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## **UNIT 1 EMERGENCE OF SOCIOLOGY IN EUROPE**

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## 1.0 OBJECTIVES

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This unit deals with the emergence of sociology in Europe. After studying this unit, you should be able to

- outline the background to the emergence of sociology
- describe the social conditions prevailing in Europe from the fourteenth to approximately eighteenth century
- list the main features of the French and the Industrial Revolution and
- define the main intellectual trends of that period which influenced the emergence of sociology.

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## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

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This is the first unit of Block 1 of ESO-13 on “Sociological Thought”. This Unit will trace the relationship between the emergence of sociology and the social and intellectual conditions of eighteenth and nineteenth century Europe. This we will do because sociology, the subject that we study today, emerged first in Europe. Sociology can in this sense be studied as a response to the social and intellectual climate prevailing in Europe of that time. A proper understanding of this linkage will help you better appreciate the ideas of the Founding Fathers. These ideas you will study in the units that will follow the first unit.

Section 1.2 of the first unit describes the background to the emergence of sociology. To explain the social, cultural, political and economic conditions of Europe before the emergence of sociology, we give briefly in Section 1.3 an account of the Commercial Revolutions and the Scientific Revolution which took place in Europe from about fourteenth century to the eighteenth century.

We will then discuss in sections 1.4 and 1.5 two salient events of the period, the French Revolution and the Industrial Revolution. They followed the Commercial Revolution and the Scientific Revolution in Europe, and left a lasting impact on the main themes of sociology.

You will learn in section 1.6 how different intellectual theories, the **Enlightenment** onwards, affected the growth of sociology.

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## 1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE EMERGENCE OF SOCIOLOGY

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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.

To give you an example, let us remind you of the National Movement in our country. When India was under the British Raj, she had to suffer all

the ills of colonialism. Indians were economically exploited, politically bonded, socially humiliated, 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.

### 1.2.1 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.

The Enlightenment Period marked a radical change from the traditional thinking of **feudal** Europe. It introduced the new way of thinking and looking at reality. Individuals started questioning each and every aspect of life and nothing was considered sacrosanct - from the church to the state to the authority of the monarch and so on.

The roots of the ideas, such as the belief that both nature and society can be studied scientifically, that human beings are essentially rational and that a society built on rational principles will make human beings realize their infinite potentials, can be traced in the development of science and commerce in Europe. The new outlook developed as a result of the Commercial Revolution and the Scientific Revolution and crystallised during the French and the Industrial Revolutions gave birth to sociology as a discipline.

To understand the social changes that were taking place in European society, we will first look at the kind of society that existed in traditional Europe, i.e. prior to the Enlightenment period.

### 1.2.2 Structure and Change in European Society

Old Europe was traditional. Land was central to its economic system. There were owners of land, the feudal lords and the peasants who worked on the lands. The classes were distinct and clearly demarcated. Religion formed the corner stone of society. The religious heads decided what was moral, what was not. Family and kinship were central to the lives of the people. Monarchy was firmly rooted in society. The king was believed to be divinely ordained to rule over his people.

The New Europe ushered in by the two Revolutions, the French and the industrial, challenged each and every central feature of old Europe. Classes

were recognised. Old classes were overthrown. New classes arose. Religion was questioned. Religion lost its important position. Family loyalties gave way to ideological commitments. The position of women changed. And finally monarchy was overthrown. **Democracy** was heralded in.

The central concepts of society, namely, religion, community, power, wealth, etc. were all taking on new bearings and new implications.

The contrast between present and past seemed stark. For the aristocrat, threatened with the loss of life and property the present was terrifying. For the peasant, the present was intoxicating as it offered new opportunities and powers.

Thus, you can see that everybody was affected. Since the significance of the changes that were taking place in Europe cannot be overestimated, it is better that you study about them in greater detail in the next section.

**Check Your Progress I**

i) Mention two features of the old European society. Use about two lines.

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ii) Fill in the blanks in the following sentences.

- a) The Indian Middle Classes had been exposed to the ..... and ..... European social thought during the Freedom struggle.
- b) .....was central to the economic system of old Europe.
- c) The ..... Europe ushered in by the French Revolution and the Industrial Revolution challenged each and every .....feature of old Europe.

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### **1.3 THE SOCIAL CONDITIONS IN WHICH SOCIOLOGY EMERGED**

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Sociology emerged as a distinct science in nineteenth century Europe. Europe then was passing through a period of immense changes which had set in with the French and the Industrial Revolutions. Indeed, sociology can be considered above all a science of the new industrial society.

But before we go on to describe the salient points of the French Revolution and the Industrial Revolution we will explain to you the Commercial Revolution and the Scientific Revolution which took place in Europe between the fourteenth century and the eighteenth century. It was during these two Revolutions in Europe, covered by what is popularly known as the “Renaissance” period, when there took place a revival of art, literature, music, sculpture, science and so on.

### 1.3.1 The Commercial Revolution

The “Commercial Revolution” refers to a series of events between 1450 to approximately 1800. These events signaled to a shift from the largely subsistence and stagnant economy of medieval Europe to a more dynamic and worldwide system. The Commercial Revolution in this sense, signified the expansion of trade and commerce that took place from the fifteenth century onwards. It was of such a large scale and organised manner that we call it a Revolution. This expansion was as a result of the initiative taken by certain European countries to develop and consolidate their economic and political power. These countries were Portugal, Spain, Holland and England.

