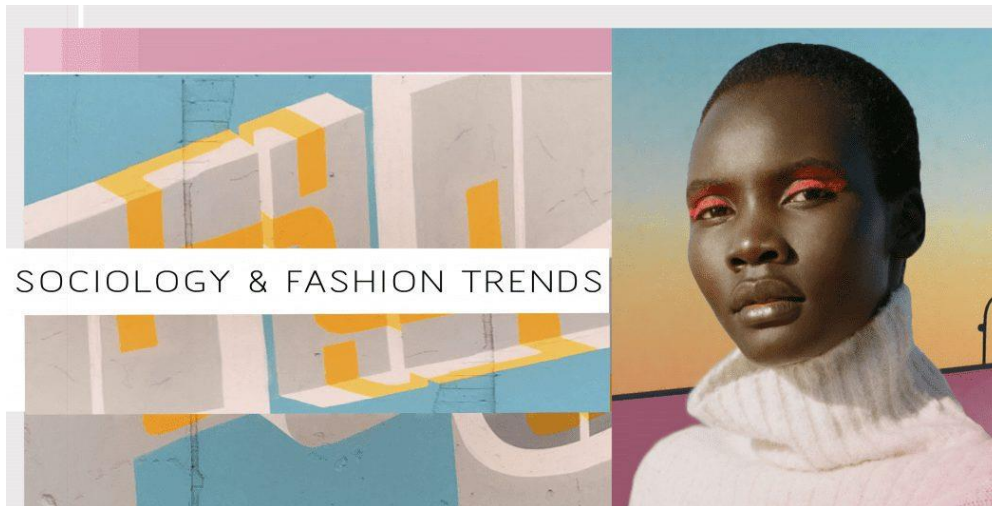


SOCIOLOGY MODULE 7

RECENT TRENDS IN SOCIOLOGY



Social change refers to the alteration of the social order of a society. It may include changes in social institutions, social behaviours or social relations. It refers to the modifications which take place in the life patterns of people. However it does not refer to all the changes going on in the society.

Characteristics of the nature of social change are:-

- Social change is a universal phenomenon
- Social change is community change: – Social change does not refer to the change in the life of an individual or the life patterns of several individuals. It is a change which occurs in the life of the entire community.
- Speed of social change is not uniform.
- **‘Social change’** is a value-neutral term, in the sense that the sociologists do not study
- social change in terms of “good or bad”, desirable or undesirable

Theories of Social Change

A. Linear Theories

- ❖ The notion of social evolution was taken from the theories of biological evolution.
- ❖ The evolutionary process of change implies that every society goes through distinctive and successive states of existence and orientation.
- ❖ The common theme in much of the evolutionary literature is that societies progress over time, to a point where they industrialise and develop in the path and manner of western nations.
- ❖ According to Spencer, biological organisms and human societies follow the same universal, natural evolutionary law. Over a period of history, societies evolve from

Simple ---→ Complex
Incoherent-→ Coherent
Homogenous --→ Heterogeneous
Less differentiated --→ More differentiated
Less Specialized -→ More Specialized

Some of the Linear Theorists are:-

- **Comte proposed** a directional theory of society. He suggested that a society passes through three stages of change: the Theological, the Metaphysical and the Positive (Positivistic).
- In the first stage man believed that supernatural powers controlled and designed the world.
- This stage gave way to the Metaphysical stage, during which man tried to explain phenomena by resorting to abstractions and philosophical explanations.
- **Comte** said that this stage started around the Middle Ages in Europe, or somewhere around the 1300s.

- People in this stage still believed in divine powers or gods, but they believed that these beings are more abstract and less directly involved in what happens on a daily basis. Instead, problems in the world were due to defects in humanity.
- On the third positive stage, man seeks an explanation for the world based on facts that can be empirically observed. In this stage, people search for invariant laws that govern all phenomena of the world.
- Durkheim classified societies into simple societies united by similarity of their members, (what he called mechanical solidarity) and complex societies based on specialisation and functional interdependence of members (what he called organic solidarity).
- L.H. Morgan sought to prove that all societies went through fixed stages of development, each succeeding the other, from savagery (hunting-and-gathering stage) through barbarism (stage of settled agriculture) to civilisation (urban society possessing a more advanced agriculture).
- Morgan introduced a link between the social progress and technological progress and divided social epochs by technological inventions, like fire, bow, pottery in savage era, domestication of animals, agriculture, metalworking in barbarian era and alphabet and writing in civilisation era
- Herbert Spencer, who likened society to an organism, maintained that human society has been gradually progressing towards a better state.
- In its primitive state, the state of militarism, society was characterised by warring groups. The society was politically centralised, economically self-sufficient and put the good of the group over the good of the individual.
- From militarism society moved towards a state of industrialism. The
- industrial society has a goal of production and trade.
- It is decentralised, interconnected with other societies via economic relations, achieves its goals through voluntary cooperation and treats the good of the individual as the highest value.

Criticism of Evolutionary Theory:

- The theory was deeply **ethnocentric**—it made heavy value judgments on different societies with Western civilization seen as the most valuable.
- It assumed all cultures followed the same path or progression and had the same goals.
- The optimistic attitude of evolutionary theorists like Spencer towards change has been criticised by **Giddens**.
- According to him, social change may create more social problems rather than social progress.
- It is contradicted by evidence. Some supposedly primitive societies are arguably more peaceful and equitable/democratic than many modern societies.
- The evolutionary scheme also failed to specify the mechanisms and processes of change through which the transition from one stage to another was effected.
- Because social evolution was posited as a scientific theory, it was often used to support unjust and often racist social practices—particularly colonialism, slavery, and the unequal economic conditions present within industrialized Europe.
- Because of the above shortcomings, evolutionary theory is less popular today. But in spite of its weaknesses, it has a very significant place in the interpretation of social change.
- The recent tentative revival in an evolutionary perspective is closely related to growing interest in historical and comparative studies.

Neo-Evolutionary theories

Neo-evolutionism discards many ideas of classical social evolutionism, notably the emphasis on social progress.

They also take on a cultural relativist view by recognizing the fact that different cultures have different ideas of what constitutes progress.

It also considers different possible paths that social evolution may take, and thus allows for the fact that various cultures may develop in different ways, some skipping entire **"stages"** others have passed through.

Neo-evolutionism stresses the importance of empirical evidence. While 19th century social evolutionism used value judgments and assumptions when interpreting data, neo-evolutionism relies on measurable information for analysing the process of cultural evolution

Leslie A. White attempted to construct a theory explaining the entire history of humanity based on evolution of technological systems.

White's law states that, other factors remaining constant, "culture evolves as the amount of energy harnessed per capita per year is increased, or as the efficiency of the instrumental means of putting the energy to work is increased".

According to him, technological advancements will lead to increase in energy consumption and will finally lead to social change (thus his theory is known as the energy theory of cultural evolution).

White differentiates five stages of human development:

- First, people use the energy of their own muscles.
- Secondly, they use the energy of domesticated animals.
- In the third, they use the energy of plants (White refers to the agricultural revolution here).
- In the fourth, they learn to use the energy of natural resources: coal, oil, gas.
- In the fifth, they harness nuclear energy.

Talcott Parsons

o Parsons contributed substantially to an evolutionary theory of social change through his works like **Societies: Evolutionary and Comparative Perspectives (1966)**,

The Sociological Theory and Modern Sociology (1967), The System of Modern Societies (1971) and The Evolution of Societies (1977).

- ❖ Although Parsons conceived of evolution as occurring in stages, he was careful to avoid a unilinear evolutionary theory.
 - ❖ Parsons uses the concept of **'evolutionary universals'** which he defined as **"any organisational development sufficiently important to further the process of evolution"**.
 - ❖ It refers to those developmental steps in social change which increase the adaptive capacity of human societies and without which further major developmental steps will be blocked.
-
- He distinguished three broad evolutionary stages
 - Primitive Society, which is based on kinship.
 - Intermediate Society, where language is the evolutionary universal.
 - Modern Society, which is based on a universal legal system.
 - Parsons further elaborated his theory and identified 5 stages:

→ **Primitive Society**

→ **Lower Primitive – Simple tribal society**

→ **Advanced Primitive – Tribal society with hierarchy**

→ **Intermediate Society**

→ **Archaic society**

→ **Historic society**

→ **Seedbed society**

→ **Modern Society**

1. Primitive Societies:

- Lower primitive societies had elementary forms of economic and political organisation
- and had some form of primitive belief system like animism, animatism etc. There was minimal inequality and Kinship was the basis of social organisation.
- When forces of production advanced in primitive societies, inequality arose and society began getting stratified.
- So stratification acted as an evolutionary universal for the creation of advanced primitive societies. There were two groups in advanced primitive societies – Elites and Commoners.
- In such societies, religious and political functions are combined. The two are performed by the priestly class or the elite class.
- The upper class appropriated the surplus produced by lower classes and eventually crystallised into a leisure class and invested their time in intellectual and cultural activities.
- They invented the script or written language, which became the basis of language formation which led to the next stage of evolution.

2. Intermediate Societies

Following the primitive stage, the second stage according to Parsons is that of the intermediate type of society. The corresponding evolutionary universal is the development of written language.

- **Archaic Society:** Here, the two class society of advanced primitive stage became the three class model. This led to the separation of religion and politics – Priestly class, Royal lineage, Commoners. They further evolved into either Historic society or seedbed society.
- **Historic Society:** These are archaic societies which accepted world rejection ethos.
- They rejected engaging in worldly pleasures and these societies became stagnant as no further evolutionary universal action awaited them. E.g.: India, China etc.

- **Seedbed Society:** These are societies which accept world affirmation ethos. Parsons gives examples of Israel, Greece, Rome etc. as societies which acted as the seedbed of the modern West. They were based on the concept that all are equal before God.
- This led to the formation of ideals of equality and a common legal system which finally contributed to the development of citizenship and law of contract.

Modern Societies

A universal legal system that is structurally independent from religious, political, and economic systems became the evolutionary universal corresponding to Modern societies.

Parsons identified the role of industrial revolution, democratic revolution led by the French Revolution and educational revolution in contributing to the modernisation of Western society.

These revolutions, according to Parsons, were uniquely Western contributions to humanity. That is why development of the modern stage of society is an entirely Western contribution, and no other civilisation, such as India or China, took a lead in this direction.

