

Conceptualizing Social Structure: A Reorientative Discussion Based on Persistent Paradoxical Debates

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ABSTRACT Social structure is the most fundamental and major concept in Sociology and Social Anthropology and for that reason, the theorists have consistently argued that if we want to understand the social system and social relationship in human society, then certainly we have to be very clear about the concept of social structure without having any ambiguity of it. There are a myriad of definitional references on social structure with persistent paradoxical debates, which are clarified in this paper through the writings and enunciation of sociologists and social anthropologists with referential sequences of time. While the concept of social structure has received theoretical treatise through the writings of different scholars and theoreticians, many empiricists however, have narrated the concept from their own field-based ethnographic details at the micro-level investigations, viewing that all forms of social interactions and activities occur within the framework of social structure in the societal and community contexts. This paper thus generates a cumulative number of critical discussions both at the theoretical and empirical spheres of sociological literature stemming towards developing its own paradigmatic thinking of social structure.

INTRODUCTION

Sociologists have always identified 'social structure' as the most fundamental and major concept in Sociology and its theorists have consistently argued that if we want to understand the social system and social relationship in human society, then certainly we have to be very clear about the concept of social structure without having any ambiguity of it. Although in euphemistic explanation, it apparently seems that the term 'social structure' is very simple, as a matter of fact, to be very analytical, it remains very vast and is inclusive of many important components of society. In this context, the author fully endorses the views of Claude Levi-Strauss who says that, "it is hardly possible for a paper strictly limited in size to meet them fully to *understand the concept of social structure*" (1954: 524; italics are added by the author).

The concept of social structure has been used by many pioneering Western sociologists and forefathers of the discipline (for example, Ibn Khaldun 1967 orig 1789; Herbert Spencer 2003 orig 1893; Emile Durkheim 1893; Max Weber 1949; Karl Marx 1848, 1859)¹ who have conceptualized social interaction and social activities as part of indicating a social structure. Eventually, the con-

cept became very significant to the structural-functionalists and remained a dominant worldview in the sociological and anthropological literature of the twentieth century. Towards the end of the century, the concept was further modified by many post-structuralists to emphasize on human life modeled through a unilinear or monolithic organizing framework (see Scott 2006). The key contribution of the structural school developed by Claude Levi-Strauss was seeking it for social order in a cultural structure, which was later conceptualized by Talcott Parsons (1954), R.K. Merton (1949) and their followers in an analytic perspective to conceptualize social system (see Lopez and Scott 2000). Karl Marx, on the other hand, focused on the economic dimension of social structure based on the mode of production, relating it clearly to political power by having access to the means of production (see Marx 1848)².

Although Western sociologists emphasize on the importance of social structure in human society, the concept of social structure focuses on patterned social arrangements to form a complex relationship, from a holistic perspective to building a life relating to society. While looking at social structure from the occidental perspective, we do not usually conceptualize the mean-

ing of it as portrayed in many empirical situations. This paper therefore, is an attempt to analyze the conceptual clarification of the term 'social structure', from the socio-anthropological perspective, and then bringing forth a reflective view of it by using a contextual explanation.

Defining Social Structure: Conceptual Clarification and Terminological Explanation

When we define the concept of 'social structure', we at once relate it very closely to the issue of social relationship as it is an important component in society. Very often, some confusion between the concepts like 'social structure', 'social organization' and 'social relationship' emerges. When the relationship becomes formal, it tends to concentrate on social structure and the statuses of the actors in it, forming a kind of social relationship, which becomes an important part for constituting a social structure (see Bernard and Spencer 1996). The author does not have any intention here to differentiate these terms and concepts rather, the author, in this writing combines both of them to use them in a synonymous meaning.