Let us now study some of the important aspects of the Commercial Revolution, namely overseas discoveries and conquests. Europe’s trade with the Oriental or Eastern countries like India and China was transacted by land routes. The northern Italian cities of Venice and Genoa were the major centers of trade. The result of the Italian monopoly was that the prices of goods like spices and silks imported from the East were extremely high. Portugal and Spain therefore, wanted to discover a route to the Orient that would be independent of Italian control.

Thus began a shift from land routes to sea-routes. The Portuguese were the pioneers in adventurous navigation and exploration, you probably know of the historic voyage of Vasco da Gama who, in 1498 landed on the Indian coast after having sailed around the southern tip of Africa.

Christopher Columbus, an Italian under the patronage of the Spanish King and Queen, set sail for India. However, he landed on the shores of North America. This accidental discovery of America was to prove very beneficial to Spain. It laid the foundations of what was to become a Spanish empire in America.

Britain, France and Holland soon followed Spain and Portugal. The parts of India and Africa, Malacca, the Spice Islands, West Indies and South America came under the economic control of Spain, Portugal, England, France and Holland. Commerce expanded into a world enterprise. The monopoly of the Italian cities was destroyed.

European markets were flooded with new commodities; spices and textiles from the East, tobacco from N. America, Cocoa, Chocolate and quinine from S. America, ivory and, above all, human slaves from Africa. With the discovery of the Americas, the range of trade widened. Formerly, the items sought for were spices and cloth, later, gold and silver were added to the list.

As the Commercial Revolution progressed, the position of Portugal and Spain declined. England, Holland and France came to dominate Europe and the world.

#### 1.3.1.1 Expansion of Banking

One of the important features of the Commercial Revolution was the growth of banking. Credit facilities were expanded, making it easy for merchants

all over Europe to do business. The “cheque” was invented in the eighteenth century. Paper money came to replace gold and silver coins.

Growth of companies: As trade and commerce expanded, new kinds of business organizations had to be devised to cope with this growth. “Regulated companies” arose in the 16th century. These were associations of merchants who bonded together to cooperate for a common venture.

“Joint-stock” companies emerged in the 17th century. In this set-up, shares of capital were distributed to a large number of investors. Some of these were also “chartered companies”, their governments gave them a charter or a contract which guaranteed them a monopoly of the trade in a particular region. Examples of these companies include the British East India Company and the Dutch East India Company.

### 1.3.1.2 Rise of a New Class

As hinted at earlier in this section, one of the most distinctive characteristics of this period was the rise of the middle class to economic power. By the end of the 17th century, the middle class had become an influential group in nearly every western European country. It included merchants, bankers, ship-owners and investors. Their power, at this stage, was mainly economic. But later in the unit, we shall see how they became politically powerful in the 19th century. “Europeanisation” of the world

By this term, we mean the transplanting of European manners and culture in other societies. The activities of traders, missionaries and conquerors saw the Europeanisation of the Americas. Later, with the strengthening of colonialism, this process took root in Asia and Africa as well.

#### Activity 1

You have just read the details about the Commercial Revolution, which took place from 14th-18th century approximately in Europe. Now read a textbook on ancient Indian history and find out whether there was a parallel kind of Commercial activity in India during this period.

This period saw the strengthening of monarchy, the decline of the Church and the rise of the middle class. It marked the beginning of the process of “Europeanisation”, which was to reach a peak with colonialism. Thus Europe charted new areas for economic expansion - the whole world had become Europe’s oyster. Now let us examine the revolution in science.

### 1.3.2 The Scientific Revolution and the Renaissance Period

In this section, we shall examine the changes and developments that took place in a very significant area of human activity - science. Europe produced a “scientific revolution” in the Renaissance period of fourteenth to sixteenth century A.D. The impact of the scientific revolution was crucial not just in changing material life, but also people’s ideas about Nature and Society.

To begin with, let us clarify what we mean by the “history of science”, which is what we will be describing in this section. The history of science does not mean a list of dates and events to be memorized. It is a story of

the interconnection between science and society, polity, economy and culture.

### **1.3.2.1 Social Functions of Sciences**

Science does not develop independent of society, rather, it develops in response to human needs e.g. various vaccines were not developed just out of the blue, but out of the necessity to cure diseases.

Apart from influencing the physical or material life of society, science is intimately connected with ideas. The general intellectual atmosphere existing in society influences the development of science. Similarly, new developments in science can change the attitudes and beliefs in other areas as well. It is important to keep this fact in mind. We shall constantly be demonstrating how new scientific ideas influenced scholars to think about society in new ways. The emergence of sociology in Europe owes a great deal to the ideas and discoveries contributed by science.

### **1.3.2.2 Science in the Medieval Period**

As we have described in the earlier section, medieval society was characterised by the feudal system. The Church was the epicenter of power authority and learning. Learning was mostly of the religious variety. Nothing could challenge the 'dogmas' or rigid beliefs of the Church. New, daring ideas could not flower in such an atmosphere. Thus the development of science was restricted mainly to improvements in techniques of production.

