

Durkheim's rule to the study of social acts

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cial solidarity. Durkheim emphasizes that the collective worship through which members express their common values and belief strengthened the integration of the society. Members of society express, communicate and comprehend the moral bonds which unite them.

Though Durkheim's ideas remain influential, most sociologists argue that he has over stated his case. They agree with the view that religion is important for promoting social solidarity and reinforcing social values, they would not support the view that religion is the worship of society. Durkheim's view on religion are more important to small, non-literate societies, where there is close integration of culture and social institution, where work, leisure, education and family life tend to merge, and where members share a common belief and value system. They are less relevant to modern societies, which have many subcultures, social and ethnic groups, specialised organisations and a range of religious beliefs, practices and institutions.

Q. 4. "Not all social facts about human behaviour are necessary social facts" state the meaning of social fact and method of studying them with reference to this statement.

Ans. : The concept of "social fact" has been propounded by Emile Durkheim, in his second major works "*The Rules of Sociological Method*" (1895). He has defined social facts as "Way of acting, thinking and feeling external to individual and endowed with power of coercion by reason of which they control him". Durkheim treats social facts as things which are real and exist independent of the individual will and desires. According to Durkheim social facts are external to individual and are capable of exerting constraints upon the individual. Social facts are independent of individual manifestation. The true nature of social facts lies in the collective or associational characteristic inherent in the society. Legal codes and customs, moral values, religious belief and practice, language etc. all are social facts.

Durkheim has stated that it is important to know which facts are commonly social. If we look, he writes, at the things individuals do, such as eating, sleeping and reasoning etc. none of their activities may be called social fact since these acts only identify a set of individual facts. In addition, if all these facts were to be viewed as social then Sociology would have no subject-matter exclusive-

ly its own, and its domain would be confused with that of biology and psychology. All these individual acts, he went on, cannot be counted as social facts and, if they were, Sociology would have no distinctive subject-matter-no social reality, only individual reality. But, according to Durkheim, in every society, there exists a group of phenomena which may be studied independently of these individual facts.

Durkheim has argued that this group of phenomena, differentiated from all other and defined externally in law and custom have two distinct properties which qualify social facts as distinct from the individual fact. First, they present the noteworthy property of existing outside the individual; and second, their existence is prior to the individual and as such they are more historically continuous than individual existence and therefore precede individuals in the historical sense. According to Durkheim, there are a class of externally independent rules or customs which are clearly withdrawn from individual discretion. These he went on, constitute a new variety of phenomena and it is to them exclusively that the term 'social' ought to be applied.

This claim by Durkheim that 'social fact' can be withdrawn from individual description was pivotal in setting out the study of society and it challenged utilitarian thinking on at least two separate and distinct fronts. First, in stating that society preceded the individual historically, it shifted the focus from individual motives to the laws of society. Second, in asserting that society exerts constraint on individuals, it showed that individual action in fact derives from society, thus placing the individual within the framework of larger social rules. When the term constraint is used in this way, stated Durkheim, we risk shocking the partisans of absolute individualism who protest the complete autonomy of the individual. Those who take this view mistakenly that the individual's dignity is diminished whenever they are made to feel that they are not completely self-determinants.

On the basis of above arguments, Durkheim has argued that only those facts will be considered as a social fact which will have the following characteristic.

- (1) Externality
- (2) Constraint
- (3) Independence
- (4) Generality

Social fact, according to Durkheim exists out-

side the individual conscience. Their existence is external to the individual. For example, domestic, civic and contractual obligation are defined externally to the individual in laws and customs. Religious belief and practices exist outside and prior to individual. An individual takes birth in the society. For example, language continue to function independently of any single individual.

In other words social fact are external to individual in two senses:-

- (1) Every individual is born on in ongoing society which already has a definite organisation and structure. There are values, norms, beliefs and practices which an individuals find readymade in the society since the birth and through the process of socialization. Since these social phe-

nomena exist prior to the individual and has an objective reality, they are external to the individual

- (2) Secondly, social fact is external to the individual in the sense that only one individual is a single element with totality of relationship.

The second criteria by which social facts are defined is the moral constraints they exercise on individual. Whenever, an individual resists the social fact, it leads to mild ridicule, social, isolation and moral and legal sanction.

