

Application of Sociological Concepts: There are two major inconsistencies in sociological theory. One is the tendency to separate qualitative insight and quantitative technique. The other is to separate theory and application, a corollary of this separation has been a neglect of applied aspects. Yet many sociological concepts have been incorporated in the therapeutic work of psychiatrists and psychologists as well as by educationists and anthropologists. Sociologists are collaborating with anthropologists in solving problems of community organization. They have also been found taking interest in the field of rehabilitation. The main consideration of sociologists is to assess the usefulness and applicability of current sociological theory and research to the field of rehabilitation. Working with economists, political scientists and other specialists, sociologists are doing theoretically sound work which is of immense practical significance.

RECENT TRENDS IN SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY

Systematic sociological theory represents the highly selective accumulation of those small parts of earlier theory which have thus far survived the test of empirical research. But the history of theory includes also a mass of concepts which fell into bits when confronted with empirical tests such as the archaic doctrines.

The early history of sociology as represented by Comte and Spencer is very far from cumulative, the conceptions of each seldom were built upon the work of predecessors. They are typically laid out as alternative or competing conceptions rather than consolidated and extended into a cumulative product. Consequently, little of what the early forerunners wrote remains relevant to sociology today as they do not often provide guidelines to the current analysis of sociological problems.

The term sociological theory refers to the logically inter-connected conceptions which are limited and modest in scope, rather than all-embracing and grandiose. Merton attempts to focus attention on what might be called theories of middle range: theories intermediate to the minor working of hypothesis evolved in abundance during the day to day routines of research; and the all-inclusive speculations comprising a master conceptual scheme from which it is helped to derive very large numbers of empirically observed uniformities of social behaviour.

Complete sociological systems today must give way to less imposing and better grounded theories of the middle range. One major task today is therefore to develop special theories applicable to limited ranges of data — e.g. theories of class dynamics, of conflicting group pressures, of the flow of power and the exercise of inter-personal influence, rather than seek at once the "integrated" conceptual structure adequate to derive all these and other theories.

Sociology as yet is a new science. It is passing through its formative period. It has not as yet fully crossed the metaphysical level of human thinking and entered upon the scientific and positive stage though the direction of its march is perceptibly in this line.

In the following pages an attempt has been made to highlight the contributions of the masters of sociological thought including prominent Muslim thinkers.