The concept of social structure, as the author has indicated before, exhibits the characteristics of a social system, where social relationship revolves around a componential and institutional framework. It is a 'composite-whole', where all parts invariably work together, but certainly not isolated from each other (see Levi-Strauss 1953)³. Accordingly from that line of thinking, social structure has been defined by Ginsberg (1979: 92) "as the complex of various groups and institutions". Based on Ginsberg's definition, social structure may accomplish an institutional relationship between both of them. Most explicitly the concept social structure has been defined by A.R. Radcliffe-Brown, "as a kind of existing social relationship which maintains a link-up among human beings" (1952: 191). Similar to A.R. Radcliffe-Brown, John Scott (2006) defines 'social structure' as "recurring and enduring patterns that are found in social behavior and the various elements that make up any social system" (pp. 157-158). In this context, social structure encompasses the social arrangements of the society, a kind of social organization or social framework which is not disorganized or unsystematic; rather they are coherent.

Although there are myriad definitional references on social structure, we may prolong our discussion by clarifying the concept based on the views enunciated by social theorists with a referential sequence of time. In the 19th century, Lewis Henry Morgan has showed a relationship and interdependence of technology and family forms to demonstrate a structural arrangement between these two variables (see Morgan 1877). It is true that Morgan did not postulate any distinctive term of social structure as such, but he clearly indicated the co-existence and dependence of family and technology, which seemingly is the reflective of social structure. Intrinsically, Morgan was saying about a processual change of family structure through human stages of technological progression.

In the early twentieth century, the concept of social structure became quite popular in the ethnographic writings of the social anthropologists who focused on ordered arrangement of social organization (see Malinowski 1922; Radcliffe-Brown 1922). The same trend had continued in the decade following World War II when it became quite essential for the anthropologists to use the term social structure to make a holistic viewpoint of their ethnographic research. Although the required use of the term social structure by the sociologists and social anthropologists in the post-1945 was quite prominent, it has a chronological background requiring further explanation.

Among the sociologists, Herbert Spencer has been specially repudiated for using the term 'social structure' for the first time from the sociological perspective, but he was considerably fascinated by his biological analogies to show an organic structure of society, with stages of human evolution. After at least three decades later, Ferdinand Tonnies (1905) first had published a book entitled 'The Present Problems of Social Structure in the USA', where he propounded the constitution of multitudes of unity to form a social structure. Drawing on the same analogies between biological and social systems, Emile Durkheim also similarly conceptualized the idea of diverse social institutions to work for a functional integration of the society and it can clearly be viewed in his book, 'The Division of Labor in Society', which was originally published in the year 1893. In his writings, Durkheim insisted on the structural arrangement of the forms of society having shown a differential relationship

based on mechanical solidarity and organic solidarity. The former explains the structure that derives cohesion and integrity from the homogeneity of individuals that unites them for a shared culture and the latter is the manifestation of the differentiation to refer to a state of interdependence based on specialized roles in which individuals and institutions are dependent on a complex division of labour. This division of labour has also been brought into discussion by Karl Marx in his works to provide a comprehensive analysis of the social structure to relate it to the political, cultural and religious life with that of the mode of production (see Marx 1848, 1859). Karl Marx specifically differentiated between basic structure and superstructure based on the relations of production as constituting the 'economic structure' being the real force on which political and juridical superstructures are dependent. Max Weber, on the other hand, formulated a 'three dimension or multi-dimensional theory of social stratification' with class, status and party for analyzing market economy, bureaucracy and politics to relate them to the structural phenomena in any modern state (Gerth and Mills 2009). Many of these studies relating to social structure, nonetheless, over-emphasize on social institutions, culture and social interactions as part of defining the concept of social structure in a very concise manner. But, the concept has received more specific dealing with the issue in the later period from many sociologists and anthropologists with greater elaboration and analysis.

George Peter Murdock published a book specifically entitled, 'Social Structure' in the year 1949, based on the information reported on cross-cultural survey of 150 primitive and contemporary societies. It is perhaps unique in a sense as it gathered information on a wide range of societies focusing specifically on kinship and social organization, having described very analytically, from diachronic and synchronic perspectives (see Murdock 1949). As a matter of fact, Murdock's study has given a particular direction in talking about the social structure attracting anthropologists to look at it from an empirical view point. Although Murdock apparently used the term 'social structure' more specifically as the title of his book, he often arguably was in favour of replacing the word 'structure' with 'process' (see Sills 1968). By providing evidence of a huge number of societies from past and present, Murdock regarded society as an assemblage of inde-

pendent bricks, which contrasted him with A.R. Radcliffe-Brown, who had some inclination to presume that society should be compared with living organism.

