit of 'value-consensus' and help in the maintenance of the order.

According to Parsons, adaptation, goal attainment, integration and pattern maintenance are the functional pre-requisites. These are essential preconditions for the survival of society.

It may be summed up that social problems are indicated by the lack of order and value-consensus which are the result of the lack of socialisation, social control, adaptation, goal attainment, and pattern maintenance.

The weakening or absence of these conditions ultimately disturb the 'social equilibrium' leading to disorganisation, crime, delinquency and other social problems.

Activity 2

Prepare a two-page note on the nature of social integration in India of the people belonging to the different religions, languages and regions.

v) **The Social Dysfunction, Anomie and Structure**

The social problems have both objective and subjective aspects. They have been termed as 'manifest' and 'latent' respectively by Merton. It is, essential to study not only manifest social problems which are clearly identified in society but also latent social problems which refer to conditions that are also at odds with current interest and values but are not generally recognised as being so. The manifest problems are apparent and objective, whereas, the latent problems remain suppressed and are subjective.

Both, manifest as well as latent aspects of social problems, are linked with dysfunctions.

In Merton's analysis the study of social problems require a focus on the dysfunctions of patterns of behaviour, belief and organisation rather than stressing simply on their functions only. A social dysfunction, according to Merton, is any process that undermines the stability or survival of a social system. This concept curbs any tendency towards the doctrine that everything in society works for 'harmony' and integration.

A social dysfunction is a specific inadequacy of a particular part of the system for meeting a functional requirement. Dysfunction provides a set of consequences which interfere with the requirements of functions in a social system. For example, large scale migration from villages to cities is dysfunctional for maintaining social solidarity, demographic composition and cultural ethos of the rural life. At the same time, it is dysfunctional for urban life also since, it increases overcrowding and decreases basic civic amenities. The same social pattern can be dysfunctional for some and functional for others in a social system. The accumulation of dysfunctions disturbs social stability and creates new social problems.

Merton suggested that certain phases of social structure generate the circumstances in which infringement of social codes constitutes a normal response. Among the elements of social and cultural structure, two are important for the purpose of approaching social problems. In this context, two aspects of social structure must be kept in view:

- The *first* consist of culturally defined goals. It comprises as frame of aspirational references. Some of these cultural aspirations are related to the original drives of man, but they are not determined by them.
- The *second* of the structure is socially approved means.

Every social group couples its cultural objectives with regulations rooted in institutions of approved procedures for moving toward these objectives.

With varying differential emphasis upon goals and institutionalised means, the society becomes unstable and there develops anomie or normlessness.

In this way the theory of anomie and opportunity – structure, set forth by Merton states that the rates of various kinds of deviant behaviour are highest where people have little access to socially legitimate means for achieving culturally induced goals. For example, the culture affirms that all members of society have a right to improve their social status but they are excluded from acceptable means for doing so. This denial of opportunity directs us to the structural sources of social problems.

Check Your Progress 2

- i) What is dysfunction? Describe its importance in the study of social problems in about eight lines.

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- ii) Define latent functions and show their significance in the functional approach in about four lines.

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2.3.2 The Marxist Approach

Marx begins with the simple observation that in order to survive man must produce food and material objects. In doing so he enters into relationship with other men. From the simple hunting stage to the complex industrial stage, production is a social enterprise.

Except the societies of pre-history, all societies contain basic contradictions which means that they cannot survive in their existing form. These

contradictions involve the exploitation of the poor by the rich. For example, in the feudal society, lords exploited their serfs. In capitalist system, capitalists exploit their workers. This creates fundamental conflict of interest between these two classes since, one gains at the expense of the other. Thus social problems in society represent contradictions inherent in it.

According to Marx, the capitalist system is beset by a number of social problems such as:

- exploitation of man by man,
- inequality and poverty,
- alienation of workers from their own products,
- dehumanisation.

