UNIT 25 CONCEPTS OF SOCIAL STRUCTURE

Structure

25.0   OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you should be able to:

* distinguish social structure from social organisation;

* state and describe the meaning of the concept of social structure put forward by the structural-functionalists;

* describe the structuralists' point of view regarding social structure;

* explain the Marxist understanding of social structure; and

* establish the relationship between social structure and social change.

25.1   INTRODUCTION

In this unit we will discuss about social structure. This is a broader and more general concept than other concepts discussed in this block. Generally speaking, anything whether an object or an idea has a structure. It is only through the enduring aspects of a structure that we comprehend its existence. Similarly, we can say that each society in the world has a structure, which can be called its social structure. We can

understand a society through the permanent and enduring aspects of its structure. Put in this way, social structure appears to be a very broad and simple concept. But, while studying a particular social structure, sociologists have differed widely in their interpretation and use of this concept.

It is due to these disparities in perspectives, that discussion on social structure has become conceptually complex and confusing. This need not be so. We maintain that at a simple level, the idea of social structure is basically quite elementary. It helps us to describe the permanent and enduring aspects of social relationships. As such it is a very useful tool to understand social reality.

In this unit you will learn about various interpretations and uses, of this basic concept in sociological thought. We begin with a broad definition of the concept. It has, generally, been understood by the structural—functionalist school of thought as the network of permanent and enduring aspects of social relationships. These relationships are distinct from individual relationships.

When two individuals have a relationship where each expects something from the other, their behaviour is predictable and social. Social behaviour is, thus, an expected and organised behaviour. It is defined by the social norms and given sanction by society. Different sociologists and social anthropologists have defined this concept in various ways. Its use and applicability, this concept is understood in different ways in Britain, France, and in North America. There may be some exceptions, but generally in North America the "Culture" aspect of social structure is given more emphasis. British sociologists like Radcliffe-Brown and his followers give more emphasis to the 'relational' aspect. In France, the concept is understood in terms of models, discussed by Levi Strauss. We will discuss more elaborately about these distinctions, as well as, the development of this concept in the next section.

25.2 THE CONCEPT OF SOCIAL STRUCTURE

The word structure meant originally, the construction of a building. Gradually, structure began to imply inter-relations between the parts of any whole. It also began to be used in anatomical studies. The concept of social structure became popular amongst the sociologists and social anthropologists, in the decade following World War II. During that period it became so fashionable to use this term, that it came to be applied to "almost any ordered arrangement of social phenomenon" (see Leach 1968 : 482).

It is essential to look at the different ways, in which sociologists and social anthropologists, have applied this concept. In this process you will learn how it was understood by the structural-functionalists, the structuralists, and the Marxists – the three main schools of sociological thought. But before proceeding to these three views of social structure, let us also look at the difference between social structure and social organisation. We also briefly mention how some scholars used the notion of social structure in terms of social groups and roles.

25.2.1 Social Structure and Social Organisation

The term "social organisation" has often been used interchangeably for "social structure". Some scholars, like Raymond Firth, have clearly distinguished between both these terms. In his book, *Elements of Social Organisation* (1956), Firth has made this distinction very clear. He regards both these terms as only heuristic devices or tools rather than precise concepts. According to him, social organisation is concerned with the choices and decisions involved in actual social relations; while

the concept of social structure deals with the more fundamental social relations, which give a society its basic form, and which provide limits to the range of action organisationally possible within it.

Firth says that in the aspect of structure, the continuity principle of society is found, while in the aspect of organisation is to be found the variation, or change principle. The latter aspect allows evaluation of situations with the scope for individual choice.

He studied the social structure, and organisation of small communities, such as the Tikopians of Solomon Islands. He described a human community as "a body of people sharing in common activities and bound by multiple relationships in such a way that the aims of any individual can be achieved only by participation in action with others". This definition of the term "community" subsumes the *spatial* aspect, which is that the people who form the community generally occupy a common territory. Therefore, they are in direct contact with each other, and their relationship is of more emotional and intimate nature, than those found in the complex societies.

