

DSC-5

Weber's Theory of Social Class - Status Power

Max Weber was a great sociologist of 19th century. He has laid a firm foundation to sociology at its developing stage. The contribution of Weber to the field of sociological thought is immense. It is a truth that social stratification is inevitable for a society since social inequality persists everywhere.

Max Weber's theory, which develops as a critique of Marx, deals with the connection between economics and society, but does not place economics at the base of society for the sake of offering a complex look at the formation of social stratification.

According to Marx there are three dimensions of stratification including ^{economic} factors. They are:
1. class ② Status ③ Power.

1. class:-

Classes are aggregates of individuals who have the same opportunities of acquiring goods, the same exhibited standard of living.

Weber is interested in the market and not in the production process.

Class is a group of people with an equal chance of getting goods in the market. The action of the class is rational and aimed at maximizing the chance in the market. It is done at the individual level.

For Weber, as for Marx, the basic condition of class lay in the unequal distribution of economic power and hence the unequal distribution of opportunity. But for Weber this economic determination did not exhaust the condition of group formation. In contrast to the economically determined class situation, "status situation" is designated every typical component of life fate of men that is determined by a specific, positive or negative social estimator of honour.

② Status:

Weber uses the term status group to refer to such groups as Junkers, industrialists & German Civil Servants. In imperial Germany, status designated the social rank of an individual and of his group. This rank consciousness was a complex phenomenon. Weber emphasizes that the collective actions of Junkers as well as of farm workers could not be understood in economic terms alone.

It also was necessary to analyse the ideas derived from the sub culture of each group ~~and~~ in Weber terms its 'style of life' which integrates into the evaluation of its economic interests.

Weber further viewed status from two distinct concepts

① class status ② social status.

Weber's concept of class status dealt primarily with the ability of the individual to control his economic environment, but he modifies this definition by considering the individual's reaction to such ability or lack of it.

② Social status applies to a typically effective claim to positive or negative privilege with respect to social prestige so far as it rests on one or more of the following basis.

- i) mode of living
- ii) a formal process of education which may consist of empirical or rational training and the acquisition of the corresponding modes of life
- iii) on the prestige of birth or of an occupation.

② power

Political power is equally important in stratification. Weber has considered this political power a residual category which does not associate with social and economic fields. As the status of an individual depends on group so also political power depends on group by acquiring legitimacy.

Economic power, status and political power unit together. Political power reflects social and economic power of an individual or a class. Naturally, power acquired in ^{one} field makes to get power in other fields. Those who are economically rich aspire to get status and political power. People in higher rank try to become politically dominant. Similarly, politicians also make attempts to gain social status and economic power. When these three powers get converged status summation takes place. For example, this type of status summation can be seen in Indian caste system. The upper caste people have dominant social, economic and political status. But a large number of lower castes have least privileges in respect to these three things.

Marx's Theory of Social Change

Marx advocated the theory of conflict. The advocates of conflict theory looks at social system from conflict perspective. The functionalists stress upon the processes ^{that} lead to social security, whereas the subscribers of conflict theory emphasize about the importance of struggle, insecurity, disorganisation in social change.

Some Assumptions.

The followers of conflict theory including Marx have developed some assumptions on conflict. Marx's views on social change can be understood in the background of such assumptions.

1. Every society continuously changes. Therefore, change is universal, and no one can stop change.
2. Every ^{society} faces conflict. Thus conflict is universal. Change is inevitable from conflict.
3. Every source of society contributes to change.
4. In every society some are dominant and others are subordinate. Wiping out of subordination leads to conflict. Conflict makes way for change.

Marx argued that conflict is the source of change. He and his friend Engels declared in communist manifest that "all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggle".

Conflict is inevitable in the state of mutual opposite interest:

Marx opined that mutual opposite interests ~~and~~ competitive interests cause conflict. Social classes like rich and poor, capitalists and labours, haves and have not's are always in exist. These classes are opposite to each other. Conflict between them is visible everywhere. This conflict is ^{the} source of change.

2) Mode of economic production is the source of social change.

According to Marx the source of social change is none other than the mode of economic production.

Marx ^{has} identified four major modes of production in the history of mankind. They are; Asiatic, ancient feudal and the modern capitalist system.