In this context, we would specially like to discuss inequality and poverty, in the light of the Marxian theoretical frame. These two problems are specially concerned with Indian Society.

i) **Inequality**

According to Marx inequality occurs in all societies because of unequal distribution of means of production.

From the Marxian perspective, the key pre-requisite of a society based on equality is 'each one according to his need', whereas, in the capitalist system and in the functional analysis the emphasis is on 'each one according to his capacity'.

The functionalists and the Marxists disagree on the sources of inequality. Both agree that inequality is linked to the division of labour in society. Marx stressed that social inequality was ultimately the result of economic disparity and deprivation. According to functionalists, stratification is functional for society and stratified. Societies are bound to have social inequality. The merit, ability, performance and achievements of all men are not equal. Thus, in the functionalist analysis, social inequality also appears to be functional.

ii) **Poverty**

Poverty in capitalist society, according to Marx, can only be understood in terms of the system of inequality generated by the capitalist economy. Wealth is concentrated in the hands of those who own the means of production. Members of the working class own only their labour which they are bound to sell in return for wages in the labour market.

From a Marxian perspective, the state in capitalist society reflects interests of the ruling class, the Government measures, therefore, can be expected to do little except reduce the harsher effects of poverty.

Even in the capitalist societies, the measure of Social Welfare and Social Securities have been adopted to minimise the hardships of the poor and socially deprived people. These measures have helped the needy but they have not resulted in the redistribution of wealth from the rich to the poor. Excess of poverty and the excess of wealth in the hands of a few are inevitable consequences of the capitalist system. The solution to poverty does not involve reforms in the social security measures. Instead, like other social problems under capitalism, it requires a radical change in the structure of society.

2.3.3 The Gandhian Approach Related to Social Problems

For the proper understanding of the Gandhian approach, a clear distinction must be made between his basic perspectives and the immediate social and political concerns. As regards his basic perspectives, Gandhi wanted to create a moral order based on truth, non-violence, brotherhood, *swadeshi*, *swaraj*, decentralisation of power and economy, austerity and resistance to injustice by determined peaceful means known as *Satyagraha*.

There were several social problems of long and short ranges faced by Indian Society such as low position of women, untouchability, poverty, illiteracy, colonial education, village reconstruction and day to day political problems. When Gandhi appeared on the Indian political scene as a political leader and as a social thinker, he was deeply concerned with them.

i) Means and Ends

Gandhian approach to social problems regards means and ends as parts of a whole which has transcendental reference, unlike, Marx who places emphasis on ends. Gandhi stood steadfastly for a non-exploitative social order for he understood well that violence is built into an exploitative system. Gandhi's major goal in life was to achieve *swaraj* for India. His socio-political philosophy was based on truth, non-violence and the unity of means and ends.

For Gandhi, means are more than instrumental. They are creative. His quest for creative means derived from a positive spiritual decision has armed men with a gallant ethical arsenal to resist all oppressions. Exerted either from within the social system or from outside. Gandhi has preferred to call this instrument as *Satyagraha*. To him, not only the end but means to achieve them should also be equally pure.

ii) The New Economic System

Gandhi said, you cannot build a non-violent society on factory civilisation but it can be built on self-contained villages. The violence that prevails to day has its roots mainly in economic factors and the only remedy for it lies in doing away with concentration of wealth in the society. The productive system should be based on the idea of progressive and regulated minimisation of needs and not on that of multiplication of wants. The economy should be life-centred and not one that is oriented to commodity production. This means that the socio-economic system should operate on the principle of a metaphysically grounded optimum and not on the principle of maximisation. Consequently, it is to be a non-exploitative economy based on simple and limited technology. Social and economic organisation should be decentralised—based on the principle of optimum autonomy. The social and economic systems should be non-competitive and non-acquisitive, based on the principle of 'trusteeship'.

iii) Inequality

Gandhian approach envisages that the goal of economic equality is equality of wages for an honest day's work, be it that of a lawyer, a doctor, a teacher or a scavenger. It requires much advanced training to reach that state of equality.

