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SAMAJ

A Sociological Review of Contemporary India & World

Contemporary Issues
Through a Sociological
Lens

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Acknowledgement

The SAMAJ Magazine, a publication by Sociologus, is the result of the collective efforts, ideas, time, and encouragement of many people. We would like to express our sincere gratitude to everyone who has contributed to making this issue possible.

First and foremost, we extend our heartfelt thanks to all the writers and contributors who shared their knowledge, perspectives, research, experiences, and ideas with SAMAJ. Your willingness to contribute has enriched this magazine and helped us create a space for meaningful sociological discussion.

We are especially grateful to our editorial team and the entire Sociologus team for their dedication in conceptualising, editing, reviewing, designing, and preparing this issue. Their continuous efforts behind the scenes have played an important role in bringing SAMAJ to our readers.

We also thank our readers, students, educators, researchers, and sociology enthusiasts whose interest and encouragement inspire us to continue building a platform for learning, discussion, and exchange of ideas.

Our sincere appreciation goes to everyone who supported the magazine directly or indirectly—through suggestions, feedback, sharing resources, reviewing content, or simply encouraging the initiative.

SAMAJ is envisioned not merely as a magazine, but as a space for sociological thinking, dialogue, and reflection. We hope every article, idea, and perspective presented in this issue encourages readers to look at society with greater curiosity, critical thinking, and empathy.

Finally, we thank everyone who believes in the vision of Sociologus: making sociology accessible, relevant, and connected to contemporary society.

With gratitude,

Team Sociologus
Publisher & Editorial Team — SAMAJ Magazine
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Preface

SAMAJ is a monthly magazine by Sociologus, created with the aim of bringing sociology closer to contemporary society. It is an attempt to connect sociological concepts, thinkers, current affairs, social issues, and everyday experiences in a way that is useful, accessible, and intellectually engaging.

The magazine is primarily designed for UPSC Sociology Optional aspirants, students of sociology, researchers, educators, and all those who simply have a curiosity and love for understanding society. We hope that SAMAJ becomes a useful companion for those preparing for examinations while also serving as a platform for wider sociological reflection.

The content of SAMAJ draws from a range of sources, including newspapers, current affairs, academic writings, sociological literature, previous issues and publications, reports, and publicly available information. We also greatly value the knowledge, perspectives, and contributions shared by our writers and contributors. Their support helps us bring diverse viewpoints and contemporary examples into the magazine.

At SAMAJ, we believe that sociology should not remain confined to textbooks. Events happening around us—from changes in family and work to youth movements, technology, politics, inequality, culture, migration, and social change—can all be understood through a sociological lens. The magazine therefore attempts to make these connections meaningful and relevant, particularly for UPSC preparation.

At the same time, SAMAJ is a growing initiative. Despite our efforts to verify, edit, and present information carefully, there may occasionally be errors, omissions, factual inaccuracies, typographical mistakes, or differences in interpretation. We sincerely acknowledge this possibility. Readers are encouraged to independently verify important facts and refer to original sources, especially for academic and examination purposes.

We welcome constructive criticism, corrections, suggestions, and contributions from our readers and writers. Such feedback will help us improve every future issue.

We hope you enjoy reading this issue as much as we enjoyed putting it together.

— Team Sociologus

For UPSC aspirants, sociology students, and everyone who loves understanding society.

Editorial Note

Dear Aspirants,

Every UPSC journey is more than completing a syllabus. It is a journey of learning to **think sociologically, connect theory with reality, and transform complex social issues into clear and meaningful answers.**

With this first edition of **SAMAJ**, we bring you an attempt to make Sociology more connected to the society we live in. This magazine is designed primarily for **UPSC Sociology Optional aspirants**, but also for sociology students, teachers, researchers, and everyone who finds society worth questioning and understanding.

At SAMAJ, we believe that **Sociology does not exist only inside textbooks.** Durkheim, Weber, Marx, M.N. Srinivas, G.S. Ghurye, Andre Beteille and other thinkers become more meaningful when their ideas are connected with contemporary issues—changing families, youth movements, gender relations, caste, technology, migration, inequality, religion, work, politics and social change.

In our **Sociological Perspectives**, we revisit important concepts, thinkers and debates in a way that helps strengthen your conceptual foundation. The objective is not simply to tell you *what a thinker said*, but to encourage you to ask **how and where those ideas can be applied to understand contemporary society.**

Our **Current Sociology** section attempts to connect newspapers and contemporary developments with sociological concepts and theories. We have tried to bring examples, cases, reports and developments that can help you enrich your UPSC answers with relevant and contemporary illustrations.

Our content has been developed with the help of **newspapers, academic literature, sociological writings, reports, previous publications, publicly available sources, and most importantly, the valuable contributions and support of our writers and contributors.** We remain grateful to everyone who has helped shape this issue.

At the same time, SAMAJ is a **learning initiative**. We are human, and despite our efforts to verify and edit our material carefully, there may be occasional **errors, omissions, typographical mistakes, factual inaccuracies, or differences in interpretation**. We sincerely acknowledge this possibility. Readers are encouraged to verify important information from original and authoritative sources, particularly when using material in examination answers or academic work.

We also welcome **corrections, suggestions, criticism and contributions**. A magazine grows stronger when its readers become active participants in it.

Ultimately, SAMAJ is our small attempt to create a space where **Sociology meets current affairs, theory meets reality, and preparation meets curiosity**.

