

# Sociological Theories of Social Change

Social change is a change in the **social structures and functions of those Structures**. The term social change is also used to indicate the **changes that take place in human interactions and interrelations**. For example Change in Structure and Functions of family (Joint to Nuclear Structure of Family and Change in functions of family). For **Maciver and Page**, Society is a web of social relationships and hence social change means change in the system of social relationships. These are understood in terms of social processes and social interactions and social organization. **Auguste Comte the father of Sociology** has posed two problems- the question of social statics and the question of social dynamics, what is and how it changes. The sociologists not only outline the structure of the society but also seek to know its causes also. According to **Morris Ginsberg social change is a change in the social structure**.

Change is the law of nature. What is today shall be different from what it would be tomorrow. The social structure is subject to incessant change.. Individuals may strive for stability, societies may create the illusion of permanence, the quest for certainty may continue unabated, yet the fact remains that society is an everchanging phenomenon, growing, decaying, renewing and accommodating itself to changing conditions and suffering vast modifications in the course of time. Our understanding of it will not be complete unless we take into consideration this changeable nature of society, study how differences emerge and discover the direction of change.

## Forms of Social Change:

**Generally social change occurs in two forms**

- **Change in the system:-** It means all the small changes occurring in the system come under this form of social change. Karl Marx has described it in the form of quantitative changes. Such changes keep going on in all the societies like premature communism, ancient society, similarly plenty of changes coming up in modern societies in all areas are the ways of change in the system. Given so much importance to children and women in today's family, is indicator of change in relations. Parsons has also talked about such kind of change.
- **Change of the system:-** Though, this form of change, brings change in the whole system, for eg the qualitative change explained by Karl Marx described, this kind of change, because under qualitative change, the whole system is replaced by another system. Similarly, if it happens that in India, caste system is completely abolished and absolute class system is established then it would be said to be change of the system.

**Direction of social change:** Though there is not any fixed direction of change and so there is nothing absolute to describe it. But Maclver and Page have given, in general, the following directions of change

- **Forward direction of change:** Shows a definite positive change. This is usually seen in the field of science and technology, which in turn, change the existence of life and knowledge.
- **Downward/Backward direction of change:-** Some changes occur, upwards initially but later on a process of degeneration starts, economic change in the best example of it. Metropolitan cities also decay after a big change. In International market also this kind of change is seen.
- **Wave Like change:** – Another direction of change happens as a wave ambulance like motion and example of such kind of changes are seen in the field of fashion, styles of living, attires etc. Which after sometime repeat itself. It does not have any fixed direction of high level of change.

### Factors of Social Change

1. **Internal Factors:**– Change in population and geographical conditions, change in production process migration, Individual interests, communal conflicts, change in physical consumerism like in science and technology industrialization, urbanization, consumerism lifestyle etc.
2. **External Factors:-** Cultural contact is the main external factor, which could be direct or indirect and which brings change in the form of acculturation, assimilation and diffusion for eg. India realized change under the direct influence of Islam and Western culture and especially westernization has put a great impact on our societies, in all spheres of life.

### Nature of Social Change

1. Social change is a universal phenomenon.
2. Social change is a community change.
3. Speed of social change is not uniform.
4. Nature and speed of social change is affected by and related to time factor.
5. Social change occurs as an essential law.
6. Definite prediction of social change is not possible.
7. Social change results from the interaction of a number of factors
8. Social change shows chain-reaction sequence

