



**Subject : Human Rights & Duties**

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**Paper :** Philosophical Foundations of Human Rights; Duties and Responsibilities

**Module :** The French Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen (Module 4)



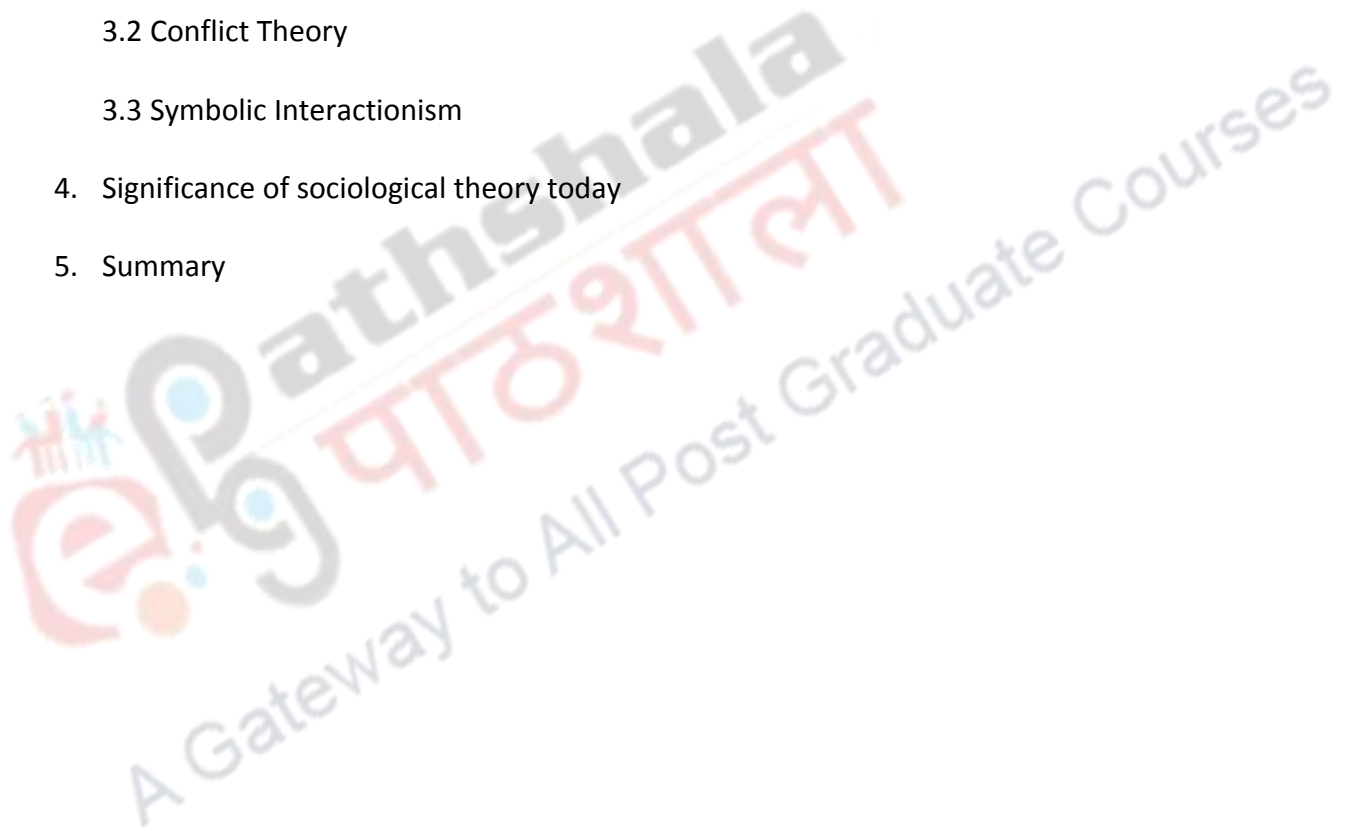
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## 1. Learning Outcomes

- Sociology as a branch of knowledge had been evolved based on the scientific method as applied in the study of pure science. This module helps students to find out the how the origin and formation of human rights are well defined and reformulated along with research in the field of sociology
- By the end of doing with this module students will come to know theorizing human rights in a sociological perspective is a vast subject and that the scope of this subject is wide and a very relevant branch for the understanding and expansion of human rights.

