

Module II

Sociological Theories

contributions of classical thinkers

1. Auguste Comte



- **Auguste Comte** was a French philosopher born on 19th January 1798 and died on 5th September 1857.
- His birthplace was Montpellier, France.
- He is known as **“the father of ‘Sociology’** as he was the first one to realize the importance of relating sociology with science. He has made huge contributions to the subject along with which **he coined sociology as ‘the science of society’ or ‘the science of human behavior’**.
- He called the new subject invented by him **“Social physics”** and later explained that Sociology is a combination of Latin and Greek words that describe the new sciences.
- He divided the subject into two major parts. The first part was the ‘social statics’ which dealt with the forces that hold the society together.
- The second part was the **‘social dynamics’** which dealt with the forces that drive social change.
- He developed his major work, **“Positive Philosophy”**, while he was hospitalized for the course of 15 years.

- This work of his contained six volumes which explained that society has its own set of laws under which it is operated, similar to the physical world.
- His philosophy is elucidated in another important work “**A Programme of Scientific Work required for the Reorganization of Society**” which he published in 1822.
- In 1844, Comte was in love and maintained a platonic relationship with Clotilde de Vaux who was a French aristocrat and writer.
- He made another contribution to the subject after his beloved’s demise in 1846 which was known as the “**System of Positive Polity**”. In his other contribution, the “**Religion of Humanity**”, he let out the idea of an improved religious order that emphasized more on reason and humanity.

Herbert Spencer



- **Herbert Spencer** was a theorist whose valuable insights have often been drowned in a sea of irrelevance and spacious reasoning.
- He is popularly known as the British Aristotle and often called the second founding father of sociology.
- Spencer’s ideas have left an indelible impression on the succeeding writers. Spencer’s name was associated with the birth of sociology in England.
- Herbert Spencer was born on April 27, 1820, in Derby in England.
- He was a man of original and independent thinking.
- He has contributed to various fields of knowledge like **philosophy, biology, psychology, anthropology and sociology**. Spencer wrote a number of books. They are as follows.

1) **Social Statics (1850)**

2) **First Principles (1862).**

3) **The study of Sociology (1873)**

4) **The Principles of Sociology in three volumes (1876-96)**

5) **The Man verses the State (1884) Organic Analogy:**

- Spencer is popularly known for his **treatment of evolution.**
- The evolutionary doctrine was no doubt the foundation of Spencer's sociological theory.
- He, however, presented the organic analogy, a secondary doctrine which also played a vital role in his thought system.
- He identified society with a biological organism.
- He established the hypothesis that society is like a biological organism and then proceeded to defend it against all objections with great logical force.
- In his "**Principles of Sociology**" Spencer observed some similarities between biological and social organisms.

Emile durkheim



- Much of Durkheim's work was concerned with how societies could maintain their order and coherence in modernity, an era in which traditional social and religious ties are no longer assumed, and in which new social institutions have come into being.
- He believed that the traditional sources of morality upon which society was built, especially religion, was no more viable or valid without serious and rational alterations.
- The new source of moral integration necessary for the establishment and stability of the society would be found in the discipline designed to scientifically analyze social order, stability and continuity, viz, that of sociology.
- Thus his overriding concern as a moral man and as a social scientist was with the social order.
- There are two main themes in the work of Emile Durkheim. The first is the priority of the social over the individual, and the second is the idea that society can be studied scientifically.
- **The Suicide:** Durkheim's most important reason for studying suicide was to prove the power of the new science of Sociology. Suicide is generally considered to be one of the most private and personal acts.
- Durkheim believed that if he could show that Sociology had a role to play in explaining such an individualistic act as suicide, it would be relatively easy to extend Sociology's domain to phenomena.

Some of the important works of Durkheim's are the following.

(i) Le Suicide (The Suicide)-1897

(ii) De La Division du Travill Sociale (The Social Division of Labour)-1893

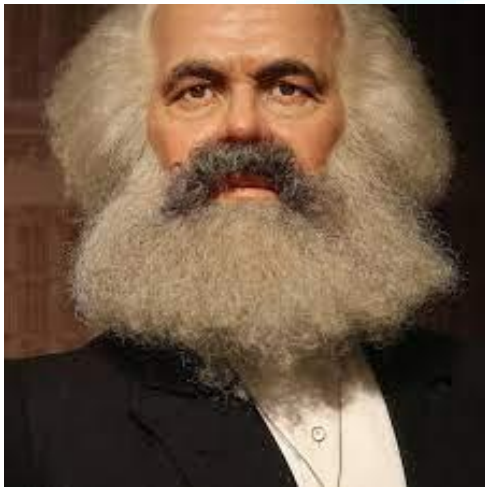
(iii) **Les Forms Elementaries de La-yie Religieuse (The Elementary Forms of religious life)—1912**

(iv) **Education at Sociology (Education and Sociology)-1922**

KARL MARX

Karl Heinrich Marx (5 May 1818 – 14 March 1883) was a German philosopher, critic of political economy, economist, historian, sociologist, political theorist, journalist and socialist revolutionary. His best-known titles are the 1848 pamphlet **The Communist Manifesto** and the three-volume **Das Kapital**. Marx's political and philosophical thought had enormous influence on subsequent intellectual, economic, and political history. His name has been used as an adjective, a noun, and a school of social theory.

Marx's most important contribution to sociological theory was his general mode of analysis, the “**dialectical**” model, which regards every social system as having within it immanent forces that give rise to “**contradictions**” (disequilibria) that can be resolved only by a new social system.



1. Marx views human society as an interrelated whole. The social groups, institutions, beliefs and doctrines within it are integrally related. Therefore, he has studied their interrelations rather than treating them separately or in isolation.
2. According to him, human nature is neither originally evil nor originally good, and has the potential to change. Also human nature is potentially revolutionary. Human will is not a passive reflection of events, but contains the power to rebel against circumstances.
3. According to Marx, man is always engaged in the process of production and has a creative relationship with his environment. This creativity is expressed in the form of labour.

- Through the process of production man transforms not just his environment but also himself and the society that he lives in.
 - In Marx's own famous words, "The first historical act is, the production of material life".
 - Marx later developed the concept of 'Modes of Production' which is a
 - scientific and detailed study of what constitutes the production process.
4. Marx was determined to identify the fundamental nature of social life and how societies change over time.

MAX WEBER



The German philosopher and sociologist **Max Weber** is one of the founding fathers of sociology. He is regarded as the proponent of anti-positivism thought and argued that society can be understood by studying social actions through interpretive meaning the actors (individual) attach to their own actions.

He also developed the '**theory of bureaucracy**' claiming that bureaucracy is the basis for the systematic formation of any organization and is designed to ensure efficiency and economic effectiveness.

His major works are

The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism (1905)

The Religion of India: The Sociology of Hinduism and Buddhism (1915)

Social action theory was founded by Max Weber. According to this theory, “an action is social if the acting individual takes account of the behavior of others and is thereby oriented in its course”. Max Weber defined sociology as a ‘**science of social action**’.