So, economic equality of Gandhian conception does not mean that everybody would literally have the same amount or would possess an equal amount of

worldly goods. It is possible to reduce the difference between the rich and the poor. There must be a general leveling down of the few rich in whose hands the bulk of the national's wealth is concentrated and a levelling up of the dumb millions. Further, everyone must be assured a balanced diet, a decent house to live in, sufficient cloth to cover himself, facilities to educate his children and adequate medical relief. So, the real meaning of economic equality is 'to each according to his need'. Gandhi did not want to produce a dead equality where every person becomes or is rendered incapable of using his ability to the utmost possible extent for such a society carries with it the seeds of ultimate destruction.

He wanted the rich to hold their wealth in trust for the poor to give it up for them. A state of economic equality cannot be brought about by dispossessing the wealthy of their possession through resort to violence. Violent action does not benefit society for it stands to lose the gifts of a man who may know how a produce can add to the wealth.

iv) **The Caste System and the Untouchability**

In his early writing, Gandhi appeared to favour *Varnashram* which implied to him self-restraint, conservation and economy of energy. Arrogation of superior status by any of the *varna* over another is the denial of the human dignity and particularly so in the case of the section of society which was considered untouchables in an unjust manner. Untouchability is a curse that has come to us. So long as Hindus willfully regard untouchability as part of their religion, *Swaraj* cannot be attained.

v) **Constructive Programmes**

Gandhi coined a new term known as '*Harijan*' for the so called untouchable. He was so much concerned with the eradication of untouchability that in 1934 he resigned from the ordinary membership of the Indian National Congress and vowed to devote his full time for the eradication of untouchability.

Besides removal of untouchability and the development of *Khadi*, Gandhian constructive programme consisted of communal unity, prohibition, village sanitation, health and hygiene, basic education, adult education and literacy, uplift of women, spread of *Hindustani*, work for economic equality, service of the aboriginal's and organisation of students, peasants and labourers.

The communication order aimed in Gandhian approach depended upon a life on non-exploitation which was in consonance with the eleven vows advocated by Gandhi. These vows are truth, non-violence, control of the passions, non-stealing, non-possession, fearlessness, *Swadeshi*, removal of untouchability, labour, tolerance, and equality of religions.

Check Your Progress 3

- i) Write a note on the social problems in the capitalist society as perceived by Karl Marx. Use seven lines to answer.

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- ii) What are the significant points in Gandhian approach? Answer in eight lines.

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2.4 INADEQUACIES OF THESE APPROACHES

The Functional, Marxian and the Gandhian approaches have tried to understand social problems from their own perspectives. No approach can be regarded as final. We have to keep in mind that these approaches emerged according to the requirements of their time and the place of origin. The classical functionalist like Comte, Spencer and Durkheim were concerned with the problems of the 19th Century European society which was experiencing new challenges with the process of transformation, i.e., moving from rural to urban, agricultural to industrial, feudal to capitalist system. Naturally, they were concerned with reorganisation of society, functional integration and social solidarity. On the other hand, Karl Marx was more concerned with historical development of human society and problems generated by industrialisation and capitalism such as alienation, exploitation of man by man, dehumanisation and inhuman working conditions in the emerging industrial and urban centres. Gandhi was primarily concerned with the problems of Indian society such as colonialism, imperialist exploitation, untouchability, status of women, alcoholism, weakening of rural communities and the destruction of cottage industries etc.

These approaches have been questioned for their inadequacies. In a brief manner, we would like to discuss the inadequacies of these approaches one by one.

