



Sociology Optional **Mains 2025 Paper 1**

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Section A

1. Answer the following questions in about 150 words each:

(10* 5 = 50)

a). What is common sense ? How are common knowledge and sociology related to each other ? Explain .

Answer :

Common Sense

Common sense refers to the basic, practical reasoning that ordinary people use in daily life. It involves intuitive judgments, shared cultural assumptions, and everyday problem-solving abilities. Scholars such as **Alfred Schutz** argue that common sense forms the “lifeworld”—the background of taken-for-granted knowledge through which people interpret reality. Unlike scientific knowledge, common sense is not systematically tested; instead, it develops from lived experience and social interaction.

Relationship Between Common Knowledge and Sociology

Common knowledge consists of ideas, beliefs, and norms that members of a society generally accept as true. It includes shared understandings about right and wrong, social roles, traditions, and expectations. Sociology, as explained by **Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann**, studies how such social knowledge is constructed, maintained, and transmitted through institutions, culture, and interaction.

Sociology and common knowledge are deeply connected. First, sociologists analyze how common knowledge shapes social behavior. For example, **Émile Durkheim** emphasized that collective beliefs guide individuals and create social cohesion. Second, sociology examines how common knowledge varies across groups, showing that what is “common” is not universal but socially produced. This challenges the assumption that everyday beliefs are natural or fixed.

Moreover, sociology transforms common knowledge into systematic knowledge by questioning taken-for-granted ideas. **Max Weber** argued that sociology must interpret social actions by understanding the meanings people attach to them—meanings rooted in their common knowledge. Finally, sociology also demonstrates how power influences what becomes accepted knowledge, as highlighted **by Michel Foucault**.

In essence, common knowledge shapes social life, and sociology studies, critiques, and contextualizes that knowledge to reveal deeper social patterns.

b). What is the relationship (similarities and differences) between sociology and history in terms of their area of study and methodology ? Discuss

Answer :

*Sociology and history are closely related social sciences, yet they differ in their focus and methods. According to **Émile Durkheim**, sociology studies “social facts” that shape collective life, while history examines past events in their unique contexts.*

Area of Study:

*Sociology focuses on contemporary social structures, institutions, and patterns of behavior. It aims to understand general principles governing society—such as class, family, religion, and social change. **Max Weber** emphasized that sociology seeks to interpret social action to arrive at causal explanations.*

*History, on the other hand, concentrates on reconstructing past events, institutions, and experiences. Historians like **Leopold von Ranke** argued that history aims to present the past “as it actually happened,” focusing on particular events rather than universal laws.*

Methodology:

Sociology typically uses scientific and empirical methods such as surveys, interviews, statistical analysis, and observation. Durkheim promoted a positivist method, insisting that social facts should be studied objectively like natural phenomena.

History relies primarily on qualitative methods, especially examination of primary sources—documents, archives, diaries, artifacts, and oral testimonies. Historians use narrative and interpretative methods to explain events within their specific temporal and cultural context.

Similarities:

Both disciplines study human societies, social relationships, and change over time. They often complement each other: history provides the chronological background, while sociology offers analytical tools to interpret social patterns. As **C. Wright Mills** noted, both contribute to the “sociological imagination,” linking personal experiences with broader social processes.

Differences:

Sociology seeks generalizations and patterns; history focuses on particularities. Sociology emphasizes present social realities; history emphasizes past events.

Overall, both fields enrich our understanding of human society through different but interconnected approaches.

**c). What is Variable in social research ? What are their different types ?
Elaborate**

Answer :

In social research, a variable is any characteristic, attribute, or phenomenon that can vary or change across individuals, groups, or situations. According to Paul Babbie, variables are “logical groupings of attributes” used to measure concepts in research. They help researchers establish relationships, test hypotheses, and explain social patterns.

Types of Variables

Independent Variable (IV)

*An independent variable is the cause or influencing factor in a study. As defined by **Earl R. Babbie**, it is the variable “presumed to cause or determine a dependent variable.”*

Example: education level influencing income.

Dependent Variable (DV)

*A dependent variable is the outcome or effect. According to **Kerlinger**, it is “the variable that is observed and measured to determine the effect of the independent variable.”*

Example: academic performance depending on study hours.

Intervening (Mediating) Variable

*These variables explain the mechanism through which the IV affects the DV. **Blalock** describes them as variables that “come between cause and effect.”*

Example: motivation mediating the relationship between teaching style and learning outcome.

Moderating Variable

*As per **Baron and Kenny**, a moderating variable affects the strength or direction of the relationship between IV and DV.*

Example: parental support moderating the link between peer influence and student behavior.

Control Variables

These are variables the researcher holds constant to reduce bias. **Neuman** notes they help isolate the true relationship between IV and DV.

Example: controlling age in a study on job satisfaction.

In summary, variables are essential building blocks of social research, enabling researchers to test theories and understand social phenomena systematically.

d) Can merton's reference group theory be relevant in understanding 'identity making' in digital world ? Explain

Answer:

Yes, **Robert K. Merton's** reference group theory remains highly relevant for understanding identity-making in the digital world.

Merton argued that individuals evaluate themselves and shape their behaviour by comparing with **reference groups**—groups they admire, aspire to join, or use as standards. In the digital age, these groups increasingly exist **online**, making reference group influence more pervasive, instantaneous, and algorithmically amplified.

On social media platforms, individuals routinely encounter curated images, lifestyles, and value systems presented by influencers, celebrities, online communities, and peer networks. These become aspirational reference **groups**, shaping identity through symbolic consumption—fashion, aesthetic choices, political views, and lifestyle aspirations. The digital world thus expands the range and intensity of comparison, accelerating what Merton called "**anticipatory socialization**"—adopting norms of a desired group before actual membership. For example, youth mimic digital subcultures (K-pop fandoms, fitness communities, crypto groups) well before offline affiliation, signalling identity through hashtags, memes, and aesthetic styles.

Digital spaces also produce **negative reference groups**, as theorized by Merton, wherein individuals define their identity by differentiating from groups they reject—seen in polarized online political discourse or subcultural boundary-making. Moreover, the logic of platforms—likes, shares, algorithmic visibility—creates **imagined audiences** that function as powerful reference groups, influencing self-presentation and online behaviour (Goffman's dramaturgy becomes intensified).

Thus, in the digital world, identity becomes a **reflexive, performative, and comparison-driven process**, with reference groups no longer limited to physical communities but widely dispersed, virtual, and constantly evolving. Merton's framework therefore remains crucial for analysing contemporary processes of identity formation online.

e) Is the social stratification theory is gender-blind ? Elucidate

Answer:

Classical theories of social stratification have often been criticized for being **gender-blind**, as they primarily focused on class, status, and power without acknowledging gender as a fundamental axis of inequality. Thinkers like **Karl Marx, Max Weber, and Davis & Moore** conceptualized stratification in terms of economic relations, market position, and functional necessity, largely ignoring the specific disadvantages experienced by women. Feminist scholars argue that this omission results in an incomplete understanding of social hierarchy.

Karl Marx analyzed class exploitation but treated the household as a non-productive sphere, sidelining women's unpaid domestic labour. **Weber's** multidimensional model acknowledged status and power but did not treat gender as an independent basis of stratification. The **Davis–Moore** functional theory justified stratification as necessary, yet failed to explain why women's work is systematically devalued despite functional importance.

From the 1970s onward, feminist scholars highlighted that gender permeates all social institutions. **Sylvia Walby** argued that patriarchy is a system of social structures parallel to capitalism. **Ann Oakley** demonstrated that gender roles are socially constructed and reproduced through socialization. **Heidi Hartmann** proposed the concept of "patriarchal capitalism," emphasizing the interaction between class and gender inequalities. These perspectives show that gender is not incidental but central to stratification.

Therefore, while mainstream stratification theories have been largely gender-blind, contemporary sociology recognizes gender as a critical dimension of inequality, intersecting with class, caste, and race. Integrating feminist insights enriches stratification theory and offers a more holistic understanding of social hierarchies.

2. (a) What is positivism ? Critically analyse the major arguments against it . (20 marks)

Answer:

Positivism is a methodological and philosophical approach that asserts that scientific methods used in **natural sciences can and should be applied to the study of society**. The term was popularized by **Auguste Comte**, who is considered the “father of sociology.” Comte argued for a “positive” science of society grounded in **observation, experimentation and comparison**, rejecting metaphysical and theological explanations. Positivism assumes that social reality is **objective, measurable, and governed by laws**, much like the natural world. Later positivists, such as **Émile Durkheim**, strengthened this tradition by insisting that social facts must be treated as “things,” external and constraining to individuals.

Positivism contributed significantly to the institutionalization of sociology by advocating empirical research, methodological rigour, and the search for cause-and-effect explanations. It laid the foundation for quantitative methods, surveys, and statistical analysis. However, the approach has been widely criticized on philosophical, methodological, and ethical grounds.

Criticisms of Positivism

Critique from Interpretive Sociology

Scholars like **Max Weber, Dilthey, and Mead** critiqued positivism for ignoring the **subjective dimension** of social life. Weber argued that sociology must focus on **Verstehen** (interpretive understanding) because human actions are guided by meaning, intentions, and values—not merely external forces. Unlike physical objects, human behaviour cannot be predicted solely through laws; it requires interpretive methods. Thus, positivism is inadequate for understanding culture, identity, and symbolic interaction.

Critique from Phenomenology and Ethnomethodology

Alfred Schutz, Harold Garfinkel, and Peter Berger & Thomas Luckmann argued that positivism wrongly assumes that reality is objective and external. Phenomenologists show that social reality is **constructed through shared meanings**, not discovered like natural facts. Ethnomethodologists further claim that scientific methods themselves influence social situations, making pure objectivity impossible.

Critique from Critical Theory

Frankfurt School theorists, especially **Horkheimer, Adorno, and later Habermas**, criticized positivism for being **reductionist, technocratic, and supportive of the status quo**. They argued that positivism reduces complex social issues to measurable data, ignoring **power, inequality, ideology, and**

emancipation. Habermas stated that positivism collapses all knowledge into technical knowledge, suppressing moral-practical and emancipatory interests.

Feminist Critique

Feminists such as **Dorothy Smith, Ann Oakley, and Sandra Harding** argued that positivism claims neutrality but actually reproduces **androcentric biases**. Their critique highlights that “objective” knowledge often excludes women’s experiences and reinforces patriarchal assumptions. Feminists propose more reflexive, standpoint-based methods.

Postmodern Critique

Postmodern thinkers like **Lyotard, Baudrillard, and Foucault** reject positivism’s belief in universal laws and grand narratives. They argue that knowledge is **fragmented, contingent, and tied to power**. Foucault shows how scientific discourses themselves produce regimes of truth, making neutrality impossible.