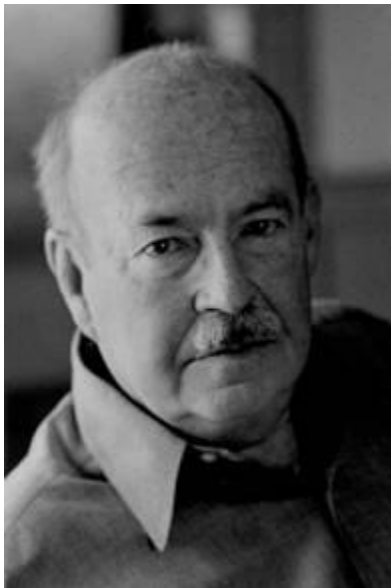
The theory of stratification (also known as ‘Weber’s theory of social class), popularly known as ‘**Weberian stratification**’ was developed by German sociologist Max Weber. According to him, people in society are stratified into social classes based on these three dimensions as follows:

Class (economy)

Status (social)

Party (political)

Talcott Parsons



Talcott parsons (December 13, 1902 – May 8, 1979) was an American sociologist of the classical tradition, best known for his social action theory and structural functionalism. Parsons is considered one of the most influential figures in sociology in the 20th century

Talcott Parsons' Major Publications

The Structure of Social Action (1937)

The Social System (1951)

Essays in Sociological Theory (1964)

Societies: Evolutionary and Comparative Perspectives (1966)

Politics and Social Structure (1969)

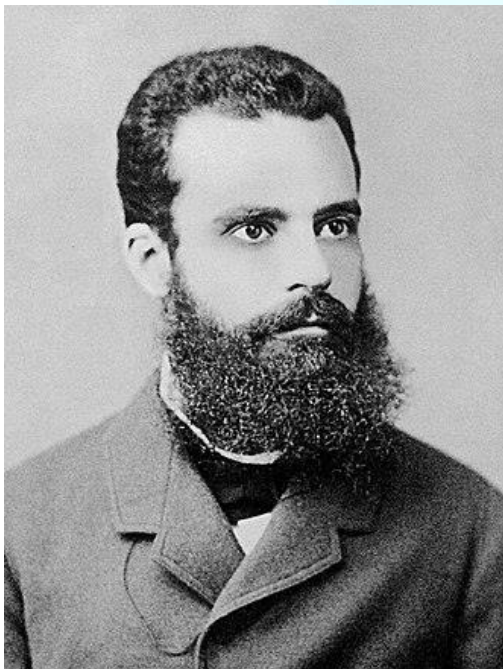
Talcott Parson says that if one has to have stability, order, and uniformity in society there must be a mutual understanding among people by having certain values that should be acceptable by everyone in society and viewed as good for all.

He says that stratification takes place from these common values and through these values a person is judged and positioned in society at certain ranks. So one who performs well and follows all the common values of society will be ranked at the top and one which performs badly will be placed at the bottom.

Parson believes that stratification is unavoidable; it is found in all societies irrespective of any human society. If value consensus is an essential component of all societies, then it follows that some form of stratification will result from the ranking of individuals in terms of common values.

Parsons somewhere views that the stratification is not a bad thing as it is said to have arrived from the common values shared by society and that is why he says it is not wrong.

Vilfredo Pareto



He is (born July 15, 1848, Paris, France—died August 19, 1923, Geneva, Switzerland), Italian economist and sociologist who is known for his theory on mass and elite interaction as well as for his application of mathematics to economic analysis.

- He introduced the concept of **Pareto efficiency** and helped develop the field of microeconomics.

ENTRI

- He was also the first to discover that income follows a Pareto distribution, which is a power law probability distribution.
- The Pareto principle was named after him, and it was built on observations of his such as that 80% of the wealth in Italy belonged to about 20% of the population.
- He also contributed to the fields of sociology and mathematics, according to the mathematician Benoit Mandelbrot and Richard L. Hudson:
- Believing that there were problems that economics could not solve, Pareto turned to sociology, writing what he considered his greatest work, *Trattato di sociologia generale*, in which he inquired into the nature and bases of individual and social action.
- Persons of superior ability, he argued, actively seek to confirm and aggrandize their social position. Thus, social classes are formed. In an effort to rise into the elite of the upper strata, privileged members of the lower-class groups continually strive to use their abilities and thus improve their opportunities; the opposite tendency is seen among the elite.
- As a result, the best-equipped persons from the lower class rise to challenge the position of the upper-class elite. There thus occurs a **“circulation of elites.”** Because of his theory of the superiority of the elite, Pareto sometimes has been associated with fascism.
- His concept of society as a social system had a strong impact on the development of sociology and theories of social action in the United States after World War II.

STRUCTURALISM



Claude Levi-Strauss was a French social anthropologist and a leading exponent of structuralism.

- Often known as **“the “father of modern anthropology”**, he revolutionized the world of social anthropology by implementing the methods of structuralist analysis developed by Saussuro in the field of cultural relations.
- During his stay at the New School for Social Research in the 1940s, the famous Russian formalist Roman Jakobson introduced Claude Levi-Strauss to the work of Ferdinand de Saussure, the legendary Swiss linguist.
- Strauss foresaw the importance of semiology for cultural analysis and studied the coded relations linked to social interactions.
- He shared his findings in his published works beginning with **“The Elementary Structures of Kinship”** in 1949, an important anthropological work on kinship. This was followed by his famous autobiographical work **“Tristes Tropiques”** in 1955, describing his travels, principally in Brazil.
- He also wrote **“Structural Anthropology” (1958)**, **“The Savage Mind” (1962)**, **“Mythologiques”** and **“The Raw and the Cooked” (1970)**.
- Levi-Strauss advocated that language preconditioned human culture, as evidenced in the “symbolic order” of religious and social life and aesthetics. He believed that cultural patterning is influenced by the huge reservoir of unconscious and universal structures of the mind.
- The most important contribution made by Levi-Strauss during his anthropological investigations was the difference **between “hot” and “cold” societies**.
- Cultures in Western Europe that altered significantly and remained open to greatly divergent influences were termed as “hot”, while the cultures that changed marginally over time were “cold”.

Siegfried Frederick Nadel



- He (24 April 1903 – 14 January 1956), known as **Fred Nadel**, was an Austrian-born British anthropologist, specialising in African ethnology
- Nadel developed the theory of social structure in his posthumously published book entitled **The Theory of Social Structure** (1957). Nadel's central argument was simply that the structuralist orthodoxy was inadequate by itself – it has to be wedded to a functionalist perspective.
- Nadel disagrees with **Radcliffe-Brown's** idea that social structure is an observable entity, but an abstraction from it.
- At the same time, he rejects Lévi-Strauss's view that social structure has nothing to do with empirical reality.
- From Radcliffe-Brown, he borrows the idea that each person occupies a position in the social structure, but from an empirical level of inter-personal interaction, he moves to a level of abstraction where the person becomes the actor who plays a role with respect to the others. This abstraction, however, does not imply that it loses touch with reality. Nadel feels that when describing structure, we abstract relational features from the totality of the perceived data, ignoring all that is not in order or arrangement in brief, we define the positions relative to one another of the component parts.
- Structures can be transposed irrespective of the concrete data manifesting it; differentially expressed, the parts composing any structure can vary widely in their concrete character without changing the identity of the structure.
- Nadel now translates all this into the language appropriate to the analysis of societies. To begin with, societies are made up of people; societies have boundaries, people either belonging to them or not and people belong to a society in virtue of rules under which they stand and which impose on them regular determinate ways of acting towards and in regard to one another.