2.4.1 Critical Review of the Functional Approach

The basic premises of the functional approach have been questioned by P.A. Sorokin in his book, 'Sociological Theories Today', 1966. According to Sorokin, the shared orientations and goals of slaves and masters and of the conquered and their conquerors are not the same, inspite of the fact they are the part of the same society. As regards the dysfunctional aspects, Sorokin raises the question whether the activities of Socrates, Jesus and Marx may be

regarded as functional or dysfunctional, whether the emphasis of the early Christian communities or the civil rights workers are the emphasis of adaptation or non adaptation. The answer to these questions will depend upon with which side we identify ourselves in respective societies.

The functional approach treats an effect as a cause. It explains that parts of a system exist because of their beneficial consequences for the system as a whole. Further, it gives a deterministic view of human action because human behaviour has been portrayed as determined by the system. Man is pictured as an automation, programmed, directed and controlled by the system.

Alvin Gouldner states that while stressing the importance of ends and values that men pursue, Parsons never asks whose ends and values these are. Few functionalists accept the possibility that some groups in society, acting in terms of their own interests, dominate others. From this point of view social order is imposed by the powerful and value consensus is merely a legitimization of the position of the dominant group.

Functionalists, thus fail to recognise the conflict of interests which tend to produce instability and disorder. Conflict is also an integral part of the system, hence is equally relevant to the sociological analysis of social problems. In the functionalist approach, historical explanations find little place in understanding society and its problems.

2.4.2 Critique of the Marxist Approach

Both, the Functionalist and the Marxian approaches are deterministic in nature. In the first, the deterministic factor is social system, whereas, in the second it is the mode of production and economy.

While making a critical review of the Marxian approach, we must keep in view the following two aspects of Marxism:

- Marxism as a theory,
- Marxism as a practice.

As regards the first aspect, Marxian approach has over emphasised the role of material forces and conflict. It has over-simplified the class structure of the capitalist society—ignoring the importance of new occupation, professions, and the middle class.

In practice, the Marxist utopia could not be achieved by the Communist States in the former Soviet Union and the Eastern Europe. The social inequality and exploitation remained in communist States also. The Communist States were characterised by dictatorship, police state, inefficiency and corruption. As a result not only the Communist States collapsed but even the dream of Marxism was shattered in the Soviet Union and the Eastern Europe.

Marx predicted that finally the intermediate strata, i.e., the middle class would disappear and there would be only two classes, i.e., capitalist and the working class. But a reverse process is visible whereby increasing numbers of affluent manual workers were entering the middle stratum and becoming middle-class. A middle mass society is emerging where the mass of the population is middle rather than the working class. This process is visible in both capitalist and communist societies.

In the Communist States as indicated by Djilas—a new class—consisting of communist leaders have emerged. The political power and higher opportunities are concentrated in this class. The class, structure and the domination of a new over the majority could not be eliminated in the communist states.

With an increasing emphasis upon multi-casual explanation of social problems, it has become difficult to provide an analysis by one cause alone, the economic, as Marx propounded in his economic determinism. Further, too much weight on ‘ends’ alone does not seem to be logical in a wholesome approach to various aspects of culture and social structure.

Societies under transformation are undergoing various processes of fission and fusion, cohesion and conflict which yield new consciousness and in consequence a different nature of social problems than found earlier. The consideration of time and space has now become significant in any integrated approach to social problems.

2.4.3 Review of the Gandhian Approach

Gandhian approach offers a critique of the existing order, propounds certain basic elements of a new society and provides a methodology for solving social problems. Critics have argued that Gandhian approach lacks originality and is a combination of the traditional Indian thinking, welfare policies and liberalism. It is idealistic and divorced from the rough nature of the social reality. An ideal State based on truth and non-violence with practice of austerity, sacrifice and moral standards seems to be utopian. The Gandhian method of ‘Satyagraha’ to fight against injustice has gradually found favour allover the world. It has been applied successfully by blacks in the USA and in South Africa and even by the people in the Eastern Europe to fight against communalism.

Activity 3

Write a note of one page on the functioning of any Gandhian Constructive Programme (such as Gandhi Ashram, the *Harijan Sewak Sangh* or the *Adim Jati Sewak Sangh* etc.)