Problematization of Causality

Scholars like **Anthony Giddens** argue that human beings are **reflexive agents** who can change their behaviour in response to being studied, making deterministic causal laws difficult. Social systems are open, dynamic, and influenced by historical context, contradicting positivist assumptions of predictability.

Conclusion

Positivism played a foundational role in establishing sociology as a scientific discipline, ensuring empirical rigor and methodological discipline. However, its **over-emphasis on objectivity, quantification, and causal laws** has been widely challenged. Contemporary sociology adopts a **methodological pluralism** that integrates positivist insights with interpretive, critical, and constructivist approaches, recognizing the complexity and reflexivity of social life.

(b). Highlight the main features of historical materialism as pronounced by Karl Marx. How far is this theory relevant in understanding contemporary societies? Explain .

(20 marks)

Answer:

Historical materialism, formulated by **Karl Marx** and further systematized by **Friedrich Engels**, is a scientific theory of social change that explains the evolution of societies through the primacy of material and economic conditions. Marx first outlines the framework in *The German Ideology* (1846) and later

elaborates it in *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (1859) and *Capital* (1867). It remains fundamental to classical sociological theory.

Main Features of Historical Materialism

Primacy of Material Conditions

Marx argues that the material mode of production forms the real basis of society. According to him, "the first historical act is the production of material life itself." Therefore, economic activities determine the organization of social relations. → This contrasts with idealist thinkers like Hegel, who emphasized ideas over material life.

Forces and Relations of Production

Marx distinguishes between:

- *Forces of production: technology, labour power, tools, skills.*
- *Relations of production: property relations and class relations.*

The combination of these forms the economic base of society.

Base and Superstructure

*Marx argues that the base (economic structure) determines the **superstructure** consisting of law, politics, religion, ideology, and culture. As he famously writes, "The mode of production of material life conditions the social, political and intellectual life-process in general."*

Dialectical Nature of Social Change

*Drawing from **Hegelian** dialectics, Marx posits that contradictions within the economic base—particularly between productive forces and relations of production—drive historical change. Each epoch contains the seeds of its own destruction.*

Class Struggle as the Engine of History

According to Marx, "the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles." Opposing classes (e.g., slaves—masters, serfs—lords, proletariat—bourgeoisie) engage in conflicts that ultimately transform society.

Stages of Social Development

Marx presents human history as a progression through successive economic formations:

Primitive Communism → Ancient → Feudal → Capitalist → Socialist → Communist

This evolution is driven by changes in productive forces.

Contemporary Relevance of Historical Materialism

Despite criticisms and changing socio-economic contexts, historical materialism remains highly relevant for understanding contemporary societies.

Understanding Capitalism and Inequality

Scholars like Erik Olin Wright (Neo-Marxist) argue that class remains a central feature of modern societies. The growing global inequality, precarious labour, and concentration of capital validate Marx's insights.

Globalization and Neo-Colonialism

Immanuel Wallerstein's World Systems Theory draws directly from historical materialism, showing how global capitalism reproduces core-periphery inequalities.

Ideology and Hegemony

Antonio Gramsci's concept of cultural hegemony extends Marx's superstructure argument. In contemporary media-driven societies, ideology still shapes consent for capitalist relations.

Technological Change and Labour

*The emergence of automation, AI, and digital labour platforms reflects Marx's argument about the **contradictions between productive forces and relations of production**. Gig workers and platform capitalism reaffirm the relevance of class analysis.*

Environmental Sociology

*Marx's "**metabolic rift**," revived by scholars like **John Bellamy Foster**, explains ecological crises as inherent to capitalist production.*

Conclusion

Historical materialism continues to provide a powerful analytical framework for understanding structural inequalities, class relations, and economic determinants of social life. While contemporary societies are more complex, with multiple identities and post-industrial dynamics, Marx's emphasis on economic structures, power, and contradictions remains indispensable for sociological analysis.

(c).What do you mean by reliability ? Discuss the importance of reliability in social science research .

(10 marks)

Answer:

Reliability refers to the **consistency, stability and replicability** of a research instrument or measurement procedure. In simple terms, a measure is considered reliable when repeated application of the same tool under similar conditions yields **similar results**. As C.R. Kothari notes, reliability indicates “the degree to which a measuring instrument gives consistent results.” Similarly, **J.W. Best** and **John Kahn** describe reliability as the “precision or accuracy of measurement.” Thus, the focus of reliability is not on the truthfulness of data (which is validity) but on the **dependability** of the measurement process.

Reliability is crucial in social sciences because researchers often deal with subjective experiences, attitudes and social behaviours that are not directly observable. As Emile Durkheim emphasized while arguing for the scientific study of social facts, the tools of social research must possess systematic and consistent features to ensure objective knowledge. Reliability ensures that measurement is not influenced by the researcher’s biases, momentary fluctuations or contextual disturbances.

There are different forms of reliability discussed in sociological methodology. **Test–retest reliability** checks whether the same instrument produces consistent results when used at two points in time. **Inter-observer reliability** ensures that different researchers using the same tool derive similar findings—important in qualitative research such as ethnography or observation. **Internal consistency reliability**, emphasized by Paul Lazarsfeld in survey research, examines whether different items in a scale measuring the same concept show coherence.

Importance of Reliability in Social Science Research

Ensures Scientific Rigor

Reliability is foundational for the scientific nature of sociology. Durkheim and later positivists like Auguste Comte stressed that sociology must adopt systematic and replicable methods. A reliable instrument allows findings to be trusted as part of cumulative scientific knowledge.

Enhances Validity and Credibility

Although reliability is distinct from validity, as Goode and Hatt point out, reliability is a “necessary though not sufficient” condition for validity. Without consistent measurement, it is impossible to evaluate the truthfulness of data. Reliable instruments therefore enhance the overall credibility of research.

Enables Comparison and Generalization

In survey research, comparative studies or longitudinal research, reliability allows researchers to compare data across groups or periods. Peter Blau and Otis Dudley Duncan's stratification research relied heavily on standardized, reliable measures to observe structural patterns across populations.

Improves Replicability

Replicability is essential for building robust sociological theories. If a study can be replicated by other scholars—an idea supported by Robert Merton's norm of organized skepticism—the findings gain legitimacy. Reliable tools increase the likelihood of replication.

Reduces Researcher Bias

Particularly in qualitative research, reliability safeguards against subjective biases. Howard Becker and other interactionists argued that rigorous procedures—such as clear coding schemes—improve reliability and thereby strengthen qualitative inquiry.

Enhances Policy Relevance

Reliable data are crucial for evidence-based policymaking. Whether in census operations, NSSO surveys, or studies on poverty, education or inequality, policymakers rely on data whose measurement procedures are dependable.

Conclusion :

Reliability is a cornerstone of social science research because it ensures consistency, comparability and trustworthiness of findings. While human behaviour is complex and context-dependent, careful methodological design—supported by the works of Kothari, Lazarsfeld, Goode & Hatt, and Durkheim—allows researchers to maximize reliability and thus produce meaningful sociological knowledge.

3. (a) Compare Capability deprivation approach with that of social capability deprivation in understanding chronic poverty. (20 marks)

Answer:

*Amartya Sen's **Capability Deprivation Approach (CDA)** is one of the most influential theoretical frameworks for understanding poverty. Sen defines poverty not merely as low income but as the **deprivation of basic capabilities**—the freedom to lead a life one values. Capabilities refer to substantive opportunities such as being healthy, educated, or participating in community life. For Sen, chronic poverty results from persistent failures in expanding these basic capabilities due to structural constraints like illiteracy, poor health, or lack of access to resources.*

Sen's framework shifted poverty studies away from monetary indicators towards **human development**. Scholars like **Martha Nussbaum** expanded the capability list to include emotions, affiliation, play, and control over one's environment. Chronic poverty, therefore, is a long-term condition where multiple capability deficits—nutrition, education, bodily integrity—interlock and reinforce each other across generations.

*However, critics argue that while CDA offers a powerful normative framework, it tends to focus more on individual conditions and less on **collective or relational constraints**. It explains “what” people lack more effectively than “why” they lack them.*

*This gap is addressed by the **Social Capability Deprivation Approach (SCDA)**. Scholars such as **Anthony Bebbington, Deepa Narayan, Amita Shah, Jean Drèze, Robert Chambers, Frances Stewart**, and social exclusion theorists argue that chronic poverty is rooted not only in individual capability deficits but also in **lack of social capabilities**—the ability of groups or communities to act collectively and participate in social, economic, and political institutions.*

Social capabilities include:

- **social networks and social capital** (Putnam, Bebbington)
- **collective agency and empowerment** (Deepa Narayan)
- **access to institutions** (Drèze & Sen in later work)
- **freedom from discrimination, caste oppression, gender inequality** (Thorat, Kabeer)

*Chronic poverty persists because marginalized groups—Dalits, Adivasis, women, informal workers—face systematic **social exclusion**. Scholars like **Harriss and Stewart** highlight how group-based inequalities—ethnic, caste, regional—shape long-term deprivation. Here, poverty is not merely about lacking capabilities but also about lacking **the social power to acquire and sustain those capabilities**.*

*Comparatively, CDA focuses on **individual well-being and opportunities**, while SCDA emphasises **structural, relational, and institutional barriers**. For example, a tribal community may lack education (capability deprivation) but the deeper reason may be geographical isolation, displacement, or political marginalisation (social capability deprivation).*

In chronic poverty studies, the social capability perspective provides better tools for explaining:

- **intergenerational transmission of poverty**
- **persistent exclusion of certain groups**
- **the role of power, social norms, and discrimination**

Where Sen highlights the end-state of deprivation, social capability theorists explain the **processes and power relations** that lead to persistent poverty.

In conclusion, while the Capability Deprivation Approach revolutionised human-centred poverty analysis, the Social Capability Deprivation Approach deepens this understanding by incorporating **collective agency, social structures, and institutional access**, making it particularly effective in analysing the social dynamics underlying **chronic and intergenerational poverty**.

(b). Are pressure groups a threat to or a necessary element of democracy ? Explain with suitable illustrations .

(20Marks)

Answer:

Pressure groups are organised associations that seek to influence public policy without aspiring to political office. In a democracy, they act as intermediaries between the state and society by aggregating interests and voicing demands. However, their influence can also raise concerns about transparency, unequal access, and policy distortion. Thus, pressure groups play a dual role—both constructive and potentially challenging for democratic governance.