### **1.3.2.3 The Renaissance period**

The 'Renaissance' period saw the beginning of the 'Scientific Revolution'. It marked an area of description and criticism in the field of science. It was a clear break from the past, a challenge to old authority. Let us briefly observe some of the major developments in art and science of this period.

#### **Visual art**

Art, literature and science all flourished. A scientific approach to Nature and the human body became prevalent. We can see this in the paintings of that period, which explored the smallest details of Nature and the human body.

#### **Medicine**

Dissection the human body became acceptable. Doctors and physiologists directly observed how the human body was constructed. The fields of anatomy, physiology and pathology thus benefited greatly.

#### **Chemistry**

A general theory of chemistry was developed. Chemical processes like oxidation, reduction, distillation, amalgamation etc. were studied.

#### **Navigation and astronomy**

Vasco da Gama reached the Indian shores in 1498. Columbus discovered America in 1492. Remember, this was the era of expansion of trade and the beginnings of colonialism. A strong interest in astronomy, important for successful navigation also grew.

### 1.3.2.4 The Copernican Revolution

The first major break from the entire system of ancient thought came with the work of the Dutchman, Nicholas Copernicus.

It was generally believed that the earth was fixed or stationary and the sun and other heavenly bodies moved around it. (This is known as a 'geocentric' theory.)

Copernicus however thought otherwise. With the help of detailed explanations, he demonstrated that the earth moved around a fixed sun. (This is a 'heliocentric' theory.) The work of Copernicus is considered revolutionary because it drastically altered patterns of thought about the universe. Human being was not at the center of the universe, but a small part of a vast system.

In a nutshell, science in the Renaissance period was marked by a new attitude towards man and nature. Natural objects became the subject of close observation and experiment.

The Copernican revolution shattered the very foundations on which the old world rested.

Let us now outline some major scientific developments of the post-Renaissance era.

### 1.3.3 Important Post-Renaissance Developments

Here we describe the developments in different fields that led to new methods and perspectives in scientific research.

#### 1.3.3.1 Experimental Method in Physics and Mathematics

The work of physicists and mathematicians like Galileo Galilei (1564-1642), Johannes Kepler (1571-1630) and subsequently, Sir Isaac Newton (1642-1727) revolutionised science. It brought to the forefront the experimental method. Old ideas were challenged and alternatives were suggested. If these alternative ideas could be proved and repeatedly verified and checked out, they were accepted. If not, new solutions were sought.

Scientific methods thus came to be regarded as the most accurate, the most objective. You will later see how the use of the 'scientific method' to study society was recommended by pioneer sociologists.

#### 1.3.3.2 Biology and Evolution

As has been mentioned earlier, dissection of the human body helped people gain a better understanding of its working: Circulation of blood was discovered by William Harvey (1578-1657). This led to a lot of rethinking. The human organism came to be viewed in terms of interrelated parts and interconnected systems. This had its impact on social thought of Comte, Spencer, Durkheim, to name a few.

Let us now come to one of the most interesting contributions in biology, which created a furor in the society of that time. The British naturalist Charles Darwin (1809-1882) published the *Origin of Species* in 1859. It was based on the observations made whilst traveling for five years all over



the world. Darwin put forward the theory that various living organisms compete for the limited resources the earth has to offer. Thus “survival of the fittest” is the natural law. Some species evolve or develop certain traits, which make their survival possible, other species die out.

Darwin studied ‘human evolution’, tracing it in his work, *Descent of Man* (1863). He traced the origins of the human species to some ape-like ancestors, which, over the centuries, evolved into modern human beings. This book created an uproar. It was believed that ‘God’ made humans “in his own image” and conservatives were not willing to accept that they were descended from the monkey.

Darwin’s evolutionary theory did, however, gain wide acceptance. It was applied to the social world by ‘evolutionary’ thinkers, notably Herbert Spencer. Not just organisms, but societies were seen as constantly ‘evolving’ or developing from a lower to a higher stage.

The forces of change set in by the Commercial Revolution and the Scientific Revolution would have now become clear to you by now. We will next describe the salient aspects of the French Revolution and the Industrial Revolution, which have together provided the social conditions which led to the emergence of sociology as a discipline. Since these two revolutions are of considerable significance let us discuss them in the next two sections (1.4 and 1.5). Before going on to them, let us complete Check Your Progress 1.

**Check Your Progress 2**

- i) What do you understand by the Commercial Revolution in Europe? Describe it in about six lines.

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- ii) Describe at least two developments in science during the “Scientific Revolution”. Use about six lines.

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iii) Fill in the blanks in the following sentences.

- a) Sociology can be considered above all a science of the new ..... society.
- b) It emerged as a distinct science in the ..... century.
- c) The Commercial Revolution and the “Scientific Revolution” in the history of Europe fall within the ..... period.

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## 1.4 THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

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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 French 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.

### 1.4.1 The Basic Picture of the French society: Division into Feudal Estates

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.

The nobles of the robe were nobles not by birth by title. They were the magistrates and judges. Among these nobles, some were very

progressive and liberal as they had moved in their positions from common citizens who belonged to the third estate.

