**Sociological Perspectives on**

**Socialisation / Social Order**

**Functionalism.**

The functionalist approach to socialisation is based on the view that society is external to the individual and human nature is passive. Socialisation is a one way process – Society in man. For Durkheim, socialisation was really similar to training or even taming. Parsons has also help put a lot of emphasis on social order and consensus being maintained through socialisation. During socialisation, individuals learn one desire – what the culture of society provides and in doing so, their personalities become structured by the social rules they learn. For example, from a functionalist perspective, a deviant behaviour can to a large extent be explained in terms of inadequate socialisation.

For functionalists, the fundamental reason for social order is the consensus that is learned during socialisation. Shared norms and values provide the basis for social order. Durkheim identified a ‘collective conscience’ that acted like social glue bonding individual members of society. In pre-industrial societies, Durkheim identified “mechanical solidarity”. The collective conscience was very powerful in these societies because a shared way of life produced shared ways of thinking. In these types of societies, ascribed status was very important and the key agencies of social control were the family and religion.

However, Durkheim was pessimistic in his analysis of the effects of industrialisation. He anticipated that industrialisation could weaken social solidarity and result in more deviance and possibly social disorder. In industrial societies, achieved status become more significant. “Organic solidarity” based on the division of labour would develop in industrial societies but it was not as peaceful as mechanical solidarity. In the industrial societies, state agencies like the police and the army would play an increasingly important role controlling behaviour. Durkheim was concerned that the social changes caused by industrialisation would lead to increasing numbers of people experiencing anomie.

**Marxism.**

The conflict theorists also put a great deal of emphasis on socialisation but are critical of its content. Traditional Marxists see little difference between culture and ideology. It is really the values and interests of the ruling class that is transmitted and represented as culture. Marxists analyse the agencies of socialisation in capitalist societies – the family, schools, the mass media and political institutions. For example: conflict theorists Bowles and Gintis emphasized the importance of Hidden Curriculum. The values that are learned are capitalist values, acceptance of authority structures (compulsory schooling) and competition (examinations and tests). Similarly the mass media is seen as a tool of the capitalist class transmitting materialistic values to passive consumers.

The whole structuralist approach tends to see socialisation as cultural programming. The functionalist see the process as positive, if provides the social glue which is the basis of consensus. The conflict theorists are negative because they see the whole process of socialisation as an exercise in brainwashing that leaves mass of people in a state of “false consciousness”. Both approaches see human nature as passive receptive to cultural programming. As structuralists they see socialisation as a process of putting “society in man”.

**Marxist Approach to Social Order.**

The Marxist view of social order is based on the inequality of power. Social order in capitalist societies is based on coercion. Marxists emphasize different types of coercion that exercise control over individuals. The most powerful force controlling behaviour was the ideology of capitalism. People were not aware that they are being controlled because the great majority of the population – ‘the proletariat’ (Marx) experienced “false consciousness”.

The ideological control was maintained by the bourgeoisie who controlled the ‘ideological state apparatus’ (Althusser). It was via their control over the media and education that they were able to maintain their control over the production of ideas. Ex: Education. Marxists have identified the Hidden Curriculum. For Bowles and Gintis, the real purpose of schooling in capitalist societies is to teach pupils to be obedient and subservient. Similarly, the media presents a very materialistic set of values through advertising. Those materialistic set of values are essential for the success of the capitalist economic system. Many people buy things they do not need with money they do not have.

Marxists also stress the importance of formal agencies of social control, the police, the army, the courts are instruments of social control. When order breaks down the army can be called upon to improve order. When ideas fail, the police can be used to repress oppression.

**Interactionist Approach to Social Order.**

For interactionists, social order is much less predictable. Individuals are not controlled by social facts (Durkheim) or ideologies, human nature is active. To the interactionists, social order does exist but is constantly being negotiated and renegotiated. For eg: behaviour that is defined as non conformist in one period of time can become part of the accepted social order. Cohabitation in Britain was regarded as completely unacceptable at the beginning of the 20th century but is now accepted as a type of family relationship. However, it is still regarded as deviant in many Asian societies.