- For determinate ways of acting towards or in regard to one another we usually say relationships and we indicate that they follow from rules by calling them institutionalised or social relationships.
- some consistency and uniformity since without these attributes they would merely be single or disjointed acts.
- Most relationships lack this simple uniformity. Rather the concrete behaviour occurring in them will always be diversified and more or less widely variable intentionally changing with the circumstances
- it will be constant or consistent only in its general character in its capacity to indicate a certain type of mutuality or linkage.
- Nadel concludes that we arrive at the structure of a society through abstracting from the concrete population and its behaviour, the pattern or network of relationships obtained between actors in their capacity of playing roles relative to one another.

Theory of middle ranges -R K MERTON



R.K Merton

Robert King Merton was a distinguished sociologist perhaps best known for having coined the phrase "**self-fulfilling prophecy.**"

He also coined many other phrases that have gone into everyday use, such as "**role model**" and "**unintended consequences**".

He was heavily influenced by Pitirim Sorokin who tried to balance large-scale theorizing with a strong interest in empirical research and statistical studies.

Paul Lazarsfeld influenced Merton to occupy himself with middle-range theories.

Theories of the middle range:

- Middle range theories of R.K Merton came as rejection of the mega theory of Parsonian sociology. His theory advocates that theory building in sociology should not be governed by intellectual aggression or academic speculation.
- Sociological theories cannot afford to be rogue, unrealistic, jargon focused and simply logical. Rather theories are developed in sociology to arrange the empirical facts in a consolidated manner. Hence sociological theories should be fact driven.
- Social theories should be coming out of facts to explain the facts in a systematic manner. Instead of being concerned about mega speculations that there is a social system where there is exchange, negotiation, convergence, consequently control and integration, sociology must look into the actual problems and issues related to empirical situations.
- During the 1960s in America, political corruption, ethnic conflict, deviant behavior was largely manifested and Merton took interest in studying them and explained all the emergent conditions using simply designed theoretical frameworks.
- Subsequently he identified these theories as middle range theories. As a reaction to mega theories Merton advocates that these theories are highly speculative and do not correspond to the empirical realities.
- They make an attempt to study every possible dimension of social reality that is not possible in the field of sociology. The degree of abstraction is quite high when concepts are chosen to develop such theories therefore these kinds of mega theories do not have much relevance to understand the essence of social reality. Hence sociology must have to reject mega theoretical constructs replacing them by middle range theories.
- Merton is not comfortable with the use of natural science theories in the field of sociology. He advocates that theories in natural science come out of cumulative research made on a given problem by a large body of scholars in time and space.
- It is possible on part of a natural scientist to modify, amend or revise the theories of his predecessors applying such theories to contemporary problems and issues.
- Natural phenomena being static, cumulative research on them become possible and a broad agreement among the researchers studying the same problem gives rise to the growth of unified theories in the field of natural sciences.
- In the field of sociology the form of capitalism, patterns of democracy, role of family as a group keeps changing in time and space. Therefore cumulative research should largely speak about diversity, variabilities present in their structure and functions for which mega theories in sociology may be a necessity to natural science but it is absolutely unwanted for sociological research.
- Sociology must have to go for middle range theories rather than striving for scientific status extending natural science theories into the field of sociological research.

- Sociology should not be compared with natural sciences. Merton borrows substantive ideas from sociology of Weber as the basic problem with ideal type construct is that it asserts that totality of reality cannot be studied by sociology therefore sociology must have to study the essence of reality.
- To Merton sociology is encountering the problem of identification of the issues for conducting research that needs to be resolved.
- Weberian sociology is committed to macroscopic issues that are difficult to study in every possible detail. If sociological research considers that it must have to address microscopic structures then it will not be difficult for sociologists to understand various dimensions to a given social reality therefore **Merton takes interest in the study of political corruption, machine politics considering these issues/problems are subjected to complete scientific investigation.**
- Middle Range theories in sociology advocate that sociological research facts are more important than theories.
- It gives rise to a situation where facts speak for themselves.
- These theories are **small understandable, on controversial universally acceptable conceptual devices** coming out of a given empirical situation having capacity to explain the same or different types of situations without any possible ambiguities or controversies.
- For instance reference group theory, concept **of in-group or out-group** are defined as middle range theories which can provide a guide to sociological research in time and space.

Neo-functionalism – Jeffrey C. Alexander



The neo functionalism represents a revival of the thought of Talcott Parsons by **Jeffery Alexander** who sees **neo functionalism as following features to create a form of functionalism that is multi dimensional and includes micro as well as macro levels of analysis.**

It argues for an implicit democratic thrust in functional analysis and in corporate conflict orientation. It also emphasizes uncertainty and interactional creativity.

Alexander defines action as the movement of concrete, living breathing persons as they make their way through time and space.

In addition he argues that every action contains a dimension of free will by which he is expanding functionalism to include some of the concerns of symbolic interactionism. Alexander started working on cultural sociology in the 1980s.

Durkheim's elementary forms of religious life were key to Alexander's thought as in this work Durkheim analyses the ways by which collective representations emerge and function as well as the role of rituals in maintaining solidarity and reiterating society's norms and values to the congregation.

The religious processes observed in tribal societies are as pertinent in modern societies regardless of whether modern societies believe themselves to be rational and secular, their civil life and processes are underpinned by collective representations by strong emotional ties and by various narratives that tell society what it believes in and what values it holds sacred.

Cultural Trauma

- In his earlier studies Alexander has written that holocaust was not immediately perceived as universally signifying universal evil for western societies rather than that it was constructed as such by way of a long process of narration and signification.
- In another article he writes about the Watergate crisis that was originally not perceived by American society as much more than a minor incident. The incident had to be culturally narrated and constructed as compromising the core values of American society turning into a full-fledged scandal.
- These events are currently thought of as deeply traumatic for civil society and are not inherently devastating but are rather constructed as such through cultural processes.
- According to Alexander, cultural trauma occurs when members of a collective feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways. It is different from lay trauma that refers to the idea that certain events are inherently traumatic to the individuals who experience them.

Conflict theory – Ralf Dahrendorf, Lewis Coser



Conflict theory is a rather fuzzy theoretical paradigm in sociological thinking.

