

Programme: Master in Sociology

SEMESTER -III

Postgraduate Department of Sociology

Patna University, Patna

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

UNIT I: Social Disorganization and Social Problems Concepts and Theories

Theoretical Approaches to Social Problems in India

Cultural Lag Approach:

Culture lag is a situation in which some parts of a culture change at a faster rate than other related parts resulting in the disruption of integration and equilibrium of the culture; for example, the material culture changes more rapidly than the non-material culture in industrial societies through rapid advances in science and technology (Ogburn, 1966).

The theory of culture lag, in particular holds that in modern societies there has been a tendency for change in the political, educational, family and religious institutions to fall behind technological changes. It is thus easy to see how culture lag can create social problems. Even after rapid industrialization in the last quarter of the nineteenth century and in the first quarter of the twentieth century, some people were so influenced by the rigid restrictions of the caste system that they refused to work with mem-

bers of other castes in the industries and preferred to remain unemployed and poor.

The first quarter of the twentieth century, thus, remained a period of culture lag. It took more than a generation to adapt ourselves to technological development in agriculture and industry. Our social institutions, thus, retained the traditional flavour whereas technology advanced in the world. Though the culture lag theory explains some of the social problems (like AIDS, population explosion, etc.), it does not explain all social problems. It, therefore, cannot be accepted as a universal explanation of all social problems.

Value Conflict Approach:-

A value is a generalized principle of behaviour to which the members of a group feel a strong, emotionally-toned positive commitment and which provides a standard for judging specific acts and goals. Each member of the group is expected to remain committed to the values accepted by the group. Values, thus, provide the generalized standards of behaviour. Examples of values are equality, justice, communal harmony, patriotism, mobility, collectivism, compromise, sacrifice, adjustment and so forth. Because of the strong emotional feeling attached to values and because they serve as standards for judging concrete goals or actions, they are often regarded as absolute (Theodorson, 1969: 456).

Different groups have different systems of values. Incompatibility between the values of two or more groups to the extent that the role

performance of individuals is interfered with is called 'value conflict'. This state of conflict may last only a short while or it may be a persistent problem.

For example, conflict in values of workers and employers leads to industrial unrest, strikes and lockouts; or conflict in values between land owners and landless labourers leads to agrarian unrest or agricultural labourers' movements; or the liberal businessmen may believe in encouraging hard work, thrift, honesty and ambition and may reward these virtues financially, but on the other hand, the conservatives may differ profoundly with this view and may believe in the profit motive and individual initiative. Liberals and conservatives thus differ not only on matters of policies but more profoundly on those of values.

The value conflict theorists like Waller, Fuller, Cuber and Harper hold that clashes in value system are of basic importance in the origin and development of social problems. Waller (1936:924) has referred to the conflict between 'organizational' and 'humanitarian' values. The former favour private property and individualism, while the latter are votaries of remedying the misfortunes of others. But this theoretical approach is too vague.

The pro-pounders have not explained their views in concrete details. It is true that our current values overemphasize money and material possessions and this attitude encourages corruption, smuggling, drug trafficking, black-marketing, and taking of bribes but problems like white-collar crime cannot be reduced to a conflict of values.

The problem of divorce may be the result of value conflict but all family problems cannot be explained merely in terms of disagreements between husband and wife or parents and children. Agreement on common values helps in maintaining harmonious interpersonal relations in family or outside it but it is not the only thing needed for family stability or group success.

Thus, the value conflict theory may be useful in some areas like economics, in the analysis of social problems, but it certainly cannot be accepted as a universal explanation. On applying the value conflict approach, questions which are generally asked (Horton and Leslie, 1970:40) are: What are the values that are in conflict? How deep is the value conflict? What groups in the society hold to each of the competing values? How powerful are they? Which values are more consistent with other larger values such as democracy and freedom? What value sacrifices would each solution require? Are some problems insoluble at present because of certain irreconcilable value conflicts?