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Unit I:- Social Disorganization and Social Problems Concepts and Theories

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The Meaning of Social Disorganisation:-

Social disorganisation is the process opposed to social organisation. Social organisation, Some Fundamental Concepts', is an orderly relationship of parts. The significance of this orderly arrangement lies in what it does. When the parts of social structure do not perform their functions efficiently and effectively or perform them badly, there occurs an imbalance in society.

The social equilibrium is disturbed and society gets out of gear. Emile Durkheim defined social disorganisation as "a state of disequilibrium and a lack of social solidarity or consensus among the members of a society." W.I. Thomas and Florien Znaniecki conceived of social disorganisation as "a decrease of the influence of existing rules of behaviour upon individual members of the groups."

According to Mowever, social disorganization is "the process by which the relationships between members of a group are shaken." Stuart A. Queen, Walter B. Bodenhafer, and Ernest B. Harper described social disorganisation in their book 'Social Organisation and Disorganisation' as the counterpart of social organisation.

According to them, just as social organisation provides the means by which a society maintains its unity and cohesion through effective control of its members, and, hence, functions smoothly; social disorganisation causes a weakening of group solidarity, loss of control over its members, and, therefore, conflict and disintegration.

According to Ogburn and Nimkoff when the harmonious relationship between the various parts of culture is disturbed, social disorganisation ensue. According to R.E.L. Faris, "Social

disorganization is a disturbance in the patterns and mechanisms of human relations. According to Elliott and Merrill, "Social disorganisation is the process by which the relationship between members of the group are broken or dissolved."

Thus on the basis of these definitions it may be said that social disorganisation refers to serious mal-adjustments rather than un-adjustments in society so that they fail to satisfy the needs of the individuals satisfactorily. Society, as we know, is the web of social relationships. In an organised society social relations have some patterns and mechanisms. When the relations become disordered or disintegrated there is social disorganisation.

In a well organised society the various institutions are in a harmonious adjustment or, in other words, there exists functional balance between the various elements of the social structure. When there is a lack of adjustment and balance and institutions do not function in a manner that satisfies all the individuals, we can speak of social disorganisation.

Social disorganisation, therefore, is to be considered in terms of functional disequilibrium, it is disequilibrium within customs, institutions, groups, communities and societies. Comparing social disorganisation with social organisation Queen and Harper write, "If social organisation means the development of relationships which persons and groups find mutually satisfactory, then disorganisation means their replacement by relationships which bring disappointment, thwarted wishes, irritation and unhappiness." Social disorganisation often brings personal disorganisation, since a person is a social creation and his "self" a social product.

It may be, however, noted that no objective criteria for measuring the degree of disorganisation are available; whether a situation represents organisation or disorganisation is largely a matter of subjective judgment. For example, divorce may be thought of as signifying family disorganisation. Actually it may be due to a better knowledge of the divorce laws and altered attitudes towards marriage.