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Punjabi University, Patiala**

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Paper : Sociological Theories

Unit : II

Medium : English

Lesson No.

- 2.1 : SOCIAL FACTS: NATURE AND CHARACTERISTICS
- 2.2 : SOCIAL SOLIDARITY AND DIVISION OF LABOUR
- 2.3 : SUICIDE
- 2.4 : MAHATMA GANDHI: NON-VIOLENCE
- 2.5 : SATYAGRAHA
- 2.6 : SWARAJ
- 2.7 : SARVODAYA

Department website : www.pbidde.org

Emile Durkheim

Introduction to the unit

This unit is devoted to the French sociologist Emile Durkheim and comprises three lessons on the [1] *Nature and Characteristics of Social Facts*, [ii] *Social Solidarity and Division of Labour*, and [iii] *Suicide*. Together the three lessons provide a comprehensive introduction to the sociological thought of one of the greatest sociologists in the history of the world.

The first lesson of the unit (lesson 12) discusses not only the nature and characteristics of social facts, but also the methodological rules prescribed by Durkheim for their study. Apparently, the rules do not form part of the syllabus, but the student is strongly advised to study them in order to gain a better understanding of Durkheim's theories of division of labour and suicide discussed in Lessons 13 and 14. The contents of the last two lessons are strictly in accord with the syllabus.

As far as possible, we have tried to present the complex and difficult ideas of Durkheim in easy English. To this end, we have also quoted extensively from Durkheim and a number of his interpreters. It will be useful to list beforehand all the books and articles that have been used in writing the lessons. Here is the list of sources:

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1. Adams, Bert N. and Sydnie, R.A. 2001. *Sociological theory*. New Delhi: Vistaar Publications.
 2. Benoit-Smullyan, E. 1948. The sociologism of Emile Durkheim. In H.E. Barnes, ed., *Introduction to the history of sociology*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
 3. Durkheim, E. (1893) 1933. *The division of labour*. London: The Free Press of Glencoe.
 - 4.--. (1895) 1961. *The rules of sociological method*. Transl. Sarah A. Solovay and J.H. Mueller, ed., George E.G. Catlin. New York: Free Press.
 - 5.--. (1897) 1951. *Suicide*. Transl. J.A. Spaulding and G. Simpson. Glencoe, Illinois: Free Press.
 6. Fish, J. 2002. Religion and the changing intensity of social solidarities in *Durkheim's division of labour (1893)*. *Journal of Classical Sociology* 2(2): 203-223.
 7. Giddens, A. 1965. Suicide problem in French sociology. *The British Journal of Sociology* 16(1): 3-18.
 8. -----, 1978. *Durkheim*. Fontana.
 9. Harrington, A. 2005. *Modern social theory*. New York: Oxford University Press
 10. Thompson, Kenneth. 1982. *Emile Durkheim*. London and New York: Routledge

Social Facts : Nature and Characteristics

Structure :

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12.0 Objectives :

A study of this lesson will enable you to:

- * learn something about Durkheim and his sociology in general;
- * grasp the centrality of the concept of social facts in Durkheim's sociology;
- * understand the nature, characteristics and types of social facts;
- * Get to know the rules Durkheim prescribes for the study of social facts; and
- * gain an insight into Durkheim's theory of society.

12.1 Introduction :

The main purpose of this lesson is to explain Durkheim's concept of social facts, which is central to his sociology. Indeed, the concept of social facts serves as a valuable point of departure for exposing the deep structure or logic of Durkheim's sociological system. Durkheim's theory of society (*social realism*) as well as his sociological method (*positivism*) can all too easily be derived from his conception of social facts.

The lesson will first lay bare the nature, characteristics and types of social facts and then pass on to a consideration of the methodology prescribed by Durkheim for their appropriate study. Before we proceed, however, it is necessary to gain some acquaintance with Durkheim's biography and the main concerns of his sociology.

12.2 Durkheim : Life and Work

Emile Durkheim was a brilliant French sociologist. By common or general consent, he was a founder of modern, professional and academic sociology. "Comte gave the subject name and an ambitious prospectus," writes Kenneth Thompson (1982), "Durkheim gave it academic credibility and influence."

Durkheim was born at Epinal in the Lorraine in 1858 in a Jewish family and died in 1917, unable to bear the death of his only son in World War I. His father was a Chief Rabbi. Durkheim, too, was supposed to follow in the footsteps of his ancestors and become a Rabbi, but he lost faith in God and eventually became a sociologist with strong positivistic leanings. Durkheim received his higher education at Ecole Normale Supérieure - one of the most prestigious educational institutions in France. He also spent a year (1885-86) in Germany studying social philosophy and collective psychology.

After completing his education, Durkheim taught philosophy in various provincial lycées or French schools before joining the University of Bordeaux in 1897 as a lecturer in education and social science. He spent a long and

productive period at Bordeaux, from 1887 to 1902. In 1902, he shifted to the Sorbonne in Paris and remained there till his death.

The intellectual influences on Durkheim were mainly two: viz., Auguste Comte and the great German philosopher Immanuel Kant. Durkheim freely acknowledged his indebtedness to the positive philosophy of Comte, although he was never its uncritical follower. Alvin Gouldner has rightly called him an "uneasy Comtean". Kant influenced Durkheim through the works of the French neo-Kantian social philosopher, Charles Renouvier. Kant believed that the nature and possibility of knowledge depended on categories of thought that are given a priori. Durkheim agreed that such categories did exist, but they were purely social. Some of the other thinkers who left a mark on Durkheim were Saint-Simon, Emile Boutroux, Monod, Fustel de Coulanges, and Wilhelm Wundt.

During the course of his intellectual career, Durkheim produced a large number of works on a variety of subjects. His major works are: *The division of labour in society* (1893), *The rules of sociological method* (1895), *Suicide* (1897) and *The elementary forms of the religious life* (1912). Durkheim also edited a very influential and remarkable journal *L'Année Sociologique*.

12.2.1 Durkheim's Sociology :

Anthony Giddens (1978) begins his book on Durkheim with the following observation: "Durkheim was not, as was Weber, an encyclopaedic thinker. What lends Durkheim's writings their power is rather his persistent attack upon a limited number of problems that occupied him throughout his intellectual career."

Durkheim's sociology has three main concerns: namely, [i] to clarify the nature of society or social facts; [ii] to grasp the specificity of modern society; [iii] and to establish sociology on an empirical basis. Underlying and corresponding to the above concerns are three all-important questions addressed by Durkheim: Is society a mere aggregation of individuals or is it a reality in its own right? How can social solidarity and individualism coexist in modern society? And how to ensure objectivity and avoid subjectivism and reductionism in the investigation of social facts? Briefly, Durkheim's answers are that society has a reality of its own, over and above the individuals; that individualism in modern society is sanctioned by society itself and hence moral; and that strict rules of the kind that govern the natural sciences can be evolved to guide sociological inquiry. In Durkheim's answers, one gets intimations of his social realism and positivism, which constitute the fundamentals of his sociological theory and method and which are fully reflected in his empirical studies of division of labour, suicide, and religion.

With this all too brief introduction to Durkheim and his sociology, we can now

turn to his concept of social facts

12.3 Nature of Social facts :

Durkheim expounds on the nature of social facts in his book *The rules of sociological method* (1895). Sociology is the study of social facts, says Durkheim. Thus, in his view, social facts constitute the distinct and determinate domain or object of sociology. It is obvious how important is the concept of social facts in Durkheim's sociology; in fact all the major doctrines of Durkheim can be derived from this single concept. But what are social facts? What are their characteristics?

12.3.1 Definition :

This is how Durkheim defines social facts:

Here, then, is a category of facts which present very special characteristics: they consist of manners of acting, thinking and feeling external to the individual, which are invested with a coercive power by virtue of which they exercise control over him. Consequently, since they consist of representations and actions, they can not be confused with organic phenomena, nor with psychical phenomena, which have which have no existence save in and through the individual consciousness. Thus they constitute a new species and to them must be exclusively assigned the term social.

It is appropriate, since it is clear that, not having the individual as their substratum, they can have none other than society, either political society in its entirety or one of the partial groups that it includes - religious denominations, political and literary schools, occupational corporations, etc. Moreover, it is for such as these alone that the term is fitting, for the word 'social' has the sole meaning of designating those phenomena which fall into none of the categories of facts already constituted and labelled. They are consequently the proper field of sociology.

According to Durkheim, social facts are [i] *ways of acting, thinking and feeling* that are [ii] *external to the individual*, and [iii] *endowed with the power of coercion*. By virtue of these characteristics, they constitute a new species of facts and hence are the proper field of sociology. Examples of social facts include natural languages; financial or monetary systems; legal codes; moral rules; religious dogmas and rites; social customs, and so on.

Not every action, event or phenomenon that takes place in society is a social fact. Only those social phenomena that satisfy the criteria of exteriority and constraint deserve to be called social facts. However, Durkheim mentions two further characteristics of social facts: They are general throughout a given society and independent of their individual manifestations. He writes: "A social fact is every way of acting, fixed or not, capable of exercising on the individual external constraint; or again, every way of acting which is general

throughout a given society, while at the same time existing in its own right independent of its individual manifestations." Notice the "or" in the above quote. Durkheim is pointing out that there are two sets of criteria for demarcating social facts: externality and constraint, on one side, and generality and independence of individual manifestations, on the other. Either of the two sets is sufficient to define social facts, for one will necessarily presume or imply the other. Thus, facts that exercise external constraint will be general and independent of their individual manifestations and *vice versa*.

12.3.2 Characteristics

It is necessary at this stage to elaborate on the four characteristics of social facts specified by Durkheim.

12.3.2.1 Exteriority or Externality :

Social facts are external to the individual in the sense that they do not exist only in the individual consciousness, but are objective and real. In a famous aphorism, Durkheim exhorts sociologists to treat social facts as things, thereby emphasising that the objective reality of social facts is very similar to that of physical or natural facts. Social facts do not depend on the individual for their genesis, continuity or change; they exist before and after him. After birth, an individual is simply inserted into a network of social facts - the pre-existing morphology, institutions and collective representations - and is required to conform to them. The substratum (source or base) of social facts, as Durkheim has made it clear in his definition, is society and not the individual. Social facts result from social interaction between groups and individuals to be sure, but they assume independent existence and begin to exercise control over individuals as soon as they come into being.

12.3.2.2 Constraint or Power of Coercion :

Benoit-Smullyan in his classic essay *The sociologism of Emile Durkheim* (1948) explains the characteristic of constraint as follows:

The other characteristic of the social fact, the "constraint" which it exercises over the individual, may be viewed as a simple corollary of its externality. Since the social fact is both real and external, it forms part of the individual's environment, like the physical and biological parts of his environment, and exerts upon him a certain constraint; for the hallmark of an independent reality is the resistance it opposes to our volitions and the counterpressure it exerts on our behaviour. Moreover, the fact of social constraint enters into the direct experience of the individual. Legal and moral rules cannot be flouted by the individual without his experiencing the tangible evidences of social disapprobation [disapproval]. But if constraint is such an essential element in legal and moral rules, it cannot be wholly absent in other types of social facts.

Firstly, Benoit-Smullyan tells us, the coercive power of social facts flows from their externality, their being part of the individual's environment. Secondly, social facts possess the characteristic of constraint in that they 'impose themselves on individuals, regulating their behaviour and even their volitions'. Thirdly, the individual can have a direct experience of the power of social constraint; he has only to defy a legal or moral norm or some other institution to taste such an experience. But whether or not the individual experiences it directly, constraint is an intrinsic attribute of social facts. The simple point is that social facts cannot be wished away, ignored or violated at will by the individual. Any such attitude or conduct vis-à-vis social facts will invite disapprobation and punishment from society in some form sooner or later.

12.3.2.3 Generality :

By their very nature, social facts are general throughout a given society; they are generally present or generally followed by the members of that society. But, cautions Durkheim, a social fact is social not because it is general, but rather it is the other way round: it is general because it is collective or social. "Thus it is not the fact that they are general," writes Durkheim, "which can serve to characterise sociological phenomena. Thoughts to be found in the consciousness of each individual and movements which are repeated by all individuals are not for this reason social facts." Again: "It may be objected that a phenomenon can only be collective if it is common to all the members of society, or at the very least to a majority, and consequently, if it is general. This is doubtless the case, but if it is general it is because it is collective (that is, more or less obligatory); but it is very far from being collective because it is general."

Indeed, Durkheim accepts without any reservation that a social fact is general in the sense that it is common to all or at least a majority of the members of society, but he discredits the idea that generality by itself can define social facts. For instance, it is general or universal for humans to move their arms while walking, but this is not a social fact. Similarly, to think of food when hungry is common to all the members of society, but it is not a sociological phenomenon. The characteristic of generality is necessary but not sufficient to distinguish social facts.

12.3.2.4 Independence of Individual Manifestations :

Take the example of the wedding ceremony. Every society has a collectively agreed upon model of how a wedding should be arranged, but every single application of the model is bound to deviate from it in certain respects. Durkheim says that social facts ought not to be equated with their individual incarnations. In his words: "What constitute social facts are the beliefs,

tendencies and practices of the group taken collectively. But the forms that these collective states may assume when they are 'refracted' through individuals are things of a different kind."

Where does one find social facts if not in individual manifestations? Collective custom may express itself "once and for all in a formula repeated by word of mouth, transmitted by education and even enshrined in the written word." Durkheim does not dismiss the private manifestations of social facts completely, for they do have something social about them and are, for that reason, of interest to the sociologist. But they are not strictly sociological, says Durkheim, nor do they constitute the immediate content of sociology. To recapitulate: it is the collective aspects of the beliefs and practices of the group - that is, the collective models - that constitute social facts, not their individual manifestations.

The four characteristics discussed above apply to all social facts. But are all social facts of the same kind or are they varied? Durkheim distinguishes between more or less crystallised social facts. The next section will describe the variety of social facts briefly.

12.3.3 Types of Social Facts :

According to Kenneth Thompson, Durkheim distinguishes three types of social facts in order of their crystallisation, namely, [i] social morphology; [ii] institutions; and [iii] collective representations including social currents. Facts relating to social morphology are the most crystallised, while social currents are the least crystallised in the above typology. But what, one may ask, is the meaning of crystallisation? And is there a difference of degree or quality between the various types of social phenomena? Thompson quotes from Durkheim:

There is thus a whole series of degrees without a break in continuity between the facts of the most articulated structure and those free currents of social life which are not yet definitely moulded. The differences between them are, therefore, only differences in the degree of consolidation they present. Both are simply life, more or less crystallised.

Social facts are crystallised to the extent they are consolidated or structured and assume a definite form and organisation. In this sense, territorial divisions or patterns of habitation (social morphology) are the most crystallised, whereas fashions and currents of opinions (social currents) are the least crystallised. But Durkheim recognises that there is only a difference of degree between them, not a difference of quality.

Kenneth Thompson has helpfully condensed the three types of social facts in the following manner:

I. Morphology (substratum)

Volume, density and distribution of population. Territorial organization. Material objects Incorporated in the society: buildings, channels of communication, monuments, technological Instruments (e.g. machines, etc.).

II. Institutions (normative sphere)

A. Formal rules and norms - expressed in fixed legal and sub-legal formulae, moral precepts religious dogmas, political and economic forms, professional role definitions, - or in determining language conventions and the obligations of social categories.

B. Informal rules and norms as applied in the preceding domains: customary models, collective Habits and beliefs.

III. Collective Representations (symbolic sphere)

A. Societal values, collective ideals; opinions; representations [ideas] which the society has of itself; legends and myths; religious representations (symbols, etc.).

B. Free currents of social life [social currents], that are effervescent and not yet caught in a definite mould; creative collective thinking; values and representations in the process of emerging.

The above details are self-explanatory and do not require any additional gloss. A few observations are in order, however. [i] Durkheim recognises three social spheres: the material, the normative, and the symbolic, to which belong respectively the social facts of morphology, institutions, and collective representations. [ii] The sphere of social morphology encompasses demographic features, territorial organisation and the material culture of society. Durkheim refers to morphological facts as "collective ways of being", which are at bottom nothing more than crystallised "ways of acting".

Institutions are obligatory beliefs and practices focussed on recurrent or continuous social concerns. Collective representations include all "the ways in which the group conceives of itself in relation to objects that affect it", says Durkheim; they comprise the collective conscience or consciousness of society. Social currents are representations and values in the process of emerging and *ipso facto* the least structured or crystallised of all the social facts. [iii] There is a broad structural correspondence between the three orders of social facts with the power of determination resting ultimately with morphology. It has been suggested, however, that Durkheim was ambivalent about morphological determinism and he in fact gave up the idea altogether in his later works.

The typology of social facts in terms of crystallisation is not the only one offered by Durkheim; the distinction he made between *normal* and *pathological* social facts is another. This latter classification will be dealt with in a following section.

It will be useful at this point to quickly see what theory of society emerges out of Durkheim's notion of social facts.

12.3.4 Social Facts and the Nature of Human Society :

Let us recall: Social facts are collective ways of acting, thinking and feeling that are external to the individual and endowed with the power of coercion. Since society is little more than a vast assemblage of social facts, it has the same characteristics as a social fact, namely, exteriority and constraint. Durkheim asserts that society is not a mere collection of individuals; rather, it has a reality of its own, above and apart from the individuals. To believe that society is a real entity outside of and apart from its members is to subscribe to the doctrine of social realism (or "agelic realism" in the vocabulary of Benoit-Smullyan, op. cit.). According to Benoit-Smullyan the doctrine of agelic realism maintains that: "...social group [or society] precedes and constitutes the individual, that it is the source of culture and all the higher values, and that social states and changes are not produced by, and cannot be directly affected or modified by, the desires and volitions of individuals." There is no room for the individual or individual initiative in such a doctrine; here society is all in all.