As a matter of fact, it was A.R. Radcliffe-Brown who has drawn an emphatic precision in conceptualizing structuralism as the principal header for institutional functioning of the society. This eventually deviates him partially from Bronislaw Malinowski who emphasized on cultural functioning of society with rituals and performances having significant bearing on it. In this context, Radcliffe-Brown's idea of functioning of the society is based on taking a composite view of the social structure. Reflectively, there has been a number of anthropological research on political and kinship structures of African societies during the 1940s where a number of veteran anthropologists have shown the societal system as a set of procedure based on mutual interdependence of the rules that fit into their ecological setting (see Fortes and Evans Pritchard 1940; Evans Pritchard 1940). Firth (1963) differed from Radcliffe-Brown (1952) in this context, and as a matter of fact, viewpoints of Fortes and Evans-Pritchard, supported Malinowski's functionalism giving more emphasis on social organization in explaining social structure. While Radcliffe-Brown used the word 'social organization' in several places to denote social structure in a synonymous meaning, Firth, for many years has been using the term 'social organization' as the principal prerequisite to understanding what is happening in a particular society. Firth clearly mentioned social organization as a synonym for social structure (see Firth 1963, 1964).

There is another aspect in defining social structure which restrictively used the view of 'social role', and it has been advocated by S.F. Nadel in his book, 'The Theory of Social Structure' (1957) and H. Gerth and C.W. Mills (2009) in their writings. Nadel argues that, "we mention about the structure of a society by knowing the relationship obtained between actors in their capacity of playing roles relative to one another" (see Nadel 1957: 12). While talking about social structure, Gerth and Mills (2009: 22-23) also held a similar view saying that, "role is the key-term for defining institution which is the significant part for conceptualizing social structure". This view of Gerth and Mills tends to facilitate a kind of individualistic conception of social behaviour, unknowingly having an indirect incli-

nation towards symbolic interactionist perspective, which actually deemphasizes the behavioural interaction of individuals in groups.

As we have indicated that Radcliffe-Brown mainly identified the components of social institutions to define the concept of social structure, French structuralists view it to apply to other aspects of human experience. For example, Marcel Mauss, a French anthropologist, put forward his opinion saying that we have to understand society based on the two way relationship of individuals and economic reciprocity which is the significant issue for constructing social organization. As a matter of fact, the famous structuralist, Claude Levi-Strauss was much enchanted by Mauss's model of reciprocity (see James and Allen 1998). But Levi-Strauss also conceptualized his model of structuralist theory, being inspired through other sources. Ferdinand Saussure's idea of 'knowing about language as part of structure' is a significant point which emphasizes on understanding socio-structural relationship of individuals through grasping the language. During the early part of the twentieth century, Ferdinand de Saussure had produced a distinction between parole or language as acts of speech, and langue or language as a structural system (see Perry 2003).

Incidentally, it is worth mentioning here and evidentially it is learned that a famous linguist working on these issues prior to Saussure, was R. Jakobson at the New School for Social Research in New York, where Levi-Strauss was appointed in an academic position during the 1940s; and being positioned there, Levi-Strauss was subsequently influenced much by the ideas of Jakobson (see Jakobson 1971; Perry 2003). Being a colleague of his, Levi-Strauss had developed a personal acquaintance with Jakobson and from there, Levi-Strauss conceptualized the 'binary system of linguistic features' to be combined with the concept of reciprocity of Marcel Mauss (see Perry 2003).

