UNIT-3 MAX WEBER

STRUCTURE

3.0   OBJECTIVES

This unit primarily deals with the central ideas of Max Weber and his argument in making

Sociology a science. The discussion on Weber includes-

• Biographical sketch of Weber and his major works

• Protestant Ethics and the Spirit of Capitalism

• Theory of authority and bureaucracy

• Theory of ideal types

• Theory of social action

3.1   INTRODUCTION

Maximilian Karl Emil Max Weber was a German sociologist, philosopher and political economist whose ideas influenced social theory, social research, and the discipline of sociology itself. He is often cited as the founding architect of sociology, along with Emile Durkheim and Karl Marx. Max Weber was a key proponent of methodological anti positivism, arguing for the study of social action through interpretative means, based on understanding the purpose and meaning that individuals attach to their own actions. Weber's main concern was understanding the processes of rationalisation, secularisation, and disenchantment which he associated with the rise in capitalism and modernity.

3.2   EARLY LIFE AND WORKS

Max Weber was born on 21 April 1864 in Erfurt, Germany, the eldest of six children. His father Max Weber Sr. was active in politics and practiced law. His mother, Helene, was well educated, deeply religious and socially conscious. As a result of his father's political prominence, Weber grew up in a home frequented by important politicians and intellectuals, such as Rudolf Von Benningsen, Theoder Mommsen, and Wilhelm Dilthey.

 Weber started school in 1870. He widely read history, classical literature and philosophy. He completed secondary school in 1882 and moved on to Heidelberg University, focusing on law, economics and history. Weber returned to Berlin to study in 1884 where he obtained a university degree in law and eventually a doctorate in political economy. By 1894, he became a professor of economics. However, his studies branched out into the study of history, economics, sociology, religion and languages. Weber married in 1893, although the relationship with his wife Marianne was more intellectual than physical. She provided Weber important support and later wrote a biography of him. Marianne Weber later became a prominent leader of German feminism, and lived until 1953.

 Weber had a nervous breakdown after his father's death. Later after his psychological depression, Weber travelled to the United States in 1904. This visit influenced Weber greatly, being impressed with mass political parties, voluntary citizen's organisations and other institutions which he felt helped promote

freedom and democracy. He also became aware of machine politics and the necessary role of bureaucracy in 'mass democracy'. After his return to Germany, Weber completed the '*The Protestant Ethics and the Spirit of Capitalism*'

(1905). In the next years, he published some methodological essays '*The Methodology of Social Sciences*', and continued his studies of major world religions in "world historical perspective". He also did extensive writing on economics and history and began his major work '*Economy and Society*' (1909), although this work was never finished. Then between

1919 and 1920, Weber wrote his last academic work entitled '*A General Economic History*' which was a series of lectures he gave at the University of Freiburg on the history of capitalist development.

In addition to his academic career, Weber participated in German political life and gave public addresses and lectures on issues such as politics and science which were well received and eventually became famous in their own right. In 1920 he caught pneumonia, and died at the age of 56.

Weber's writings as a whole are best known for their historical grasp of modern western societies and their economic, political, legal and religious development. The scopes of his writings are extremely broad and wide ranging, and his contribution to theoretical problems such as the formation of modern social classes, the nature of political legitimacy, the development of modern law and the study of world religions, is extensive. In addition to these themes, his work has a modern distinct emphasis, focusing on such issues as the rise of modern society, the formation of bureaucracy, the development of the modern political state and a comparative analysis of world economies and religions.

A central feature of Weber's overall work is his approach to social theory. By and large, Weber was a modernist in his overall approach to social thought. He brought together various traditions of social theory and formed a unique theoretical perspective based on history, economics, philosophy, law and comparative historical analysis. The theoretical influences in Weber's work derive from two broad schools of thought. First, was the influence of the German historical school of Carl Menger, Gustav Schomoller, Karl Knies and Henrich Rickert. As a result of his links to the historical school, Weber became involved in a methodological controversy which forced him to take a position critical to historical economics and the methods of the natural sciences. While Weber's involvement in the controversy shaped his work for the rest of his career, it eventually brought him into contact with Heinrich Rickert, whose participation in the debate led to a key distinction between the subject matter of the social and natural sciences. A second influence on Weber's theoretical perspective was the Marxist school of economics. At the time Weber was working, Marx's writings were pervasive in Europe and at that time there were many schools of thought which were critical to Marx's economic thinking. As a result of this, Weber criticized Marx's perspective on several fronts and this led him to formulate a completely different view of the role played by history and economy in social development.

3.3 The Protestant Ethic and The Spirit of Capitalism

Weber wrote 'The Protestant Ethic and The Spirit of Capitalism' between 1903 and 1904, and published it as two separate essays in 1905 and 1906. Since its publication, *The Protestant Ethic* has been a controversial work that has been subject to harsh criticism by many writers for its central assertion that the ascetic regulation of economic life coupled with restraint, prudent saving and s stringent attitude toward work was religiously induced. Critical objections began to emerge from historians and theologians who claimed that Weber's argument had central weaknesses. Even today, criticism of Weber's study continues to generate controversy.

Weber located a positive relationship between the Protestant ethics and the spirit of capitalism. Western capitalism, according to Weber, assumed its shape because it was supported by a certain belief system, namely, the "the Protestant ethic". Weber argued that the Protestant ethic is associated with the spirit of capitalism. In order to bring out this interrelationship, Weber constructed ideal types of both, the Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism.

The commercial activities of many of the Western European countries intensified along with a simultaneous popularity of Protestantism in these societies. The capitalism of those times were identified by two contradictory activities of amassing wealth beyond the personal uses of individuals and avoidance of use of these wealth for the purpose of personal pleasure and enjoyment. Thus, Weber noticed capitalism is not only the production and exchange, money making and profit, but an ascetic attitude towards life.

3.3.1 The Spirit of Capitalism

The desire to earn wealth or profit is as old as human history. Wealth is regarded as a symbol of power, property and prestige. However, this desire to earn wealth got an organised form in modern or rational capitalism. Weber wanted to study this rational capitalism. Weber makes a distinction between traditional capitalism and rational capitalism. Traditional capitalism was particularly noticeable in the Italian cities. Traditional capitalism was a risky business, involving the import of luxury items from distant places. Foreign silks, spices, ivory etc. were sold to buyers at exorbitant prices. The aim was to extract maximum profit. Rational capitalism on the other hand depends on mass production and distribution of goods. Industrial revolution and factory production made this possible. Rational capitalism does not deal with a few luxury items but with almost all the daily material requirements. Rational capitalism is constantly expanding and looking for new methods, new inventions, new products and new customers. Involving methodical work and regularised transactions, it is thus qualitatively and quantitatively different from traditional capitalism.

According to Weber, capitalists earn wealth not for enjoyment of life but for earning more capital. The thirst for money making for its own sake is the very essence of modern capitalism. Capitalism is an economic system which aims at the unlimited accumulation of profit through the rational organisation of production. Capitalism arose in the Western countries like England and Germany, which experienced what

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we call the "Industrial Revolution". The growth of the factory system, new techniques of production, new tools and machines made it possible for the capitalists or the owners to earn vast amounts of money. Efficiency and discipline are the pillars of capitalism. The worker was a means to an end, the end being profit. The attitude towards work was that it should be done well not because one had to do it, but because it carried an intrinsic reward.

