

Impact of Revolutions on Sociology

The beginning of tradition of social sciences has been one of the major developments of the 19th century. It is often said that social sciences are mostly understood as responses to the problem of order that was created in men's minds by the weakening of the old order under the blows of French Revolution and Industrial Revolution. The European society was hard hit by these revolutions. The old order that rested on kinship, land, social class, religion, local community and monarchy became very shaky. Thinkers were more concerned about finding ways and means of reconsolidating these elements of social order. Hence the history of 19th century politics, industry and trade is basically about the practical efforts of human beings to reconsolidate these elements. The history of 19th century meant new contents and meaning to the doctrine of sociology. A new wave of intellectual and philosophical thoughts was let loose in Europe.

Intellectual currents in the form of socio-political ideologies were also witnessed. The ideologies of individualism, socialism, utilitarianism, and utopianism took birth. Thinkers and intellectuals floated new ideologies and spread novel ideas.

The Bearings of World Revolutions on Origin and Growth of Sociology

American war of Independence gave way to establishment of democracy in American society. Tocquaville in his book Democracy in America advocated that the growth of democracy was instrumental for the development of capitalism in America. C Wright Mills advocated that democracy is different from socialism because it reproduces the elements of an open society whereas socialism develops closed features.

All these contributions necessarily indicate how the appearance of democracy in America was considered as an ideal form of governance system. Thus different notions of the world abandoning their traditional system of administration went for democracy, bureaucracy contributing for complete transformation in their structural character. The American War of Independence enormously contributed to the social changes a major area of interest of sociology.

Thus it is inevitable to establish interconnectivity between American War of Independence and growth of sociology. French revolution has important bearings on growth and development of sociology. When social history looks into the reasons behind French Revolution, ideological support the revolution received from the intellectuals, middle class and lower clergy and the consequence of French revolution to its contrast, sociology looks for the ideology glorified during the revolution period offering an intellectual foundation to the growth of sociology. French revolution and Rousseau are synonymous to each other. Rousseau was a liberal and radical as well who believed that man is rational therefore he has capacity of establishing interlink age between individual will and collective will from out of which develops general will establishing organic interlink ages between individual and society. He further believes that man when driven by self-love there is a possibility of emergence of crisis in society. Therefore his self-love will be so designed that it corresponds with sympathy giving rise to harmonic union between individual and society.

This argument of Rousseau is foundation to sociology of Comte and exclusively sociology of Durkheim. Hence it can be concluded that Rousseau's theory of general will, his explanation of equality, liberty and man as a moral savage living happily in the state of nature and inequalities as social evils directly influenced the writings of Karl Marx and Durkheim who are two founding pillars of sociology. Hence French Revolution offered an ideological support for the origin and development of sociology.

Industrial Revolution was greatly instrumental in transforming the structural character of a small community focused pre-literate simple society into a diversified, technologically complex occupationally divergent highly populous modern society. Social change was driven by economic growth and industry gave rise to mass production, appropriation of surplus, profitability, class structure, growth of markets, impersonal relations between people, growing importance on laws and comprehensive change in social relationships, economic structure and interpersonal relationships between individuals. A shift from simple to complex society was considered as a disaster by the conservatives who believed that future is dark; there is no source for solace in modern society, decline of religion has given rise to moral crisis therefore purpose of life is lost. For eternal happiness man must have to get back to past. This argument developed by Mastaire and Bonald is still having profound appeal in contemporary sociology.

However this conservative reaction is dismissed by rational scholars like J.S Mills who advocates that man is rational enough to distinguish between quantitative and qualitative happiness. Using their rational mind collectivity can decide in which direction the society must have to move. They give importance on liberal education, free thinking, scientific temper, the notion of collective justice and importance of law to regulate human action driving him in the direction of progress and development. Freedom to man and to his action is also emphasized by Classical Economists who advocated that man and society work together in a rational manner for the economic development of society and individuals.

Thus in conclusion it can be advocated that sociology is able to establish a balance between theories and facts successfully using scientific methods to study social actions, its outcomes such as social institutions and social groups which are subjected to both continuity and change. The sociologists are using different theoretical paradigms and ideological support they have been receiving from world revolutions and renaissance. Thus it will be impossible to think about the origin of sociology in isolation to economic changes, political transformation and ideological changes that western European societies witnessed from 14th to 19th centuries. Sociology no doubt emerged as a reaction to various revolutions such as technological, social, cultural, moral, spiritual and ideological.