How did Durkheim establish that society exists outside of and apart from individuals, that it is a reality *sui generis*, independent and irreducible to its constituent members? Benoit-Smullyan says that Durkheim offers four types of evidence in defense of his view:

The first is the alleged heterogeneity of individual and collective states of mind. Thus it is asserted that in a time of national danger the intensity of the collective feeling of patriotism is much greater than the individual feeling...A second type argument stresses the difference in individual attitudes and behaviour which results from the group situation. When in a crowd the individual thinks, feels, and acts in a different fashion. A third type of evidence is supplied by the uniformity of statistics ...[which can only derive] from the influence of real social currents...A fourth line of argument is based on analogy and on the philosophical theory of emergence. Just as the phenomenon of life is not to be explained by the physiochemical properties of the molecules which form the cell, but by a particular association of molecules ...so we must assume society is not reducible to the properties of individual minds but that it constitutes a reality *sui generis* [i.e. of its own kind] which emerges out of the collocation and interaction of individuals.

Durkheim had believed in social realism, in the irreducible and sui generis character of society, from the very beginning, for such a belief alone would make possible the new science of sociology towards which he was striving. And yet one discerns a certain evolution in Durkheim's conception of society in which his social realism is pushed to the farthest extent. Starting with the theory that social facts are external and coercive (Stage I), Durkheim moves in the direction of social transcendentalism (Stage II) and thence to equating society with god (Stage III). During the stage of transcendentalism, Durkheim endows society with the characteristics of hyper-spirituality, personality, creativity, and transcendence. In the last stage, he tries to establish that god is nothing but the symbolic representation of society. Unfortunately, this is a theme that cannot be pursued here any further.

Check Your Progress 1

Notes: i. Use space below for your answers.

ii. Compare your answers with those given at the end of this lesson.

1. What are social facts? Answer on the basis of Durkheim's definition above.

2. Explain the meaning of exteriority and constraint.

3. Which are the main types of social facts?

4. What is social realism?

12.4 Rules for the study of social facts : Durkheim's

Sociological Method

Social facts are external and coercive implying that they have the same objective character as the phenomena of nature. In so far as this is true, argues Durkheim, social facts ought to be approached and studied in the same way that the natural scientists approach and study the physical world. Such a philosophy - that the social sciences should adopt the methods or schemas of the hard sciences - is known as positivism and was accepted and followed by Durkheim. The rules that Durkheim recommends for the study of social facts, the rules of his sociological method, are undoubtedly positivistic. Social realism and positivism come together and reinforce each other in what Benoit-Smullyan has called Durkheim's sociology.

Turning to Durkheim's sociological method, he prescribes the following rules for the study of social facts. The rules tell us how to observe, classify, and explain social facts.

12.4.1 Rules for Observation :

The first and basic rule for observation is "Consider social facts as things". The rule has been variously interpreted, but at a more apparent level, Durkheim's message is simple and clear: Social facts should be treated as facts of nature and approached objectively without any preconceived ideas. This is made clear in three supplementary rules:

- i. Eradicate all preconceptions.
- ii. The subject matter of every sociological study should comprise a group of phenomena defined in advance by certain common external characteristics and all phenomena so defined should be included within this group.
- iii. When the sociologist undertakes the investigation of some order of social facts, he must endeavour to consider them from an aspect independent of their individual manifestations.

The first rule is a general call to sociologists to discard all prejudices before proceeding to observation. Durkheim next lays down that, to ensure scientific objectivity, the object of every sociological study should consist of a group of phenomena defined beforehand by their external characteristics. The third rule stipulates that the investigator should consider social facts from an aspect that is independent of their individual manifestations. What does it mean? It means that if a social custom is available, say, in the form of a written text, it will be best to proceed with the text first; otherwise the study of individual manifestations may remain the only way to access or extract the collective model implicit in them. Durkheim himself used legal codes, social statistics, and religious dogmas in that order in his studies of division

12.4.2 Rules for Classification :

Once observations have been made, the next step is to classify social facts. It is important to determine whether the social fact in question is normal or not. Facts that are not normal are designated as pathological by Durkheim. He has specified the following criteria for classifying facts into normal and pathological:

- i. A social fact is normal, in relation to a given social type at a given phase of its development, when it is present in the average society of that species at the corresponding phase of its evolution.
- ii. One can verify the results of the preceding method by showing that the generality of the phenomenon is bound up with the general conditions of collective life of the social type considered.
- iii. The verification is necessary if the fact in question occurs in a social type which has not reached the full course of its evolution.

The criteria suggested by Durkheim for distinguishing normal from pathological social facts are statistical and structural, not moral. If a social fact is [a] generally present [b] in an average society [c] of a particular social type [d] at a given phase of its development, then the fact is normal, otherwise not. But the sociologist is also required to show why the social fact is present in that social type, that is, how its generality is intrinsically connected with 'the general conditions of collective life of the social type considered.' Only then can he be sure that the fact is indeed normal.

Social facts can be classified only if there already exists a typology of societies, a classification of social types. Then, how to classify societies? According to Durkheim, the basis of such a classification will be the *number of segments* making up a society and the *extent of their integration*. In other words, societies are to be classified according to the *degree of organisation* they represent.

12.4.3 Rules for Explanation :

After observation and classification of social facts, the next stage is of explanation. If, for example, it is observed that joint families exist in one social type and not in another, then this fact has to be explained. Durkheim offers the following general rules for the explanation of social facts:

- i. When, then, the explanation of a social phenomenon is undertaken, we must seek separately the efficient cause which produces it and the function it fulfils.
- ii. The determining cause of a social fact should be sought among the social facts

- preceding it and not among the states of the individual consciousness.
- iii. The function of a social fact ought always to be sought in its relation to some social end.
- iv. The first origins of all social processes of any importance should be sought in the internal constitution of the social group.

Durkheim suggests a two-fold explanation for social facts: causal and genetic, on one side, functional on the other. For a full understanding of a social fact, one should seek its efficient cause, origin and function. The determining cause of a social fact must be sought among social facts preceding it, while its origin should be sought in the social milieu or the internal constitution of society (i.e., morphology). Causal-genetic explanation moves backwards and seeks origins and causes; on the other hand, functional explanation looks forward and seeks to discover the functions - the socially useful effects-of a social fact. Durkheim warns that the sociologist must never explain social facts in relation to individual psychology, but only in relation to other social facts; he is warning against the pitfalls of psychologism and reductionism.

12.4.4 Rules Relative to Establishing Sociological Proofs :

The sociologist needs evidence to prove that the explanation of a social fact offered by him is true. He has to show that social facts X and Y are indeed causally or functionally connected. The evidence required is that of concomitant variation, that X and Y move together. In the case of sociological studies, such evidence can be obtained only by using comparative method. One has to study how X and Y, for example division of labour and social solidarity, are related in societies of various types. Only then can the sociologist be sure that the posited relationship between the two variables holds. Durkheim says: "One cannot explain a social fact of any complexity except by following its development through all social species."

Check Your Progress 2

- Notes: i. Use space below for your answers.
- ii. Compare your answers with those given at the end of the lesson.

1. Which is the first and most fundamental rule for the observation of social facts? Explain the rule briefly.

2. How does Durkheim distinguish normal from pathological facts?

3. What is functional explanation?

4. What is meant by concomitant variation?

12.5 Let Us Sum Up :

In this lesson, we have [i] introduced Durkheim, [ii] explained the nature of social facts including their definition, characteristics, and types, and [iii] dwelt at some length on the methodology - the various sets of rules - proposed by Durkheim for the study of social facts. A brief note is included on Durkheim's realist conception of society as well (section 1.3.4). A careful study of the lesson will reveal that the concept of social facts is central to Durkheim's sociology and both his theory of society (social realism) and his sociological method (positivism) are derived from it. Benoit-Smullyan has given the name of sociologism to Durkheim's sociological system; sociologism is nothing but the synthesis of social realism and positivism.

12.6 Key Words :

Causal explanation: Causal explanation is aimed at discovering the efficient or determining cause of a social fact among antecedent social facts.

Collective conscience: Collective beliefs and sentiments shared by the average citizens of a society. In due course, the concept of collective conscience gave way to that of collective representations.

Collective representations: Societal values, collective ideals; opinions; representations [ideas] which the society has of itself; legends and myths; religious representations (symbols, etc.).

Concomitant variation: If two variables x and y are present or absent simultaneously, it is called concomitant variation. The evidence of concomitant variation is needed to establish sociological proofs.

Constraint/Coercive power: The second most important characteristic of social facts is constraint or coercive power. Social facts possess coercive power in that they impose themselves on individuals and regulate their conduct and volitions; they cannot be wished away, disregarded or violated at will by individuals.

Exteriority: Exteriority or externality is the most fundamental feature of

social facts. It means that social facts are objective and real and exist outside of and apart from individuals.

Functional explanation: Functional explanation is aimed at discovering the social end or the socially useful effects of a social fact.

Generality: Generality means that social facts are common to all or at least a majority of the members of society. All Social facts are general, but not all general facts are social.

Institutions: Institutions are beliefs and practices that have become normative or obligatory and that are focussed on recurrent or continuous social concerns. Example: The institution of marriage.

Normal and pathological facts: Before explaining a social fact, it has to be determined whether it is normal or not. If a social fact is [a] generally present [b] in an average society [c] of a particular social type [d] at a given phase of its development, then it is normal, otherwise not. A fact that is not normal is called pathological by Durkheim. But the criteria to distinguish normal from pathological facts are statistical and structural, not moral. For instance, according to Durkheim, crime is a normal social fact, not a pathological one.

Positivism: The belief that social sciences can and should adopt the methods and schemas of the physical sciences.

Psychologism: To try to explain social facts in relation to states of individual consciousness is psychologism, which is a form of reductionism.

Reality sui generis : Society is a reality sui generis in the sense that it is a reality of its own kind, not comparable or reducible to any other.

Reductionism: To explain a higher order of facts in terms of a lower order of facts is reductionism. Thus, to explain social facts in terms of biology or psychology is to commit the fallacy of reductionism.

Social currents: Social currents or free currents of social life are social facts/ collective representations that are least crystallised or consolidated. Example: Movements of enthusiasm, indignation and pity in a crowd.

Social facts: Social facts are ways of acting, thinking and feeling external to the individual and endowed with coercive power.

Social milieu: Social milieu refers to the internal constitution of a society or its morphology. The origin of a social fact is to be sought in the social milieu.

Social morphology: Social morphology consists of demographic features, territorial organisation and material culture of society.

Social realism: The doctrine that society has a reality of its own, above and apart from its constituent members.

Social type: A social type refers to societies of the same type. For example, societies with the same number of segments (parts) and the same degree of integration will form one social type or species.

Sociologism: The term was coined by the French scholar Emile Benoit-Smullyan to refer to the sociological system of Durkheim. Sociologism is the synthesis of social realism and positivism.

12.7 Check Your Progress 1

1. Social facts are ways of acting, thinking and feeling that are external to the individual and endowed with the power of coercion or constraint.
2. Exteriority and constraint are the two most fundamental characteristics of social facts. Exteriority or externality means that social facts are external to the individual in the sense that they exist outside of and apart from the individuals.
Constraint or coercive power of social facts follows from their externality. Social facts possess constraint or coercive power in that they impose themselves on individuals.
3. Morphology, institutions and collective representations are the main types of social facts. Collective representations also include social currents.
4. Social realism is a doctrine that holds that society has a reality of its own above and apart from its constituent members.

Check Your Progress 2

1. The first and foremost rule for observation is: Treat social facts as things. The rule has been interpreted in various ways, but at a more apparent level, Durkheim's message is simple and clear: Social facts are like physical or natural facts and should be approached objectively without any preconceptions.
2. If a social fact is generally present in an average society of a particular social type at a given phase of its development, then it is normal, otherwise not. This is how Durkheim distinguishes normal and pathological facts.
3. Functional explanation is aimed at discovering the social end or the socially useful effects of a social fact.

4. If two variables x and y are present or absent simultaneously, it is called concomitant variation. The evidence of concomitant variation is needed to establish sociological proofs.

12.8 Questions

Long Answer Questions:

1. Write a note on Emile Durkheim and his contribution towards Sociology.
2. Critically analyse the concept of Social Facts as described by Emile Durkheim.
3. Explain the characteristics and types of social facts.
4. What are the different rules for the study of social facts?

Short Answer Questions:

1. What are the features of social facts?
2. What is meant by the statement "Social facts are independent of individual manifestations"?
3. What are the rules for observation of social facts?
4. What are the rules for classification of social facts?

12.9 Further Readings :

1. Benoit-Smullyan, E. 1948. The sociologism of Emile Durkheim. In H.E. Barnes, ed., Introduction to the history of sociology. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
2. Durkheim, E. [1895] 1962. The rules of sociological method. Transl. Sarah A. Solovay and J.H. Mueller, ed., George E.G. Catlin. New York: Free Press.
3. Giddens, A. 1978. Durkheim. Fontana.
4. Thompson, Kenneth. 1982. Emile Durkheim. London and New York: Routledge Model Answers to Check Your Progress

Social Solidarity and Division of Labour

Structure

- 13.0 Objectives
- 13.1 Introduction
- 13.2 Social Solidarity and Division of Labour:
 - Durkheim's Main Theses
 - 13.2.1 Primitive vs Civilised society
 - 13.2.2 Mechanical vs Organic solidarity
 - 13.2.3 Repressive vs Restitutive law
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- 13.4 Let Us Sum Up
- 13.5 Key Words
- 13.6 Model answers to Check Your Progress
- 13.7 Questions
- 13.8 Further readings

13.0 Objectives :

A study of this lesson will enable you to:

- * get an idea of Durkheim's theory of social evolution;
- * understand how division of labour, social solidarity and legal norms are interrelated in primitive and modern societies;
- * learn about types of societies (primitive and civilised), types of social solidarity (mechanical and organic), and types of law (repressive and restitutive); and
- * gain some knowledge of the abnormal forms of division of labour and their negative role in relation to social solidarity.

13.1 Introduction :

This lesson will explain Durkheim's views on the nature of division of labour and social solidarity in primitive and civilised societies. The nature of social solidarity gets reflected in legal codes and varies with the level of division of

labour, says Durkheim. In modern society, the basis of solidarity or cohesion is primarily the division of labour and economic interdependence; in primitive society, the basis was the communality of belief and sentiment or *collective conscience*. This does not imply that collective morality is absent from advanced societies or that the division of labour is totally non-existent in premodern societies. It is really a question of what serves as the principal source of social cohesion or integration in the two social types.

The lesson will first state Durkheim's main theses on division of labour, social solidarity and law and then explicate them further with reference to three conceptual pairs: namely, primitive society vs civilised society, mechanical solidarity vs organic solidarity, and repressive law vs restitutive law. This is being done for analytical convenience.

13.2 Social Solidarity and division of labour :

Main Theses

Durkheim's sets out his main theses on the relationship between [a] division of labour, [b] social solidarity and [c] legal codes in primitive and civilised societies in his first major work *The division of labour in society* (1893). According to Benoit-Smullyan (1948), this book, which is based on Durkheim's doctoral dissertation, deals with the nature and the cause of social evolution.

According to Durkheim, in the course of evolution from primitive to civilised mode of social existence, three *interrelated transformations* take place: [i] the division of labour grows from simple to complex; [ii] social solidarity changes from mechanical to organic; and [iii] repressive or penal law makes way for restitutive or civil law.

In primitive societies, the division of labour is rudimentary, solidarity is mechanical and law is repressive. In civilised societies, on the other hand, the division of labour is well-developed, solidarity is organic and law is predominantly restitutive. It is increase in the amount of division of labour that changes the character of social solidarity and the law in modern or civilised societies.

What causes the steadily growing development of the division of labour? It is the increase in the material and moral density of population, so that the entire evolutionary sequence may be presented schematically as follows: Increase in material and moral density ® development of the division of labour ® organic solidarity ® restitutive law.

In order to explicate the above theses further, it is necessary to clarify and dwell on the three conceptual contrasts that underlie and organise Durkheim's discourse on social solidarity and division of labour, namely: primitive society vs civilised society, mechanical solidarity vs organic solidarity, and repressive law vs restitutive law.

13.2.1 Primitive versus Civilised Society :

According to Jonathan Fish (2002), Durkheim distinguishes six types of society that appear in the course of evolution: "Durkheim's analysis of western social evolution reveals six different types of society on the basis of their increasingly complex structural-functional organization and religious unity. These are as follows: (1) the horde, (2) the tribe composed of clans, (3) the tribal confederation, (4) the ancient city-state, (5) medieval society, (6) the modern industrial nation. Durkheim refers to the first three stages as examples of 'mechanical solidarity' The last three stages illustrate 'organic solidarity'." In this scheme, horde, tribe and tribal confederation are primitive, while the last three fall in the civilised mode.

Anthony Giddens (1978), however, makes do with only three basic types: the *horde* or the *aggregate* where individuals are not connected by reciprocal ties; the *segmental type* of society in which society becomes differentiated into segments, formed of kinship groups or clans; and the *complex, modern* or *civilised society*. The horde and the segmental type (Fish's Tribe) naturally belong to the primitive category. Other writers such as Benoit-Smullyan contrast primitive with modern society in a generic fashion without any allusion to their subtypes.

What is the fundamental difference between primitive and civilised societies? As already noted, the fundamental difference lies in the level of division of labour and in the type of social solidarity and law. To recap: in primitive societies, the division of labour is *simple*, solidarity is *mechanical*, and law is *repressive* in radical contrast with modern societies, where the division of labour is *complex*, solidarity is *organic* and law is *restitutive*.

These terms and concepts will be spelt out below, but meanwhile a few other subsidiary differences between primitive and modern societies may be specified:

The simplest type of human society takes the form of an aggregate [the horde]: solidarity derives from communality of belief and sentiment... This type of social order is succeeded by one in which society becomes differentiated into segments, formed of kinship groups or clans [the segmental type]. Here the level of individualism is still low, and property is owned communally (Anthony Giddens).

"In such societies," adds Giddens "collective beliefs are centred in religion."

In primitive society, where division of labour is rudimentary, individuals are relatively homogeneous...moral and legal responsibility is collective, social status tends to be hereditarily fixed, and a relatively small part of social life is ordered by the contractual principle (Emile Benoit-Smullyan).

It is typical of societies with segmentary structure composed of groups lacking any significant degree of internal differentiation, notably in the case of primitive societies made up of tribes or clans...Each component element or segment of the society is more or less identical to the others... (Austin Harrington, 2005).