Weber contrasted this work ethic with another type which he termed as traditionalism. Here, workers prefer less work to more pay, relaxation to exertion. They are either unable to or unwilling to take up new work methods and techniques. In capitalism, the worker is regarded by the capitalist as a means to an end. But under traditionalism, the worker employer relationship is informal, direct and personal. Traditionalism hampers the growth of capitalism. Capitalism stresses on individualism, innovation and relentless pursuit of profit whereas traditionalism is characterised by a much less disciplined and efficient system of production.

3.3.2 Features of the Protestant ethic influencing the development of capitalism

Protestantism, as the name suggests, is a religion of the protest. It arose in the sixteenth century Europe during the reformation period. Its founding fathers like Martin Luther and John Calvin broke away from the Catholic Church. They felt that the Church had become too immersed in doctrines and rituals. It had lost touch with the common people. Greed, corruption and vice had gripped the Church. Priests had a life-style more suitable for princes. The Protestants tried to recapture the lost spirit of the Church. They stressed simplicity, austerity and devotion. Calvinism, founded by John Calvin, was one such sect. The followers of Calvin in Europe were known as puritans. They migrated to the continent of North America and were the founders of the American nation. Weber observed that in the West, it was by and large the Protestants who had made great progress in education and employment. They were the top bureaucrats, the most skilled technical workers and the leading industrialists. Weber was very much interested to study Calvinism. By examining its features, we can see the linkage between religion and economy.

3.3.3 Features of Calvinism

- **Calvin's image of god-** God, said Calvin, was all powerful, transcendent. His divine will was unknowable. It would be foolish of any human being to try to understand
  God's will. It could not be understood simply because it was God's will.

- **Doctrine of predestination-** Calvinism believes that certain persons are chosen or 'elected' by God to enter heaven while the rest are dumped. The chosen will reach heaven no matter what ever they do on Earth. We cannot bribe God through prayers and sacrifices. As this Will is unknowable, we cannot change it. People can only work for their material prosperity as it would symbolise their election. We would work for the glory of God.

- **"This worldly asceticism"-** By 'asceticism' we mean strict discipline, control and conquest of desires. In Protestantism, particularly Calvinism Weber detected this-worldly asceticism. It stressed rigorous

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self-discipline in order to master the environment. A simple frugal life-style was recommended along with hard work. Worldly or sensual pleasures are denounced. Dance and music, film and theatres are thought to deviate the people from working for the glory of God. This emphasis on hard work was not confined to the Calvinists alone. It was a common feature of all Protestant sects. The idea that 'honesty is the best policy' was the principle of early capitalism. The fruits of hard labour could not be spent on worldly pleasures. Thus there was only one outlet for money. It was reinvested and hence used to make more money. Calvinists believe that 'work is worship' and 'time is money'.

- **The notion of "calling"-** The Calvinist ethic holds that all work is important and sacred. It is not mere work, it is a calling or a mission and should be performed with devotion and sincerity.

Weber summarized the Calvinists ethics in five points-

a. There exists an absolute transcendent God who created the world and rules it, but is incomprehensible and inaccessible to the finite minds of men.

b. This all powerful and mysterious God had predestined each of us to salvation or damnation, so that we cannot by our works alter a divine decree which was made before we were born.

c. God created the world for his own glory.

d. Whether he is to be damned or saved, man is obliged to work for the glory of God and to create the Kingdom of God on Earth.

e. Earthly things, human nature, and flesh belong to the order of sin and death and salvation can come to man only through divine grace.

This helped to create a disciplined and dedicated workforce without which capitalism could not have emerged. Hard-work, saving and re-investment and the desire to prosper have a strong affinity with the "spirit of capitalism". Working day and night and not enjoying the fruits of that labour might seem very irrational to most of us. But if we keep in mind the

"doctrine of predestination" and the need to prosper to prove one's "election" by God, this irrational behaviour makes sense.

3.3.4 Weber's comparative studies on religion

It is quite evident by now that Weber has tried to establish a link between religious ethics on the one hand and economic behaviour on the other. After establishing the role of Protestant ethic in the development of Western Capitalism, Weber made an attempt to search for whether a worldly asceticism of which Protestant ethic is a typical example exist outside the Western civilisation. Weber found that modern capitalism with its unique features that developed in the Western Europe did not develop in any other part of the world except there. The only factor that was lacking in the non-West is a particular religious' ethic. Weber makes a comparative study of the world religions in order to find out what is absent in many of these world religions, which could not help in the development of modern capitalism that was developed in the modern Western societies.

3.3.4.1   The religion of China: Confucianism

In traditional China, there were certain important developments which Weber distinguishes as conducive for capitalism and a rationalised economy. These include the emergence of cities and guilds, the formation of monetary systems, the development of law, and the achievement of political integration within the patrimonial state. But there were some significant differences. Weber found the religious and other conditions in China greatly limited the rationalisation of the economy. He observed that though private property emerged in China, it could not become truly private as in the West. The community or the 'sib' is powerful in China. The power of the sib rested to a large extent on the ancestor cult. The ancestral spirits acted as mediators between their decedents and god. The sib and the other traditional elements were stronger than the rational bureaucracy. The illiterate old aged people carried higher status and authority than the learned bureaucrats. Chinese justice far from being formal, legal and rational remained patriarchal in nature. All these kept the kinship relations tightly knitted and prevented the rational development of the individual.

There were some other religious factors that inhibited the development of rational capitalism in Chinese society. In Confucianism, the social order is considered to be eternal and inevitable. What is most valued in Confucianism is the cultivated man, who behaves with universal dignity and prosperity, and who is in unison with himself and the outside world. Self-control, the regulation of emotion is demanded by this ethic since harmony of the soul is the ultimate good; passion must not be allowed to disturb this balance. The notion of sin and the corresponding concept of salvation were absent. While Confucianism emphasised on self-control, there was no specific emphasis on asceticism.

Confucianism facilitated the belief in magic and animism. It was not only tolerated but also systematized and rationalised so that they become tremendous power in Chinese life. All the sciences, which had empirical and naturalistic beginnings, were completely rationalised as magical and supernatural practices and rituals. As Weber puts it, Chinese world, despite its secular, rational-empirical elements, remained enchanted. The secular bureaucracy too tolerated magic as a means of taming the masses and also they themselves believed in it.

Weber argues in spite of the various factors which might have acted to promote the rise of rational capitalism, it did not rise spontaneously in China because of the absence of ethical code that was present in Protestantism.

3.3.4.2   The religion of India: Hinduism

Hinduism differed from other world religions in some important aspects. It is an eclectic and tolerant religion. It is marked by caste system based on vertical segregation of occupational categories. There exist in Hinduism some dogmas or beliefs that are shared by most of the believers. The most important of these are those of the transmigration of souls and the notion of 'karma'. Both these dogmas are directly bound up with the social ordering of caste system existing in Indian society. Karma is the belief that actions of

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this world or this life have a consequence for the next life. Karma is a cycle of rebirth, which guarantees status mobility for the individual in the next birth on the basis of his performance of his duty in this birth. The social impact of the karma philosophy is that it prevents the individual from searching for the better occupations. It confines him to what is assigned to him through his caste system.

