
UNIT 13 FORMS OF SOCIAL SOLIDARITY

Structure

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13.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit you would be able to understand:

- the relationship between mechanical solidarity and its specific social structure
- the repressive law as the means of strengthening the social solidarity in segmental social structure
- the significance of collective conscience in primitive societies
- that organic solidarity, the characteristic feature of complex social structure, is based on division of labour
- the role of **restitutive law** in complex social structure with reference to the solidarity and the changed form of collective conscience in advanced societies.

13.1 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, the economic and **social solidarity** as analysed in *The Division of Labour in Society* by Durkheim is discussed briefly. Durkheim was curious to know the forces, which regulate and control social life. To conceptualise his ideas he established dichotomy between segmental and complex societies. What are the characteristics of these societies and what

types of solidarities are found among them? He answers these questions with reference to forms of solidarities. While explaining these affirmatively, he propounds that two types of solidarities i.e., mechanical and organic, can be identified through the types of law in different kinds of social structures. The detailed description is presented in section 13.2 of this unit. In this regard the repressive forms of the law, painful to the criminals, are analysed with reference to the segmental type of social structure. The sub-sections of this part deal with the importance of the **collective conscience** in the social structure, the definition of collective conscience and its nature. Organic solidarity is shown in section 13.3. In this part the restitutive aspects of law with reference to complex social structure which makes individuals interdependent and the way it unites them in complex society are also discussed. The sub-parts of this part bring out the contents of collective conscience with regard to the changed social conditions. This unit should be seen as a continuation of Unit 12. Finally, the summary of the unit is given.

13.2 MECHANICAL SOLIDARITY

Mechanical solidarity is *sui generis* i.e. born in the natural course of events based on resemblances of individuals. It directly links them with the society. This type of solidarity has arisen out of a number of common experiences of like members in a given society.

Mechanical solidarity can be characterised by segmental system in which every segment is homogenous and involved in the social structure. Hence the society is divided into quite small compartments which envelop the individual completely. Originally, the segmental society was based on **clans** which were frequently found in less developed societies. But in the process of evolution, the segmental characteristics could not be confined to this one characteristic and started expanding on the bases of territories. Consequently, the division of the society was not solely according to the relation of **consanguinity** (real or fictitious) but also on territorial bases. The segmental social structure is characterised by a low degree of interdependence. What occurs in one segment hardly has any effects on others. Finally, it can be said that the segmental social structure has relatively low volume of moral and material density. This means that interactions take place among limited people (volume). It also means that the number of times people interact is also limited (density). The reason is that what one can do, the other can also do. So he does not need others until more people are needed in a work. If a man has to cut a piece of wood, or catch a bird, or pick a fruit from a tree in a forest, he can do this work by himself like any other. Thus people do the same type of work. They are similar; their inter-dependence is limited. Their density of interactions is low. Then a question arises what forms of **custom** regulate and control the conditions of people bound in mechanical solidarity? Durkheim answers this through collective conscience. Homogeneity of experience leads to the collective conscience. This gives rise to common **beliefs** and practices. The social life blended with religion and economic institutions of such a society, nearer to primitive communism as

differentiations are few. Most of the property is common, the experiences are similar, and rules and regulations too relate to common life. Customs and laws protect the group — its property and its sentiments. The nature of laws is thus collective — a wrong-doer is punished by the collectivity. Penal or **repressive law** is an indicator of mechanical solidarity. Legal sanctions derived from the penal are directly proportional to the number of social bonds, which are regulated and controlled by collective conscience. Thus, we can understand the relative significance of the two. A wrong against the group is punished. On the one hand, punishment is given to the individual; on the other hand, punishment strengthens the beliefs and values of the society. Any wrong brings injury to the group sentiments; every punishment restores the authority of the collectivity.

If a group of individuals are less dependent and conversely more autonomous and if the density of volume of communication is less in such a society, or sect, how is it possible for it to develop collective conscience or social control across individuals or across groups or such sects?

13.2.0 Collective Conscience

Now what is collective conscience under mechanical solidarity at the cultural and ideological level? Durkheim defines collective conscience as a set of beliefs and customs, which on an average are common in a society and form a determinate system, which has its own life-style. Collective conscience exists in a general form in society and one can easily differentiate between the characters relating to its form and those to its content.

13.2.1 Collective Conscience: On the Basis of Forms

Durkheim views that the strength of social bonds is the feature of mechanical solidarity and is a function of three variables. They are:

- i) relation between the volume of collective conscience and individual's conscience
- ii) average intensity of the stages of collective conscience
- iii) the greater or lesser firmness of all those stages.

The more the beliefs and sanctions are present in the society, the less are the chances of freedom of an individual. Thus, where the mechanical solidarity is effective, there is strong and extensive collective conscience. It brings harmonious relationships in the activities of the people extensively. In such a social condition, it is difficult to distinguish individual's conscience from the collective one. Hence, collective authority becomes the mode of totality, whether it involves the whole of the community or it incarnates the chief of the community.

