

# Emergence of Sociology: The 3 Great Revolutions



## LECTURE 3

# History of Sociology



- How old is Sociology? : Just 200 years old
- Newer streams of thought do not occur in vacuum.
- Several **social forces** create conditions for emergence of a discipline – Political, Economic and Intellectual
- Social forces – can be material but also ideological.
- Three important social forces that shaped the emergence of sociology:
  - The Enlightenment
  - The French Revolution
  - The Industrial Revolution
- Together they created: ‘The Great Transformation’ (Karl Polyani, 1944 ) as they led to creation of new ideas about ‘Man’, ‘Society’ and ‘Nature’

# The Age of Enlightenment



Source: Joseph Wright of Derby, *A Philosopher Giving A Lecture at the Orrery*, c. 1765, oil on canvas, 147 x 203 cm (Derby Museum and Art Gallery, Derby, England)



- Enlightenment- Critical event in the development of Sociology (1685-1815). Period of remarkable intellectual development.
- Human being have always been interested in the source of their behaviour.
- Traditionally all ideas were explained in religious terms or through myths and superstition. The Catholic Church determined the principles of nature.
- However, in 16<sup>th</sup> century, many scientific discoveries challenged church supremacy.
- Copernicus model of Heliocentrism – Challenged the traditional Church propagated belief around Geocentrism ; Galileo's Telescope established it ; Newton's Law of gravity proved it (Church had to accept it)
- Common people started questioning Church and thus began the age of Enlightenment.
- Largely the work of French and British Philosophers – Locke, Rousseau, Voltaire, Montesquieu



- Central idea: Use and celebration of **Rationality / Reason**. German philosopher Immanuel Kant summed : “Dare to know! Have courage to use your own reason!”
- This was a period of optimism – of a belief that science and reason could make society and human condition better- **Progress, knowledge, freedom, and happiness.**
- Enlightenment era marked a Shift in thinking from Religion to Science. Belief in ‘**Deism**’ – God exists but he leaves it up to mankind to make their own path in life - So can human beings devise best ways to live?
- Early Sociologists were deeply influenced by this idea. They wanted to combine empirical research (scientific) with reason – wanted this kind of research to address social issues.
- Early founders of Sociology like August Comte , Herbert Spencer and Emile Durkhiem shared this idea of enlightenment that society can be improved if we have a ‘science of society’



- Sociology also grew out of negative reaction to Enlightenment.
- For some early conservative thinkers , like Louis De Bonald and Joseph de Maistre were deeply religious also.
- For them, God created the world, He is supreme and reason (which is human) is inferior to Religion.
- Gave primacy to society over individualism
- Emphasized not altering traditional institutions: Patriarchy, Monogamous family, Monarchy, Church
- Even in this conservative view, they added value to study of society by emphasizing the “irrational” aspects of social life.
- They looked upon Religion, Emotionalism and tradition as “necessary components of social life” – emphasis on “social order” – very relevant for sociologists
- Sociology’s belief in Scientific study of Society can be linked back to this period.

# The French Revolution



Source: Eugene Delacroix. Liberty Leading The People, 1830. Louvre Museum, public domain.



- Period of radical social and political upheaval in France from 1789-1799
- Posed Challenge to the existing traditional order – 3 estate Feudal system – Clergy (1<sup>st</sup> estate) , Aristocrats (2<sup>nd</sup> estate) and peasants, merchants, lawyers, artisans and industrial workers (3<sup>rd</sup> estate)
- Theory of Divine right of the King – God's mandation of political legitimacy of a monarchy. Belief that events and organization of society was result of God's will and therefore should not be questioned.
- First 2 estates constituted less than 1% of population but reaped all benefits, estate 3- laboured + tax burdened
- At the same time French Philosophers propagated ideas of liberty and Equality.
- Montesquieu rejected the theory of the Divine Right of Kings and urged for separation of powers- Secularism (Religion and Politics separate) ; Rousseau, in his book 'Social Contract', announced that sovereign power lay in popular will.
- 3<sup>rd</sup> estate , full of resentment was influenced by these ideas.





- Immediate factor that led to revolution: France went through immense economic challenge under wars – Bankrupt government under Louis XVI and his wife Queen Marie Antoinette
- Aristocracy proposed to further increase Taxes
- Meeting of Estates-General was called – Estate 3 demanded for change in voting patterns but it was denied and they walked out of the meeting
- A few weeks later, the third estate declared themselves to be the National Assembly and August 1789 presented Declaration of rights of Man- “Men are born and remain free and are equal in rights.”.
- Uprising led by food shortages, extreme poverty of masses and not just enlightenment ideas of freedom and liberty.
- All this turmoil culminated into Formation of constitution (1791) marked the End of Monarchy and move towards Democracy – Period of immense political turmoil – complete anarchy and disorder.
- In this context of disorder, sociology emerged .

# Impact of Enlightenment and French Revolution

## Sociology's Emphasis on Social Order and Scientific Method



- **August Comte** – Father of sociology proposed sociology (1838) in this climate of disorder.
- He believed that study of sociology should be ‘scientific’
- Greatly disturbed by the anarchy created through enlightenment and French Revolution, he developed the scientific view of ‘**positivism**’ - Applying natural science methodology to study social phenomenon.
- First referred to sociology as ‘Social Physics’
- Sociology to study both **Social Statics** and **Social Dynamics**
- He proposed the **law of 3 stages**:- Human societies progress through the following 3 stages
  - Theological (-1300)– Dominated by Religion (Gods, Spirits, Demons)
  - Metaphysical (1300-1800)– Dominated by Abstract forces- Nature
  - Positive (1800-) – Dominated by Science
- His main argument was social universe is amenable to development of abstract laws that can be tested through careful collection of data.

# The Industrial Revolution



Source: Alexander Stanhope Forbes, The Munitions Girls, 1918, Wellcome Collection, United Kingdom



- Industrial revolution was another major contributing factor behind emergence of sociology.
- Started in Britain in late 1750s and continued post 1800s spreading to other parts of the world.
- Industrial revolution – not a single event but many interrelated developments that culminated in the transformation of western world from agrarian system to industrial one.
- It refers to a broad set of social and economic transformations brought about by newer technological innovations like steam engine and machinery.



- Major impacts the industrial revolution created was:
  - Shift from land to industry for livelihood
  - Technologically driven factories – assembly line mode of production
  - Emergence of large bureaucracies to manage industries
  - Emergence of Capitalism with the idea of a free market place
    - Newer forms of relationships – notion of ‘free labour’
    - Within this system few profited, rest exploited with longer working hours
    - Reaction against this started – Labour Movements
  - Massive **Urbanization**



- Rate at which Urbanization happened:

City	1800	1900
London	900,000	4.7 Million
Paris	600,000	3.6 Million
Berlin	170,000	2.7 Million

- This mass exodus of people to cities changed the face of social world and posed several challenges:
  - Poor living conditions and lack of sanitation and drinking water
  - Child labour, poverty, increased diseases
  - Longer working hours, insufficient wages
  - Overcrowding, pollution, noise, traffic
- Cities and Social Problems became synonymous during industrialization

# Impact of Industrial Revolution on Sociology

- The upheaval and multiple social challenges that Industrial Revolution threw for society was of great interest to the first generation sociologist- Karl Marx, Max Weber, Emile Durkheim, George Simmel.
- First major school of American Sociology- Chicago School – interested in Cities as ‘Urban Laboratories’ (Louis Wirth, Robert E. Park, Ernest W. Burgess)
- Focus on ‘Social Engineering’ – To reform cities