## 2. Introduction to Sociology and Rights:

Sociology is a branch of knowledge; studies societies. Man since his life in primitive life is not alone; lived in a family; in a group. We may call a society is not that where in a place lives only one individual; for formation of at least two or more persons are required. Thus family too is a society; a primary society. Sociology aims at study of societies in a scientific; logical and rational way. When we use the term science one has to apply this word to modern science that was supported by sense perception; experimental verification and inference. Until 18<sup>th</sup> century study of society was not given a scientific approach. In fact all branches also aimed at knowing about the ultimate reality; and with curiosity of creation and with many questions on life after death etc., All branches of knowledge like that we individually treat as Botany, Zoology, Physics, medicine, astronomy were treated as part of philosophy. It was only after inventions in science and technology, inventions of laws of electricity; dynamics; gravitation and Helio-centric theories and many scientific inventions that developed human lives; industrially and technologically. Philosophers hither to believed in certain eternal laws to guide the world; super naturally; followed deductive logic – the method of arriving at truth from universal to particulars. Philosophers like Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato and Aristotle and others too in the ancient times studied and theorized about man and society but it is systematized only in the modern times with the influence of scientific developments.

Francis Bacon's theory on inductive method of logic and, scientific reasoning made certain philosophers too to follow science and inductive method of logic. In this context in support of theories on universals that philosophers believe. That is to say that most Hence Auguste Comte (1798-1857) , a French philosopher wanted to study philosophy in a scientific way. Later he studied society to in a scientific way and arrive at certain valid truths on study by experimental method. Auguste Comte was called as *father of sociology*.

Sociology is a branch of knowledge is a science which took a major role in the area of social sciences studies human being's interactions with other; behaviours people; factors that determine human

social, economic and political lives. Its objectives are to find out the ways to bring good social psychology and societies meant for wellbeing of all. Research data collected by sociology is of good source for many social changes and developments too. Thus applied branches namely, political sociology, economic sociology, sociology of law, Social psychology, social anthropology rural sociology and many other branches have taken momentum for the development of human societies. These specialized areas of sociology thus study people's economic, psychological, political behaviours and find out the reasons and methods to improve the society scientifically. Man has to live in his relation with others; cannot live in isolation. Hence his interactions with others should lead for good social life. Researches thus help to take policy suggestion in the major areas of health, education and other social aspects mainly. It is due to development in the area of sociology only many of the national and international initiatives have been translated as rights of women; child, industrial workers and many disadvantaged groups.

Auguste Comte, Herbert Spencer, Emile Durkheim, Max Weber, Georg Simmel, Talcott Parsons, Malinowski, and Karl Marx, Robert Merton, Herbert Mead; are some major contributors. There are many sociologist in recent times Viz., Levi Strauss Michael Foucault; Jurgen Habermas and many others. Some of the social theories put forwarded by these sociologists are explained below.

### **3. Major sociological theories on human rights:**

As said above there were thinking of society even before sociology had been named as social science as we see it today. Hindu Vedas; Old Testament, Greek classics like Aristotle's Politics, Plato's Republic, all might contribute to sociological thinking<sup>1</sup>. Sociological theories have been developed due to social, political, economic forces in the back drop of science and technology of 19<sup>th</sup> century. There are three major theories namely *structural functionalism*; *conflict theory* and *symbolic Interactionism*. Some sociologists propounded some thought provoking and significant theories. For example Emilie Durkheim studies on the reasons and rate of suicides at macro level. His research on macro level collected helped to evolve the reasons were due to religious affiliations; different affiliations found different rates. Thus he found Protestants were more in number than Catholic communities.

#### **Structural Functionalism**

Society is a combination of various social groups associated in various organizations, establishments and committees; each group in such established association works as a whole works for each other. Individual for his personal and needs of his beloved joins a group. In fact family itself is a primary

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<sup>1</sup> Hayatullah Laluddin, A Review of three Major Sociological Theories and an Islamic Perspective in International Journal of Islamic Thought, vol. 10(Dec.) 2016, p.8.

group of society. Structural functionalism is a theory that treats society as a whole and as a social system. Herbert Spencer, Emile Durkheim, Talcott Parsons; Alfred Radcliffe Brown, and Robert Merton are some sociologists to formulate this theory.

Herbert Spencer (1820-1903) an English sociologist analyses society based on the measurement of like elements and unlike elements of society. It is the degree of integration and degree of disintegration that determines the strength and weakness of that particular group or society; the more the structural elements that are self-sufficient and identical the more the strength of the society. However, structural elements can be extended as educational institution, health institution etc., at larger level. Further each institution in its turn will have its own structural components to integrate or disintegrate.