9. Social change are chiefly those of modification or of replacement

1. **Social change is a universal phenomenon. Social change occurs in all societies. No society remains completely static.** This is true of all societies, primitive as well as civilized. Society exists in a universe of dynamic influences. The population changes, technologies expand, material equipment changes, ideologies and values take on new components and institutional structures and functions undergo reshaping. The speed and extent of change may differ from society to society. Some change rapidly, others change slowly.
2. **Social change is community change. Social change does not refer to the change in the life of an individual or the life patterns of several individuals.** It is a change which occurs in the life of the entire community. In other words, only that change can be called social change whose influence can be felt in a community form. Social change is social and not individual.
3. **Speed of social change is not uniform. While social change occurs in all societies, its speed is not uniform in every society.** In most societies it occurs so slowly that it is often not noticed by those who live in them. Even in modern societies there seems to be little or no change in many areas. Social change in urban areas is faster than in rural areas.
4. **Nature and speed of social change is affected by and related to time factor.** The speed of social change is not uniform in each age or period in the same society. In modern times the speed of social change is faster today than before 1947. Thus, the speed of social change differs from age to age. The reason is that the factors which cause social change do not remain uniform with the change in times. Before 1947 there was less industrialization in India, after 1947 India has become more industrialized. Therefore, the speed of social change after 1947 is faster than before 1947.
5. **Social change occurs as an essential law. Change is the law of nature. Social change also is natural. It may occur either in the natural course or as a result of planned efforts.** By nature we desire change. Our needs keep on changing. To satisfy our desire for change and our changing needs social change becomes a necessity. The truth is that we are anxiously waiting for a change. According to Green "The enthusiastic response of change has become almost a way of life."
6. **Definite prediction of social change is not possible. It is difficult to make any prediction about the exact forms of social change.** There is no inherent law of social change according to which it would assume definite forms. We may say that on account of the social reform movement untouchability will be abolished from the Indian society; that the basis and ideals of marriage laws passed by the government; that industrialization will

increase the speed of urbanization but we cannot predict the exact forms which social relationships will assume in future. Likewise it cannot be predicted as to what shall be our attitudes, ideas, norms and values in future.

7. **Social change shows chain-reaction sequence. A society's pattern of living is a dynamic system of inter-related parts.** Therefore, change in one of these parts usually reacts on others and those on additional ones until they bring a change in the whole mode of life of many people. For example, industrialism has destroyed the domestic system of production. The destruction of domestic system of production brought women from the home to the factory and the office. The employment of women meant their independence from the bondage of man. It brought a change in their attitudes and idea. It meant a new social life for women. It consequently affected every part of the family life.
8. **Social change results from the interaction of a number of factors. Generally, it is thought that a particular factor like changes in technology, economic development or climatic conditions causes social change.** This is called monistic theory which seeks to interpret social change in terms of one single factor. But the monistic theory does not provide an adequate explanation of the complex phenomenon of social change. As a matter of fact, social change is the consequence of a number of factors. A special factor may trigger a change but it is always associated with other factors that make the triggering possible. The reason is that social phenomena are mutually interdependent. None stand out as isolated forces that bring about change of themselves. Rather each is an element in a system. Modification of one part influences the other parts and this influence the rest, until the whole is involved.
9. **Social change are chiefly those of modification or of replacement.** Social changes may be broadly categorized as modifications or replacements. It may be modification of physical goods or social relationships. For example, the form of our breakfast food has changed. Though we eat the same basic materials which we ate earlier, wheat, eggs, corn, but their form is changed. Ready-to-eat-cornflakes, breads, omelettes are substituted for the form in which these same materials were consumed in yester years. There may also be modifications of social relationships. The old authoritarian family has become the small equalitarian family, the one room school has become a centralized school. Our ideas about women's rights, religion, government and co-education stand modified today.

## **Sociological Theories of Social Change:**

### **Classical Evolutionary Theory of Change:**

Evolutionary theories are based on the assumption that **societies gradually change from simple to more complex forms**. Early sociologists beginning with Auguste Comte believed that **human societies evolve in a unilinear way**— that is in one line of development. According to them social change meant progress toward something better. They saw change as **functional and beneficial**. To them the evolutionary process implied that societies would necessarily reach new and higher levels of civilization. This evolutionary view of social change was highly influenced by **Charles Darwin's theory of organic evolution**. Although evolutionist's ideas dates back to **August Comte** but it was **Herbert Spencer** who presented his theory of evolution in a more systematic form.

### **Theoretical Strands:**

1. **L.H Morgan** believed that there were **three basic** stages in the process:
  - Savagery,
  - Barbarism and
  - Civilization.