That is the spirit we hope you carry into every page of SAMAJ—and eventually into every answer you write.

Read beyond the syllabus.

Think beyond the obvious.

Write beyond the conventional.

— Editorial Team

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Feedback

We would love to hear from you.

Your feedback, suggestions, corrections, and ideas help us improve **SAMAJ** and make every issue more useful for our readers. If you have suggestions for future topics, notice an error, or would like to contribute to the magazine, please reach out to us.

Write to us: info@sociologus.com

— Team SAMAJ | Sociologus

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1. INDIA'S DIGITAL SOCIETY: FROM DIGITAL DIVIDE TO DIGITAL INCLUSION

When connectivity becomes infrastructure, access to technology becomes a question of social equality

*By,
Jai Kishan,
Telangana.*

From connectivity to capability, from access to social power

India's digital transformation has moved far beyond smartphones and internet connectivity. Digital technology now shapes banking, education, governance, employment, healthcare and political communication. According to TRAI, India had **1,092.79 million internet subscribers in March 2026**. The 2025 Comprehensive Modular Survey: Telecom by the National Statistical Office found that **86.3% of Indian households had internet access within their premises and 85.5% possessed at least one smartphone**. Yet these numbers raise a crucial sociological question: **does connectivity necessarily mean inclusion?**

The answer is no. The contemporary digital divide is increasingly shifting from a question of **access** to one of **capability, quality and outcomes**.

From Digital Divide to Digital Inequality

Jan van Dijk's¹ Work on the digital divide helps us understand that digital inequality has multiple layers. Having an internet connection does not mean having equal capacity to use it. A student with a laptop, high-speed broadband, English proficiency and access to online courses

¹ **Jan van Dijk** is a Dutch sociologist and communication scholar. He argues that digital inequality is not merely about access to technology, but also involves differences in **skills, usage and the benefits people derive from digital resources**.

has a very different digital experience from a student dependent on a shared smartphone and limited data.

The 2025 MoSPI survey found that internet use among persons aged 15 years and above was **70%**, with usage at **76.7% among men** and **63.1% among women**. Rural–urban differences also remain significant. Thus, India's challenge is no longer simply connecting people but ensuring **meaningful digital participation**.

Bourdieu and Digital Capital

Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of economic, social and cultural capital provide a useful framework. Digital opportunities are not equally distributed because people possess unequal resources. Economic capital determines the quality of devices and connectivity. Cultural capital influences digital literacy and language skills. Social capital provides access to information and networks.

Therefore, two people may possess the same smartphone but derive completely different benefits from it. Digital access can become a new form of capital when it is converted into education, employment, income and social mobility.



Castells and the Network Society

Manuel Castells²' concept of the **Network Society** is particularly relevant to India. Economic, political and social activities increasingly operate through digital

networks. India's UPI ecosystem illustrates this transformation: in March 2026, UPI processed approximately **2,264 crore transactions worth 29.53 lakh crore**.

² **Manuel Castells** is a Spanish sociologist known for his theory of the "**Network Society**," which explains how digital communication networks increasingly shape the economy, politics, culture and social relationships.

Digital networks create enormous opportunities, but exclusion from these networks can itself become a form of social exclusion. When education, employment applications, financial transactions and welfare services move online, being digitally disconnected can increasingly mean being disconnected from opportunities.

Digital Public Infrastructure and the State

India's Digital Public Infrastructure represents another major transformation. Aadhaar, UPI, DigiLocker, UMANG and BharatNet are changing how citizens interact with the state. By March 2026, DigiLocker had more than **67 crore users**, while UMANG had recorded over **10 crore registrations**.

From a Weberian perspective, digital governance represents a further rationalisation of bureaucracy: procedures become standardised, documentation becomes digital and services can be delivered without physical interaction.

However, digital governance also creates new dependencies. A citizen who cannot navigate an online platform may still require a human intermediary. Thus, technology does not necessarily eliminate intermediaries; it can transform the **bureaucratic clerk into a digital service intermediary**.

Gender, Language and Social Inequality



Digital inequality is also shaped by gender, geography and language. The MoSPI survey found that mobile phone ownership among people aged 15 years and above was substantially higher among men than women. Patriarchal norms, unequal income and limited digital literacy can restrict women's independent use of technology.

Language is equally important. India's linguistic diversity means that meaningful digital inclusion cannot

depend exclusively on English. Digital inclusion therefore requires **linguistic and cultural inclusion**.

At the same time, digital platforms can empower women, small entrepreneurs and marginalized communities by creating access to education, markets, political mobilisation and alternative forms of expression.

Foucault, Surveillance and the Datafied Citizen

The digital society also raises questions of power and surveillance. Michel Foucault's analysis of surveillance becomes relevant as citizens increasingly produce digital traces through financial transactions, online searches, location data and social media.

Shoshana Zuboff's³ The concept of **surveillance capitalism** further highlights how personal data can become an economic resource for corporations. The challenge is therefore not merely whether citizens have access to digital systems, but whether they possess **privacy, autonomy and control over their data**.

From Access to Inclusion

True digital inclusion requires more than connectivity. It requires **affordability, digital skills, reliable infrastructure, language accessibility, cybersecurity, privacy and meaningful outcomes**.

India has made remarkable progress in building digital infrastructure. The next stage must ensure that digitalisation does not merely connect citizens but expands their capabilities.

The central question of India's digital transformation is therefore no longer:

“Who is connected?”