Each one of these modes evolves from internal inconsistency ^{and antagonism} between them. It means, ~~old~~ change is definite. Nobody can prevent it. But, its speed can be accelerated.

3. The seeds of change hid inside the system.

Because of class hostility, people cannot satisfy their interests in the old social system. This situation causes the emergence of new social classes.

At the large time, production powers reach their maximum limits. In this state of condition, new social classes representing new principle of production destroy old system. New powers of production emerged in old system create ~~new~~ material conditions that are essential for further progress.

4. Conflict continues till the establishment of communism

According to Marx conflict between rich and poor is continuous. It can be seen throughout human history. This conflict will root out the capitalist system and establish socialist system in place of it.

5) The theory of ^{social change} provides the picture of social dynamics:

The advocates of conflict theory stress that society is not rigid. But it is dynamic. According to them, conflict is a normal state but not abnormal one. The seeds of future social changes are in the social conditions of present society.

Criticism

1. The economic forces are not the only sources of social change.
2. Political, cultural and religious forces are not accorded importance.
3. Man is portrayed as helpless in the current economic system. It is not acceptable.

DSC-5: Social Stratification & Mobility

Marx's Theory of class

The advocates of conflict theory strongly criticised functional theory which stresses only the stability element of society. Conflict exists in social values and group interests. This theory became more popular in European countries than in America. European societies caught in class conflict for a long time.

All the followers of conflict theory argue that social stratification is a divisive system rather than uniting system of society. Stratification system ~~favours~~ exploitation of one group by another. They focus more on social classes that are the bases of social inequality.

Economic Relations constitute the Basis of classes.

According to Marx the whole society rests on economic relations. The reason is economic relations create classes or social strata.

Class Relations - The cause of all happenings in society

In the opinion of Marx classes are present in all human societies. Economic return, political power and social prestige emerge from class structure.

All the activities of society are determined by economic relations. The classes are not just income groups. They emerge on the basis of how production is socially organised.

Origin of social classes

production of material goods is the primary activity of man. It is essential for his existence. After doing this activity, he pays ^{his} attention to other activities. Classes emerge in society when man produces ^{goods} surplus. A class consisting a large number of people involve in production. Another class consisting a few people dominates over majority class and becomes owner of production and takes surplus into its custody. In this type of society we will observe two ^{types} classes.

1. Exploiter class: This class captures surplus and become ruler.
2. Exploitee class: Engage in ^{own} production on their ^{own} labour and ^{they are} subjected to exploitation.

Two classes in the productive system. Class of the Rich and the class of Labourers

In capitalist productive system, there are only two major classes. They are capitalists and the labourers. Though Marx mentioned about other classes like

farmers class and owners of small properties they disappeared in course of time and merged ^{themselves} with other classes. The capitalists get class status because of ownership of productive wealth but not merely by income. They hold ownership over means of production. It is inevitable for labourers to surrender to capitalists as they don't have opportunity to hold control over the means of production. This situation caused for the exploitation of labourers. The mutual antagonistic interest between the capitalists and the labourers keeps conflict alive between them. It has been described by ~~max~~ Marx dramatically. In this way Marx attempts to explain different classes in an objective manner.

Subjective view of classes.

In the view of Marx ~~the concept~~ class is not merely the concept of defining economic status of different groups. In his view, class is a concrete form of power of changing society. pauperisation of labourers creates class consciousness. The development of class consciousness unites labourers. Eventually, labourers start conflict against capitalists. This view of Marx is purely subjective.

Marx has both objective as well as subjective view on class system.

The definition of class of Marx includes two criteria.

1. Economic status of class.
2. class consciousness.

According to Karl Marx stratification was established to protect the economic interests of a group. It has originated for the benefit of rich people. Therefore, the conflict in society is called the conflict between the exploiters and exploitees. He predicted that the last dimension of conflict brings about changes in society. He ~~dreamed~~ dreamed of the emergence of classless society.

Critical Remarks.

1. Marx failed to ~~focus~~ focus on the talent and expertise of labourers.
2. polarisation of classes is not seen in the society.
3. no sign of historical proletarian revolution is seen.