Following the impact of these three types of revolutions the modern system of society emerged. Its main features in Parsons views are:

- **The growth of universalistic laws.**
- **The evolution of modern institutions of money and banking**
- **The institution of rational bureaucracy and**
- **The growth of democratic society.**
- **It was assumed by Parsons that in spite of historical gaps and unevenness in the process**

of evolutionary social change all societies would go through the institutionalisation of “**evolutionary universals**”, and in due course of time would establish. When forces of production advanced in primitive societies,

inequality arose and society began getting stratified. So stratification acted as an evolutionary universal for the creation of advanced primitive societies.

There were two groups in advanced **primitive societies** – **Elites and Commoners**.

In such societies, religious and political functions are combined. The two are performed by the priestly class or the elite class. The upper class appropriated the surplus produced by lower classes and eventually crystallised into a leisure class and invested their time in intellectual and cultural activities. They invented the script or written language, which became the basis of language formation which led to the next stage of evolution.

Intermediate Societies

Following the primitive stage, the second stage according to **Parsons** is that of the intermediate type of society. The corresponding evolutionary universal is the development of written language.

universalistic legal norms, money and banking, rational bureaucracy, and finally, democracy.

B. Cyclical Theories

Unlike the theory of social evolutionism, which views the evolution of society and human history as progressing in some new, unique direction, sociological cycle theory argues that events and stages of society and history generally repeat themselves in cycles.

- **Oswald Spengler** (in his book *Decline of the West*) developed a version of cyclical theory of social change. He analysed the history of various civilizations including the Egyptian, Greek and Roman and concluded that all civilizations pass through a similar cycle of birth, maturity, old age and death.
- After making a study of eight major civilisations, including the West, he said that the modern Western Society is in the last stage, i.e. old age. He concluded that

ENTR I

- Western Societies were entering a period of decay – as evidenced by wars, conflicts, and social breakdown that heralded their doom.
- He had a pessimistic view about the future and believed that all societies will inevitably decay and the fate of civilisations was a matter of **“destiny”**.
- **Arnold J. Toynbee**, the noted English historian, has also propounded a cyclical theory of the history of world civilization.
- The key concept in Toynbee’s theory is **“challenge and response”**. Every society faces challenges—at first, challenges posed by the environment; later challenges from internal and external enemies.
- The nature of the responses determines the society’s fate. The achievements of a civilisation consist of its successful responses to challenges; if it cannot mount an effective response, it dies.
- He maintains that civilizations pass through three stages, corresponding to youth, maturity and decline. The first is marked by a **“response to challenge”, the second is a “time of troubles” and the third is characterised by “gradual degeneration”**.
- **Toynbee’s** views are more optimistic than those of Spengler’s, for he does not believe that all civilisations will inevitably decay but each new civilisation is able to learn from the mistakes of others. It is, therefore, possible for each new cycle to offer higher levels of achievement.

Vilfredo Pareto’s theory of ‘Circulation of Elites’:-

- According to this theory, major social change in society occurs when one elite replaces another, a process Pareto calls **‘circulation of elites’**. All elites tend to become decadent in the course of time. They **‘decay in quality’ and lose their ‘vigour’**.
- History to Pareto is a never-ending circulation of elites. He said that societies pass through the periods of political vigour and decline which repeat themselves in a cyclical fashion

Criticism of Cyclical theory

- Spengler's theory has been criticised for not properly explaining the processes behind social change. His biological analogy is also too unrealistic and his work is too mystical and speculative.
- Spengler's views on development of western societies, that it has reached its uppermost form, is defective, as the work of its development is still going on. His announcement of the destruction of western societies by wars has also been criticised as fictional.
- Toynbee has been criticised for not explaining as to why some societies are in a position to make effective responses to challenges while some others do not.

Pitrim Sorokin's Pendulum/Pendulum Theory

A variant of cyclical process is the theory of a well-known American sociologist P.A. Sorokin (Social and Cultural Dynamics, 1941), which is known as '**pendular theory of social change**'. (He adopted Durkheim's concept of social realism:) He considers the course of history to be continuous, though irregular, fluctuating between two basic kinds of cultural mentalities: the 'sensate' and the 'ideational' through the 'idealistic'. According to him, culture oscillates like the pendulum of a clock between two points.

A sensate culture is one that appeals to the senses and sensual desires. It is hedonistic in its ethics and stresses science and empiricism.

Ideational Culture emphasises those things which can be perceived only by the mind. It is abstract, religious, concerned with faith and ultimate truth. It is the opposite of sensate culture. Both represent 'pure' types of culture.

Idealistic culture, is a mixed form of sensate and ideational cultures—a somewhat stable

mixture of faith, reason, and senses as the source of truth.

Sorokin's theory is based on the following **three principles**:-

Principle of cyclical change: -

He rejected the unilinear theories of change and argued that socio-cultural phenomena are always recurrent and that The process of social change is essentially cyclical. According to him, societies move in a certain direction either quantitatively or qualitatively, till a “point of saturation” and then reverses its direction.

Principle of immanent socio-cultural change: – This implies that any socio-cultural system (i.e. society and civilization) alters by virtue of its own forces and properties. Sorokin rejected “externalist theories” of change.

Principle of limited possibilities of change: – There is a limit to the number of alterations that can develop in a system.

For example, types of economic organisation, political regimes, forms of marriage etc. are limited in number. The system simply runs out of combinations in due time and eventually starts running through the changes again. Thus, there is “recurrence” or “rhythm” in the histories of socio-cultural systems.

Sorokin places contemporary European and American cultures in the last stage of disintegration of sensate culture, and argues that the only way out of our ‘**crisis**’ is a new synthesis of faith and sensation.

In Sorokin’s analysis of cultures, we find the seeds of both the theories—cyclical and linear change.

In his view, culture may proceed in a given direction for a time and thus appear to conform to a linear formula. But, eventually, as a result of forces that are inherent in the culture itself, there will be a shift in direction and a new period of development will be ushered in.

Criticism

Sorokin has also been unable to specify the factors of social change. His theory is in a way speculative and descriptive. It does not provide an explanation as to why social change should take this form.

Sorokin's theory is difficult to empirically test and verify.

Based on historical facts, it is not possible to prove that all societies go through the phases of change from one type of culture to another.

Sorokin's concepts of 'sensate' and 'ideational' are purely subjective.

Furthermore his concept of social realism has been criticised for subordinating individuals to the society and culture and overemphasising the role of culture in bringing social change.

C.Functionalism and Social Change:

One of the most significant assumptions of functionalists is that society is composed of functionally interdependent parts and like the human body, it is a balanced system of institutions, each of which serves a function in maintaining society. When events outside or inside the society disrupts the equilibrium, social institutions make adjustments to restore stability.

- This fundamental assumption became the main basis of critics of functionalism to charge that if the system is in equilibrium with its various parts contributing towards order and stability, it is difficult to see how it changes.
- Critics (mostly conflict theorists) argue that functionalists have no adequate explanation of change.

Parsons theory

Merton:- Dysfunction and functional alternatives

Van den Berghe states that according to functional theory change may come from three main sources:

- 1. Adjustment to external disturbances (E.g.:- recession in world trade**
- 2. Structural differentiation in response to problems within the system, e.g., electoral reforms in response to political unrest.**
- 3. Creative innovations within the system, e.g., scientific discoveries or technological advances.**

Functionalists have nothing or very little to offer to the study of social change as this approach is concerned only about the maintenance of the system, i.e., how social order is maintained in the society.

D. Conflict/Marxist Perspective

Conflict theory holds that social order is maintained by domination and power, rather than by consensus and conformity. According to conflict theory, those with wealth and power try to hold on to it by any means possible, chiefly by suppressing the poor and powerless. A basic premise of conflict theory is that individuals and groups within society will work to try to maximise their own wealth and power.

- Conflict theory focuses on the competition among groups within society over limited resources.
- Conflict theory views social and economic institutions as tools of the struggle among groups or classes, used to maintain inequality and the dominance of the ruling class.
- Marxist conflict theory sees society as divided along lines of economic class between the proletarian working class and the bourgeois ruling class.
- Later versions of conflict theory look at other dimensions of conflict among capitalist factions and among various social, religious, and other types of groups.

Agents of Social Change

Agents of social change are factors that either initiate change or hasten the speed of social change. They can be from within the society, that is, endogenous or orthogenetic or can be from external sources, that is, exogenous or heterogenetic.



1. Conflict and Tension

Marxist scholars pointed out the role of contradictions within the sphere of economy whereas functionalist scholars have highlighted the role of structural strain in society as the major factor creating change. Relative deprivation faced by sections of society can also be a source of conflict.

2. Values, Belief and ideology

Weber in PESC, highlighted the role of religious beliefs and values in generating social change by pointing out the role played by protestant religion in growth of capitalism in Europe.

Religious beliefs sometimes lead to revolution and civil wars which lead to creation of new countries, for example – creation of Pakistan, civil war in Syria, Iran Revolution.

New ideas and modifications of old ideas in a new context often bring wide changes in society, for example – communism and Marxism which influenced Russian and Chinese Revolutions.

3. Law (Social Legislations)

Yogendra Singh has identified law as an initiator and indicator of social change

4. Economic factors

Marx – Economic determinism

5. Demographic factors

Change in birth rate, death rate and migration are the major demographic factors creating changes in society.

According to Durkheim, increase in population leads to an increase of social differentiation and a division of labour.

According to Thomas Malthus, under normal conditions, the population would grow by geometrical progression, whereas the means of subsistence would grow by arithmetical progression. The imbalance or lag or gap between the two would create a lot of problems for society. E.g.:-

6. Environmental factors

Human life is closely bound up with the geographical conditions of the earth. Climate, storms, social erosion, earthquakes, floods, droughts etc., definitely affect social life and induce social change.

E.g.:-

7. Technological factors

8. Political and Social movements

9. Charismatic leadership

As highlighted by Max Weber, charismatic leadership can be an agent of social change. E.g.:-

10. Modernisation

Modernisation has brought about remarkable changes in social relationships and installed new ideologies in the place of traditional areas. It has changed the social structure, which adds impetus to the growth of science and technology as a result of which the rate of change increases rapidly

11. Cultural Diffusion and Acculturation

Diffusion may be simply defined as the spread of a cultural item from its place of origin to other places whereas acculturation consists of those changes in one culture brought about by contact with another culture, resulting in an increased similarity between the two cultures. When the process is at its most extreme, assimilation occurs wherein the original culture is wholly abandoned and the new culture adopted in its place.