Lewis Henry Morgan, a 19th-century anthropologist, indeed proposed a theory that categorized human societies into three stages of cultural evolution: savagery, barbarism, and civilization. These stages were based on technological advancements, social organization, and cultural development.

**Savagery:** This stage encompassed early human societies characterized by hunting and gathering for survival. It involved the use of simple tools and had kinship-based social structures.

**Barbarism:** This stage marked an advancement from savagery, where societies began to practice agriculture and domestication of animals. The development of more complex tools, pottery, and the establishment of more elaborate social structures like tribes and clans occurred during this phase.

**Civilization:** The highest stage in Morgan's theory, civilization, represented societies with advanced technology, complex institutions (such as government, religion, and law), written language, and urbanization. These societies were characterized by significant cultural achievements and organized states.

Morgan's framework was based on evolutionary progress, suggesting that societies would naturally evolve from one stage to the next over time. However, it's important to note that this theory has been critiqued for its Eurocentric bias and oversimplification of complex cultural development across different societies worldwide.

2. **Auguste Comte's** ideas relating to the three stages in **the development of human thought and also of society namely-the theological, the metaphysical and the positive** in a way represent the three basic stages of **social change**.
3. **Herbert spencer:** spencer started with the assumption that **reality was governed by the cosmic law of evolution**. He said, "the evolution is an integration of matter and concomitant dissipation of matter during which matter passes from the indefinite incoherent homogeneity to definite coherent heterogeneity". Stated in simple words, this means that evolution is a twin process of "differentiation and integration" whereby a simple and less differentiated society is formed.

**Spencer's conception of the notion of social reality was influenced by biology.** Adopting **organismic analogy**, spencer believes that like individual organism, societies were made up of inter-connected and interdependent parts. In case of society these parts are social institutions. A more or less persisting network of inter-dependent parts constitutes the social structure.

Like organism, societies are also characterized by progressive increase in size. Increase in size is followed by increase in **differentiation and integration**. Thus, simple societies had relatively undifferentiated social structure.

Increasing **differentiation** or in other words increasing division of labour is accompanied by new means of maintaining integration. Thus, **societies either due to change in environment or due to internal growth of population gradually undergo evolutionary change. This change is viewed as progressive and unidirectional process** involving transition from small and simple to large and complex type of societies. **Spencer's theory of change is a macro theory because the entire societies are taken as a unit of analysis.**

Further, **Spencer even examined certain stages which the societies in course of their evolution passed.** Each stage is characterized by increasing differentiation and increase in the integration. The evolutionary sequence consists of the following stages:

- Simple society (Herd or band)
  - Compound society (Tribe and chiefdom)
  - Doubly compounded society (City state & kingdom)
  - Trebly compounded society (Empire and modern nation state)
1. **L.T. Hobhouse:** following spencer, **L.T Hobhouse** also presented the sequence of evolution. Like spencer, he continued to believe in the idea of progress. However, he used concept of social development to analyse and

explain social change. Taking advancement in human knowledge as the chief indicator of development, Hobhouse also presented an evolutionary sequence tracing development of human society through five stages:

- Stage of preliterate societies.
- Stage of literacy and proto-science
- Stage of reflective thought

2. **Emile Durkheim:** Durkheim has given an evolutionary picture of social change and depicted that society has evolved from highly **undifferentiated to differentiated stage**. It means that the society is evolved from **mechanical or simple to organic or complex society**. In mechanical society, **collective consciousness was very strong, division of labour** was very low and so the mental level of the people. That is why, without questioning the authority, they followed each and every order, blindly or mechanically.