Yet, Levi-Strauss had gained a profound influence through the writings of Karl Marx, whose idea of dialectical materialism seemed to be compatible with the binary opposition, following the thematic idea of dialectic which he borrowed from Hegel. In regard to contradictions, Levi-Strauss's structural model did not mention that revolutionary social change as propounded by Karl Marx could serve to maintain contradictory postulates (see Perry 2003). If we want to compare the views

of Levi-Strauss in regard to social structure with those of Radcliffe-Brown, we may note that according to the later, structure persists in a particular society is associated with a particular culture based on a specific geographical locality whereas, the underlying features of Levi-Strauss's version of culture are those which encompass multiple aspects of life; they do not persist only with the interrelationship of institutions (see Sills 1968).

While the concept of social structure has drawn interest through the theoretical writings of a number of sociologists since 1867, Herbert Spencer used the term for socio-structural explanation of his organic analogy, which continued to receive further empirical investigations in several African societies during the 1940s. Meanwhile, a different yet fascinating group of sociologists from Harvard school however, had shown interest in it, explaining the concept under a new title of 'institutional structure' (cf. Parsons 1967). Since the 1930s, Talcott Parsons along with Robert Merton (1968), Kingsley Davis and a few others, have diffused the idea of social structure in the form of normative function of the system in the institutional framework (see Lopez and Scott 2000). As a matter of fact, during the post-World War II period of the 1950s, there was an increasing economic boom in the United States, which required emphasizing the issue of social stability to match the institutions like economy, family and the political system in the country. In talking about the social system, Parsons (1945) argued that "the over-all system and sub-systems of which it is composed, work together to form a balanced, stable-whole and that the system naturally tends towards stability rather than moving towards disorder" (as cited in Levin 1991: 77). In continuation of it, Talcott Parsons further mentioned that "institutional pattern are the backbone of social system" (Parsons 1954: 239). The normative pattern in the institutional framework indicatively becomes the social structure in a functional subsystem of the social system.

As recently as the beginning of the 21st century, a few structuralist writers have directed us towards a different view of social structure, which was headed by Anthony Giddens (1984) and Piere Bourdieu (1977). Being influenced by a few linguists, both writers treated social structure as analogous to the grammatical structures of speech and language. Relating to a number of central concepts in Social Science, social struc-

ture was conceived by Anthony Giddens (1984) who combined the 'agency' in context to his 'theory of structuration'. Giddens's theory of structuration notes that social life is more than random individual acts, but it is not merely determined by social forces. Instead, Giddens suggests that human agency and social structure are in a relationship with each other, and it is the repetition of the acts of individual agents which reproduce the structure. This means that there is a social structure—traditions, institutions, moral codes and established ways of doing things—which can be changed when people start to ignore, replace or reproduce them differently.

Giddens gives an example of it by drawing an analogy with language when he says that although language only exists in those instances where we speak or write, people react strongly against others who disregard its rules and conventions. In a similar way, the 'rules' of social order may only be 'in our mental make-up' - they are not usually written down and often they do not have any formal force to back them up - but nevertheless, people can be shocked when seemingly minor social expectations are not adhered to. Therefore, Giddens mentioned that society only has form which eventually has effects on people; thus structure is always is produced and reproduced through people's interaction (Giddens 1996).

In his book, 'Outline of a Theory of Practice' (1977), Pierre Bourdieu's hermeneutic (relating to the whole) understanding of the way people read, understand, interpret and live their everyday lives amplifies an objective analysis of the structures which frame, limit, control and influence social life and link the objective with the subjective social spheres. Breaking down the traditional sociological dualism, he argues for complexity of peoples' activities as simultaneously shaping and being shaped by the social world. Bourdieu (1977) concludes that in the structure (the field), social relations are not reproduced in a vacuum, but as an outcome of power relations. The field of social relations refers to the areas of social life where strategies are used in the struggle for resources. Therefore, he views the relations between practice (what we do in our immediate environment) and the field (the larger parameters of power relations) as being intrinsically linked.

