

SYM 101

Sociological Concepts

Unit : 04

**Topic : Social
System Part II**



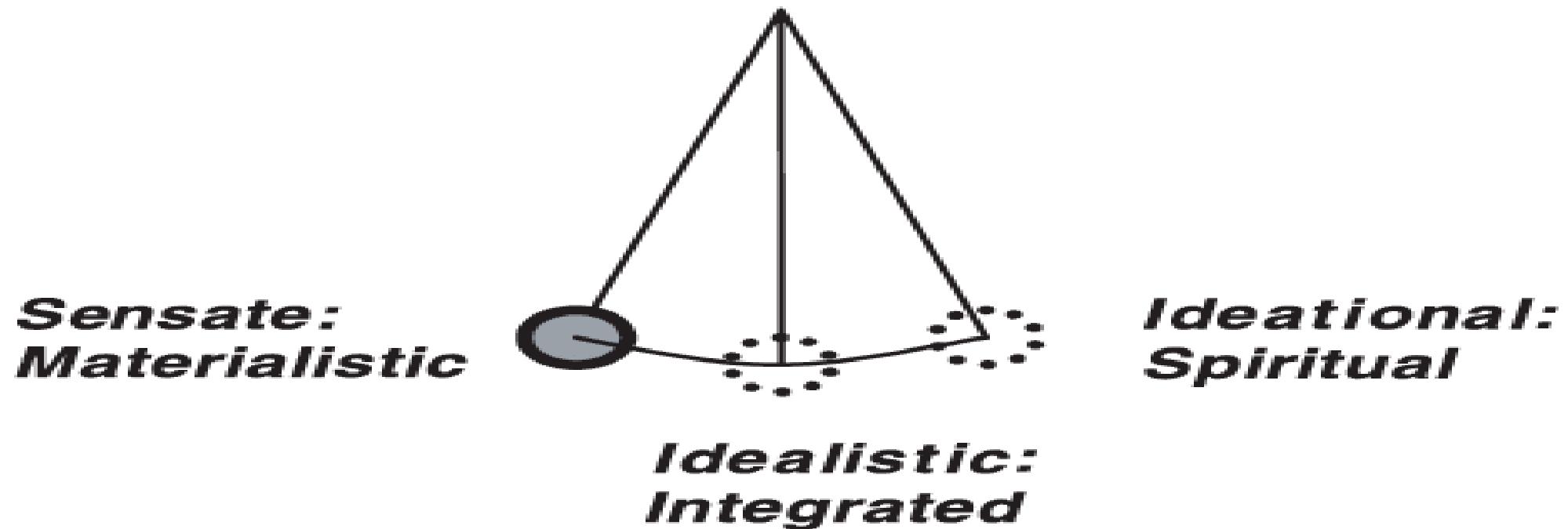
Content

- Pitrim Sorokin's Classification of Social System
- Functional Prerequisites of Social System
- Functions of Social System: AGIL Model of Talcott Parsons
- Mechanism of Social System

Sorokin's Understanding of Social System

- Pitirim Sorokin's idea of social systems involves understanding how societies change and evolve over time, focusing on the cyclical nature of societal development and the interplay between different cultural types. **He proposed a cyclical theory of social change, suggesting that societies move through different phases, including ideational, idealistic, and sensate stages.** Sorokin also emphasized the importance of social mobility, both vertical (movement between social strata) and horizontal (movement within the same social stratum), as a key element in understanding social change.