In India there was cultural change due to the rule of the British. English language, western clothing, food, political system, family type, economy etc. became part of Indian society.

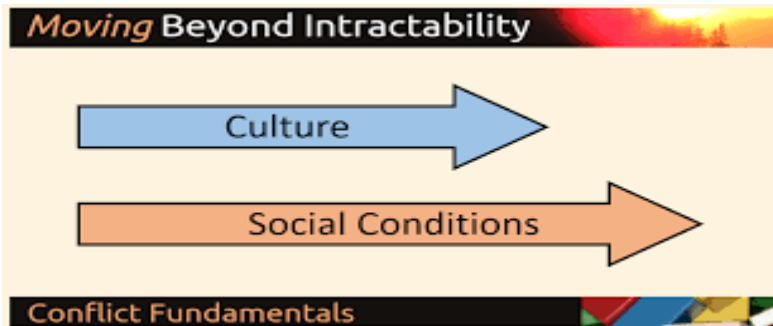
12. Education and Social Change

13. Social and Economic Planning

Lester F. Ward has asserted that progress can be achieved by means of purposive effort or conscious planning. According to Ward, natural evolution is a very slow process, whereas intelligent planning can and in fact always accelerates the process of natural evolution.

14. Energy

Cultural Lag



- ★ The term cultural lag refers to the notion that culture takes time to catch up with technological innovations, and that social problems and conflicts are often caused by this lag.
- ★ The term was coined by sociologist **William F. Ogburn** in his 1922 work *Social change with respect to culture and original nature*.
- ★ The theory of cultural lag suggests that a period of maladjustment occurs when the nonmaterial culture is struggling to adapt to new material conditions.
- ★ Cultural lag occurs when parts of a culture that were once in adjustment with each other change at different rates, and become incompatible with each other.
- ★ **Ogburn** pointed out how the non-material culture (values, beliefs, norms, family, and religion) often lags behind material culture (technology, means of production output of the economic system).
- ★ According to Ogburn, material culture evolves and changes rapidly and voluminously while non-material culture tends to resist change and remain fixed for a far longer period of time.
- ★ Due to the opposing nature of these two aspects of culture, adaptation of new technology becomes rather difficult.
- ★ The issue of cultural lag tends to permeate any discussion in which the implementation of some new technology is a topic.

- ★ Cultural lag is seen as a critical ethical issue because failure to develop broad social consensus on appropriate applications of modern technology may lead to breakdowns in social solidarity and the rise of social conflict.

Examples:

- ★ **Stem cell research and therapies:** Stem cells have been proven to defeat a host of diseases, yet they must come from unborn foetuses thus creating a conflict between medical advancement, the law, and ethical and religious beliefs.
- ★ **Life Support:** Medical technology is now being used to keep people's bodies functioning long after they would otherwise have been declared dead. This raises cultural and ethical questions about who has the right to end artificial life support or to prolong existence.

Criticism of cultural lag

Some critics of the cultural lag theory have expressed doubts as to whether the concept has any usefulness in helping us to understand social change. They argue that social change is always disturbing because it disrupts the patterns of life to which we have become accustomed.

According to **Mueller**, the concept of cultural lag is artificial and imaginary.

Sociologists like Sutherland and Maxwell, pointed out that Ogburn is guilty of over simplifying the processes of social change.

The rate, speed and direction of social change is not the same everywhere. So it cannot be explained by simply saying that change first takes place in material culture and thereafter in non-material culture.

MacIver have put forward the following objections to Ogburn's theory of cultural lag:

- **Ogburn's distinction between material and nonmaterial culture is not clear.**

- Ogburn has used the same term cultural lag for all types of disequilibrium
- occurring in the process of social change. MacIver has in this connection, suggested the use of many terms for the various types of disequilibrium and conflicts, such as technological lag, cultural clash; cultural ambivalence;

Etc. Finally, Ogburn has not provided any standard or scale to measure the units of material and non-material culture. So it is difficult to find out whether one aspect of culture changes faster than the other or not.

Systematic sociological theory represents the highly selective accumulation of those small parts of earlier theory which have thus far survived the tests of earlier theory which have thus far survived the tests of empirical research. But the history of theory also includes the far greater mass of conceptions which fell into bits when confronted with empirical tests. It also includes false starts, the archaic doctrines and fruitless errors of the past.

The early history of sociology as represented, e.g., in the speculations of Comte and Spencer, a Hobhouse or a Ratzenhofer is very far from cumulative. The conceptions of each seldom build upon the work of those who have gone before. They are typically laid out as alternative or competing conceptions rather than consolidated and extended into a cumulative product. Consequently little of what these early forerunners wrote remains pertinent to Sociology today. Their works testify to the large merits of talented men, but they do not often provide guidelines to the current analysis of sociological problems.

Theories of middle range like many words which are bandied about, the world's theory threatens to become emptied of meaning. The term Sociological Theory

refers to the logically interconnected conceptions which are limited and modest in scope, rather than all embracing and grandiose. Merton attempts to focus attention on what might be called theories of middle range.

Theories intermediate to the minor working hypothesis evolved in abundance during the day to day routines of research; and the all-inclusive speculations comprising a master-conception scheme from which it is hoped to derive very large numbers of empirically observed uniformities of social behaviour.

Contemporary social scientists live at a time in which some of the physical sciences have achieved comparatively great precision of theory and achievement, a great aggregate of instruments and tools, and an abundance of technological by-products. Looking at them, many social scientists take this as the standard for self appraisal. They too, want to count badly, afflicted with despair at not having the rugged physique of their big brothers, they begin to ask "is a science of society possible?"

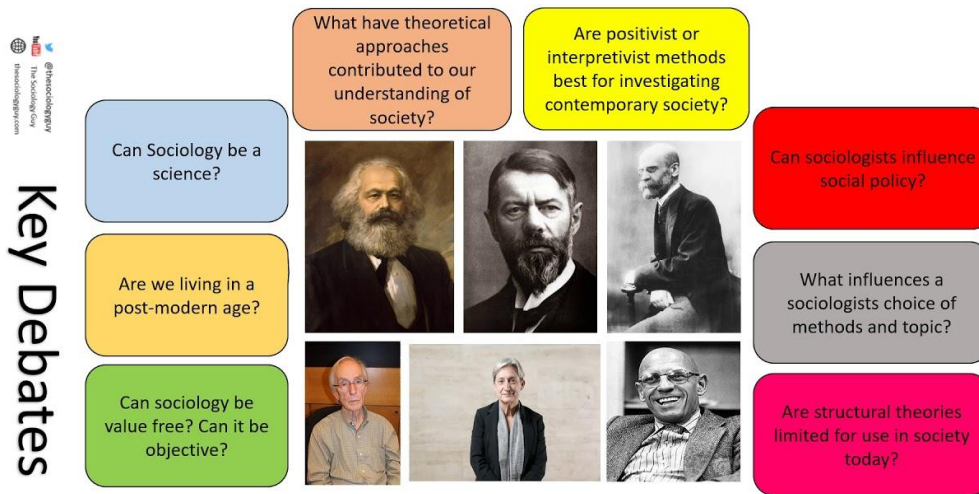
To answer the above question one has to remember the destructive prehistory of each, between 20th century physics and 20th century sociology stand billions of man hours of sustained, disciplined, and cumulative research. Perhaps sociology is not yet ready for its Einstein because it has not yet found its Kepler. As Whitehead has observed, "it is characteristic of a science in its early stages to be both ambitiously profound in its aims and trivial in its handling of details."

Complete sociological systems today, as in their day complete systems of medical theory or of chemical theory, must give way to less imposing and better grounded theories of the middle range. one major task today is, therefore, to develop special theories applicable to limited ranges of data e.g., theories of class dynamics, of conflicting group pressures, of the follow of power and the exercise of interpersonal influence rather than seek at once the "integrated" conceptual structure adequate to derive all these and other theories. The sociological theorist, exclusively committed to the explorations of high abstraction, runs the risk that, as with modern décor, the furniture of his mind will be sparse, bare and uncomfortable.

One must admit that a large part of what is now called sociological theory consists of general orientation toward data, suggesting types of variables which need somehow to be taken into account rather than clear, verifiable statements of relationships between specified variables. We have many concepts but few confirmed theories, many points of view, but few theories; many approaches but few arrivals.

Sociological theory must advance these interconnected planes, through special theories adequate to limited ranges of social data and through the evolution of a more general conceptual scheme adequate to consolidate groups of special theories.

Codification of Sociological Theory



...in Theory and Methods

Through theoretical codification, the desperate empirical generalisations in sociology must be revamped, collated and consolidated. Codification is the orderly arrangement of systematised fruitful experience with procedure of inquiry and with the substantive findings which result from the use of these procedures.

Merton uses analytical paradigms for presenting codified materials. The use of formal paradigms have great propaedeutic value. For qualitative analysis in sociology they have closely related functions:

Paradigms have national functions. They provide a compact, parsimonious arrangement of the central concepts and their interrelations as these are utilised for description and analysis.

The explicit statement of analytic paradigms lessens the likelihood of inadvertently importing hidden assumptions and concepts since such new

assumptions and concepts must be either logically derivable from the previous terms of the paradigm or explicitly incorporated in it.

It thus supplies a pragmatic and logical guide for the avoidance of ad hoc hypotheses.

Paradigms advance the cumulation of theoretical interpretation.

Paradigms by their very arrangement, suggest the systematic cross-tabulation of presumably significant concepts and may thus sensitive the analyst to types of empirical and theoretical problems which might otherwise be overlooked.

Paradigms made for the codification of methods of qualitative analysis of manner approximately the logical, if not the empirical, rigour of quantitative analysis.

Nevertheless, equipped with his paradigm the sociologist may shut his eyes to strategic data not expressly called for in the paradigm. He may turn the paradigm from a sociological field glass into a sociological blinker. Misuse results from absolutising the paradigm rather than using it tentatively, as a point of departure.

CASTE SYSTEM IS FAST CHANGING AND IS WEAKENING.