Weber argued that Hinduism lacked an ethic conducive for the development of capitalism, though there existed in the Indian society the social and cultural conditions, which should have given rise to modern rational capitalism. The caste system in the Hindu society tried to ritually stabilize the occupational structure and hampered the rationalisation of the economy. The Brahmins, the highest of the caste group, held the highest status and the status of other caste groups, which are actually hereditary caste groups, depend on their proximity of distance from the Brahmins. The Brahmins kept the larger masses of the society servile to them with the help of magical (purity and pollution) and mystical elements.

These orthodox Hindu beliefs, according to Weber, acted as barriers to the challenges emerging in the existing social order. Although trade and manufacturing flourished in India, the caste system and the ascendancy of Brahmin priesthood and strong belief in religious dogmas such as Karma philosophy effectively prevented any further economic development.

Based on the studies of the Asiatic religions (that of India, China, Ceylon and Korea), Weber concluded that although there existed economic strata and forms conducive for the emergence of a modern rational economy, the East was still dominated by magical mentality. This hindered the economic development in particular and rationalisation of the culture in general. The western civilisation had undergone a significant amount of disenchantment of rationalisation giving rise to modern capitalism.

3.3.4.3   Ancient Judaism

This is the religion of the Jews who originally inhabited the land of Palestine in West Asia. Judaism is the oldest of the monotheistic religions. It is a religion that speaks of one, all-powerful and almighty god. The Jews believe themselves to be the chosen ones of god or "Yahweh". Their prophets united them in the belief that they were the chosen ones of god and must help to establish God's kingdom on Earth. Judaism, unlike Confucianism and Hinduism speaks of an ethic of mastery over the environment, not harmony.

Judaism, says Weber, could have generated the "spirit of capitalism". However, certain historical forces prevented this. The exodus or the mass migration of Jews from their homeland due to persecution left them scattered all over the world. Their economic participation was restricted to money-lending, which they did very successfully.

So we can see mere material conditions like finance, trade and technology are not enough to promote capitalism. India and China had both of these, yet the value systems of these societies were such that the pursuit of health for own sake and rational organisation of work to achieve this purpose did not make sense. It did not fit in with the ethos or the ideals of these societies.

3.3.5 Critical evaluation of Weber's studies on religion

Weber's work on religion and economy has often been subjected to criticism. Some scholars feel that he has concentrated very selectively on certain aspects of religious ethics and interpreted them very narrowly so that they fit in with his theory. For instance, in his studies on the Hindu ethic, Weber has seen only one aspect of the Hindu ethic and has over emphasized the fatalistic and passive aspect of it. Some scholars would argue that the notions of 'karma' and 'dharma' actually spur individuals to act, to perform their duties, to live up to their obligations. It is pointed out that the concept of calling which forms the very foundation of the spirit of capitalism is also prevalent in Hinduism. The principle in the Bhagwad Gita of doing one's duty without thinking of benefit is similar to the doctrine of calling which is the focal point of material progress in the West.

Milton Singer has presented a functional equivalent of the Protestant Ethic in India in his study of the leading industrialists of the city of Madras. To him caste background and tradition may equally be fitted for the industrial development in India. Caste based division of labour has been used successfully in the specialisation of industrial workers. Singer observed that through the process of "compartmentalisation", many industrialists kept their business obligations and ritual obligations separate or in distinct compartments. Hence, there was no conflict between an individual's role as a businessman on the one hand and a religious person on the other. According to Singer, if capitalism is to be developed in India then it must not be an aping of the West that destroys the traditional way of life. Capitalism can rather develop within the given cultural norms and institutions of our society.

3.4   Power and Authority

3.4.1 Concept of Power

In ordinary usage, power means strength or capacity to control. Sociologists describe it as the ability of an individual or group to fulfil its desires and implement its decisions and ideas. It involves the ability to influence and/or control the behaviour of others even against their will.

For Weber, power is an aspect of social relationships. It refers to imposition of one's will upon the behaviour of another person. Power is present in social interaction and creates situations of inequality since the one who has the power imposes it on others. The impact of power varies from situation to situation. On the one hand, it depends on the capacity of the powerful individual to exercise power. On the other hand, it depends upon the extent to which it is opposed or resisted by others. Weber says power can be exercised in all walks of life and is not restricted to battle fields or to politics. According to Weber, there are two sources of power. They are-

a. Power which is derived from a constellation of interests that develop in a formally free market. For example, a group of sugar producers' controls supply of their production in the market to maximise their profit.

b. An established system of authority that allocates the right to command and the duty to obey. For example, in the Army jawan is obliged to obey the command of his officer.

The officer derives his power through an established system of authority.

3.4.2 Concept of Authority

Weber uses the German word "Herrschaft" to refer to the concept of authority. Herrschaft is a situation in which a 'Herr' or master dominates or commands others. Raymond Aron (1967:

187) defines Herrschaft as the master's ability to obtain the obedience of those who theoretically owe it to him.

Now the question arises, what is the difference between power and authority? Power refers to the ability or capacity to control another. Authority refers to legitimised power. It means that the master has the right to command and can expect to be obeyed.

3.4.3 Elements of Authority

For a system of authority to exist the following elements must be present.

a. An individual ruler/master or a group of ruler/masters.

b. An individual/group that is ruled.

c. The will of the ruler to influence the conduct of the ruled which may be expressed through commands.

d. Evidence of the influence of the rulers in terms of the compliance or obedience showed by the ruled.

e. Direct or indirect evidence which shows that the ruled have internalised and accepted the fact that the ruler's commands must be obeyed.

Authority implies a reciprocal relationship between the rulers and the ruled. The rulers believe that they have the legitimate right to exercise their authority. On the other hand, the ruled accept this power and comply with it, reinforcing its legitimacy.

3.4.4 Types of authority

Authority implies legitimacy. According to Weber, there are three systems of legitimation, each with its corresponding norms, which justify the power to command. It is these systems of legitimation which are designated as the following types of authority.

a. Traditional authority

b. Charismatic authority

c. Rational-legal authority

3.4.4.1   Traditional authority

Authority is traditional, according to Weber, when its legitimacy is based on tradition and custom and on the sanctity of age old rules and powers. Compliance to traditional authority is owed not to an objective system of legal rules but to the framework of obligations which bind individuals to the ruler by personal loyalties. Obligation to obey commands derives from the traditional status of the ruler and the ruler's

power to command respect and honour based on tradition. Here, leaders obtain their powers from inherited right and are seen as legitimate in the light of customary rights and traditional rules. Monarchies and the landholding aristocracies of the feudal period are historical examples of traditional authority or domination. In societies where traditional authority is dominant, duty and obedience is owed not to the enacted rules as such, but rather to the individual leader.

The authority of the ruler is obtained in two ways. First, by the prestige conferred by tradition, and by the belief that the ruler's commands are valid because of the authority inherent in the office, or the authority inherent in the traditional right of the ruler. Second, rulers have authority by the virtue of the discretionary powers which are conferred upon them by titles or hereditary claims to powers. In this case, power exists in the form of traditional prerogatives, privileges and rights which tend to confer almost unlimited authority to the leader. Ruler is considered to be the personal master, followers are formally the 'subject' to the ruler and the obedience is not owed to enacted rules and traditions, but to the person who occupies the position of authority. Similarly, the relationship between the ruler and their followers is defined by personal loyalty, rather than being defined by impersonal legal precepts and contractual agreements.