In the foregoing pages, the author has documented a few valuable authoritative views on

social structure as enunciated by sociologists, anthropologists and theoreticians of different era and phases. These discussions clearly formulate their explanations from an analytical viewpoint indicating as to how the concept of social structure has been defined and redefined by these theorists with several paradigmatic shifts in its definition. In the following section, the author relates the concept of social structure with that of specific socio-cultural situations and also at the same time, highlights the empiricists' viewpoints in this context with regard to their respective intensive micro-level investigations.⁴

SOCIAL STRUCTURE AS VIEWED THROUGH EMPIRICISM IN MICRO LEVEL INVESTIGATIONS

While the concept of social structure received theoretical treatise through the writings of different scholars and theoreticians, many empiricists narrated it from their field-based ethnographic experiences at the micro-level investigations. They viewed social structure as it is reflected in their own societal context and community perspectives. When we say that every society has its own social structure, it immediately contextualizes us to empiricism indicating about the multiplicity of existing societies with their diversities. In this section, the researcher deals with social structure in reference to such writings, where it has been treated ethnographically and also it has been described through empiricism.

The continued discussion begins here with A.R. Radcliffe-Brown's most convincing argument whereby he consistently employed the term 'social structure' specifically by giving the appropriate title to his book 'Structure and Function in Primitive Society', but also because Radcliffe-Brown always regarded the accessibility of structures and deals with it only empirically. Although Radcliffe-Brown has often been blamed for slipping very frequently in using the term 'social structure', it must be admitted that his book on 'Structure and Function' contains much discussion on social structure based on ethnographic examples and also at the same time, it specifically includes a special chapter on social structure. As we clarify the conceptual use of the term 'social organization' very often and synonymously used for the term 'social structure', it is essentially the same in the case of Radcliffe-

Brown, when he explained about the structural context of the Andaman Islanders in speaking about the social organization of that community (see Radcliffe-Brown 1922). To make a sequential treatment, we now refer to the work of Bronislaw Malinowski, who has been repudiated as a brilliant ethnographer in compiling his experiences in his publication 'Argonauts of the Western Pacific' (1922). It has given us a different example of inter-island trade, linking everyone in a network of relationship. Among the Trobrianders, a person who has been able to maintain more Kula partners overseas, can claim more status and prestige in the society. Each Kula expedition requires extensive social and ritual performances which are the functional part of the society within the structural framework.

We now turn our attention to Fortes and Evans-Pritchard's African Political System (1940) which included as many as eight condensed articles in the edited volume; each one of these articles is taken from their individually detailed ethnographic research relating to different segments of African societies conducted by a group eminent anthropologist during that period. The book specially discusses tribal communities like Zulu, Bantu, Tallensi and Nuer and by making intensive narratives on comparative political system that have prevailed in African societies. Fortes and Evans-Pritchard (1940) maintained that "there are innumerable ties which counteract towards political fission arising out of tensions and cleavages in the social structure" (1940: 17). Evans-Pritchard's solo work on the Nuer is a further description of the modes of livelihood and political institutions of a Nilotic group of people from Sudan. Nuer's social structure is inclusive of the political organization based on segmentary lineage system which is the social means of temporary unification of a fragmented tribal society to join in a network of relationship.

In this context, Edmund Leach's ethnography, 'Political Systems of Highland Burma' is a splendidly ornate example of the Kachin society and its social structure intensively described there in it. The book was published in the year 1954 and Leach was very thoughtful in analyzing an integrated Kachin way of life, their political system that focuses on social structure. Leach (1954) mentioned that "I hold that social structure in practical situations (as contrasted with the sociologists' abstract model) consists of a set of ideas about the distribution of power be-

tween persons and groups of persons". At this level he added, "We may discuss social structure simply in terms of the principles of organization that unite the component parts of the system where Kachin social organization is analysed in an ethnographic description of that community" (Leach 1954: 4). As a matter of fact, in the sub-heading of his ethnographic text, Leach clearly used the term 'social structure', to give special emphasis on it analyzing most intensively the practical situations of the Kachin political process, and thus thematically, dealt with the concept of social structure by providing his own critical insight of it by citing arguments of Mayer Fortes (1949) and Claude Levi-Strauss (1949). Leach explained the Kachin political system as a structure of persisting processual political categories and arguably showed the context of historical changes in the Kachin society. According to him, these changes are simply the reinterpretation of the existing political system; they are not actually changes in the structure of ideas.