Thirdly Durkheim argues that social fact is general, not specific fact. It is generally found in the collective conscience of the society. The collective conscience consists of common beliefs and values of the society.

SHORT NOTES TYPE

Q. 1. Sacred and profane.

Ans. : Durkheim, in his last major book *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1912) describes the essence of religion as the division of the world into kinds of phenomena- the *sacred* and the *profane*. The sacred refers to things human being set apart including religious life, rites, duties or anything socially designed as requiring special religious treatment. Participation in sacred order such as rituals and ceremonies bestows special prestige. It is one of the social functions of religion. The sacred thing, wrote Durkheim is par excellence which the profane should not touch with impunity. The profane is the reverse of the sacred. It is the ritualistic and manifested aspect of religion. He argues that sacredness is essentially a matter of attitude on the part of individual towards animate and inanimate objects. It is the society which designate certain things as sacred. For example; the holy water of the Ganga. Unlike the profane, sacred is the non-utilitarian and non-empirical and does not involve knowledge, but involves power. Durkheim has defined religion as a unified system of belief related to sacred things. Profane is subordinate to sacred things. In this sense profane is the principle which has the capacity to contaminate the sacred. In all religions, rules exist which regulate the separation between the two domains. Pro-

fane things are set apart from sacred things and are regulated by a special class of religious prohibition called interdiction.

Q. 2. Pathological form of division of labour.

Ans. : Simply stated, division of labour refers to process of dividing up labour so that different tasks are performed by the different people. According to Durkheim, specialisation and differentiation have given a new dimension to the division of labour in the modern society. It is essential for the growth, development and smooth functioning of the society. He has described division of labour in the societies characterised by mechanical solidarity such as tribal and organic solidarity such as modern society. Durkheim believed that certain social states can be considered as a form of disease and he termed it as "Social pathology". Thus the pathological form of division of labour is an abnormal state which consists of anomic division of labour and forced division of labour. Generally, he believe that anomic division of labour arises during the industrial crisis when there is a widespread commercial failure. This crisis tends to breach the social solidarity existing between specialised functions and creates a decline in social cohesion. The 'forced division of labour' occurs when the functional specialisation and social organs representing them become instrument placed at the disposal of certain social classes and their

interest. It is the rearrangement of unrelated and unnatural demands which lose the social cohesion.

Q. 3. Social Fact

Ans. : It is a term used by Durkheim to describe elements of society which can be studied independently of individual disposition. He believed that the primary task of the Sociology was the description and observation of social facts. He has defined social facts as "*Way of acting, thinking and feeling external to individual and imposed, endowed with a power of coercion by reason of which they control him.*" He treats social fact as real and independent of the individual. It is external to individual and constraints upon him. Thus the chief characteristics of social facts are; *externality, constraint, independence and generality.* Durkheim assumes that it exists outside the individual conscience. It is independent and found everywhere. He has divided social facts into several categories such as, Morphological social fact which consists of population; Institutional social fact related to the institutions of society; non-institutional social fact; Normal and Pathological social facts. According to him a social fact is normal which is generally encountered in a society of a certain type at certain phase. Every deprivation from the standard is Pathological social facts.

Q. 4. Division of labour and differentiation of social structure.

Ans. : Durkheim divides social differentiation into two types of societies. The first is the small scale type of society characterised by local division of labour based upon ascriptive criteria like age and sex. The second is the large scale industrialised society characterised by high division of labour based on specialised skills. In the former, the task to be performed is simple which almost all members can perform equally well. Due to similar activities being performed by all members, likeness result among them. Cohesiveness in such a society is based upon the shared sense of likeness among the parts. Durkheim calls this type of solidarity as the "*mechanical solidarity*". In the latter, members perform highly specialised task. Thus, each members

task is different from those of the other members. So each part of society tends to be more and more different. But given the specialised and partial nature of society, they become highly interdependent. In this case, cohesiveness of society based upon interdependent of parts. Durkheim calls this type of solidarity "*organic solidarity*". According to Durkheim, society based an mechanical solidarity is segmental in nature with little interdependence. It has relatively low volume of population and low material and moral density. On the other hand organic solidarity is characterised by the decline of 'collective conscience'. The individual becomes increasingly more free of interdependence.