A second characteristic of traditional authority is that the ruler's command are perceived to be valid by virtue of the leader's inherited right to exercise personal discretion. The ruler is free from specific rules and obligations that would be binding on his conduct and, in such circumstances, the ruler is not bound by specific rules, rather acts on the basis of

'good will' even though it may not be legally binding on the rulers as such.

There are two formal types of administrative authorities within traditional domination- patrimonial and patriarchal. Patrimonial administration is common in feudal societies where traditional authority is prevalent, and where the landholder exercises power entirely without administrative staff. Here, rulers may rely on the family members, or subordinate dependents or slaves to perform specific functions for the master. Patrimonial administration tends to be based on, what Weber called, a system of favourites who perform functions for rulers out of loyalty or obligation. Individuals who occupy official positions are invariably personal followers of the master whose ties to the master are reinforced by loyalty and customary obligation. This form of authority, according to Weber, leads to arbitrary decision making which follows the personal direction of the ruler, rather than a strict set of administrative rules which equally apply to everyone.

Weber thought that traditional system of authority tends to resist bureaucratic development and the differentiation of power into separate offices or office holders. It lacks rationally established hierarchies of offices, technical training and clearly delineated jurisdiction of powers and responsibilities. Tasks are assigned on the basis of the discretion of the master, and roles are often performed by individuals who are tied to household positions.

3.4.4.2   Charismatic Authority

The term charisma has its origin in religious history and essentially means the gift or grace.

Weber used the term to refer to 'a certain quality of an individual's personality which is considered extraordinary and treated as capable of having supernatural, superhuman, or exceptional powers and qualities' of some kind. Charismatic leaders, according to Weber, are believed to have capabilities which are not accessible to ordinary individuals, and their powers are regarded as having a divine origin, and on this they come to hold power and are treated by others as leaders. These individuals, said Weber, can be prophets, persons with reputations, devout religious believers or heroes in war. The powers manifested in these individuals are thought to transcend the routines of everyday life and are believed to rest on magical powers. Leaders of this type may emerge from ordinary population and announce themselves as saviours. What is important for Weber here is that, the individual's power is regarded by others as valid and true. Their devotion to the leader is unquestioned.

In Charismatic domination or authority, Weber reasoned, the leader's claim to legitimacy originates from two related levels of belief: first is the level which derives legitimacy from people's belief that the leader is to be followed because of extraordinary capacities and powers of personal inspiration and unique ethical vision. Second is the level which derives legitimacy from what Weber calls the degree of 'felt duty' which the followers believe is put upon them to carry out the demands or commands of the leader. People adhere to the authority of the ruler on the basis of an inner conviction which they expect will resolve long standing inner conflicts and suffering. This psychological connection to the leader in creases the followers to suspend any critical judgements regarding the abilities of the leader.

Mahatma Gandhi's struggle for against British domination in India is an explicit example of Charismatic leadership. Gandhi based his acts on principles he referred to as 'ideal truths' and on activities he called 'purification' which acted to create in the believer the idea that Gandhi was the embodiment of a holy spirit. Similar to this is the mobilisation of the American Civil Rights Movement in 1962 by Martin Luther King.

Weber argued that one of the central features of Charismatic authority is the tendency of the leader to reject the desire and needs of everyday life. Such a rejection created a necessity on the part of the ruler to transcend everyday activity by emotional difference, renunciation of desire and repudiation of worldly pleasure and material property. The Dalai

Lama's rejection of the material world of everyday life for higher religious duties is based on the religious rejection of the world as it is.

Weber believed that Charismatic authority often emerges during periods of social crises. He argued that the charismatic leaders often come to power in a time of crisis either because the 'nation' or the 'people' are thought to be on the brink of a political or economical catastrophe or believed the established way of

doing things are seen as inadequate. For example, Adolf Hitler came to power in the 1930s when Germany was in a severe economic

crisis.

The administrative staffs of the charismatic leader have no appointed officials or a hierarchy of offices, and its members are not technically trained. Appointments to offices or positions are made by the leader who personally selects disciples or followers who commit themselves to serve the leader because of their beliefs in the leader's powers. Their service to the leader may function in the form of sacrifice based on the renunciation of their own interests for those of the leader's interests. Under these circumstances, the performances of administrative functions are carried out by trusted disciples rather than by appointed office holders. Weber believed that charismatic authority does not adhere to norms of rational decision making and therefore resists the tendency to bureaucratic administration.

3.4.4.3   Rational-Legal Authority

It is a system of domination characterised by legal authority where legitimacy rests on 'rational grounds' and on the belief in the inherent 'legality of enacted rules'. Modern democracies are examples of rational-legal authority or legal domination. In this case, those who have been elevated to political authority under the rule of law have the right to issue commands and form a system of legitimate authority. Compliance is owed to those issuing commands based on the principles of law rather than personal authority of the ruler. A key characteristic of rational-legal authority is that the officials in power are themselves subject to laws and must orient their action to an impersonal order of legal rules at their disposition. Since the operation and organisation of this system of domination takes the form of legality, the total system of laws and judicial framework leads to a form of administrative organisation which grows out of the principle of legality and the authority of law. Weber took the view that the administrative apparatus in legal authority tends to be bureaucratic in orientation and this, Weber thought, is reflected in the organisation of offices, the chain of command, an administrative staff of functionaries and the use of official files. Offices which are governed in this way function as administrative agencies with clearly defined limits imposed upon their powers and decision making. Officials are either elected or appointed to a term of office. Rational norms dictate that all administrative acts be put in writing.

The connection between legal authority and a bureaucratically organised means of administration is central to Weber's thinking in a number of ways. First, he believed that bureaucratic administration was technically the most efficient means of exercising authority over people, and the bureaucratic development was at the basis of the Western Democratic state. Second, he thought that a system defined by legality led to an organisation of offices based on an official hierarchy that relates to offices in terms of their function and to specified jurisdictions in terms of authority. More than any other system of domination, Weber

believed that legal authority eliminates arbitrariness in the exercise of power, and that it replaces forms of authority of the past where power was exercised by status privilege or by the sheer application of physical force.

3.5   Theory of Bureaucracy

A bureaucracy is a body of non-elective government officials and/or an administrative policymaking group. Historically, bureaucracy referred to government administration managed by departments staffed with nonelected officials. In modern parlance, bureaucracy refers to the administrative system governing any large institution. Since being coined, the word "bureaucracy" has developed negative connotations for some. Bureaucracies are criticized for their complexity, their efficiency, and their inflexibility. However, others have defended the existence of bureaucracies. The German sociologist Max Weber argued that bureaucracy constitutes the most efficient and rational way in which human activity can be organized, and that systematic processes and organized hierarchies were necessary to maintain order, maximize efficiency and eliminate favouritism. But even Weber saw bureaucracy as a threat to individual freedom, in which the increasing bureaucratization of human life traps individuals in an "iron-cage" of rule based rational control.

 The term 'bureaucracy' is French in origin, and combines the French word 'bureau'- desk or office- with the Greek word kratos- rule or political power. It was coined sometime in the mid- 1700s by the French economist Jacques Claude Marie Vincent de Gournay, and was a satirical pejorative from the outset. Gourney never wrote the term down, but was later quoted at length in a letter.