All the above quotes describe only the characteristic features of primitive societies; it follows that advanced societies would have the exactly opposite features. Social and cultural homogeneity, communal ownership of property, collective moral and legal responsibility, hereditary status, centrality of religion - all these features point to the presence of mechanical solidarity implying a low level of the division of labour, specialisation and individualism in premodern societies. In comparison, modern societies display far greater social and cultural differentiation, individual autonomy and an organic social solidarity based on economic interdependence and co-operation. Therefore, it is to the most fundamental difference between primitive and civilised societies, namely, the difference in the type of their social differentiation and social solidarity, that we must turn.

13.2.2 Mechanical vs Organic Solidarity :

It is now clear that what distinguishes simple and complex, primitive and civilised or traditional and modern societies is the type of their social solidarity. In primitive societies solidarity is mechanical; in modern societies it is organic.

There is nothing abstruse, nothing opaque about the idea of social solidarity. Social solidarity simply means social unity, social cohesion or social integration. Obviously, no society can survive or subsist without solidarity. However, what is important to find out is *how* social solidarity is achieved, *how* society is held together. The basis of social solidarity can be common beliefs, values and sentiments, that is, what Durkheim calls *collective conscience* or the basis can be the *division of labour* and the resulting interdependence. Solidarity based on common culture or collective conscience is mechanical; one based on division of labour is organic. Mechanical solidarity is based on *similarities*, while organic solidarity is based on *differences* between groups and individuals.

Durkheim identified two types of solidarity: mechanical and organic. In using the term mechanical, Durkheim was making an analogy with inanimate objects, the parts of which cannot operate independently if the harmony and cohesion of the whole are to be maintained. For example, a clock cannot work if one of its parts malfunctions. The term organic is an analogy with a living body, in which harmony and cohesion are produced by the interdependent operation of the parts. Mechanical solidarity is characteristic of more primitive societies, in which the division of labour is minimal and "individuality is

zero". The individual "does not belong to himself" but is "literally a thing at the disposal of society". The common consciousness in this type of society is primarily religious. In such societies..."collective personality" is the only one, and property itself is inevitably collective.

The organic type of society is characterised by specialization and individuality. The resemblance between individuals is replaced by difference between them, and individual personality as opposed to the collective, asserts itself..

Durkheim noted that the collective consciousness becomes more secular in organic society, moving toward "the cult of the individual" and that such morality is "more human, and consequently more rational" than found in mechanical solidarity (Adams and Sydie).

In primitive society, where division of labour is rudimentary, individuals are relatively homogeneous and bound together by a "mechanical solidarity" characterized by blind acquiescence [surrender] to the dictates of public opinion and tradition. The legal system is designed primarily to punish those who violate the collective will and offend collective sentiments and to restore a moral equilibrium.

In civilized societies, where division of labour is well-developed, individuals have diverse personalities, experiences, and functions, and they are bound together by an "organic solidarity" rooted in their need for each other's services. The primary purpose of the legal system is to restore to the individual that which has been wrongfully taken away from him. In this sort of society individualism is the dominant morality (E. Benoit-Smullyan).

Mechanical solidarity involves: low division of labour and social differentiation
 ® zero individuality
 ® similitude or homogeneity
 ® strong collective conscience and collective will
 ® repressive law
 ® social solidarity. On the other side, organic solidarity signifies: well-developed division of labour and social differentiation
 ® specialisation and individualism
 ® heterogeneity and interdependence
 ® contracts and cooperation
 ® restitutive law
 ® social solidarity.

In mechanical societies, solidarity exists because people share common beliefs and sentiments and follow the dictates of public opinion and tradition. There is law in place to punish and repress deviations from social rules. In organic societies based on the division of labour, people are solidary because they need each other's services. Civil or restitutive law ensures that what has been wrongfully taken away from the individual is duly restored to him.

There are two important points that need to be cleared at this stage about the role of the division of labour in organic or advanced societies.

Division of labour and collective morality or conscience

Firstly, according to Anthony Giddens, Durkheim repudiated the thesis

advanced by Herbert Spencer and the Utilitarians that "solidarity in the division of labour is produced automatically by each individual pursuing his own interests in economic exchange with others". Why? Because "the prevalence of contractual exchange already supposes a moral framework within which it is ordered, hence the framework cannot be explained as the outcome of exchange."

In short, the division of labour is no doubt the principal source of cohesion in organic societies, but division of labour and contractual exchange cannot operate in a moral vacuum, that is, in the absence of collective morality or collective conscience. In fact, the division of labour presupposes a moral framework founded upon the new values of moral individualism and cooperation.

Benoit-Smullyan explains the meaning of moral individualism: "Individualism as a conscious moral attitude appropriate for our type of society, is not a claim for the unlimited right of individual to pursue his immediate desires; it is, rather, an obligation laid upon him to individualize himself by intensive specialization in order to make his distinctive contribution to social welfare." As for cooperation, Durkheim emphasised that it "has its intrinsic morality." Individualise and cooperate - that seems to be the essence of the new secular and rational morality, which, as we shall see, is reflected in the restitutive or civil law of modern societies.

To rub it in: it is not moral consensus alone, as Auguste Comte had believed, that ensures integration in all societies. In modern societies, the division of labour, interdependence and exchange of goods and services through contracts play a major role in forging solidarity, but of course not without supportive morals and legal sanctions.

Abnormal forms of division of labour and social solidarity

The second question that needs to be addressed and clarified is: Is the division of labour in modern societies always normal and healthy and does it always contribute to social solidarity? No, says Durkheim. The division of labour can assume abnormal or pathological forms uncondusive to organic solidarity. Such abnormal forms are the *forced* division of labour and the *anomic* division of labour. In the first kind, individuals are forced to enter occupations incompatible with their faculties; in the second, there is an absence of regulation (anomie= normlessness) of the relations between functions and classes.

External inequalities are the cause of the forced division of labour, while over-rapid industrialisation is the cause of the anomic division of labour. According to Durkheim, both of these types are unhealthy and come in the way of fully-fledged organic solidarity. For instance, he writes: "...we may say

that the division of labour produced solidarity only if it is spontaneous [i.e. when it is not forced] and in proportion as it is spontaneous."

13.2.3 Repressive vs Restitutive Law :

What bearing does law have on the question of social solidarity? For Durkheim, law that prevails in a society or social type is the index of the nature of its solidarity. Social solidarity is not directly observable; then, how should one know what type of solidarity exists in a society? If one cannot determine the type of solidarity (mechanical or organic), one cannot fix the nature of a social type (primitive or civilised). It is at this point that legal codes come in handy: They reflect the nature of social solidarity and, on that account, the nature of the social type.

Repressive or penal law prevails in primitive society, restitutive or civil law in modern society. The purpose or function of law is always to punish deviations from collective morality. "Legal sanctions represent society's reaction to the 'outrage of morality'" write Adams and Sydie. Thus, it will be more correct to say that legal codes both reflect and reinforce social solidarity.

How do the two types of law or two types of legal sanctions function? Adams and Sydie sum up the differences as follows:

Repressive sanctions, which are characteristic of mechanical solidarity, are embodied in penal law. These sanctions consist of "some injury, or at least some disadvantage" imposed on the criminal with the intention of doing harm to him through "his fortune, his honour, his life, his liberty or to deprive him of some object whose possession he enjoys". The moral outrage expressed in mechanical solidarity to criminal acts is more intense than in organic society because of the greater unity and strength of collectively held moral sentiments, inflicting pain and suffering on the criminal serves to reaffirm the common consciousness and restore social solidarity.

Restitutive sanctions are embodied in civil law, commercial law, procedural law, and administrative and constitutional law. They do not necessarily produce suffering for the criminal but "restoring the previous state of affairs". Organic solidarity relies on this type of sanction because of the need to regulate relations between individuals. Some repressive sanctions might carry over into organic society - for example, the retention of the death penalty for certain crimes - but restitutive law, administered by special agencies, is more common.

The repressive law or sanctions are designed, to recall the words of Benoit-Smullyan, "to punish those who violate the collective will" and to "restore by this punishment a moral equilibrium." The restitutive law is intended not to do harm to the criminal, but "to restore to the individual that which has been wrongfully taken away from him." That is the meaning of restitution. However,

the way collective conscience carries over into organic societies, so do some repressive sanctions, but restitutive law remains predominant.

Check Your Progress 1

Notes: i. Use the space below for your answers

ii. Compare your answers with those given at the end of the unit.

1. According to Jonathan Fish, Durkheim distinguishes six types of society. Which are they?

2. What is mechanical solidarity? How is it different from organic solidarity?

3. Explain the meaning of repressive law and restitutive law.

13.3 Conclusion: The Nature and the Cause of Social Evolution :

It is legitimate to return to Durkheim's *The division of labour* in society and restate its main thesis on social solidarity, division of labour and law. As societies evolve from the primitive to the civilised mode, the division of labour grows from simple to complex; mechanical solidarity changes into organic solidarity; and repressive or penal law makes room for restitutive law.

It is increase in the amount of division of labour that changes the character of social solidarity and the law in modern or civilised societies. "The development of society," writes Giddens, "in the direction of greater complexity in the division of labour correlates with the expansion of the role of restitutive law, and a progressive transition from mechanical to organic solidarity. Durkheim sought to encompass this process within an evolutionary scheme of increasing structural differentiation."

The question remains what triggers changes in the division of labour. It is not the desire of individuals for greater happiness or greater prosperity that promotes the development of the division of labour as Spencer and the Utilitarians had assumed. Social facts cannot be explained in relation to the motives or intentions of individuals without committing the serious fallacy of (psychologistic) reductionism. Durkheim had discounted such an explanatory strategy from the very beginning. Social facts, such as the division of labour

and social solidarity, ought to be explained in relation to other social facts.

What is Durkheim's explanation of the developmental growth of division of labour? It is [a] increase in population (material density) that [b] leads to greater interaction (moral density) and competition among individuals and [c] forces them to specialise in order to survive.

Having disposed of the psychologistic and individualistic explanations of the division of labour

Durkheim now turns to his own morphological explanation...

Division of labour is due to changes in social structure arising out of an increase in material and moral density. The increase in population intensifies competition and thus forces individuals to specialise, in order to survive. Thus, Durkheim ...comes to rest his entire explanation upon the factor of an assumed natural increase in population (Benoit-Smullyan).

Schematically put, the explanation proceeds as follows: Increase in population ® increase in interaction among social groups and individuals ® intensification of competition ® specialisation for survival ® division of labour. Increase in population is termed material density by Durkheim and increase in social interaction, moral or dynamic density. Durkheim holds that the cause of division of labour and therefore of social evolution is ultimately material and moral density.

A last comment before we close this lesson. Like many other social thinkers of the 19th century, Durkheim wanted to understand the specific nature and origin of modern society by contrasting it with its premodern or primitive counterpart. What had struck him the most about modern society was the co-presence in it of social solidarity and individualism: "Why does the individual," he asked, "while becoming more autonomous, depend more upon society? How can he be at once more individual and more solidary?" The answer, as he painstakingly demonstrated in *The division of labour*, lies in "a transformation of social solidarity due to the steadily growing development of the division of labour." It is the division of labour that explains how individualism and cooperation, or individual autonomy and social solidarity, can coexist in organic societies. The division of labour requires of individuals to specialise and individualise themselves, but also at the same time cooperate with others.

Check Your Progress 2

Notes: i. Use the space below for your answers.

ii. Compare your answers with those given at the end of the unit.

1. What is collective conscience?

2. What are the abnormal forms of the division of labour? Briefly explain their meaning.

3. What is material density? How is it different from moral or dynamic density?

13.4 LET US SUM UP :

The lesson has presented Durkheim's views on the nature and the cause of social evolution. Human societies evolve from the primitive to the civilised mode, or from mechanical to organic solidarity, propelled by the growth in the division of labour. As we know, behind the growth of the division of labour lies the increase in material and moral density. It has also been shown that abnormal forms of division of labour appear in organic societies. Such forms - labelled anomie and forced by Durkheim - undermine social solidarity. Thus, our exposition has covered, albeit in its own manner, all the three parts of Durkheim's book *The division of labour in society*, viz., the functions, the causes, and the abnormal forms of division of labour in relation to social solidarity.

13.5 Key Words :

Abnormal forms of division of labour: The division of labour in advanced societies is not always healthy or normal. There are forms of the division of labour such as anomie and forced, which are abnormal or pathological. They are pathological because they undermine organic solidarity.

Anomie division of labour: Anomie implies normlessness. The anomie division of labour results when relations between functions and classes are not properly regulated (in the absence of suitable norms). The cause of the anomie division of labour is over-rapid industrialisation.

Collective conscience: In The division of labour in society, Durkheim defines collective or common conscience as "the totality of beliefs and sentiments common to average citizens of the same society (which) forms a determinate system which has its own life."

Forced division of labour: The division of labour is forced when individuals are compelled to enter occupations incompatible with their faculties. External inequalities are responsible for the forced division of labour.

Horde/Aggregate: The horde or aggregate is the simplest and the earliest form of human society in the scale of evolution. Durkheim refers to the horde as "an absolutely homogeneous mass whose parts were not distinguished from one another."

Mechanical solidarity: Mechanical solidarity is based on communality of belief and sentiment or collective conscience. It is characteristic of primitive societies.

Material density: Material density is what we normally call population density (the total population /area of land measured in km or mile).

Moral density: Moral density refers to the volume of social interaction and exchange between and among members of the population.

Moral individualism: Benoit-Smullyan defines moral individualism as follows: "Individualism as a conscious moral attitude appropriate for our type of society, is not a claim for the unlimited right of individual to pursue his immediate desires; it is, rather, an obligation laid upon him to individualize himself by intensive specialization in order to make his distinctive contribution to social welfare." In short, when individualism is harnessed to the welfare of society, it is moral.

Organic solidarity: Organic solidarity is based on the division of labour. It is characteristic of modern civilised societies.

Repressive law: Law is the index of social solidarity. Repressive or penal law reflects and reinforces mechanical solidarity. The repressive law or sanctions are designed "to punish those who violate the collective will" and to "restore by this punishment a moral equilibrium."

Restitutive law: Restitutive or civil law reflects and reinforces organic solidarity. It is intended not to do harm to the criminal, but "to restore to the individual that which has been wrongfully taken away from him."

Segmental type of society: "Societies with segmentary structure composed of groups [clans or tribes] lacking any significant degree of internal differentiation...Each component element or segment of the society is more or less identical to the others" (Harrington). The segmental type of society

arises when the horde gets differentiated into segments, formed of kinship groups or clans.

Social solidarity: Social solidarity means social cohesion or social integration.

13.6 Model Answers to Check Your Progress :

Check Your Progress 1

1. According to Jonathan Fish, Durkheim distinguishes six types of society that appear in the course of evolution. These are as follows: (1) the horde, (2) the tribe composed of clans, (3) the tribal confederation, (4) the ancient city-state, (5) medieval society, (6) the modern industrial nation. The first three are primitive, while the last three fall in the civilised mode.

2. Mechanical solidarity prevails in primitive societies. It is based on communality of belief and sentiment or collective conscience. On the other hand, organic solidarity is found in modern societies and is based on the division of labour.

3. Repressive or penal law is designed to punish those who violate the collective will or offend the collective Sentiments and thereby restore the moral equilibrium of society in primitive society. The purpose of restitutive law is to restore to the individual (the victim of a crime) that which has been wrongfully taken from him. Restitutive law is the law of civilised societies. Unlike repressive law, it is not designed to inflict pain and suffering on the criminal.

Check Your Progress 2

1. According to Durkheim, collective or common conscience is "the totality of beliefs and sentiments common to average citizens of the same society (which) forms a determinate system which has its own life."

2. The abnormal forms of the division of labour are anomic and forced. The anomic division of labour results when relations between functions and classes are not properly regulated (in the absence of suitable norms). The cause of the anomic division of labour is over-rapid industrialisation. The division of labour is forced when individuals are compelled to enter occupations incompatible with their faculties. External inequalities are responsible for the forced division of labour.

3. Material density refers to population size or density, while moral density refers to social interaction and exchange between and among members of the population.

13.7 Questions**Long Answer Questions:**

1. Critically analyze the concept of Division of Labour by Emile Durkheim.
2. How is social solidarity tied to Division of Labour in society?
3. What are the types of Social Solidarity that Emile Durkheim identifies?

Short Answer Questions:

1. What do you mean by anomie?
2. What are the different types of social solidarity?
3. What is organic solidarity?
4. What is mechanical solidarity?
5. Explain the meaning of repressive law.

13.8 Further Readings :

1. Adams, Bert N. and Sydie, R.A. 2001. Sociological theory. New Delhi: Vistaar Publications.
2. Benoit-Smullyan, E. 1948. The sociologism of Emile Durkheim. In H.E. Barnes, ed., Introduction to the history of sociology. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
3. Giddens, A. 1978. Durkheim. Fontana.
4. Harrington, A. 2005. Modern social theory. New York: Oxford University Press.

Suicide

Structure

- 14.0 Objectives
- 14.1 Introduction
- 14.2 Suicide: A Study in Sociology
 - 14.2.1 Suicide as an Individual Act vs Suicide as a Social Fact
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14.0 Objectives :

A study of this lesson will enable you to:

- * see how Durkheim applies his sociological method to the study of suicide;
- * learn how he defines and explains suicide as a social fact;
- * understand the nature and basis of Durkheim's typology of suicides into egoistic, altruistic, anomic and fatalistic; and
- * come to know, even if very briefly, about the shortcomings of Durkheim's study of suicide.

14.1 Introduction :

The last lesson of this unit is devoted to Durkheim's study of suicide

(1897). The 19th century had witnessed a striking increase in suicide rates in most European societies. Durkheim wanted to demonstrate how only the rigorous application of the sociological method (as developed by him in *The rules of sociological method* in 1895) could help understand and explain suicide rates in Western Europe and elsewhere.

This lesson will examine: [i] in what sense is suicide not only an individual act, but also a social fact for Durkheim; [ii] how he goes about explaining the suicide rates in Europe sociologically, that is, in relation to other social facts; and [iii] how he sets up his classification of suicides into four types, viz., egoistic, altruistic, anomic and fatalistic. [iv] In the end, some shortcomings of Durkheim's otherwise classic study will be pointed out briefly.