It is:

³ **Shoshana Zuboff** is an American scholar best known for the concept of “**surveillance capitalism**,” which explains how corporations collect and analyse personal data to predict and influence human behaviour for economic gain.

“Who has the capability and power to benefit from being connected?”

India's digital future will ultimately depend on whether technology merely reproduces existing inequalities in a new form—or becomes an instrument for **greater social mobility, democratic participation and inclusion.**

THINKERS AT A GLANCE

Jan van Dijk

Dutch sociologist and communication scholar known for his work on the Digital Divide.

He argues that digital inequality involves not only access, but also skills, usage and the benefits derived from technology.

Pierre Bourdieu

French sociologist famous for his concepts of economic, social and cultural capital. His ideas show how existing social inequalities influence people's ability to use digital resources effectively. In digital society, unequal digital capital can reproduce class and educational inequalities.

Manuel Castells

Spanish sociologist best known for his theory of the Network Society. He argues that modern economic, political and cultural activities increasingly operate through interconnected networks.

Max Weber

German sociologist who developed the concept of rationalisation and modern bureaucracy. His ideas help explain how digital governance increasingly standardises administration through rules, databases and automated systems. Digital platforms can therefore be understood as a new form of rationalised bureaucracy.

Jurgen Habermas

German sociologist and philosopher known for his concept of the Public Sphere. He emphasised communication and rational discussion as foundations of democratic participation. Social media represents a new digital public sphere, but one challenged by misinformation, algorithms and polarisation.

Michel Foucault

French philosopher and social theorist whose work explored power, surveillance and social control. His ideas are highly relevant to digital societies where citizens continuously generate data through online activities.

Shoshana Zuboff

American social theorist who developed the influential concept of Surveillance Capitalism. She argues that technology companies can collect behavioural data and use it to predict and influence human behaviour. Her work highlights the growing economic and social power associated with personal data.

2. Youth, Protests and the Polycrisis

The Gen Z Revolution and the Changing Sociology of Political Participation

By,
Harsh Patel,
MADHYA PARDESH.



Credit : UNICEF

The twenty-first century is witnessing a remarkable transformation in the sociology of protest. Young people, particularly **Generation Z**, are increasingly moving from conventional forms of political participation like voting, joining political parties and attending formal meetings to demonstrations, digital campaigns, memes, hashtags and decentralized street movements. This is happening in a period of what may be called a “**polycrisis**”: a condition in which economic insecurity, unemployment, political distrust, climate anxiety, inequality, technological disruption and institutional failures overlap and reinforce one another. In such a context,

protest becomes more than an expression of anger & it becomes a sociological expression of how young people imagine their future.

Youth as Historical Agents of Social Change

Historically, youth have repeatedly been at the centre of transformative social movements. The May 1968 protests in France, the anti-war and civil-rights movements in the United States, the Tiananmen Square movement of 1989, the Arab Spring of 2010–11, and the Hong Kong protests of 2019 demonstrated the capacity of students and young citizens to challenge established political authority. In India too, youth activism has deep roots, from the Quit India Movement of 1942, in which students played an important role, to the JP Movement of the 1970s, the anti-Mandal protests of 1990, the Nirbhaya protests of 2012, and more recent student and youth mobilisations.



File Photo : Arab Spring

This article explores protests as a preferred method of political engagement by young people and an expression of their future aspirations. These are some main findings by the UNICEF,

1. Young people prefer **informal to formal** political engagement, such as through protests and direct action, and various factors and grievances drive youth mobilization.
2. Young people help to diversify protest tactics and bridge online and offline activism.

- a. **Example** : What began as a satirical digital expression quickly developed into an organised youth mobilisation around examination irregularities, unemployment and institutional accountability — **CJP Movement Of India**.
3. Youth participation can contribute to more peaceful and inclusive activism, but even non-violent action faces preemptive repression.
4. Youth participation contributes to protest impact and social change, but this does not necessarily produce direct gains for young people.



From Individual Frustration to Collective Identity

From a sociological perspective, **Emile Durkheim's concept of collective effervescence** helps explain why protests can generate a powerful sense of collective identity. Individuals who may otherwise feel isolated suddenly experience themselves as part of a larger moral community. A university student worried about unemployment, an aspirant frustrated by examination irregularities and a young worker facing

precarious employment may discover a common identity on the street. The protest therefore transforms individual frustration into **collective consciousness**.

Youth Protest and Economic Precarity

At the same time, **Karl Marx's concept of class conflict** provides another lens. Contemporary youth protests are not always conventional class movements, but many are rooted in unequal access to employment, education, housing, technology and political power. The young person from a middle-class family who spends years preparing for competitive examinations, the graduate unable to find stable employment and the gig worker without social security may occupy different class locations, yet they can experience a common sense of **economic precarity**.

The Global Rise of Gen Z Protests



File Photo : Bangladesh Revolution

The present global wave of Gen Z protests is particularly significant because it connects economic grievances with a crisis of political legitimacy. Research on recent youth movements identifies corruption, inequality, unemployment, weak public services and lack of governmental accountability as recurring themes. Countries including **Indonesia, Nepal, Kenya, Morocco, Madagascar, Peru, Serbia, the Philippines, Bangladesh and India** have witnessed major youth-led mobilisations.

