

Classical Sociological Theory
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Lecture 08
Industrial revolution and the rise of capitalism

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Industrial Revolution and the
rise of capitalism



Welcome back to the class. We are continuing with the discussion about the social context in which discipline like sociology emerged. We are talking about the great transformations that happened in Europe in the 18th and 19th century. In the previous class, we discussed about the intellectual transformations and political transformations that happened with the rise of nation-state and the French Revolution.

And in today's class, we are going to discuss, the major transformations that happened in the economic front and how did the economy underwent substantial and comprehensive changes in Europe during this particular time. We are familiar with the different ways of organization and distinct characters of economic activity which are usually classified, at least in the Marxian sense, as a primitive communism or feudalism or slavery or capitalism or socialism.

These modes are extremely important, because their relevance is not only confined to the realm of economic activity, but they spill over to other fields such as social, economic and cultural spheres of life. It is extremely important to understand what the larger transformations were and what were the kind of revolutions that happened in the sphere of economy in Europe during this particular time.

This European transformation, the rise of capitalism and the Industrial Revolution began to spread across the globe immediately after its origin, basically through the process of colonialism. So, in this class, we are going to examine this two important aspects 'The Rise of Capitalism' and 'Industrial Revolution'.

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- The Industrial Revolution, with machine labor gradually replacing hand labor, originated in Great Britain in the late 1700s and then spread to Western Europe and the United States.
- Industrial Revolution initiated an outpouring of continuous scientific and technological innovation and continuous improvement in the methods of production. Once the process of industrialization got under way, Eric Hobsbawm writes, "change became the norm."
- New technological inventions, emergence of new domestic and overseas markets, and above all the role of colonialism



The Industrial Revolution, with machine labour gradually replacing hand labour, originated in Great Britain in the late 1700s and then spread to Western Europe and the United States. In the previous class, we discussed about scientific discoveries, we discussed about Copernicus, we discussed about Charles Darwin, we discussed about Galileo Galilei and we discussed about how a series of scientific discoveries completely undermined the religious explanation about the universe.

The scientific revolutions were not only restricted in the realm of ideas, but they also had very Immediate and specific practical consequences because it was transferred and transformed as a set of technological innovations.

Series of technological innovations took place during this particular time and centuries just preceding to that such as the discovery of electricity, the discovery of steam engine and a host of other scientific discoveries and technological innovations completely began to transform the technological and economic scenario of Europe and most importantly in Britain and that immediately spread across Europe and to America and then on to the rest of the society.

We are familiar with India's own experience in terms of technological advancements. Whether it is telegraph or postal or telecommunications or railways or a host of other

technological innovations or any other technological expansions happened in India, happened mainly because of colonial rule. Whether that was for their own convenience and for their own efficiency is a different question. Colonies began to experience the fruits of technological innovation, basically through the process of colonialism.

The Industrial Revolution initiated an outpouring of continuous scientific and technological innovations and continuous improvements in the methods of production. Once the process of industrialization got underway, as Eric Hobsbawm writes, “change became the norm.”

Therefore, we are witnessing a particular phase in history with the rate of these innovations become so high that this particular phase cannot be compared with any of this preceding centuries, where the rate of changes or the rate of innovations were much slower and lower.

We witnessed that the period since 16th or 17th centuries experienced a series of scientific innovations that began to appear with very long lasting influences. So, that is why it is leading to an outpouring of continuous scientific and technological innovation.

Innovation does not come and then stop, rather it becomes a continuous set of innovations. A host of scholars and scientists working across the countries are bringing in new technologies which are becoming more and more efficient and thereby replacing the traditional technology, where human labour and animal labour were the most important source of labour power. Whether it is in terms of industrial activities or in terms of agriculture activities, this human labour and animal labour were swiftly replaced by the machine labour and continuous improvement in the methods of production.

This technological innovations had very specific bearing on the economic activities. As this methods of production and once the process of industrialization got underway, Eric Hobsbawm writes “change became the norm.” You are no longer in a society which is more or less static, you are no longer in a society where change is very gradual and very-slow.

You are in a society which is changing rapidly, you are in a society which is witnessing unprecedented kind of transformation, a transformation of a much higher level in every aspect of life. In this particular context, the changes are brought in by technological innovations.

In the previous class, we discussed about the changes that happened in the intellectual realms, in terms of the ideologies and the resultant changes that were brought in the political realm.

Here, we are talking about the kind of changes in technological and economic spheres of the society.

We need to understand the relation between technological innovations and the emergence of new domestic and overseas markets and the role of colonialism. I have been reiterating several times that the new domestic market emerges with the rise of factory system, new Industrial capitalist class leading to the ability to spend more. As a result, new overseas markets emerge during this particular time, through the process of colonialism.