According to Firth (1956 : 41) the structure and organisation of the community life possess certain constituents which are essential for social existence within a community. These constituents are : social alignment, social controls, social media, and social standards.

25.2.2   Social Structure and Social Groups

There are some scholars who use the term social structure for only persistent social groups in society like nation, tribe, clan, etc. One of them is E.E. Evans-Pritchard. His theory of social structure arose as a reaction to Radcliffe-Brown's understanding of social structure. In fact, it was Evans-Pritchard who first brought about the shift from pure structure-functionalism to structuralism in social anthropological studies of societies.

In his book, *The Nuer* (1940), he has dealt with these persistent and permanent groups, whose individual membership keeps on changing, but whose structural form remains approximately the same throughout time. His definition of social structure differs from Radcliffe-Brown's, in the sense that he is not concerned with the social behaviour of person to person. He has concentrated his attention in his study of the Nuer of Sudan, on the relationship of the homestead with the wider group of the village. The village he studies in relation to the tertiary group-composed of few villages; the tertiary group with the secondary group-composed of several tertiary groups, the secondary group with the primary group-composed of several tertiary groups, the secondary group with the primary group-composed of several secondary groups; and so on, till the whole tribe is included. In this segmentary social structure, clans, lineages, consanguineal and affinal kins, etc. form major components.

Thus, Evans-Pritchard's conception of social structure has the family or the homestead (as in the case of the Nuer society) as its basic unit, rather than the individuals.

Activity 1

Take a plain sheet of paper. Using the triangle △ for male and circle O for female of each generation, draw the network of relationships of each of your family member with others in your wider kinship circle. Link members of other families in your neighbourhood as well. Write a short note of two pages on your "Family and social structure". Compare your answer with those of others at your study centre.

25.2.3   Social Structure and the Concept of Social Roles

Fred Eggan, an American anthropologist, describes that the component or units of social structure, are around the interpersonal relations which 'become part of the social structure in the form of status positions' occupied by individuals. He was not the only one who has defined social structure in terms of social status and position occupied by individuals in society.

One of the major theories of social structure has been outlined by Nadel in his book, *The Theory of Social Structure* (1969). He, too, has defined social structure in terms of the roles played by the individual actors in society and their consequent social status. Nadel (1969 : 5) says : "We arrive at the structure of a society through abstracting from the concrete population and its behaviour the pattern or network (or "system") of relationships obtaining between actors in their capacity of playing roles relative to one another". His definition of roles is far more specific than the one given by most other sociologists.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: a)   Use the space given below for your answer.

  b)   Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

1)   What is the main difference, according to Firth between social organisation and social structure. Use five lines for your answer.

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2)   What is the basic unit of social structure in the study of the Nuer tribes by E.Evans-Pritchard? Use one line for your answer.

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3)   Who defined social structure in terms of social status and position occupied by individuals in society? Use one line for your answer.

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25.3   THREE MAJOR VIEWS OF SOCIAL STRUCTURE

Now, we look at the three major views of social structure, as propounded by structural-functionalist school, structuralist school and Marxist school.

25.3.1 The Structural Functionalist Point of View

Social structure is one of the core concepts, in the structural-functionalist approach, to the study of society. This approach is founded on the analogy between a society and an organism, which gained credence when it was presented in a scientific way, modelled on the natural science methods of biology. We will discuss here three sociologists from this school.

i)   Herbert Spencer (1820-1903) was one of the initiators of this approach, and was also one of the first sociologists to use the term. He was quite fascinated

by the biological analogy : between society and organism, and between social evolution and biological evolution. But in spite of this fascination, he did not make the term "structure of society" very clear.

For him, a society is made up of different parts, all of which have to work in order to remain healthy, meet the demands of the environment and to survive. Just like an organism, the society adjusts and adapts itself to the demands and pressures of social change is order to survive. Unlike the case of animals the "parts" in society are not eyes, ears or a nose but certain social arrangements which are indispensable to the life of the society, since they ensure the discharge of vital functions in society.