14.2 Suicide : A study in Sociology :

Durkheim published his third major work *Suicide: A study in sociology* in 1897. As the very title indicates, the book is addressed exclusively to the phenomenon of suicide. Its main purpose is to show that only sociology or the sociological method, as conceived by Durkheim, can satisfactorily explain differential suicide rates in Western Europe and, by implication, elsewhere. It will be useful to listen to Anthony Giddens (1972) and Kenneth Thompson (1982) on the intent and the background of Durkheim's study of suicide:

In *The division of labour*, Durkheim had referred to the increased suicide rates in most countries during the nineteenth century. This was a well-attested phenomenon by the time Durkheim came to the subject. A large number of statistical monographs on suicide and its causes had been published since the late eighteenth century. Many of their authors had argued that the documented rise in suicide rates throughout most of Western Europe was evidence of a moral crisis in European civilization.

Durkheim accepted this approach, modifying it for his own purposes and drew heavily upon the statistical generalizations on the distribution of suicide established by previous writers. Durkheim's *Suicide* has subsequently become so well known that many authors have exaggerated the novelty of its method of statistical correlation and the results obtained. The book contains very little that was new in these respects. *Its unusual qualities derive more from the way in which Durkheim applied his conception of sociological method to explain suicide* (Giddens; emphasis added).

If the *Rules* [i.e. *The rules of sociological method*] was a revolutionary method for scientific sociological explanation, it was given its most forceful demonstration in the famous work that followed - *Suicide*, pointedly subtitled *A Study in Sociology*.

He wanted to demonstrate and establish sociology's scientific status by providing a sociological explanation of the seemingly most individual of acts - suicide (Thompson).

If the above quotes are read together, the following points stand out about Durkheim's study of suicide. *Firstly*, Western Europe had witnessed an increase in suicide rates in 18th and 19th centuries. Durkheim himself took notice of this fact in *The division of labour in society* and attributed it to increasing normlessness (anomie) in advanced societies. To be sure, as a citizen and a sociologist making extraordinary claims in behalf of his subject, he could ill-afford to neglect the threatening rise in suicides in his part of the world. *Secondly*, statistical data as well as 'statistical generalisations on the distribution of suicide established by previous writers' were to hand to enable Durkheim to carry out a fresh investigation of suicide rates in European societies from the standpoint of his own theory and method. *Thirdly*, both Giddens and Thompson are agreed that Durkheim's study of suicide was meant, *above all*, to demonstrate the validity of the sociological method devised by him in 1895.

To recall, the main premise of Durkheim's methodology is that since social facts are *sui generis* for being external to the individual and coercive, they ought to be explained only in relation to other social facts *and not* in relation to the lower order facts of biology, psychology or geography. According to Durkheim, suicide too is a social fact requiring sociological explanation. Indeed, as Durkheim shows in his book, there are hidden social forces that account for the seemingly most individual of acts - suicide.

But in what sense is suicide a social fact and not just an individual act? How does Durkheim define and approach the phenomenon of suicide?

14.2.1 Suicide as an Individual Act vs Suicide as a Social Fact :

What is suicide? Durkheim writes: "the term suicide is applied to all cases of death resulting directly or indirectly from positive or negative act of the victim himself, which he knows will produce this result." Suicide is not an accidental death; it is an act of self-destruction on the part of the individual. However, Durkheim refuses to define suicide in terms of individual motives or intentions "because intentions are not externally observable and are too variable to define a single order of phenomenon" (Benoit-Smullyan 1948).

On the face of it, suicide is an individual act. There is no denying that there is an individual factor in suicide, just as there is in disease, but it determines who in particular will become a victim and not the number of deaths. It is the number of deaths or, more precisely, the *rate of suicide* in a given society that is a social fact. If, writes Durkheim, "the suicides committed in a given society during a given period of time are taken as whole," we find that "this total is

not simply a sum of independent units, a collective total, but is itself a new fact *sui generis*, with its own unity, individuality, and its own nature."

To reiterate: it is the suicide rate, not the individual act of suicide, which constitutes the social fact and which requires an explanation by means of other social facts. Durkheim pointed out that the suicide rate remains remarkably constant in any given society over time affirming that we are in the presence of a social fact. Since the individual victims of suicide vary from year to year, they cannot account for the relative constancy in suicide rate, which must emanate from social causes. These social causes, based in varying states of social organisation, release "suicidal currents" that act mechanically upon individuals and force a certain number of them to commit suicide.

What exactly are the social causes? How do they compel individuals to commit suicide? Before we attempt an answer to these questions, there is need to flesh out Durkheim's explanation of suicide.

14.2.2 Durkheim's sociological explanation of suicide :

There are *four steps* involved in Durkheim's explanation of suicide.

i. The first step is to identify and suitably define the object of investigation. For Durkheim such an object is the suicide rates across countries and categories of people. The suicide rate, or the social distribution of suicide, alone constitutes the social aspect of suicide fit for sociological study. Giddens clarifies: "Suicide, in other words is a social fact, and has to be explained by means of other social facts. To be more accurate: the task of sociology in the explanation of suicide is not to account for all its aspects, certain of which it is the business of psychology to study; *suicide is a social fact only in terms of its social distribution*"(emphasis added).

ii. For data on suicide rates, Durkheim relies completely on official statistics of his time. This is the second step on which Anthony Giddens offers the following comment:

Durkheim's use of suicide statistics in his study owed a good deal to the ideas of 'moral statisticians'. Like them, Durkheim looked to official statistics as an exact measure of the distribution of suicide, and virtually the whole of his work is based upon them. Even prior to Durkheim's study, there had been lengthy debates about the usefulness of official statistics for the investigation of suicide. Durkheim did not mention this controversy in his work and barely considered the problem of the validity of such statistics at all.

In Europe, there was a long tradition of using official statistics in the study of suicide rates; Durkheim simply conformed to that tradition perhaps because no alternative or better source of data was available to him.

iii. In the next move in his explanatory strategy or trajectory,

Durkheim refutes theories, which explain the distribution of suicide in terms of geographic, climatic, biological, or psychological factors. "Most previous writers," writes Giddens, "while acknowledging that suicide is strongly influenced by social factors, believed that causal influences such as race, or inherited mental disorder, are also important in its aetiology. In the opening part of his book, Durkheim set out to show that this was not the case. Comparing the distribution of suicide with that of 'non-social' factors, he concluded that none of the latter can explain the observed differences in suicide rates: we must look for an exclusively sociological explanation."

iv. Having rejected by statistical demonstration insanity, imitation, race and climate as possible determinants of suicide, Durkheim concludes, in the words of Benoit-Smullyan, "that only in the social realm can a comprehensive explanatory factor be found. The social factors influencing the rate of suicide are revealed by the correlation of suicide rates with group affiliations and with important collective processes"(Benoit-Smullyan). The transition from empirical correlations to revelation of social factors influencing the rate of suicide is not automatic, but guided by theory. In a remarkable paper titled *The suicide problem in French sociology* written way back in 1965, Giddens brings out the role of statistical techniques and theory in Durkheim's explanation of suicide rates:

The originality and vitality of Durkheim's work did not lie in the empirical correlations contained in *Le Suicide*: all of these had been previously documented by other writers. Durkheim took a lot of material directly from the works of Legoyt, Morselli and Wagner, and used Ottingen's *Die Moralstatistik* extensively as a source of data. Where Durkheim's work marked a decisive advance was in the attempt to explain previous findings in terms of a coherent sociological theory. Previous writers had used a crude statistical methodology to show relationships between suicide rates and a variety of factors: Durkheim developed this technique in order to support a systematic sociological explanation of differential suicide rates. Durkheim was by no means the first to recognize that suicide rates could be explained sociologically; but no writer before Durkheim had presented a consistent framework of sociological theory which could bring together the major empirical correlations which had already been established.

Thus, it was his sociological theory that helped Durkheim 'bring together the major empirical correlations' and reveal to him the true social causes underlying differential suicide rates.

As Durkheim found out, it is an imbalance of social structural forces that account for the stable rates of suicide in a country or a social category. "Two pairs of imbalances of forces are defined; " writes Kenneth Thompson (1982), "one pair refers to the degree of integration or interaction in a group (egoism

and altruism), the other pair refers to the degree of moral regulation (anomie and fatalism)." If the level of integration in a social structure is low, egoism follows; if it is too high, the result is altruism. Similarly, if there is inadequate moral regulation in a group, it is a case of anomie; if regulation is excessive, it is fatalism. Egoism, altruism, anomie and fatalism are types of social structure that produce high rates of suicide.

Check Your Progress 1

Notes: i. Use space below for your answers.

ii. Compare your answers with those given at the end of this lesson.

1. Is suicide an accidental death? What is Durkheim's definition of suicide?

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2. In what sense is suicide a social fact?

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3. What data did Durkheim use in his study of suicide? On what basis did he reject inherited mental disorder or insanity as a determinant of suicide rates?

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14.2.3 Types of Suicide

Corresponding to the four types of social structure are four types of suicide - namely, egoistic, altruistic, anomic and fatalistic. Egoistic and anomic suicide predominate in modern society, altruistic and fatalistic in traditional society. It is time to explain the nature of each of these four types of suicide in some detail.

14.2.3.1 Egoistic Suicide :

Egoistic suicide occurs in societies, communities or groups, which are marked

by low solidarity or integration and excessive individualism. Writes Durkheim: "suicide varies inversely with the degree of integration of the social groups of which the individual forms a part." Durkheim shows, for instance, that suicide rate is lower among Catholics as compared to Protestants not because their respective religious beliefs about suicide differ, but because the former are more strongly integrated than the latter. Benoit-Smullyan elaborates:

Thus, Durkheim uncovers evidence to prove that free thinkers have the highest suicide rates and Protestants the next highest; Catholics have low rates, and Jews the lowest of all. The essential difference here, according to Durkheim, is not in the religious beliefs themselves but in the degree of integration of the religious group. Protestantism involves a higher degree of religious individualism than Catholicism ... while Judaism [religion of the Jews], because of its heritage of persecution, strongly binds its embers together to face a hostile environment. Durkheim infers that one important type of suicide ("egotistic") is caused by the insufficient participation by the individual in the life of a group.

Durkheim gave three further examples of higher rate of egoistic suicide: [a] among unmarried adults; [b] in families with fewer children; and [c] during times of low political integration. Marriage integrates the individual into a stable social relationship; the large family tends to be a more closely-structured group, involving more binding social ties, than a small family or a marital pair alone; and a high level of political integration of a society during wars and crises fosters greater social solidarity. Thus, egoistic suicide is inversely correlated with marriage, large family and political integration.

Why is a socially isolated individual relatively more prone to suicide? It is only the social group that provides meaning to the life of the individual; cut off from his social moorings, he is overcome with boredom and despair and finally pushed into suicide. Benoit-Smullyan puts it very succinctly and elegantly:

The individual in himself is of little value; it is only what he derives from participation in a social group that can give his private existence purpose and significance. Hence the individual who remains aloof from strongly integrated social groups, who pursues his own personal ends exclusively, is more liable than others to be overcome with ennui and to find no reason for continuing his existence.

14.2.3.2 Altruistic Suicide :

Altruistic suicide is the obverse or opposite of egoistic suicide. Egoistic suicide occurs when the individual is not well integrated into the social group; altruistic suicide results when the integration is excessive. In Durkheim's

language, egoistic suicide takes place because "society allows the individual to escape it", while altruistic suicide happens because "society holds him in too strict tutelage." Again, egoistic suicide predominates in modern society, whereas the theatre of altruistic suicide is the simpler, premodern societies. This does not imply that altruistic suicide is absent from the modern society. No, At least there is one group in civilised societies where Durkheim finds evidence of altruistic suicide. That group is the army.

The logic of altruistic suicide is self-sacrifice or dying for the "other", when the other is the social group, the community or the nation. The individual is so completely absorbed and controlled by the group that he has little or no sense of individuality left in him. "Such a person," writes Kenneth Thompson, "could not resist the pressure to sacrifice the self for the group's interests, even if it meant committing suicide." Giddens makes some interesting comments on altruistic suicide:

In the first edition of *The division of labour*, Durkheim wrote that suicide is 'extremely rare' in traditional societies. He changed his mind about this later, and in subsequent editions of the book the statement was omitted. He was, however, already convinced that suicide in the simpler societies is distinct from that in the more advanced...If in the modern society people kill themselves because life is meaningless, in traditional society they do so because death is meaningful: values exist which make self-destruction, for certain categories of individuals, an honourable or even an obligatory act. For instance, in some societies, it is the duty of a wife to put herself to death on the demise of her husband; in others, those who become infirm must commit suicide rather than be a burden upon the community. Durkheim's term for this type of suicide is 'altruistic suicide', and it is counterposed to egoistic suicide: in the first, the integration of the individual into the community, and respect for its values, is the source of the suicidal act, whereas the second derives precisely from the absence of such integrative ties.

To die or sacrifice oneself for the welfare of the group or the collectivity is altruistic suicide. Giddens gives two examples of altruistic suicide from traditional societies: [a] the widows and [b] the aged or the sick who put themselves to death for the sake of their society and its values. One could add to this list the suicides of followers or servants on the death of their chiefs.

The modern example of altruistic suicide comes from the army. Why army? Because military morality is a survival of primitive morality, where collective conscience reigns supreme and individuality is zero. In the army, wrote Durkheim, the soldier is predisposed to kill himself "at the least disappointment, for the most futile reasons, for a refusal of leave, a reprimand, an unjust punishment, a delay in promotion, a question of honour, a flush of

momentary jealousy, or even simply because other suicides have occurred before his eyes or to his knowledge."

14.2.3.3 Anomic Suicide :

Anomic is a state of normlessness. When people kill themselves for want of moral regulation, it is anomic suicide. Durkheim showed that economic fluctuations and suicide are positively correlated: suicide rates tend to rise sharply both in times of economic depression and economic boom. For, such fluctuations disrupt and destabilise social life and thereby weaken the hold of moral codes over individuals pushing them to self-destruction. Another and a more chronic source of anomic suicide is the deregulated condition of the division of labour in modern society. The incidence of suicide is far higher among those working in commerce and industry, argues Durkheim, than among those working in agricultural occupations. Within commerce and industry, those at the highest levels of socio-economic status have the highest rates of suicide. Anthony Giddens explains how economic anomie moves individuals to suicide:

What has happened in the modern period is that needs and desires have become freed from moral constraint, so that they have lost any fixed point of reference. In previous times, a traditional moral order (which still maintains a greater hold in rural areas than in commercial-industrial settings) adjusted expectations to income... This traditional order has eroded with the growth of the modern division of labour, while the new forms of moral control of economic life have still to become well established. The consequence is that desires become unmoderated. The quest to make more and more money is unlimited, and therefore unrealizable however successful an individual is in accumulating wealth he may still feel unfulfilled. Since this empty space of unbounded aspiration is nearer to those at the top levels of the economic system, they are more prone to suicide than others in less elevated positions.

To sum it up schematically: Absence of moral constraint, control or regulation ® unlimited needs and desires ® disappointments ® suicide.

Suicides caused by economic fluctuations (*acute economic anomie*) and deregulated division of labour (*chronic economic anomie*) are not the only examples of anomic suicide. Suicides may also result from domestic anomie. Examples include suicides committed by widowed persons and bachelors. "*Acute domestic anomie*," says Kenneth Thompson, "was exemplified by widowhood, which represented a crisis for the surviving husband or wife, who would not be adapted to the new situation and so offered less resistance to suicide." Similarly, "the bachelor, who is less restricted in his sexual life than the married man, is easily disenchanting and disgusted with life" (Benoit-Smullyan). The result again is suicide. The bachelor's suicide stems from *chronic domestic anomie*.

2. Explain the meaning of anomie, acute economic anomie and anomic suicide.

3. Distinguish egoistic suicide from altruistic suicide.

14.3 Conclusion And evaluation :

I. Zeitlin, the Marxist, who is otherwise a critic of Durkheim's sociological theory, pronounces the following verdict on *Suicide: A study in sociology*: "Durkheim's use of socio-cultural variables to explain an ostensibly idiosyncratic phenomenon such as suicide must be regarded as ingenious and brilliant." The verdict is to be found in his *Ideology and the development of sociological theory*.

The brilliance of Durkheim, especially his study of suicide, is generally acknowledged. At the same time, Durkheim's theory of suicide has been faulted on various grounds. It has been pointed out, for instance by Giddens, that Durkheim's dismissal of non-social influences on suicide is not convincing; that the official statistics he uses for his research into suicide is of questionable worth and do not include attempted suicides; and that his very definition of suicide without reference to individual intentions is radically defective. Durkheim has also been criticised for his failure to draw a clear line of demarcation between egoistic suicide and anomic suicide. Notwithstanding the diverse critiques, Durkheim's study of suicide continues to claim the status of a classic.

14.4 Let us sum up :

The lesson has explained the various aspects of Durkheim's theory of suicide - his definition of suicide as a social fact, his sociological explanation of differential suicide rates across Europe and his classification of suicides into four types. The long and the short of Durkheim's theory is that individual suicide is caused by certain imbalances in social structure. Egoism, altruism, anomie and fatalism (the last mentioned only in passing by Durkheim) are the types of unbalanced social structure that generate suicidogenic currents that act mechanically upon individuals and force a certain number of them to commit suicide.

A few points of criticism, generally voiced against Durkheim's theory, are also noted in the concluding part of the lesson, but without any detailed discussion.

14.5 Key Words :

Altruism/Altruistic Suicide: Altruism signifies excessive social integration. The individual is overly integrated into the group or the collectivity and has little individuality. In such a situation, the individual is ever ready to die or sacrifice himself or herself for the sake of the community. This is altruistic suicide-dying for others.

Anomie/Anomic Suicide: Anomie means the absence of norms or rules - a state of normlessness. When individuals commit suicide for want of adequate moral regulation or moral guidance, it is anomic suicide. The lack of moral regulation leads to unlimited desires; unlimited desires in turn lead to frustration and eventually to suicide.

Domestic Anomie: Normlessness at the domestic level is domestic anomie. It can be acute or chronic. A widowed person unable to adapt to the new situation exemplifies the acute variety; a bachelor with less restricted sexual life exemplifies the chronic type.