We know that how big this issue was in our freedom struggle which lead Mahatma Gandhi to launch the whole movement of Swadeshi movement because India was one of the most important markets for Britain. India was also a place for them to procure raw materials and these raw materials were taken to Britain from where they were converted into finished products and brought back to India and sold at a much higher price.

Thereby completely breaking the traditional industrial system in India and also reaping so much economic profit through this process. Therefore, the connection between the rise of capitalism and the process of colonialism is very strong and we need to understand these larger transformations not only as the triumph of science and technology, but also the triumph of systematic exploitation through the process of colonialism. The scenario this development are much-much complicated rather than a black and white situation.

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- Decline of agrarian rural life and the rise of industrial urban societies
- Feudal, tradition-based economic transactions were replaced by, market oriented, contractual relations.
- a new culture based on individualism, competitive struggles for wealth, and a secular worldview gave people a strong sense that they were living in a new era of constant change
- Fundamental changes in the social bonding between people, the decline of kinship, religion and joint family systems and the rise of individualism



As students of sociology we are more interested to understand the implications or the consequences of these technological changes, the changes that happened in terms of science and technology leading to a more efficient forms of production, not only in the economic sphere but also promote predominantly in the social sphere.

How did these changes influence the social sphere of Europe? These changes basically, led to the decline of agrarian rural life and the rise of industrial urban societies. We are talking about two things, the changes from an agrarian rural life to that of an industrial urban societies.

It is not only the transition from rural societies to urban societies, but also a transformation from an agrarian society to an industrial society and these are very different types of social organizations in every sense of the world. Not only in terms of the nature predominant economic activity but also in terms of a host of socio cultural and political aspects that come along with that.

This feudal tradition based economic transactions were replaced by market oriented contractual relations. A feudal society is characterized more by conventions, traditions and by kind of economic transactions influenced by very close networks, close kinship, close ties, ethnic ties and so on. They were gradually but significantly replaced by more market oriented and contractual relations, where this ethnic affiliations, your conventional ties, your social ties became less significant, if not completely irrelevant.

Even now, even in the modern capitalist system, these ties are important. But they became less significant and business transactions happens mostly through modern contractual relations and a new culture based on individualism. It comprises of competitive struggle for wealth and a secular worldview that gave people a strong sense that they were living in a new era of constant change.

A host of consequences of these changes occurred such as a new culture based on individualism, which is the staple food for sociological thought. We will discuss how the rights of the individual is one of the most important aspects of sociological studies. We discussed in the previous class about the emergence of the social, along with the rise individual as an independent person, as a more free agent, not as a part of a wider collectivity or not as a part of a wider community.

This transformation of the individual as an independent free agent, who can think on her own terms, who is not completely bound by the traditional rules, who has agential power, who is empowered and so on and who involve in a competitive struggle for wealth is a very distinct idea compared to that of previous ideas about the Individual.

We discussed how capitalism emerged, which completely destroyed the existing hierarchical social stratification system, based on landed few and landless majority.

The land became less an important site for economic competition as industries and factories became the new sites for this competitions. It came with a rapid phase of secularization where the influence of religion began to decline and was pushed to the private sphere. Religion was disentangled from other domains of social life, influence of religion on law, on political life and on education was curtailed.

Therefore, you have more and more spheres emerge as autonomous from the influence of religion and this is an extremely important element of the process of secularization. We will come back to secularization more in detail when we discuss Max Weber, but I just want to highlight this point. Secularization is not only that the number of people who go to church or mosque or temple are coming down. It is also a very important delimitation of the relevance of the religion in what is understood as the public sphere and in the public matters.

Religion is seen as one of the important institutions but its relevance and its ambits are very specifically restricted. It is very seriously restricted and its dominance, its influence in a large extent to other realms like family, law, politics, entertainment and a host of other things are

very significantly curtailed. A new secular worldview emerged and that gave people a strong sense that they were living in an era of constant change.

The fundamental changes in the social bonding between people such as the decline of kinship, religious bonding and joint family system and the rise of individualism are all connected. We know that in an agrarian rural settings, the relationship amongst people in villages or in rural areas are mostly defined by agrarian activities and that kind of social relationship is very different and usually defined as face to face interaction.

Everybody knows each other and their families for the past so many generations. Everybody knows each other's caste and family history and everything and you are seen as a member of a particular family, you are seen as a member of a particular community or a religion and that kind of intimate social bonding was completely replaced and was disrupted because in an urban situation you are seen as an individual.