- c) **The Third Estate** comprised the rest of the society and included the peasants, the merchants, the artisans, and others. There was a vast difference between the condition of the peasants and that of the clergy and the nobility. The peasants worked day and night but were overloaded with so many taxes that they lived a hand to mouth existence. They produced the food on which the whole society depended. Yet they could barely survive due to failure of any kind of protection from the government. The King, in order to maintain the good will of the other two estates, the clergy and the nobility, continued to exploit the poor. The poor peasants had no power against him. While the clergy and the nobility kept on pampering and flattering the King.

As compared to the peasants, the condition of the middle classes, also known as the bourgeoisie comprising the merchants, bankers, lawyers, manufacturers, etc. was much better. These classes too belonged to the third estate. But the poverty of the state, which led to a price rise during 1720-1789, instead of adversely affecting them, helped them. They derived profit from this rise and the fact that French trade had improved enormously also helped the commercial classes to a great extent. Thus, this class was rich and secure. But it had no social prestige as compared with the high prestige of the members of the first and the second estates.

In spite of controlling trade, industries, banking etc. the bourgeoisie had no power to influence the court or administration. The other two estates looked them down upon and the King paid very little attention to them. Thus, gaining political power became a necessity for them.

The clergy and the nobility both constituted only two per cent of the population but they owned about 35 per cent of the land. The peasants who formed 80 per cent of the population owned only 30 per cent of the land. The first two estates paid almost no taxes to the government. The peasantry, on the other hand, was burdened with taxes of various kinds. It paid taxes to the Church, the feudal lord, taxed in the form of income tax, poll tax, and land tax to the state. Thus, you can see how much burdened and poverty stricken the peasants had become at this time. They were virtually carrying the burden of the first two estates on their shoulders. On top of it all the prices had generally risen by about 65 per cent during the period, 1720-1789.

### **1.4.2 The Political Aspects of the French society**

Like in all absolute monarchies, the theory of the Divine Right of King was followed in France too. For about 200 years the Kings of the Bourbon dynasty ruled France. Under the rule of the King, the ordinary people had no personal rights. They only served the King and his nobles in various capacities. The King's word was law and no trials were required to arrest a person on the King's orders. Laws too were different in different regions giving rise to confusion and arbitrariness. There was no distinction between the income of the state and the income of the King.

### 1.4.3 The Economic Aspects of the French society

The kings of France, from Louis XIV onwards, fought costly wars, which ruined the country, and when Louis XIV died in 1715, France had become bankrupt. Louis XV instead of recovering from this ruin kept on borrowing money from bankers. His famous sentence, “After me the deluge” describes the kind of financial crisis that France was facing. Louis XVI, a very weak and ineffective king, inherited the ruin of a bankrupt government. His wife, Queen Marie Antoinette, known for her expensive habits, is famous for her reply, which she gave to the poor, hungry people of France who came to her asking for bread. She told the people that, ‘if you don’t have bread, eat cake’.

Now let us examine the intellectual developments in France, which proved to be the igniting force in bringing about the revolution.

### 1.4.4 Intellectual Developments in France

France, like some other European countries during the eighteenth century, had entered the age of reason and rationalism. Some of the major philosophers, whose ideas influenced the French people, were rationalists who believed that all true things could be proved by reason. Some of these thinkers were, Montesquieu (1689-1755), Locke (1632-1704), Voltaire (1694-1778), and Rousseau (1712-1778).

Montesquieu in his book, *The Spirit of the Law*, held that there should not be concentration of authority, such as executive, legislative, and juridical, at one place. He believed in the theory of the separation of powers and the liberty of the individual.

Locke, an Englishman, advocated that every individual has certain rights, which cannot be taken by any authority. These rights were (i) right to live, (ii) right to property, and (iii) the right to personal freedom. He also believed that any ruler who took away these rights from his people should be removed from the seat of power and replaced by another ruler who is able to protect these rights.

Voltaire, a French philosopher, advocated religious toleration and freedom of speech. He also stood for the rights of individuals, for freedom of speech and expression.

Rousseau wrote in his book, *The Social Contract*, that the people of a country have the right to choose their sovereign. He believed that people can develop their personalities best only under a government which is of their own choice.

The major ideas of these and several other intellectuals struck the imagination of the French people. Also some of them who had served in the French army, which was sent to assist the Americans in their War of Independence from British imperialism, came back with the ideas of equality of individuals and their right to choose their own government. The French middle class was deeply affected by these ideas of liberty and equality.

So far you have learnt about the basic picture of the French society just before the Revolution. Now we will describe some of the major of the major events that took place during the Revolution.

### 1.4.5 Important Events

- i) In France there was a parliamentary body called the Estates-General in which all the three estates were represented but which had met last in 1614. It was in 1778 that the King, Louis XVI, was forced to impose a tax on everyone irrespective of his or her social status. The French government had become bankrupt due to the extravagance of the King, as well as, the help that they had given to the Americans in their War of Independence.

This imposition of tax led the rich nobles and the clergy to demand a meeting of the Estate-General, which they felt, was the only body, which could levy tax. The Estate-General met on May 5, 1778, but in this meeting, unlike the earlier practice, the representatives of the third estate wanted all the estates to meet and vote as one assembly. But the first two estates did not agree to this.