Economic Anomie: Fluctuations in the modern economy (booms and depressions) and deregulated division of labour are examples respectively of acute and chronic economic anomie.

Egoism/Egoistic Suicide: Egoism signifies low social integration and excessive individualism. The individual is not well integrated into his society, community or group. Cut off from the group, he loses the sense of direction and purpose in life, is overcome by boredom and despair and finally pushed into suicide.

Fatalism/ fatalistic Suicide: Fatalism refers to a situation when society or community exercises excessive moral or physical despotism over the individual. The control over the individual is too tight to allow him or her any way out of the adverse situation except suicide. Such a suicide is called fatalistic by Durkheim. Self-killings by desperate slaves and childless married women exemplify fatalistic suicide.

Suicide: Suicide is an act of self-destruction on the part of the individual; it is not an accidental death. According to Durkheim, "the term suicide is applied to all cases of death resulting directly or indirectly from positive or negative act of the victim himself, which he knows will produce this result." Durkheim avoids saying that suicide is "intentional".

Suicidal Currents: Benoit-Smullyan explains: "There exist suicidal currents produced by varying states of social organization, which act mechanically

upon individuals and force a certain number of them to commit suicide." The states of social organisation that release suicidal currents are: egoism, altruism, anomie and fatalism.

Suicide Rate: In the words of Durkheim: "suicides committed in a given society during a given period of time" is the rate of suicide. Suicide rates are social facts, which ought to be explained by means of other social facts.

14.6 Model Answers to Check your Progress :

Check Your Progress 1

1. Suicide is an act of self-destruction on the part of the individual; it is not an accidental death. According to Durkheim, "the term suicide is applied to all cases of death resulting directly or indirectly from positive or negative act of the victim himself, which he knows will produce this result."
2. A suicide is an individual act of self-destruction, but the rate or distribution of suicide in a given society is a social fact requiring sociological explanation.
3. Durkheim used official statistics for his research into suicide. It was on the basis of statistical demonstration or correlation that he rejected inherited mental disorder or insanity as a determinant of suicide rates.

Check Your Progress 2

1. Each of them represents an imbalance in social structure. Egoism and altruism represent respectively too little or too much social integration, while anomie and fatalism represent respectively too little or too much moral regulation. Giddens regards them as types of social structure that produce high rates of suicide.
2. Anomie is a state of normlessness. Acute economic anomie refers to the regular fluctuations in modern economy and their destabilising effects. When individuals commit suicide for want of adequate moral regulation or moral guidance, it is anomic suicide. The lack of moral regulation leads to unlimited desires; unlimited desires in turn lead to frustration and eventually to suicide.
3. Egoistic suicide follows when the individual is not well integrated into his group, community or society; altruistic suicide results when the individual is overly integrated. Thus, egoistic suicide is the obverse of altruistic suicide. Again, egoistic suicide is characteristic of modern society, while altruistic suicide prevails mainly (but not exclusively) in premodern societies.

14.7 Questions

Long Answer Questions:

1. Explain the concept of "Suicide" given by Emile Durkheim.
2. Is suicide a social fact? If yes, explain.

Short Answer Questions:

1. What are the types of suicide explained by Durkheim?
2. Is suicide a social phenomenon?
3. What is meant egoistic suicide?

14.8 Further Readings :

1. Benoit-Smullyan, E. 1948. The sociology of Emile Durkheim. In H.E. Barnes, ed., *Introduction to the history of sociology*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
2. Giddens, A. 1978. *Durkheim*. Fontana.
3. Thompson, K. 1982. *Emile Durkheim*. London and New York: Routledge.

Mahatma Gandhi : Non-violence

Structure :

- 15.0 Objectives
- 15.1 Introduction
- 15.2 Meaning of Nonviolence
- 15.3 Summing up
- 15.4 Key words
- 15.5 Readings
- 15.6 Exercise Questions

15.0 Objectives :

This lesson will enable the student to know about

- * the meaning of nonviolence
- * nature and types of nonviolence
- * and elaboration of concept through examples

15.1 Introduction :

In the next chapter we have tried to understand the concept of *swaraj* and there it is mentioned that nonviolence is central to it. It is the backbone of Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy of life, society and nature. It is an all pervasive concept in the sense that it forms the basis of means and ends, individual's acts and institutional goals and processes in a society that claim to abide by the principles of *swaraj*. We have not had such a society so far which is why there is an attempt by people like Gandhi and many more who have always preached nonviolence for the well being of human beings, their society and nature as well.

15.2 Meaning of nonviolence:

The Hindi or Punjabi equivalent of nonviolence is *ahimsa* which is often understood as not doing violence to any living being or refraining from it. In a well-known saying of *Mahabhart*a, "Ahimsa or nonviolence is the highest duty." All religions have preached it in one way or another irrespective of the fact whether it is an old one like Hinduism or a young one like Sikhism. Mahatma Buddha or Jain Mahavir are still considered greatest apostles of nonviolence. But in the modern times Gandhi is the tallest figure among them all.

We all know that in every day understanding of this concept we believe it to be not using violence and that further implies not killing any living being - bird, animal or human- which is best conveyed in a Hindi word *jeev hatya*. One is supposed to abstain from it in every way because it is sin, *paap* that invites the wrath of God who surely punishes the guilty, that is, *paap*. Therefore the term nonviolence has a negative connotation in the sense of not doing something. Another version of it that is very common in this region of India, especially Punjab is the association of nonviolence with Gandhi's practice of offering another cheek when some one slaps a person. It is surely an object of ridicule here as it demands something that is not complimentary to the Punjabi culture. To offer another cheek is definitely interpreted as a sign of weakness which is not only considered bad but despicable.

A typical Punjabi would retort exactly in reverse, that you must reply with a heavier stone as it is said in the vernacular: "*Itt chakde nu pathar mar.*" Interestingly this tendency of replying violence with greater violence is highly appreciated here despite the fact that the Sikh religion too preaches nonviolence. The fifth Guru Arjan Dev who compiled the Guru Granth Sahib and the ninth Guru Tegh Bahadur, offered their lives for the sake of dharma only and that too absolutely nonviolently. Guru Tegh Bahadur himself traveled all the way from Anandpur Sahib to Delhi for his martyrdom and Guru Arjan Dev had calmed down Sayin Mian Mir from doing any violence against the rulers. He consoled him to accept the divine will (*rabb da bhana*).

To Gandhi nonviolence is not a sign or trait of any sort of weakness, physical or moral. On the contrary he thought it to be a tool, rather a weapon in the hands of a morally strong individual. Nonviolence is not conceivable without fearlessness. Who may practice nonviolence? How does one practice it? Obviously a strong and a confident individual who has not only shunned fear but has overcome the ultimate fear of death. When one is not afraid of death any threat from a mortal individual cannot scare him/her. Raj Mohan Gandhi notes that "Fear, hate and violence appear together, and in that order, in many of Gandhi's statements." (1995: 80) He also quotes Gandhi what he said in 1924: "As a coward, which I was for many years, I harboured violence."

Nonviolence or ahimsa, as mentioned above is often used in a negative sense of not using violence but to Gandhi there is also a positive aspect of it and that is of love. A truly nonviolent person not only bears violence inflicted on him/her calmly but also does not bear any ill will against its perpetrator. As he does not bear ill will the feeling of revenge does not arise and which is what brings about the self realization in the mind of a person inflicting violence, physical or moral. The logic of offering the other cheek not only brings self realization but also breaks the cycle of violence which is never ending. Revenge and retaliation have no limit till the two actors, that may be individuals or families or nations, decimate each other or at least one of the two. Such

feelings of revenge trickle down to generations after generations. Any Punjabi person would know that enmity in the Jutt families lasts for seven generations. It is worth reading Gandhi's views on this matter:

A nonviolent man or woman will and should die without retaliation, anger or malice, in self-defense or in defending the honour of their womenfolk. This is the highest form of bravery. If an individual or a group of people are unable or unwilling to follow this great law of life, retaliation or resistance unto death is the second best, though a long way off from the first. Cowardice is impotence worse than violence. The coward desire revenge but being afraid to die, he looks to others, may be to the government of the day, to do the work of defense for him. A coward is less than a man. He does not deserve to be a member of a society of men and women. (Gandhi 1948 Vol. II: 148)

Ahimsa as "Passive resistance is a method of securing rights by personal suffering; it is the reverse of resistance by arms. When I refuse to do a thing that is repugnant to my conscience, I use soul-force." (Hind Swaraj 1938: 79) Further: "If a man will only realize that it is unmanly to obey laws that are unjust, no man's tyranny will enslave him. This is the key to self-rule or home-rule." (Ibid.: 81) And "Passive resistance cannot proceed a step without fearlessness. Those alone can follow the path of passive resistance who are free from fear, whether as to their possessions, false honour, their relatives, the government, bodily injuries or death." (Ibid.: 85)

Gandhi took note of the traditional definition of ahimsa yet added into it something of his own which gave a new meaning to this concept. Bhikhu Parekh suggests:

For Gandhi then ahimsa meant both passive and active love, refraining from causing harm and destruction to living beings as well as promoting their well-being. Himsa was the opposite of ahimsa. Since the ancient Indian thinkers took himsa to be a positive concept, they defined ahimsa in terms of it. Gandhi equated ahimsa with the positive and self-contained concept of love and adopted the opposite approach of defining himsa in terms of it. (Parekh 1989: 116-17)

Another noted Gandhian philosopher K.J. Shah also tries to sort out the subtle differences in various concepts of Gandhi's thought but expresses the difficulty of doing so because he never defined such terms categorically but only through examples, citing certain situations and in relation to one another. Shah in his own way tries to understand nonviolence in relation to cowardice and violence. He writes:

Gandhi was very keen on emphasizing the difference between his nonviolence and passive resistance. 'Nonviolence is not one form, it is the only form, of direct action.' 'Passive resistance is a misnomer for nonviolent resistance. It

is much more active than violent resistance. It is direct, ceaseless, but three-fourths invisible and only one-fourth visible. In its visibility it seems ineffective, e.g. the spinning wheel which I have called the symbol of nonviolence. In its visibility it appears ineffective, but it is really intensely active and more effective in ultimate result.' 'This is not merely an emotional thing.' For Gandhi, this is hard truth. (Shah 1994: 5)

Shah further clarifies difference between violence and nonviolence what most people misunderstand. He quotes Gandhi who cautioned that mere *jivadaya* (kindness to animals) does not enable us to overcome the six deadly enemies. Such *jivadaya* will be a mechanical performance without any spiritual value. And

People committed the mistake of thinking that all that did not involve killing was nonviolence. Some times killing is the cleanest part of violence. If you kill the mischief maker outright there is an end to it as far as he is concerned; but harassment is worse. It did not put out mischief. (Quoted in Ibid.: 6)

But what is that force that activates the soul and takes it to such heights of sacrificing herself for dharma or society. The soul force is referred to as satyagraha that literally means insistence on Truth. An important contribution of Gandhi to the theory of ahimsa is that he made it into a mode of protest at an individual and at the mass level in the public sphere. Nonviolence becomes a political weapon, a means to an end for establishing swaraj or for that matter getting legitimate demands accepted from the government or other authorities. Earlier nonviolence was a way of acting, thinking and doing at the level of an individual. Gandhi made it into a tool or a weapon in the hands of people for mass action. The 241 kilometers long Dandi March in April 1931 to violate the laws of salt tax is an exemplary case of satyagraha. Five batches of satyagrahis would walk up to the shore where they were stopped and canned by the British police force but they neither refrained from marching to their goal nor raised their hands in self defense. The injured were taken away by other volunteers and given first aid. Such satyagrahas organized by Gandhi and his followers deterred the British government as they were at a loss to deal with such people. Even General Smutts felt the irresistible attraction of Gandhi's methods, and one of his secretaries said to Gandhi:

I do not like your people and I do not care to assist them at all. But what am I to do? You help us in our days of need. How can we lay hands upon you? I often wish that you took to violence like the English strikers and then we would know at once how to dispose of you. But you will not injure even the enemy. You desire victory by self-suffering alone and never transgress your self-imposed limits of courtesy and chivalry. And that is what reduces us to sheer helplessness. (Radhakrishnan 1956: 19)

Check your knowledge :

Define Nonviolence.

What is Passive Resistance?

What is the difference between violence and Non-violence?

According to Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan, the former President of India the practical application of nonviolence or ahimsa in life is satyagraha or soul force. It is based on the assumption that, and he quotes Gandhi "the word rests on the bedrock of *satya* or truth. *Asatya*, meaning untruth, also means non-existent, and *satya*, or truth means 'that which is'. If untruth does not so much as exist, its victory is out of question. And truth is being 'that which is' can never be destroyed." (Ibid.: 16) He says God is the reality. The will to freedom and love is in accordance with reality. And

Satyagraha is rooted in the power of reality, in the inward strength of the soul. It is not merely the negative virtue of abstaining from violence, but the positive one of doing good. 'If I hit my adversary, that is of course violence: but to be truly non-violent, I must love him even when he hits me.' Love is unity and it comes into clash with evil which is separateness, getting, despising, hating, hurting and killing. (Ibid.: 17)

Gandhi asks us to leave fighting to apes and dogs and behave like men and

serve the right by quiet suffering. Love or self-suffering can overcome the enemy, not by destroying him but by changing him, for he is, after all, a person of like passions with ourselves. Gandhi's acts of repentance and self-humiliation are full of moral courage and atoning sacrifice. (Ibid. 17)

To Gandhi, nonviolence or ahimsa and Truth are like two sides of a coin, or rather a smooth unstamped metallic disc. Who can say, which is the obverse and which the reverse? To practice ahimsa is to realize Truth and to realize Truth is to practice ahimsa. In Gandhi's own words: "Ahimsa is my God, and Truth is my God. When I look for Ahimsa Truth says: 'Find it through me.' When I look for Truth, Ahimsa says: 'Find it through me.'" (Quoted in Richards 1982: 8) He used to say that when Truth is on your side it gives you moral strength to fight.

Gandhi was not a utopian dogmatic follower of nonviolence. The case of a diseased calf in his ashram is well known. It was incurable and always writhing in pain. He himself advised the doctor to kill the beast as that was the only way it could be relieved of the pain and agony of survival. When a lady asked him what must she do if she is subjected to molestation. The Mahatma advised her to use her nails and teeth. Shah quotes Gandhi: "Haven't I said to our women that, if in defense of their honour they used their nails and teeth and even a dagger, I should regard their conduct nonviolent." (Shah 1994: 7)

Gandhi was not moralizing in the air alone. He was acutely aware of the limitations of his theory of nonviolence. Parekh notes: "He knew that his ideal of a completely nonviolent society was unrealizable and that violence was necessary, unavoidable or understandable when used in the pursuit of such values as individual and social life, justice, the assertion of human dignity and the development of courage or when provoked by unbearable oppression. (Parekh 1989: 137) As Gandhi was not an arm chair philosopher but close to reality being a practical person (karam yogi), he often suggested exceptions to complete or total nonviolence. J.D. Sethi also notes: "I have counted at least twenty two relative exceptions to the concept of nonviolence which Gandhi himself has mentioned. Yet we all seem to have made the mistake of absolutizing it." (Sethi 1978: 37-8)

But Gandhi had undoubtedly an unflinching faith in the realizability of nonviolence in practical life. It is important to note his suggestions for disarmament against Hitler during the Second World War:

The hardest metal yields to sufficient heat; even so must the hardest heart melt before the sufficiency of the heat of nonviolence. And there is no limit to the capacity of nonviolence to generate heat.

... During my half-century of experience I have yet not come across a situation when I had to say that I was helpless, that I had no remedy in terms of nonviolence. (Radhakrishnan 1956: 22-23)

He believed firmly: "Nonviolence is the greatest force at the disposal of mankind. It is mightier than the mightiest weapon of destruction devised by the ingenuity of man." And the very basis of his conviction was the manifestation of the spirit of the almighty God in each living being. As it is His creation its nature must be good basically. He mentions: "Belief in nonviolence is based on the assumption that human nature in its essence is one and therefore unfailingly responds to the advances of love." (Gandhi 1948 vol. I: 175) Despite Gandhi's optimism and the possibility of nonviolence, Radhakrishnan is skeptical. He writes:

The fate of civilization and humanity on this planet is bound up with that deep instinct for the universal values of spirit, freedom, justice and love of man which form the breath of Gandhi's being. In this violent and distracted world Gandhi's nonviolence seems to be a dream too beautiful to be true. For him God is truth and love, and God wishes us to be truthful and loving regardless of consequences. (Radhakrishnan 1956:21-22)

15.3 Summing up:

In this lesson we have tried to look into the meaning of the concept of nonviolence as to what it meant to Gandhi and how he tried to differentiate it from the traditional notions of the term. He advocated it as the sole principle for the realization of swaraj, of a good society. And he dispelled doubts about it being a weapon of the weak and the meek. On the contrary he suggested that cowardice and fear are enemies of nonviolence. Moral strength of an individual is more important than the physical strength and the moral strength comes from the Truth. The God too is on the side of the Truth. Thus Truth and nonviolence are inseparable.

15.4 Keywords:

Non-violence or ahimsa means not only to refrain from violence but also loving one's opponent or enemy. It also refers to Truth. It is mightier than the mightiest weapon made thus far by man. It is also active resistance.

Truth is that which exists. It never dies nor it is destroyed. It provides strength and moral support to the person and prepares her for nonviolent struggle.

Satyagraha is insisting on truth and readiness to tolerate any pain or torture for realizing the rightful goal or purpose. It is also soul force.

Fearlessness is freedom from fear. It is an essential element of nonviolence.

Passive resistance refers to recuring one's rights through personal

suffering without taking to arms. It is only a form of nonviolence in the western sense of the term. A coward person cannot practice it since it requires fearlessness.

15.5 Exercise Questions :

- 1) Write an essay on non violence.
- 2) Define non-violence and discuss its nature.
- 3) What do you mean by non-violence? Explain its types.

Short questions (Define)

- a) Ahimsa
- b) Satyagraha
- c) Passive Resistance
- d) Truth.

15.6 Suggested Readings:

Gandhi, M.K. (1938) *Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule*. Ahmedabad: Navjivan Publishing House.

Gandhi, M.K. (1948) *Nonviolence in Peace and War. Vols. I & II*. Ahmedabad: Navjivan Publishing House.