Changes in the caste system

Changes in the Caste hierarchy: The caste system is no longer a clearly

demarcated system of hierarchically-ordered caste groups. As a result of certain factors such as occupational diversification, migration to urban areas, mechanisation of agriculture, boundaries between caste groups are tending to blur or break down. A gradual lessening of the congruence between caste, class and power is visible.

Change in the fixation of status: In a caste society, birth was taken as the exclusive basis of social status. But in the changing social scenario, birth no longer constitutes the basis of social prestige. Criteria such as wealth, ability, education, efficiency etc. have become the determinants of social status. There is considerable social mobility in Indian society now.

Change with regard to occupation: So far as the caste system is concerned, the individual had no choice but to follow the occupation ascribed to him by his caste. But today occupation is not the hereditary monopoly of any caste any more. One is free to take up any occupation he likes according to his ability and interest.

Changes in marriage restrictions: Under the caste system endogamy was the basis of mate-selection. The members of a caste or subcaste were forbidden by an inexorable social law to marry outside the group. But at present the Special Marriage Act, 1954 and the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 have removed endogamic restrictions and declared inter-caste marriages as legally valid.

Change in commensality: In the traditional system, the unit of commensality was defined fairly rigidly in terms of caste affiliation. But Kali Prasad's empirical conclusion that 90 per cent of the upper caste people

accepted the lower caste people as their fellow-diners enabled him to conclude that caste cleavages are being levelled up fast.

Change in the concept of purity and pollution: According to Kapadia, the Hindu concept of purity and pollution was very extensive in various ways in inter-caste relations such as accepting cooked food, drinking water, coming into close contact etc. However in the twenty-first century the importance of these ideas of purity and pollution in Hindu social life has considerably decreased.

Change in the life style: In the past, every caste had its own unique life style which kept them distinct from one another. But today differences between the lifestyles of castes are gradually being eliminated and there is a marked tendency towards the evolution of a common style. The standardisation of lifestyles is due to the twin processes of **Sanskritization and westernisation**.

Change in inter-caste relations: M.N. Srinivas has maintained that the mutual rights and obligations among the castes are crumbling down. Members of the low castes no longer obey the orders of the members of high castes. They do not come forward to perform forced labour for the members of the upper caste.

Change in the power of caste Panchayats: The caste Panchayat played the role of a judicial body in traditional society. But today Jati Panchayats are on the decline. Law courts and village factions have taken over most of their roles.

Restrictions on education removed: Today education is no more confined to the higher castes. Anybody belonging to any caste can prosecute study in educational institutions. Of late, the Government both at the Union and State levels has adopted several measures for the spread of education among the lower castes by way of giving them stipends, scholarships, free study materials, reservation of seats etc.

Changes in the system of power: The notions of democracy and adult franchise have affected the caste system in several ways. The new political system attacks the very roots of hierarchization.

Weakening of the Jajmani system: The Jajmani system in the villages has weakened, affecting inter-caste relations. Several reasons like laxity in the performance of rites and rituals on the part of the members of various castes, decline of Brahminical supremacy, development in the field of transport and communication, intergenerational educational mobility etc. may be attributed to the decline of the Jajmani system in rural India.

Loss of faith in the ascriptive status: People are not psychologically prepared to accept the fixed status of an individual solely on the basis of birth. They attach importance to ability, efficiency, talent and aptitude.

Scholars like **Ram Krishna Mukherjee** concluded that both the economic aspect (change in occupational specialisation) and the social aspect (adoption of higher caste customs, giving up polluting professions, etc.) of the caste system have vastly changed. He said that change is more specific in urban areas where rules on social intercourse and caste commensalism have

greatly relaxed and civil and religious disabilities of lower castes have been lifted.

TRENDS IN CASTE SYSTEM

CASTE SYSTEM IS NOT TRANSFORMING ITSELF FAST AND CHANGES ARE GRADUAL.

Scholars who believe in this viewpoint do not consider the changes in the caste system as being disintegrative of the caste system as a whole.

A.R. Desai and Y.B. Damle are of the opinion that the magnitude of changes in the parts of the caste system is not as great as it is believed to be.

Ghurye was of the opinion that even though the caste system has shed some of its features, an individual's caste continues to prescribe the circle into which one has to marry. Also, one has still to depend very largely on one's caste for help at critical periods of one's life, like marriage and death.

As per Census 2011, only 5.8% of Indian marriages were inter-caste, a rate unchanged over 40 years.

Dumont in his book *Homo Hierarchicus* holds that contemporary literature 'exaggerates' changes in caste system. According to him, caste system, as an the overall framework has not changed. The only change that seems to have taken place is that the traditional interdependence of castes has been replaced by a universe of impenetrable blocks, self-sufficient and in competition with one

another, which he called as "the substantialization of caste".

Khap panchayats and caste councils still continue to regulate the conduct and minds of their caste members.

Rudolph and Rudolph have identified the growth of castes into interest groups and pressure groups through strengthening of caste associations.

Furthermore, rising incidents of caste violence and inter-caste conflicts and

politicisation of castes and growth of caste based political parties further strengthens the argument that caste continues to play an important role in India's socio-political milieu.

Harold Gould concludes that the truth lies somewhere between these two positions. In general, it can be observed that caste has transitioned from a system to an identity. Srinivas in 1999 wrote an essay 'An obituary of caste system' in which he concluded that even though caste system no longer exists, but castes do.

Andre Beteille in his 1995 presidential address to the sociology association said caste has transformed into identity and consciousness. Thus, caste has retained its relevance in 21st century in the avatar of casteism

Trends in marriage:



Indian society has been witnessing a number of changes in the institution of marriage:

1. Changes in the rituals of marriage:

The rituals of marriage have been minimised particularly among the Hindu society.

2. Exogamous marriage:

Marriage between the members of different communities has become a common feature.

3. Increase in the age of marriage:

Age of marriage is restricted by the government. The age of marriage is fixed as 18 years for girls and 21 years for boys. Apart from the legal restriction late marriage has become common since there is a desire for higher education, and economic independence both among boys and girls.

4. Decline in parental control over selection of mates:

Traditionally, it was the responsibility of parents to arrange marriages. But in recent days boys and girls choose their life partner according to their own wishes.

5. Pomp and Luxury:

In recent days, celebration of marriage on a grand scale with a lot of pomp and luxury has become a common feature. To a certain extent marriage has lost its Sanctity and more importance is given to luxurious celebration rather than customs and traditions.

6. Dowry system:

It has emerged as an evil practice in Indian society.

“Dowry” refers to a specified amount of cash, jewels and other articles to be given by the bride as precondition of marriage. Non-payment of dowry would result in breaking of marriages, torturing the wife and dowry deaths.

In spite of passing the legislation on Dowry prohibition Act, Dowry evils continue to exist. Particularly in north India.

7. Dissolution of Marriages:

In recent days, the stability of marriage is in question. Instances of “divorce” have become a common feature. As per the reports given by the law

department, at least 3,000 divorce cases are being filed every year before the family court in the city of Bangalore alone. The reasons of divorce may be due to dowry harassment or lack of compatibility on account of changing roles of women.

8. Widow Remarriage:

It is a drastic change particularly among the Hindu society. Widow Remarriage is considered as very much legal. In the pre independent period there was absolutely no provision for widow remarriage. But in the modern days, a broad view is taken and widow remarriage has become a common feature. The Hindu Widow Remarriage Act 1950 has been passed to this effect.

9. Changing role of Husband and wife:

In the traditional system, there was a clear cut division of labour in the family. Husband was the bread earner of the family and the role of wife was confined to household work and nurturing children. But in the modern days the role of wife has expanded and it is a common feature that married women take up employment. There is a sharing of responsibility between the husband and wife. The husband has to assume some of the household responsibility to assist the wife. This has reduced male domination in the system of marriage.

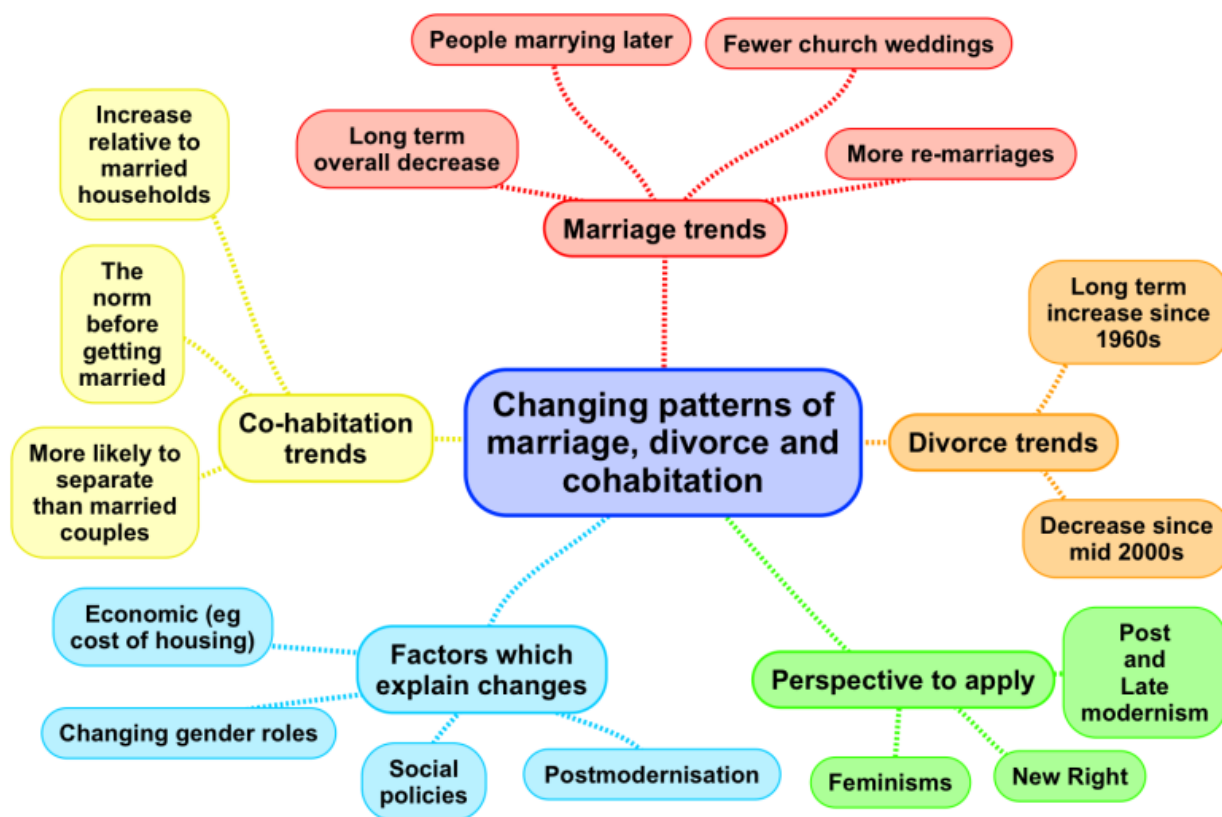
10. Management Perspective:

Marriage being an important social system influences the practices of an organisation.