The refusal of the first two Estates to meet with the third Estate as a single body led to the formation of the National Assembly. The meeting of the National Assembly led by middle class leaders and some liberal minded nobles was met with stiff resistance. On 20th June 1789 when a meeting was to be held in the Hall at Versailles near Paris, the members found that it was closed and guarded by the King's men. Therefore, the National Assembly members led by their leader Baillet-Latour went to the next building which was an indoor tennis court. It was here that they took an Oath to draw a new constitution for France. This Oath, which marks the beginning of the French Revolution, is popularly known as the Oath of the Tennis Court.

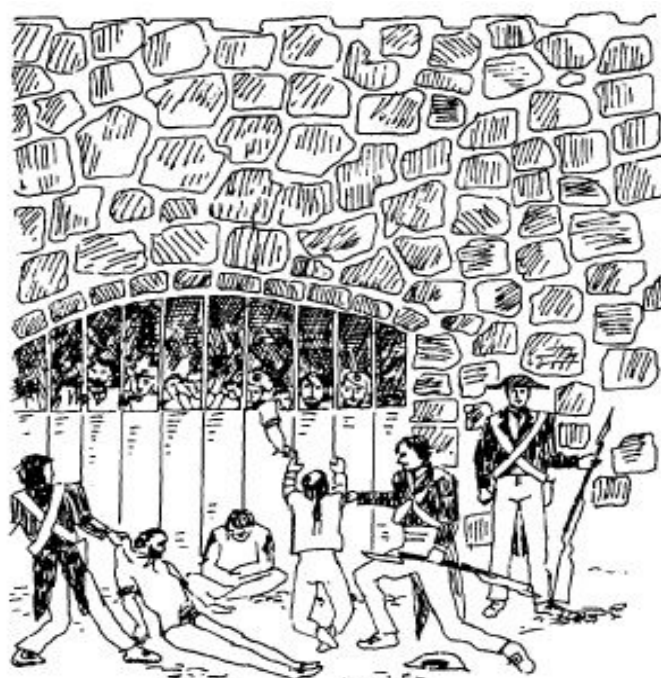


Figure 1.1: Storming of the Bastille

- ii) On July 14th, 1789 took place one of the most important events of the French Revolution. It was the storming of the Bastille, an ancient royal prison that stood as a symbol of oppression (see Figure 1.1: Storming of the Bastille). On this date the mobs of Paris, led by some

middle class leaders, broke open this prison and set its inmates free. The causes for this event were the shortage of food, on the one hand, and the dismissal of a very popular minister called Necker, on the other. The mobs of Paris rebelled against the ruling class, especially the King. This day is celebrated in France as its Independence Day.

- iii) Declaration of Rights of Man by the Constituent Assembly, (1789-1791), comprising the members of the third estate and some liberal minded members of the other two estates, guaranteed freedom of speech, freedom of religion, and freedom from arbitrary punishments. It abolished the special rights and privileges of the clergy and the nobility. The King was no longer to rule by Divine Right and several important social and economic changes were brought about. According to this declaration 'all men were born and remains equal before law. They have a right to choose their government and to resist oppression. Personal liberty becomes a right given to all individuals. Thus, the ideas of liberty and equality put an end to the age of serfdom, despotism and hereditary privileges found in the old feudal society.
- iv) In 1791 the king tried to escape from France but was recognised at the frontier and brought back. Since then he become a virtual prisoner.
- v) In Paris, the new Legislative Assembly (1791-1792) was formed. It comprised two very radical groups, namely the Girondin and the Jacobin. These groups considered the king a traitor and were in favour of establishing a Republic.
- vi) The King, Louis XVI, was beheaded in public on 21st January 1793 after being proved guilty of treason. The Queen was also beheaded later in the same year. France was declared a Republic.
- vii) A period referred to as "Reign of Terror" took place in France when several of the nobles, priests, some of the revolutionaries themselves were guillotined i.e. beheaded. This period lasted for three years.
- viii) Establishment of the Directorate took place in 1795. It lasted for four years till a young artillery officer from Corsica, a neighbouring island, overthrew the Directorate in 1799. He was Napoleon Bonaparte. He made himself the new Director and provided a much sought after stable government to the people of France. Thus the French Revolution ended with the overthrow of the Directorate by Napoleon.

You would have by now developed a rough idea of what the French Revolution was and how significant its role has been in the history of human civilisation. It changed the political structure of European society and replaced the age of feudalism by heralding the arrival of democracy. There were many significant themes, which arose due to the impact of this Revolution, which have been the focus of interest of the early sociologists. These significant themes included the transformation of property, the social disorder, caused by the change in the political structure and its impact on the economic structure. A new class of power holders emerged - the bourgeoisie. In order to understand more about these themes, we need to learn the details of the Industrial Revolution.

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## 1.5 THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

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The Industrial Revolution began around 1760 A.D. in England. It brought about great changes in the social and economic life of the people first in England, then in the other countries of Europe and later in other continents. In Europe, especially England, the discovery of new territories, explorations, growth of trade and commerce and the consequent growth of towns brought about an increase in demand for goods. Earlier goods (i.e. consumer items like cloth, etc.) were produced at domestic levels. This means that there existed a domestic system of production. With increased demand, goods were to be produced on a large-scale.

### 1.5.1 New Invention

During Industrial Revolution, new tools and techniques were invented, which could produce goods on a large-scale. During 1760-1830 A.D., a series of inventions in tools and techniques and organization of production took place and it gave rise to the factory system of production. Thus, a change in economy from feudal to **capitalist** system of production developed. Subsequently, there emerged a class of capitalists, which controlled the new system of production. Due to this revolution society moved from the old age of hand-made goods to the new age of machine-made goods. This shift heralded the emergence of Industrial Revolution.