Gandhi, Raj Mohan (1995) *The Good Boatman: A Portrait of Gandhi*. Delhi: Viking.

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Radhakrishnan, Sarvapalli (ed.) (1956/1977) *Mahatma Gandhi: Essays and Reflections on his Life and Work*. Bombay: Jaico Press Private Limited.

Sethi, J.D. (1978) *Gandhi Today*. Delhi: Vikas Publishing House.

Shah, K.J. (1994) "An Introductory Note to Gandhi's Non-Violence: Its Bases", *Seminar on Gandhi*, Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla, (unpublished).

Mahatma Gandhi : Satyagraha

Structure :

- 16.0 Objectives
- 16.1 Introduction
- 16.2 Origin
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- 16.11 Key Words
- 16.12 Exercise Questions
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16.0 Objectives :

This lesson will enable the student to know about

- * the meaning of satyagraha
- * essential ingredients of satyagraha
- * nature, types and scope of satyagraha
- * differences between these types
- * and elaboration of concept through examples

16.1 Introduction :

When one thinks of satyagraha no name other than Gandhi comes to one's mind and it is associated with peaceful struggle or hartal or dharna by those who are protesting against some unjust rule or law or policy of the government or some private organization. In Punjab it is closely associated with morchas

often launched by the Shiromani Akali Dal on various issues whereby the said political party is protesting against the central government or any other institution. Despite this similarity between satyagraha and morcha as forms of peaceful protest, Punjabis in general and Sikhs in particular have some aversion to Gandhi's concept of ahimsa especially of offering the other cheek for more violence by its perpetrator. It is considered highly pejorative and non-masculine and a sure sign of one's weakness.

16.2 Origin :

Many readers may not know this fact that this potent Gandhian weapon of protest did not originate in this country. It was no doubt invented by Gandhi, an Indian but in South Africa where he was protesting against the autocratic and illegitimate ways of the colonial government that was trying to make laws to check immigration of Indians there. Canceling their earlier documents they were asked to register afresh. The immigrants protested under Gandhi's leadership, who also traveled to England to talk to the King there but without much success. In 1907 Transvaal ceased to be a Crown Colony hence revoked the Black Act and made it into a law making registration compulsory. Penderel Moon describes:

The Indian community now had to make plans for carrying out their pledge not to submit to this legislation. Gandhi had at first described the movement he was about to inaugurate as 'passive resistance'. But he soon became dissatisfied with this description. He *disliked an essentially Indian movement being known by an English name*; and he discovered that the term 'passive resistance' gave rise to what seemed to him to be 'terrible misunderstanding'... He denied that the Indians were weak or passive and defined their passive resistance as 'soul-force' which is far stronger than brute, physical force. (Moon 1968: 42) (emphasis added)

To give a suitable name to an Indian movement and to differentiate it from 'passive resistance', Gandhi announced a prize on the best suggestion in his paper *Indian Opinion*. One Maganlal Gandhi suggested *sadagraha*, meaning "firmness in a good cause" but Gandhi made a slight variation and called it satyagraha. He himself explained the difference:

I liked the word, but it did not fully represent the whole idea I wished it to connote. I therefore corrected it to 'satyagraha'. Truth (satya) implies love, and firmness (agraha) engenders and therefore serves as a synonym for force. I thus began to call the Indian movement 'satyagraha', that is to say, the force which is born to Truth and Love or non-violence, and gave up the use of the phrase 'passive resistance'. (Iyer 1973: 269-70)

It is elaborated further: "I do not like the term 'passive resistance', it fails to convey all I mean. It describes a method, but gives no hint of the system of

which it is only a part. Real beauty, and that is my aim, is in doing good against evil." (Ibid: 271) Iyer suggests many sources of this concept: "The doctrine of satyagraha was derived from many sources, from the Sermon on the Mount and the *Bhagavad Gita*, from Tolstoy and Thoreau. Gandhi's campaign of *satyagraha* was actually well under way in South Africa before he saw Thoreau's writings." (Ibid: 270) But it is not denying the fact that he was much impressed by Thoreau's *Civil Disobedience* written in 1849, a year after the publication of the *Communist Manifesto*.

16.3 Meaning :

Satyagraha is a conjugation of two words satya, means truth and agraha, means insisting on or holding firm suggesting thus to stand firm on a cause that is truthful and hence just. In simple terms it means that if some one is harmed by some person, institution or a government then that person must protest against the concerned exploiter or oppressor, all very peacefully standing firm on her truthful cause or demand. The truthfulness of her demand or cause will provide her strength to stand firm on her target without any deterrence. This strength will come to her only and only if her cause is just and legitimate. She will not offer any resistance even if she is given any physical pain or torture. She would bear all this suffering without even thinking ill of its opponent. There is no malice in her suffering. Such soul-force shall not coerce the opponent harbouring ill will against the satyagrahi but make her a willing convert to her demands. It would generate a bond of love between the two - opponent and the satyagrahi.

Let us know from Gandhi himself what he says of satyagraha, its constituents and types:

Satyagraha is like a banyan tree with innumerable branches. Civil disobedience is one such branch. Satya (truth) and ahimsa (non-violence) together make the parent trunk from which all the innumerable branches shoot out... We must fearlessly spread the doctrine of satya and ahimsa and then, and not till then, shall we be able to undertake mass satyagraha. (Iyer: 285)

It comes out clearly from the above description that satya and ahimsa are absolutely essential inputs for carrying out satyagraha irrespective of the fact that whether it is carried out at the individual or at the mass level. As a matter of fact these inputs become all the more important for the mass satyagraha as there lies the greater possibility of digression from the true path if all satyagrahis are not strictly disciplined on the lines of truth and nonviolence. Satyagraha is also called "soul-force" because "to believe in Absolute Truth, which is God, implies every man embodies a portion of that truth, that is, a soul possessing 'soul-force'."

16.4 Satya :

It is derived from sat which means being or to be. Gandhi writes to Narandas in 1930:

The word satya is derived from sat, which means that which is. Satya means a state of being. Nothing is or exists in reality except Truth. That is why sat or satya is the right name for God. In fact it is more correct to say that Truth is God than to say that God is Truth. But as we cannot do without a ruler or general, the name God is and will remain more current. On deeper thinking, however, it will be realized that sat or satya is the only correct and fully significant name for God. (Iyer 1993: 231-2)

Gandhi suggests further that observing the law of Truth means to speak the truth. It is in its narrow sense only. As a matter of fact it should be Truth in thought, speech and action. And someone who has realized this Truth in fullness nothing else remains to be known. He continues:

But how is one to realize this Truth, which may be likened to the philosophers' stone or the cow of plenty? By abhyasa, single-minded devotion, and vairagya, indifference to all other interests in life - replies the Bhagavad Gita. Even so what may appear as truth to one person will often appear as untruth to another person. But that need not worry the seeker. Where there is honest effort, it will be realized that what appear to be different truths are like the countless and apparently different leaves of the same tree. Does not God Himself appear to different individuals in different aspects? Yet we know that He is one. (Ibid: 232)

The above description of Gandhi tells us that the archetypal Reality, the God and the Truth are all synonyms, all standing for the same thing. And the purpose of man's life is to understand or know this Reality. Since this Reality is not easily known one must ever keep trying to understand it and the only way to it is through tapas, self-suffering "sometimes even unto death." "The pursuit of Truth is true bhakti, devotion... It is the path that leads to God. There is no place in it for cowardice, no place for defeat. It is the talisman by which death itself becomes the portal to life eternal." (Ibid: 233) Once a person reaches that level of understanding of reality then and only then one gets the moral courage to stand up to the highest authority against any injustice because one has become fearless as the truth is on her side, one is prepared to suffer to any extent including death (the greatest of all fears) and one has risen above the possession of material and worldly goods. This precisely is satyagraha. But there is another very important constituent without which satyagraha is not possible. It is ahimsa. Reflecting on the significance of satya, Iyer suggests: "Gandhi's concept of truth was developed in an effort to undermine external authority and to reaffirm the moral autonomy and authority of the individual as an agent and active performer in

the arena of politics and social life." (Iyer 1973: 173)

16.5 Ahimsa :

We have looked into the meaning of this concept above but here we shall focus on that dimension which is entwining it with truth or satya and hence satyagraha. Gandhi believed that satya and ahimsa are so intertwined that it is practically impossible to disentangle and separate them from each other: He says:

They are like the two sides of a coin, or rather of a smooth unstamped metallic disc. Who can say which is the obverse, and which is the reverse? Nevertheless ahimsa is the means; Truth is the end. Means to be means must always be within our reach, and so ahimsa is our supreme duty. If we take care of the means, we are bound to reach the end sooner or later. When once we have grasped this point, final victory is beyond question. (Ibid: 227-8)

Iyer points out that the above stated position of Gandhi is at variance with his earlier position and also brings out the overlap between these two terms:

But though he (Gandhi) sometimes equated satya with ahimsa, he was concerned at other times to distinguish clearly between them. Satya, he once said, is positive, whereas ahimsa is negative, and yet 'nonviolence is the highest religion.' He distinguished between the positive and negative meanings of both satya and ahimsa, but he regarded ahimsa as negative in relation to satya because of his identification of truth with reality, the derivation of satya from Sat. (Ibid: 227)

Although in practice Gandhi emphasized ahimsa rather than satya, he consistently maintained that satya is superior to ahimsa if a comparison must be instituted between these inseparable concepts. For although satya and ahimsa were "convertible terms" if circumstances arose in which we have to choose between the two, Gandhi would opt for satya which is supreme than ahimsa. He makes it more clear:

As I proceed in my search for truth it grows upon me that Truth comprehends everything. It is not in ahimsa but ahimsa in it... We have to live a life of ahimsa in the midst of a world of himsa, and that is possible only if we cling to truth. That is how I deduce ahimsa from truth. Out of truth emanate love, tenderness, humility. (Ibid: 229)

Gandhi considered ahimsa not a policy but a creed which is why it has to be all-pervasive. It is an ideal to be reached, a fact of the life and an act of faith, hence a law of life. He used to say, "I cannot be non-violent about one activity of mine and violent about others. That would be a policy, not a life-force." He wrote in a letter to Asaf Ali: "Non-violence for me is not a mere experiment. It is part of my life and the whole of the creed of satyagraha, non-cooperation, civil disobedience, and the like are necessary deductions from the fundamental

proposition that non-violence is the law of life for human beings." (Iyer 1993:

244) Gandhi lists out five simple axioms of this creed:

- (i) Non-violence implies as complete self-purification as is humanly possible thus implying rigorous ethical discipline.
- (ii) Man for man strength of non-violence is in exact proportion to the ability, not the will, of the non-violent person to inflict violence.
- (iii) Non-violence is without exception superior to violence.
- (iv) There is no such thing as defeat in non-violence. The end of violence is surest defeat.
- (v) The ultimate end of non-violence is surest victory- if such a term may be used. In reality, where there is no sense of defeat, there is no sense of victory. (Iyer 1993: 246)

No doubt civil disobedience and non-cooperation are the branches of the same tree yet there is difference between them. Iyer writes that Gandhi not merely distinguished firmly between passive resistance and satyagraha, but also brought out difference between the closely connected notions of non-cooperation, civil disobedience and satyagraha. Satyagraha is a much broader concept than civil disobedience or non-cooperation. The civil disobedience is "civil breach of unmoral statutory enactments." Non-cooperation on the other hand implies withdrawal of cooperation from the State that has become corrupt. Further non-cooperation can be safely practiced by the masses, civil disobedience can be practiced only as a last resort and by a select few. Civil disobedience is more difficult than non-cooperation because it presupposes the habit of willing obedience to laws without fear of the sanctions. (Ibid: 275) It neither hurts the moral sense nor violates the individual conscience. Gandhi envisaged the need for complete civil disobedience which is nothing but a state of peaceful rebellion, a refusal to obey every single State-made law. When violence is corroding the body politic, such civil disobedience will be "'but a purifying process and may bring to the surface what is burrowing under and into the whole body.' Civil disobedience can be made 'a sovereign remedy for all our ills' if we can produce the necessary atmosphere for it." (Ibid: 279)

16.6 Scope :

Reflecting on the scope and significance of satyagraha, Iyer suggests that the doctrine of satyagraha was conceived by Gandhi as an extension of the rule of domestic life into the politics. He held that family disputes and differences are generally settled according to the "Law of Love". He quotes Gandhi:

It is this Law of Love which, silently but surely, governs the family for the most part throughout the civilized world. I feel that nations cannot be one in reality...unless there is this definition and acceptance of the law of the family

in national and international affairs, in other words, on the political platform. Nations can be called civilized only to the extent that they obey this law. (Iyer 1973: 294)

Gandhi writes in a leaflet that religious sects and divisions, churches and temples are useful so long they teach us to recognize the universality of satyagraha. He adds: "I do wish to submit as a matter of experience that that it is not only possible to live the full national life, by rendering obedience to the law of satyagraha, but that the fullness of national life is impossible without satyagraha, i.e, without a life of true religion." (Iyer 1993: 317)

Gandhi further adds:

When men and women have gone a stage further, they would extend the law of love, i.e., satyagraha, from the family to the village. A still further stage away from the brute life is reached when the law of satyagraha is applied to provincial life, and the people inhabiting a province regulate their relations by love rather than with hatred. And when as in Hindustan we recognize the law of satyagraha as a binding force even between province and province and the millions of Hindustanis treat one another as brothers and sisters, we have advanced a stage further still from the brute nature. (Iyer 1993: 316-7)

Gandhi was so sure of the effectiveness of the law of satyagraha that he called it a "universal principle and a law of universal application." All human beings independent of caste, class, creed, race, gender and age can use this method of protest and conflict resolution. But how this law is within the reach of all and sundry, the rich and the poor, an individual and a collective group or communities or even nations? What is the reason for its universal applicability? And the reason suggested for the universality of this law and its world wide application is the fact that it is independent of pecuniary or other material assistance. A poor man or a poor nation can resort to satyagraha as much and as effectively as a rich man or a rich nation.

Gandhi not only called satyagraha a law of love, a law of universal application, and equated it with religion as well, he even said that it a "science in making" as the humanity is yet not so mature and disciplined and it is yet to learn the law of satyagraha, leave aside perfecting it. The humanity is yet learning its techniques which are no doubt simple but not very easy to master. It demands lot of practice and strict discipline. And for spreading the use of such techniques and to teach this law to the peoples of the world, he fixed the responsibility of the Indian people since they have inherited it from their social and cultural tradition. No other people in the world have this privilege and hence adequately equipped for this job.

16.7 Conditions for Satyagraha:

Satyagraha is not only a method of protest but also a way of life. But when we

have to use it as a technique of conflict resolution then what are those conditions that must be fulfilled. Iyer lists out seven such conditions or prerequisites that must be met.

- (i) The cause must be just. It can never be launched for an unjust cause.
- (ii) Violence in any form - thought, speech or deed - must be avoided. It demands absolute non-violence.
- (iii) Satyagraha presupposes a reasoned and willing obedience to the laws of the State, i.e., a compliance which is free and voluntary and fearless. It tantamounts to tolerance of those laws that are inconvenient and unjust against whom satyagraha is to be launched.
- (iv) The satyagrahis must have the capacity and willingness to suffer. Suffering also involves loss of property, dear ones and one's life as well.
- (v) Satyagraha demands strict discipline and cool courage on the part of its activists.
- (vi) Satyagraha requires complete humility.
- (vii) Satyagraha is always launched for the good of others and never for a personal gain. (Iyer 1973: 296-7)

16.8 Rules for Satyagrahis :

If there are conditions that must be observed under which satyagraha may be practiced, Gandhi is more concerned about the behaviour and activities of those who participate in satyagraha. Gandhi writes in February 1930: "Satyagraha literally means insistence on truth. This insistence arms the votary with matchless power. This power or force ... satyagraha...may be offered against parents, against one's wife or one's children, against rulers, against fellow-citizens, even against the whole world." (Iyer 1993: 319) Therefore, a satyagrahi, the wielder of such a potent force must observe numerous definite rules lest he may spoil the broth altogether to the detriment of others and the movement as well. He listed out rules for satyagrahi as an individual, as a prisoner, as a unit and also in a communal riot but here we shall concentrate only on the rules to be observed by an individual satyagrahi.