Spencer introduced the concept of social structure but did not develop it further. Many of his ideas regarding the study of society have become redundant, yet his ideas on concepts like "structure" and "function" are still popular (see Cuff and Payne 1984 : 28-30)

ii)   Although Durkheim has not directly talked about the term social structure, the understanding of some sort of a social structure is implicit in his writings. He applied the natural science methods, especially of biology, to the study of society. In his book, The Rules of Sociological Method, he has clearly stated that "social facts", are distinct from individual facts. They are, external to the individual and exercise constraint over his or her conduct. For example, laws of a society are "social facts" or the coinage of society is a "social fact". These are external to all the individual members of the society and at the same time exercise constraint on them.

For Durkheim, social order is a moral order. Society as not just the sum total of all its members but it is a reality *sui generis*, i.e., an emergent reality. It includes the collective values shared by the members of the society in general. According to him all social relationships give rise to expectations of patterns of conduct. In the process of developing the social relationships human beings develop common ways of looking at reality, of evaluating, feeling, thinking and behaving in society. This common way of behaving, acting and perceiving reality leads to the development of a common pattern of values and norms. It gives rise to certain expectations from members of the society and puts constraint on them. The result of this common way of social behaviour, of sharing the collective values, etc. leads to the emergence of the "collective consciousness" in society. We may say that for Durkheim to study the collective consciousness in a society was akin to discussing its social structure. But like Herbert Spencer, he too, did not clearly spell out this concept.

iii)   Radcliffe-Brown defined social structure far more precisely than Durkheim, who was the source of many of his major ideas. However, it was from Herbert Spencer that he borrowed the organic analogy which has shaped his ideas on social structure and his structure-functionalist approach to the study of society.

Radcliffe-Brown (1952 : 11) defined social structure as "an arrangement of parts of components related to one another in some sort of a larger unity". It is "an arrangement of persons in relationships institutionally defined and regulated". He has described the "institutionally defined and regulated" relationship as that between the King and his subject, between husband and wife, etc. Thus relationships within society are ordered by various mores and norms.

a) **Social Morphology and Social Physiology**

He has related the concept of social structure to the concept of social function. Concept of function, according to him is the "contribution which a partial activity makes to the total activity of which it is a part" (Radcliffe-Brown 1952 : 181). This concept involves the notion of a structure consisting of a set of relations amongst unit entities. The continuity of the structure is maintained by a life-process made up of the activities of the constituent units. He called the structural aspect of society *Social Morphology*, and the functional aspect of society *Social Physiology*. Thus, for Radcliffe-Brown social structure consists of a network, of person to person relations, and when we study social structure we are concerned with the set of actually existing relations at a given point of time.

b) **Dyadic Relations and Social Structure**

Radcliffe-Brown's definition (1952 : 191) deals with all social relations of person to person which he calls dyadic relations, such as, between a father and son, or a mother's brother and his sister's son. He says that in an Australian tribe the whole social structure, is based on a network of person to person type of relations, which are established through genealogical connections. He includes under social structure, the differentiation of individuals and classes by their social role, for example, the differential social positions of master and servant, of ruler and the ruled, etc.

He distinguished between structure as an actually existing concrete reality empirically given and structural form. Just like the cells of an organism die out and are renewed, so also the individual members of society die and are replaced by new people born. Yet, the form of body remains same and so does the form of the social structure. Even during wars and revolutions, not all the framework of society is destroyed. For example, family institution is not only found universally but persists in all societies in spite of all changes.

c) **Spatial Aspect of Social Structure**

Society as an object of study is difficult to conceive of. According to Radcliffe-Brown (1952 : 193), we do not often find a society or community which is absolutely isolated and having no contact with the outside world. In the contemporary period, we find the network of social relations extending throughout the world, having no clear-cut boundary as such. Thus, for example in the case of India we do not know whether India as a whole is "a society" or whether the several religious groups, linguistic groups, tribal groups, etc. are distinct societies. Therefore, we have to define, first of all, the unit of study and compare it with other units of suitable size to study the structural system as it appears in and around that region. This is the *spatial aspect* of social structure which can vary from a village or family to a whole nation or the world, depending upon the unit of study.

d) **Social Structure and Social Laws**

Law, economic institution, education, moral ideas, values, etc. are the complex mechanisms by which a social structure exits and persists.