One of the significant mechanical inventions, which led to a quicker and better method of production in various industries, was the Spinning Jenny, invented in 1767 by James Hargreaves, an English weaver. It was a simple machine rectangular in shape. It had a series of spindles, which could be turned by a single wheel. In 1769, Arkwright, an English barber, invented another tool, which was named after the name of its inventor and called Arkwright's Water Frame. This Water Frame was so large that it could not be kept in one's home and a special building was required to set it up. Thus on account of this it is said that he was responsible for introducing the factory system. Another invention called "the Mule" was by Samuel Crompton in 1779 in England. There were several other inventions, which all contributed to the industrial growth of European society.

### 1.5.2 Impact of the Industrial Revolution on Society

With the change in the economy of society several social changes followed. As capitalism became more and more complex, the developments of banks, insurance companies, and finance corporations took place. New class of industrial workers, managers, capitalists emerged.

The peasants in the new industrial society found themselves with thousands of other people like themselves, winding cotton in a textile mill. Instead of the famous countryside they found themselves in unhygienic living conditions. With the increase in production, population started increasing. Rise of population led to the increased rate of urbanisation. The industrial cities grew rapidly. In the industrial cities socio-economic disparities were very wide. The factory workers were involved in repetitive and boring work, the result of which they could not enjoy. In Marxist terms the worker became alienated from the product of his/ her labour. City life in the industrial society became an altogether a different way of life.

These changes moved both conservative and radical thinkers. The conservatives feared that such conditions would lead to chaos and disorder. The radicals like Engels felt that the factory workers would initiate social transformation.

Though the judgement of values differed, social thinkers of the time were agreed upon the epoch-making impact of the Industrial Revolution. They also agreed upon the importance of the new working class. The history of the period from 1811 to 1850 further indicates that this class increasingly agitated for their rights.

### 1.5.3 Significant Themes of the Industrial Revolution

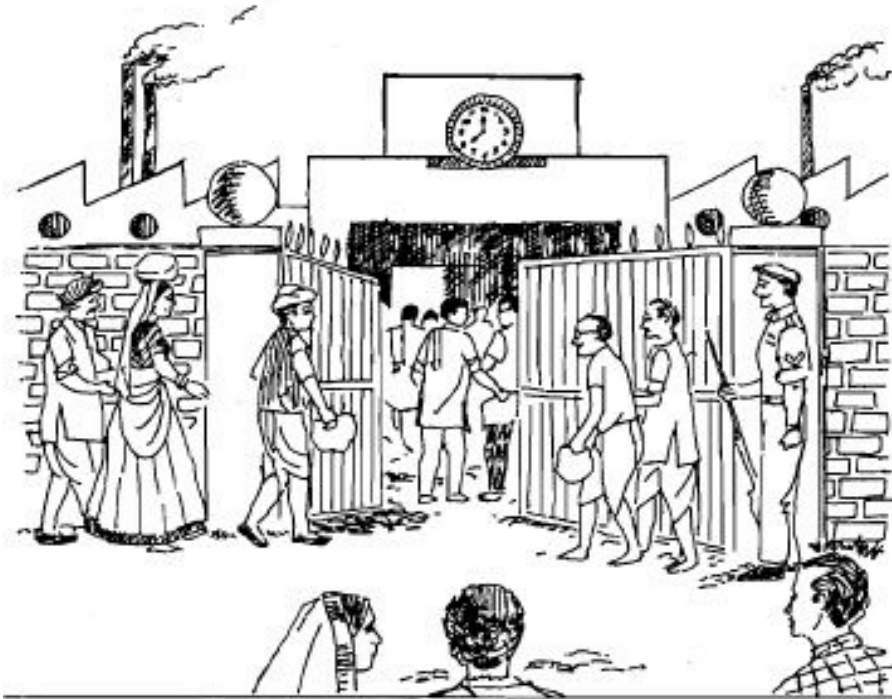
The significant themes of the Industrial Revolution, which concerned the early sociologists, were as given below.

- i) **The condition of labour:** A new population earning their livelihood by working in the factories arose. In the early years this working class lived in poverty and squalor. They were socially deprived. At the same time they were indispensable in the new industrial system. This made them a powerful social force. Sociologists recognised that the poverty of this class of workers is not natural poverty but social poverty. Thus the working class became during the nineteenth century the subject of both moral and analytical concern.
- ii) **The transformation of property:** The traditional emphasis on land lost its value while money or capital became important during the Industrial Revolution. The investment in new industrial system came to be recognised. The feudal landlords became less significant while the new capitalists gained power. Many of these new capitalists were the erstwhile landlords.

Property was one of the central issues that were raised in the French Revolution too. Its influence on the social order is considerable. Property is related to economic privileges, social status and political power. A change in the property system involves a change in the fundamental character of society. Sociologists have grappled with the question of property and its impact on social stratification since the days of Marx, Tocqueville, Taine and Weber.