In another ethnographic research on the !Kung San of Kalahari Desert in Botswana, Richard B. Lee (1963) provided a detailed account of their subsistence system. In explaining the ecology, group structure and nutritional part of life, Lee gathered most reliable data by remaining with them in three phases. His description gave us an idea about the flexible social organization of the !Kung society in regard to their sharing of food from egalitarian ethics, an important indication about their social structure. Raymond Firth conducted a study in the title of 'Malay Fisherman' to identify a peasant economy of the fishing community in Kelantan and Terengganu, two states in the east coast of Malaysia. The research however, did not specifically talk about the social structure or social organization as such, as it did not actually concentrate on any specific village community. But the economics of the fishing community have been dealt with in describing their way of life relating to fishing activities are crucial to understand the Malay social structure at the village level.

Victor Turner's (1967) work on aspects of the Ndembu ritual is an excellent description of this society where the majority of the local groups are found to be very much unstable with regard to their organizational principles but the organization itself remains persistent. While talking about symbols, Turner mentioned that their meaning must be derived from their relationship

with each other, and their significance lies with the Ndembu system as a whole formulating structure and composition of the groups. To say about symbols, social structure has been identified as the significant indicator for analyzing the Ndembu society. George Peter Murdock (1960) edited a book titled 'Social Structure of Southeast Asia', which is a compilation of a number of articles presented earlier in a symposium at the 9th Pacific Science Congress in Bangkok in 1957 with the financial support of Wenner-Gren. The book is a textual incorporation of a number of selective articles which aroused some special interest among the anthropologists related to social structure in the South East Asian context.

In describing about Malay peasants and leadership, S. Husin Ali (1975) studied a small territorial region comprising of three areas which were selected from three *mukim* (a higher tier of local government administration above the village level) of Malaysia. A rural life in Malaysia is very much based on a composite relationship to maintain social solidarity and kinship ties among the villagers though it often can be traced through their ancestor's genealogy. It becomes part of social structure and leadership in the villages due to having status and position within that social structure. Similarly, in the intensive ethnographic discussion on three Malay villages, social structure has also been considered as a significant issue for analyzing their life and living style (see Kuchiba et al. 1979).

In many empirical research, the terms 'social organization' and 'social structure' have frequently been used synonymously although from the conceptual point of view, they are not exactly the same yet are often truly indistinguishable. The main concern of these anthropologists is to provide the genealogical background and taxonomic classification of the societies on the basis of their institutional interplay for community solidarity. We will continue exploring this situation in further documentation of community studies in regard to South Asian societies dealing with social structure more intensively in the following section.

The issue of social structure has also been dealt with exactly in a very similar manner by these South Asianists, as it was done by their classic forerunners in the global context. One may avidly look at the situation in South Asian context and the author begins here by referring my readers to the work of Peter J. Bertocci, a

renowned anthropologist who had studied two villages in rural Bangladesh during the 1970s. Like many other ethnographers, Bertocci also studied social structure more specifically by putting specific emphasis on the title of his work (see Bertocci 1970). Bertocci observed that in rural Bangladesh, a group of rich landholders having greater access to the agrarian production system exercised greater power in the socio-structural context of the villages. Due to partible inheritance of Islamic law, "there appears to occur a regular rise and fall of families, the decline of wealth for some and the increase of it (wealth) for others" (Bertocci 1970: 43) He referred to this process as "cyclical Kulakism", and admitted that the change that occurred due to this cyclical change had some direct bearing on the social structure of the villages. In regard to micro-studies, S.C. Dube has published two important books in the context of Indian villages, where he spoke about the social structure to relate it to the development context. His analysis of social structure has been presented in a separate section of his book and his indication of the change that had occurred due to the impact of development programmes had direct influence on the villages' social structure (see Dube 1958: 138-140).