The kind of relationship that exists in an urban setting is qualitatively different. It is not face to face and not very intimate. Of course, you will have very strong set of relationships but people generally do not know or do not identify you as belonging to a particular family or particular community. They do not know the history of your life.

People are more or less anonymous. You may not even know who are living next to you. There is a very interesting connection between the rise of industrialism, industrialization in Europe and rise of nuclear families, because capitalism wanted able-bodied people, especially able-bodied men who are available for their work.

Therefore, there was a large scale migration which we are going to discuss. There was a large scale migration of predominantly male workers from rural areas to urban and Industrial regions, leaving mostly the parents and other family members back in the villages. They migrate alone to urban settings alone or maybe with their wife and children. So, the rise of nuclear families and the decline of joint families and the decline of influence of religion have all played a very important role in the rise of individualism or the rise of individual as autonomous entities.

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- Large-scale migration of population to urban areas, rapid growth of cities, poor housing and sanitary conditions
- Karl Polanyi: "At the heart of the Industrial Revolution of the eighteenth century, there was an almost miraculous improvement in the tools of production, which was accompanied by a catastrophic dislocation of the lives of the common people".
- The rise of the factory: division between private sphere of domestic work and public sphere of factory and employment



There was large scale migration of population to urban areas and there are very fascinating statistics about how large scale migration happened across Europe in very short span of time. How the population cities increased manifold and the rapid growth of cities, which brought in a series of problems and challenges, because it was unplanned and unregulated completely, as it happened as a consequences of a sudden economic transformation.

That led to the proliferation of slums, poor housing and sanitary conditions and people's life became quite chaotic, and there was quite a lot of issues in terms of living together in unhygienic conditions in with the very bad infrastructural facilities. A series of social issues emerged as a result of this large and unregulated migration of people who left behind the traditional feudal society and then moved towards the urban cities which were seen as the modern industrial new world.

Karl Polanyi is one of the very important intellectuals and he described this process as "at the heart of the Industrial Revolution of the 18th century, there was an almost miraculous improvement in the tools of production, which was accompanied by a catastrophic dislocation of the lives of common people".

Two things happened simultaneously. On the one side, there is a miraculous improvement of tools of production. As we discussed earlier, the human power and the animal power was dismissed and it was replaced by machine power, which was far more effective and more efficient in terms of productivity and at the same time, it was accompanied by catastrophic dislocation of the lives of common people.

This dislocation is not only spatial dislocation. It is not only that people were displaced from the rural area into urban areas. These are also dislocations in the lives of the people in every sense of the word, in their cultural understanding, in the traditional ways of living, in the quality of social bonds and the kind of an orientation that they used to develop. So, it was a complete transformation and Polanyi is using the word catastrophic, because the consequences were very significant.

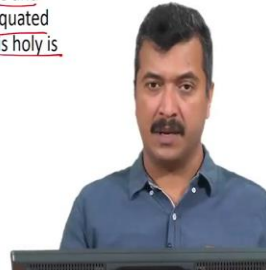
So, that is why we will come back to this kind of characterizations as catastrophic, because most of the social scientists including the people whom we are going to discuss in the coming classes found these changes as very disturbing. Because the social order which they were familiar with, characterized by a very lethargic slow life of the traditional societies were completely replaced by very unpredictable fast changing tumultuous social life, which had a series of negative consequences and had catastrophic effects of the common people.

The rise of the factory as the most important site of economic activity and economic production does not mean that the agriculture activities are declined, but the factory emerges as the most important site of economic activity and the division between private sphere of domestic work and the public sphere of factory and employment emerges.

Another very important point which can be easily connected with this change is the later theorizations about the emergence of public sphere and the distinction between public and private. Your household being always synonymous with your private life and the public life being synonymous with your factory, your place of employment, the place of your entertainment, the place of your reading, intellectual discussions and other things. So, the rise of factory is yet another very important which we will discuss.

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- The Industrial Revolution resulted in the triumph of modern capitalism, but on the other side it also gave birth to capitalism's chief adversary: the modern socialist movement.
- End of the feudalism and the rise of working class comprising of free, independent agents who can sell his labour
- Marx and Engels in 'The Communist Manifesto': "All fixed, fast-frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions, are swept away, all new-formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned"



In the factory, you have a central surveillance of the workforce and greater control on the labourer; it is a regimented life and the tyranny of the clock. What does it mean to experience a transition from a feudal, agrarian life into that of a modern factory life? How the labour class did experienced this change?

The change was tremendous. The labour class or working class experienced this changes as very significant, because they were always under surveillance. There was no physical threat, no physical punishment unlike the feudal period and the power equations were completely changed under Industrial capitalism.