Most of the primitive institutions, values and belief appear in quite a new light if seen in relations to the social structure. For example, the 'Potlach' system of the Indians of the north-west America, appeared to the Canadian politicians as a wasteful foolishness. But for the social anthropologist it was a machinery for maintaining the social structure of lineages, clans and moieties, with which was combined an arrangement of rank defined by privileges. There are many other customs which appear ridiculous, but which perform tension removing functions in simple societies.

Law is the mechanism by which the social structure is maintained, social relations between persons and social groups are defined, restored and maintained. The system of law of a society can only be fully understood if it is studied in relation to the social structure and vice versa.

e) **Interests and Values in Society**

The study of social structure leads immediately to the study of interests or values in terms of which social relations are defined. "A social relation", according to Radcliffe-Brown (1952 : 194) "exists between two or more individuals when there is some adjustment of their respective interests by convergence of interests, or by limitation of conflicts that might arise from divergence of interests".

A social relation is not just similarity of interests, but is also based on mutual interests of persons in one another. The social solidarity results when two or more people have same goals and they cooperate with each other to achieve those goals.

f) **Social Structure and Social Institutions**

The study of social structure leads to the understanding of the network of social roles and, therefore, of social behaviour. Society reacts through its sanctions, in a positive or a negative way, to social behaviour. Sanctions maintain a given standard of social life. This include social laws, besides the norms, values, customs etc. of the society. The norms of society function through the social institutions of the society. Radcliffe-Brown (1952 : 10) has defined social institution as a social group which observes certain norms of conduct. The institution of a society, therefore, provides social ordering to interactions of persons in social relationship. This has two aspects, one is in terms of the social structure where it provides the norms to relationships, as within a family. The other aspect is the group or class, in which persons interact briefly or casually. An example of the first case, is the behaviour of a father in the family, of a doctor in the clinic, etc. The second case is that of the behaviour of a neighbour, a friend, etc.

Thus, according to Radcliffe-Brown, institutions, being standardised modes of behaviour, constitute the machinery by which a social structure maintains its existence and continuity.

In spite of his extensive explanations regarding the concept of social structure, Radcliffe-Brown has been accused of being too general. Amongst others, Raymond Firth criticised his analysis of social structure "for not making a distinction between the ephemeral, i.e., short-lived and enduring elements in social activity and also for making it impossible to distinguish the idea of the structure of the society from that of the totality of the society itself" (see Bottomore 1962: 109).

Other major contributions within the structural-functionalist school to the theory of social structure have been given by such sociologists and anthropologists as P.G. Murdock, Talcott Parsons and Robert K. Metton. Murdock used the term "social structure" as the very title of his book in which he has studied the institution of family in several tribes by using Human Relations Area Files, located at Yale University in the USA. He was the first person to collect these files and they remained his principal research tool in all his other works, as well.

Talcott Parsons defines social structure as a natural persistent system which maintains its continuity despite internal changes from time to time, in the same way as the organism does in reality. By natural persistent system, we mean that it has a life of its own. For him, social system is a much wider concept, including both the functional and structural aspect than just social structure.

Merton has also talked about the concept of social structure. Like many structural-functionalists social structure for him is the interrelation of social positions and roles.

25.3.2   The Structuralist Point of View

Claude Levi-Strauss of France is one of the major structuralists, who has given a distinct meaning to the concept of social structure. According to him the term "social structure" has nothing to do with empirical reality but it should deal with models which are built after it. Thus, Levi-Strauss (1953 : 524) says that social structure "can by no means be reduced to the ensemble of social relations to be described in a given society."