The Networked Protester

The **2025–26 Gen Z protest wave** is different from many earlier movements because it is highly networked. TikTok, Instagram, Discord, Telegram, YouTube and other platforms can function as informal political infrastructures. A protest slogan can cross national boundaries within hours. The movements in Madagascar, Nepal and other countries have drawn inspiration from one another, demonstrating what **Manuel Castells** describes through the idea of the

“**network society**”—a society in which power and collective action increasingly operate through networks rather than only through traditional institutions.

Social Media as a New Repertoire of Protest

The phenomenon can also be understood through **Mancur Olson’s collective-action problem**. Why would individuals participate in a protest when they could simply remain at home and benefit from others’ efforts? Digital platforms partially reduce this problem by creating visibility, social recognition and rapid coordination. Participation itself becomes a source of identity. The hashtag, meme, profile picture and viral video become small but significant forms of political participation.

Nepal and the Global Gen Z Wave

This is particularly visible in **Nepal**, where Gen Z mobilisation became associated with demands for political accountability and opposition to restrictions on social media. Similar youth-led movements emerged across Asia and Africa, although their local grievances differed. Sociologists must therefore avoid treating “Gen Z” as a homogeneous global class. Youth movements are shaped by **class, gender, caste, ethnicity, region, education and rural–urban differences**.

India’s Cockroach Janta Party: A New Youth Politics



INDIA : CJP MOVEMENT

The **Indian experience of 2026** provides an especially striking example. The emergence of the **Cockroach Janta Party (CJP)** began as a satirical response to a controversial description of unemployed young people as “cockroaches.” Abhijeet Dipke’s social-media response evolved into a broader youth mobilisation, connecting satire with anger over unemployment, competitive-examination failures and allegations surrounding examination paper leaks.

The importance of the CJP lies not merely in its name but in its **political sociology**. Satire became a weapon of political communication. Instead of accepting an insulting label, young people appropriated it and transformed it into a collective identity. The movement demonstrates what **Erving Goffman’s sociology of stigma** can help us understand: an imposed negative identity can sometimes be reappropriated by the stigmatized group and converted into resistance.

The movement also reflected the growing crisis surrounding India’s competitive examination culture. For millions of young Indians, examinations are not simply tests; they are gateways to social mobility. When examination systems are perceived as unfair, the grievance becomes much deeper than an administrative complaint. It becomes a crisis of **meritocracy and trust**.

Bourdieu and the Unequal Competition

This connects directly with **Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of social reproduction**. Educational credentials are formally presented as mechanisms of merit-based mobility, but unequal access to coaching, technology, English-language education, networks and economic resources means that the competition does not begin from an equal social position. When the examination itself is perceived as compromised, young people can experience a double injustice: they have invested years of labour in a system that they believe has failed to reward merit.

From Meme to Movement



The CJP phenomenon also demonstrates the changing nature of political organisation. The traditional political party is usually hierarchical, institutionalised and organised around a relatively stable ideology. Gen Z movements are often **horizontal, fluid, decentralized and personality light**. Expressions such as “**Vasteguna Huya**” and other internet driven slogans have circulated through social media and protest spaces, making political communication more informal, humorous and easily shareable.

Bridging the Online and Offline Worlds

Young people therefore diversify protest tactics by combining **digital mobilisation with physical protest**. In the CJP movement, social-media posts, satire and viral content helped create visibility and a shared identity, while physical demonstrations converted online sentiment into collective action. The smartphone becomes an organising tool, social media becomes a mobilisation space, and the street becomes the arena where digital solidarity is converted into political pressure. This illustrates Castells' argument that contemporary movements increasingly operate through interconnected communication networks.

Protest as Future-Making

Nevertheless, the global youth movements reveal something fundamental about contemporary society: **young people increasingly refuse to accept a future designed without their participation**. Their protests are about jobs, education and corruption, but beneath these immediate demands lies a deeper question—*What kind of society will we inherit?*



The sociology of Gen Z protest is therefore ultimately a sociology of **future-making**. The young protester is not merely resisting the present; they are contesting the distribution of opportunities, dignity and power in the future. In a world marked by climate change, AI-driven employment disruption, rising inequality, political polarization and declining institutional trust, protest becomes a way of demanding recognition.

The contemporary “Gen Z revolution” should therefore not be understood simply as a rebellion of young people against governments. It is better understood as a new form of political socialisation. The street and the smartphone have merged into a single arena of political action. A meme can become a slogan; a hashtag can become a movement; a campus grievance can become a national debate.

A Demand for Ownership of the Future

As **Manuel Castells** argues in his analysis of network society, contemporary movements can challenge established power through networks of communication. The Gen Z protests

demonstrate this principle vividly. Their greatest strength is their ability to connect dispersed individuals; their greatest challenge is transforming temporary collective energy into durable institutional change.

The question for democracies is therefore not whether young people will protest. They already are. The more important question is whether political institutions will **listen before frustration becomes alienation**. The future of democracy may depend less on suppressing youth protest than on creating meaningful channels through which young citizens can participate in shaping the society they are destined to inherit.

Thinkers at a Glance	
Emile Durkheim	Protests create emotional energy and a shared sense of collective identity among participants.
Karl Marx	Youth protests can reflect inequalities in employment, education, wealth and access to opportunities.
Pierre Bourdieu	Unequal access to coaching, education, technology and cultural capital shapes young people's chances of success.
Manuel Castells	Social media enables decentralized mobilisation and connects online activism with offline protests.
Erving Goffman	Marginalised identities or insults can be reappropriated and transformed into symbols of resistance.
Charles Tilly	Protest is a form of collective political action shaped by political opportunities, organisation and state response.
Hannah Arendt	Political power emerges when people collectively act in the public sphere.
Mancur Olson	Explains why individuals participate in collective movements despite the risks and costs involved.