Why Pressure Groups Are a Necessary Element of Democracy Facilitate Political Participation

Pressure groups help citizens participate in public affairs beyond voting.
Example:

- **Narmada Bachao Andolan (NBA)** mobilised affected communities to influence policy on displacement and dam construction.
- **RTI activists' networks** helped strengthen the transparency framework leading to the RTI Act, 2005.

Represent Diverse Interests

Democracies must accommodate pluralism. Pressure groups articulate the concerns of varied social, economic, and regional groups.

Example:

- **SEWA** advocates for women in the informal sector.
- **Farmers' unions** represent agrarian interests in MSP and land policy debates.

Act as a Check on Government Power

By scrutinising policy decisions, pressure groups act as watchdogs.
Example:

- **Environmental groups like Greenpeace India** raise objections to environmentally harmful industrial clearances.
- **PUCL (People's Union for Civil Liberties)** has played a role in highlighting human rights violations, influencing judicial and policy correction.

Provide Expertise for Policy-making

Many pressure groups possess domain-specific knowledge that aids informed decision-making.

Example:

- **FICCI or CII** contribute economic analysis for industrial policy.
- **Doctors' associations** influence health-related guidelines.

Why Pressure Groups Can Be a Threat to Democracy Promote Narrow Interests Over Public Good

Some groups may prioritise sectional benefits at the expense of broader societal welfare.

Example:

- **Transport unions or employee unions** sometimes resort to strikes that disrupt essential services affecting the general public.

Unequal Access and Influence

Well-funded groups often enjoy disproportionate influence compared to marginalised communities.

Example:

- **Corporate lobbying** may sway policy in areas like taxation or environmental regulations, leading to "policy capture."

Lack of Internal Democracy or Transparency

Many groups are not democratically structured themselves, reducing their legitimacy.

Example:

- Some student or trade unions are controlled by political parties, reducing autonomy and accountability.

Use of Undemocratic or Extra-legal Methods

Pressure tactics like blockades, violent protests or coercive methods undermine democratic norms.

Example:

- **Bandhs or aggressive protests** by certain groups may infringe on citizens' rights and disrupt law and order.

Conclusion

Pressure groups are an integral component of democratic politics as they deepen participation, strengthen accountability, and ensure that policymaking

reflects societal diversity. However, they can also distort democratic processes if dominated by money power, opaque lobbying, or coercive tactics. The challenge for modern democracies, therefore, is to balance their constructive role while regulating their excesses through transparency norms, lobbying reforms, and inclusive consultation mechanisms. When functioning responsibly, pressure groups are not a threat but a vital pillar of a vibrant democracy.

(c).What is hypothesis ? critically evaluate the significance of hypothesis in social research?

Answer :

A hypothesis is a tentative, logical, and testable statement that predicts the relationship between two or more variables. In social research, it acts as a guiding proposition that directs inquiry and provides a basis for empirical testing. Given the complexity of human behaviour and social phenomena, hypotheses help researchers narrow down their focus and bring clarity to the research process.

Meaning of Hypothesis

A hypothesis is a presumptive explanation formulated on the basis of limited evidence, which can be verified or refuted through systematic investigation. For example, "Higher parental education leads to better academic performance among children" is a hypothesis that suggests a possible causal link.

Types of Hypotheses

1. **Null Hypothesis (H_0)**: Assumes no relationship between variables.
2. **Alternative Hypothesis (H_1)**: Assumes a relationship exists.
3. **Directional Hypothesis**: Specifies the direction of relationship.
4. **Non-directional Hypothesis**: Indicates a relationship without specifying direction.
5. **Causal and Descriptive Hypotheses**: Suggest cause-effect or describe characteristics.

Significance of Hypothesis in Social Research

Provides Direction and Focus

A well-formulated hypothesis determines what data is needed, what methods should be used, and how evidence should be interpreted. It prevents research from becoming a random data-collection exercise.

Enhances Scientific Rigor

Hypotheses make social research more systematic and scientific. By demanding empirical verification, they help separate scientific inquiry from speculation.

Facilitates Explanation and Prediction

Hypotheses allow researchers to explain social phenomena and predict outcomes. For instance, hypotheses in studies of crime, poverty, or education help identify underlying causes and expected patterns.

Helps in Theory Building and Verification

Social science theories evolve through a cycle of hypothesis formulation, testing, modification, and validation. Thus, hypotheses bridge theory and empirical observation.

Assists in Operationalising Concepts

Abstract concepts such as “development,” “social capital,” or “gender discrimination” can be translated into measurable variables through hypotheses. This enhances precision and objectivity.

Guides Sampling and Data Collection

Hypotheses indicate the type of respondents, sample size, and tools required. For example, a hypothesis about youth unemployment may guide researchers to adolescent and young adult populations.

Enables Statistical Analysis

Hypotheses form the basis for applying statistical tests (t-test, chi-square, regression analysis). They allow researchers to quantify relationships and assess significance.

Critical Evaluation

While hypotheses are valuable, they also carry certain limitations:

- **May Restrict Exploration:** Strict adherence to a hypothesis might limit open-ended inquiry, especially in studies where phenomena are not well understood.
- **Risk of Bias:** Preconceived notions may lead to confirmation bias where researchers selectively interpret data to support their hypothesis.
- **Not Always Suitable:** In exploratory research, qualitative studies, or ethnographic investigations, formulating hypotheses beforehand may be impractical.
- **Complex Human Behaviour:** Social reality is dynamic and context-dependent; hypotheses may oversimplify complex interactions.

Thus, while hypotheses strengthen explanatory and predictive power, their role must be balanced with flexible research approaches.

Conclusion

A hypothesis is a foundational element of scientific research, offering clarity, direction, and methodological discipline. In social research, its significance lies in guiding inquiry, enabling theory testing, and making empirical verification possible. However, its utility depends on the nature of the study and the

researcher's openness to unexpected insights. When used judiciously, hypotheses greatly enhance the validity and scientific value of social research.

4 (a). Give an account of the recent trends of marriage in the Indian context. How are these different from traditional practices?

Answer:

Marriage in India has historically been a socio-religious institution embedded in kinship, caste, and community norms. Classical sociologists such as **Claude Lévi-Strauss** described marriage as an "exchange relationship" sustaining alliance formation, while **Irawati Karve** emphasized its role in maintaining caste endogamy and joint family structures. However, in contemporary India, rapid urbanization, education, economic independence, and media exposure have significantly transformed marital practices, leading to diverse and individualized choices.

Shift from Arranged to Semi-Arranged and Love Marriages

Traditionally, marriages were arranged by families to maintain caste, sub-caste, and community endogamy. **M.N. Srinivas's** concept of "structural functionalism in caste" explains how arranged marriage reinforced caste solidarity. Recent decades show an increase in **love, semi-arranged, and self-choice marriages**, especially among urban youth. Expansion of university education, workplace interactions, and digital platforms such as matrimonial apps have widened partner-choice networks.

Increased Age at Marriage

Historically, child and early marriages were common. Legal reforms like the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act and increased female education have pushed the **average age at marriage higher**, aligning with **William Goode's theory of modernization**, which associates delayed marriage with industrialized societies.

Rise of Inter-Caste and Inter-Religious Marriages

Although still limited, inter-caste unions are increasing in metropolitan cities. These challenge the traditional endogamy principle described by **Louis Dumont**, who argued that caste hierarchy is preserved through marriage regulation. State incentives, legal protection, and growing individual autonomy have encouraged more such unions.

Increasing Female Agency

Traditional marriages emphasized patriarchal control, dowry, and lineage purity. Feminist scholars like **Patricia Uberoi** highlight how women were historically passive participants.

Contemporary trends show growing **female participation in mate selection**, negotiation of marriage terms, and preference for egalitarian roles, reflecting broader gender empowerment.

Decline of Joint Family–Controlled Marriage

According to **A.M. Shah**, the joint family historically dominated marriage decisions. With nuclearization, geographical mobility, and dual-income households, families still influence marriages but with reduced authority. Preference for **nuclear households** after marriage is rising.

Digitalization of Marriage

Matrimonial websites and dating apps represent a major departure from traditional modes of “community brokers.”

This aligns with **Anthony Giddens’ concept of the “pure relationship,”** shaped by personal choice rather than duty or custom.

Changing Ritual and Expenditure Patterns

Traditional Indian marriages involved elaborate rituals, community feasts, and dowry. Contemporary shifts include:

- Preference for **destination weddings**
 - Minimalist, court, or registered marriages
 - Reduction or transformation of dowry into mutually agreed gifts
- These reflect changing economic aspirations and urban lifestyles.

Acceptance of Divorce and Remarriage

Traditionally stigmatized, divorce and remarriage—especially for women—are slowly gaining social legitimacy. **Goode’s theory of family change** explains this as a result of individualism and modernization.

Conclusion

Marriage in India is experiencing significant transformation driven by modernization, education, gender empowerment, and globalization. While traditional norms of caste endogamy, family involvement, and ritualism persist, contemporary trends emphasize personal choice, equality, and flexibility. India today reflects a hybrid marriage culture—where modern aspirations co-exist with deep-rooted traditions—showcasing the gradual but steady transition of a complex social institution.

(b). What would you identify as the similarities and differences in the elite theories of Mosca, Michels and Pareto ? Discuss their main / Crucial issues.

Answer:

Elite theories emerged as a critical response to the liberal-democratic assumption that political power is widely diffused in society. Thinkers such as **Gaetano Mosca, Vilfredo Pareto, and Robert Michels** argued that, in practice, a minority—an elite—always dominates governance, irrespective of the political system. While all three thinkers share the core belief in the inevitability of elite rule, they differ in how they conceptualize its nature, sources, and dynamics.

1. Similarities Among Mosca, Pareto and Michels

a) Inevitability of Elite Rule

All three argue that societies are inevitably governed by minorities:

- **Mosca** asserts the “**political class**” always rules.
- **Pareto** posits that elites rule due to their superior qualities.
- **Michels** states that even democratic organizations fall under an **oligarchic leadership**.

b) Critique of Mass Rule

Each thinker rejects the ideal of genuine rule by the masses:

- Masses lack organization and cohesive interests.
- Leadership is structurally concentrated.

c) Emphasis on Organization and Capability

- For **Mosca**, organizational ability differentiates rulers from the ruled.
- For **Pareto**, psychological and intellectual superiority does so.
- For **Michels**, organizational necessities create leadership hierarchies.

Thus, all see structural or inherent forces enabling elite dominance.

2. Differences in Their Elite Theories

A) Mosca

- Focuses on the **political organization** of the ruling minority.
- Introduces the concept of the “**political class**”, which persists across systems.
- Emphasizes the role of **legal-institutional structures** and the **consensus** needed for elite stability.
- Views elite rule as pragmatic but capable of **moral and institutional improvement**, making him comparatively moderate.