Emile Durkheim (1820-1903) a French sociologist studies society in the area of goods and services – division of labour. Population density is the determinant to cause pressure and disintegrity as we understand in a general sense. Hence division of labour according Durkheim helps integrity and a moral density according to Durkheim. Auguste Comte too stressed on the “systematic character of society” and on the “role of social consensus”.<sup>2</sup>

Talcott Parsons (1902-1979) viewed society as functionally related structure; believed that the major function of state is provide goods and services required for survival of the system. At the same time he identifies four major issues of social system: ‘goal attainment; adaptation; integration and tension management (Caplow, 171:185, cited Laluddin, 2016, p.13)<sup>3</sup>. As for instance Laluddin contends that in a factory management it is important to see that a good relation is maintained between employers and worker and to safeguard their needs and security are essential functions.

Alfred Radcliffe Brown (1881-1955) sensed the need for laws when all the members can do their functions together and also to make a society stable. For the Brown defined “function of any recurrent activity as the part it plays in social life as a whole, and thereby, the contribution it makes to structural continuity” (Radcliffe Brown, 1952, cited.,).<sup>4</sup>

Further Robert Merton (1910-2003)<sup>5</sup> discusses of three functions in his theory on structural functionalism: manifest functions; latent functions and dysfunctions. While manifest functions are

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<sup>2</sup> *Sociological Theory: An Introduction*, <http://nptel.ac.in/courses/109103023/download/Lecture%2035.pdf> , retrieved on 22 July, 2017

<sup>3</sup> Laluddin, op.cit, p.13

<sup>4</sup> Cited., In *Sociological Theory: An Introduction*, <http://nptel.ac.in/courses/109103023/download/Lecture%2035.pdf> , retrieved on 22 July, 2017, p. 18

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.,

progress of person. For example education functions for the child’s development that further makes him self sufficient by enabling him a career. But in the process sometimes other activities too will be played by the student; extra-curricular activity or an activity that is not actually related with the major function. For example finding a spouse in the process of education in school or college – such function is called latent function. Dysfunction according Merton is visible in non-performance of educational activity; drop out; lower grades and non- attainment of graduation etc., and, these are the areas where the institutions need to take care for the understanding of rights for all.



**In society all the members should play their role<sup>6</sup>**

We can extend this theory on structural functionalism to any system or group including family lest quest and conflict for rights are inevitable. How conflict theory takes the other side of structuralism we will understand below through conflict theory

### **Conflict Theory**

Laluddin<sup>7</sup> held that conflict theory comes to us as against structural functionalist theory which “sees society as a well-integrated social system”. This theory deals with the dominant social, political and economic forces. Karl Marx, Saint Simon, Max Weber, Georg Simmel studied social systems in terms of conflicting forces. Conflict theory basically aims not only to find the forces that are bases for social disequilibrium but also makes use of the force of the deprived categories to wage a revolution in order to rebuild society with new social , political and economic and also familial values . Social

<sup>6</sup>[https://www.google.co.in/search?q=conflict+image&tbm=isch&tbo=u&source=univ&sa=x&ved=0ahUKEwjSiu\\_37aHVAhVDoJQKHTXBA0q7AkIPQ&biw=1366&bih=613#tbn=isc](https://www.google.co.in/search?q=conflict+image&tbm=isch&tbo=u&source=univ&sa=x&ved=0ahUKEwjSiu_37aHVAhVDoJQKHTXBA0q7AkIPQ&biw=1366&bih=613#tbn=isc)  
retrieved on 24 July 2017

<sup>7</sup> Laluddin, op.cit., p.16.

change is possible when conflict is rife and makes the deprived desperate at one point and questions the society in a collective way.

Whether Marx claimed himself as sociologist or not many political theorists and sociologists and even economist considered him as sociologist. Marxism is treated as scientific socialism. To Karl Marx (1818-1883) social inequality is rooted in mode of production and accumulation of capital/money/land or anything that has a value and that makes powerful is the determinant of political power too. All individuals will be categorized in to two classes according to Marx – Bourgeoisie or the socially dominant class or the proletariat class or the dependent class for its livelihood. Any labour is not justly paid according to Marx, this leaves a surplus value which becomes the profit for the employer and a loss/unpaid labour to the proletariat. Persistent loss makes the proletariat class weaker and weaker and stronger and stronger of the bourgeoisie. The conflicting theory based on the social class struggle ends up when all the proletariat classes unite and wage revolution against the bourgeoisie and takes the social and political power. Many a nations though initially did not agree for political power gained through democracies or tyrannies once gained will tend to be lost by any person; groups or nations. But over a period of time Marxian impact led nations to understand the humanistic aspect of laborer and tried to build welfare economies and welfare states; socialistic democracies.