Q. 5. Anomie.

Ans. : The concept of "*Anomie*" was first propounded by Durkheim in his book "*Division of Labour*" (1893) to describe the deterioration of moral restraints which occur in industrial society when the division of labour fails to produce social solidarity and when the regulatory restraint of society are unable to set limits on social wants so that needs begin to exceed the means to attain them, and disappointment and despair follow. Later in 1897, Durkheim used the term to put forward a theory of anomie in relation to suicide by pinpointing the decline of the regulatory mechanism of society which takes place when the economy and industry are dominant. As the economy develops, market are extended and social wants are freed from the previous limitation. As a result, the capacity of social wants become insatiable and the more one has, the more one wants. The stress on economic activity increases individual's desires to such an extent that discomfort and restraints that were tolerable in previous societies become less acceptable. Durkheim believed that it is in the economically related function of society where anomie creates the largest category of suicide in contrast to other spheres of society in which the old regulatory forces will prevail. Looked at in this way, anomie can be defined as the decline which takes place in the regulatory force of society brought about by unchecked economic progress.



Durkheim's theory of religion

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therefore, generally do not have service or business
as their occupation. This has been shown by K.L.
Sharma's study of six villages of Rajasthan. The
impediments on their way to achieve education and
professional skill are both their extreme poverty and
lower caste rank.

Q.2. Give a critical review of Emile Durkheim's theory on Religion and society. To what extent does it explain the contemporary scenario in Asia?

Answer: Emile Durkheim's theory on religion and society has been dealt in his famous book, '*The Elementary forms of Religious Life*'. The book deals a description and a detailed analysis of the clan system and of totemism in the *Arunta* tribe of Australian aborigines. It elaborates a general theory of religion derived from a study of the simplest and most "Primitive" of religious institutions, and outlines a sociological interpretation of the forms of human thought which is at the heart of contemporary sociology of knowledge.

Durkheim began with a refutation of the reigning theories of the origin of religion. Tylor as well as Spencer supported the notion of "*animism*" i.e., spirit worship as the most basic form of religious

expression. Max Mueller put forth the concepts of "naturism", i.e. the worship of nature's forces. Durkheim rejected both concepts because he felt that they failed to explain the universal Key distinction between the *sacred* and the *profane*, and because they tended to explain religion away by interpreting it as an illusion, i.e., the reductionistic fallacy. The central thesis of Durkheim's theory of religion is that throughout history men have never worshipped any other reality, whether in the form of the totem or of God, then the collective social reality transfigured by faith.

According to Durkheim, the essence of religion is a division of the world into two kinds of phenomena, the sacred and the profane. The sacred refers to things human beings set apart, including religious beliefs, rites, deities, or anything socially defined as requiring special religious treatment. Participation in the sacred order, such as in rituals or ceremonies, gives a special prestige, illustrating one of the social functions of religion. "The sacred thing", wrote Durkheim, "is par excellence that which the profane should not touch and cannot touch with impunity." The profane is the reverse of the sacred. "The circle of sacred objects", continued Durkheim, "cannot be determined once for all. Its existence varies infinitely, according to the different religions." Accordingly, *Durkheim defines religion as a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden beliefs and practices which unite in one simple moral community called a church, all those who adhere to it.* Beliefs and practices unite people in a social community by relating them to sacred things. This collective sharing of beliefs, rituals, etc. is essential for the development of religion. The sacred symbols of religious belief and practices refer, not to the external environment or to individual human nature but only to the moral reality of society.

Instead of animism or naturism, Durkheim took the "totemism" among the Australian tribes as the key concept to explain the origins of religion. Ordinary objects, whether pieces of wood, polished stones, plants or animals, are transfigured into sacred objects once they bear the emblem of the totem. Totem, Durkheim explained, refers to an implicit belief in a mysterious or sacred force or principle that provides sanctions for violations of taboos, and inculcates moral responsibilities in the group, and animals the totem itself. The emphasis was upon the

collective activities as the birthplace of religions sentiments and ideas.

According to Durkheim, the essence of totemism is the worship of an impersonal, anonymous force, at once immanent and transcendent. This anonymous, diffuse force which is superior to men and very close to them is in reality society itself.