However, because of the rationale of the economic system in which workers were entangled, they were completely under central surveillance and they were forced to work more. They were constantly under surveillance and supervision. They were forced to work more and it was a regimented life.

So, what does it mean to be a 'regimented life'? I am also connecting with this point of a 'tyranny of the clock'. Because now, the life is regimented, the life is divided into very specific rigid, schedules. For example, the sound of the siren in the factories emerged as a very important factor in every labourer's life.

The idea of the work begins and ends with the siren in the morning and evening respectively. In between the working day, there will be a short period of time around 30 minutes or 40

minutes for them to have food. It doesn't matter whether they are hungry or not that allotted time is for you to have food and you have to get back to work after that specific time period.

At the end of the day, maybe after 10 hours or 12 hours of continuous work, the siren rings again, you must stop your work and then get back to your home. Hence, this was completely a different lifestyle for quite a lot of people, because in feudal societies, this kind of very stark difference between the work and the life was not acute and this kind of a demarcation was not very strong. Here, the life became more regimented and there was this all pervasive influence of the siren and the clock, which brought in so much of changes in the everyday life of ordinary people turned workers.

As the industrial economy displaced agrarian economy, wealth in the form of landed property declined in importance relative to the wealth in the forms of industrial capital including factories and machinery. It is a significant transformation before the Industrial Revolution, it was the land that is the most valued and was the site of economic activity. Agriculture was the most important form of economic activity.

Labour had to take place in this agricultural field and there was a decline of this agricultural land as the site of economic activity. On the other hand, the buildings and the factories and the machinery became the important forms of capital. The use of Land continued but it was no longer the most important form of capital. The new form of capital was a set of new ideas, buildings, huge buildings and huge factories and the kind of machineries which can enhance the production process.

A series of new issues emerged as a result of the transformation to Industrial capitalism due to the exploitation of workers and resistance. We will touch upon this point maybe later when we discuss Karl Marx. Because Karl Marx was a historian and an intellectual who devoted his entire life for analyzing this whole question of labour and working class in the capitalist era.

This transformation resulted in the systematic and brutal exploitation of workers and the resultant resistance lead many times to successful revolutions and many often to not so successful workers resistance which was kind of negotiated or defeated. While Industrial Revolution resulted in the time of modern capitalism, on the other side, it also gave birth to capitalism's chief adversary: the modern socialist movement.

Till the fall of Berlin Wall, socialism represented as a very important model of competition for the capitalist system. Throughout 19th and 20th century, socialism was a very important alternate. It was seen as an important alternative for capitalist economic system.

Industrial Revolution, not only gave birth to the triumph of modern capitalism but also the resulted in the modern socialist movement or the working class movement. The ideas of Karl Marx and the ideas of socialism became very powerful during this particular time, leading to a series of workers unrest across the industrial societies, because it was only through this workers unrest and agitations that they were able to get better benefits from the capitalist class.

Whether it is to attain better remuneration or better living conditions or other facilities, working class had to involve in constant struggles and constant strikes and there are moments where they were able to improve their life as a result of these struggles. Industrial capitalism, therefore meant the end of the feudalism as well as the rise of working class compressing of free independent agents who are free to sell his or her labour power.

Now, the labourer emerges as an independent agent who can sell his labour power. For example, in the previous system of slavery where you become a property of your master, where the master can sell you, and you are not the owner of your labour power. Under feudalism, your dependency over the feudal lord was much more stronger. While under capitalism, you become as an autonomous, independent agent who can sell your labour.

We conclude this session with a very famous passage from Karl Marx and Engel's very famous book, 'The Communist Manifesto' ,where they say, "All fixed fast-frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions, are swept away, all new-formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned". It is a very beautiful passage, which actually captures the kind of magnitude as well as the depth of the transformation that was happening.

Marx and Engels are saying that all new formed ones became antiquated before they can ossify or before something becomes like crystallized, they became antiquated. Even the new one becomes old, very fast and all the venerable prejudices and opinion are swept away .The whole aspects of tradition with all fixed and fast frozen relations with the train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinion are swept away and all that is solid melts into air and all that is holy is profaned. These are very beautiful sentences. All that is considered to be holy,

all that is considered to be unquestionable, all that considered to be divinely ordained are now profaned.

They are brought back to the ground, they are questioned, they are profaned, and all the holy aspects of them are taken out, and made very ordinary things. This passage is very powerful, which really captures the mood of this kind of larger transformations happening in Europe during this particular time.

As we discussed in the previous class, the kind of a large scale transformations happened in the realm of economy and the kind of social change that took place was yet another factor that played a very important role in the rise of sociology as a distinct social science discipline. We will conclude this session now and we will meet you for the next class. Thank you.