This model building on the basis of existing social relations will help one to clarify the difference between the two closely-related concepts of s*ocial structure and social relations.*

He says that it will be enough to state that social relations, consist of the raw materials out of which the models making up the social structure are built. Therefore, he believes that social structure cannot claim a field of its own among others, in the study of societies. It is rather a method to be applied to any kind of social studies. It is similar to the structural analysis which is current in other disciplines like linguistics, literature, political science, etc. (see Levi-Strauss 1953 : 525-553).

Applying the structuralist method, Louis Dumont (1970) in the study of caste system in India, shows that it is based on the fundamental social principle of hierarchy. He says that the principle of hierarchy, is the core of the caste system, and is opposed to the principle of equality. In this system, man as the member of society is given more importance than the individual. Here the concepts of the individual, freedom, and equality of mankind are relatively less important.

These ideals of individualism, freedom and equality are negated by the three basic features of caste system, such as heredity, hierarchy and endogamy. Like Levi-Strauss, Louis Dumont too has used the kinship system, to explain many of his views regarding the structuralist approach.

25.3.3   The Marxist Point of View

The Marxist theories regarding the concept of social structure are free from the bias of organic analogy of the structure functionalists Karl Marx (1877) has written about the relations of production as constituting "the economic structure, the real basis on which is erected a judicial and political super-structure and to which correspond the forms of the determined social conscience". In this explanation Marx has used the term structure, not in the biological sense, but in the sense of a building or construction.

But his notion of structure cannot be clearly distinguished from the other related concepts.

Edmund Leach (1968 : 482-88) a British social anthropologist, says that "in Marx's work there are references made to political, juridical, religious, and philosophical system. But here the term "system" is almost indistinguishable from the above uses of "structure", "superstructure", and "form". In both Marxist and non-Marxist literature, lately, sociologists have added such variants as "infrastructure", "macrostructure", "microstructure" etc.

Marx had viewed the historical development of societies in terms of stages such as the primitive, ancient, feudal, capitalist and, finally communist according to their distinctive modes of production. This historical development is governed by the law of "dialectical materialism" about which you will learn more in elective course 3. In each stage of social development, society is divided into social classes on the basis of ownership or non-ownership of property. The owners as a class, have a dominant position in society and they exploit the class of non-owners. The owners are in minority in all societies while the non-owners are in majority. Yet the owners as a class are able to exploit the masses by extracting surplus value of their labour. This exploitation goes on till the masses become united and the 'seeds of revolution' becomes ripe. When a revolution occurs, the mode of production changes.

According to Marx, societies will develop till the stage of communism where there will not be any classes; where society will be based on equality in all respects. This view gives an ideal picture of society and is not yet found in reality. Even the Russian and Chinese societies, which are generally referred to as socialist societies, do not reach up to this ideal.

Most of the Marxist sociologists, both in India and abroad, use the concept of class in studying the structure and process of a society.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: a) Use the space given for your answer.

b) Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

1) Define Radcliffe-Brown's concept of social structure. Give an example. Use about five lines.

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2) What is the spatial aspect of social structure? Explain in about five lines.

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3) According to Levi-Strauss, social structure can be reduced to the ensemble of social relations in a given society. Tick the correct box.

| True | | False |

25.4 SOCIAL STRUCTURE AND SOCIAL CHANGE

Social structure, in all societies and at all times, experiences change. Change is an essential aspect of all societies, and it is brought about by the process of social evolution, in all societies. Several social anthropologists and sociologists have attempted to study the process of social evolution in societies, which brings about change in the structure and the functioning of societies. Here we are going to discuss some of these processes of change, as explained by some sociological thinkers.

25.4.1 Social Differentiation in Societies

There have been many ways in which social thinkers have explained social differentiation in societies. Social differentiation means the process in which the various parts; i.e., social groups and institutions of society become more complex, and each of them performs some specialised tasks. Some of these thinkers are:

i) **Henry Maine** has made a distinction between the societies based on *social status* and those based on *social contract*. According to him traditional societies, like Indian society, were based on the relations of social status, where the prestige and ascriptive criteria, determine the status of the person in society. The caste system, especially the *jajmani* system, found within the caste system in India, depicts the relations of social status.

