4. METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, I propose to expound the methodological principles which have governed my research. At this juncture, I think that it will be fit to distinguish between methodology and method. While methodology is the analysis of how research should as does proceed, and an examination of how theories are generated, methods or techniques of research are actual techniques or procedures used to gather and analyse data related to some research question or hypothesis. Methodology is thus the sum total of philosophical principles governing choice of techniques of research. Method implies the technique of research.

Methodology and method are often closely related. For example, a researcher following the Verstehen methodological principles expounded by Max Weber has to follow the participant observation method. Otherwise, he cannot empathetically observe social action.

(1) Philosophy of Research

The methodology which I intend to follow is a variant of Positivist methodology. Positivism believes that there can be a natural scientific study of people and society, the doctrine known as ‘unity of scientific method’. Sociologism is a variant of Positivism. It is a synthesis of positivist methodology with a particular set of substantive theories termed “agelecism” by Smullyan. Agelecism is ‘the general sociological doctrine which maintains the reality sui generis or the casual priority of the social group qua group’.

Durkheim was one of the earliest sociologists whose theories are identified with sociologism. I propose to follow the methodological principles.

(2) The Rules of Sociological Method

Before me proceed further, let us briefly review Durkheim’s methodology. According to Kultygin, Durkheim was the key figure in the institutional period of French sociology. French sociologists in this period used specific sociological methods procedures and put into practice an exclusively sociological approach in the analysis of sociological phenomenal which had acquired classical status.
Emile Durkheim’s ‘The Rules of Sociological Method’ is a seminal contribution to Sociological Methodology. In this book, Durkheim gives a step by step approach to sociological research. Let us first discuss his methodology in brief:

Durkheim regards Sociology as the study of social facts. Social facts have very distinctive characteristics. According to Durkheim, Social facts consists of ‘ways of acting, thinking and feeling, external to the individual and endowed with a power of coercion, by reason of which they control him’⁵.

Durkheim’s theory of social facts may be discussed under the following heads:

i) Rules for the observation of social facts
ii) Rules for distinguishing the normal from the pathological.
iii) Rules relating to the classification of social types.
iv) Rules for explanation of social facts.
v) Rules relating to the establishment of proofs.

Let us now discuss his theory in brief:

(i) Rules for Observing Social Facts

Let us begin our discussion with an analysis of the rules for the observations of social facts. Durkheim’s first and fundamental rule is:

‘Consider social facts as things’⁶. Before having any scientific idea about any social phenomena, we develop our commonsensical notions about these phenomena. This is because reflection comes before science. It is very difficult to discard these notions, because social things are actualized only through men. They are a product of human activity. Yet, we must separate social phenomena from the conscious things which they represent. Only then will scientific objectivity be possible.

The first of these corollaries is: All preconceptions must be systematically avoided.

But this rule is entirely negative. It does not teach the sociologist to avoid the dominance of popular notions and to turn his attention towards facts. For this reason, Durkheim advocates a formal definition of a social fact based on certain external characteristics. All phenomena, which fit into this definition, must be included.
ii) Rules for distinguishing the normal from the pathological:

Durkheim distinguishes between ‘facts which are as they should be’ and ‘facts which ought to be something other than what they are’. In other words, he spoke of the necessity of distinguishing the normal from the pathological.

Normal social facts are those which appear in the most general forms. The others we may call morbid or pathological. Durkheim, however, observes that whether a social fact is normal or not depends on the precise phase of development of a social species. In other words, he gave a developmental model of normal/pathological social facts.

iii) Rules relating to classification of social types:

Every science is based on classification, and typology. Durkheim observes that a scientific method of classification must, above all, ‘facilitate scientific work by substituting as limited number of types for the indefinite multiplicity of individuals’\(^7\). The basis of Durkheim’s classification is ‘simplicity’ by which he means ‘a complete absence of parts’\(^8\). Corresponds to this the ‘horde’ definition, it is a social aggregate which does not, and has never included within itself any other elementary aggregate but is directly composed of individuals\(^9\). Durkheim arrives at this conclusion by studying clans, which are social aggregates which cannot be reduced to a narrower one. Durkheim proposed to classify societies according to the degree of organization they present taking as a basis the perfectly simple society.

iv) Rules for Explanation of Social Facts:

Having established rules of classification of social facts, Durkheim now seeks to establish rules for explaining social facts. In this connection, he distinguishes between the efficient cause which produces it and the function it fulfils\(^10\).

*Durkheim* thus distinguishes between causal and functional analysis. Both methods of analysis should go hand in hand. We must seek the explanation of social life within society itself.

Durkheim argued against psychological explanation of social facts. ‘The determining causes of a social fact should be sought among social facts preceding it and not among the states of individual consciousness’\(^11\). The sociologists must abandon psychological explanations and arrive at the heart of social facts. *Durkheim* was an
advocate of unicausality. That is why he argued that a given ‘effect has always a single corresponding cause’\textsuperscript{12}. Durkheim argued that the function of a social fact must be sought in relation to some end. He thus argued for a teleological explanation of social facts. But his argument that functional explanation should be made in relation to some social end which is a teleological one. Such arguments have been severely criticized. Turner rightly observed that ‘despite Durkheim’s warnings about illegitimate teleology, he often appears to waver on the brink of the very traps he wished to avoid’\textsuperscript{12}. We should take lessous from Durkheim and avoid illegitimate teleology.

v) Rules for the Establishment of Proofs:

All sciences must establish relationships between variables and prove these relationships. If sociology is to be a science, it too must establish relationships between variables and prove that these relationships exist.

In his System of Logic, John Stuart Mill dwelt extensively on the various methods of inductive analysis. In chapter VI of The Rules of Sociological Method, Durkheim makes an expensive study of John Stuart Mill’s classic treatise on the subject. Durkheim rightly argues that ‘social phenomena are much too complex for the effect of one or all the causes, excepting one, to be removed in a given case’\textsuperscript{14}. On this ground, he dismisses the probability of using the methods of agreement, difference, joint methods of agreement and difference, joint method of agreement and difference and the method of residues as methods of proof in Sociology.

With regard to the method of Concomitant Variations, Durkheim argues that ‘it is not necessary that all the variables differing from those which we have been comparing shall have been strictly excluded. The mere parallelism of the series of values presented by the phenomena, provided that it has been established in a sufficient number and variety of cases, is proof that a relationship exists between them. Its validity is due to the fact that the concomitant variations display the causal relationship, not by coincidence, as the preceding ones do, but intrinsically\textsuperscript{15}. So, concomitant variations may be regarded, after Durkheim, as the method of proof in sociology.

My method of study is based on Durkheim’s methodology. In the following pages I will discuss the method or technique of research which I have followed.
References:
1. Norman Blaikie: Approaches to social Enquiry, P-13
2. Blaikie, loc. cit. P-13
8. Ibid, p-82.
10. Ibid, p-84.
12. Ibid, p-128.
15. Ibid, p-130.