 The first known English-language use was in 1818. The 19th century definition referred to a system of governance in which offices were held by unelected career officials, and in this sense "bureaucracy" was seen as a distinct form of government, often subservient to a monarchy. In the 1920s, the definition was expanded by the German sociologist Max Weber to include any system of administration conducted by trained professionals according to fixed rules. Weber saw the bureaucracy as a relatively positive development.

3.5.1 Weber's notion of bureaucracy

Max Weber described many idealised types of public administration and government in His work "Economy and Society" (1922). It was Weber who began the studies of bureaucracy and whose works led to the popularisation of the term. As the most efficient and rational way of organizing, bureaucratization for Weber was the key part of the rational-legal authority and he saw it as the key process in the ongoing rationalisation of the Western society. Weber essentially argues that bureaucracy constitutes the most efficient and rational way in which human activity can be organized, and that is indispensible to the modern world.

 Weber listed several preconditions for the emergence of bureaucracy. The growth in space and population being administered, the growth in complexity of the administrative tasks being carried out, the existence

of a monetary economy requires a more efficient administrative system. Development of transport and communication technologies makes more efficient administration possible.

3.5.2 Characteristics of bureaucracy

Bureaucracy refers to the management of large organizations characterized by hierarchy, fixed rules, impersonal relationships, rigid adherence to procedures, and highly specialized division of labour.

Weber suggests the characteristics of bureaucracy as following:

- A bureaucratic administration presupposes a chain of command that is hierarchically organised. It follows a clearly defined structure of offices and positions with duly assigned responsibilities. It is based on different levels of authority, jurisdiction, due process and correct rulings.

- A system of impersonal rules governs the rights and duties of positional incumbents and the adherence to rules always prevail over emotional or ethical considerations.

- The management of modern offices is based upon the written documents (files), which are preserved in their original form.

- Bureaucratic officials receive contractually fixed salaries and do not own their offices or means of production. This creates an official separation between the administrative sphere of responsibility and the private affairs of the official.

- It presupposes a system of impersonal guidelines for dealing with and defining work responsibilities. Rules are defined for typical cases and officials deal with them effectively by applying uniform rules and procedures. Decision making is carried out with regard to a reliance on technical knowledge and the concept of the expert prevails.

- A bureaucracy is predicted on a clearly defined division of labour based upon functional specialization of tasks and a well-defined hierarchy of authority. Authority is strictly defined and officials take orders only from those immediately above them in rank.

- Within the bureaucracy, norms of impersonality govern inter-personal relations.

- Bureaucratic officials are inclined to treat people in terms of 'cases' rather than as individuals. They remain impersonal in them in their contacts with the public.

- Written documents and a rigid orientation to files is a precondition to legitimate decision making.

3.5.3 Concept of 'Office' in bureaucratic organisation

According to Weber, office refers to a sphere of legal authority that is granted to an area of work which is under the administrative jurisdiction of an official and their directives. Bureaucratic office holders often obtain their position by appointment to public service which is in accord with the vocation of the office holder. The officers are required to undergo prescribed courses of training and are required to take special examinations which function as preconditions to employment and service. Officials perform their function as duties which are executed as administrative functions. Functions and duties of the officials are defined by legal rules and legislations. Any official breaking the legal rules of the official is apt to be removed

from his post. Loyalty to the office owes allegiance to the framework of legal rules which are contractually enforced. Higher status in the office gives greater authority and lower status demands less expertise and the authority of the official is weakened.

It is the norm for the bureaucratic officials that the officials are to be appointed by their seniors. If they are elected by those they govern, they immediately lose their bureaucratic character. It is because of the fact that elected officials tend to be autonomous in relation to their superiors and are directly accountable to the people who elected them.

3.5.4 Consequences of Bureaucracy

Max Weber basically outlines two major consequences of bureaucracy:

i. First consequence of incompatibility of bureaucracy with democracy. As soon as bureaucracy develops, the governed tend to accept the authority of bureaucratic decision making without question and in doing so they give up the right to accountable government. Moneyed elites tend to wield power over bureaucratic agencies through political donations in exchange for patronage positions. This gives rise to economic interest groups who lobby state officials to advance their interests by manipulating the structure of power.

ii. Second consequence of bureaucracy is the tendency to develop secrecy, especially in regard to the knowledge they hold and to their intentions or their plans. This leads to the exclusion of the public from decision making and from participation in the production of consensus. Bureaucratic institutions thus become closed, and this entails a loss of democracy.

3.6   IDEAL TYPES

Weber first developed the concept of the 'ideal type' in a writing entitled '*Objectivity in the Social Sciences and Social Policy*' which was published in the year 1905. Weber used ideal type as a methodological tool to describe the comparative features of different societies by outlining the distinct social characteristics.

According to New Webster's Dictionary 'ideal' is a 'conception or a standard of something in its highest perfection'. It refers to a mental image or conception rather than a material object. It is a model. The term 'type' means a kind, class or group as distinguished by a particular character. Thus generally speaking, we may conceptualise ideal type as a kind, category, class or group of objects, things or persons with particular character that seems to be the best example of it. He defined ideal type as a 'conceptual pattern which brings together certain relationships and events of historical life into a complex whole whose purpose is to describe historical societies by comparing their internal and external characteristics'. In other words, ideal type is a mental construct, like a model, for the scrutiny and the systematic characterisation of a concrete situation. Indeed, he used ideal type as a methodological tool to understand and analyse social reality. Max Weber was particularly concerned with objectivity in social sciences. Hence, he used ideal type as a methodological tool that looks at reality objectively. It scrutinises, classifies, systematises

and defines social reality without subjective bias. Ideal type does not deal with values. Ideal types are concepts formulated on the basis of facts collected carefully and analytically for empirical research.

3.6.1 Construction of Ideal Types

Ideal types are constructed or formulated by the abstraction and combination of a number of elements, which though found in reality, are rarely or never discovered in specific form. For the construction of ideal types, the sociologist selects a number of traits from the whole which is otherwise confusing and obscure, to constitute an intelligible entity. For example, if we wish to study Democracy in India, we mention some of the essential characteristics of Democracy like existence of a multi-party system, universal adult franchise, formation of government by people's representatives, peoples participation in the decision making process, equality before law, respect to majority verdict etc. This formulation of a pure type or an ideal type concept of Democracy will guide us and work as a tool in our analysis. Any deviation from and conformity to it will unfold its reality. Ideal types, therefore, do not consider the common or average characteristics but focus on the typical and essential characteristics.

One thing should be kept in mind that though ideal types are constructed from facts existing in reality, they do not describe or represent the total reality; they are of pure types in the logical sense. According to Weber, 'in its conceptual purity, this ideal mental construct cannot be found empirically anywhere in reality'.