Jajmani system in India was based on the patron-client relationship, where each caste had certain rights and obligations towards the other. In this relationship prestige element, and a sense of obligation of the patron to protect his clients; formed a significant feature. It was above all an economic system which took care of the distribution of agricultural and material goods produced within the society and exchange of services rendered.

In contrast to this society, the society having social contract type of relationship, gives, importance to the role of the individual. Here achievement is more important than ascriptive criteria. All exchanges of goods and services are based on rational grounds of profit. Social values of prestige, of obligations, etc. do not count in this type of relationship. This type of relationship is found in modern, complex societies where all formal exchange are contractual.

ii) **Emile Durkheim** (1964) has described the nature of social solidarity in two types of societies, depending on the division of labour present in it. Thus, he says that mechanical solidarity is found in pre-industrial societies. In these societies there are relatively little social differentiation in the sense that division of labour in these societies is based on criteria of age, sex, etc. rather than specialised skills. Here solidarity is based on similarities between the members of society. They have more scope for face-to-face contact and share values, beliefs and social norms. Even the roles performed within the society are shared to a great degree. In these societies the "collective conscience" which includes the moral values and belief aspect of society is very strong. Therefore, in these societies, according to Durkheim laws of repressive kind are practised which are based on the idea of punishing the criminal for hurting the "collective conscience".

In the industrial societies based on *organic solidarity* society is based on differences. All the parts of the society performs a different function which contributes to the life of the total society. Thus, division of labour in these societies is more complicated. Unlike the societies having "mechanical solidarity" these societies are based on restitutive laws which emphasises the reform of the criminal. Here we find numerous occupational roles and social differentiation is based on several criteria's of occupation, income, power, prestige, age, sex, etc.

25.4.2 Evolution versus Revolution

The concept of social evolution is derived from Darwins' theory of biological evolution. It implies order, change and progress. It has been used to refer to certain definite stages, through which all societies were supposed to have passed, from a simple to a more complex form. Thus, social evolution like biological evolution, refers to gradual change in which change is measured in terms of greater complex, refers to gradual change in which change is measured in terms of greater complexity of structure. Evolution is a one way process; but in societies we find that sometimes change can be from complex to simple, as well. For example, it has been seen in some places, that a major trading centre or city became a small village, within a period of time, due to economic and political factors. Some of the major social evolutionists are Morgan, Spencer, Henry Maine, etc.

Social revolution implies total transformation of the structure of society, as has been explicated by Karl Marx. According to him the mode of production of a society changes after a revolution, and with it the "super-structure", (which includes all values, beliefs, all socio-political institutions etc.) also changes. Unlike evolution, revolution is quick and often violent. It could be a non- violent revolution also; such as the one brought about by Mahatma Gandhi during the Nationalist Movement in India. But revolution is never gradual. It is immediately perceptible to the members of the society.

However, the functionalists believe that no society can be totally transformed. Some institutions, like marriage, family, etc. survive all social transformations. These are some of the views regarding evolution, as against revolution, in relation to the structure of society.

25.4.3 Social Structure and Anomie

Emile Durkheim for the first time used the concept of anomie in his book. The *Division of Labour in Society* (1964). He defined anomie as the state of normlessness in society. He said that members of society need certain social conditions for social participation, in which they can attain happiness. If these social conditions are not present the members of that society loose the necessary social integration and become anomie. These necessary social conditions are those where the conduct of men and women is governed by norms, which are integrated and not conflicting in the society. The individual members of the society, should be morally involved with other people in the society.

Robert K. Merton's use of the term anomie varies from Durkheims', in the sense that he has defined anomie, on the basis of the gap between the cultural goals in society, and the norms or the available institutional means to attain them. He says that conformity in society is achieved when both the cultural goals and available norms are accepted by the members of the society.

Check Your Progress 3

Note: a)   Use the space given for your answer .

b)   Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

1)   Describe mechanical solidarity. Use about six lines.

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2)   Give an example to show the difference between social evolution and revolution. Use about two lines.