B) Pareto

- Bases his theory on **psychological residues** and **circulation of elites**.

- *Arges society is always divided into **elites and non-elites**, with elite replacement occurring cyclically.*
- *Categorizes elites as “**lions**” (**force-driven**) and “**foxes**” (**cunning, manipulative**).*
- *His approach is more **sociological** and **cyclical**, emphasizing inherent qualities over institutional factors.*
- *Considered more deterministic, even cynical, about political change.*

C) Michels

- *Develops the “**Iron Law of Oligarchy**” based on empirical study of political parties.*
- *Claims that every organization, even socialist or democratic, becomes oligarchic.*
- *Attributes elite formation to:*
 - *Need for specialized leadership*
 - *Access to information*
 - *Administrative continuity*
- *Michels highlights **organizational dynamics**, unlike Mosca’s institutional and Pareto’s psychological bases.*
- *More pessimistic about democracy since it structurally produces oligarchies.*

3. Crucial Issues Raised by the Three Thinkers

Democracy vs. Elite Rule:

They question whether true popular sovereignty is possible.

Stability and Change:

- ***Pareto’s circulation** explains elite turnover.*
- ***Mosca** discusses elite adaptation.*
- ***Michels** warns of ossified leadership.*

Legitimacy of Power:

They raise questions about how elites justify domination—through consent (Mosca), charisma and cunning (Pareto), or organizational indispensability (Michels).

Conclusion

*The elite theories of **Mosca, Pareto, and Michels** converge on the central proposition that a minority inevitably governs society. However, they diverge in explaining why this happens: Mosca highlights institutional organization, Pareto emphasizes psychological qualities and cyclical elite circulation, and Michels stresses organizational imperatives. Collectively, their insights challenge democratic idealism and underscore structural constraints on political equality, making elite theory a significant component of modern political sociology and political theory.*

(c). Critically analyse the sociological significance of informal sector in the economy of developing societies?

Answer:

The informal sector—popularly conceptualized by **Keith Hart (1973)**—refers to economic activities that operate outside state regulation, taxation, and formal labor protections. In developing societies, where structural unemployment, rapid urbanization, and limited industrial growth prevail, the informal sector emerges as a dominant site of livelihood. Its sociological significance extends beyond economics, shaping class relations, migration patterns, gender dynamics, and the overall social fabric.

Source of Employment and Social Security Substitute

In many developing societies, the formal sector is unable to absorb the growing labor force. The informal economy thus becomes a major employment provider.

- **ILO (1972)** noted that informal employment often constitutes over half of total non-agricultural employment in developing nations.
- It provides a de facto social security net where states fail to provide adequate welfare measures.

Rural–Urban Linkages and Migration

The informal sector serves as an important transitional space for rural migrants.

- **Michael Lipton's "Urban Bias" theory** highlights how underdeveloped rural economies push people into cities, where the informal sector becomes an immediate absorber.
- Street vending, casual labor, and home-based work help migrants integrate into urban life while maintaining ties with rural households through remittances.

Gender Dynamics and Feminization of Work

A significant portion of informal workers are women, especially in home-based industries, domestic work, and small-scale vending.

- **Caroline Moser's "Triple Role Framework"** argues that women balance productive, reproductive, and community roles—tasks often rooted in informal and unpaid work.
- Informality often perpetuates patriarchal norms by undervaluing and invisibilizing women's labor, yet also creates avenues for income and autonomy.

Class Formation and Social Stratification

Informal work often reflects structural inequalities.

- **Manuel Castells and Alejandro Portes (1989)** argued that informality is a structural feature of capitalist economies, not a traditional residue.

- *Informal workers often experience exploitation, lack of legal protections, and precarious livelihoods, reinforcing a working poor class that remains socially and economically vulnerable.*

Entrepreneurship and Social Mobility

Informal economies foster micro-entrepreneurship, creating opportunities for upward mobility.

- *Street vendors, small manufacturers, and artisans often innovate within resource constraints.*
- **Hernando de Soto** emphasized that informality represents untapped entrepreneurial potential hindered by bureaucratic barriers.

Cultural Embeddedness and Social Networks

Informal economic activities rely heavily on trust, kinship, and community networks.

- **Mark Granovetter's concept of "embeddedness"** explains how economic actions are rooted in social relations.
- *Rotating credit associations, caste/community-based occupations, and neighborhood networks facilitate informal trade and credit.*

Challenges and Negative Consequences

Despite its contributions, the informal sector poses structural challenges:

- *Lack of regulation leads to unsafe working conditions.*
- *Absence of social protection deepens vulnerability.*
- *Informal settlements strain urban infrastructure.*
- *Weak tax compliance reduces state capacity.*

Conclusion

The informal sector in developing societies holds immense sociological significance: it sustains livelihoods, shapes gender roles, moderates rural–urban transitions, and reflects deep social inequalities. While it contributes to economic dynamism and cultural cohesion, its precarious and unregulated nature mirrors broader developmental challenges. A balanced strategy—combining labor protections, social security, and easing of formalization barriers—is essential to harness the strengths of the informal sector while minimizing its vulnerabilities.

Section - B

Answer the following questions in about 150 words each:

(10*5= 50)

(a). In what way is the scope of sociology unique ? Explain

Answer:

Sociology is a systematic study of human society, social relationships, and institutions. While other social sciences study specific aspects of society, sociology has a **broad, comprehensive, and integrative scope**, making it unique. As Emile Durkheim noted, sociology examines “**social facts**” that exist beyond individual intentions yet shape collective life.

Broad and Inclusive Scope

Sociology studies all aspects of social life—family, religion, economy, politics, culture, identity, deviance, social change, etc. Unlike economics or political science, which focus on specific institutions, sociology adopts a **holistic perspective**.

- **Morris Ginsberg** described sociology as the study of “human interactions and interrelations.”

Focus on Social Groups and Collective Behaviour Sociology analyses human behaviour in **groups**, not as isolated individuals.

- **Max Weber** emphasized social action as meaningful behaviour shaped by others, highlighting sociology’s focus on social context.

Emphasis on Patterns and Structures

Rather than studying isolated events, sociology looks for **patterns, regularities, and structures** in society.

- **Talcott Parsons’** structural-functionalism shows how every part of society works within an integrated system.

Scientific and Critical Inquiry

Sociology combines **scientific methods** (surveys, statistics) with **interpretive understanding** (qualitative research).

- **Karl Marx** used critical analysis to study class conflict and power structures, showing sociology’s ability to question social inequalities.

Comparative and Evolutionary Approach

Sociology compares societies across time and space.

- **Herbert Spencer** compared societies to biological organisms, emphasizing evolutionary development.

Value Neutrality

Sociology aims at objective study.

- **Max Weber** stressed value neutrality to separate facts from personal biases.

Conclusion

The uniqueness of sociology lies in its **comprehensive scope**, interdisciplinary nature, and emphasis on understanding society through systematic, scientific, and critical lenses. By studying social structures and collective behaviour holistically, sociology offers deep insights into the dynamics of human societies and remains crucial for informed policymaking and social development.

(b). Does the structural-functionalist perspective on social stratification promote a status quo ? Give reasons for your answer .

Answer:

The structural-functionalist perspective, chiefly advanced by **Kingsley Davis and Wilbert Moore**, views social stratification as a necessary and universal feature of society. It argues that inequality performs important functions by ensuring that the most talented individuals fill the most important roles. This perspective has often been critiqued for implicitly supporting existing hierarchies.

According to **Davis and Moore's functional theory**, stratification allocates individuals to different positions and motivates them to perform their duties efficiently. Positions that are functionally important and require special skills must offer higher rewards, leading to an unequal distribution of resources.

This framework tends to **legitimize existing inequalities** by portraying them as functional necessities rather than outcomes of power or historical processes. As **Melvin Tumin** critiques, the theory assumes that the current system is meritocratic, ignoring barriers such as caste, gender, and class that prevent equal access to opportunities. By overlooking these structural constraints, functionalism indirectly **promotes the status quo**.

Furthermore, the perspective underestimates the role of **power and conflict**, as highlighted by **Ralf Dahrendorf** and **Marxist theorists**, who argue that stratification often reflects domination rather than functional importance. Functionalism's emphasis on stability, order, and consensus renders it less capable of explaining exploitation, discrimination, or social movements aimed at change.

Even its assumption that rewards correspond to functional importance is circular: positions are considered important **because** they receive high rewards. This reinforces existing hierarchies without questioning their origins or fairness.

Thus, while functionalists do not explicitly advocate maintaining inequality, their analytical framework tends to **justify and normalize existing social arrangements**, contributing to status-quo orientation.

Conclusion:

The structural-functionalist view, by stressing necessity, universality, and beneficial functions of inequality, tends to promote the status quo. Its neglect of power relations, historical injustices, and structural barriers limits its ability to critique entrenched hierarchies. As scholars like Tumin note, stratification often persists not because it is functional but because it benefits dominant groups.

(c). Do you think that the formal workspaces are free of gender bias? Argue your case.

Answer :

Social stratification refers to the hierarchical arrangement of individuals based on class, status, and power. The **structural-functionalist perspective**, especially articulated by **Kingsley Davis and Wilbert Moore (1945)**, argues that stratification is a necessary and inevitable feature of society.

Does it promote the status quo? – Yes

Functional Necessity of Inequality

Davis and Moore argue that inequality performs positive functions for society.

Differential rewards ensure that the most qualified individuals occupy positions requiring the highest skills and responsibilities.

→ *This inherently justifies existing inequalities, thereby supporting the status quo.*

Meritocratic Assumption

Functionalists assume society provides equal opportunities and that rewards are based purely on merit.

Critics like Tumin (1953) argue that this assumption masks structural barriers such as caste, gender, and class, normalizing unequal access to opportunities.

→ *This legitimizes current hierarchies.*

Social Order Over Social Change

Functionalism prioritizes stability, equilibrium, and social cohesion. By framing stratification as essential to order, it discourages redistributive reforms or radical change.

→ *Thus, it reinforces existing power structures.*

Counter-View – Does it challenge the status quo? – Limited

Possibility of Mobility

Functionalists highlight social mobility as a mechanism through which inequality becomes acceptable. This symbolically challenges the idea of fixed status groups. But mobility is assumed rather than critically examined.

Role Differentiation as Dynamic

As societies modernize, functional requirements change, theoretically allowing roles—and therefore hierarchies—to adjust.

However, this remains a theoretical possibility rather than a critique of existing inequalities.

Conclusion

Overall, the structural-functionalist perspective **largely promotes and justifies the status quo** by portraying social stratification as functional, meritocratic, and necessary for societal stability. Despite acknowledging the potential for mobility and role change, the approach overlooks structural inequalities and power relations, making it more supportive of existing hierarchies than transformative in nature.