- The term **conflict theory** crystallized in the 1950s as sociologists like Lewis Coser and Ralf Dahrendorf criticized the then dominant structural functionalism in sociology for overly emphasizing the consensual, conflict-free nature of societies.
- Therefore, they put forward conflict theory as an independent paradigm of sociological theory with a distinct focus on phenomena of power, interests, coercion, and conflict.
- Basically, conflict theory assumes that societies exhibit structural power divisions and resource inequalities leading to conflicting interests. However, the emergence of manifest conflicts is a rather rare phenomenon, since it depends on the mobilization of power resources by social actors and on their social organization.
- Therefore, conflict theory assumes that societies and other forms of social organization usually exhibit rather stable structures of dominance and coercion, punctuated only infrequently by manifest conflicts. Only a few contemporary sociologists use the label conflict theory to identify their paradigmatic stance. Thus, conflict theory has not become an established paradigm in social theory .
- However, apart from the notion of conflict theory as an independent theoretical paradigm, the term is often used in at least three other important meanings.
- Finally, the label conflict theory is often applied to substantive research on power structures, domination, conflict, and change.
- **Conflict theory as a paradigm** had a kind of catalytic function in the social sciences. It was able to show that the sociological classics also had a focus on phenomena of power and conflict , it inspired other theoretical paradigms to broaden their focus to include hitherto neglected

issues, and it contributed to the emergence of conflict-oriented research in several fields of sociology.

- In contemporary sociological discussions, therefore, conflict theory is less important as an independent sociological paradigm than in the various forms of conflict theorizing it has inspired.

Exchange Theory – George Homans Peter Blau

It is proposed by **the social exchange theory** that social behavior is the result of an exchange process. The basic purpose of exchange theory is to maximize benefits and minimize costs. In sociology, social exchange theory is a very major theoretical perspective

Social exchange theory is a two-sided process involving two actions – one is to give and the other is to get something in return. Many psychologists consider the social exchange theory as highly individualistic. According to this theory the individual measures all social interactions against personal gains that he achieves. All individual decisions and actions are based on self-serving motivation.

HISTORY BEHIND THE THEORY

Sociologist George Homans (1961) and Peter Blau were the first to find out the theory of social exchange theory in the late 1950s and early 1960s.

GEORGE HOMANS

- George Homans in 1958, created the social exchange theory. There are basically two main fundamental properties – the one is self-interest and the other is interdependence.
- Whenever there occurs an exchange between two parties, then an individual is looking out for their own economic and psychological needs or benefits.
- They want to satisfy themselves that their needs are being fulfilled. And when there is any social exchange, then there is some sort of interdependence on one another.
- Two parties are mutually dependent on one another for any kind of social exchange.
- If this dependence provides a positive outcome then the relationship will be held in good terms and will be continued and if in case the outcome is negative, the two parties won't work together.

PETER BLAU

Blau's work was very much influenced by that of Homans. His focus was merely future-oriented. He was the one to motivate theorists to look forward. He thought if people think too much about the returns that they will be getting as a reward then they won't be able to learn the developing aspects of the social exchange.

BASIC CONCEPTS OF SOCIAL EXCHANGE THEORY

Social exchange theory basically explains the behavior of people while exchanging something. It is the study of human behavior according to the situations. There are various basic concepts of this theory are as follows:

1. **Costs:** Costs can be anything whether time, effort or money.
2. **Rewards:** It can be anything whether the sense of acceptance, support, and companionship. Simple social exchange models assume that rewards and costs drive relationship decisions.
3. **Resources:** Resources are any commodities, material or symbolic, that can be transmitted through interpersonal behavior and give one person the capacity to reward another.

OUTCOMES = REWARDS – COSTS

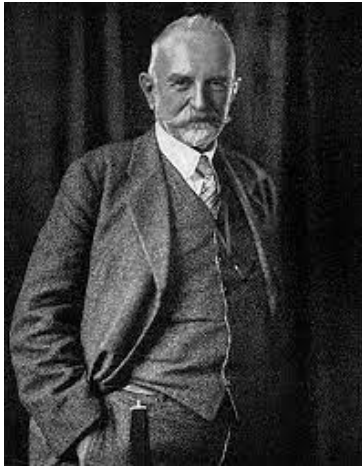
ADVANTAGES OF SOCIAL EXCHANGE THEORY

1. It is a scientific theory. It explains that individuals minimize their cost and maximize their rewards within a relationship.
2. It tells one how to sustain and keep relationships.
3. It is a timely and systematic approach. The theory is almost applicable in all situations.
4. It helps us to understand that when we give something in any relationship then we expect something in return to maintain the relationship.
5. The theory is fairly simple, allowing most people to understand its general assumptions and relate to them.
6. When a person becomes knowledgeable of this theory, he or she can work towards having more balanced relationships. This knowledge can also provide awareness of what one's own costs are to other people.

DISADVANTAGES OF SOCIAL EXCHANGE THEORY

1. The whole theory revolves around the rewards only and it neglects the cultural contexts and variations of cultures.
2. Social exchange theory makes people seem individualistic and reward-seeking people.

George Herbert Mead



- **George Herbert Mead** was an American philosopher, sociologist and psychologist, primarily affiliated with the University of Chicago
- He is regarded as one of the founders of symbolic interactionism and of what has come to be referred to as the Chicago sociological tradition.
- In Mead's view, human thought, experience and conduct are essentially social. They owe their nature to the fact that human beings interact in terms of symbols, the most important of which is contained in language.
- **A symbol does not simply stand for an object or event:** it defines them in a particular way and indicates a response to them. Thus, the symbol 'chair' not only represents a class of objects and defines them as similar, it also indicates a line of action: that is, the action of sitting
- Mead argued that symbols impose particular meanings on objects and events and provide a means by which humans can interact with each other. Without symbols there would be no human interaction and no human society.
- **According to Mead, social life can proceed only if the meanings of symbols are shared by all the members of society.** In the absence of commonly shared meaningful symbols, communication would be impossible.
- Thus, in order for interactions among people to proceed, each person involved must be able to interpret the meanings and intentions of others. This is made possible by the existence of common symbols.
- Mead identified a process of '**role-taking**' by which people understand the meanings held by each other. o The process of role taking involves one person taking on the role of another by imaginatively placing themselves in the position of the person with whom they are interacting.

Symbolic Interactionism by MEAD

Symbolic Interactionism (usually referred to as Interactionism) is a distinctly American branch of sociology. It developed from the work of a group of American philosophers who included John Dewey, William J Thomas and George Herbert Mead.

- Like Max Weber's theory, Symbolic Interactionism is concerned with explaining social actions in terms of the meanings that individuals give to them. However, they tend to focus on small-scale interaction situations rather than large-scale social change.
- **George Herbert Mead is generally regarded as the founder of symbolic interactionism.**
- **Herbert Blumer**, a student of ` George Herbert Mead, systematically developed the ideas of his mentor. In Blumer's view, symbolic interactionism rests on three basic premises:
 - Human beings act on the basis of meanings that they give to objects and events, rather than simply reacting either to external stimuli.
 - Meanings arise from the process of interaction. Meanings are created, modified, developed and changed within interaction situations rather than being fixed and performed.
 - Meanings are the result of interpretive procedures employed by actors. By taking the role of the other, actors interpret the meanings and intentions of others.
- B argues that the interactionist perspective contrasts sharply with the view of social action presented by mainstream sociology. Mainstream sociology, and functionalism in particular, have tended to portray action as a mechanical response to the constraints of social systems. Rather than actively creating their own social world, humans are pictured as passively responding to external constraints.
- But Interactionists maintain that society must be seen as an ongoing process of interaction, involving actors who are constantly adjusting to one another and continuously interpreting the situation.
- Interactionists study how individuals shape society and are in turn being shaped by society through meaning that arises in interactions.