Religion, as Durkheim saw and explained it, is not only a social creation, but is in fact society divinized. Durkheim stated that the deities which men worship together are only projections of the power of society. If religion is essentially a transcendental representation of the powers of society, then the disappearance of traditional religions need not herald the dissolution of society. Furthermore, Durkheim reasoned that all that is required for modern men now was to realize directly that dependence on society, which before, they had recognized only through the medium of religious representation. "We must," he explained, "discover the rational substitute for these religious notions that for a long time have served as the vehicle for the most essential moral ideas." On the most general plane, religion as a social institution serves to give meaning to man's existential predicaments by typing the individual to that supra individual sphere of transcendent values which is ultimately rooted in his own society.

Criticism: Modern anthropology has been able to challenge the picture he gives of aborigine society as built upon homogeneous tightly organised clans. Also, many objections have been raised to Durkheim's assumption that Australian totemism may be regarded as representing the most primitive or elementary stage of either social organisation or religious thought.

Critics have objected that the distinction between sacred and profane is faulty as an account of what aborigine religious thought was actually like. Conceptually also it is not clear that there can be only two classes of objects. Is there not also at least one other class which consists of things which are neither 'sacred' nor 'profane', but simply mundane? Again, is the relationship between the two classes of objects one of total hostility or one of a division between two complementary systems of thought?

Lastly, the origin of the actual content of religious systems is not accounted for at all but treated as if to say the choice of sacred objects were arbitrary or unimportant.

SOCIOLOGY PAPER-I

process of intensive cultivation. Religion, once a major passion for him in childhood became once again a major pre occupation, not so much as an unwitting participant but as a scrutinizing observer.

According to Durkheim, the origin of religion may be traced in the *Arunta tribe of Australian Aborigine* who used to practice totemism. According to him, the essence of religion is a division of world in two kinds of phenomenon, the *sacred & profane*. The sacred refers to things human being set apart, including religious beliefs, rites, deities or anything socially defined as requiring special religious treatment. Participation in the sacred order, such as in ritual and ceremonies gives a special prestige, and is one of the social functions of religion. The 'sacred things', wrote Durkheim, is *par excellence*, that which the profane should not touch and cannot touch with impunity. The profane is the reverse of the sacred. The circle of 'sacred object' continued Durkheim, can not be determined once for all. It's existence vary infinitely, according to different religions". According to Durkheim religion as a unified system of belief & practices relative to sacred thing, that is to say, things set apart & forbidden, belief & practices which unite in one simple moral community called a church, all those who adhere to it'. Belief & practise unite people in a social community by relating them to sacred things.

Durkheim writes "Totemism is the religion not of certain animal or of certain man or of certain image but of a kind of anonymity and impersonal force which is found in each of his beings. It is the implicit belief in a mysterious or sacred force or principle that provides sanction for violation of taboo, inculcates moral responsibility in the group and animates the totem itself. Durkheim has argued about the functional aspect of religion. He says, by worshipping religion man indirectly worships the society. Religion performs various social, economic, political and individual function in society and enhances collective conscience and social solidarity. In this way, social integration and cohesion are being ensured in the society.

Thus, we see that Durkheim has contributed a lot to make Sociology a scientific discipline. His views on social fact, anomie, religion & society, crime, suicide etc are of paramount importance as far as the sociological investigation is concerned. He is one of the prominent founding fathers or the modern architect of sociology.

Q. 4. State the meaning and characteristics of an 'Ideal Type'. What according to Max Weber, is the use and significance of Ideal Type in social science research?

Ans. The 'ideal type' is an analytical construct, that serves the investigator as measuring rod to ascertain similarities as well as deviations in concrete cases. It is neither an statistical average nor a hypothesis. Rather it is a mental construct created by exaggerating certain essential features of a given phenomena, so that no one case of that phenomena correspond exactly to the constructed type, every case of phenomena falls within, a definitional framework. Thus 'ideal type' is never an accurate representation of real things. It is some what distorted or exaggerated version rather in the ways of cartoonists caricature, which is an exaggerated version of still recognizable face.

The ideal type concept grew out of the creative convergence of Weber's concept of 'Versetehen' and casual explanation. Weber developed three kinds of ideal types based on their levels of abstraction:

(1) **Ideal type of historical particulars:** It refers to specific historical reality such as western city, Protestant Ethic, modern capitalism etc.