(d). How does Weber's Verstehen address the objectivity-subjectivity debate in sociology ?

Answer :

Max Weber, a foundational figure in sociology, introduced the concept of Verstehen (German for “interpretive understanding”) to bridge the long-standing debate between objectivity and subjectivity in social sciences. He argued that understanding social action requires both scientific rigor and empathetic interpretation.

Meaning of Verstehen

Weber defined Verstehen as the interpretive comprehension of the meanings individuals attach to their actions.

- Unlike natural sciences, sociology deals with actors' intentions, values, and motives.
- Therefore, understanding subjective meaning becomes central.

Addressing Objectivity–Subjectivity Debate

(a) Balancing Subjectivity Through Meaning Analysis

- Sociology cannot ignore subjective experiences; individuals act based on meanings.
- Verstehen allows sociologists to enter the actor's mental world without abandoning scientific discipline. (Weber: “Sociology is a science concerning itself with the interpretive understanding of social action.”)

(b) Ensuring Objectivity Through “Value-Free Sociology”

- Weber insisted that while interpretation is necessary, the researcher must maintain **value-neutrality**.
- Personal biases should not influence analysis or conclusions.
- He proposed **ideal types** as analytical constructs to maintain systematic objectivity.

(c) Methodological Pluralism

- Weber accepted both qualitative (Verstehen) and quantitative (causal explanation) approaches.
- He argued that subjective understanding should complement, not replace, empirical causal analysis.
- This dual approach resolves the tension between interpretive subjectivity and positivist objectivity.

Scholarly Support

- **Alfred Schutz** expanded Weber’s idea, arguing that social reality is built from shared meanings.
- **Talcott Parsons** integrated Verstehen into his action theory, highlighting its utility in structural-functionalism.

Conclusion

Weber’s Verstehen offers a balanced resolution to the objectivity–subjectivity debate by recognizing the importance of subjective meanings while upholding scientific rigor through value neutrality, ideal types, and methodological pluralism. It positions sociology as a unique discipline capable of both empathetic understanding and objective explanation, strengthening its scientific credibility.

(e). To what extent can education and skill development be an agent of social change ? Critically analyse.

Answer :

Education has long been regarded as a powerful instrument of social transformation. Thinkers such as **Emile Durkheim** viewed education as a means of socializing individuals into collective values, while **Paulo Freire** emphasized its role in awakening critical consciousness. In contemporary societies, education and skill development together shape social mobility, economic productivity, and democratic participation, thereby serving as engines of social change.

How Education Acts as an Agent of Social Change

Social Mobility:

As argued by **Kingsley Davis and Wilbert Moore**, education facilitates merit-based mobility by equipping individuals with knowledge and credentials, helping break cycles of poverty and caste-based disadvantages.

Economic Transformation through Skills:

Skill development increases employability, boosts productivity, and aligns the workforce with industrial needs, thus driving economic modernization. The Human Capital Theory (Schultz, Becker) highlights education's role in enhancing economic value.

Promoting Equality and Inclusion:

Education counters social evils like casteism, gender discrimination, and communalism by fostering rationality and constitutional values. Freire's concept of "critical pedagogy" shows how education can empower marginalized groups.

Democratization of Society:

Education strengthens democratic culture by cultivating informed citizenship, encouraging debate, and enabling political participation.

Critical Analysis / Limitations

Reinforcement of Inequality:

Bowles and Gintis argue that the education system often reproduces existing class structures rather than transforming them. Inequities in access, quality, and digital divide limit transformative potential.

Skill Mismatch:

Despite skill initiatives, India faces a gap between training and job market demands, weakening the link between skill development and socio-economic mobility.

Cultural Resistance:

Deep-rooted social norms (caste patriarchy, regional biases) often dilute the emancipatory potential of education.

Conclusion

Education and skill development possess immense transformative power, but their impact depends on inclusiveness, quality, and relevance. When coupled with supportive social policies and equitable access, they become not just

instruments of learning but catalysts of sustainable and progressive social change.

6. (a) What is science? Do you think the method applied on natural science can be applied to sociology ? Give reasons for your answer.

Answer :

Science refers to a systematic and objective body of knowledge that uses **empirical observation, verification, and logical reasoning** to understand phenomena. It relies on methods such as experimentation, measurement, hypothesis-testing, and prediction. Sociology, as defined by **Auguste Comte**, is the “science of society,” aiming to discover social laws similar to natural laws. The question of whether sociology can adopt the methods of natural sciences has been central to methodological debates within social sciences.

What is Science?

Science is characterized by:

- **Objectivity** – facts independent of personal bias (Max Weber’s Wertfreiheit).
- **Systematic observation.**
- **Empirical verification.**
- **Predictability and generalization.**
- **Causality** – cause–effect relationships.

Natural sciences (physics, biology, chemistry) employ controlled experiments and quantifiable measurements to derive universal laws.

Can Natural Science Methods Be Applied to Sociology?

This debate revolves around two schools of thought: **positivism** and **interpretivism**.

Arguments For Applying Natural Science Methods to Sociology

Comte’s Positivism

- Comte argued that society operates according to “invariable natural laws.”
- Sociology should use observation, comparison, and experimentation (though in indirect forms).

Durkheim’s Social Facts

- Émile Durkheim insisted that social facts must be treated “as things.”
- His study of *Suicide* (1897) used quantitative data and statistical correlations, demonstrating that rigorous methods can explain social phenomena.

Reliability and Generalization

- Quantitative methods enable large-scale surveys, improving reliability.
- Cross-cultural comparisons help derive patterns (e.g., modernization, demographic transition).

Prediction and Policy Formulation

- Scientific methods allow sociology to offer predictions, useful for planning and governance (e.g., population trends).
-

Arguments Against Applying Natural Science Methods to Sociology

Human Consciousness and Meaning

- **Max Weber** argued that society is fundamentally different because human actions involve subjective meanings (*Verstehen*).
- Natural science methods cannot capture motives, beliefs, and cultural contexts.

Lack of Controlled Experimentation

- Social phenomena cannot be reproduced in laboratories; variables are too complex.

Contextual and Historical Specificity

- Social reality changes with time, culture, and historical conditions.
- Universal laws, as in natural sciences, may not be possible.

Interpretivists and Phenomenologists

- **Alfred Schutz** and **Peter Berger & Thomas Luckmann** emphasize that society is constructed through shared meanings.
- Thus, qualitative methodologies such as interviews, ethnography, participant observation are more appropriate.

Critical School Perspective

- **Habermas** argues that human societies require critical understanding, not just causal explanation, because power and ideology influence behaviour.

Balanced Perspective

Modern sociology uses **methodological pluralism**:

- Both quantitative and qualitative methods.
- Mixed-method research combines statistical analysis with interpretive insights.
- Sociology adapts scientific rigor but tailors methods to social complexity.

Conclusion :

Science is a systematic, empirical, and objective approach to understanding reality. While early sociologists like Comte and Durkheim believed that natural science methods could be directly applied to sociology, later thinkers like Weber, Schutz, and Habermas highlighted the unique nature of social reality, grounded in meanings and subjectivity. Therefore, sociology cannot fully replicate natural science methods, but it can incorporate scientific rigor through **pluralistic methodologies** suited to understanding both patterns and meanings. The discipline thus stands as a scientific but distinct field of inquiry.

6(b). What do you understand by gender based domestic division of labour. Is it undergoing a change in the wake of increasing participation of women in formal employment ? Clarify your answer with illustrations.

(20 marks)

Answer :

The **gender-based domestic division of labour** refers to the culturally constructed allocation of household and caregiving tasks along gender lines, where women are expected to perform unpaid domestic work (cooking, cleaning, childcare) while men engage primarily in paid economic activities. Sociologists like **Ann Oakley** and **Sylvia Walby** argue that such division is rooted in patriarchal norms and reinforced through socialisation, economic dependence, and institutional structures.

Meaning and Basis of Gender-Based Domestic Division of Labour

Cultural norms and patriarchy

- Ann Oakley (1974) highlights that domestic work is historically feminised due to traditional gender-role expectations.
- Talcott Parsons' instrumental and expressive roles explain how men are assigned breadwinning (instrumental) roles while women manage emotional and household responsibilities (expressive roles).

Economic dependency

- Women's historically limited access to economic resources reinforced their responsibility for domestic work.

Socialisation and stereotypes

- Girls are often socialised to caregiving and nurturing activities, while boys are encouraged to take up tasks associated with strength and production.

Is the Domestic Division of Labour Changing?

The increasing participation of women in **formal employment**, urbanisation, and rising education levels have triggered notable but **uneven transformations**.

Evidence of Change

Dual-earner households

- With more women in paid work, households increasingly adopt shared domestic responsibilities.
- **Arlie Hochschild's "Second Shift"** concept explains that although women work outside, men today contribute relatively more to household tasks than before.

Technological and market interventions

- Household appliances, food delivery services, and paid domestic help (common in India) reduce the domestic load and normalise shared responsibilities.

Policy support and institutional change

- Maternity and paternity leave policies, corporate crèches, and flexible working hours encourage men's involvement in caregiving.

Urban middle-class shift

- In metropolitan areas, young working couples often share cooking, grocery shopping, and childcare.

Illustration:

- In many urban families, men increasingly take responsibilities like helping children with schoolwork or preparing one meal a day due to women's employment commitments.

Evidence of Persistence

Despite progress, the change is **partial and class-specific**.

"Double burden" or "Second Shift" remains

- Hochschild notes that even employed women perform a disproportionate share of domestic work.
- Indian Time Use Surveys show women still spend significantly more time on unpaid labour.

Cultural resistance

- Rural areas and traditional households still expect women to manage the household irrespective of employment status.

Patriarchal attitudes

- Men's contribution often seen as "helping" rather than an equal responsibility.

Informalisation of women's work

- Women take up "flexible" or home-based jobs to balance domestic duties, reinforcing gender roles.

Illustration:

- A woman working in IT may still be responsible for cooking and childcare, while her husband's participation is limited to occasional tasks, reflecting persistent internalised norms.

Conclusion :

The gender-based domestic division of labour, deeply rooted in patriarchy and socialisation, is **undergoing transformation** with women's growing participation in formal employment. However, change is **uneven and incomplete**. While urban educated classes exhibit greater sharing of domestic responsibilities, most women still face a **double burden** of paid and unpaid work. Sustainable change requires not only economic empowerment but also **attitudinal transformation**, gender-sensitive policies, and social recognition of domestic labour as shared responsibility.

