

**Programme: Master in Sociology**

**SEMESTER-III**

**Postgraduate Department of Sociology**

**Patna University, Patna**

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**Compulsory Paper: C.C. 11 (SOCIAL PROBLEMS IN INDIA)**

**UNIT I: Social Disorganization and Social Problems Concepts and Theories**

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# **Theoretical Approaches to Social Problems in India**

Social problems have been analysed scientifically. We will examine some of the theoretical approaches which present universal explanations for all types of social problems.

## **1. Social Disorganization Approach:**

Social disorganization is a condition of a society, community or group in which there is a breakdown of social control, or of a social order, or of formal and informal norms that define permissible behaviour. It is characterized by the lack of co-operation, common values, unity, discipline and predictability.

**Warren (1949:83-87) has described it as a condition involving:**

- (a) Lack of consensus (disagreement about group purposes),
- (b) Lack of integration of institutions (often working at cross purposes), and

(c) Inadequate means of social control (preventing individuals from playing their individual roles due to confusion).

Elliott and Merrill (1950:20) have defined it as a process by which relationships between members of a group are broken or dissolved. Social disorganization occurs when there is a change in the equilibrium of forces, a breakdown of the social structure so that the former patterns no longer apply, and the accepted forms of social control no longer function effectively.

This disruptive condition of society, which is evidenced by normlessness, role conflict, social conflicts, and demoralization, increases social problems. For example, increasing industrialization, spread of education, and women taking up paid work have affected the relations between husband and wife, and between parents and children.

Many of the old norms which governed the intra-family and inter-family relations seem to have broken down. Many people feel frustrated and unhappy. This is the condition of social disorganization, in which changes in the basic conditions of life, causing breakdown of traditional norms, have resulted in widespread discontentment and disillusionment. In other words, change has disrupted the organization of the formal system of behaviour. Talking of social disorganization in slum life, Whyte (1955:268) has referred to deviant or non-approved group organization in slums.

However, according to one school of thought, the state of social disorganization does not always create social problems. For example, during Hitler's regime, Germany was not a disorganized society nor

during Stalin's regime, was the Soviet Union in a state of disorganization; yet many conditions in these countries were shocking "deviations from the social ideal, demanding social action", that is, there were social problems.

Reacting to this view, some scholars say that even if the social disorganization theory may not explain all social problems, it does explain some of the social problems, for example, mental illness may not be a symptom of a disorganized society but corruption in the society does lead to the malfunctioning of institutions, lack of perfect consensus and the evasion of social control by some citizens.

In employing the social disorganization approach to social problems (Horton and Leslie, 1970:33), one looks to factors like: What were the traditional norms and practices? What were the major changes that made them ineffective? What are the old rules which have broken down partially or completely? What is the nature and direction of social change? Who are the disgruntled groups and what solutions do they propose? How various do proposed solutions fit in with the trend of social change? What may become the accepted rules in the future?