UPSC Connect:

Q. "Youth protests are not merely expressions of political dissatisfaction but manifestations of deeper structural contradictions within society." Discuss in the context of the contemporary polycrisis. (20 marks, 250 words)

3. Euthanasia in India: A Sociological Perspective on Death, Dignity and Social Institutions

Credit : The live Law , The Hindu , Supreme Court Observer

On 11 March, a Bench of Justices J.B.Pardiwala and K.V. Viswanathan permitted a plea seeking passive euthanasia for Harish Rana, a 32-year-old who has been in a permanent vegetative state for 13 years. Justice Pardiwala wrote the lead opinion, and Justice Viswanathan penned a concurring one.



Passive euthanasia involves withdrawing life-supporting medical treatment so that life is not artificially prolonged. This was the first instance where the passive euthanasia guidelines set out by the Supreme Court in ***Common Cause v Union of India (2018)*** were applied to their complete extent. In *Common Cause*, a Constitution Bench of five judges had held that the **right to die with dignity** is a facet of the right to life and liberty under **Article 21**.

Euthanasia refers to the deliberate ending of a person's life to relieve unbearable suffering, usually in the context of a terminal or incurable illness.

- **Active euthanasia:** Deliberate intervention is undertaken to cause death, such as administering a lethal substance.
- **Passive euthanasia:** Life-sustaining treatment is **withheld or withdrawn**, allowing the underlying illness to take its natural course.

From Death to “Socially Managed Death”

Death is biologically universal, but its meaning and management are socially constructed. In India, this question is becoming increasingly significant as demographic ageing, chronic illness and advances in medical technology transform the experience of dying. India's elderly population accounted for 8.6% of the population in 2011 and is projected to reach about 19.5%—nearly 319 million people—by 2050. The population aged 75 and above is projected to increase by 340% during 2011–2050.



At the same time, a nationally representative study estimates that **12.2% of India's older adults have supportive and palliative-care needs**, with higher needs among rural residents, women, older age groups and those suffering from chronic diseases.

We will see some sociological perspectives on this issue:

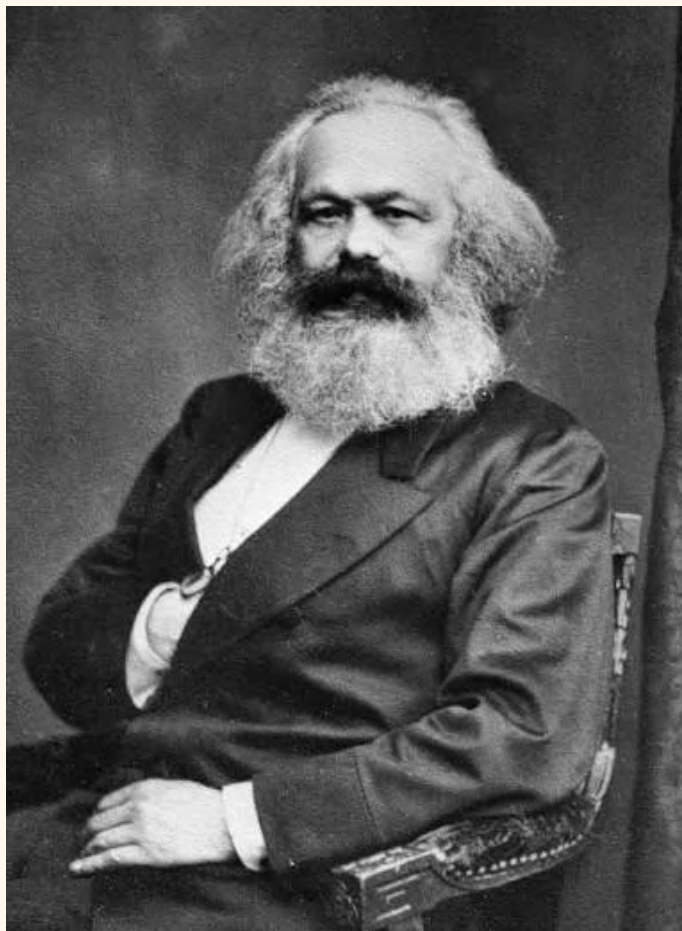
Durkheim: Euthanasia and Collective Morality

Using **Emile Durkheim's** perspective, euthanasia can be understood as a conflict between **individual autonomy** and **collective morality**.

- **Collective conscience:** Society develops shared moral beliefs about the sanctity and value of human life. Euthanasia may challenge these norms by redefining when death can be considered socially acceptable.
- **Social solidarity:** In a Durkheimian sense, society has a responsibility to protect vulnerable members. Legalising euthanasia may therefore raise concerns about whether the elderly, terminally ill or dependent are being protected or subtly pressured.

Marxist Perspective: Class, Healthcare and the “Right to Die”

A **Marxist perspective** views euthanasia not merely as an issue of individual choice but in relation to **class inequality, access to healthcare and the unequal distribution of power and resources.**



- **Class inequality:** The “right to die” may not be equally meaningful for all. Wealthier individuals may have access to quality palliative care, while poorer patients may experience euthanasia as a response to **unaffordable or inaccessible healthcare.**

- **Healthcare as a commodity:** From a Marxist viewpoint, the commodification of healthcare can turn human suffering into an economic calculation. Prolonged treatment may become financially burdensome for working class families.