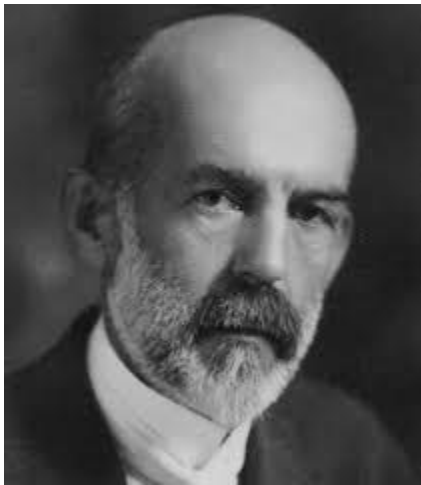
The three important principles of Mead's theory are mind, self and society.

Mind Theory

- Mead defined mind as the inner conversations with one's self through significant symbols.
- Thus, he considered it as a process and not a thing. Mind is a social phenomenon.
- It arises and develops within the social processes. He identified the process of role taking as central to the emergence of mind.

- According to Mead, a distinctive characteristic of the mind is the ability of the individual to call out in himself not simply a single response of the other but the response of the community as a whole.
- Mind also involves thought processes oriented towards problem solving.
- It is the function of the mind to try to solve problems and permit people to operate more effectively in the world.
- Development of mind is an essential prerequisite for the development of self.

Charles Cooley's Looking-Glass Self



- The term looking-glass self, first introduced by **Charles Cooley (1902)**, refers to the dependence of one's social self or social identity on one's appearance to others.
- The ideas and feelings that people have about themselves — their self-concept or self image — are developed in response to their perception and internalization of how others perceive and evaluate them .
- This is underpinned by the idea that the context of someone's socialization allows them to define themselves.
- As has been long posited by sociologists, people may have a self-image that is formed by their interactions with others, or even no essential self at all.
- The early 1900s brought the development of the looking-glass self. Cooley argued that the dynamic of self-creation is similar to a looking-glass in that: **“As we see our face, figure, and dress in the glass and are interested in them because they are ours...so in imagination we perceive in another's mind some thought of our appearance, manner, aims, deeds, character, friends, and so on, and are variously affected by it”**

- According to Cooley (1902), the human mind is social and mental. This means that the mental processes occurring in the human mind are the direct result of social interaction.
- Charles Cooley (1902) proposed three steps to how interactions with others form self-identity:
 - People imagine how they appear to other people;
 - People imagine how others are thus judging them based on appearance and how they present themselves;
 - People imagine how others feel about them based on the judgments they make.
- Cooley's empirical evidence derives from his observations of children. Drawing from his observations of his own daughter as she developed her ability to use the looking-glass self,
- Cooley noted that children are especially incentivized to learn how to use the looking-glass self well, as it helps them in a competition for care from members of their primary group.
- The self grows as it interacts with more and more people. To Cooley, one can only become truly human through social experience.

Erving Goffman – Self Dramaturgical view



The theory exploring the interactions between one's self and the other individuals based on the analogy with the theater built and developed by Goffman is called a dramaturgical model in which the self functions as the main performer .

Goffman's dramaturgical theory is based on the performances that require the presence of several main components – the actor (one's self), the situation (the stage), and the audience (other individuals).

According to Goffman's theory of self, a life of any human being can be studied as a series of performances dictated by the roles one takes over at different periods of life .

In other words, at any moment of one's life they are engaged in playing a particular role. In this case, the concept of role covers a variety of behaviors.

For instance, the roles may be professional or social that reflect different positions of the individuals in society in reference to versatile aspects such as age, gender, cultural and ethnic background, identity, health status, biometric characteristics, to name a few.

That way, at any time of one's life the features they identify with outline their roles in society. Several characteristics may be responsible for just one role.

For instance, in different societies the age and profession of an individual may reflect the way they are perceived by the others – an older employee may be associated with a higher level of professionalism while the younger one may not be taken seriously. However, these perceptions vary depending on different scenarios.

That way, the dynamics described above may dominate the field of medicine where young doctors may be perceived as untrustworthy, but the ideas are reversed in such fields as IT or sports, where the young professionals are associated with better skills and performances.

These examples demonstrate that the roles may be shaped based on two influences – that of an individual, and those of the people around.

In Goffman's dramaturgical model, the performances expressed by means of fulfilling various roles are the sources of a person's meanings and information concerning themselves, the situations, and the observers.

The main purpose of performances is the production of an impression on the surrounding individuals or oneself. Impression management is the most important concept of Goffman's dramaturgical model .

According to Goffman's perspective, each individual has their own interpretation of the situation or a scenario and all of them are projecting their interpretations through their actions .

Phenomenology – Edmund Husserl and Alfred Schutz

Social phenomenology is an approach within the field of sociology that aims to reveal what role human awareness plays in the production of social action, social situations and social worlds. In essence, phenomenology is the belief that society is a human construction.

Phenomenology was originally developed by a German mathematician named Edmund Husserl in the early 1900s in order to locate the sources or essences of reality in the human consciousness.

It wasn't until the 1960s that it entered the field of sociology by Alfred Schutz, who sought to provide a philosophical foundation for Max Weber's interpretive sociology. He did this by applying the phenomenological philosophy of Husserl to the study of the social world.

Schutz postulated that it is subjective meanings that give rise to an apparently objective social world. He argued that people depend upon language and the “**stock of knowledge**” they have accumulated to enable social interaction. All social interaction requires that individuals characterize others in their world, and their stock of knowledge helps them with this task.

The central task in social phenomenology is to explain the reciprocal interactions that take place during human action, situational structuring, and reality construction.

That is, phenomenologists seek to make sense of the relationships between action, situation, and reality that take place in society. Phenomenology does not view any aspect as causal, but rather views all dimensions as fundamental to all others.

Application Of Social Phenomenology

- One classic application of social phenomenology was done by Peter Berger and Hansfried Kellner in 1964 when they examined the social construction of marital reality.
- According to their analysis, marriage brings together two individuals, each from different lifeworlds, and puts them into such close proximity to each other that the lifeworld of each is brought into communication with the other.
- Out of these two different realities emerges one marital reality, which then becomes the primary social context from which that individual engages in social interactions and functions in society. Marriage provides a new social reality for people, which is achieved mainly through conversations with their spouse in private.
- Their new social reality is also strengthened through the couple’s interaction with others outside of the marriage.
- Over time a new marital reality will emerge that will contribute to the formation of new social worlds within which each spouse would function.

Ethnomethodology

Harold Garfinkle symbolic interactionism of Herbert Blumer and Manform Kuhn.

- **Ethnomethodology is a recent development in sociology.** Its existence as a publicly identified approach dates only from the publication of Harold Garfinkel's *Studies in Ethnomethodology* in 1967.