Max Weber (1864-1920) too like Marx is a reformist and he believed in rationalization of legal systems; rules. Like Weber too saw the conflicting and competing forces in the society to cause inequality. Weber identified many other inequalities other than economic inequalities; inequalities between genders, races and other social statuses. According to Weber “understanding of political, economic and social worlds is to be done not only through the concept of conflict but also through using other concepts such as advantages, power, prestige and privileges” and “Weber was able to present a broader perspective of conflict theory”.<sup>8</sup> Hence expansion of rights is a possible phenomenon through study of conflicts in terms of advantages and possession in a society.

Georg Simmel (1858-1918) recognized the significance internal solidarity and centralized power, to reduce tension and conflict.<sup>9</sup> Simmel anticipated how “large-scale social structures like the money

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<sup>8</sup> Laluddin, op.cit., p.19.

<sup>9</sup> *Sociological Theory: An Introduction* at <https://www.saylor.org/site/textbooks/OpenStax%20Sociology.pdf> retrieved on 22July,2017, p.20



economy” can dominate individuals in his work namely *The Philosophy of Money*. However Simmel also focused on small-scale issues like social interaction between people<sup>10</sup>.

### 3.3 Symbolic Interactionism:

Symbolic Interactionism a social theory put forwarded by Charles H. Cooley(1864-1929), Herbert Mead (1863-1931) and William Issac Thomas (1863-1947) studies social phenomena both at social and psychological levels. These were interested to know “how an individual acquires personal and social characteristics”; also “self-identity”. Mead had worked further of these three. To him human mind itself is a social product<sup>11</sup>.

Some features of Symbolic Interactionism are:

- Symbolic Interactionism studies human responses.
- People’s respond in a subjective way
- It is futile to evaluate one’s behaviour in an objective way.
- It analyses social relations in a micro level
- It examines the role of communication as a unique phenomenon
- Social pattern is subject to negotiation
- Social patterns are expressed in symbolic patterns are
- People influence each other through their actions and it is an ongoing process
- How people assign values to things do not convey intrinsic value.
- Meaning and values are social products
- Meaning have permanent character; their implication may differ <sup>12</sup>

### 4. Significance of sociological theory today:

Study of sociology has a significant relevance for the study of rights. While theory on structural functionalism helps to moral strength of the society and major organizations that help social integration, conflict theory on the other hand deals with disintegrated components and issues of a society. Further conflict theory helps to reconstruct the society on new social and political principles at larger level.

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<sup>10</sup> Sociological Theories: An Overview available at <http://nptel.ac.in/courses/109103023/download/Lecture%2035.pdf> on 22July,2017, p.4..

<sup>11</sup> Laluddin, op.cit., p.14.

<sup>12</sup> Laluddin, op.cit., pp.14-16

Structural functionalism as helps to see society not only as a social order, but a moral order to help each other, respect each others' rights. Educational institutions and religious institutions all support to help this moral and social consensus according to this theory.<sup>13</sup> Studies in this area help societies to know the moral basis of rights; moral strength of institutions and help to educate and rectify the declining strength of societies. For example studies on geriatric care and not only studies the status of aged people but also paves society where rights of elderly are secured. For example Canada improved well-defined health care systems for elderly people.

Further conflict theory gained significance in the opened debates for women's rights against exploitation; abuse and harassment. As we understand from the conflict theories helped nations to revolt and to establish democracies and to protect rights of majority. Even today nations like Myanmar; Siberia are struggling to establish democracies. Not only in the third world nations we find discrimination in distribution of rights in the developed nations, quest for rights of women and coloured people and rights of migrants are not satisfactory. This theory also helps through a branch called social psychology to resolve conflicts in an amicable way too. Some of the peace theories of Gandhi, Confucius; Laotzu; Dalai Lama and Ecumenical perspectives aim to resolve conflicts in a nonviolent way. For example Gene Sharp a sociologist of our times and also one who was influenced by Gandhi founded Albert Einstein Institution in 1983 to establish democracy non-violently through his works like *Waging Nonviolent Struggle: 20<sup>th</sup> Century Potential* (2005) and *From dictatorship to democracy: A conceptual framework for liberation* (2002).

## 5. Summary

Summarily, theory on structural functionalism impacts to integrity and solidarity; conflict theory impacts social changes perhaps through negotiation or at times through revolution and theory on symbolic Interactionism might help perspectives at individual level and help qualitative studies on society. No theory is comprehensive; we have to look each theory in its specialized way as well as in its relation with other aspects. And we also understand that the scope for sociological theory is vast.

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p.14..