E.g.: Organisations consider “marriage” as a valid ground for granting leave for employees.

“Marital status” is one of the information which every organisation seeks to obtain from prospective employees.

Wife is considered as the dependent and legal representative under the provisions of many enactments like ESI Act, workmen's compensation Act, P.F. Act etc. This shall be taken into consideration by organisations in awarding compensation under the relevant provisions of different enactments. Some organisations have a policy of providing employment to the "wife" of a deceased employed in service.



Trends in indian family system:



The changing household- As the nuclear family system has gained traction, the percentage of 'couple only' families has increased. The percentage of single mothers too has increased, corresponding to increasing rates of divorce in the country. Extended families (one or more parents or relatives) are also common. There are more single-mother households (5.4%) than single-father households.

Decision Making- In a traditional family, the wife had no voice in family decision-making. But in the contemporary family, in budgeting the family expenditure, in disciplining the children, in purchasing goods and giving gifts, the wife now credits herself as equal in power. Though husband continues to play the instrumental role and wife the expressive role, yet both often talk things over and consult each other in the process of arriving at a decision. This also does not mean that the husband-dominant family is changing into a wife-dominant or equalitarian family.

Equal work participation- A rise in middle-class families is seen with many being uplifted from poverty, both husband and wife take active part in work. Women being more economically, legally and educationally empowered is no more restricted to kitchen or family management.

Change in authority- In a traditional family, power and authority was totally vested in the grandfather and he was virtually all powerful who decided everything about education, occupation, marriage and the career of children in the family. In contemporary families, not only in nuclear but also in joint families, the grandfather has lost his authority. The authority has shifted from patriarch to parents who consult their children on all important issues before taking any decisions about them.

Less abuse and Increased freedom of children- Children have also started discussing their problems with parents. They even oppose their parents. Children today enjoy more freedom. Some legislative measures have also given powers to children to demand their rights. Perhaps, it is because of all this that parents do not use old methods of punishing their children.

Factors responsible for change in Indian family structure:

Industrialisation: With the advent of the British in India a process of industrialisation started which brought about far-reaching changes in the Indian social and economic life. Industrialisation resulted in the migration of rural population to the urban areas for jobs and a better standard of living breaking their relationships with the joint family. Thus, modern industries shattered the very foundation of the joint family system in India. The geographical mobility of some of the members of the joint family has affected the traditional structure of the joint family as well as the relations among the members. Jobs in the factory have freed young men from direct dependence upon their families and from the control of the heads of the households.

Urbanisation: Along with the process of industrialisation, the process of urbanisation has resulted in the weakening of the joint family system in India. Urban population has grown at a faster rate in our country in the last few decades. The result of urbanisation has been the establishment of nuclear families because urban-dwellers choose the nuclear families. Urbanisation has emphasised individuality and privacy which encourage the establishment of independent family units. In addition, the women who have got gainful jobs seek more freedom in many aspects. Therefore, they try to restrict the kinship ties.

Education: Education has affected the joint family system in many ways. It has brought about changes in attitudes, beliefs, values and ideologies of the people. These changes are visible among both males and females who are educated. Education has also created individualistic attitudes among the educated persons. Hence, education has worked against the maintenance of the joint family system.

Enlightenment of Women: The educated Indian women are impressed by modern family life. They have become conscious of their rights and equality with men. They have started making use of educational and employment opportunities. Education and jobs for women have brought about tremendous changes in their status. At present they earn their own living. This gives them a sense of independence. The effect of jobs for women has been towards equality. Thus, the rises in the status of women and their economic independence have adversely affected the joint family system.

The Impact of Western Culture: The impact of Western culture can be seen in many ways. It resulted in the spread of ideals of liberty and equality.

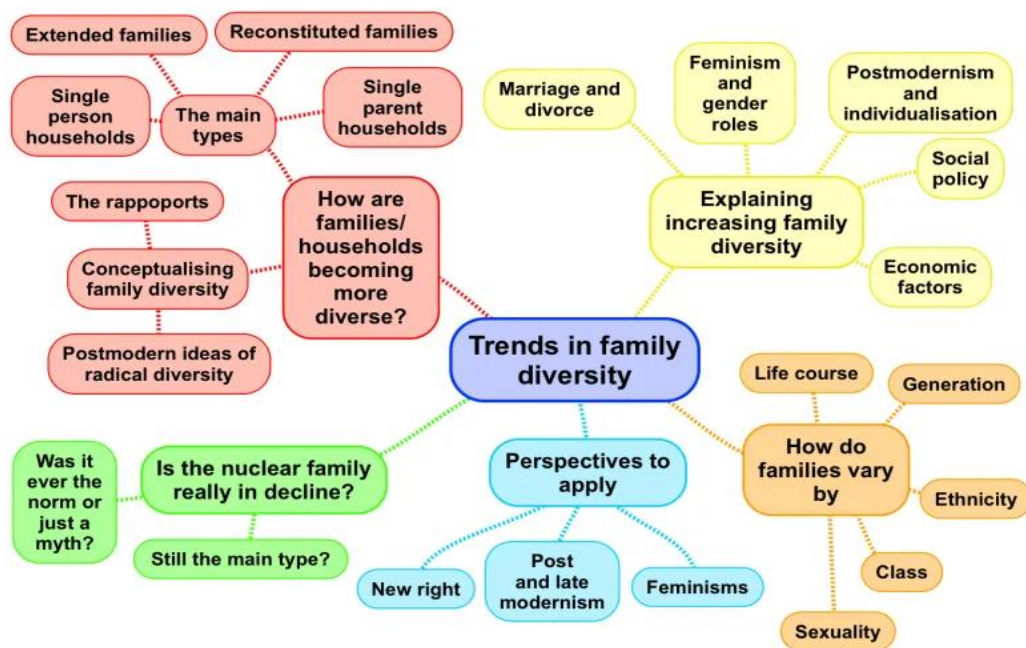
Spread of individualism. Materialistic behaviour.

As a combined result of this Western influence, the old and traditional Hindu values underwent tremendous changes and the very nature of joint living was affected.

6. Change in Marriage System: Change in age of marriage, freedom in mate selection and change in attitude of individuals towards marriage have also affected the joint family system. The choice of the marriage partners is less and less determined by the head of the family. People are less subject to parental control and other forms of social pressure regarding whom and when they shall marry. The older external and one-sided control is replaced by choice of mate. This has weakened the patriarchal control over the family.

7. Social Legislations: The joint family system has received a great setback from several legislations. These Acts have not only modified the interpersonal relations and the composition of family but also the stability of joint family. The Hindu succession Act, 1956 has brought about fundamental changes in the Hindu joint family structure by conferring equal rights on women in inheritance. Special Marriage Act, 1954 has permitted the freedom of mate selection and marriage in any caste and religion without the parent's consent. This has affected the marriage system to a large extent.

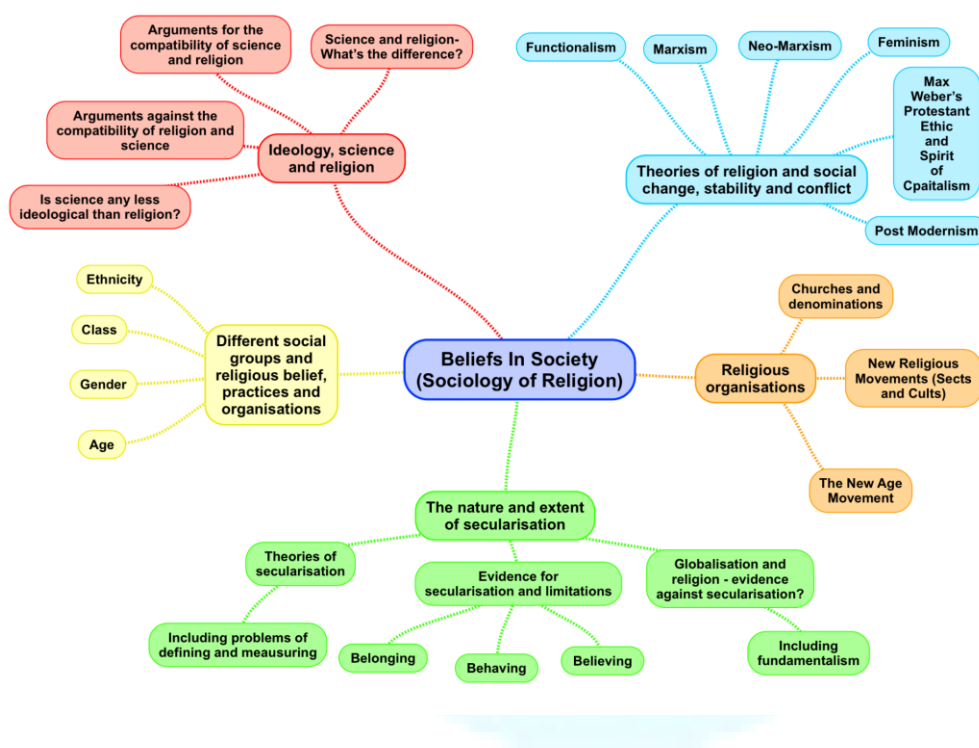
8. Decline in Agriculture and Village Industries: The joint family system emerged as a product of agrarian society. The villagers depended on agriculture as well as agro-based collage industries. But the commodities produced by the village artisans and craftsmen could not stand the competition brought about by the price and quality of goods produced in the factories. Also overpopulation has caused excessive pressure on the agricultural and residential land. Agriculture no longer provides employment to the ever- increasing number of people depending on it. The poor and the unemployed desert their homes in search of employment elsewhere, moving away from their families.