- Ethnomethodology has attracted considerable attention and criticism within sociology. The impact of Ethno methodology has stemmed from the radical nature of its ideas. The ideas of ethnomethodology are in general similar to those of the Symbolic Interactionists.
- Both Symbolic Interactionists and ethnomethodologists are principally concerned with studying interpersonal social interaction. Both regard social interaction as consisting of meaningful communicative activity between persons, involving mutual interpretative work.
- **Ethnomethodology draws from and extends the concerns of interactionists such as Blumer and Goffman and the phenomenological projects of Husserl and Schutz.** It emphasizes the process of interaction, the use of interpersonal techniques to create situational impressions and the importance of perceptions of consensus among actors.
- In extending interactionism and phenomenology, ethnomethodologists often think that they posit a different vision of the social world and an alternative orientation for understanding the question of how social organization is created, maintained and changed.
- According to Mehan and Wood, ethnomethodologists have chosen to ask not how order is possible but rather to ask how a sense of order is possible.

Critical Theory – Louis Althusser, Jurgen Habermas

Sociology is the core social science that produces social theory. Other social sciences produce specialised forms of social theory , but only sociology is committed to the production and development of the most general forms of social theory capable of application to a whole range of social phenomena.

The social theory produced by sociologists is often called ‘sociological theory’ and while the two terms are interchangeable, ‘social theory’ is probably preferable as the generic term.

My earliest explorations into social theory concerned **Talcott Parsons**, whose Structure of Social Action I studied in detail. I then undertook investigations into the theories of Louis Althusser (**Sociological Theorising and the Althusserian Ideal Sociological Analysis and Theory**) and Jurgen Habermas (**Critical Social Theory: An Introduction and Critique**). I also made some preliminary investigations into recent British social theory (**Sociological Theory in Britain**).

A critical theory is any approach to social philosophy that focuses on reflective assessment and critique of society and culture to reveal and challenge power structures. With roots in sociology and literary criticism, it argues that social problems stem more from social structures and cultural assumptions than from individuals. It argues that ideology is the principal obstacle to human liberation.

Critical theory finds applications in various fields of study, including psychology, sociology, history, communication theory, and feminist theory.

Critical Theory is a school of thought practiced by the **Frankfurt School theoreticians Herbert Marcuse, Theodor Adorno, Walter Benjamin, Erich Fromm, and Max Horkheimer**. Horkheimer described a theory as critical insofar as it seeks **"to liberate human beings from the circumstances that enslave them. Although a product of modernism, and although many of the progenitors of Critical Theory were skeptical of postmodernism.**

Critical Theory is one of the major components of both modern and postmodern thought, and is widely applied in the humanities and social sciences today.

Reflexive Sociology – Pierre Bourdieu PostModernism – Michael Foucault

Reflexivity has been taken up as the issue of **"reflexive prediction"** in economic science by Grunberg and Modigliani and Herbert A.

Simon, has been debated as a major issue in relation to the Lucas critique, and has been raised as a methodological issue in economic science arising from the issue of reflexivity in the sociology of scientific knowledge literature.

Reflexivity has emerged as both an issue and a solution in modern approaches to the problem of structure and agency, for example in the work of Anthony Giddens in his structuration theory and Pierre Bourdieu in his genetic structuralism.

Giddens, for example, noted that constitutive reflexivity is possible in any social system, and that this presents a distinct methodological problem for the social sciences. Giddens accentuated this theme with his notion of "reflexive modernity" – the argument that, over time, society is becoming increasingly more self-aware, reflective, and hence reflexive.

Bourdieu argued that the social scientist is inherently laden with biases, and only by becoming reflexively aware of those biases can the social scientists free themselves from them and aspire to the practice of an objective science. For Bourdieu, therefore, reflexivity is part of the solution, not the problem.

Michel Foucault's The order of things can be said to touch on the issue of Reflexivity. Foucault examines the history of Western thought since the Renaissance and argues that each historical epoch) has an episteme, or **"a historical a priori"**, that structures and organises knowledge.

Foucault argues that the concept of man emerged in the early 19th century,

what he calls **the "Age of Man"**, with the philosophy of **Immanuel Kant**. He finishes the book by posing the problem of the age of man and our pursuit of knowledge- where **"man is both knowing subject and the object of his own study"**; thus, Foucault argues that the social sciences, far from being objective, produce truth in their own mutually exclusive discourses.

The Concept of Structure, Giddens aimed to underline that social structure is always being generated via the flow of everyday social practice by using the term structuration, which he borrowed from French, to express his theory.

As a result, his perspective contrasts from popular positivist and micro-sociological conceptions of structure, which see structure as either law-like regularities among social facts or stable patterns of aggregate behaviour across time.

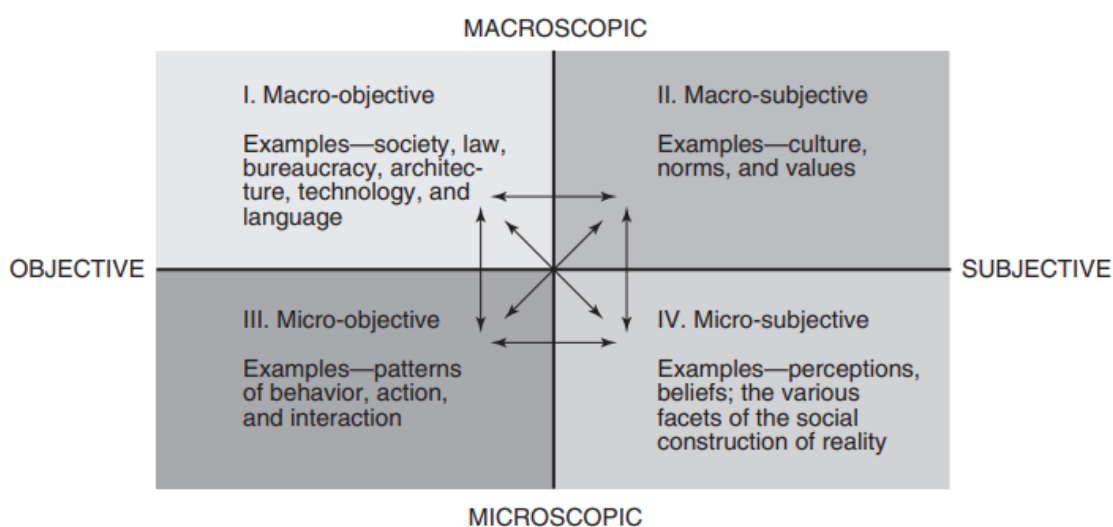
Thus, rather than focusing on one or the other, structuration focuses on the interaction between individuals and society, as well as a process rather than static qualities or patterns.

Anthony Giddens Current debates

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- Thus, rather than focusing on one or the other, structuration focuses on the interaction between individual and society, as well as a process rather than static qualities or patterns.
- As a result, Giddens uses an unusual definition of structure: “rules and resources arranged as features of social systems,” which only exists
- structural properties.
- These resources are classified as either allocative or authoritative, with the former referring to "transformative capacity generating command over objects, goods, or material phenomena" and the latter to "transformative capacity generating commands over persons or actors."

- Giddens also distinguishes between "rules of social life," which are "techniques or generalizable procedures applied in the enactment/reproduction of social practices," and "formulated rules," which are "codified interpretations of rules rather than rules as such," such as those of a game or a bureaucracy.
- Giddens compares the former to mathematical equations,
- arguing that they provide guidelines for how to proceed in a given circumstance that people can express without understanding or observe without being able to define the underlying concept.
- Individuals and groups, such as labour unions, governments, and corporations, have the potential to "make things happen" within structural limits and opportunities.