3.6.2 Characteristics of Ideal Types

Some of the important characteristics of ideal types are as follows:

i. **Ideal types are mental constructs or subjective in nature.** As Weber has stated more positively the ideal types are mental constructs which are ideal in the 'logical sense', that is, they state a logical extreme. They depend on our capacity for comprehension and imagination. For example, we have ideal types about perfect health, church, state of equilibrium, perfect religion, democracy etc.

ii. Since ideal types are mental constructs, **they do not exactly correspond to the reality**. Ideal types are constructed in such a way that they are kept at a distance from the real world. Though they are constructed out of many actual facts, they themselves do not exactly correspond to the actual facts in each and every aspect. They are mental constructs created to understand reality and they themselves do not have actual existence. Differences

are found between ideal constructs and actual situations. Thus, not all the characteristics will be present in the real world, but any particular situation may be understood by comparing it with the ideal type.

For example, individual bureaucratic organisations may not exactly match the elements in the ideal type bureaucracy, but the type can illuminate these variations. Ideal types are therefore hypothetical constructions, formed from real phenomena, which have an explanatory value.

iii. **Ideal types as theoretical tools:** though ideal types are not actualities and remain as our mental constructs they function as theoretical tools to understand the reality. "Its function is the comparison

with empirical reality in order to establish its divergences or similarities, to describe them with most unambiguously intelligible concepts and to understand and to understand and explain them casually."

iv. **Ideal types are not the instruments to denote statistical average**: The ideal type is not a description of those factors or laws which are thought to be found on the average in that kind of configuration. For example, the Protestant Ethic does not indicate the average behaviour of all the Protestants. Similarly, honesty does not indicate the average behaviour of all the honest people that the society has witnessed.

v. **Ideal types signify "pure" or "abstract" types and do not indicate anything that is normatively desirable**. As Weber himself has stated that ideal types have "no connection at all with value-judgements, and it has nothing to do with any type of perfection there than a purely logical one." There are thus all sorts of ideal types of brothels as well as religions [Weber], Totalitarianism is no less an ideal type than democracy, for example, for both are abstract constructs with which we can compare and contrast actual political systems in order to see their various characteristics more clearly. It is a "methodological device", that is all. It is not ideal ethically good or right.

vi. **Ideal types are not hypotheses** and hence the question of proving or disproving them and establishing general laws does not arise here. Weber in his studies in the Sociology of Religion examined the relationship between the religious ethics and in various societies and elements of economic development there. But this was not to establish general laws about the relationships between "religious ethics" and "economic development". It was essentially to check the sufficiency and validity of his ideal type of relationship between the Protestant ethic and industrial capitalism of Western Europe.

vii. **It is essentially a one sided model**. It deliberately emphasises those imputations thought to be worth postulating and testing. In this sense, it is purely selective, and of the nature of experiment.

viii. **An ideal type does provide an exhaustive description of a social phenomenon**. Many ideal types can be constructed about any specific configuration, each selectively emphasising one point of view and submitting its particular imputations to test.

ix. **Ideal types are not rigid and fixed things but are subject to change**. Ideal types are abstract in nature and reside in our imagination. They are changeable and subject to consideration from time to time. They are affected by social thinking and social environment and hence cannot be permanent.

3.6.3 Categories of Ideal Types

3.6.3.1   Historical Ideal Types

These can be described as ideal types that select general concepts that are common to a wide range of different social characteristics that exist among historical societies. In this case, historical ideal types begin by selecting features of different societies on the basis of their common characteristics, and employ a criterion of selection of general concepts which are precisely definable and which may include concepts

such as Protestantism, feudalism and capitalism. In this case, the ideal type is designed to capture features of empirical reality by arriving at what Weber refers to as the 'analytical accentuation' of certain aspects of social historical reality. For example, when we attempt to understand the development of a city economy, and when we engage in these sorts of ideal type comparisons we 'construct the concept of a city economy' and thus get closer to it.

An ideal type is thus a 'picture of events' which approximates the reality of a given society under certain conditions of its organisation. The characteristics of a city economy include elements such as a rational market, a system of law based on statutes, the decline of magic and a system of private property. Other related traits may include the concept of a citizen, a municipal organization and a bureaucracy with political office holders. Weber thought that it is only possible to formulate the concept of a city economy by isolating what is essential from what is inessential. The ideal type, therefore, does not serve as a description of concrete historical reality, but simply as a construct used to elucidate the features of historical reality. This is carried out by extracting essential traits or characteristics which elaborate concepts by comparing them with the concrete features of the social structure. These traits are then compared to an ideal picture of social reality, and from this a workable type is formed. When applied to reality, said Weber, ideal types are useful in research and in social and historical description because they function by arranging what initially were indistinct traits into a consistent construct by an elucidation of their essential elements.

3.6.3.2   Abstract Elements of Social Reality

These elements of social reality are found in a variety of historical and cultural contexts. Bureaucracy and types of authority are important examples of these abstract elements.

While explaining bureaucracy, Weber pointed out that bureaucracy was the best administrative form for the rational or efficient pursuit of organisational goals. Weber's ideal type of bureaucracy comprised various elements such as (a) high degree of specialisation and a clearly-defined division of labour, with tasks distributed as official duties, (b) hierarchical structure of authority with clearly circumscribed areas of command and responsibility, (c) establishment of a formal body of rules to govern the operation of the organisation and administration based on written documents, (d) impersonal relationships between organisational members and the clients, (e) recruitment of personnel based on ability and technical knowledge, (f) long term employment, promotion on the basis of seniority and merit, (g) fixed salary and the separation of private and official income.

Though examples of developed bureaucracies existed in different parts of the world prior to the emergence of modern capitalism, it is only within this that organisations are found which approximate to this ideal typical form. Weber used these abstract elements of bureaucracy to explain a concrete phenomenon.

To understand the various aspects of authority Max Weber constructed its ideal types in terms of three types of authority. These are traditional, rational and charismatic.

Traditional authority is based upon the belief in the sanctity of age old customs and rules. Rational authority is maintained by laws, decrees, and regulations. Charismatic authority is characterised by exceptional virtue possessed by or attributed to the leader by those who follow the leader, have confidence in the leader and are devoted to the leader.

Hence the construction of a pure type of bureaucracy and authority helps the sociologists as an ideal type "which has the merit of clear understand ability and lack of ambiguity".

3.6.3.3 Reconstruction of a particular type of behaviour

This ideal type includes those elements that constitute rationalising reconstructions of a particular kind of behaviour. For example, according to Weber, all propositions in economic theory are merely ideal typical reconstructions of the ways people would behave if they were pure economic subjects. These include laws of supply and demand, marginal utilities etc. Supply of commodity in the market governs prices in relation to demand. Similarly, utility of a commodity for consumption is higher or lower depending upon the units available for consumption. Economic theory rigorously conceives economic behaviour as consistent with its essence. This essence is often defined in a precise manner.

3.6.4 Purpose of Ideal Types

According to Weber, an ideal type serves the following purposes.

a. It can be used to make judgements about whether the type of society referred to in concrete reality actually exists and to what extent its characteristics can be made clear and understandable.

b. It is an indispensible tool for the purpose of a comparative analysis of different societies and for developing an understanding of their social and historical characteristics, and how these may change over time.

c. While an ideal type is not a description of reality, it can be used to assist in reducing ambiguity about empirical reality by providing the means to foster adequate descriptions
of it.

d. As a methodology the ideal type leads to the formation new concepts about the social and economic organisation of societies by inviting historical comparisons of given social types that are within the conceptual boundaries of history and reality.