6(c). How can you assess the significance of social movements in the digital era ? Explain. (10 marks)

Answer:

Social movements have historically played a vital role in shaping political and social change. In the digital era, their character, scale and strategies have transformed significantly due to advancements in communication technologies. Scholars like Manuel Castells argue that digital networks have redefined the nature of collective action, enabling faster mobilization and wider participation.

Enhanced Mobilization and Connectivity

Digital platforms allow rapid dissemination of information, reducing the cost of mobilization. Castells' "Network Society" framework highlights how horizontal communication empowers decentralized movements, as seen in the Arab Spring and #MeToo movement.

Democratization of Voice

According to Clay Shirky, social media lowers barriers to participation, enabling marginalized groups to express concerns and build solidarity beyond

geographical boundaries. The digital public sphere fosters inclusivity and pluralism.

Framing and Narrative Building

Digital tools help shape public discourse through hashtags, viral content, and real-time storytelling. Zeynep Tufekci notes that online platforms allow movements to frame issues strategically, influencing mainstream media and political agendas.

Global Reach and Transnational Solidarity

Digital networks facilitate cross-border alliances. Climate movements like Fridays for Future demonstrate how localized concerns become global campaigns through online coordination.

Challenges and Limitations

Despite advantages, Tufekci warns of “tactical freeze”—online movements scale quickly but may face organizational weaknesses. Issues like misinformation, digital surveillance, and “slacktivism,” as discussed by Evgeny Morozov, can dilute long-term impact.

Data and Metrics for Assessment

Significance can be assessed through:

- **Scale of participation** (online engagement, protest counts)
- **Media visibility**
- **Policy outcomes**
- **Shift in public consciousness**
- **Longevity and organizational depth**

Conclusion :

In the digital era, social movements have acquired unprecedented speed, reach, and visibility. While digital tools amplify voices and enhance mobilization, structural limitations persist. A balanced assessment must consider both online dynamics and real-world impact. Ultimately, the significance of digital-era movements lies in their ability to transform awareness into sustained social and political change.

7. (a) What is sampling in the context of social research ? Discuss different forms of sampling with their relative advantages and disadvantages ? (20 marks)

Answer :

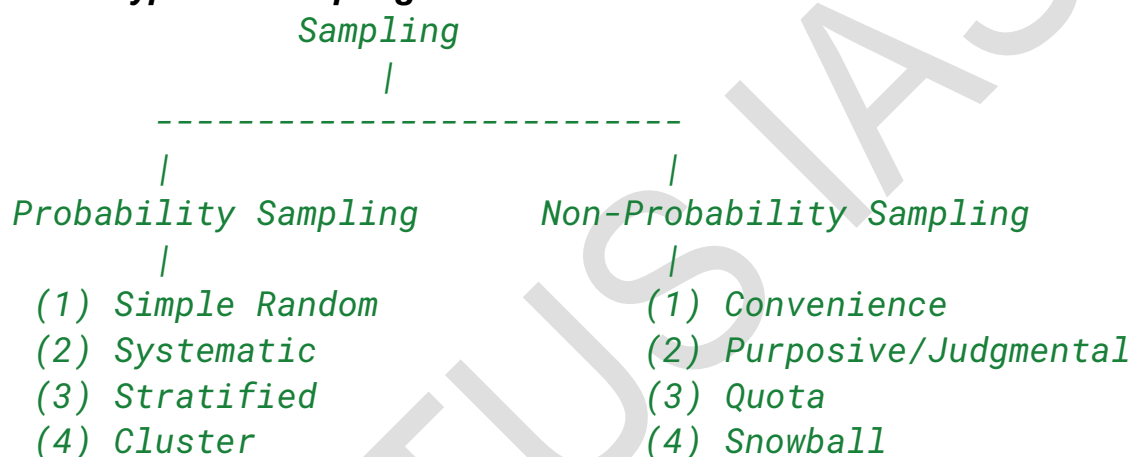
Sampling refers to the scientific process of selecting a subset of individuals, groups or social phenomena from a larger population for empirical study.

Goode and Hatt describe sampling as a method that enables researchers to study a representative part of a population to generalize findings reliably. In large and complex societies, sampling becomes essential due to constraints of time, cost, and feasibility, making it a critical tool in sociological research.

Why Sampling Is Important in Sociology (with Scholar Support)

- **Durkheim** emphasized representative data for discovering social facts.
- **Weber** highlighted systematic empirical investigations where sampling ensures objectivity.
- **Lazarsfeld** showed how modern survey research depends on scientifically chosen samples to infer social attitudes and behaviour.

Types of Sampling in Social Research



Forms of Sampling

Probability Sampling (Each unit has known chance of selection)

Emphasised by **Mahalanobis** in large-scale surveys.

Simple Random Sampling

- Every member has equal probability.
- **Advantage:** unbiased, easy to compute.
- **Disadvantage:** requires complete list of population; not suitable for heterogeneous societies.

Systematic Sampling

- Selecting every *n*th unit from a list.
- **Advantage:** simple, time-saving.
- **Disadvantage:** hidden periodicity may bias results.

Stratified Sampling

- Population divided into strata (e.g., caste, class, gender).
- **Advantage:** ensures representation of diverse groups; higher precision.
- **Disadvantage:** requires detailed information for stratification.

Cluster Sampling

- Population divided into clusters (e.g., villages), a few clusters sampled.
- Advantage:** cost-effective for dispersed populations.
- Disadvantage:** higher sampling error than stratified method.

Non-Probability Sampling (No known probability of selection)

Common in interpretive sociology and qualitative research (supported by **Max Weber, Alfred Schutz**).

Convenience Sampling

- Units selected based on availability.
- Advantage:** economical.
- Disadvantage:** low reliability and generalizability.

Purposive Sampling

- Units chosen deliberately based on relevance.
- **Advantage:** useful for studying deviant cases, elites, unique groups.
- Disadvantage:** researcher bias likely.

Quota Sampling

Ensuring sample proportion matches population characteristics.

- Advantage:** cheaper alternative to stratified sampling.
- Disadvantage:** not truly random; interviewer bias possible.

Snowball Sampling

- Existing participants recruit more participants; often used for hidden populations (drug users, LGBTQ groups).
- Advantage:** useful when sampling frame unavailable.
- Disadvantage:** highly unrepresentative; difficult to estimate sampling error.

Comparison Table: Types of Sampling

Type of Sampling	Advantages	Disadvantages
Simple Random	Unbiased; mathematically robust	Requires full population list
Systematic	Simple; time-efficient	Periodicity may bias results
Stratified	High representativeness; low error	Needs detailed population data
Cluster	Cost-effective; practical	Higher sampling error
Convenience	Fast; inexpensive	Very low reliability

Purposive	<i>Focused; good for qualitative work</i>	<i>Researcher bias</i>
Quota	<i>Ensures proportional representation</i>	<i>Not random; subjectivity</i>
Snowball	<i>Access to hidden groups</i>	<i>No generalizability</i>

Conclusion :

Sampling is indispensable to sociological research as it balances scientific accuracy with practical feasibility. Probability sampling strengthens the positivist emphasis on generalization and objectivity, while non-probability methods align with interpretive traditions focusing on depth and meaning. A judicious combination of sampling techniques, depending on research objectives and population characteristics, enhances the validity and reliability of sociological inquiry.

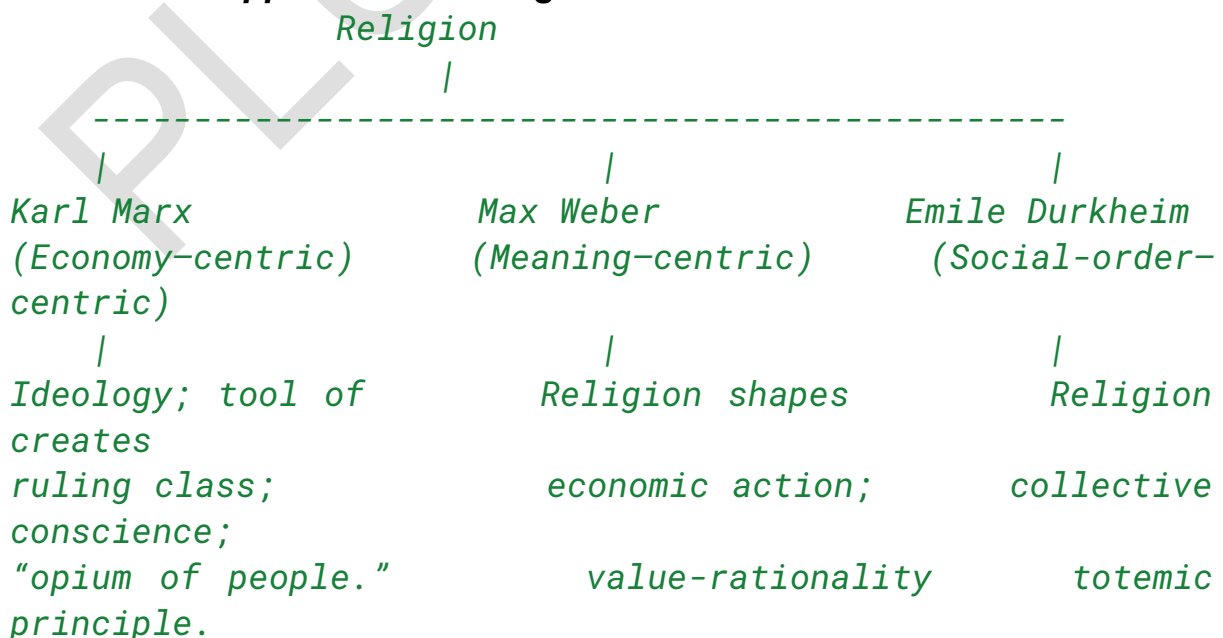
(b).How do theories of Marx, Weber and Durkheim differ in understanding religion ? Explain.

(20 marks)

Answer :

*Religion has been a central theme in classical sociological theory. **Karl Marx, Max Weber, and Émile Durkheim**—the three foundational thinkers—offered distinct frameworks for understanding religion, shaped by their broader theories of society, economy, and social order. While Marx emphasized religion as ideology and a tool of domination, Weber saw it as a source of social change, and Durkheim viewed it as the basis of social solidarity. Their perspectives continue to influence contemporary sociological debates.*

Classical Approaches to Religion



Karl Marx: Religion as Ideology and Alienation

Key Ideas

- Religion is a “**tool of exploitation**” created by the ruling class to maintain dominance.
- Famous quote: “**Religion is the opium of the people.**” (Marx)
- It masks material inequalities and legitimizes an unjust social order.
- Religion emerges from **alienation**—workers project their own power onto divine beings.