2.5 THE CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL REALITY: DYSFUNCTIONAL ASPECTS

The activities and conditions which adversely affect the smooth functioning of society are termed as dysfunctional. In Sociology, this term was used by Merton. In all societies crime, delinquency, alcoholism, drug addiction, prostitution, poverty and socio economic inequalities are regarded as ‘dysfunctional’.

In contemporary society, there are several dysfunctional activities and conditions which operate at the global, national and local levels. These three levels of the dysfunctional aspects are closely linked with each other.

2.5.1 The Global Dysfunctions

There are several institutions which operate at the global level. After the First World War, the League of Nations was set-up to prevent future wars and to develop better understanding between the nations. It could not perform its functions effectively. Ultimately, the Second World War broke out in 1939. The First and the Second World Wars created a great deal of misery and

destruction. The threat of the cold war and the fear of the nuclear weapons were felt at the global level till the dismantling of the USSR. In the recent decades, the emergence of religious fundamentalism, increasing rate of unemployment, slow growth of economy, manifestation of global terrorism have been the prominent global challenges.

In a globalised world it is very difficult to assure that social problems are confined to the national boundaries. However, there are certain problems which are specific to certain nations predominantly. In this context, we may pinpoint some of the dysfunctions and problems which are visible in India at the national level. The religion as an institution is supposed to spread brotherhood and amity among the human beings. Unfortunately, in India, religious divisions have led to the dysfunctional aspects of communalism. Consequently it has become a victim of religious fundamentalism and terrorism.

Similarly, there are certain specific problems of Indian society such as poverty, untouchability, casteism and corruption, which at times changes the foundation of Indian democracy.

2.5.2 The Local Dysfunctions

There are certain dysfunctional conditions of Indian society confined to certain localities, regions and the States. For example, terrorist activities are concentrated in Kashmir and the North-east. Similarly there are other forms of ethnic violence, gender based social discrimination, conservatism etc. as the localised forms of dysfunctional activities.

The moot question is how and why such dysfunctional conditions emerge in Society. The different societies have their specific contextual problems. There is a difference in the socio-economic conditions of India, Western Europe and North America and thus there is a difference in social problems faced by these societies.

The dysfunctions in a society are closely linked with the socio-economic and political transformations. The Western industrial capitalist societies which receive their ideological support for the functional theory are facing the challenge of the rising curves of crimes, delinquency, alcoholism, loneliness, sex offences, mental breakdown, increasing rate of divorce and economic inequality. Similarly, in the former Soviet Russia and in the Eastern Europe, where during the last seven decades, a concerted effort was made to transform and the free society from exploitation, dehumanisation, alienation and socio-economic inequality, these dreams have been shattered. The Indian Society, where Gandhi made his experiments of truth, non-violence and moral order, is also facing the challenges of rising violence, terrorism, crime and corruption.

In the light of these facts, there is a need to examine alternative paradigms which claim to transform and to reorganise society to make it free from tensions, conflicts, social problems and disorganisation.

2.6 THE PARADIGMS OF TRANSFORMATION AND SOCIAL PROBLEMS

Of late, the concept of paradigm is often used in social science. The literal meaning of this word is 'inflexions of word tabulated as an example' or 'to

express grammatical relationship between different words' or 'bend' or 'curves'. Thus the concept of paradigm has come in social sciences from grammar. For the first time, in social sciences, the theoretical and philosophical formulation of the concept of 'paradigm' was made by Thomas S. Kuhn in his book the 'Structure of Scientific Revolution', 1962. In Social Sciences, this concept is used to mean a major shift or revolution in ideas or the emergence of new traditions of thought in the place of the old one after vigorous discussions and debates. Thus paradigm indicates towards the radical transformation of ideas.