- iii) **The industrial city, i.e. urbanism:** Urbanisation was a necessary corollary of the Industrial Revolution. Industries grew and along with it grew great cluster of populations, the modern towns and cities. Cities were present in ancient period too, such as Rome, Athens, etc. but the new cities, such as Manchester in England, famous for its textile, were different in nature. Ancient cities were known as repositories of civilised graces and virtues while the new cities were known as repositories of misery and inhumanity. It was these aspects of the new cities, which concerned the early sociologists.
- iv) **Technology and the factory system:** Technology and the factory system has been the subject of countless writings in the nineteenth century. Both the conservative and radical thinkers realised that the two systems would alter human life for all times to come.





**Figure 1.2: Shift from Domestic to Factory Work**

The impact of technology and factory system led to large-scale migration of people to the cities. Women and children joined the work force in the factories. (See Figure 1.2: Shift from Domestic to Factory Work). Family relations changed. The siren of the factory seemed to rule peoples' life. The machine rather than man seemed to dominate work. As mentioned earlier the relation between the labourers and the products of their labour changed. They worked for their wages. The product was the child of everybody and of the machine in particular. The owner of the factory owned it. Life and work became depersonalised.

### Activity 2

Read the section on the significant themes of the French Revolution and the Industrial Revolution carefully. Discuss with two elders the four significant themes given in the unit, in the context of our own society. Write a note of one page on any one of these four themes in the context of Indian society, for example, "Indian Society and the Condition of Labour".

Marx saw a form of enslavement in the machine and a manifestation of alienation of labour. Social scientists, felt that men and women had grown mechanical in heart, as well as in hand due to the industrial system of production. Thus themes, which you will notice in the units of this Block and other Blocks of ESO-13, kept recurring in the works of pioneers among sociologists, such as Durkheim, Marx and Weber.

### Check Your Progress 3

- i) List three changes, which took place in Europe due to the Industrial Revolution.
- a) .....

- b) .....
- c) .....
- ii) Fill in the blanks in the following sentences.
  - a) Industrial Revolution led to the transformation of the economy from ..... to capitalist.
  - b) The French Revolution put an end to a political structure based on ..... privileges and feudalism.
  - c) July 14th, 1789 is celebrated by the French people as their ..... day.

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## 1.6 THE INTELLECTUAL INFLUENCES AFFECTING THE EMERGENCE OF SOCIOLOGY

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Sociology emerged as a response to the forces of change, which took place during eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Europe. The ideas, which are discussed again and again in early sociological writings, are thus essentially ideas of that period.

The thinkers of the Enlightenment of eighteenth century affected much of the early sociology. The Enlightenment appears as the most appropriate point of departure in the study of the origins of sociological theory, for various reasons including those mentioned below.

Firstly, a scientific approach to the study of society dates back to the tradition of Enlightenment. The eighteenth century thinkers began more consistently than any of their predecessors to study the human conditions in a scientific way using the methods of the natural sciences. They consciously applied scientific principles of analysis to the study of human beings and their nature and society.

Secondly, the eighteenth century thinkers upheld reason as a measure to judge social institutions and their suitability for human nature. Human beings, according to them, are essentially rational and this rationality can lead them to freedom of thought and action.

Thirdly, the eighteenth century thinkers believed that human beings are capable of attaining perfection. By criticising and changing social institutions they can create for themselves even greater degrees of freedom, which, in turn would enable them increasingly to actualise the potentially creative powers.

Sociological thinkers are concerned with the above three assumptions. Apart from them, three other intellectual influences current in the post-Enlightenment period influenced the emergence of sociology in Europe. They can be identified as

- i) the philosophy of history

- ii) the biological theories of evolution; and
- iii) the surveys of social conditions.

These three intellectual influences are the precursors of sociology and are reflected the writings of the early sociologists.

### 1.6.1 The Philosophy of History

In the early part of the nineteenth century the philosophy of history became an important intellectual influence. The basic assumption of this philosophy was that society must have progressed through a series of steps from a simple to complex stage. We may briefly assess the contributions of the philosophy of history to sociology as having been, on the philosophical side, the notions of development and progress. On the scientific side, it has given the concepts of historical periods and social types. The social thinkers who developed the philosophy of history such as Abbe Saint Pierre, and Giambattista, were concerned with the whole of society and not merely the political, or the economic, or the cultural aspects (Bottomore 1962: 14-15). Later the contributions of Comte, Spencer, Marx and many others reflected the impact of the loss of this intellectual trend in their sociological writings.

### 1.6.2 The Biological Theories of Evolution

The influence of the philosophy of history was further reinforced by the biological theory of evolution. Sociology moved towards an evolutionary approach, seeking to identify and account for the principal stages in social evolution. It tended to be modeled on biology, as is evident from the widely diffused conception of society as an organism, and from the attempts to formulate general terms of social evolution. Herbert Spencer and Durkheim are good example of this kind of writing.

### 1.6.2 Surveys of Social Conditions

Social survey forms an important element in modern sociology. It emerged due to two reasons, one was the growing conviction that the methods of the natural sciences should and could be extended to the study of human affairs; that human phenomenon could be classified and measured. The other was the concern with poverty ('the social problem'), following the recognition that poverty was not natural but social. The social survey is one of the principal methods of sociological inquiry. The basic assumption, which underlines this method, is that through the knowledge of the social conditions one can arrive at solutions to solve the social problems prevalent in society.