13.2.2 Collective Conscience: On the Basis of Contents

With regard to the content of the collective conscience there are distinguishable elements; mainly, its nature is rooted in the totality of a society. It is so because society is controlled by common beliefs and sanctions, which are unanimously accepted by the members of that society.

Indeed, in ancient era, the religious elements were spread in every aspect of the society and everything, which was social, was religious as well. Both words, religious and social, were synonymous in the primitive societies. The source of super human features was deeply rooted in the constitution of conscience. Collective and the social characteristics of the latter were deemed to be transcendental values. These societal conditions lifted people even beyond their own conscience. The stages of the collective conscience were concretely associated with traditional (local) conditions, linking individual to racial and powerful objects in the universe viz., animals, trees and many natural forces such as sun, moon, clouds etc. People have always been linking himself to such objects. These phenomena affect every conscience in the same way Thus, the fusion of the individual's conscience with the collective indicates its form and object. Now it can be said that collective conscience acquires its specific features in different primitive societies.

Check Your Progress 1

Read the following questions carefully and write the correct answers.

- i) Originally the segmental society was based on
 - a) caste
 - b) vama
 - c) race
 - d) clan
- ii) The objective of the repressive law was
 - a) to give freedom to individuals
 - b) to divide society
 - c) to bring solidarity in the society
 - d) to maintain division of labour in society

iii) Define in three lines the collective conscience.
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iv) Give within four lines the meaning of mechanical solidarity.
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13.3 ORGANIC SOLIDARITY

Durkheim viewed that division of labour is an essential condition of organic solidarity, and it gradually replaces that engendered by social likeness. Here individual depends upon those parts, which the society is composed of. In this respect a society is an arrangement of different and specific functions which are linked mutually by social bonds. In this conception the differences among the individuals are visible to the extent that everybody has his specific field of activities and confines himself or herself to that area only. Hence, the individual's conscience is distinct from the collective conscience.

13.3.0 New Forms of Collective Conscience in Organic Solidarity

Even primitive societies are well organised in the society where organic solidarity is greater; the social structure is well organised and has the features opposite that of segmental social structure. Organised social structure is characterised by the system of different organs and each has a specific role. These organs are formed by different components, which are coordinated and subordinated to one another around a single central organ. This central organ influences the rest of the organism within reasonable limits. Organised social structure, in turn, gives rise to the fusion of the segments completely. Hence, an individual extends his sphere of interaction. As this process continues, it increases in its numerical strength and as such its impact is no longer restricted to the local place. The process of fusion of the segments leads to the fusion of markets, which crystallises a single market (city). This virtually embraces whole society, which contains the entire population within its boundary. Thus, the society itself resembles a large city. Now, individuals are no longer grouped according to their **lineage**, but to their specified activities. The existing social conditions and the nature of work do not confine the individual to his birthplace, but also bring him out of it to the place of work.

Organised social structure is thus characterised by high degree of interdependence. The increase in industrialisation corresponds to the progress of division of labour and the latter determine the concentration of the social mass. Any change at one place is rapidly transmitted to the other. Therefore, the intervention of state/legal sanctions is needed. Finally, we can say that organised social structure has relatively high volume (material and moral density). With the above mentioned advancements, societies become more and more voluminous and, in turn, work gets more divided. The population becomes even more concentrated with the advancement of the people as a whole. Whenever the social norms correspond to the organic solidarity, the division of labour gives rise to legal rules. These will determine the nature and relation of specialised functions and any violation is to be entailed through restitutive measures. Law, with sanctions of restitutive or cooperative nature, works as an index of organic solidarity; this index consists of civil, commercial, procedural, administrative and constitutional laws, which had been abstracted from the penal rules, found in the less-advanced societies. Here we find almost similar co-relation as was observed between penal law and mechanical solidarity. The extent of co-operative law is proportional to that part of social life, which consists

in the bond, engendered by the division of labour. Here one can reasonably neglect those interdependent relations, which are regulated by the customs binding the individuals through similarity of work. Nevertheless, the legal and customary rules are essential for organic solidarity. For the existence of such a solidarity it is necessary that different parts cooperate in a determined way (if not in all respects, at least in predetermined conditions). Therefore, the contract is not self-sufficient, but it presupposes a set of regulations, which are as extensive and complicated as the contracted aspects.

13.3.1 On the Basis of Forms

Now we turn to the question of what form the collective conscience takes in the condition of organic solidarity. Having considered the volume of collective conscience, its intensity and determinateness, Durkheim argues about the forms of collective conscience where volume remains constant or probably diminishes, while its intensity and determinate character decline. Advancement of society through progressive development in the division of labour leads to a decline in the intensity and determinateness of collective states. The collective conscience seems to have less strength to carry the individuals in collective directions; as the rules of conduct to that of collective conscience become indeterminate, an individual gets more chances for self-reflection which, in turn, provides more opportunity for self-freedom. In other words, individual conscience no longer remains so tightly enmeshed in collective conscience, it acquires a certain degree of autonomy.