**According to Durkheim, Change in three social factors—the volume, the material density, and moral density Caused Social Change. Volume** refers to the size of the population and material density refers to the number of individuals on a given ground surface. **Moral density** means the intensity of communication between individuals. With the formation of cities and the development of communication and transportation, condensation of society, multiplies intra-social relations. Thus the growth and condensation of societies and the resultant intensity of social intercourse necessitate a greater division of labor. **“The division of labor varies in direct ratio with the volume and density of societies and, if it progresses in a continuous manner in the course of social development, it is because societies become regularly denser and generally more voluminous.”**

As societies become more voluminous and denser, more people come into contact with one another; they compete for scarce resources and there is rivalry everywhere. As the struggle for survival becomes acute, **social differentiation** develops as a peaceful solution to the problem.

- When individuals learn to pursue different occupations, the chances of conflict diminish. Each man is no longer in competition with all; each man is in competition with only a few of his fellows who pursue the same object or vocation. The soldier seeks military glory, the priest moral authority, the statesman power, the businessman riches and the scholar scientific renown. The carpenter does not struggle with the mason, nor the physician with the teacher, not the politician with the engineer. Since they pursue different objects or perform different services, they can exist without being obliged mutually to destroy one another. The social change is thus, the result of the struggle for existence.

## Neo-Evolutionary Theory of Social Change: Talcot Parsons

Of late, there has been a revival of interest in the explanation of change as a evolutionary process. These evolutionary theories of change have come to be known as neo-evolutionary theory of change. Some of these theories **have made a conscious attempt to overcome the limitation of classical evolutionist approach.**

**Talcott parsons: parsons** build his theory of change based on the model of **biological theory of evolution.** As in the living organism's system, which have survived and become most developed are those which have shown greater **ability for adapting to** their environment. Thus, **the fundamental principle of evolution is the capacity for adaptation.**

**Capacity for adaptation,** in turn depends upon two basic processes viz **differentiation and integration.** **Increasing structural differentiation** enables society to **upgrade its adaptational capacity.** At the same time, as it becomes more differentiated, **new models of integration** have to be invented in order to coordinate the new and more numerous parts of which it is composed.

**Increased differentiation** accompanied by **sustained integration** enables society to evolve according to exigencies of the environment. Here change in the culture is very important for both. Increased differentiation as well as for new integrative mechanism to be effective, culture plays the most important role in maintaining control. According to parsons cultural change accompanied by increasing differentiation is characterized by increasing generalization of cultural value which helps in greater inclusion.

Applying evolutionary model, **parsons has distinguished five stages of evolution,** in terms of which various societies can be classified. These stages are characterized by increasing level of differentiation and integration.

- **First type is Primitive society, like Australian aborigine.**
- **Second type is Archaic society like Mesopotamia and Egyptian Empire.**
- **The third type is Historical Society like China and India.**
- **The fourth type is Seedbed society like Israel and Greece and**
- **The fifth type is Modern society like U.S., Soviet Union, Europe and Japan.**

**Each of these stages represents similarity in their degree of differentiation and their integrative solution.**

**Parsons** discuss about **evolutionary universals**. If a civilization at a lower evolutionary stage adopts certain evolutionary universals belonging to a higher stage, it can easily leap over one or more stage altogether. Here, parsons give the example of **feudal Europe**. Traditional Europe was at a lower stage of evolution than their contemporaries like the Indian and the Chinese empire. **Yet feudal Europe observed some of the higher level universals that have originated in the roman, Hellenistic and Judaic civilization which together transformed the medieval European societies into modern advanced stage.**

## **Critical Analysis & Arguments:**

1. The classical evolutionist approach was conceived as scientific attempt towards explanation of social change. However, in later part of the 19th century, the classical evolutionist approach came to be severely criticized for failing to be adequately scientific as can be seen from the following characteristics of classical evolutionist approach.
2. **Classical evolutionists share the general 19th century belief in human progress.** Their theories tended to have a **value bias and hence lacked objectivity** a precondition for a scientific study. This bias is evident from the fact that **they cynically labelled simple societies as primitive or savage etc., while describing European culture and societies as a model of high civilization.** Ethenomethodologists, phenomenologists and symbolic interactionist vehemently criticized classical theories. Such a romantic perception of human progress came for a severe criticism in early 20th-century when the first world war broke out in European society which was considered to be advancing towards to apex of human progress and civilization and Europe witnessed the human savagery.
3. **Most sociologist and anthropologist belonging to the classical evolutionist's tradition were the arm chair theorists.** So they largely relied on secondary data of questionable value to build their evolutionary models and hence works were considered unscientific.

