

Sociological thoughts: chapter-1 (course content- the emergence of sociology: the French Revolution Industrial revolution), B.A (H) part 1st paper- 2 Sociology (lecture1 and 2)

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Background to the Emergence of Sociology:

To understand the emergence of sociology in Europe we need to appreciate the relationship between society and ideas. There is always a connection between the social conditions of a period and the ideas, which arise and are dominant in that period.

For an example, let us remind of the National Movement in our country. When India was under the British Raj, they had to suffer all the ills of colonialism. Indians were economically exploited, politically bonded, socially humiliated, and culturally bereft. At the same time, the Indian middleclass emerged as a product of the economic policies of colonialism. They had also been exposed to the **liberal** and radical European social thought. They were therefore disturbed by the exploitation of colonialism and started writing, campaigning and building up a movement to free India. Culture, theatre, songs, literature were pervaded by the spirit of freedom. Premchand's novel *Karma Bhumi*, which was serialized on television in the 1980s, depicts the changes of that time. You can thus see that ideas are normally rooted in their social context. It is in this context that we need to see the emergence of sociology as a discipline. Let us begin with a discussion of the Enlightenment period.

The roots of the ideas developed by the early sociologists are grounded in the social conditions that prevailed in Europe. The emergence of sociology as a scientific discipline can be traced to that period of European history, which saw such tremendous social, political and economic changes as embodied in the French Revolution and the Industrial Revolution. This period of Change in European society is known as the Enlightenment Period as it embodies the spirit of new awakening in the French philosophers of the eighteenth century.

French Revolution:

The French Revolution, which erupted in 1789 marked a turning point in the history of human struggle for freedom and equality. It put an end to the age of feudalism and ushered in a new order of society. An outline of this revolution will explain to you the kind of turmoil that occurred in Europe. This revolution brought about far reaching changes in not only reach society but in societies throughout Europe. Even countries in other continents such as, India, were influenced by the ideas generated during this revolution. Ideas like liberty, fraternity and equality, which now form a part of the preamble to the Constitution of India, owe their origin to the French Revolution. Let us first examine some of the major aspects of this revolution.

The French society was divided into feudal '**estates**'. The structure of the feudal French society comprised the 'Three Estates'. Estates are defined as a system of stratification found in feudal European societies whereby one section or estate is distinguished from the other in terms of status, privileges and restrictions accorded to that estate.

a) **The First Estate** consisted of the clergy, which was stratified into higher clergy, such as the cardinal, the archbishops, the bishops and the abbots. They lived a life of luxury and gave very little attention to religion. In fact, some of them preferred the life of politics to religion.

They spent much of their time in wasteful activities like drinking, gambling, etc. In comparison to the higher clergy, the lower parish priests were over worked and poverty-stricken.

b) **The Second Estate** consisted of the nobility. There were two kinds of nobles, the nobles of the sword and the nobles of the robe. The nobles of the sword were big landlords. They were the protectors of the people in principle but in reality they led a life of a parasite,

Living off the hard work of the peasants. They led the life of pomp and show and were nothing more than 'high born wastrels'; that is, they spent extravagantly and did not work themselves.

They can be compared to the erstwhile zamindars in India.