TRENDS IN RELIGION

The much delayed and also much awaited religion – wise census data has finally been released. The data shows that the population of Hindus has grown

from 82.7 crores in 2001 to 96.63 crores in 2011, indicating 16.67% growth. Meanwhile, the Muslim population has grown from 13.8 crores to 17.2 crores, indicating a growth of 24.6%. Minority Sikh population also witnessed a substantial dip in their population growth rate from over 18% (1991-2001 decade) to 8.4% during 2001-2011. As a result, Sikh population as a proportion of total population has witnessed a decline of 0.2% from 1.9% in 2001 to 1.7%. The good news is that the growth rates of both Hindus and Muslims, in comparison to the previous decade, have come down.



The growth rate of Hindu population has witnessed a decline from 20.3% during **1991-2001 to 17.7% during 2001-2011, resulting in Hindu population in the country dipping below 80% to 79.8%. The religion-wise data released indicated that the proportion of Christian and Jain communities remained static at 2.3% and 0.4%, respectively. The proportion of Buddhists, in contrast, has witnessed a marginal dip from 0.8% (2001) to 0.7% (2011 census).** The data also reveal that there is a certain level of acceptance of family planning programmes by all the religions. The sex ratio among Muslims

now stands at 951 females for every 1,000 males, substantially better than 936 in 2001, while among Hindus, it is 939 females for every 1,000 males, a slight improvement over the 2001 value of 931.

The share of Hindus over the previous five decades — between 1951 i.e. post-partition and 2001 — dropped 3.65 percentage points from 84.1% to 80.45% of the total population. Again in absolute terms, the Hindu population more than doubled (172% increase) from 30.36 crore to 82.75 crore during the 50 years till 2001. The drop in share of Hindus, due to a steady dip in the rate of growth of the Hindu population, comes on the back of rising education and income levels of the majority community.

The Census 2011 data shows that since independence, the share of Hindus has dropped by 5.75 percentage points while the share of Muslims has risen by slightly more than 4 percentage points. According to the 1951 census, Hindus comprised 84.1 percent of the population post partition, after the inflow of Hindus from Pakistan and the outflow of Muslims at partition changed in the country's demography. Hindus comprised just about 66% of the population of India before partition.

Experts believe that census data is neutral data, whereas its impacts are not neutral in nature. It has great sociological impact, which needs to be judged and evaluated. These data indicate that for the first time Hindus have come down below the psychological mark of 80%. Sociologically, Society is constituted not only by religion, there are other variables too like class, caste etc. While looking at demographics data it is easy to look from a communal point view, as the data is presented from a communal perspective. Experts are of the view that the data has to be segregated based on socio – economic and regional variables.

Trends in Education System



Despite being a year of global upheaval, the new year has brought about a number of major developments in digital solutions in education, such as the rise in the use of apps and hybrid learning and widespread switch to online schooling, It is almost definite that teaching will continue to make use of digital technology for the foreseeable future.

With this comes new challenges and developments, from classroom teaching to online assessments to future study goals; from continuing to upskill staff to an updated teaching environment.

The projected trends in teaching for 2022 and beyond are many, a few of which have been enlisted below:

1. Nano learning:

The information age has brought with it a decline in attention span and an increase in screen fatigue. Our brains are bombarded with distracting alerts and notifications day in day out. They respond to these signals with an increase

in the stress hormone cortisol. As a result, our brain is unable to retain and process large amounts of information.

So how do we approach this problem in the classroom? The answer is...through nano learning. It involves providing students with information in smaller amounts, over a shorter period. Learning in short bursts is proven to increase our ability to take in and retain information. By providing students with small, “pellet” like bits of information, it is more likely to increase their productivity, capture their attention and aid their ability to learn.

The four keys for effective nano learning in the classroom are:

- Identify the students’ needs.
- Set the learning objectives.
- Choose your content e.g. videos, apps, podcasts.
- Keep it short.

2. Online schooling:

With the onset of COVID-19 and work from home settings, the professionals have shown curiosity for learning new things. Growing awareness about technology is steadily and gradually making online education, including online training courses and exams, a commonplace. The learning that can be augmented using the virtual world is gradually being stressed by programs and organisations. It is estimated that online schooling is likely to be USD 2 billion in India by 2021 according to studies conducted by KPMG and Google. We are seeing blending technology and instruction to create a high-grade and personalised curriculum for kindergarten to 12th-grade students. Online schools driven by K-12 steadily gain popularity as they blend conventional teaching with new technologies and digital learning resources.

Online learning is the most popular educational trend for 2021 – albeit one born out of necessity in 2020. Of course, with developments in edtech, this is now becoming possible on a large scale. Sped up by the pandemic, schools have been forced to experiment more with online learning. Not only is it flexible and cost-effective, it's also accessible to a wider range of learners as it removes the concept of 'location'.

Therefore, it can be seen as breaking down barriers in education and opening the door to a wider pool of students.

3. Concept-Based/Experiential learning:

Collaborative exercises, role playing, field work & project-based learning help students to develop key skills and be prepared for careers in the future. There has been an increase in the trend in learning to shift and transfer from machines to cell phones.

Mobile phone penetration has been most in India as compared to that in the world, and the fast rise in digitalisation in urban and rural areas has fuelled the pattern of learning everywhere. STEM edtech players are providing STEM kits for kids to imbibe learning by doing.

4. Introduction of Gamification and Self Analysis:

The gamification theory in education is that learners learn best when they are also having fun. Gamification in learning involves using game-based elements such as point scoring, peer competition, teamwork, score tables to drive engagement, help students assimilate new information and test their knowledge.

Gamification has changed the attitude of learning. It helps students in their learning processes to learn to use computer game design and game elements. It enhances attendance by catching students' attention and increasing engagement. It allows students to test their results with intuition and decreases the risk of partiality by different data analysis algorithms. Learning through games allows not only students to develop their skills, but also makes the whole learning process enjoyable and effective.

5. Student Assessment using Artificial Intelligence (AI):

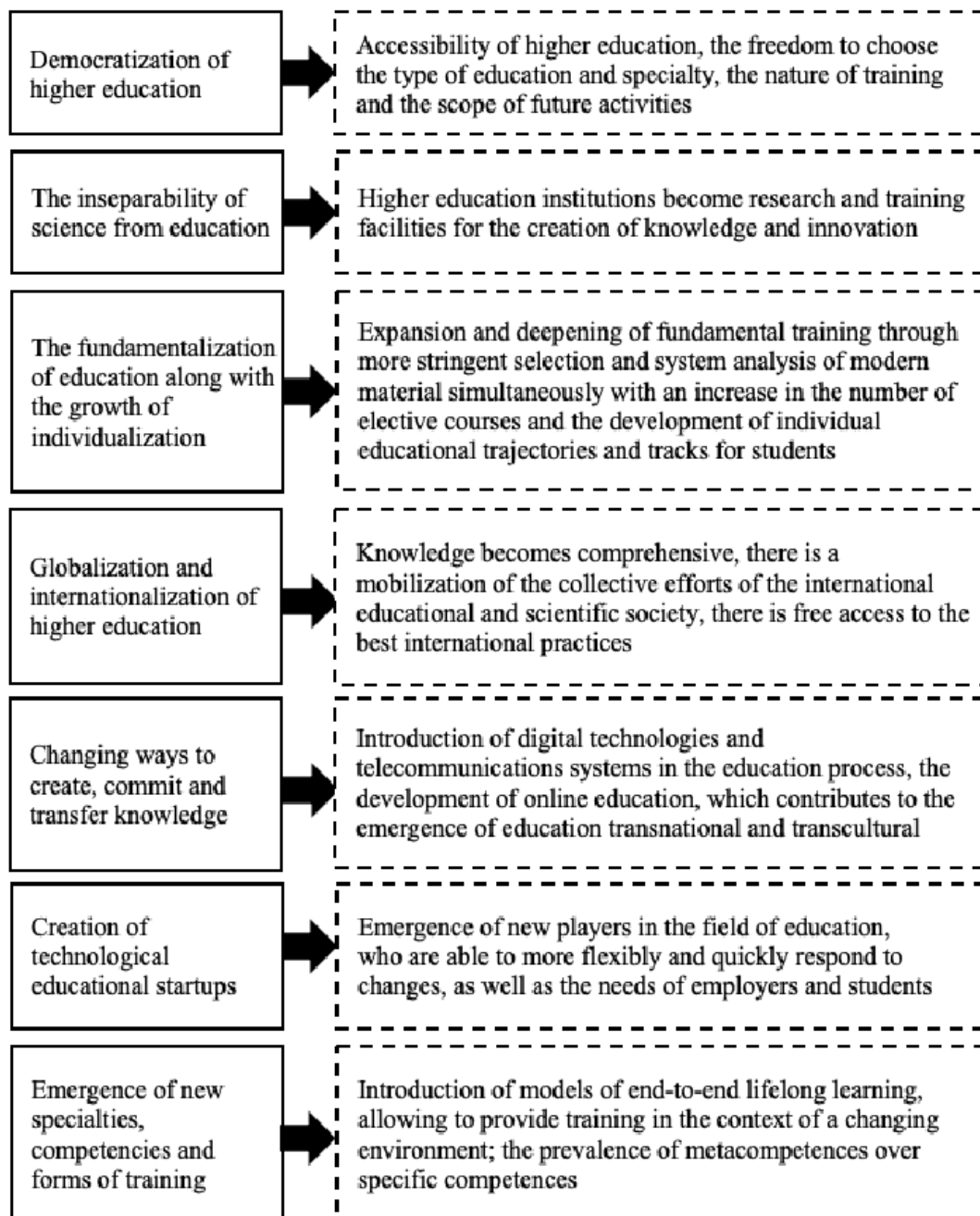
For students using online test systems powered by AI, they experience personalised evaluations. AI-based programs offer valuable insights into the performance of students and the group for each topic/subject. During the traditional manual evaluation of the tests, there are chances of biases creeping in. Since online resources and methods are used to assess the student, it will remove biases of manual evaluation.