3.6.5 Critical Comments on Ideal Types

Though Weber's concept of "ideal type" has been well appreciated by scholars it is not free from criticisms. Some of the criticisms levelled against the concept are briefed here:

a. Though the ideal type is a "mental construct" many a times it is confused to be the "actual reality" itself.

b. There is also the possibility of considering the "ideal type as a procrustean bed into which data are forced in."

c. The "ideal type" is often made a theory and the ideas or things that it represents are often taken to be the ideas and things that are very much found in the real world.

d. It is commented that the concept of "ideal type" is very complex and only an expert sociologist can understand and make use of it efficiently.

e. Though "ideal types" are very significant in the study of social sciences, their usage is somewhat limited because they cannot be used in all types of social analysis.

f. There are critics who argue that "ideal type analysis should be dropped as utterly inappropriate to sociological analysis once this is seen as involving the meaningful understanding of specific cases and not the development of general concepts and general theories.

g. Weber himself had argued that "ideal types were not models to be tested. However, other sociologists treat them as testable models of the real world. Further confusion may arise since Weber himself often implicitly used ideal types as testable models.

Finally, it can be said that if the above mentioned dangers and deficiencies are averted, the ideal type can become an extremely useful instrument to confront reality.

3.7   SOCIAL ACTION

Weber's theory of social action follows directly from his discussion of the problem of methods in the social sciences. He first developed a theory of social action in "Economy and Society" between 1911 and 1920. Weber is concerned with developing a theory of society that was consistent with making judgements about the decisions individuals make in their actions with others in a social environment. Weber stated that 'sociology is a science concerning itself with the interpretative understanding of human social action'. Between 1903 and 1907, Weber wrote several essays on methodological issues in which he discussed problems related to founding a theory of social action. While the essays were originally written as critical reviews of the ongoing debate between the natural and social sciences on the question of method, they became a theoretical justification for the pursuit of a theory of meaningful social action. Weber argued that the objective sciences of the outer world of nature had failed to treat the problem of 'human inner understanding'. He claimed that social sciences were concerned essentially with the 'inner states' of actors. The social sciences have as their object those things which in principle are different from the objects of the sciences like physics, chemistry and biology. Weber believed that what sets the subject matter of social science apart is that human beings have 'inner states' in terms of which they 'understand' the events of the outer world in which they come to act. Weber reasoned that human conduct is in principle distinct from physical events in the outer world because the physical behaviour of things in nature such as the action of the Earth around the sun does not involve understanding, and is thus devoid of it. Human individuals understand the action of others by interpreting them, and that they depend on this understanding in order to act. Their actions involve meaningful interpretations of the act of others they are responding to.

Society is the product of what is produced by human beings acting according to values and value ends. Thus whatever is produced in the society by human action is the result of values attaching to it. Every product of society- history, language, art, religion- embodies some value recognised by human actors as having value attached to it. As far as the objective sciences are concerned, whatever is a product of nature is without regard to values. In order to understand the meaning of a particular action we must understand the values of the actor and the other actor, which is only possible in social sciences.

3.7.1 Meaning of Social Action

According to Weber, any form of investigation which reduces human action to its simple external characteristics would be meaningless since it would not capture the tendency of human interpretative understanding. Human beings can only act in the world after having interpreted the act of others to whom they are responding. "Social Action" takes place only 'when the acting individual attaches a subjective, meaning to the act and when the act takes account of the behaviour of others and is thereby oriented in its course.' From this, there appears to be three key aspects to defining a human action as social:

- Meaningful to the actor- Presumably things that are understandable or are of concern to the social actor, perhaps as a result of experiences, values and interests.

- Consider others- other social actors are necessarily involved in order for an individual action to become social action, and they must explicitly be considered by the social actor
   (whether positively, negatively or neutrally).

- Oriented- some direction or purpose in the action.

3.7.2 Meaning and Orientation

This includes actions that are associated with ends that the actor wishes to pursue, actions or ends that have value of their own sake for the actor (spiritual, ethical, emotional), 'feeling states' associated with affectual and emotional activities and interests, traditional and habitual feelings, concerns and interests that may drive from experiences and socialisation. Some activities that Weber does not consider to be social action, like contemplation or spiritual activities, also having meaning for the individual but these either do not involved others or are not oriented.

Weber's first reference to meaning notes that this is 'actual meaning in the given concrete case of a particular actor' or alternatively, 'to the average or approximate meaning attributable to a given plurality of actors'. In the case of the individual, Weber notes how this means conduct that the actor subjectively orients to the behaviour of others. This includes some idea of subjective consciousness, awareness of others, attention to others, having some understanding how one's actions respond to others, or are likely to affect others. It is also oriented in its course, implying that it has some purpose, aim or end, so that the actor presumably considered how it takes others into account.

3.7.3 Range of Social Action

Weber defines and analyses the range of social action and the categorization of such actions. One way that social action can be understood is by considering what is not social action. Among these actions are:

- **Reactive Behaviour-** Here there is no subjective meaning and generally 'merely reactive imitation' is not social.

- **Traditional behaviour** although this may cross the line between what is meaningful and not and "almost automatic reaction to habitual stimuli".

- **Psychological processes** may not be meaningful, at least not discernible by those other than a psychologist.

- **Mystical experiences** are not ordinarily social since they are entirely personal and "contemplation and solitary prayer".

- **Psychic or psychophysical phenomena** such as "fatigue, habituation, memory … states of euphoria" and variations in individual reaction times or precision.

- Non-social, if **overt action** directed toward inanimate objects. What about action directed toward non-human animals, e.g. walking a dog.

- **Natural actions** such as "a mere collision of two cyclists" although subsequent actions such as insult, blows, or friendly discussion are ordinarily social meaningful.

- **Common actions in a crowd, crowd psychology, mass action**. These might be socially meaningful in some circumstances but tend to be more habitual, impulsive (cheering or booing at a sporting event or clapping after a music performance, eg. after every solo in jazz), automatic, or reactive.

- **Imitation** may be meaningful or not, depending on its form and results. Weber argues that this is difficult to analyse – imitation may be merely reactive or it may be a learning process that has subjective meaning associated with this. The reactive learning of language by children is of this sort and it is difficult to determine the extent to which subjective meaning is involved.

- "**Purely affectual behavior**" is also on the borderline – affectual action is one form of social action but if the activity is merely reactive or habitual, it may not be so meaningful in each circumstance.

All of the above show the difficulty of defining social action since the dividing line between what is meaningful or considered differs by individual and situation. While Weber fairly clearly distinguishes between what is social action and what is not in analytical terms, any study of social action requires careful empirical study and sympathetic understanding by a sociologist.

Among the types of action that have meaning attached to them and result from conscious consideration, Weber notes the following:

- Orientation toward "ultimate ends or values", determining the "ends of the participants and [obtaining] adequate knowledge of all the circumstances", and "the various ways in which human action has been oriented to these facts".

- "Oriented to the past, present, or expected future behaviour of others".
- May involve others who are "entirely unknown".
- Use of money and economic exchange are socially meaningful in that they are considered, involve others (including future), and are oriented toward obtaining some end.