During the last two hundred years, a great deal of debate has been going on about the patterns of social, economic, and political development and transformation. In this process, there were shifts in idea, replacement of one ideology by the other. In modern terminology, it may be regarded as paradigm-shifts or in the place of the old paradigms, the emergence of new paradigms of development. We can divide these paradigms of transformation and development in the following categories:

- the liberal capitalist,
- the communist,
- the democratic socialist, and
- the Indian experiments and the Gandhian Paradigm

2.6.1 The Liberal - Capitalist Paradigm

The Liberal industrial democracy generated new thought patterns which were completely different from the ideas of the earlier periods. The major emphasis of this paradigm was on democracy, political freedom, free enterprise, industrialisation, modern technology and mass production. The social economic and political consequences of the application of these ideas were democratic state, large scale industrialisation, migration from villages to cities, unprecedented urbanisation in Europe and North America followed by anonymity, impersonal relationship and the decline of the traditional mechanism of social control.

The democratic capitalist societies have succeeded in providing a minimum standard of living to their citizens and a good deal of political freedom. At the same time, the developed and industrialised societies are suffering from crime, white collar criminality, fear of war, juvenile delinquency, anomie, mental health problems, discrimination based on race and growing apathy. They have not succeeded in solving the problem of poverty and gender discrimination. The race riots in the USA in 1992 are some of the examples of the growing racial hatred. The similar trends of manifest or latent racial hatred are visible in England, Germany and France also.

2.6.2 The Communist Paradigm

The Communist Paradigm of the social and economic transformation is primarily based on the theories of Marx and Lenin. The ideology of communism is opposed to the ideology of capitalism. Its major emphasis is on collectivity, control over the means of production by the Communist State, dictatorship of the proletariat and the utilisation of the means of production and resources for benefit of the working class. In his classical analysis, Marx was of the view

that the capitalist system of production has generated problems of class conflict, exploitation, social and economic inequality, suppression of the working class their alienation from the ownership of the means of the production.

Communism claimed to offer an alternative social, political and economic system. It was supposed to eliminate the social problems produced by the capitalist system. The Communism as an alternative paradigm was practiced in the Soviet Russia from the year 1917 to 1991, in China, since 1949, in most of the countries of the Eastern Europe from 1945 to 1991, in Vietnam since 1945 and in Cuba since 1955. The communist societies suffered from a number of socio-political problems such as dictatorship, lack of freedom, large scale corruption, inefficiency, growing divorce, alarming rate of abortions, loneliness and fear psychosis. The Communist system could not fully solve the problems of poverty, lack of a minimum level of quality of life etc. As a result, communism has collapsed not only in soviet Russia but in the whole of Eastern Europe, also.

2.6.3 The Paradigm of the Democratic Socialism

A group of perceptive thinkers, particularly Fabians in England and some others in Germany and France had a critical view on the claims of communism, since the last quarter of the 19th Century. They thought that the capitalism and communism, were equally incapable of meeting the challenges posed by the industrial, technological revolution. Capitalism cannot provide economic freedom and communism cannot offer political freedom. Both systems equally degrade human dignity. The new society can be created only when men are free from social economic and political inequalities.

In several Western European countries, the socialists and the labour parties were in power after the First World War. The Labour party in Britain and the social democrats in Sweden and Germany tried to apply the ideals of the democratic socialism in their countries. In concrete terms, their social, political and economic ideals took the shape of a number of social security measures such as the nationalisation of major industries in Britain, France, Sweden, and Germany, security of jobs, *employment*, minimum wages, health scheme to provide medical facilities and educational reforms to protect the interests of the working class.

In spite of the policy of the intervention by the State, the problems of crime, delinquency, racial discrimination, gender discrimination, drug addiction, sex crimes, unemployment, alcoholism, growing divorce and prostitution etc. could not be solved in Sweden, Britain, France and Germany where democratic socialist were in power at one or the other period.

2.6.4 The Indian Experiments and Gandhian Paradigm

The policy of democratic socialism along with mixed economy and the Gandhian ideology was followed by the independent India State after 1947.