George Ritzer Theoretical Synthesis.



McDonaldisation

George Ritzer's (2000) McDonaldization thesis, which argues that the giant fast food corporation is now the paradigm of culture and social relationships, governed by efficiency, calculability, predictability, and technological control. McDonaldization is the process by which principles of the fast food restaurant are coming to dominate more and more spheres of US society and the rest of the world.

Coined by the sociologist George Ritzer, the term invokes the famous fast food chain founded by Ray Kroc in 1955 as a metaphor for a widespread change in the delivery of goods and services toward more instrumentally efficient means of distribution. In a series of books and articles, Ritzer describes the competitive advantages of the McDonald's service system and catalogs the many ways in which it has shaped the expanding consumer marketplace.

The concept of “McDonaldization” building on the work of German sociologist Max Weber, Ritzer argues that the phenomenon of McDonald’s fast food restaurants now embodies and retools the principles of industrial rationality: efficiency, calculability, prediction, and control “particularly through the substitution of nonhuman for human technology.

” For Ritzer, the McDonaldization model has extended the “iron cage” of industrial society’s rationalization process, moving beyond Weber’s theory of bureaucratization as well as other production models such as Fordism and Taylorism

Indian Social Thinkers

1. G.S.Ghurye



Govind Sadashiv Ghurye can be considered as the **founder of institutionalised sociology in India**. He headed India’s very first post-graduate teaching department of Sociology at Bombay University for thirty-five years. He guided a large number of research scholars (MN Srinivas, A R Desai, Irrawati Karve etc) many of whom went on to occupy prominent positions in the discipline. **He also founded the Indian Sociological Society as well as its journal Sociological Bulletin.**

He wrote several books and articles and his knowledge of Sanskrit enabled him to study the religious scriptures in the context of Indian society. He studied castes and tribes, rural-urbanisation, Indian Sadhus etc. **He established a Modern Indological perspective which was different from the narrow view taken by Classical Indology.**

APPROACH:

- Ghurye adopted a **historical - comparative - anthropological - diffusionist approach** and many of his works focused heavily on culture. He supplemented study of Sanskrit texts with

theoretical perspectives. His study of Indian society was from the point of view of continuities from the past as well as changes induced by British rule.

- Despite his training at Cambridge under W.H.R. Rivers and his broad acceptance of the structural-functional approach, Ghurye did not strictly conform to the functionalist tradition when interpreting the complex facets of Indian society and culture, which he chose to investigate.
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- It was said that “Ghurye insisted on fieldwork, though he himself was an armchair scholar”. It would be appropriate to characterize Ghurye as a practitioner of **‘theoretical pluralism’**.
- Basically, interested in inductive empirical exercises and depicting Indian social reality using any source material – primarily Indological. One of the major themes that Ghurye worked on was that of **‘tribal’ or ‘aboriginal’** cultures. In fact, it was his writings on this subject, and specially his debate with Verrier Elwin which first made him known outside sociology and the academic world.
- Ghurye became the best-known exponent of the nationalist view and insisted on characterising the tribes of India as **‘backward Hindus’** rather than distinct cultural groups unlike the Western anthropologists

M.N.Srinivas



Mysore Narasimhachar Srinivas (1916–1999) was an Indian sociologist and social anthropologist. He is mostly known for his work on caste and caste systems, Social stratification, Sanskritisation and Westernisation in southern India and the concept of **'Dominant Caste'**.

He is considered to be one of the pioneering personalities in the field of Sociology & Social anthropology in India as his work in Rampura remains one of the early examples of ethnography in India.

This was in contrast to most of his contemporaries of the Bombay School, who were primarily focusing on a historical methodology for conducting research.

M.N. Srinivas not only used a **structural-functionalist approach** himself but also inspired his colleagues and students to apply it in understanding Indian society.

His classic study of '**Religion and Society among the Coorgs**', Rampura Village and '**Social Change in Modern India**' are important examples of application of structural functionalist approach.

S.C. Dube's study of Indian Village is another important example. All of these and similar studies used a field study approach to the understanding of Indian society. Though the major strength of this approach is its strong empirical foundation, its critics are of the view that it suffers from its limitation of neglecting the cultural and historical dimensions.

Srinivas explained two basic concepts to understand Indian society:

a) Book view- Knowledge about the elements which make up Indian society like religion, varna, caste, family, village, etc, come from sacred texts and books. This view is also known as the Indological approach.

b) Field view- Srinivas believed that knowledge about different regions of the Indian society can be attained through field work. This he called field view.

Srinivas used the field view and the empirical method of ethnography to study the caste system in village settings.

This aspect becomes clearer in Srinivas's work on positional mobility known as 'Sanskritization'.

Sanskritization is a process whereby a caste attempts to raise its rank within the caste hierarchy by adopting the practice, the attributes of the caste or castes above them, in the rank order.

This is to say the 'low' attributes are gradually dropped and the 'high' attributes of the castes above them are imitated. This involves adoption of vegetarianism, clean occupations and so on. Closely connected is the concept of dominant caste. The dominant caste in a village is conspicuous by its:

- **Sizeable numerical presence**
- **Ownership of land**
- **Political power**

- Access to western education
- Jobs in administration
- Place in local caste hierarchy

Books

- **Marriage and Family in Mysore (1942)**
- **Religion and Society Among the Coorgs (1952)**
- **Caste in Modern India and other essays (1962), Asia Publishing House**
- **The Remembered Village (1976, reissued by OUP in 2013)**
- **Indian Society through Personal Writings (1998)**
- **Village, Caste, Gender and Method (1998)**
- **Social Change in Modern India(1966)**
- **The Dominant Caste and Other Essays (ed.)(1986)**
- **Dimensions of Social Change in India(1977)**

A.R.Desai



Akshay Ramanlal Desai (1915-1994) was born on April 16, 1915 at Nadiad in Gujarat. In 1946, he graduated from Bombay University under the supervision of G S Ghurye. In 1948, the publication of his “**magnum opus**” titled Social Background of **Indian Nationalism** made him well known in the academic circles.

A.R. Desai had consistently advocated and applied a dialectical-historical model in his sociological studies. His studies of nationalism and its social configuration, his examination of community development programmes for economic development in villages, his diagnosis of the interface between state and society in India or the relationship between polity and social structure, his treatment of urban slums and their demographic problems, and finally his study of peasant movements are all based on a Marxist method of **historical-dialectical materialism**.

Desai has been one of the only sociologists who has consistently applied Marxist methods in his treatment of Indian social structure and its processes.

The Marxist approach gives central importance to property structure in the analysis of society.

His sociology is essentially a secular phenomenon where he relies on economics to understand and analyse social structures.

According to Desai, Marxist approach helps to understand the social reality of India through the means of production, division of labour, and social relations of production.

For Desai property relations are crucial because they shape the purpose, nature, control, direction and objectives underlying the production. It also shapes the hierarchy and division in the society since it decides who gets how much and on what grounds.