Functions (According to Marx)

- Justifies status quo (e.g., caste hierarchy, divine right of kings).
- Reduces revolutionary consciousness by offering false hope.
- Reinforces economic base and superstructure relationship.

Criticism

- Overemphasis on economic determinism; overlooks the independent role of religion.

Max Weber: Religion as a Driver of Social Change

Key Ideas

- Religion can have **autonomous causal power**.
- In *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Weber argues:
 - Calvinist ethics (asceticism, calling, predestination) encouraged capitalist rationality.
- Religion shapes:
 - **Economic behaviour**
 - **Political legitimacy**
 - **Social mobility** (e.g., Hindu caste system and Dharma)

Methodology

- **Verstehen** (interpretive understanding)
- Comparative sociology (e.g., Confucianism, Buddhism, Islam)

Criticism

- Selective historical data; overemphasis on ideas over material conditions.

Émile Durkheim: Religion as Social Solidarity

Key Ideas

- Religion is a **social institution** that represents society itself.
- In *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, he argues:
 - Totem is a symbol of the **collective conscience**.
- Religion differentiates **sacred vs. profane**.
- Collective rituals reinforce social cohesion and shared moral order.

Functions (According to Durkheim)

- Creates social integration
- Regulates behaviour (moral norms)
- Provides meaning through collective representations

Criticism

- Overgeneralization from Australian tribes.
- Ignores conflict and power dimensions of religion.

Marx, Weber & Durkheim on Religion

Feature	Karl Marx	Max Weber	Émile Durkheim
Nature of Religion	Ideology of ruling class	Source of meaning & motivation	Social institution of solidarity
Key Focus	Economy & class domination	Values, ideas & social action	Social cohesion & collective conscience
Primary Question	How does religion maintain inequality?	How does religion shape action and change?	How does religion bind society together?
Method	Historical materialism	Verstehen, comparative method	Functionalism
Function of Religion	Legitimizes oppression	Guides economic/political behaviour	Creates social order & moral unity
View on God	Human projection	Interpretation of meaning	Symbol of society
Change	Religion hinders social change	Religion can create social change	Religion maintains equilibrium

Conclusion :

Marx, Weber, and Durkheim provide three foundational yet contrasting explanations of religion. **Marx** highlights religion's ideological role in sustaining inequality; **Weber** emphasizes its capacity to shape social action and historical change; and **Durkheim** underscores its integrative function in maintaining collective life. Together, their theories offer a comprehensive sociological understanding of how religion operates across economic, cultural, and social-structural dimensions, shaping both continuity and change in society.

(c).What is the nature of relationship between science and religion in modern society ? Analyse with suitable examples. (10 marks)

Answer :

The relationship between **science and religion** in modern society is complex, marked by both tension and accommodation. While **science** relies on empiricism and falsifiability, **religion** draws authority from faith and sacred values. Sociologists such as **Émile Durkheim** saw religion as a source of social cohesion, whereas **Max Weber** highlighted its role in shaping rationality and modernity. In contemporary societies undergoing rapid scientific advancement and secularisation, both institutions continue to influence social behaviour, identity, and public policy.

Sociological Perspectives on Science–Religion Relationship

Conflict Perspective

- The **conflict thesis** (popularised by John Draper & Andrew White) argues that science and religion are fundamentally incompatible.
- Example: Debates around **evolution vs. creationism** in the USA; opposition to **stem-cell research**; clashes on **LGBTQ+ issues** where religious doctrine challenges scientific psychiatry.

Complementarity Perspective

- **Bronislaw Malinowski** argued religion provides emotional comfort where science cannot.
- Science explains how things happen, while religion explains why they matter.
- Example: In India, people often use **biomedicine** for illness but also seek **ritual healing** for emotional security.

Functionalist Perspective

- **Durkheim**: Religion offers moral unity, while science helps in instrumental rationality.
- In modern societies, both coexist by fulfilling different functions—religion for collective conscience; science for technological efficiency.

Weberian Rationalisation

- **Max Weber** viewed modernity as dominated by scientific rationality ("disenchantment of the world").
- Yet resurgence of spirituality and new religious movements shows that rationalisation does not eliminate religious needs.

Postmodern Perspective

- **Lyotard and Bauman** argue that grand narratives of both science and religion are questioned today.
- Rise of **alternative medicine**, astrology apps, and spiritual wellness movements despite scientific progress.

Nature of Science–Religion Relationship in Modern Society

Areas of Cooperation

- **Bioethics committees** where religious leaders and scientists collaborate on IVF, organ donation, euthanasia.
- **Environmental movements:**
 - Pope Francis' *Laudato Si'* aligns with climate science.
 - Indian religious groups promoting rivers, biodiversity conservation.

Areas of Tension

- **Reproductive technologies:** IVF, surrogacy questioned by orthodox religious groups.
- **Genetic engineering and AI ethics** provoke debates on “playing God.”
- **Sex education** resisted by religious institutions in many societies.

Plural and Context-Specific Coexistence

- In India, **scientific modernity** coexists with **sacred practices** like temple rituals, pilgrimage, vastu, astrology.
- State policies oscillate between scientific temper (Article 51A(h)) and accommodation of religious sentiments (personal laws).

Changing Relationship Between Science & Religion

Traditional Societies

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Religious worldview dominates

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Scientific Revolution - Rationalisation (Weber)

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Secularisation & Institutional Differentiation (Parsons)

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Tension: Evolution, Biomedicine, Reproductive Tech

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Postmodern Phase - Coexistence + Revival of Spirituality

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Hybrid Society: Science for efficiency & Religion for meaning

Comparison Table: Science vs. Religion in Modern Society

Dimension	Science	Religion
Epistemology	<i>Empirical, testable</i>	<i>Faith-based, sacred</i>
Main Function	<i>Technical control, prediction</i>	<i>Meaning, moral order</i>
Authority Source	<i>Experiment, evidence</i>	<i>Scriptures, tradition</i>
Change	<i>Rapid, cumulative</i>	<i>Slow, conservative</i>
Public Role	<i>Policy, technology, medicine</i>	<i>Identity, morality, community</i>
Modern Trend	<i>Rationalisation</i>	<i>Revivalism & pluralism</i>

Conclusion :

The relationship between science and religion in modern society is **neither purely conflictual nor wholly harmonious**. Instead, it is **dynamic, context-specific, and shaped by modern values of pluralism and individual choice**. While science provides technological advancement and rational solutions, religion continues to serve emotional, moral, and community needs. As sociologists note, modern societies exhibit **multiple modernities** where both science and religion coexist, negotiate boundaries, and occasionally contest each other—ultimately shaping the cultural fabric of contemporary life.

8. (a) What do you understand by sustainable development ? Discuss the elements of sustainable development as proposed in the UNDP's sustainable development goals Report - 2015. (20 marks)

Answer :

Sustainable development refers to a model of social change that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. This definition, popularized by the **Brundtland Commission (1987)**, emphasizes the interaction between society, economy and ecology. Sociologically, sustainable development involves understanding how social structures, institutions and cultural practices influence resource use, environmental behaviour and equitable development. Scholars like **Anthony Giddens** highlight that sustainability challenges are inherently **“socio-environmental risks”** requiring collective action.

Sociological Understanding of Sustainable Development

From a sociological lens, sustainable development is not merely ecological protection but a transformation of social values, power relations and patterns of consumption.

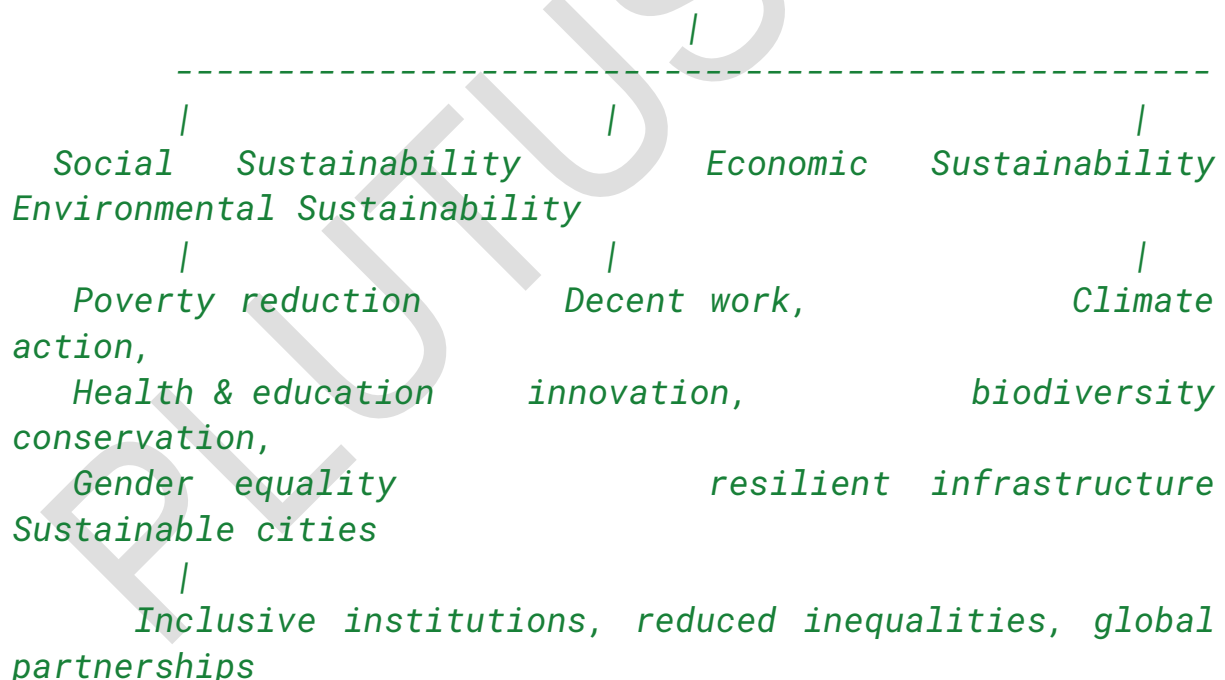
- **Ulrich Beck's Risk Society** explains how modernisation creates global ecological risks that necessitate reflexive governance.
- **Amartya Sen** links sustainability to human capabilities, implying that development must enhance freedoms equitably.
- **M.N. Srinivas** and **A.R. Desai** emphasize development's social consequences—stratification, displacement, social movements—which must be addressed for sustainability.

Elements of Sustainable Development as Proposed in UNDP's SDG Report (2015)

The UNDP's Sustainable Development Goals (2015) outline **17 goals**, built on three key pillars: **economic efficiency, social equity, and environmental sustainability**—but extended into a broader sociological framework.

