

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

Personal Deviation Approach:

Deviation is non-conformity to social norms. It is different from abnormal behaviour because the latter connotes psychological illness rather than social maladjustment or conflict. Thus, people who deviate from social norms are not necessarily mentally ill. In the social disorganization approach to social problems, one looks to the rules that have broken down and the changes that have taken place because of the breaking of the rules. In personal deviation approach, one looks to the motivation and behaviour of the deviants who are instrumental in causing the problems.

Two factors that need explanation in the personal deviation approach are:

(i) How does personal deviancy develop?

(ii) What types of personal deviation are frequently involved in social problems?

Personal deviancy develops because of either:

(a) An individual's inability to follow generally accepted norms, or

(b) An individual's failure to accept generally accepted norms.

The first is caused because of a person's emotional, social or biological deficiency, that is, some persons are so constituted biologically, emotionally, or socially that they are incapable of adhering consistently to generally accepted standards. The socially deficient do not truly violate norms; rather they manifest an inability to learn and follow the norms. The cause of emotional deficiency is bio-psychological. These deviants that constitute social problems and also contribute to problems often require medical, psychiatric and environmental or social therapies.

On the other hand, an individual's failure to accept social norms has something to do with deficiency in socialization. These individuals, though have learnt the norms and values like honesty, truthfulness, integrity, justice and cooperation, they cannot put them into practice.

They remain disposed to telling lies, cheating, exploiting, and defaming others when it suits their purposes. Their deviance does not produce any guilt-feeling or shame in them. They may change sides abruptly and completely on a social issue if it serves their purpose. They care little whether social problems exist and whether

they are solved or not so long the situation can be used for their vested interest.

Horton and Leslie (1970:35-36) have referred to three types of personal deviations:

(i) Deviation that results from conformity to norms of diverse reference groups. Because of cultural variability, most people are exposed to different sets of norms that may be in conflict with one another. For example, a person may belong to one religion or caste but his professional role may literally force him to deviate from the norms of his religion/caste. Similarly, a clerk as well as an officer may accept bribe because it serves economic interests,

(ii) Deviation that results from the existence of deviant sub-cultures, for example, the criminal norms in slum areas of large cities,

(iii) Outright deviation from generally accepted norms. Deliberately hiding one's income while, filling income tax returns provides a good example of this type of deviation.

In applying the personal deviation approach to social problems, the questions asked (Horton and Leslie, 1970:37) are: What deviant persons/groups are involved? Are deviants themselves the problem or they help creating the problem? What deviant sub-cultures are involved? What alternatives are there for dealing with the deviants?