In the ideal Gandhian paradigm of social transformation, there is a little scope for the State, since, it represents brute force. The Gandhian paradigm plans to make a society based on the decentralisation of power and economy, self-sufficient village community and a moral order rooted in truth and non-violence. In independent India, the Gandhian emphasis on the Village Panchayats,

reconstruction of villages, the legal measures against untouchability and the revitalisation of the cottage industries were adopted. India adopted the path of social and economic transformation with emphasis on community development, removal of poverty, planned agricultural and industrial development, protective discrimination in favour of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and the upliftment of the socially and educationally backward classes. The concerted effort was made to improve health, education, and social security measures for the benefit of the underprivileged people.

The problems of poverty, ill health, slum conditions in the urban centres, illiteracy, increasing drug addiction, alcoholism, untouchability, growing terrorism and violence have not been solved as yet in India. In this context, we have to keep in mind that these problems cannot be solved only by the intervention of the State. The machinery of the State has got its own limitations.

2.7 LIMITATIONS OF STATE INTERVENTION

In the modern period, State has emerged as a powerful institution. This process started in Europe in the 17th Century with a gradual decline in the power of the Church and separation between the powers of the Church and the State. This process has passed through the following two phases:

- the policy of the Laissez-Faire,
- the rise of the Collectivist Ideologies.

2.7.1 The Policy of the Laissez-Faire

In the 19th Century, there was more emphasis on the policy of 'laissez-faire' which refers to the minimum interference by the State in day to day affairs of its citizen. The major concern of the State should be only the enforcement of law and order and State should not involve itself with welfare measures to protect the interests of its citizens. Every person understands his or her own interests.

2.7.2 The Collectivist Ideologies

Under the impact of the Collectivist ideologies – propagated by Communists, Socialists and the Fascists, there was growing emphasis on the role of the State in combating social problems and in promoting social welfare measures. After the great depression of 1929, even the capitalist State like the USA, the U.K. and France intervened to regulate economy and market. Certain special measures were taken by these States to control unemployment and the closures of factories.

The State is the most powerful institution and undoubtedly its roles are very significant in controlling violence, communalism, social discrimination and in promoting social security and welfare.

2.7.3 Limitations

The policy of the laissez-faire has been discarded even by the capitalist States. The State has tried to intervene in many areas particularly after 1919. Similarly, the Collectivist ideologies of the State intervention has also not succeeded.

There are limitations of the State intervention. The social problems can be more effectively checked by social consciousness, sense of participation, on the part of citizens and the sense of responsibility on the part of the public. The efforts of State will not be effective unless welfare measures are accepted by society. Thus, we have to keep in mind that the measures initiated by states have their limits. Society and State combined together can effectively sort out challenges posed by social problems, trends of disorganisation and pathological conditions.

Check Your Progress 4

1) Describe the major inadequacies of (a) the functional, and (b) the Marxist approaches in four lines each.

a)

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b)

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2) What is the meaning of Paradigm?

a)

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2.8 LET US SUM UP

This unit starts with an introductory remark showing the relationship between social transformation and social problems. The early and the modern approaches to the understanding of social problems and their differences are mentioned in this unit. You have also learnt, in somewhat details, about the Functional, the Marxist and the Gandhian approaches and their inadequacies. The paradigms of transformation and problems generated by them have also been described. Finally, we have thrown some light in this unit on limitations of State intervention in finding solution to social problems.