3.7.4 Types of Social Action

Weber argues that there are four major types of social action. These are ideal types in that each is analytically distinct from the other, are average forms of behaviour, are "conceptually pure", and "sociologically important". The four forms are:

1.7.4.1 Traditional Social Action

This is a form of social action in which the individual reacts 'automatically' to the problem in the outside world and to the external circumstances in a habitual manner. Traditional action is based on a habitual response to the world that guides the behaviour of the actor in a course of action which has been repeatedly followed in the past. To act in this way, Weber argued, the actor need not imagine a goal, a picture an outcome or be conscious of a specific commitment to values or to value scales. According to Weber, the bulk of everyday action corresponds to this type. In traditional action, the ends and means are fixed by customs, there is no calculation in the attainment of ends, and there is little or judgement. Traditional action lacks a specific orientation to rationality, it lies closer to what Weber called the 'borderline of what can be justifiably called meaningful oriented action'. A religious leader, for example, may exhibit traditional action by a devotion to routine or to ways of living in the world that are frozen in tradition.

Traditional action is distinguished from the other types of action by the absence of a subjective meaning that is attached by the actor to the situation, and from this perspective Weber believed that traditional action forgoes a specific orientation to subjective meaning since the actor largely responds to situations based on a customary view of reality that is handed down from the past.

1.7.4.2 Affectual (Emotional) Action

Action is emotional when it 'satisfies a need for revenge, sensual gratification, devotion, contemplative bliss, or the working off of emotional tensions'. In this context, the actor is directly impelled to act on the basis of an emotional response to a situation or external circumstance that is determined by the state of mind of the actor. Like traditional action, emotional action lacks a specific orientation to goal or to a set of ultimate values since its means of expression is based on the emotional state of the actor in a given circumstance. Under these conditions, emotional action lacks a specific rational orientation to the world and forgoes means and ends calculation since it is governed by impulsive acts which often have no goal or aim. Like traditional action, emotional action is on the border line of what is considered to be meaningful action and, in this sense, it is irrational in that it forgoes inner evaluation and subjective meaning.

1.7.4.3 Value Rational Action (Wertrational)

This is a type of action in which ultimate values act as a guide to action. While the first two types of action were characterized by the absence of a specific meaning that is subjectively assigned by the actor, value rational action exemplifies a rational orientation to the extent that a specific meaning is applied to the action by the actor. Weber describes value rational action as a straightforward orientation to absolute values and consideration of action based on a value orientation to the world. Under these circumstances the actor seeks to put into practice their convictions of what seems to them to be required either by duty, honour, the pursuit of beauty, a religious call or the importance of some cause no matter in what it consists, regardless of possible cost to themselves.

In this case, the meaning of an action does not lie in the achievement of a result but rather lies in carrying out the realization of the specific value considerations for its own sake, and therefore the sole aim of value rational action is the realization of specific value and the obligation placed on the actor by the value in question. Here the efficacy of the means is not taken into account. The actor feels obligated to follow commands or demands which are binding on the actor's commitment to specific values. For instance, the Dalai Lama acts on the basis of promoting peace in the world because of the meaning that attaches to the value of promoting human life and his commitment to the pursuit of such values.

1.7.4.4 Instrumental Rational Action (Zweckrational)

This type of action differs from value rational by virtue of the fact that the ends, the means and the secondary results are all rationally taken into account and weighed for the explicit purpose of maximizing successful outcomes and controlling unforeseen circumstances in reality. Instrumental action utilizes strategies in relation to the world based on the most effective procedures for attaining desired ends. Actors may choose to treat ends as a given set of subjective wants and arrange them in a scale of urgency. To the extent that instrumental action orient itself to the rational achievement of ends, it may be without relation to values, and in this respect the actor may not be bound by specific values or value scales. The actor takes into account those conditions of knowledge calculated to produce the best possible outcomes.

3.7.5 Critique of Weber's Social Action Theory

1. It limits the study for sociologists. According to him, social is that which has meaning for individuals. Therefore, individual behaviour activities, which lack meaning, are not a subject matter of sociology. Also such behaviour should be oriented towards others.

   Therefore, solitary prayer is not a social action.

2. According to Weber, human beings are rational and conscious in interpreting the world. Thus, he excludes much action as irrational. These include impulsive acts and emotions like anger, pride, jealousy etc.

3. Weber's action theory studies only individual action. Group or collectivities are not his primary focus.

4. He mentions little about conflict. He does not consider disagreements and misunderstandings.

5. According to Weber, actions of individuals must be analysed to determine their consequences. That is causal approach. But there may be unintended consequences. Outcomes of social action cannot be predicted from meanings of action.

6. According to C.W Mills, Weber laid greater emphasis on mental processes but spent a little time on them.

3.8   Let's Sum Up

In this unit, we learnt about Max Weber's theory of Protestant Ethics and the Spirit of Capitalism where he hypothesized that capitalism is a product of the western mind. According to him, the Protestant Ethic spawned and encouraged what Weber called the "spirit of capitalism". Weber studied other religion to establish the relationship between protestant ethic and spirit of capitalism. The reason he gives why rational capitalism did not develop in other parts of the world is the lack of this religious ethic in other religions around the world.

The unit also discusses the Weberian concept of 'Power' and 'Authority' and we also discussed about the three types of authority- traditional, charismatic and rational legal. The unit also focused on Bureaucracy as the instrument through which rational-legal authority operates. Not only did the unit outline the features of a bureaucratic office but also the officials or staff that constitute it.

We have also discussed in detail the concept and characteristics of ideals types. Ideal types are those constructs or concepts which are formulated for interpretation and explanation of social reality. Some focus is also laid upon the concept of social action which was primarily developed by Max Weber to observe how human behaviours relate to cause and effect in the social realm. The theory of social action accepts and assumes that humans vary their actions according to social contexts and how it will affect other people; when a potential reaction is not desirable, the action is modified accordingly. For Weber, Sociology is the study of society and behaviour and therefore must look at the heart of interaction.

3.9   Key Words

1. **Authority-** Legitimate power that is institutionalised.

2. **Bureaucracy-** A system of administration based on the division of labour, specialisation, hierarchy of officials, formal body of rules to govern, written documents, impersonal relations, recruitment and promotion on the basis of ability and separation of private and official income etc.

3. **Capitalism-** An economic organisation which consists of private ownership of property, control of capital, has market mechanism and provision of workers and which aims at making maximum profit.

4. **Charismatic Authority-** In this type of authority, commands are obeyed because followers believe in the extraordinary character of the leader.

5. **Hypothesis-** A statement of inter-related concepts, which may be tested for its validity.

6. **Ideal Type-** A methodological tool developed by Weber through which the most commonly found features of a phenomenon are abstracted. Ideal type is an analytical construct with which the social scientist compares existing reality.

7. **Power-** One's capacity to impose his or her will on others.

8. **Protestant Ethic-** A doctrine of Christianity which provided much of the cultural content of capitalism like individualism, achievement motivation, hostility to inherited wealth and luxury, emphasis on work and profit, opposition to magic and superstition and commitment to rational organisation.

9. **Rational-Legal Authority-** This involves obedience to formal rules established by regular public procedure.

10. **Reason-** An explanation or justification of an act, idea etc.

11. **Value-** An idea about what is good, right, wise or beneficial.

3.10 Suggested Further Readings

- Aron, R. 1967. *Main Currents of Sociological Thought.* Volume 2, Penguin Books: London.

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- Haralambos, M. 1980. *Sociology: Themes and Perspectives.* Oxford University Press: London.