## **Cycle Theories of Social Change:**

Cyclical theories of social change focus on **the rise and fall of civilizations** attempting to discover and account for these **patterns of growth and decay**. Spengler, Toynbee and Sorokin can be regarded as the champions of this theory.

1. **Spengler** pointed out that the fate of civilizations was a matter of destiny. **Each civilization is like a biological organism and has a similar life cycle, birth, maturity, old age and death.** After making a **study of eight major civilizations** including the west, he said that the modern western society is in the last stage i.e., Old age. He concluded that the western societies were entering a period of decay as evidenced by wars, conflicts and social breakdown that heralded their doom.
2. **Arnold Toynbee:** his famous book 'a study of history' (1946) focus on the key concepts of **challenge and response.** Every society faces challenges at first, challenges posed by the **environment** and later challenges from **internal and external** enemies. The **nature of responses** determines the society's fate. The achieve successful responses to the challenges; if cannot mount an effective response it dies. He does not believe that all civilizations will inevitably decay. He has pointed out that history is a series of cycles of decay and growth. But each new civilization is able to learn from the mistakes and to borrow from cultures of others. **It is therefore possible for each new cycle to offer higher level of achievement.**
3. **Vilfredo pareto:** pareto has divided the whole social system into two parts: **elites and masses.** Elites consists of both **governing and non-governing elites.** Elites could be further divided into two groups 1. Residues of combination 2. Residues of group persistence. **The first group** has a characteristic to mix up easily with the people. They are highly imaginative and cunning as well, which reflects their ideology in the same way. Whereas **the second group** has a characteristic of stability and so, they work on the principle of group stability. **The first group** is politically called fox, economically called speculators and obviously they are non-idealists. **The second group** is politically called lions, economically called ren tiers and of course, it is idealistic.

**When the first group i.e. Foxes are in power, then a speedy change is seen in the society, but after some time, when people realize their cunningness and their demerits, then there is a disturbance in the society, which needs a change, this time, lions make their way.** They convince the people substantially and with their support, gain the power by replacing foxes.

**But in due course of time, when people find no creativity or invention or discovery done in the society, they become hopeless and dissatisfied.** The Cunning foxes realize this thing and so clear the way for them and as a result, they gain the power.

The process keeps on going which is **circulation of elites**, as called by Pareto. It is because of this circulation, that social change occurs in society and the change is obviously in the form of cycle This is cyclical social change given by Pareto.

## Critical Analysis & Arguments:

1. **In the Context of two opposite ideologies:** Pareto's opinion about lions and foxes, in the form of two opposite ideologies is nowhere absolutely found. Because in modern era, such system is established worldwide, that a single ideology cannot work. The aware citizens of any country want a party, to be pragmatic, reconcillatory and based on stability, And this cannot be found in a single group i.e. lion or fox. This is the reason, that in today's leadership, the characteristics of both lions and foxes are present, naturally that leadership will get mandate, which is able to adequately all the required attributes. This is the reason that in Britain, sometimes, conservative party also gets a bundle of votes from working class. And same is situation of American Rightist, Democratic party. In India also caste chemistry has become more important than caste arithmetic . In this context, Pareto's theory does not seem to be much relevant in modern.
2. **In the form of multi party system:** In modern times in many countries, multi party system works and today, the government is formed with the alliance of many parties. In this context, Pareto becomes non-relevant.
3. **In the context of Non Governing elements :But Pareto's theory is** relevant in the form of opposition party. Opposition party keeps acknowledging the people, the faulty policies and their wrong implementations and in that way, they stop the government to be authoritarian and arbitrary. Some times, they become successful replacing the governing elites.