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3)   What is anomie? Distinguish between Durkheim's definition and Robert K. Merton's definition of anomie. Use about seven lines.

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25.5   LET US SUM UP

In this unit we have explained the history and development of the concept of social structure amongst some of the major schools of sociological thought. We have first discussed the structural-functionalist's view of social structure as described by Herbert Spencer, Emile Durkheim, Radcliffe-Brown, etc. It has been shown that the concept of social structure is at the core of their understanding of society.

We have discussed the structuralists point of view. The way Claude Levi-Strauss has defined social structure and made a distinction between this concept and the concept of social relations. His concept is only a model of the actually existing social relations in a society. We have also discussed here the application of structuralist approach by Louis Dumont to study the caste system in India.

We have described the Marxist point of view of social structure which is implicit in the terminology used like "superstructure", "infrastructure" etc. In this unit we have also described the relations between social structure and social change, including the process of social differentiation in society. We have also discussed here the relationship between social structure and anomie.

25.6   KEY WORDS

Affinal	:	The relationships which are acquired through marriage, such as, wife's brother, husband's sister, etc.
Analogy	:	Similarity or correspondence between two things or ideas.
Consanguineal	:	The relationships which one has through the blood ties, such as, of mother and child, or brothers and sisters, etc.
Constraint	:	Any kind of restraint or compulsion felt by an individual.
Genealogical	:	Any link which corresponds to the descent traced continuously from an ancestor.
Heuristic devices	:	The means to provide aid in solving problems.
Indispensable	:	Something which is essential and cannot be substituted.
Methodology	:	It is the body of methods, tools and techniques of studying society, as in the case of a student of sociology.
Morphology	:	It is the study of forms or structure of animals, plants or the society as in our case.
Physiology	:	It is the study of the life-process or functioning of animals, plants or the society.
Potlatch	:	The practice of holding feasts among the American North-West tribals was known as the institution of potlatch, which is cited as an example of to show how giving of goods to the extent of physically destroying them was linked with the particular tribal group's claims to a higher status.
Segmentary	:	Anything which is divided into different parts or sections.

25.7   FURTHER READINGS

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Leach, Edmund, 1968. *Social Structure. In David I. Sills (ed.) International Encyclopedia of Social Sciences*. Macmillan Company and The Free Press : New York.

Levi-Strauss, C., 1953. *Social Structure. In A.L. Kroeber. (ed.) Anthropology Today: An Encyclopedic Inventory*, pp. 524-553. The University of Chicago Press: Chicago and London.

Radcliffe-Brown, A.R., 1952. *Structure and Function in Primitive Societies*. Cohen and West Limited : London.

25.8   MODEL ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

1) According to Firth, social structure is concerned with the more basic social relations which give a society its basic structure, while social organisation deals with the choices and decisions involved in actual relations.

2)   The homestead is the basic unit of social structure in Evans-Pritchard's study of the Nuer tribe.

3)   Both Fred Eggan and S.F. Nadel defined social structure in terms of social status and roles of the individuals in society.

Check Your Progress 2

1)   Radcliffe-Brown has defined social structure as "an arrangement of persons, in relationships institutionally defined and regulated". These institutionally defined and regulated network of relationships are of the kind, such as, of mother and father in a family; of a judge in the court, etc.

2)   The spatial aspect of social structure defines the limit or the size of the society to be studied. It provides the unit of study which can be compared with other units of similar size to arrive at the structural system of that society.

3)   False

Check Your Progress 3

1)   Mechanical solidarity is the solidarity found in pre-industrial societies. It is the solidarity of likeness or similarities. In such societies social differentiation is minimal and division of labour is based on criteria's of age, sex, etc. Here the collective conscience of the society is very strong.

2)   Social evolution is a gradual, slow progress while revolution is relatively short and swift change in the structure of society.

3)   Anomie is the virtual normlessness in society. According to Durkheim when the normative structure of the society breaks down the integration of the individual in the society becomes weak. This leads to anomie in society. For Merton, anomie occurs when there is a gap between the culturally defined goals and the socially available means to acquire them.

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