Sorokin's Idea of Social Systems



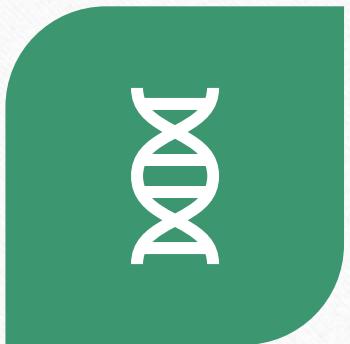
Sorokin's Idea of Social Systems

- Sorokin's most famous contribution is his theory of the three main types of dominant **cultural mentalities** that societies tend to oscillate between over long periods:
 - a) **Ideational Culture:** In this type, truth and reality are sought primarily through spiritual, religious, and metaphysical beliefs. Values are absolute, derived from transcendent sources, and emphasized over material concerns. Art, science, and ethics in an ideational society would reflect these spiritual orientations.
 - b) **Sensate Culture:** This mentality is characterized by a focus on empirical, sensory experience and material reality. Truth is what can be perceived and measured, and values are relative and utilitarian. Scientific inquiry is empirical, and art tends to be realistic and focused on the physical world. Sorokin believed Western civilization was in a late stage of sensate culture, leading to over-materialism and social disorganization.
 - c) **Idealistic Culture:** This is a synthesis or balance between the ideational and sensate. It combines elements of both, recognizing both spiritual and empirical truths, and striving for a harmonious integration of values, reason, and sensory experience. It's often a transitional phase between the other two extremes.

Sorokin's Idea of Social Systems

- Sorokin argued that societies don't progress in a straight line but rather experience a cyclical "pendulum swing" between these ideational and sensate mentalities, with idealistic phases acting as transitions. This is his theory of **sociocultural dynamics**.
- When a society reaches an extreme in one mentality (e.g., excessive materialism in a sensate culture), it experiences a crisis and eventually begins to shift towards the opposite mentality.
- This change is driven by an "immanent dynamic" within the system itself, as the prevailing mentality becomes exhausted or inadequate to address new challenges.
- The shift is not necessarily smooth or automatic; it can involve periods of social turmoil, conflict, and disorganization before a new dominant mentality emerges.

Prerequisites of Social System



**BIOLOGICAL
PREREQUISITES**



**FUNCTIONAL
PREREQUISITES**



**CULTURAL
PREREQUISITES**

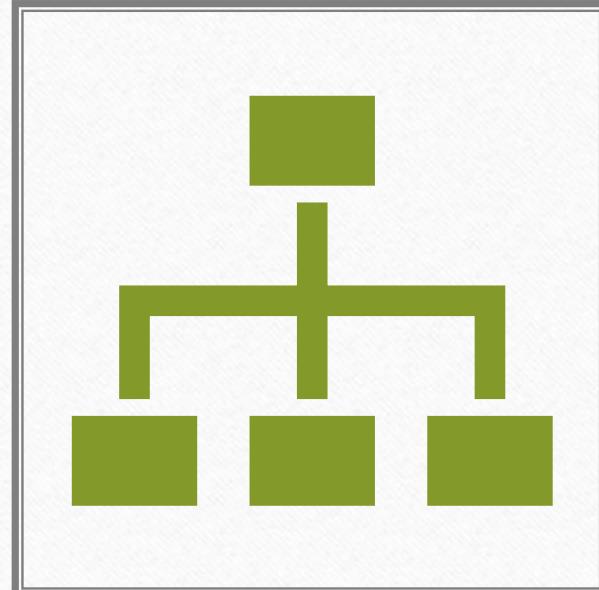
Biological Prerequisites

- (a) **Adequate number of people** (b) **A definite system of procreation**
- There should be enough people in a social system so that it may function efficiently. But the number should not be too much. Overpopulation is an evil. The number of people in a social system should be neither too less nor too many. Moreover, a social system should ensure a definite system of procreation to maintain its continuity. There should not be an exceedingly high death rate also.

Functional Prerequisites

Functional pre-requisites are those pre-requisites which are concerned with the functions of the members of the social system. These are:

(a) Obedience to social norms: Each social system has some norms of conduct. There can be no normless society. The norms are the socially approved ways of behaviour which the members of a social system are required to observe. If these are violated, social system cannot function efficiently.



(b) Mechanism of Social Control: Since some individuals in society violate its norms, therefore, it is essential that requisite mechanisms be provided whereby the individuals may be compelled to observe these norms and the social system may function in a satisfactory manner. The mechanisms of social control may be both formal and informal.