## SOROKIN: Socio Cultural- Dynamics :

1. **Sorokin**, in his cyclical theory of social change has shown that every social system has a definite cultural stage, in which a change makes changes in the whole social system and this is social change. Sorokin, in his book "**Socio Cultural Dynamics**" has illustrated mainly two and overall there cultures **1. Sensate 2. Idealistic & 3. ideational culture.**
2. Here sensate and ideational are extremes cultural stages. It means, reaching to any of the culture extreme level, society faces a change, that is why **Sorokin believes that the whole human history is the history of cultural dynamics.**

3. **The distinction B/W sensate and ideational culture** is the basis of social change, when society changes from one stage to another. Then all the attributes of social relation as science, religion philosophy, law, morality, art, literature etc. are changed and in that way, this is a social change widely.

### **The Change is cyclical**

**According to Sorokin**, one cultural stage reaches to second cultural stage and again moves back to its original stage. This is cyclical stage for eg from sensate culture, there is a change towards ideational culture and again the sensate culture is restored back, but meanwhile, it has to pass through one more stage, which Sorokin has called idealistic culture.

**In sensate culture, material & sensual** aspects all given prime imp, in which status & position of members of society are considered on the basis of those aspects they have earned. In this the beliefs, values, emotions of individual are of material aspect. And people love to accomplish their task, which can give more sensual pleasure that is why, in this cultural stage, power is concentrated in those hands, who possess lot of material property. In sensate cultural stage, religion, tradition, customs have limited impact on social relations and social action.

**In ideational cultural stage**, spirituality has a prime concern, in which, the ideals of life focus on the search of truth and peace. Instead of material pleasure, ethics, traditions, religion, truth, nonviolence are the important elements in social system and activity controlled and regulate the activities of the members. In this system, the social strata's are determined on the basis of religious and spiritual success and skill. Idealistic culture stage:- contains the attributes of both the cultures that is sensate and ideational it is a kind of integrated system, which shows the transitional phase, it comes in between, whenever there is a change from sensate to ideational and ideational to sensate.

**The principle of eminent change:- According to Sorokin**, Social system is related with cultural system, that is why a change in cultural system, changes the social system Sorokin believes that this change is based on the principle of eminent change, according to which the forces of change are inherent on the nature of culture itself.

### **Principle of Limits:**

Sorokin envisages that sensate and ideational cultures are extreme stages, naturally they do not change beyond them, so cultural elements move in backward direction. To make it intelligible Bierstedt has given the example of piano, in which the sound comes out in the same proposition of the force by which the keys are

pressed. But it has a limit beyond which the keys will breakup. When the same is applied in Sorokin theory, then it becomes clear that, now the change will be in backward direction.

### **Irregular Motion of Change:**

Whether the change is from sensate to ideational or ideational to sensate, the motion of change is irregular, It is in the form of Fluctuation So in the sequence of change, the speed of change is sometimes high and sometimes slow and next time it may stagnate temporarily. In this way it cannot be predicted when one cultural stage would reach to second cultural stage. This is Sorokin's cyclical theory of change.

### **Limitations:**

1. This theory does not explain all kinds of changes and specially the minute change or routine changes in life. Eventually. It lacks microscopic explanation Movever it explains the change in social system in toto whereas Marxist or Parsonian approach explains all kinds of changes whether qualitative or quantitative.
2. According to Sorokin, a change in different direction occurs only after reaching to the extreme level of cultural stage. But the same has not been seen practically. One important fact in this regard is that it is absolutely difficult to determine what is the extremity of a cultural stage. Apart from it, it has also been seen that a social system turns to a second culture, before reaching to the extremity of a first culture. Thus the western materialistic culture has reached to idealistic culture, before reaching to the extremity of materialism. It also shows that the change is sometimes forward and sometimes backward, which violates its claim of being cyclical, in this way it lacks objectivity and rationality.

**Note: What kind of change is indicated through the peace efforts done by western countries worldwide?**

The peace efforts are mainly done in the following way.