13.3.2 On the Basis of Contents

The content of collective conscience gradually becomes human oriented, secular and rational. These social conditions start weakening the values of collective curiosity from the society. The religious domain contracts in greater degree and the ever strong domain of collective religious beliefs and sentiments starts decreasing with the rise of scientific procedures. The transcendental characters of society, which were superior to the human interests, begin losing their lustre increasingly.

Durkheim has seen the features of collective conscience in the system of beliefs. In advanced societies the supreme values not only bring dignity to an individual but also equality of opportunity. This has been explained in his work *Ethic and social justice*.

Check Your Progress 2

Read the following statements carefully and write the correct answer.

- i) Mechanical solidarity was found in that society where
 - a) the group was based on likeness and repressive law was in practice
 - b) the group was based on differentiation and repressive law was in practice
 - c) the group was based on likeness and restitutive law was in practice

- d) the group was based on differentiation and restitutive law was in practice. ii) Durkheim has described mechanical and organic solidarity in his work on
 - a) the suicide
 - b) the elementary form of religious life
 - c) the division of labour in society
 - e) the rules of sociological method.
- iii) Complete the following statement by filling in the gap:
 Organic solidarity is found in that society where social structure is
 - a) simple
 - b) organised
 - c) mixed
 - d) imaginary
- v) Describe in five lines the organic solidarity.

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13.4 LET US SUM UP

We now present the summary of the unit in a tabular form under three heads. This will help you recall the major differences between mechanical and organic types of solidarity. The first basis for this distinction is structural, the second deals with types of norms, and the third with characteristics of collective conscience — their form and content.

Bases of distinction	Mechanical	Organic
1) Structural bases	based on likeness (predominant in less-developed society)	based on differences and division of labour (predominant in society advanced societies)
	segmental type (firstly, based on clan then on territory)	organised (firstly, fusion of markets and later development of city)

	less volume of interdependence (relatively, weak social bonds)	high volume of interdependence (relatively strong social bonds)
	relatively, low volume of population	relatively, high volume of moral and material density
2) Types of norms	rules with repressive sanctions practices of penal law	rules with restitutive sanctions practices of cooperative law (cooperative, commercial, administrative and constitutional)
3) Characteristics of collective conscience		
a) form	high volume high intensity high determinants absolute collective	low volume low intensity low determinants more chances to individuals for self-reflection
b) content	highly religious (closed for discussion) attaching supreme values to the society concrete and specific	secular, human oriented (open for discussion) attaching supreme values to the individual abstract and general

13.5 KEYWORDS

Clan

Descent from a common ancestry; now, often applied to any group of people who count descent unilineally from a common ancestor (actual or mythical). The ancestor in primitive societies may be represented by totem such as animal, plant or sources of natural forces. Common ancestor signifies a relationship through blood. Hence, marriages within group are prohibited.

Belief

A statement about reality that is accepted by individuals as true and regarded as factual.

Custom	The term refers to the established mode of behaviour, thought and action, which are practised from generation to generation. Violation of this mode of behaviour is socially not accepted because of societal constraints. Customary forces are sometimes more binding than the orders of the state.
Lineage	A group of kin who reckons descent from a known common ancestor, this being conducted in a single line, either exclusively through patrilineal or exclusively matrilineal.
Consanguinity	The relationship of the people who are descended from one. The quality of common ancestors, commonly termed as “relationship by blood”
Collective Conscience	A set of beliefs and customs, which on an average are common in a society and form a determinant system which has its own style of life.
Social Solidarity	The condition within the group in which there is social cohesion and cooperation, and the collective action is directed towards the achievement of group goals and in which social organisation is shown by permanency. These conditions are changeable according to the social conditions. That is why Durkheim proposes two types of solidarity (mechanical and organic).
Repressive Law	Law that punishes the wrong-doer to reestablish the power and authority of the group or the collectivity. The most prevalent type of law in primitive societies.
Restitutive Law	Law which appears no longer a law for punishment but for restitution or reform. Its function is not to expiate but rather to restore to the rightful person what he or she has lost e.g. an amount of money given on loan or a house given on rent.

13.6 FURTHER READING

Bierstedt, Robert 1966. *Emile Durkheim*. Weidenfeld and Nicolson: London

Durkheim, Emile 1893. *The Division of Labour in Society*. Macmillan: London

Lukes, Steven 1973. *Emile Durkheim: His Life and Work*. Alien Lane, The Penguin Press: London

13.7 SPECIMEN ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

- i) d
- ii) c
- iii) The totality of beliefs and sentiments in average individuals of the same society forms a determinant system, which has its own style of life, may be called collective or common conscience.
- iv) When the individual is bound to society without any intermediary which, in turn, gives rise to totality of belief and sentiments, i.e., the solidarity of likeness; because, the segments of the society have no special type of action of their own and the individual's conscience depends upon the collective one.

Check Your Progress 2

- i) a
- ii) c
- iii) b
- iv) In organic solidarity the individual is dependent upon the parts of which society is composed. This, in turn, gives a system of interrelated and interdependent functions, which exhibit a division of labour. In such a society solidarity, however, based on differences is called as organic, because it produces the kind of integration where each organ has its own specific function.

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