- **Power relations:** Medical institutions possess considerable authority over decisions concerning life, treatment and death.
- **Alienation:** Serious illness can produce physical, social and economic alienation. Patients may feel themselves to be a “burden” on their families, particularly where social security and healthcare systems are weak.

Weber: Rationalisation and the Bureaucratisation of Death

Using **Max Weber’s** perspective, euthanasia can be understood through the processes of **rationalisation, bureaucracy and legitimate authority** in modern society.

- **Rationalisation:** Modern medicine increasingly approaches death through scientific knowledge, diagnosis, prognosis and measurable criteria. Decisions about euthanasia may therefore become based on **rational legal rules** rather than purely religious or customary morality.
- **Bureaucratisation of death:**
Euthanasia involves procedures, medical committees, documentation, legal safeguards and institutional approvals. Thus, even the deeply personal experience of dying becomes regulated through **bureaucratic procedures**.
 - **Example:** The Supreme Court’s recognition of **passive euthanasia and advanced medical directives** in *Common Cause v. Union of India* (2018) illustrates the rational-legal regulation of end-of-life decisions.



- **Rational legal authority:** In modern states, the legitimacy of euthanasia increasingly depends on **laws, courts and formally established procedures** rather than traditional or religious authority.

Foucault: Medicalisation and Power Over the Body



Using **Michel Foucault's** perspective, euthanasia can be analysed through **medicalisation, disciplinary power and biopower**. The central question is not simply "*Who has the right to die?*" but "**Who has the authority to define, regulate and manage life and death?**"

- **Medicalisation:** Death and dying increasingly become matters of medical expertise. Doctors and medical institutions determine what constitutes terminal illness, unbearable suffering, medical futility and appropriate treatment.
- **Biopower:** Foucault's concept of **biopower** refers to modern institutions' power to regulate and manage human life. Euthanasia represents a situation where the medical legal system becomes involved in determining when life may legitimately be ended.

- **The medical gaze:** The patient's body becomes an object of observation, diagnosis and classification. Personal suffering may consequently be interpreted through **clinical categories and medical criteria**.
 - **Example:** The Supreme Court's *Common Cause v. Union of India* (2018) recognised the right to refuse medical treatment and upheld advanced medical directives, illustrating the interaction between **medical authority, legal power and individual bodily autonomy**.

Feminist Perspective: Gender and End-of-Life Care

A **feminist perspective** examines euthanasia and end-of-life care through **gendered inequalities, care work, bodily autonomy and power relations**. It asks whether women and men experience dying, caregiving and medical decision making equally.



- **Gendered care work:** Feminist scholars highlight that women disproportionately perform **unpaid care work** for elderly, sick and dying family members. Prolonged illness can therefore create unequal emotional, physical and economic burdens on women.
- **Bodily autonomy:** Feminism strongly emphasises **women's control over their own bodies**. The debate over euthanasia can therefore be connected to the broader principle of reproductive and bodily autonomy.
- **Ethics of care:** **Carol Gilligan's** ethics of care emphasises relationships, responsibility and interdependence rather than viewing autonomy as purely individual. This adds a relational dimension to euthanasia debates.
 - **Example:** In India, where women often carry a disproportionate share of unpaid family caregiving, end-of-life decisions cannot be understood

solely through individual autonomy , they must also consider **care burdens, family dependence and unequal access to healthcare.**

Indian Cases on the “Right to Die”

Gian Kaur v. State of Punjab 1996	Overruled Rathinam ; held that Article 21 does not include a general right to die . However, it recognised the concept of the right to die with dignity as part of the right to live with dignity.
Aruna Ramachandra Shanbaug v. Union of India 2011	Permitted passive euthanasia under strict safeguards; distinguished active and passive euthanasia.
Common Cause v. Union of India 2018	Landmark judgment: recognised right to die with dignity as part of Article 21; upheld advanced medical directives/living wills and permitted withdrawal/withholding of life-sustaining treatment subject to safeguards.
Common Cause v. Union of India – modification 2023	The Supreme Court simplified the procedure for advance medical directives and withdrawal/withholding of life-sustaining treatment, making implementation more practical.

Step towards the solution

1. **Strengthen palliative care:** Expand affordable hospice and palliative-care services so that euthanasia is never chosen merely because adequate pain management is unavailable.

2. **Ensure informed consent:** Decisions must be based on the patient's **free, informed and voluntary consent**, without family, financial or institutional pressure.
3. **Strengthen safeguards:** Maintain independent medical assessment, review boards, documentation and judicial oversight in difficult cases.
4. **Protect vulnerable groups:** Special safeguards are needed for the **elderly, persons with disabilities, economically weaker patients and socially isolated individuals** who may feel like a burden.
5. **Improve healthcare accessibility:** Reduce out-of-pocket healthcare expenditure so that economic distress does not influence end-of-life decisions.
6. **Promote advance medical directives:** Increase public awareness about **living wills/advance directives**, while making procedures simple, accessible and legally secure.