6. Shift towards non-conventional courses:

Perhaps the biggest trend is to choose which course to learn for the students. India has long been described as an economy in which graduates concentrate on becoming doctors, lawyers,

accountants, and engineers and even though it is still valid largely, the variety of programs, as they offered it, has opened the market for other avenues. There are YouTubers and social media influencers who are independent players, who's success has opened a different set of opportunities itself, which were earlier not imagined. Today, students are looking to explore further skills and vocational courses in areas such as Video Editing, Design thinking, Fashion, Marketing, PR, Communications, and other niche fields such as e-commerce, Hospitality, Food & Catering, Data Science, Machine Learning, Artificial

Intelligence, even specialisation in Edu-Tech programs. One such initiative to inculcate the new skills is dream career's idx.education initiative





Trends in Health Care System

Health refers to the extent of a person's physical, mental, and social well-being. As this definition suggests, health is a multidimensional concept. Although the three dimensions of health just listed often affect each other, it is possible for someone to be in good physical health and poor mental health, or vice versa. Medicine refers to the social institution that seeks to prevent, diagnose, and treat illness and to promote health in its various dimensions. This social institution in the United States is vast, to put it mildly, and involves more than 11 million people (physicians, nurses, dentists, therapists, medical records technicians, and many other occupations). Finally, health care refers to the provision of medical services to prevent, diagnose, and treat health problems.

With these definitions in mind, we now turn to sociological explanations of health and health care. As usual, the major sociological perspectives that we have discussed throughout this book offer different types of explanations, but together they provide us with a more comprehensive understanding than any one approach can do by itself. Table 13.1 "Theory Snapshot" summarises what they say.

Theoretical perspective Major assumptions

Theoretical perspective	Major assumptions
Functionalism	Good health and effective medical care are essential for the smooth functioning of society. Patients must perform the “sick role” in order to be perceived as legitimately ill and to be exempt from their normal obligations. The physician-patient relationship is hierarchical: The physician provides instructions, and the patient needs to follow them.
Conflict theory	Social inequality characterizes the quality of health and the quality of health care. People from disadvantaged social backgrounds are more likely to become ill and to receive inadequate health care. Partly to increase their incomes, physicians have tried to control the practice of medicine and to define social problems as medical problems.
Symbolic interactionism	Health and illness are <i>social constructions</i> : Physical and mental conditions have little or no objective reality but instead are considered healthy or ill conditions only if they are defined as such by a society. Physicians “manage the situation” to display their authority and medical knowledge.

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Symbolic interactionism Health and illness are social constructions: Physical and mental conditions have little or no objective reality but instead are considered healthy or ill conditions only if they are defined as such by a society. Physicians “manage the situation” to display their authority and medical knowledge.

The Functionalist Approach

As conceived by Talcott Parsons (1951), the functionalist perspective emphasises that good health and effective medical care are essential for a

society's ability to function. Ill health impairs our ability to perform our roles in society, and if too many people are unhealthy, society's functioning and stability suffer. This was especially true for premature death, said Parsons, because it prevents individuals from fully carrying out all their social roles and thus represents a **"poor return"** to society for the various costs of pregnancy, birth, child care, and socialisation of the individual who ends up dying early. Poor medical care is likewise dysfunctional for society, as people who are ill face greater difficulty in becoming healthy and people who are healthy are more likely to become ill.

- ❖ For a person to be considered legitimately sick, said Parsons, several expectations must be met. He referred to these expectations as the sick role. First, sick people should not be perceived as having caused their own health problems. If we eat high-fat food, become obese, and have a heart attack, we evoke less sympathy than if we had practiced good nutrition and maintained a proper weight. If someone is driving drunk and smashes into a tree, there is much less sympathy than if the driver had been sober and skidded off the road in icy weather.
- ❖ Second, sick people must want to get well. If they do not want to get well or, worse yet, are perceived as faking their illness or malingering after becoming healthier, they are no longer considered legitimately ill by the people who know them or, more generally, by society itself.
- ❖ Third, sick people are expected to have their illness confirmed by a physician or other health-care professional and to follow the professional's instructions in order to become well. If a sick person fails to do so, she or he again loses the right to perform the sick role.

Talcott Parsons wrote that for a person to be perceived as legitimately ill, several expectations, called the sick role, must be met. These expectations

include the perception that the person did not cause her or his own health problem.

If all these expectations are met, said Parsons, sick people are treated as sick by their family, their friends, and other people they know, and they become exempt from their normal obligations to all these people. Sometimes they are even told to stay in bed when they want to remain active.

Physicians also have a role to perform, said Parsons. First and foremost, they have to diagnose the person's illness, decide how to treat it, and help the person become well. To do so, they need the cooperation of the patient, who must answer the physician's questions accurately and follow the physician's instructions. Parsons thus viewed the physician-patient relationship as hierarchical: the physician gives the orders (or, more accurately, provides advice and instructions), and the patient follows them.

Parsons was certainly right in emphasising the importance of individuals' good health for society's health, but his perspective has been criticised for several reasons.

- First, his idea of the sick role applies more to acute (short-term) illness than to chronic (long-term) illness. Although much of his discussion implies a person temporarily enters a sick role and leaves it soon after following adequate medical care, people with chronic illnesses can be locked into a sick role for a very long time or even permanently.
- Second, Parsons's discussion ignores the fact, mentioned earlier, that our social backgrounds affect the likelihood of becoming ill and the quality of medical care we receive.
- Third, Parsons wrote approvingly of the hierarchy implicit in the physician-patient relationship. Many experts say today that patients need to reduce this hierarchy by asking more questions of their physicians and by taking a more active role in maintaining their health.

To the extent that physicians do not always provide the best medical care, the hierarchy that Parsons favoured is at least partly to blame.

The Conflict Approach

The conflict approach emphasises inequality in the quality of health and of health-care delivery (Weitz, 2013). As noted earlier, the quality of health and health care differs greatly around the world and within the United States. Society's inequities along social class, race and ethnicity, and gender lines are reproduced in our health and health care.

People from disadvantaged social backgrounds are more likely to become ill, and once they do become ill, inadequate health care makes it more difficult for them to become well. As we will see, the evidence of disparities in health and health care is vast and dramatic.

The conflict approach also critiques efforts by physicians over the decades to control the practice of medicine and to define various social problems as medical ones. Physicians' motivation for doing so has been both good and bad. On the good side, they believe they are the most qualified professionals to diagnose problems and to treat people who have these problems. On the negative side, they have also recognized that their financial status will improve if they succeed in characterising social problems as medical problems and in monopolising the treatment of these problems. Once these problems become "medicalized," their possible social roots and thus potential solutions are neglected.

Several examples illustrate conflict theory's criticism. Alternative medicine is becoming increasingly popular, but so has criticism of it by the medical establishment. Physicians may honestly feel that medical alternatives are inadequate, ineffective, or even dangerous, but they also recognize that the use of these alternatives is financially harmful to their own practices. Eating disorders also illustrate conflict theory's criticism. Many of the women and girls

who have eating disorders receive help from a physician, a psychiatrist, a psychologist, or another health-care professional. Although this care is often very helpful, the definition of eating disorders as a medical problem nonetheless provides a good source of income for the professionals who treat it and obscures its cultural roots in society's standard of beauty for women (Whitehead & Kurz, 2008).

Obstetrical care provides another example. In most of human history, midwives or their equivalent were the people who helped pregnant women deliver their babies. In the nineteenth century, physicians claimed they were better trained than midwives and won legislation giving them authority to deliver babies. They may have honestly felt that midwives were inadequately trained, but they also fully recognized that obstetrical care would be quite lucrative (Ehrenreich & English, 2005).

According to conflict theory, physicians have often sought to define various social problems as medical problems. An example is the development of the diagnosis of ADHD, or attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder.

In a final example, many hyperactive children are now diagnosed with ADHD, or attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder. A generation or more ago, they would have been considered merely as overly active. After Ritalin, a drug that reduces hyperactivity, was developed, their behaviour came to be considered a medical problem and the ADHD diagnosis was increasingly applied, and tens of thousands of children went to physicians' offices and were given Ritalin or similar drugs. The definition of their behaviour as a medical problem was very lucrative for physicians and for the company that developed Ritalin, and it also obscured the possible roots of their behaviour in inadequate parenting,

stultifying schools, or even gender socialisation, as most hyperactive kids are boys

Critics say the conflict approach's assessment of health and medicine is overly harsh and its criticism of physicians' motivation far too cynical. Scientific medicine has greatly improved the health of people around the world.

Although physicians are certainly motivated, as many people are, by economic considerations, their efforts to extend their scope into previously nonmedical areas also stem from honest beliefs that people's health and lives will improve if these efforts succeed.

Certainly there is some truth in this criticism of the conflict approach, but the evidence of inequality in health and medicine and of the negative aspects of the medical establishment's motivation for extending its reach remains compelling.



The Symbolic Interactionist Approach

The symbolic interactionist approach emphasises that health and illness are social constructions. This means that various physical and mental conditions have little or no objective reality but instead are considered healthy or ill conditions only if they are defined as such by a society and its members (Buckser, 2009; Lorber & Moore, 2002).

The ADHD example just discussed also illustrates symbolic interactionist theory's concerns, as a behaviour that was not previously considered an illness came to be defined as one after the development of Ritalin.

Opium use was considered neither a major health nor legal problem. That changed by the end of the century, as prejudice against Chinese Americans led to the banning of the opium dens (similar to today's bars) they frequented, and calls for the banning of opium led to federal legislation early in the twentieth century that banned most opium products except by prescription .

In a more current example, an attempt to redefine obesity is now under way in the United States. Obesity is a known health risk, but a **"fat pride"** or "fat acceptance" movement composed mainly of heavy individuals is arguing that obesity's health risks are exaggerated and calling attention to society's discrimination against overweight people. Although such discrimination is certainly unfortunate, critics say the movement is going too far in trying to minimize obesity's risks (Diamond, 2011).

The symbolic interactionist approach has also provided important studies of the interaction between patients and health-care professionals. Consciously or not, physicians "manage the situation" to display their authority and medical knowledge. Patients usually have to wait a long time for the physician to show up, and the physician is often in a white lab coat; the physician is also often addressed as "Doctor," while patients are often called by their first name.

Physicians typically use complex medical terms to describe a patient's illness instead of the more simple terms used by laypeople and the patients themselves.

Management of the situation is perhaps especially important during a gynaecological exam, as first discussed in Chapter 12 "Work and the Economy". When the physician is a man, this situation is fraught with potential embarrassment and uneasiness because a man is examining and touching a woman's genital area. Under these circumstances, the physician must act in a

purely professional manner. He must indicate no personal interest in the woman's body and must instead treat the exam no differently from any other type of exam. To further "desex" the situation and reduce any potential uneasiness, a female nurse is often present during the exam.