For A.R. Desai, contradictions emerging in the Indian process of social transformation arise mainly from the growing nexus among the capitalist bourgeoisie, rural petty-bourgeoisie and the state apparatus.

S C DUBE



Shyama Charan Dube (1922-1996) is a **well-known anthropologist and sociologist in India**. His application of the structural-functional approach for studying the Indian village community brought him in repute. Although he recognizes the semi-autonomous character of the Indian village, he does not regard it as **“static, timeless and changeless”**.

He viewed that it is difficult to say any one village as representative of rural India as a whole; it cannot be representative in its cultural area. His study of Shamirpet provides description of social, economic and ritual structure, family level living etc.

S.C. Dube was born on 25th July, 1922 at Narsinghpur in Madhya Pradesh and passed away on 4th February, 1996 at the age of 73 years.

Dube took his Master's degree from Nagpur University in Political Science and then proceeded to undertake research among the Kamar – a tribe of shifting cultivators in Madhya Pradesh.

He has taught social anthropology and sociology at universities in India and abroad. He started his professional career as a lecturer at Bishop College, Nagpur, and Maharashtra. Later, he joined the Department of Political Science in Lucknow University.

Theoretical and Methodological Approach:

S.C. Dube, basically a product of Lucknow, played a key role in his study on India's Changing Villages.

His later writings also maintained the same insight into India's social reality, gained from a macro-perspective, while simultaneously demanding precision in theoretical formulations and empirical verification of these propo-sitions, e.g., **The Study of Complex Cultures (1965), Explanation and Management of Changes (1971), Contemporary India and its Modern-ization (1974).**

Dube has all through been an ardent advocate of interdisciplinary orientation and a promoter of research interest. Thus, he had a vision of looking at things from different perspectives, which reflects his multidimensional personality.

Dube (1965) proposed a more comprehensive frame of reference for the study of '**complex cultures**' to understand Indian reality.

He applied a deductive-positivist rather than induc-tive-inferential approach, based on a null situation, like '**no change in modern India**' or '**India's unchanging villages**'.

Works of Dube:

S.C. Dube has contributed on a variety of themes including tribes, rural life, community development, and modernization, management of change and tradition and development over the next 30 years. In a way, he has written on many aspects of Indian society and culture.

Irawati Karve



Irawati Karve (15 December 1905[1] – 11 August 1970) was a pioneering Indian sociologist, anthropologist, educationist and writer from Maharashtra, India. She was one of the students of G.S. Ghurye, founder of Indian Sociology & Sociology in India. She has been claimed to be the first female Indian Sociologist.

Irawati was an independent thinker and she followed her beliefs strongly. By nature, she was a researcher who preferred to work independently. She developed her personality through different media like being an assiduous professor, a researcher, an author and an orator. She was an intelligent woman who spread her knowledge.

Her enthusiasm for study, research and travel was of unmatched kind. She has the reputation of being the first woman two-wheeler driver of Pune in 1952. Her ideas of women's liberation were very modernistic. Addressing the women fighting for women's liberation, she said, "Ladies, while fighting with men for rights, why fight for only equal rights? Always fight for more rights".

After the Second World War, the fields of Cultural Anthropology and Social Anthropology were developed as independent sciences. By studying and doing in-depth research of these subjects, she successfully analysed culture and history; she was an unparalleled researcher in the world. The researcher in her is still alive today through the work of her son – **Dr Anand Karve**.

Methodological Perspective:

Irawati Karve was India's first woman anthropologist at a time when anthropology and sociology were still developing as university disciplines.

She was also the founder of **Anthropology Department at Poona University**, an indologist who mined Sanskrit texts for sociological features, an anthropologist, serologist, and palaeontologist, a collector of folk songs, a translator of feminist poems, and a Marathi writer and essayist of no mean repute whose book *Yuganta* transformed our understanding of the Mahabharata.

The indological tradition that Karve subscribed to was very different from Dumont's in that there was no attempt at building or eliciting an underlying model of social relations. Instead, she was an indologist in the classical Orientalist sense of looking to ancient Sanskrit texts for insights into contemporary practice

Ghurye's influence is apparent in much of Karve's work. They shared common belief in the importance of family, kinship, caste and religion as the basis of Indian society, and also a broad equation of Indian society with Hindu society .

Karve wrote in both Marathi and English on topics pertaining to sociology and anthropology as well as on non-scientific topics.

The following are some of her books:

- 1. Kinship Organization in India (1953)**
- 2. The Bhils of West Khandesh (1958)**
- 3. Hindu Society: An Interpretation (1961; 1968)**
- 4. Group Relations in Village Community (1963)**
- 5. The Social Dynamics of a Growing Town and Its Surrounding Area (1965)**

McKim Marriott

McKim Marriott is an American anthropologist.

Marriott received a PhD from the University of Chicago in 1955.

Marriott has studied villagers and urbanites of Asia and professionals of Asia, including Japan.

He criticized Western categories which often present obstacles to understanding peoples, and he elaborated alternative models for studying differing cultural realities.

Methodology:

Marriott used the structural-functional approach in his study of village India. Influenced by the model of Robert Redfield and Milton Singer, Marriott had conducted some studies on social change in India utilizing this conceptual framework. The basic ideas in this approach are **'civilization' and 'social organization of tradition'**.

It is based on the evolutionary view that civilization or the structure of tradition grows in two stages:

- **first, through orthogenetic or indig-enous evolution,**
- **second, through heterogenetic encounters or contracts with other cultures and civilizations.**

Works of Marriott:

- **Village India: Studies in the Little Community (1955)**
- **Caste Ranking and Community Structure in the Five Regions of India and Pakistan (1960)**
- **India through Hindu Categories (1990)**

Louis Dumont

- Louis Dumont (1911-1998) was a French anthropologist specialising in India. His research also dealt with Western societies with a comparative perspective.
- The work of Dumont is related to the totality of the social sciences areas: philosophy, history, law, political sciences, sociology, anthropology, that highly contributed from a new way of apprehension of what modernity is.
- Louis Dumont was a student of Marcel Mauss, at the Institute of ethnology. In 1945 he joined the Musée National des Arts et des Traditions Populaires where he pursued his education and his research activities.
- From 1951 to 1955, Dumont taught at the Institute of Social & Cultural Anthropology in Oxford.
- He became Head of the École pratique des hautes études in 1955 where he created, in collaboration with the economist Daniel Thorner, the Centre for Indian Studies, and founded the journal Contribution to Indian sociology with D. Podock.



The main contributions of Dumont, focuses on the following:

1. Methodological perspective

2. Homo Hierarchicus: The Caste System and Its Implications

3. Concept of pure and impure

4. Theory of varnas

5. Religion, Politics and History in India

Methodology:

As a study of the caste system in India, Dumont's Homo Hierarchicus offers several new perspectives of social structure. The notions of ideology and tradition are intrinsic parts of his paradigm. He has brought the method of structuralism to bear upon his study of the caste system.

The chief elements of his methodology are:



- 1. Ideology and structure**
- 2. Dialectic transformational relationship and comparison**
- 3. Indological and structuralist approach**
- 4. Cognitive historical approach**