1. Non proliferation of Nuclear, chemical or biological weapons
2. disarmament
3. Conservation of Environment
4. Abolition of terrorism

5. Alleviation of poverty from poor countries
6. Globalization of world economy

The observation of all such efforts shows that overtly western countries are oriented towards world peace. But reality is something else. In the processes like non-proliferation of chemical biological & nuclear weapons & disarmament, the self interest of these countries are highly deep rooted. Actually, they have a threat to their own existence, thereby they are appealing the whole world in this context, the some condition is related with removal of terrorism from the world and through it the developed countries want to preserve their own capital. A similar explanation can be given for other sections also for globalization, poverty alleviation, through which they want to minimize this project more and more obviously they are leading towards cyclical change. Undoubtedly, these countries are making their endeavor in Yoga Ayur Veda, naturapathy, herbal, organic food, philanthropy and so a partial peace process is going on in this way a little glimpse of cyclical change is seen now. In this way it can be said that Sorokin's theory has a limited relevance.

## Malintegration Theory of Change:

### Neil J. Smelser :

**According to Smelser over a period of time incompatibilities may develop between parts of the social system.** This may lead to conflicting pressure of demands over different sectors of the society. For example, in some cases, the opposition between the social group of one kind or another; in other cases, the system of incompatibilities may cut across group division. **These inconsistencies may generate structural strain in the system. Such situation of structural strain in the system. Such situation of structural strain may sometimes lead to collective mobilization and social movement may emerge to bring about social change.** However, structural strain alone is not enough to generate a change oriented social movement. Other conditions whose presence are essential are:

- Growth and spread of generalized belief
- Precipitation factors
- Mobilization of participants for action.

### R.K. Merton :

**According to Merton over a period of time, parts become dysfunctional and these dysfunctional parts give rise to Malintegration and maladjustment with the social system.** Malintegration are manifested in the form of conflict.

For the system to survive, the conflict has to be resolved. Therefore, **the dysfunctional parts may be replaced by its functional alternatives or functional equivalent.** This, in turn, would bring about a partial change in the structure.

## Diffusionist Theory of Change:

Diffusionist theory of change locates the source of change outside the society. According to Diffusionist, the process of change begins with culture. When cultural contact takes place, various possibilities may happen:

- The cultural trait may be accepted in parts or in totality.
- The cultural traits may be accepted after modification.
- The cultural traits may be rejected.

The acceptance or rejection of cultural traits depends firstly on intensity of contact; **thus if there is the direct cultural contact leading to acculturation process, recipient culture may be transformed to a great extent. Secondly, if the coming cultural traits are related to the peripheral aspects of the recipient's culture, then there is great chance of its acceptances,** for example, how easily Indians have accepted Jeans and Pizzas, but if it is related to the core values of the recipient culture, then it will face a lot of resistance. In fact, a change in core values of the recipient culture may even give rise to revivalist type of protest movement.

**Robert Readfield** in his studies of Mexican community had developed the concept of great and little tradition to analyze social change, resulting due to diffusion. **Milton Singer and Mackim Marriot** have tried to approve this model of study of social change in India. **According to this approach, the social structure of civilization operates at two levels; first that of the folk or ordinary people and second that of the elite.** The culture of folk comprise the little tradition, while that of elite comprises the great tradition. Now, while studying the process of social change through diffusion, the impact of diffusion should be analysed at two levels. Prof Y. Singh has attempted an analysis of social change in this manner.

## Conflict (Marxian) Theory of Social Change:

Karl Marx borrowed from Hegel, a dialectical view of nature and synthesized it with his materialist stand point. Instead of seeing the world only as the quantity of fixed things or objects, defined and distinguished from one another by their external characteristics, dialectics views the world as a series of mutually interconnected processes. **All phenomenon are the process of change and such change is rooted in what Marx called unity and conflict of opposites. In each social**

formation, thesis develops its own antithesis, finally leading to the conflict between the two which is resolved with the emergence of new synthesis, having elements of both and which in turn becomes the new thesis.