Critics fault the symbolic interactionist approach for implying that no illnesses have objective reality. Many serious health conditions do exist and put people at risk for their health regardless of what they or their society thinks. Critics also say the approach neglects the effects of social inequality for health and illness. Despite these possible faults, the symbolic interactionist approach reminds us that health and illness do have a subjective as well as an objective reality.

TRENDS IN SOCIAL MEDIA



The phenomenal rise of Social Media (SM) platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and others is proving to be a double-edged sword in the functioning of democracies. On the one hand, it has democratised access to information but on the other hand, it has also posed new challenges which are now directly impacting our democracies and the people.

Extent of Social Media

- India has 574 million active Internet users as of 2019.
- India is the second-largest online market, behind China.
- It was estimated that by December 2020 there will be around 639 million active internet users in India.
- The majority of India's internet users are mobile phone internet users.
- The overall data traffic in India increased by 47% in 2019 driven by continued 4G consumption. 4G constituted 96% of the total data traffic consumed across the country while 3G data traffic registered its highest-ever decline of 30%.

Benefits of Social Media

Democratisation of Information

Social media is allowing the democratisation of knowledge and broader communication.

Billions of netizens around the world now feel empowered to bypass traditional curators of information.

They have also become creators and disseminators of content, not just consumers of it.

New Opportunities

The rise of the virtual world provides voiceless people unprecedented opportunities to assert themselves and experience a sense of belongingness.

The rise of several YouTubers as a medium of profession is a testimony of the phenomenon.

Challenges

Wider and Heterogeneous Communities

Online communities are, geographically, much wider and more heterogeneous than physical communities.

In the past, many communities in India were not allowed to participate in public discourses, organise themselves and advance their thoughts and ideas. Their concerns, ideas, experiences, ambitions and demands largely went unheard.

Cheap and Easy

Today, creating content needs less investment than the brick and mortar or any other Physical set up.

It is more often soft-skill driven.

With the assistance of technology, anyone can create competent, authentic, effective and fresh online content.

Countering The Hegemony

Social Media has also evolved as a tool to counter the hegemony or narrative of traditional players.

It has provided an alternate source of Knowledge in a world where mainstream media has come under severe public criticism for fake news and propaganda.

Closing The Distance

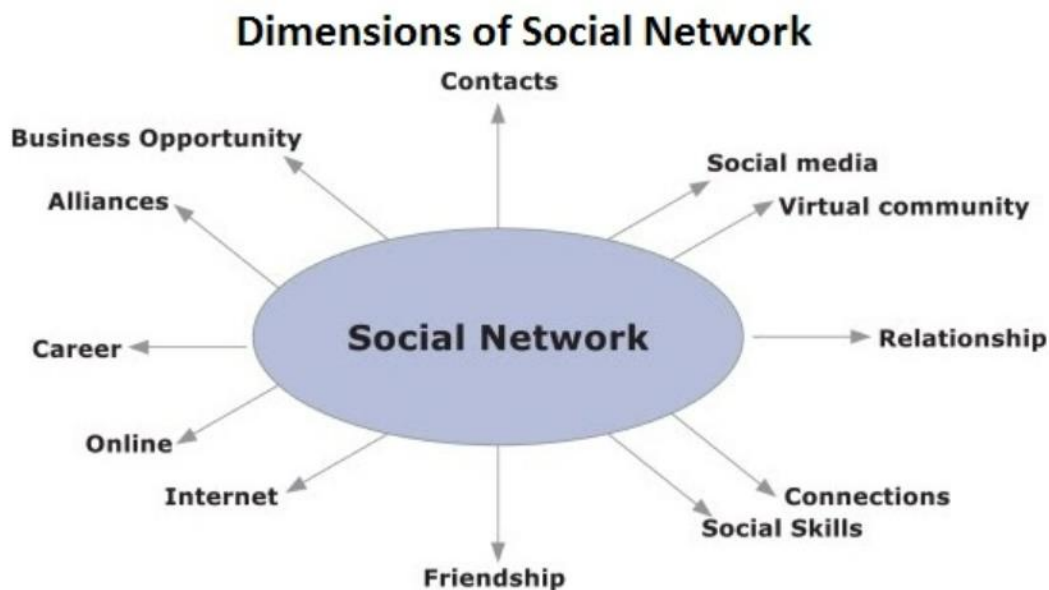
Social Media has also bridged the distance.

Friends and Family are now connected over WhatsApp and other Apps despite being far away in distance.

Direct Interaction With Government

Today Social Media has empowered common people to directly interact with the government and avail government services directly.

Common people tagging Railway and other ministries and the agencies responding to them is common news these days.



Hate speech and Rumours

Hate speech and rumours in India have been responsible for acts of violence and deaths in many of the cases for quite some time now.

The most recent being the case when two sadhus and their driver were lynched in Gadchinchale village in Palghar, Maharashtra this year.

The incident was fuelled by WhatsApp rumours about thieves operating in the area and the group of villagers had mistaken the three passengers as thieves and killed them. Several policemen who intervened were also attacked and injured.

Similarly Hate Speech on Social Media had a big role in the Delhi Riots of 2020.

Fake News

A 2019 Microsoft study found that over 64% of Indians encounter fake news online, the highest reported amongst the 22 countries surveyed.

There are a staggering number of edited images, manipulated videos and fake text messages spreading through social media platforms and messaging

services like WhatsApp making it harder to distinguish between misinformation and credible facts.

Online Trolling

Trolling is the new byproduct of Social Media.

Vigilantes take law in their own hand and start trolling and threatening those who don't agree with their views or narratives.

It has led to anonymous trolls who attack the reputation of an individual.

Women Safety

Women face cyber rape and threats that affect their dignity severely.

Sometimes their pictures and videos are leaked with and are forced to cyber bullying.

TRENDS NOW

Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Several Social Media houses have put up a mix of automated and human driven editorial processes to promote or filter certain types of content.

These AI units will automatically flag the danger of misreporting everytime an image or news is shared.

This practice must be strengthened and disseminated.

Fight Misinformation With Information

This is the other way where alternative information alongside the content with fake information is posted so that the users are exposed to the truth and correct information.

This approach, which is implemented by YouTube, encourages users to click on the links with verified and vetted information that would debunk the misguided claims made in fake or hateful content.

E.g, If you search “Vaccines cause autism” on YouTube, while you still can view the videos posted by anti-vaxxers, you will also be presented with a link to the Wikipedia page of MMR vaccine that debunks such beliefs.

TRENDS IN STATUS OF WOMEN IN INDIA



Discrimination against women and girls is a pervasive and long-running phenomenon that characterises Indian society at every level.

India’s progress towards gender equality, measured by its position on rankings such as the Gender Development Index has been disappointing, despite fairly rapid rates of economic growth.

In the past decade, while Indian GDP has grown by around 6%, **there has been a large decline in female labour force participation from 34% to 27%. The male-female wage gap has been stagnant at 50%** (a recent survey finds a 27% gender pay gap in white-collar jobs).

Crimes against women show an upward trend, in particular brutal crimes such as rapes, dowry deaths, and honour killings. These trends are disturbing, as a natural prediction would be that with growth comes education and prosperity, and a possible decline in adherence to traditional institutions and socially prescribed gender roles that hold women back.

A preference for sons

Cultural institutions in India, particularly those of patrilineality (inheritance through male descendants) and patrilocality (married couples living with or near the husband's parents), play a central role in perpetuating gender inequality and ideas about gender-appropriate behaviour.

A culturally ingrained parental preference for sons — emanating from their importance as caregivers for parents in old age — is linked to poorer consequences for daughters.

The dowry system, involving a cash or in-kind payment from the bride's family to the groom's at the time of marriage, is another institution that disempowers women. The incidence of dowry payment, which is often a substantial part of a household's income, has been steadily rising over time across all regions and socioeconomic classes.

This often results in dowry-related violence against women by their husbands and in-laws if the dowry is considered insufficient or as a way to demand more payments.

These practices create incentives for parents not to have girl children or to invest less in girls' health and education. Such parental preferences are reflected in increasingly masculine sex ratios in India. In 2011, there were 919 girls under age six per 1000 boys, despite sex determination being outlawed in India.

This reinforces the inferior status of Indian women and puts them at risk of violence in their marital households. According to the National Family and Health Survey of 2005–06, 37% of married women have been victims of physical or sexual violence perpetrated by their spouse.

Affirmative action

There is clearly a need for policy initiatives to empower women as gender disparities in India persist even against the backdrop of economic growth.

Current literature provides pointers from policy changes that have worked so far. One unique policy experiment in village-level governance that mandated one-third representation for women in positions of local leadership has shown promising results.

Evaluations of this affirmative action policy have found that in villages led by women, the preferences of female residents are better represented, and women are more confident in reporting crimes that earlier they may have considered too stigmatising to bring to attention.

Female leaders also serve as role models and raise educational and career aspirations for adolescent girls and their parents.

Behavioural studies find that while in the short run there is backlash by men as traditional gender roles are being challenged, the negative stereotype eventually disappears. This underscores the importance of sustained affirmative action as a way to reduce gender bias.

Another policy change aimed at equalising land inheritance rights between sons and daughters has been met with a more mixed response. While on the one hand, it led to an increase in educational attainment and age at marriage

for daughters, on the other hand, it increased spousal conflict leading to more domestic violence.

Improvements in labour market prospects also have the potential to empower women. An influential randomisation study found that job recruiter visits to villages to provide information to young women led to positive effects on their labour market participation and enrolment in professional training.

This also led to an increase in age at marriage and childbearing, a drop in desired number of children, and an increase in school enrolment of younger girls not exposed to the programme.

Recent initiatives on training and recruiting young women from rural areas for factory-based jobs in cities provide economic independence and social autonomy that they were unaccustomed to in their parental homes.

Getting to parity

For India to maintain its position as a global growth leader, more concerted efforts at local and national levels, and by the private sector are needed to bring women to parity with men.

While increasing **representation of women** in the public spheres is important and can potentially be attained through some form of affirmative action, an attitudinal shift is essential for women to be considered as equal within their homes and in broader society.

Educating Indian children from an early age about the importance of gender equality could be a meaningful start in that direction.