SDG Framework (UNDP 2015)

Sustainable Development (UNDP-SDG 2015)



Social Sustainability Goals

These relate to improving human wellbeing and strengthening social structures.

Key SDGs:

- **No Poverty (SDG 1)** – addresses structural inequality; relates to Sen's capability approach.

- **Quality Education (SDG 4)** – fosters human capital; supported by Durkheim’s idea of education as socialization.
- **Gender Equality (SDG 5)** – empowerment and dismantling patriarchal norms; supported by Sylvia Walby’s theory of patriarchy.
- **Reduced Inequalities (SDG 10)** – tackles caste, class and regional disparities relevant to Indian sociology.
- **Peace, Justice & Strong Institutions (SDG 16)** – aligns with Weber’s rational-legal authority for stable governance.

Economic Sustainability Goals

These focus on creating inclusive economic opportunities and resilient systems.

Key SDGs:

- **Decent Work & Economic Growth (SDG 8)** – promotes labour rights; relates to Marx’s critique of exploitation.
- **Industry, Innovation & Infrastructure (SDG 9)** – stresses technological change with equity.
- **Responsible Consumption & Production (SDG 12)** – resonates with Weber’s idea of rationalization and its ecological consequences.

Environmental Sustainability Goals

These emphasize the protection of natural systems crucial for societal survival.

Key SDGs:

- **Climate Action (SDG 13)** – aligns with Beck’s ecological risk theory.
- **Life Below Water / On Land (SDG 14 & 15)** – conservation of ecosystems.
- **Sustainable Cities (SDG 11)** – echoes the Chicago School’s focus on urban ecology.

Sociological Dimensions & UNDP SDG Elements

Dimension	UNDP SDG Elements (2015)	Sociological Perspective
Social	Poverty, health, education, gender equality, institutions	Sen (capabilities), Durkheim (social cohesion), Walby (patriarchy), Weber (institutions)
Economic	Jobs, infrastructure, innovation, consumption patterns	Marx (class & labour), Weber (rationalization)
Environmental	Climate action, biodiversity, clean energy	Ulrich Beck (risk society), Giddens (ecological modernization)

Governance	Peace, partnerships	justice,	Weber (authority), Parsons (system integration)
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Conclusion :

Sustainable development is fundamentally a **sociological project** because it demands transforming the social structures, cultural norms, and institutional arrangements that shape human–environment interactions. The UNDP’s SDG framework (2015) provides a holistic blueprint that integrates social justice, economic opportunity and environmental protection. Achieving these goals requires not merely policy interventions but deep sociological engagement with issues of inequality, power, community participation and behavioural change. Sustainable development, therefore, is both a **social vision** and a **collective responsibility** essential for a just and resilient future.

(b).How do ‘Civil Society Organization’ such as ‘NGO’ and ‘Self Help Groups’ contribute grassroot level social changes? Discuss (20 marks)

Answer:

Civil society organizations (CSOs)—including **Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)** and **Self-Help Groups (SHGs)**—serve as bridges between the state and society. According to **Anthony Giddens**, civil society strengthens “the associational life that democratizes everyday social relations.” At the grassroots, these organizations address local needs, empower marginalized groups, and facilitate participatory development, thereby catalyzing enduring social transformations.

Conceptual Background

- **Gramsci’s civil society theory** highlights CSOs as agents of counter-hegemonic consciousness, challenging inequality and enabling social empowerment.
- **Mahatma Gandhi’s constructive work programme** similarly viewed community organizations as instrumental in moral and social upliftment.
- **Amartya Sen’s Capability Approach** emphasizes the role of NGOs and SHGs in broadening people’s choices and capabilities.

Mechanisms of Grassroots Social Change – NGOs & SHGs

Pathway of Social Change by NGOs & SHGs

Identification of Local Issues

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Community Mobilization & Awareness Building

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Capacity Development (skills, literacy, rights-education)

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Economic Empowerment (microfinance, livelihood training)

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Social Empowerment (gender equality, caste harmony, health behaviour)

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Institutional Linkages (state schemes, banks, markets)

↓

Transformation of Norms & Power Structures

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Grassroot Social Change (inclusive development, participation)

Contribution of NGOs

A. Empowerment & Capacity Building

- NGOs work as facilitators of education, health, gender awareness.
- **Paulo Freire's "pedagogy of the oppressed"** explains how NGOs empower people through critical consciousness.

Examples:

- NGOs like **Pratham** improving literacy,
- **SEWA** empowering informal sector women,
- **Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan (MKSS)** promoting transparency and RTI awareness.

Social Inclusion & Rights Advocacy

- Work on issues of caste discrimination, women's rights, tribal forest rights.
- Create platforms for subaltern voices—aligns with **Subaltern Studies** scholars like **Ranajit Guha**.

Acting as Policy Catalysts

- NGOs supply data, monitor implementation, and push for policy shifts.

- Example: NGO activism contributed to the **RTI Act** and **MGNREGA** transparency reforms.

Contribution of Self-Help Groups (SHGs)

Economic Empowerment

- Microfinance-led savings and credit culture.
- **Muhammad Yunus' microcredit theory** validates SHGs as tools of poverty reduction.

Social Capital & Collective Strength

- SHGs build **bonding, bridging, and linking social capital** (Robert Putnam), strengthening community solidarity.

Gender Transformation

- Women's SHGs enhance bargaining power, decision-making, and public participation.
- Associated with **Acker's gendered organization theory**—SHGs challenge patriarchal structures.

Behavioral and Social Norm Change

- Health practices, sanitation, nutrition, domestic violence prevention—achieved through peer-learning.

Comparative Table: NGOs vs SHGs

Dimension	NGOs	SHGs
Nature	Formal, professional organizations	Informal, community-based groups
Primary Focus	Social welfare, rights, advocacy	Savings, credit, livelihood, empowerment
Operational Scale	Regional/National/International	Local/Community/Village level
Approach	Top-down + participatory	Bottom-up, self-governance
Strength	Expertise, resources, advocacy reach	Trust-based networks, community ownership
Role in Social Change	Policy advocacy, awareness, capacity-building	Micro-level empowerment, social capital formation
Limitations	Funding dependency, legitimacy issues	Limited scale, capacity constraints

Conclusion :

NGOs and SHGs together constitute vital pillars of civil society that promote **participatory democracy, social inclusion, and transformative empowerment** at the grassroots. As noted by **Giddens**, “civil society revitalizes social bonds and democratizes social life.” Through advocacy, microfinance, education, and community mobilization, these organizations challenge structural inequalities and create pathways for sustainable social change. Their synergy with the state and community thus becomes essential for inclusive and just development in contemporary India.

(c). In what way does queer kinship challenge the traditional kinship system? Substantiate by giving illustrations (10 marks)

Answer :

Kinship refers to the social relationships based on blood, marriage, or adoption, forming the basis of family and inheritance systems. Traditional kinship systems—whether **patrilineal, matrilineal, or bilateral**—are structured around **heteronormativity**, reproduction, and regulated gender roles. However, the rise of **queer kinship**, grounded in the experiences of LGBTQIA+ communities, challenges this normative structure. As **Kath Weston (1991)** highlights in *Families We Choose*, queer people often form “chosen families” that expand the meaning of kinship beyond biology and sexuality.

How Queer Kinship Challenges Traditional Kinship

Challenges Heteronormativity

- Traditional kinship assumes heterosexual marriage as the core unit.
- Queer kinship includes same-sex couples, trans partnerships, non-binary households.
- **Judith Butler** argues that gender and sexuality are socially constructed; thus, kinship need not rely on heterosexual norms.

Illustration: Two gay men raising a child through surrogacy disrupts the male–female parental binary.

Redefines Family Beyond Blood and Marriage

- Queer communities often form **chosen families** based on emotional bonds, solidarity, and support networks.
- **Kath Weston’s** ethnography shows that queer individuals substitute biological families that may reject them.

Illustration: LGBTQ+ support groups functioning as caregiving units, sharing finances, housing, and emotional care.

Subverts Traditional Gender Roles

- Traditional kinship assigns men as breadwinners and women as caregivers.
- Queer kinship practices egalitarian division of labor and fluid roles.

Illustration: In lesbian households, both partners may share breadwinning and caregiving responsibilities without rigid roles.

Reconfigures Reproduction and Parenthood

- Queer kinship accepts **non-biological forms of reproduction:** IVF, surrogacy, adoption, co-parenting.
- Parenthood becomes **social**, not purely biological.

Illustration: A trans woman adopting a child and recognized as a mother despite not giving birth.

Challenges Lineage, Inheritance, and Descent Rules

- Traditional descent rules (patrilineal/matrilineal) privilege bloodline continuity.

Queer kinship legitimizes inheritance based on **choice**, not lineage.

Illustration: Will-based inheritance in queer households represents "intentional kinship".

Questions Marriage-Centric Kinship

- Queer kinship may include polycules, friendship-based family units, or cohabitation without marriage.
- This counters traditional views of marriage as the gateway to family formation.

Illustration: A triad (three-person) queer partnership functioning as a family unit.

How Queer Kinship Challenges Traditional Kinship

Traditional Kinship

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Heteronormativity - Fixed Gender Roles - Bloodline-based Family

Queer Kinship Challenges

- ↓
- ├— Chosen Families (Weston)
- ├— Fluid Gender Roles (Butler)
- ├— Non-biological Parenthood
- ├— Diverse Household Forms
- └— Inclusive Inheritance & Care Networks

Traditional vs. Queer Kinship

Aspect	Traditional Kinship	Queer Kinship
Basis	<i>Blood, marriage, biology</i>	<i>Choice, emotional bonds, fluid ties</i>
Structure	<i>Heteronormative, nuclear</i>	<i>Diverse: same-sex couples, polycules, friendships</i>
Gender Roles	<i>Rigid (male–female roles)</i>	<i>Fluid, negotiated</i>
Parenthood	<i>Biological emphasis</i>	<i>Social/intentional parenthood</i>
Reproduction	<i>Natural/biological</i>	<i>IVF, surrogacy, adoption</i>
Legitimacy	<i>State & society recognition</i>	<i>Often informal, community-validated</i>
Descent	<i>Patrilineal/matrilineal</i>	<i>Non-linear and flexible</i>

Conclusion :

Queer kinship represents a transformative shift in the sociological understanding of family, relationships, and social reproduction. By embracing **choice-based, non-heteronormative, and fluid** structures, it challenges the traditional kinship system's assumptions of gender, reproduction, and lineage. As scholars like **Weston, Butler, and Schneider** suggest, kinship is not a static biological reality but a dynamic social construction that evolves with changing social values and identities. Queer kinship thus expands the scope of what it means to be a family in contemporary society.