Euthanasia represents a profound transformation in the social meaning of death. In India, the debate lies at the intersection of individual autonomy and collective morality, medical power and patient dignity, family responsibility and changing patterns of ageing, and constitutional rights and social inequality. The challenge is therefore not merely to decide whether a person has a right to die with dignity, but to create social conditions in which that choice, when made, is genuinely autonomous and not a consequence of poverty, neglect, stigma or inadequate care.

UPSC Connect:

Q1 : “Euthanasia is not merely a medical or ethical issue, but a sociological question concerning the relationship between individual autonomy and collective morality.” Discuss. 10

Q2 : How does the changing structure of the Indian family influence attitudes towards euthanasia and end-of-life care? 10

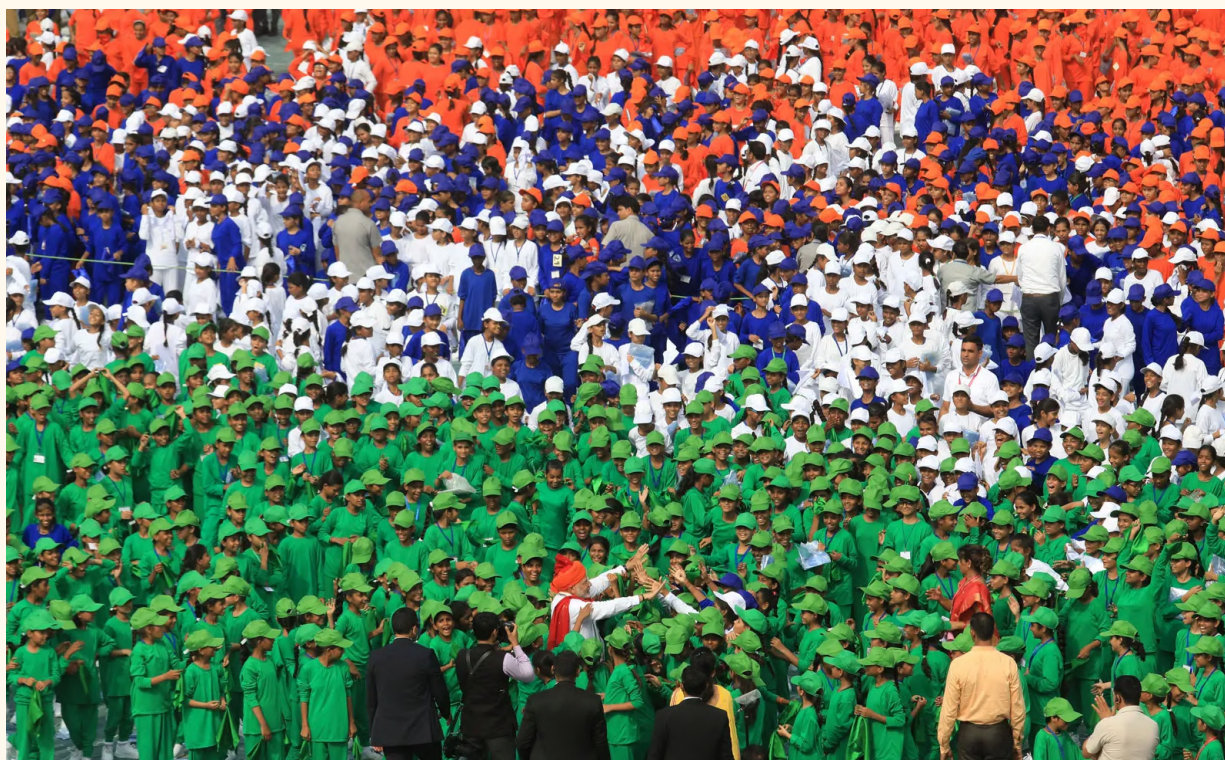
Q3 : Critically examine euthanasia from the perspectives of Durkheim, Marx, Weber and Foucault. 15

4. Civic Religion: The Sociology of Sacred Nationhood in India and the World

When the Nation Becomes Sacred — A Sociological Perspective

*By,
Farheen B,
Maharashtra*

Civic religion refers to the process by which a society gives sacred or moral significance to its nation, Constitution, political institutions, symbols, heroes and public rituals, creating a shared sense of collective identity and belonging.



From Religious Sacredness to Civic Sacredness

Religion is generally associated with faith, rituals, sacred texts and places of worship.



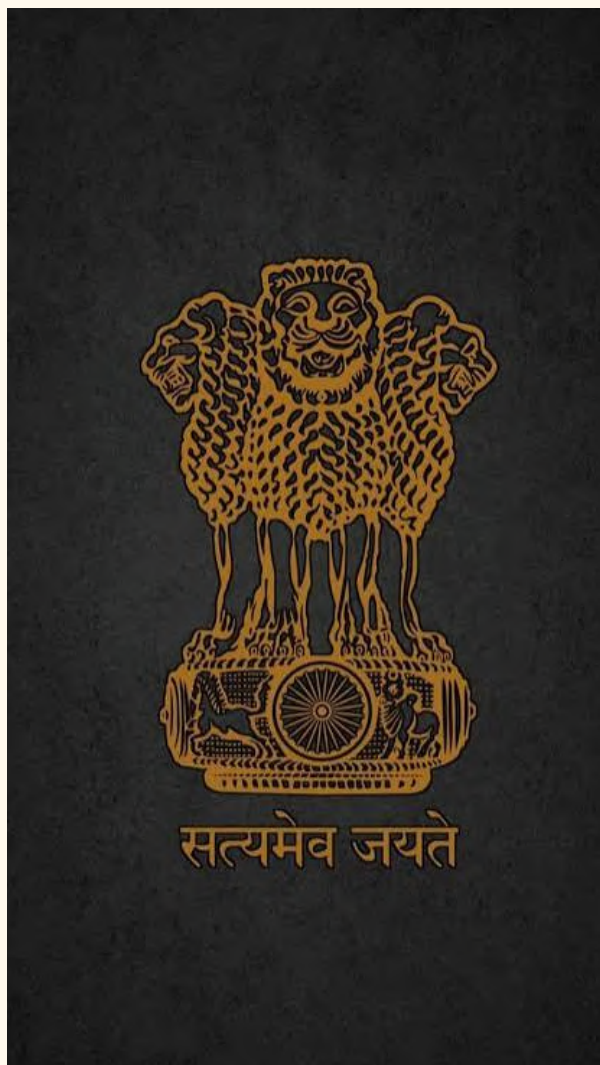
Yet modern societies, even when they become more secular, continue to create symbols, rituals and collective beliefs that command deep emotional attachment. The flag, Constitution,