- (i) S/he will harbour no anger against the opponent instead suffer her anger.
- (ii) S/he will neither retaliate against the assaults of the opponent nor insult her.
- (iii) Non-retaliation excludes swearing and cursing.
- (iv) S/he will neither resist arrest nor confiscation of her property from authority.
- (v) But if a satyagrahi is a trustee of some property he would defend it at

- the cost of her life as well.
- (vi) A satyagrahi will not salute the Union Jack, nor will he insult it or officials, English or Indian.
 - (vii) In case of an assault on the opponent or an official a satyagrahi will protect her life at the cost of her own life. (Iyer 1993: 320-1)

Besides these rules he expected satyagrahis to stick to truth remembering that they are fighting a holy war. They must show courtesy to their adversaries and must apply the same principle that they observe in their family quarrels. They must not act clever but be frank. They must make bare minimum demands for their stay when they are camping at a village. They must help the villagers in their spare time in all those activities where they are deficient and lacking. For example, if their children need to be taught or health services are deficient there, they must render their own services to them to improve these conditions. They must intervene in the villagers' quarrels. They must narrate stories of Prahlad and Raja Harishchandra to the villagers so that the message of satyagraha is properly disseminated to them and they come to appreciate its significance. (Ibid: 314-5)

Gandhi believed that satyagraha is the "noblest and best education" as it will make mortal men perfect. He expected a perfect satyagrahi to be a "perfect man". Thus he is a radical activist and a revolutionary without using violence. Iyer sums up: "At the centre of Gandhi's conception of satyagraha lay his image of the ideal satyagrahi, a religious as well as a political model, the archetype of Good Citizen as well as of the perfect devotee of Truth." (Iyer 1973: 339)

16.9 Difference between satyagraha and passive resistance :

Gandhi regarded Jesus Christ as "the Prince of Passive Resisters" and argues that this technique of protest is not new. Iyer informs that in modern India the doctrine of passive resistance was expounded chiefly by Aurobindo Ghose as a political tactic rather than a spiritual therapeutic. Gandhi writes in *Hind Swaraj*, which according to Penderel Moon is composed on his return voyage to South Africa in November 1909 "in order to demonstrate the sublimity of Satyagraha' (Moon 1968: 52):

Passive resistance is an all-sided sword, it can be used anyhow; it blesses him who uses it and him against whom it is used. Without drawing a drop of blood it produces far-reaching results. It never rusts and cannot be stolen. Competition between passive resisters does not exhaust. The sword of Passive Resistance does not require a scabbard. It is strange indeed that you consider such a weapon to be a weapon merely of the weak. (Gandhi 1938: 82)

Gandhi illustrates, again in *Hind Swaraj*:

Passive resistance is a method of securing rights by personal suffering; it is

the reverse of resistance by arms. When I refuse to do a thing that is repugnant to my conscience, I use soul-force. For instance, the government of the day has passed a law which is applicable to me. I do not like it. If by using violence I force the Government to repeal the law, I am applying what may be termed body-force. If I do not obey the law and accept the penalty for its breach, I use soul-force. It involves sacrifice of self. (Ibid: 79)

Iyer writes that although Gandhi used satyagraha and passive resistance as synonyms in Hind Swaraj and elsewhere, he sharpened the distinction between them in *Satyagraha in South Africa* regarding the difference between the two as "great and fundamental". Focusing on the significance of ahimsa in satyagraha, Gandhi once remarked that "satyagraha differs from passive resistance as the North Pole from the South." (Iyer 1968: 274) He listed five points:

- (i) Passive resistance is expected or reputed to be a tool of the weak and the hapless. Satyagraha on the other hand is a tool for the strong. It increases the strength of stayagrahi.
- (ii) There is no scope for love in passive resistance and of hatred in satyagraha.
- (iii) There is no scope for the use of arms in Passive resistance but these may be used at some stage but these are strictly forbidden in satyagraha. Brute force is its negation, but not necessarily for passive resistance.
- (iv) Passive resistance may not be offered against one's near and dear ones but satyagraha may be invoked against them too.
- (v) Passive resistance always harbours an idea of harassing the other party which is not true of satyagraha. It offers love for all. (Ibid: 273)

16.10 Summing Up :

An attempt has been made in this lesson to make some sense of that concept of Gandhi which was close to his heart and a powerful method of peaceful conflict resolution. He launched this kind of struggle for the first time in South Africa and realized its fruits here in India, though not to his satisfaction, where he was an active participant in the Indian national struggle for Independence. He, however, was wary of implementing mass satyagraha here because of lack of discipline in the volunteers. Iyer writes: "Gandhi himself soon came to recognize the dangers of '*limited and mechanical*' adherence to ahimsa in mass satyagraha. He had to learn these lessons from bitter experience in India, where the true spirit of satyagraha did not readily take root as it had among the Indian community in South Africa." (Ibid: 326) (emphasis original)

We have seen that satyagraha has varied meanings, shades and colours and Gandhi goes to the extent of calling it a "science in making" that will create

perfect men. Truth and ahimsa are its integral parts and non-cooperation, civil disobedience are its types which could be practiced by people cutting across all types of classifications, hierarchies and boundaries. It is a soul-force that moves mountains. It is a universal principle of universal application that neither requires money nor weapons used in conventional wars. A satyagrahi only needs the support of truth and moral courage derived there from to stand up against anybody ranging from near and dear ones to the imperial powers. Her aim is to convert the opponent rather than coerce her to yield to her just demands. But this is possible only if satyagrahis follow rules and observe conditions necessary for satyagraha. If not done so, it becomes duragraha, opposite of satyagraha.

16.11 Keywords :

Satyagraha is a compound word that means insistence on truth. It also means firmness of one's stand for a just cause. It is called soul-force. Satya and ahimsa are its pillars.

Satya means truth or Reality. It is also referred to as God. It alone exists.

Ahimsa is non-violence which not only means not giving an injury to someone but also in its positive sense showering love on the enemy.

Civil disobedience is not obeying those rules of the government or society that are unjust and/or against the truthful claims of an individual.

Non-cooperation means that when a government is harming a person or a community they decide not to cooperate with it.

Passive resistance is a method of securing rights by personal suffering; it is the reverse of resistance by arms. When one refuses to do a thing that is repugnant to her conscience, she uses soul-force.

16.12 Exercise Questions :

1. Define Satyagraha and Discuss conditions which must be fulfilled.
2. What do you mean by the concept of Satyagraha as given by Gandhi and through light on the Rules for Satyagrahis.
3. Write an essay on Satyagraha.

Short Questions (Define) :

- (a) Passive Resistance
- (b) Satya
- (c) Ahimsa
- (d) Satyagrahi

16.13 Suggested Readings :

Iyer, Raghavan (1973) *The Moral and Political Thought of Mahatma Gandhi*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Iyer, Raghavan (ed.) (1993, 2005) *The Essential Writings of Mahatma Gandhi*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Moon, Penderel (1968) *Gandhi and Modern India*. London: The English Universities Press Ltd.

Gandhi, M.K. (1938) *Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule*. Ahmedabad: Navjivan Publishing House.

Mahatma Gandhi : Swaraj

Structure :

- 17.0 Objectives
- 17.1 Introduction
- 17.2 Mahatma Gandhi : Introduction
- 17.3 Swaraj
 - 17.3.1 Swaraj at Social Level
 - 17.3.2 Swaraj at Economic Level
 - 17.3.3 Swaraj at Political Level
- 17.4 Summing Up
- 17.5 Key Words
- 17.6 Exercise Questions
- 17.7 Further Readings

17.0 Objectives :

This lesson will enable the student to know about :

- * a brief introduction to the life and times of Mahatma Gandhi
- * the meaning of Swaraj
- * Swaraj in its social, economic and political contexts.

17.1 Introduction :

In this lesson we are going to look into the concept of swaraj which had been central to the Gandhian thought. It proposes a vision of the Indian society as Gandhi deemed fit after the end of colonial rule by the British. Though often understood in its political administrative sense of independence or national liberation or freedom from the yoke of colonialism Gandhi's concept of swaraj certainly transcends all these notions. It is a very comprehensive concept that includes almost every thing that a good society must have. It is a critique of the western civilization, its science and technology and a restructuring of the Indian traditional thought and society.

17.2 Introduction to Mahatma Gandhi:

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi has been given the status of Mahatma by the people of India as he stood out amongst whole lot of political leaders who were fighting for the country's independence till August 1947. His identification with people in terms of his form -dress, costumes, life style as well, and in terms of content too -his philosophy, ideas and language etc. has endeared him to the common people which is why he was addressed as *mahatma*. He was born on 2nd October 1869 in Gujrat, studied in England for his law degree, practiced his views on life, living and political action in South Africa, and finally made his motherland his *karam bhoomi*. His political career spread over four decades was dedicated not only to the liberation of country from the British rule but also to suggest an alternative mode of life and politics to the people of India. He established *ashrams* at Sabarmati and Wardha to let people realize how the traditional village life had been and can be a meaningful mode of habitation and nonviolent living. Finally this great apostle of nonviolence or ahimsa was made to face a violent death on 30 January 1948 at the hands of a fanatic worker of RSS, Nathuram Godse.

17.3 Meaning of swaraj :

A simple dictionary meaning of swaraj is self rule to be precise. Swa is self and raj is rule. Thus swaraj is an individual's control on own self as in Indian philosophy ego or self is given to animal instincts and behaviour. An individual's self is given to all sorts of worldly enchantments and glamour what is known as *mayajal*. The material is opposed to the spiritual and the ultimate aim of human life is to attain *moksha*, that is, deliverance from this worldly existence driven by greed, sexuality, anger and elated ego that are given to collection of material goods including power. This precisely is *mayajal*. Why? Because lust for power and money are difficult to control and these know no limit. Ravana, for instance, was aiming to win the three worlds -*teen lok-* and establish his supremacy there. Unlike his father, a rishi he was given to the aspirations of his mother and finally met a disastrous end. Such stories are told to us from childhood yet we do not listen to their morals. The true salvation thus, lies in getting control on one's self in its pursuit of material gains and channelise it towards *moksha*.

Besides the above mentioned notion of swaraj as self rule or self improvement swaraj for Gandhi in its political administrative mode refers to self government or the quest for home rule or the good state. It is realization of sarvodaya, the welfare of all. The title of his little book, a manifesto indeed for liberation and a good society is titled *Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule* which is where he spells out in detail the need for a good society and its nature as well. What makes a good society? Why is this required and what are its essential elements? This is such a simple yet profound, small yet large in content that

it makes sense to both a lay person and to a philosopher as well. In Gandhi's own words the issues raised therein are such that a student of class six can also understand it.

This was initially written in Gujrati language in 1909 between 13-22 November when Gandhi was returning from London in a ship called Kildonan Castle. Its English version translated by the author himself came in the following year. It is interesting to note Gandhi's views in his foreword to this manifesto: "I have written because I could not restrain myself. I have read much. I have pondered much, during the stay (in London)...I discussed things with as many of my countrymen as I could. I met, too, as many Englishmen as it was possible for me to meet. I consider it my duty now to place before the readers of *Indian Opinion* the conclusions, which appear to me to be final." (*Hind Swaraj* 1938)

In the words of Anthony Parel, Gandhi had six intentions to write it down. One, it was an inner urge as mentioned above. He also wrote to Polack a month before the actual writing: "The thing was brewing in my mind." Two, it was meant to clarify the meaning of swaraj as self rule and as self government. Three, it addressed to the ideology of political terrorism adopted and propagated by the expatriates, that is, Indians settled abroad and fighting for the liberation of the country. Four, that modern civilization posed a greater threat to the Indians than colonialism. In his own words: "it is not the British that are responsible for the misfortunes of India but we who have succumbed to modern civilization." He reiterated the same views in 1929: "The Western civilization which passes for civilization is disgusting to me. I have given a rough picture of it in *Hind Swaraj*. Time has brought no change in it." Fifth, he wanted reconciliation between the Indians and Britons. He did not consider all Englishmen bad or evil. As a matter of fact he was against their rule not the people. He writes in *Hind Swaraj* against those Indians who want to drive them away but adopt their ways of doing things: "that we want English rule without the Englishman. You want the tiger's nature, but not the tiger; that is to say you make India English." (*Hind Swaraj* 1938: 30) Six, to be able to give Indians a practical philosophy, an updated conception of dharma, that would fit them for life in the modern world. In Gandhi's own words: "This is not a mere political book. I have used the language of politics, but I have really tried to offer a glimpse of dharma. What is the meaning of *Hind Swaraj*? It means rule of dharma or *Ramrajya*...We may read the Gita or the Ramayana or *Hind Swaraj*. But what we have to learn from them is desire for the welfare of others" (Parel *Gandhi. Hind Swaraj and other writings* 1997: xiv - xvii)

In the words of Raj Mohan Gandhi, the grandson of Mahatma Gandhi *Hind Swaraj* drew out of three sets of influences, namely disillusionment with the politics and society of South Africa and England, the western civilization and

the Indian militants' organization in London. (Raj Mohan Gandhi *The Good Boatman: A portrait of Gandhi* 1995: 141) He further suggests that the thesis of Hind Swaraj is straight that violence and western civilization go together as satyagraha and Indian civilization. (Ibid.: 152) He calls it "a warrior's manifesto, not a scholar's survey. It was the East's assertion of identity in a world and an age dominated by the West, and Gandhi's assertion of himself before an India undecided between petitioning and bomb-throwing. Helping India to stand upright, let go the bomb and look the West in the eye. Hind Swaraj also triggered a worldwide celebration of indigenous cultures." (Ibid.: 164)

Thus swaraj is an attempt to construct a society where there is neither domination of the State nor of some caste or class of people on fellow human beings; where each individual person is enjoying social, economic and political freedom and is able to thrive on the boons of nature that are bountiful. In such a society nature is not only not exploited but protected and respected by its members since their ultimate survival is based on nature's well being.

If this is so then what are the ingredients that must be go into the making of swaraj, a peaceful, harmonious, nature loving society? What must be done to achieve this goal? Unlike many other theories and philosophies Gandhi's approach is holistic which means that he does not see individuals or institutions, facts and values, content and form separate from each other. For him means cannot be separated from ends. He was a strong votary of an intrinsic connection between the two which suggests that only pure means can achieve an end or goal that is pure. One cannot reach a pure goal with impure means as is the wont of Marxists for whom an end justifies the means. If the ultimate goal is good and serves the interests of majority people then impure means like violence or terror are also granted sanction. It is for this very reason that Gandhi disagreed strongly with the expatriates like Veer Savarkar and others such as Subhash Chandra Bose or Bhagat Singh who took recourse to violence for the liberation of country.

How to realise swaraj also engaged Gandhiji's attention seriously. Mathai mentions that Gandhi often reminded his colleagues that swaraj will not drop from the cloud and it would be the fruit of patience, perseverance, ceaseless toil, courage and intelligent appreciation of the environment. He also reminded them that swaraj means vast organising ability, penetration into the villages solely for the services of the villagers; in other words, it means national education i.e., education of the masses.' And in the Gandhian discourse, education of the masses means conscientization, mobilisation and empowerment, making people capable and determined to stand up to the powers that be. He said: "Real swaraj will come, not by the acquisition of authority but by the acquisition of the capacity by all to resist authority when it is abused. In other words, swaraj is to be attained by educating the masses

to a sense of their capacity to regulate and control authority."

Swaraj thus means taking all aspects of society together following the principle of nonviolence. We shall talk about this concept in a separate chapter. If nonviolence is the very basis of an institution then its functions and relations with other institutions will also be such. Thus we may see swaraj being realized at the social, economic and political levels.

Check your knowledge :

1. Where does Gandhi established ashrams?

2. What is the meaning of Hind Swaraj?

3. According to Gandhi how Swaraj can be realised?

17.3.1 Social level or Society :

Gandhi strongly feels that Indian society is a traditional society and predominantly rural. Hence he advocated that villages should be modified and restructured such that caste relations are changed and exploitation of dalits or women or other marginal sections be eradicated. Schools, community centres etc. should be developed. The water works and sanitation must be taken care of. It has to be a self-sufficient unit in all respects. He used to say my India lives in villages. He wanted the village to be the first building block of a large nation like ours. If a village is self-sufficient so would be the nation. If a village is sovereign so would be the country. The country derives strength

from each village and not vice versa.

He was strongly biased against the urban centres of the modern civilization. He writes in *Hind Swaraj*: "that large cities were a snare and a useless encumbrance and that people would not be happy in them, that there would be gangs of thieves and robbers, prostitution and vice flourishing in them and that poor men would be robbed by rich men. They (our forefathers) were, therefore, satisfied with small villages." (*Hind Swaraj* 1938: 62) You would agree with me that Gandhi's so-called fears have come true. On the last year's (2008) eve two girls were molested by a crowd of young men before a posh hotel in Mumbai despite the presence of police. And on this year's eve nearer home at Chandigarh, the city beautiful seven foreign girls met the same fate in the Sector 17 Plaza. The police cordoned the girls off and took them to the police station for their safety but the crowd followed there too. Not to talk of the murders, lootings and frauds that fill each newspaper's belly every day.

17.3.2 Economic level or Economy :

According to Gandhi society can have the above mentioned features only if production processes are based on nonviolence. A large factory cannot have non-violent relations between workers and managers. The power and authority are only different forms of oppression and exploitation. He writes; "It is machinery that has impoverished India. It is difficult to measure the harm that Manchester has done to us. It is due to Manchester that Indian handicraft has all but disappeared." (Ibid.: 93) Further: "The workers in the mills of Bombay have become slaves. The condition of women working in the mills is shocking. When there were no mills, these women were not starving. If the machinery craze grows in our country, it will become an unhappy land." (Ibid.: 94)

Thus Gandhi prescribed *charkha*, the traditional handloom not only as a machine for spinning khadi but also a weapon against colonialism. It is a tool that would make the country self-dependent. It is something that would reduce and subsequently finish the demand for cloth made in Manchester. And if the English goods are not sold here why should they stay here. That is why Gandhi used to say that the English are not here on their own or because they are powerful but we want them to be here.

You may wonder how a *charkha* can get freedom? According to Gandhi it is a simple machine that is made by our own artisans in villages. One is not required to look to other countries for its import or to obtain its know how. When we get our own home made cloth (swadeshi) we shall not require to import from Manchester hence we can save on that count. He wrote: "By using Manchester cloth we only waste our money; but by reproducing

Manchester in India, we shall keep our money at the price of our blood, because our very moral being will be sapped..." (Ibid.: 94) Referring to the mill owners he remarks: "If they would be good they would gradually contract their business. They can establish in thousands of households the ancient and sacred handlooms and they can buy out the cloth that may be thus woven." (Ibid.: 95) Thus it is neither possible nor advisable to close down the existing factories but it is very much feasible to discourage their expansion

A *charkha* is also a symbol of austerity and simplicity. Spinning threads with a *charkha* and humming *Ramdhun* also purifies the soul besides the fact that it earns one's bread labour. Guru Nanak as you all know has also stressed upon the importance of *Kirat karo*. Islam also lays emphasis on it and the Mughal emperor of Hindustan Aurangzheb used to take food after knitting the caps.

17.3.3 Political level or Polity :

To Gandhi "Swaraj is infinitely greater than and includes independence." (Ramana Murty 1970: 267) His notion of self-government involves democracy not mobocracy where people are empowered and in which the administration is decentralized. This means that no doubt a village is the smallest unit in the chain of country's administration yet it is supposed to enjoy autonomy for purposes of carrying out all activities of daily routine necessary in the life of its people. The village panchayat is recommended to be the most powerful organization in administration. It would also dispense with justice making redundant the civil courts. In Gandhi's views these courts do not dispense justice but promote corruption and greed for money. He remarks: "My firm opinion is that the lawyers have enslaved India, have accentuated Hindu-Mahomedan dissensions and have confirmed English authority... The lawyers, therefore, will, as a rule, advance quarrels instead of repressing them." (*Hind Swaraj* 1938 : 54-55)

The model of parliamentary democracy in England is also not considered good for India. Gandhi compares it to a sterile woman: "That which you consider to be the Mother of Parliaments is like a sterile woman and a prostitute...That Parliament has not yet, of its own accord, done a single good thing. Hence I have compared it to a sterile woman...It is like a prostitute because it is under the control of ministers who change from time to time." (Ibid.: 31) He also invokes Carlyle who called it the "talking shop of the world". He further says: "Parliament is simply a costly toy of the nation." (Ibid.: 32)

17.4 Summing up :

What we have tried to present in this lesson how Gandhi spelled out his concept of swaraj which is self rule at the level of an individual person and self government at the level of a nation-state. These two dimensions of swaraj are not mutually exclusive but complimentary rather necessary as one cannot

be achieved without the other. Swaraj takes care of the creation by the almighty God, as only that is true and which manifests itself in each element of nature including the human beings. Nonviolence is centrally important in the making of swaraj and it suggests a type of society different both from traditional Indian village society and the modern western civilization as well. We have also seen how such a society must be conducting itself at the three levels -social, economic and political.