(c) Interest towards Positive Action: The actors should willingly accept the social system. They should have no resentment against it. They should evince keen interest towards positive action.

Cultural Pre- requisites

(a) Language- The members of a social system should possess a meaningful language to communicate and express themselves. Without language no social system can operate.

(b) Symbols: The symbols also have a significant place in social system. According to Piper. "A symbol is essentially a material object or process which stands for a meaning beyond bare sensation. It represents man's supplement to animal response and signals his entrance to the space less, transcendental world of meaning". A symbol is an object representing an invisible abstract and inaudible object. For example, God is represented by an idol, The lion represents bravery, the fox represents cunningness. The tribes, clans and nations adopt symbols which have importance in their individual and social life. The flag is a symbol of the nation. A leaf, a flower, an animal can become a symbol of a social system. A symbol must not be arbitrary but must be natural, i.e., it must convey as well as illuminate the idea.

(c) System of communication- Lastly, every social system should have a system of communication. Social interaction acts through communication. The means of communication may be language, script, gesture, symbols, telephone etc.

Functions of Social System

Social system is a functional arrangement. It would not exist if it were not so. Its functional character ensures social stability and continuity. Parsons has discussed in depth the functional character of society. Other sociologists such as Robert F. Bales too have discussed it.

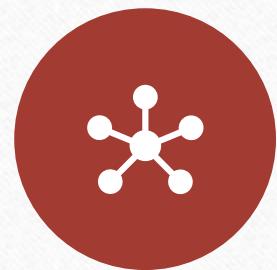
It is generally agreed that the social system has four primary functional problems to attend. These are conceived in **AGIL Model of Talcott Parsons**.



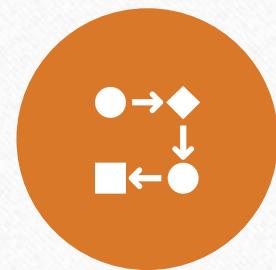
ADAPTATION



**GOAL
ATTAINMENT**



INTEGRATION



**LATENT-
PATTERN
MAINTENANCE**

AGIL MODEL

- **Adaptation:** This function refers to the system's ability to adjust to its external environment and secure the necessary resources for its survival. It involves coping with external challenges and ensuring the system can meet its basic needs.
- **Goal Attainment:** This function involves the system's capacity to define and achieve its primary goals and objectives. It's about setting collective aims and mobilizing resources to achieve them.

AGIL MODEL

- **Integration:** This function refers to the need to maintain solidarity, coordination, and cohesion among the different parts of the social system. It ensures that the various components of society work together harmoniously and that conflicts are managed effectively
- **Latent Pattern Maintenance:** This function, also known as “pattern maintenance” or latency, focuses on maintaining and transmitting the fundamental cultural patterns, values, and norms of the society to its members, especially to new generations. It deals with managing internal tensions and ensuring the continuity of the social system’s values and motivations.

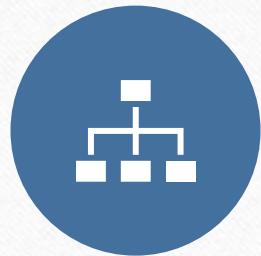
Mechanism of Social System



A social system is maintained by the various mechanisms of social control which maintain the equilibrium.



1. Socialization.



In brief, these mechanisms may be classified in the following categories:



2. Social control.

Socialization

It is process by which an individual is adjusted with the conventional pattern of social behaviour. A child by birth is neither social nor unsocial. But the process of socialization develops him into a functioning member of society. Individual actor adjusts oneself with the social situations conforming to social norms, values and standards.

Social Control

Like socialization, social control is also a system of measures by which society molds its members to conform with the approved pattern of social behaviour. According to Parsons, there are two types of elements which exist in every system. These are integrative and disintegrative and create obstacles in the advancement of integration.

Thankyou