Having considered at length, the social conditions in which sociology emerged, it is now time to complete Activity 3 and Check Your Progress 4 before summing up the contents of the unit.

#### Activity 3

You have just now read about the relationship between society and the ideas that are generated from time to time in a society. You also learnt about the social change that took place in European society from the

fourteenth to the eighteenth century A.D. and during the period when the French Revolution and the Industrial Revolution took place.

Keeping these ideas and developments in mind give at least two examples from Indian society where ideas have influenced society or where events taking place in society have influenced the ideas.

#### Check Your Progress 4

- i) Which of the following would you categorise as factors responsible for the growth of sociology?
  - a) The Enlightenment
  - b) The progress of Natural Sciences
  - c) The growth of religious authority
  - d) The strengthening of monarchy
  - e) The factory system
  - f) The growth of urban slums
  - g) Increase in poverty and squalor
  - h) The Industrial Revolution
  - i) The rise of modern state system
  - j) The concept of individual rights
  - k) The decline in the concept of divine will
  - l) The belief that society is man-made
  - m) The belief that men and women can change society
- ii) Identify two intellectual approaches affecting the emergence of sociology. Use about eight lines.

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## 1.7 LET US SUM UP

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In this unit you studied how social conditions affect the ideas which people have. You learnt how certain changes taking place in the eighteenth and nineteenth century in Europe bothered social thinkers. Sociology thus grew essentially as a product of the reflections of the great thinkers reflecting on society.

You learnt about the sociologically significant themes of the Commercial, the French and the Industrial Revolutions. Finally, you read about the intellectual influences such as the philosophy of history, biological theories of evolution and surveys of social conditions, which affected the emergence of sociology in Europe.

After learning about the setting in which sociology as a discipline emerged in Europe, you will now in the next two units read about the ideas of the founding fathers of sociology and contributions of these ideas to development of sociology.

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## 1.8 KEY WORDS

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|                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
| <b>Capitalist</b>    | In an industrial system of production, the class of owners of the means of production (such as, the capital i.e. the money, the property, the tools, etc.) is called the capitalists.   |
| <b>Democracy</b>     | A form of government in which the supreme power is vested in the people collectively. It is a state of society characterised by recognition of equality of rights and privileges, social and legal equally.   |
| <b>Enlightenment</b> | It refers to that period in European history, which embodies the spirit of the French philosophers of the eighteenth century. During this period a belief developed that both nature and society can be studied scientifically. Human reason and the ideas of progress developed. |
| <b>Estate</b>        | The system of stratification followed in medieval European society of around 17th-18th century, in which society was divided into different social groups having a different set of laws and social status for each   |
| <b>Feudal</b>        | A system of tenure in agricultural areas whereby a vassal or serf served the landlord to whom the land belonged. In return the landlord allowed the serf to till his land and live on his land  |
| <b>Liberal</b>       | A person who is broad minded and not bound by authority or traditional orthodoxy i.e. old fashioned beliefs   |

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## 1.9 FURTHER READING

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Berger, P. 1963, *Invitation to Sociology A Humanistic Perspective*, Anchor Books Double Day & Company, Inc.: New York

Bottomore, T.B. 1962, *Sociology A Guide to Problems and Literature*, George Allen & Unwin Ltd.: London

Inkeles, A. 1975, *What is Sociology?* Prentice-Hall: New Delhi.

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## 1.10 SPECIMEN ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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### Check Your Progress 1

- i) The old European society was traditional feudal society in which land was the basic property. Religion provided the foundation to this society.
- ii)
  - a) liberal, radical
  - b) land
  - c) new, central

### Check Your Progress 2

- i) The forces of change in the largely subsistent and stagnant economy of the Medieval Europe from about 1450-1800 century A.D. led to what it called the Commercial Revolution in Europe. The cause of this Revolution was expansion of trade and commerce initiated by certain European countries. These countries, such as Portugal, Spain, Holland etc. tried to consolidate their political and economic power through overseas trade and commerce and conquests of new territories.
- ii) During the scientific revolution, the following two developments, among many others, took place and helped in advancement of knowledge. Dissection of human body started which led to an increased knowledge of the anatomy. Modern medicine developed due to this knowledge. The ancient belief that the earth was fixed and the sun revolved around it was shattered by Copernicus, who proved that it is the sun, which is fixed, and the earth, which revolves around it. This is called the “heliocentric theory”.
- iii) a) Industrial  
b) nineteenth  
c) renaissance

### Check Your Progress 3

- 1) a) The production process of Europe was transformed with the new capitalistic factory system replacing the old feudal, largely agricultural system.  
b) A new working class employed as wage labour in the industries arose.  
c) The growth of urban slums changed both the physical as well as the social life of people.
- ii) a) feudal  
b) hereditary  
c) Independence

### Check Your Progress 4

- i) a), b), e), f), g), h), i), j), k), l), m)
- ii) Two intellectual approaches affecting the emergence of sociology are Philosophy of History: According to this approach, each society moves through a series of steps from a simple to complex stage and therefore progress is both natural and inevitable.

**The Biological Theories of Evolution:** The comparison of society to a biological organism made sociologists believe that (i) society moves inherently from a simple to complex structures, and (ii) society like an organism operates on the same principles of adjustments to an equilibrium.