

bring **social change** in society.

For ex. An individual from 'lower middle class' emulates the 'norms and lifestyle' of middle class individuals and tries to enhance his status.

However, in '**relatively closed social structures**', reference group behaviour could be 'dysfunctional.' If an individual tries to emulate the 'norms and values' of 'non-membership group' it will lead to **negative attitude** since there is very less chance to be accepted by non-membership groups. This is so because social mobility is restricted. Because of 'anticipatory socialisation', and imitation of the values of a non-membership group, an individual would be disliked by the members of his/her own group. According to Merton, an individual would be reduced to being a '**marginal man**'. It may also lead to a state of '**social tension and conflict**.' Ex. In traditional Hindu caste society, emulation of 'lifestyle' of upper caste Hindus, by dalits.

Another 'dysfunction' of reference group behaviour, is when the nature of the reference group is of '**negative nature**'. Emulation of the norms, and attitudes and self appraisal, could be 'dysfunctional' for the individual. Ex. **deviant groups, criminal gangs**.

Thus, 'reference group' could be 'functional' and 'dysfunctional' for individuals. The 'choice and nature of the reference group' and the 'social structure' of which it is a part, determines its purpose. The 'functions' and 'dysfunctions' of reference group, is an important contribution to Robert K. Merton's 'functional analysis'.

1. (c) Specificity Vs Diffuseness:

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Approach:

- Description of 'pattern variables' as a conceptual tool, in understanding social reality
- Characteristics of 'specific - diffuse' pattern variables
- Examples 'specific diffuse' pattern of interaction
- Conclusion: Criticism of the concept of pattern variables

Answer:

Talcott Parsons' concept of '**pattern variables**' bridges the gap between his idea of 'social action' and 'social system'. Pattern variables, reflect the properties of all 'action systems'.

According to Parsons, 'pattern - variables', are the '**fundamental dilemmas** that face social actors in any situation.' These dilemmas emanate from strains with reference to an individual's preference within a range of orientations related to '**needs**' and '**values**.' Talcott Parsons, recognised '**five set of dilemmas**'. Though, these dilemmas are seen dichotomously, they are placed along a continuum. Each side of it, represents 'one polar extreme.'

Specificity versus diffuseness, is one of the five pattern variables, identified by Talcott Parsons. It refers to the '**scope of the object of role performance**'. Scope is to be understood in terms of the 'nature' of social interaction.