In a recent ethnographic work on rural power structure during 1990s, the author of this paper has documented the dynamics of two villages named Dhononjoypara and Gopalhati in the northern part of Bangladesh to examine the leadership pattern as exercised through the *samaj* (an informal village social organization) and government agencies for development programmes. The author examined most intensively the traditional and emerging political structures of the two villages where he has clearly mentioned that the villages' social organization was very much significant and part of the villages' social structure. In outlining the major concern of the research, it has been clearly mentioned in a statement in the book saying that, "the focus of this research is based on the village social structure, for it provides both traditional and formal patterns of leadership" (see Karim 1990: 15). Thus at this point, to conclude this section of the discussion, the author views that each researcher at the micro-level investigation seemed to have his own way of looking at the society based on its social structure. As a matter of fact, it links up with the main theme and provides intelligent analysis of the social structure and social organization.

CONCLUSION

In conceptualizing society from the sociological point of view, it must be kept in mind that the concept of social structure is componentially relevant for its formation, and from the societal context, it is also conceptually significant as well. Accordingly for that reason, sociologists from the very beginning have started some paradoxical debates and discussions on the concept of social structure by providing significant importance on it. Although a few sociologists and anthropologists often want to use a slightly different connotation for the term 'social structure', their discussions have not deviated from the principal thematic ideas. The socio-institutional components are the essential prerequisites for a society which provide the formation of a social structure and we find its reflection in the same way in our small communities at the micro-level as proven in the foregoing discussion. It is also useful to have a discussion with a few descriptions of some empirical studies based on in-depth narration of some specific cultures from the socio-anthropological perspective. We cannot disregard those micro-analytical studies if we want to understand social structure in general.

The preceding discussion clearly indicates that individuals from the very beginning have lived in communities with distinct and essential social institutions and various types of social organizations to interact in a group which has been designated as social structure. This view was clearly held by A.R.Radcliffe-Brown and others, though Raymond Firth and a few other sociologists designated it as a social organization that has a synonymous meaning to social structure. When social structure comprises the socio-behavioural roles of individuals in a society, and there exists an interactive-process of various groups and institutions, it is not always true to believe that it is constantly stable and well-integrated. It gets modified frequently and becomes flexible because of the changing dimension in the functional process of the society. For that reason, social structures of all societies do not always seem to be similar, nor do they remain static for all times and situations-From that perspective, it seems to be justified to say that sociologists often apply a comparative outlook in contextualizing the different types of social structures from different perspectives. T.B. Botto-

more's statement seems to be apposite here when he stated that each and every society has its own social structure which might be different from each other; on the other hand, several societies might have similar social structure. His statement clearly indicates a change in social structure; its dynamism and non-static nature which may occur due to processual function of social sub-system in an integrative framework.

NOTES

1. Although many of these classical sociologists did not however, use the term social structure specifically for their theoretical interpretations, a few of them clearly hinted on it by giving importance of social structure in their sociological analysis. To be specific we may mention here the name of Abdel Rahman Ibn-Khaldun, a Tunisian sociologist (1332-1476) who produced a corpus of works that had contained many ideas common to society and social structure (see Ritzer 1992).
2. Basically, Karl Marx propounded a theory of alienation rooted in social structure. According to him, it is the social structure which plays an important role of domination of a particular group having possessed the forces of production in the human society (see Karl Marx 1859, 1848, 1867; Ritzer 1992:57).
3. In explaining social structure, empiricist viewpoint is very significant and crucial. As a matter of fact, at the initial stage, Levi-Strauss himself was reluctant to use empirical viewpoint in regard to social structure when he mentioned, 'social structure has nothing to do with 'empirical reality' (see Levi-Strauss 1953). But later on, he fully left that viewpoint and emphasized on the importance of empiricism in explaining social structure (see Bottomore 1962:11)
4. In regard to functional pre-requisites of society, Bottomore (1962) mentioned five important components, which he borrowed from Aberle *et al.* (1950). These components are (1) a system of communication, (ii) an economic system, (iii) arrangements for socialization of new generations through family and education, (iv) a system of authority and power and (v) a system of rituals (for details see Bottomore 1962:115-116). One sociologist (e.g. Schaefer 2009) regarded these components as the most 'predictable' elements of human social relationships making up a social structure and the individuals are socialized through them in a life-long process.

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