### Summary :

1. **The world including the social world is better characterized by flux and change rather than by stability and permanence.**
2. **In the social world, as in the world of nature, change is not random, but orderly, in that uniformities and regularities can be observed and therefore, scientific finding can be made about them.**
3. **In the social world, the key to the pattern of change can be found in man's relationship in the economic order, the world of work. Subsistence, the need to make a living must be achieved in all societies. How subsistence is achieved crucially affects the whole structure of society.**
4. **Pursuit of economic interest is primary basis for cooperation and conflict in the society.** Men having common and compatible economic interest enter into cooperation with each other. Generally the economic interests are shaped by the fact of the whether one owns the means of production or not. Groups of people having similar relations to means of the production constitute a class.
5. **There are two main classes.** The cooperation between these classes is essentially to carry out production. These classes represent those who own the means of production and hence contribute their labour. While these classes depend on each other to fulfil their economic interest, at the same time, their economic interest are mutually opposed because of the unequal distribution of the fruits of production which are appropriated by the ownership class at the cost of propertyless working class. So long as such economic inequality persists, these two classes are inevitable, leading to hostile relation between them though sometimes this hostility may be latent but in certain situation it becomes manifest leading to open conflict between them. Such conflict between these classes in midwife of change because the interest of ownership class lies in preserving the status quo. While the propertyless working class wants a radical transformation to bring about an agitation and redistribution of the means of production.
6. The source of change lies in the economic organisation of the society. Social reality being systematic in nature has inter-connected parts. Therefore, changing in the economic organization inevitably stimulates change in the other parts of the society too

## Critics Comment:

Weber criticized Marxian theory of social change on various grounds

1. Firstly, **Weber** sees no evidence to support Marxian idea of polarization of society into two mutually hostile camps. More importantly, Weber argues that white collar middle class expands rather than contracts as capitalism develops, because capitalist enterprises in the modern nation state requires a rational bureaucratic administration which involves large number of administrative and clerical staff. Thus, Weber sees process of diversification of classes and an expansion of white collar middle class rather than a polarization.
2. Further, **Weber** rejects the inevitability of revolution and regards it only as one of the possibilities, in fact a rare possibility. Increasing social mobility and rise of welfare state in modern industrial society have dampened the revolutionary fervour of the industrial workers.
3. A similar criticism of Marxian theory has been presented by Ralph Dahrendorf also. According to him there is no possibility of general configuration leading of revolutionary change in the modern society. “**Decomposition of capital**” and “**Decomposition of labour**” have not presented any possibilities of polarization, though conflict of interest remains but, increasing institutional autonomy in modern industrial society insulated conflict and change in one area from spreading to other areas of social life.
4. Another criticism is generally directed towards the **orthodox Marxist** who felt economic sub structure as the sole determining cause of all the change in the society. Here Marxian theory of social change can be seen only as on ideal type explanation of social change highlighting the role of economic factors.

**NOTE: (More analysis in Thinkers Notes : Karl Marx)**

## Functionalist or Dynamic theories:

1. **In the middle decades of the 20th century a number of American sociologists shifted their attention from social dynamics to social static or from social change to social stability.** Talcott Parsons stressed the importance of cultural patterns in controlling the stability of a society.
2. **According to him society has the ability to absorb disruptive forces while maintaining overall stability.** Change is not as something that disturbs the social equilibrium but as something that alters the state of equilibrium so that a qualitatively new equilibrium results. He has stated that

changes may arise from two sources. They may come from outside the society through contact with other societies. They may also come from inside the society through adjustment that must be made to resolve strains within the system. Parsons speaks of two processes that are at work in social change.

- 3. In simple societies institutions are undifferentiated that is a single institution serves many functions.** The family performs reproductive, educational, socializing, economic, recreational and other functions. A process of differentiation takes place when the society becomes more and more complex. Different institutions such as school, factory may take over some of the functions of a family. The new institutions must be linked together in a proper way by the process of integration. New norms must be established in order to govern the relationship between the school and the home. Further bridging institutions such as law courts must resolve conflicts between other components in the system.