(2) **Ideal type that refers to abstract element of historical reality:** It is observable in a variety of historical and cultural context such as bureaucracy and federation.

(3) **Ideal type that constitutes rationalized construction of particular kind of behaviour:** All propositions in economic theory may be said to fall in this category. Since these are merely ideal types reconstruction of the ways man would behave if they were pure economic objects.

Other Characteristic of Weber's Ideal Type

(a) An ideal type is a clearly constructed model of the specific set of social relationship of which an understanding and causal explanation is sought.

(b) It is not the description of those factors or laws which are thought to be found on an average in the kind of configuration.

(c) It is not ideal in the sense of being ethically good or right.

(d) It is an ideality of rational construction imputing certain meaning in terms of values held and sought, calculation made and men implied, in which the imputed meaning of action are interpreted as having causal validity in terms of value relevance. It is a clear rational construction of the nature of an

exercise in imputation of meaning for causal understanding.

(e) It is not rational in the sense of assuming pure rationality among men and women in the specific configuration of action and relationship. Thus, investigator knows that non-rational and irrational elements are often in much of the human behaviour.

(f) It is ideal and rational only in the sense of being a conceptual and logical reality imputing a pure rationality of means and action simply as a hunting case.

(g) It is essentially a one-sided model deliberately emphasizing those imputation thought to be worth postulating and testing. In this sense it is purposefully selective and of the nature of an experiment.

(h) Many ideal types may be constructed about one specific configuration, each relatively emphasizing one point of view and submitting its particulars imputation to the test. The adequacy of an ideal type is measured purely in that it gives a correct explanation to the specific social configuration it is examining.

Significance of Ideal type in Social Science

In the social research and investigation, ideal type provide us with lots of ideas or clues about the matter or things. Before proceeding towards the real situation the researcher visualizes the entire research procedure in a channelized or hypothetical ways. For example, Max Weber has argued about the ideal type of bureaucracy in which he firstly made an imaginative idea in his brain about an ideal structure and function of the bureaucracy. Later on, he compares this model to the existing bureaucratic structure. This is applicable not only in the case of bureaucracy but this methodology may be reasonably applied to the various issues of social research and investigation. The social scientist, by adopting the ideal type methodology, may be able to get more reliable and valid data. To a large extent, objectivity will also be ensured by this method. But, since Sociology is a science of social relationships, interactions and changing phenomena, it will be difficult to ensure biaseness or value-free approach to analyse a problem. The ideal type method is scientifically framed which was used not only by Max Weber but also a large number of social scientists are following this method to expose the hidden realities of the society.

An ideal type can be viewed as an ideal experiment. Like the ideal type all experiment is constructed as a closed system, although nothing that happens in the controlled and natural stage may occur exactly as it does in the experiment, the experiment proves that what is performed is possible and therefore occur in nature. What happens in the open system outside the laboratory, approximate in the various degree to the result of experiment. Knowledge of the result obtained by experiment helps us to find out factors which might be operative in actual situation and bring out result that differs from those observed in the experimental situation. The other function or significance of ideal type is to use theoretical analyses. In particular an ideal type makes prediction possible. With an ideal type as a model, we can foresee probable development in particular situation that correspond in some degree to the model. For example Spencer's prediction of dictatorship in Europe form the tenants of some colonies such as Germany towards the materialistic type of organization. An ideal type also makes possible the establishment of relevant connection between two different constellations e.g. pattern represented by ideal types. For example the connection between the Spirit of Capitalism and Ascetic Protestantism. In this case of recognition of the connection is facilitated by unambiguous formulation of ideal type. They provide the clarity of conception necessary to perceive affinities.

SECTION-B

Q. 5. Write short notes on any three of the following (each note should not exceed 200 words):

- (a) Types of Exchange
- (b) Incest taboo
- (c) Informal structure of Bureaucracy
- (d) Religion and Science

Ans. (a) **Types of Exchange** : In sociology, Exchange refers to the process of allocation or distribution of scarce goods and service among the members of society. According to *Karl Polanyi* there are three basic modes of allocation. These are; *Reciprocity*, *Redistribution* and *Market Exchange*. Every empirical economy exhibits at least one of these principles of distribution. Most are characterised by all the three.

Reciprocity: It includes exchange of goods among people who are bound in non market and