

Revision Notes
Chapter 9
Introducing Western Sociologists

- Three major social processes developed the intellectual ideas and materialistic aspects that went into the making of sociology as a discipline. These social processes were:
 - The age of reason or enlightenment
 - The French revolution
 - The scientific or industrial revolution
- The modern era in Europe and the conditions of modernity that we take for granted today were brought about by these three major processes.
- The ideas of the classical thinkers like Marx, Weber and Durkheim about society were influenced by social conditions of the three processes that helped sociology to emerge.
- Emergence of radically new ways of thinking about the world made it felt necessary to displace nature, religion and the divine acts of gods from the central position they had in earlier ways of understanding the world.
- It helped to develop attitudes of mind that is referred to as secular, scientific and humanistic.

The Age of Enlightenment

- The age of enlightenment is important in the development of sociology because it helped in establishing human being, the subject matter of sociology at the centre of the universe.
- It established the ability to think rationally and critically and that transformed humans into both the producer and the user of all knowledge.
- This was the era when society was considered as the handiwork of humans and thus amenable to rational analysis.

The French Revolution

- The French Revolution introduced political sovereignty at the level of individuals as well as nation states.
- Questioning the legitimacy of privileges inherited by birth was made possible due to



declaration of human rights.

- Emancipation of individuals from the oppressive rule of religious and feudal institutions became possible due to political sovereignty.
- Every citizen was given equal rights before the law and other institutions of the state.
- Separated the private realm from the public sphere and state had to respect individual autonomy without intruding it.
- Ideas like liberty, equality and fraternity became the watchwords of the modern states.
- The conditions of modernity brought by the French Revolution thus laid the ground for sociology to study the new social phenomena.

The Industrial Revolution

- The industrial revolution laid down numerous conditions that were responsible for the rise of sociology as a discipline.
- Sociological thought was concerned with the scientific analysis of developments in industrial society, the foundations of which was laid down by the industrial revolution.
- Scientific discussion about trends in social behaviour became possible with evolution of new phenomena such as large scale organisation of markets and labours.
- Changes in the productions process due to large scale industries brought major changes in social life in terms of settlement, hazardous circumstances of working, unequal distributions of population, etc.
- These demanded new forms of knowledge to be generated to reflect on the social problems. Sociological theories are the result of this self-reflection about society.

KARL MARX AND THEORY OF CLASS STRUGGLE

- Karl Marx as a social thinker advocated an end to oppression and exploitation.
- According to him, the progression of human society occurred through different stages development.
- Every society moves from one stage to another, i.e. Primitive, Communism, Slavery, Feudalism, Capitalism.
- The theory of class struggle according to Karl Marx was a process of bringing change in the capitalist society.
- Capitalism though oppressive and exploitative created preconditions for an egalitarian future of society.
- Classes in society are formed through historical processes shaped by transformations in the



conditions of the production process and relation of existing class to it.

- Changes in the mode of production (the production technology and the social relations of production) develops conflicts between different classes which results in struggles. This leads to conflict between the already existing classes.
- The conflict between different class leads to class struggle that becomes the major driving force of change in society.
- In each era, a particular kind of class struggle evolved between the oppressor and oppressed classes.
- However, the class struggle only develops when class consciousness develops amongst group members leading to conflict.
- Such struggle finally becomes a revolution when the whole group of oppressed class joins in the struggle and finally overthrowing the old ruling class and formation of a new class.

EMILE DURKHEIM AND DIVISION OF LABOUR

- Durkheim was the first professor of sociology and hence, known as the founder of sociology as a formal discipline.
- Society for him was a social fact that existed as a moral community over and above the individual.
- Social ties that bound people in groups are crucial to the existence of society as these exert pressure on individuals to conform to norms and expectations of groups.
- Durkheim's vision of sociology was characterised by two defining features:
 - The subject matter of sociology that is social facts
 - Sociology can be defined as an empirical discipline as the social facts can be empirically
- Social facts are the level of complex collective life where social phenomena/social fact can emerge like in the social institutions of religion or the family.
- Social facts are social values like friendship or patriotism that exist in the larger society.
- Individuals functions according to these social facts.
- Sociology can be termed as an empirical discipline as the subject matter of sociology that is social facts is observable and can be empirically tested and verified.
- As individuals follow social facts, their behaviour become regulated and patterned. The social facts are external to individuals however these constrain human



behaviour. Hence, social facts are indirectly observable through behavioural patterns of individuals who are part of society.

- According to Durkheim, modern society can be characterised by the following features:
 - Individuals with similar goals come together voluntarily and form associations or groups.
 - Individuals might belong to various such groups and thus have many different identities.

MAJOR WORKS OF MAX WEBER

- Weber developed an interpretative sociology of social action and of power and domination.
- According to Weber, the process of rationalisation in modern society has relationship of the various religions of the world.
- Weber suggested that human actions carry subjective meaning and to study these, sociologists need to constantly practice 'empathetic understanding' to be objective.
- Weber used the ideal type to illustrate the three types of authority that he defined as traditional, charismatic and rational-legal.
- While the source of traditional authority was custom and precedence, charismatic authority derived from divine sources or the 'gift of grace', and rational-legal authority was based on legal demarcation of authority that is inherent in the bureaucracy of modern times.

Bureaucracy

Bureaucracy is a mode of organisation which was premised on the separation of the public from the private (domestic) world. This means the behaviour in the public domain was regulated by explicit rules and regulations.

As a public institution, bureaucracy restricted the power of the officials in regard to their responsibilities and did not provide absolute power to them.

Characteristic features of bureaucratic authority

1. Functioning of Officials
2. Hierarchical Ordering of Positions

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3. Reliance on Written Document
 4. Office Management
 5. Conduct in Office

Functioning of Officials

- Within the bureaucracy officials have fixed areas of 'official jurisdiction' governed by rules, laws and administrative regulations.
- The regular activities of the bureaucratic organisation are distributed in a fixed way as official duties.
- As duties are to be fulfilled on a regular basis, only those who have the requisite qualifications to perform them are employed.
- Official positions in a bureaucracy are independent of the incumbent as they continue beyond the tenure of any occupant.

Hierarchical Ordering of Positions

- Authority and office are placed on a graded hierarchy where the higher officials supervise the lower ones.
- Hierarchical ordering of position allows scope of appeal to a higher official in case of dissatisfaction with the decisions of lower officials.

Reliance on Written Document

- The management of a bureaucratic organisation is carried out on the basis of written documents (the files) which are preserved as records.

Office Management

- As office management is a specialised and modern activity it requires trained and skilled personnel to conduct operations.

Conduct in Office

- As official activity demands the full time attention of officials irrespective of her/his delimited hours in office, hence an official's conduct in office is governed by exhaustive rules and regulations.
- These rules and regulations have legal recognition, officials can be held accountable