17.5 Keywords :

Swaraj is used in two distinct senses, one as self rule and other as self government. As self rule it means control on one's own self. The ego is not allowed to waver and is not given to sensuous pleasure. Needs are restricted and wants are not entertained. As self government it pertains to rule by one's own country people as opposed to rule by the foreigners such as British ruled on us till 1947.

Non-violence or ahimsa means not only to refrain from violence but also loving one's opponent or enemy. It also refers to Truth. It is mightier than the mightiest weapon made thus far by man. It is also active resistance.

Civilization refers to the overall way of life of a people. It involves both the material and (social) culture involving values, norms, institutions and modes of acting, thinking and feeling of a people of a specific area. Some differentiate it from culture, others do not.

Democracy is a rule of the people, by the people and for the people. Different political parties seek people's mandate and those (one or many forming a coalition) with majority vote form the government. All citizens have the freedom of speech and action and enjoy basic human and civil rights upheld by the country's constitution.

Freedom is the ability of an individual to perform certain actions or make statements without any body's fear. In a democratic country it is ensured by the constitution.

Tradition refers to the practices carried out either by individuals or by a society as followed by its previous generations.

Modernization is a process by which a traditional society adopts the way of acting, thinking and feeling that developed as a result of Enlightenment philosophy and bourgeois revolution in late 18th century Western Europe.

Charkha is a spinning wheel for making threads from raw cotton. To Gandhi it meant doing labour (physical) for purifying one's thoughts. It was an instrument of independence as well since it would decrease our

dependence on British Industrial Cloth.

Colonialism is the practice of colonial rule. A foreign power, like the British, made India a colony and exploited it economically.

17.6 Exercise Questions :

1. Write an essay on Swaraj.
2. What do you mean by Swaraj? How it can be realised at Social Level?
3. Define Swaraj and Discuss how it can be realised at political level.
4. What is Swaraj? Explain how it can be realised at economic level?

Short questions (Define) :

- (a) Swaraj
- (b) Non-Violence
- (c) Tradition
- (d) Modernization

17.7 Suggested Readings :

Gandhi, M.K. (1938) *Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule*. Ahmedabad: Navjivan Publishing House.

Gandhi, Raj Mohan (1995) *The Good Boatman: A Portrait of Gandhi*. Delhi: Viking.

Mathai, M.P. () *How to Realize Swaraj?* Wikipedia

Parekh, Bhikhu (1989) *Colonialism, Tradition and Reform: An Analysis of Gandhi's Political Discourse*. Delhi: Sage.

Parel, Anthony (ed.)(1997) *M.K. Gandhi: Hind Swaraj and other writings*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (Foundation Books, Delhi)

Ramanamurty, V.V. (ed.) (1970) *Gandhi: Essential Writings*. Delhi: Gandhi Peace Foundation.

Sethi, J.D. (1978) *Gandhi Today*. Delhi: Vikas Publishing House.

Mahatma Gandhi : Sarvodaya

Structure :

- 18.0 Objectives
- 18.1 Introduction
- 18.2 Meaning of Sarvodaya
- 18.3 Some misconceptions of Sarvodaya
- 18.4 Summing Up
- 18.5 Key words
- 18.6 Exercise Questions
- 18.7 Suggested Readings

18.0 Objectives :

This lesson will enable the student to know about :

- * the meaning of Sarvodaya
- * essential ingredients of Sarvodaya
- * some misconceptions of Sarvodaya
- * and elaboration of concept through examples

18.1 Introduction :

We have discussed above the concepts of truth, ahimsa, swaraj and satyagraha that are very central to the Gandhian thought. Here we shall look into the significance of sarvodaya as an independent concept though not so central to his thought, since to my mind it seems to be a category or concept subsumed within swaraj. When we have attained purna swaraj, when each and every person in a society or a nation subscribes to the laws and principles of swaraj following the theory and practice of truth, ahimsa and satyagraha we shall end up in a society where each individual and community would not be more or less than other individuals or communities in the country in any respect - social, cultural, economic and political. And that state of society is nothing but sarvodaya where each individual or community rises or falls together.

Where there is equality amongst them and none is superior or inferior to

anybody whosoever. Thus sarvodaya is the end product of the Gandhian thought in its socio-economic and political dimensions. But how do we reach there? Can we attain this state of society if we do not think on the lines of sarvodaya? Should it not be a means to the desired end? As is true of all other concepts of Gandhi, sarvodaya too is a means to an end, that is, sarvodaya. Because, without following the right means we cannot reach the right end.

18.2 Meaning :

A break up of the word sarvodaya suggests that "sarva" means all and "udaya" means to rise, just as the sun rises. By this Gandhi means that whatever model of socio-economic and political development a society any where in the world, in general and in India in particular may follow, it must lead to the rise and development of all individuals and all communities together. In nutshell sarvodaya means "welfare of all", the rise of all and sundry irrespective of caste, class, creed and gender. This is something like "Sarbat da bhala", wishing for the well of all, as we say while doing Ardas in Sikhism. But why was Gandhi hammering on this idea of sarvodaya again and again when he had already spelled out his philosophy of swaraj? Probably he had understood that the leaders of the nation who even subscribed to the theory and creed of swaraj do so primarily in the sense of political terms of attaining Independence, that is, freedom from the British, the colonial rule, and later follow the same model of development that had already been launched by them during their regime. And we all know that that was not the model of development that Gandhi approved of for our country and its people since that is based on and generates inequality in society.

We all know by now that he was strongly opposed to the western model of progress or development, be it mass scale parliamentary democracy, modern science and technology, modern industry or modern cities, whatever. It is not that he was anti-west or anti-modern but he knew that this model of development is farther from his principles of swaraj and ahimsa. No doubt he had great faith in Indian tradition and culture, more so as a civilization, but that did not stop him from criticizing it as well. He was strongly opposed to the caste system and to the oppression of women. More than this he even criticized the Vedic practice of animal sacrifice. Referring to the justification of animal sacrifice recommended in the Vedic literature and his non-approval of such ceremonies, he remarked: "It does not matter that animal sacrifice is supposed to find a place in the Vedas. It is enough for us that such sacrifice cannot stand the fundamental tests of Truth and Non-violence." (Iyer 1993: 380)

On the contrary Gandhi himself learnt from the West. Who were such people as Tolstoy, Ruskin and Thoreau among others from whom he derived many formulations central to most of his major concepts. Even when he had already

launched civil disobedience in South Africa, Thoreau's reading on the same subject did not enlighten him significantly as much as he sought legitimacy of his approach and programme and that there are such people in the West who think on similar lines. You might be aware that sarvodaya was the title of the Ruskin's book *Unto This Last* that he translated in Gujarati. This work impressed him greatly. He summarized the teachings of this major work as below:

First. The good of the individual is contained in the good of all.

Second. A lawyer's work has the same value as that of a barber in that all men have the same right to earn a living from their labour.

Third. A life of labour where one works with one's hands is the life worth living. (Richards 1982: 74)

Let us hear from Gandhi himself what he said in his message to the inaugural issue of the journal *Sarvodaya*, on 21 July 1938:

Sarvodaya is impossible without satyagraha. The word satyagraha should be understood here in its etymological sense. There can be no insistence on truth where there is no non-violence. Hence the attainment of sarvodaya depends upon the attainment of non-violence. The attainment of non-violence in its turn depends upon tapascharya. Tapascharya, again, should be pure. Ceaseless effort, discretion, etc., should form part of it. Pure tapascharya leads to pure knowledge. Experience shows that although people talk of non-violence, many are mentally so lazy that they do not even take the trouble of familiarizing themselves with the facts. Take an example. India is a poor country. We wish to do away with poverty. But how many people have made a study of how this poverty came about, what its implications are, how it can be removed, etc.? A devotee of non-violence should be full of such knowledge.

It is the duty of *Sarvodaya* (journal) to create such means and not to enter into controversies. Editors of *Sarvodaya* should forget Gandhism. There is no such thing as Gandhism... We shall adopt truth wherever we find it, praise it wherever we see it, and pursue it. In other words, in every sentence of *Sarvodaya*, we should catch a glimpse of non-violence and knowledge. (Iyer 1993: 384)

We may note four things in this instructive message. One, the true meaning of sarvodaya which is not attainable without putting into practice other principles of Gandhian thought. Hence it is an outcome of all of these principles put together. Two, Gandhi's focus on Indian poverty as an illustration of peoples' laziness to know even the facts, leave aside verifying them. Three, the relation of knowledge to non-violence and hence to sarvodaya without which social transformation cannot take place. Four, humility of Gandhi, of shying away from the very fact of being a propounder of the new concept at least in its

latest or modern incarnation as an important constituent of sarvodaya.

Besides following the major principles mentioned above for attaining sarvodaya, Gandhi also strongly recommended the "principle of non-possession". He writes to Narandas:

Non-possession is allied to non-stealing. A thing not originally stolen must nevertheless be classified as stolen property if we possess it without needing it. Possession implies provision for the future. A seeker after truth, a follower of the law of love, cannot hold anything against tomorrow. God never stores for the morrow. He never creates more than what is strictly needed for the moment... The rich have a superfluous store of things which they do not need, and which are therefore neglected and wasted; while millions starve to death for want of sustenance. If each retained possession only of what he needed, no one would be in want and all would live in contentment. (Ibid: 377)

It becomes clear that for Gandhi the problem of poverty neither lies in the karma of the poor nor their large population which is often cited as an example of India's or other country's poverty, but in the very mechanism of hoarding and profiteering by those who have capital and excess property much beyond their means and requirements. That is why he used to say that nature has every thing for man's needs but not for his greed. And possession is nothing but greed. And this greed increases with more possession. He qualifies: "We should remember that non-possession is a principle applicable to thoughts as well as to things. A man who fills his brain with useless knowledge violates that inestimable principle." (Ibid :378) Further: "Civilization, in the real sense of the term, consists not in the multiplication, but in the deliberate and voluntary reduction of wants. This alone promotes real happiness and contentment, and increases the capacity for service." (Ibid: 378) He called non-possession (aparigraha) also as voluntary poverty.

18.3 Misconceptions of Sarvodaya :

Most scholars have confused sarvodaya with the "greatest good of the greatest number". Bhupinder Singh clarifies:

Thus understood, Sarvodaya is fundamentally opposed to the utilitarian doctrine of the greatest good of the greatest number. The difference between the two concepts is not merely quantitative, but qualitative. In the case of Sarvodaya, the good or welfare of the majority at the cost of minority, even the minority of one, is simply inconceivable, much less practicable. The majority or minority must rise or fall together. (Singh 1983: 202)

To make the notion of sarvodaya more elaborate he quotes a noted Gandhian philosopher K.J. Shah:

It (sarvodaya) means the goal of the economic, political, moral and spiritual interests of all groups. Any emphasis, therefore, on the interests of any one

or more groups exclusively is wrong, unless this includes the interests of the other groups also.

It is also wrong to emphasize one kind of interest, moral or economic, to the exclusion of other kinds of interests, unless in the particular context this emphasis has arisen from the requirement of all other interests.

He illustrates:

In a paper which attempted to characterize the differences in approach between Gandhi and Ambedkar to the problem of untouchability, I have tried to show that while Ambedkar is concerned with the economic and political interests of the untouchables Gandhi is concerned with their moral and spiritual (religious) interests also.

Ambedkar's concern is limited only to the interests of the untouchables, while Gandhi's extended to the interests of caste Hindus and any other concerned group. Thus Gandhi's approach is much more comprehensive than that of Ambedkar.

Finally: It follows that for Gandhi it would be wrong to consider the interests of any group exclusively even if that group happened to be the weakest section of society. (Ibid: 201-2)

Gandhi himself certifies:

The utilitarian's has no limit. Judged by the utilitarian standard each party has justified it according to its idea of utility. Even the Jallianwala Bagh massacre was justified by its perpetrators on the grounds of utility. And precisely on the same ground the anarchist justifies his assassination. But none of these acts can possibly be justified on the greatest-good-of-all principle. (Iyer 1993: 376-7)

Gandhi likens sarvodaya to yajna:

A yajna is an act directed to the welfare of others, done without desiring any return for it, whether of a temporal or spiritual nature. 'Act' here must be taken and includes thought and word, as well as deed. 'Others' embraces not only humanity, but *all life*...

From this definition of yajna it follows that a primary sacrifice must be an act which conduces the most to the welfare of the greatest number in the widest area, and which can be performed by the largest number of men and women with the least trouble. It will not, therefore, be a yajna, much less a mahayajna, to wish or to do ill to anyone else even in order to serve a so-called higher interest. (Ibid: 379-80)

Bhupinder Singh sums up:

Thus Sarvodaya, as we have understood and described it emerges as the theory of unity in variety applied to the social field. This, of course, is a very

limited meaning of Sarvodaya. For, in the ultimate analysis, Sarvodaya must also include the welfare of nature and Spirit in its sweep. The Vedic yajna is one archetypal instance of such an integral Sarvodaya ensuring the good of Spirit, man and nature at one and the same time. It is interesting to recall that Gandhi often characterized his programmes and undertakings as yajna. (Singh 1983: 203)

The above mentioned quote makes it clear that meaning of sarvodaya as socio-economic equality as understood by some scholars and activists is in its very narrow sense of the term. Gandhi's vision is cosmic, hence for him a banyan tree is as important as a small bush, and a large animal is equally significant as a tiny ant. The air, the water and earth and all its inhabitants and constituents, as a matter of fact the whole universe are equal in significance in terms of their existence that must not be jeopardized by any other creature at any cost. The span of life of each individual creature cannot be curtailed by the other under any circumstances since no species is less than the other. This cosmic vision of Gandhi is strongly opposed to the anthropocentric vision of many religions and philosophies including that of the modern western science for whom man is the supreme being and everything else here, on this planet is subordinate to him. Hence it is not only right that he may kill, destroy or change or mould any aspect of nature to suit his will for his living and comfort, it is very legitimate on his part to do so. Her mental ability has empowered her to subjugate every other inhabitant or constituent of this universe and in this age of capitalism to exploit nature for personal profit and capital accumulation. The modern medical and pharmaceutical industry kills hundreds and thousands of animals - rats, guinea pigs, monkeys etc. - during their experimental stages only for the production of a single medicine for its use by the humankind. To test the lethal doses of all medicines countless monkeys are subjected to excruciating pain and torture till they succumb to life under pain and poison.

Gandhi's notion of sarvodaya does not permit this sort of exploitation of nature or any of its resources even for the sake of life saving drugs for humankind since for him human is not the supreme being but only one species among others inhabiting the mother earth. For Gandhi earth has the status of mother as it generates and sustains life of all including human beings and these human beings have no right to shorten the natural life span of any other species, howsoever insignificant, for the sake of any good to humankind and for the modern socio-economic development which is the buzz word now. The Guru Granth also speaks of the significance and heightened status of the natural resources when it says "*Pawan guru, pani pita mata dharat mahat.*"

In his late life Gandhi had started recommending that human beings should live only on fruits since that is the most non-violent way of life possible today.

Why? Because in living on fruits we do not shorten their life span as we eat them only when these are fully ripe. If not plucked these would fall down and perish. Then how this kind of activity is non-violent? It is so because we eat all fruit when these are ripe and that is the terminal phase of their life span. Even taking vegetables is not non-violent because we eat vegetables when these are far short of their ripe stage. And for growing vegetables we plough the field which is once again a violent activity as it kills all life underneath the surface of earth such as the earthworms so very essential for the fertility of the top soil.

18.4 Summing up :

Sarvodaya means that all life on earth must live in peace and harmony without any species, howsoever big or powerful, dominating any other species for its own well being including the human beings who are used to exploiting every aspect of nature for its comfortable living and luxury. No individual, class or species is higher or lower to the other, more or less significant than the other. Therefore, with this idea in mind, the modern human society must ensure that the model of socio-economic development it plans to undertake or implement that must ensure enrichment of not one class or species but of all classes and species. The concept of sarvodaya is not confined only to the human society but Spirit, man and nature. It is an overarching and an all-encompassing holistic concept which ensures well being and welfare of all simultaneously. He also called sarvodaya non-violent socialism that could be brought with trusteeship since it intends to bring an end to capitalism not the capitalist.

18.5 Keywords :

Sarvodaya means rise or welfare of all irrespective of caste, class or gender etc.

Swaraj is understood in two respects. One, in its collective sense as self-rule as opposed to the foreign or colonial rule. Two, in its individual sense as control or rule on one's own self.

Ahimsa as neither injuring someone nor hating someone. It is loving one's enemy. It is the law of love.

Aparigraha or non-possession of material or non-material goods that one really does not need. It is also called voluntary poverty.

18.6 Exercise Questions :

1. Define Sarvodaya and explain its meaning.
2. Write an essay on Sarvodaya
3. What do you mean by Sarvodaya and discuss its misconceptions.

Short Questions (Define) :

- (a) Sarvodaya
- (b) Aparigraha
- (c) Swaraj

18.7 Suggested Readings :

Iyer, Raghavan (1993) *The Essential Writings of Mahatma Gandhi*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Richards, Glyn (1982) *The Philosophy of Gandhi: A study of his basic ideas*. London: Curzon Press and Totowa NJ: Barnes and Noble Books

Singh, Bhupinder (1983) "Sarvodaya versus Populism", *Guru Nanak Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 4, No. 2, October.

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