2.9 KEY WORDS

- Anomie** : For the first time this term was used by Emile Durkheim to indicate normlessness in a society and the lack of society in individuals. In such a situation, an individual or a group is not in a position to decide what should be done or what should not be done.
- Dysfunction** : The consequences of an event or action which adversely affects the functioning, unity and stability of a society.
- Satyagraha** : Peaceful and truthful resistance to injustice.
- Paradigm** : The literal meaning of this term is ‘inflections of a word’ or a grammatical relationship between different words. It was used for the first time in Social Science by Thomas S. Kuhn in 1962 to mean major shifts in ideas.
- Collective Consciousness** : The French counterpart of this term ‘La Conscience Collective’ was used by Emile Durkheim to mean common beliefs and accepted norms of a society which promote social solidarity.
- Alienation** : Means estrangement, separation or to find oneself as a stranger in a situation. This term was used by Hegel but was developed as a sociological concept by Karl Marx.
- Capitalism** : An economic system characterised by private ownership of the means of production, competition, free market and a strong profit motive.
- Communism** : A social philosophy represented by the public ownership of the economic services and the material resources of production. It believes in strong state control and the dictatorship of the proletariat class.
- Disorganisation** : A break in the social order or in its activities.

2.10 FURTHER READINGS

Jonathan H. Turner, 1987; *The Structure of Sociological Theory*, Fourth Edition, Rawat Publications, Jaipur.

Kenneth Henry, 1978; *Social Problems: Institutional and Interpersonal Perspectives*, Scott, Fopresman and Company, Illinois, London.

Robert K. Merton, Robert Nisbet, 1976; *Contemporary Social Problems*, Hercourt Brace Iovanovich, International Editing, New York, Chicago.

2.11 SPECIMEN ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

- i) Urban Industrial Social Structure is characterised by rapid social transformation, cities, high technology, modern productions, consumerism, rapid means of transport and communication, migration, mobility and anonymity, a secondary groups and impersonal relationships.
- ii)
 - a) Cesar Becaris (1786), Italy
 - b) Jereme Bentham (1823), U.K.
- iii) Cesane Lambroso (1836-1909), Italy
- iv)
 - Earlier understanding of crime and other social problems was based on superstitions and ignorance.
 - the Classical and the Physical — Constitutional approaches are only of historical importance, today, their focus is on individuals.
 - they have not made adequate emphasis on the social, economic and cultural factors.

Check Your Progress 2

- i) Dysfunction is the consequence of an even or action which adversely affects the functioning, unity and stability of a society. This concept curbs this tendency towards the doctrine that everything in a society works for harmony and integration. A social dysfunction is a specific inadequacy of particular part of the system for meeting a functional requirement.
- ii) To Merton, functions and social problems have both subjective as well as objective aspects. Manifest functions are apparent and objective, whereas, the latent functions are hidden and subjective. Latent social problems refer to conditions which are at odds with current interests and values but are not generally recognised as being so.

Check Your Progress 3

- i) According to Marx, the Capitalist System is beset by a number of social problems, such as:
 - inherent contradictions,
 - exploitation of many by man,
 - alienation of workers from their own products,
 - dehumanisation, poverty and inequality.

According to Marx, socio-economic inequality is a major problem of the capitalist system where the emphasis is not on the human need but on the human capacity.

- ii) Gandhian ideology emphasised on the creation of a moral order – based on truth and non-violent. In this order, there is a little scope for the State. Gandhi strongly believes in the decentralisation of power and economy. His main instrument to fight against injustice is *Satyagrah*. Gandhi mobilised relentlessly against untouchability and alcoholism in India.

Check Your Progress 4

- i) a) The functional approach does not keep in view the contradictions existing in society and the clash of interests between the different groups and classes. It treats an effect as a cause. It provides a deterministic view of human action. The functionalists portray social system as an active agent, whereas in reality, only human beings act.
- b) Marxism as a theory has over-emphasised the role of material forces and conflict. It has over-simplified the class structure of the capitalist society. In practice, the Marxist Utopia could not be achieved by the Communist State.
- ii) The literal meaning of this term is the ‘inflections of words or ‘a grammatical relationship between different words’. It was used for the first time in social Sciences by Thomas Kuhn in 1962 to mean major shift or revolution in ideas after a great deal of debates and discussions.
- iii) a) the liberal Capitalist,
 b) the communist,
 c) the democratic Socialist,
 d) the Gandhian.