national anthem, martyrs, monuments and national celebrations often evoke feelings that resemble religious devotion. This phenomenon is described sociologically as **civic religion**. It refers to the process through which the political community acquires sacred meanings and becomes a source of collective identity and moral obligation.

Durkheim and the Sacred Nation

The roots of this idea can be traced to **Emile Durkheim**, who distinguished between the sacred and the profane. For Durkheim, the sacred is not necessarily something supernatural. It is whatever a community sets apart, protects and invests with collective significance. In traditional societies, the totem represented the clan itself. In modern societies, national symbols can perform a similar function. The flag, anthem or Constitution therefore becomes more than an object or document; it becomes a representation of the collective.

This idea was developed more explicitly by **Robert Bellah**⁴ in his study of American civil religion. Bellah argued that the United States possesses a set of beliefs, symbols and rituals surrounding the nation that have a quasi-religious character. The Constitution, Declaration of Independence, presidential oath, national memorials and commemoration of political figures contribute to a shared moral narrative. Civic religion does not necessarily replace conventional religion, rather it creates another layer of collective belonging around citizenship and the political community.



India: Building Unity Through Civic Symbols

India provides an especially interesting case because of its enormous religious, linguistic, caste and regional diversity. Here, civic religion can be understood as an attempt to create a common symbolic framework without demanding that citizens abandon their particular identities.

The **Constitution and its Preamble** occupy an important place in this process. Justice, liberty, equality and fraternity provide a common moral vocabulary through which citizens are expected to understand their relationship with one another and with the state. Ambedkar's idea of **constitutional morality** further strengthens this civic dimension.

⁴ **Robert N. Bellah (1927–2013)** was an American sociologist best known for developing the concept of “**civil religion**” in his study of American society. He argued that nations can develop sacred symbols, rituals, beliefs and moral narratives that create collective identity, even in a formally secular society.

National rituals also contribute to this process. Independence Day, Republic Day, flag hoisting, the singing of the national anthem and public remembrance of freedom fighters periodically bring individuals into a common symbolic space. Durkheim's idea of **collective effervescence** is useful here. Individuals who normally live separate social lives participate in the same ritual and temporarily experience themselves as part of a larger collective. The emotional power of such occasions helps reproduce national solidarity.

Gandhi, Ambedkar and Civic Memory



Indian public life also demonstrates how historical personalities can acquire civic-sacred significance. **Mahatma Gandhi** is remembered through public statues, memorials and commemorations associated with non-violence, sacrifice and the freedom struggle. **B.R. Ambedkar**, similarly, has become a powerful civic symbol of constitutionalism, equality, dignity and social justice.

Yet these figures do not carry exactly the same meaning for every social group. Their symbolic significance is continually interpreted and sometimes contested. Gandhian ideas of pluralism and non-violence, Ambedkarite emphasis on equality and anti-caste justice, and more nationalist understandings centred on sovereignty, unity and sacrifice may coexist, overlap or compete.



Thus, civic religion is not simply a story of consensus. It is also a field in which society negotiates the meaning of the nation.

The Dark Side: Inclusion and Exclusion

However, civic religion also has a darker side. The same symbols that unite people can establish boundaries between those considered loyal and those portrayed as outsiders. Debates over national slogans, historical figures, monuments, textbooks or patriotic practices are therefore not merely political disagreements; they are struggles over **symbolic power and collective memory**.

Gramsci's concept of **hegemony** and Bourdieu's idea of **symbolic power** help explain how particular interpretations of the nation can become dominant and appear natural. The crucial question is therefore: **Whose history becomes the sacred history of the nation?**

Civic Religion in the Digital Age

The digital age has added another dimension. National mourning, patriotic hashtags, online tributes to soldiers and virtual celebrations of national occasions increasingly turn social media into spaces of civic ritual. National identity is no longer produced

only in public squares, schools and ceremonial institutions; it is also reproduced through digital networks.



Example : Harghar Tiranga Initiative through Selfie

This can be described as a form of **digital**

civic religion, where symbols, emotions and collective memories circulate rapidly

among citizens and sometimes create temporary moments of online collective effervescence.

At last,

Civic religion should neither be dismissed as ordinary patriotism nor treated as a substitute for traditional religion. Sociologically, it represents the process through which societies create sacred symbols, collective memories and moral commitments around the political community.

In a diverse country like India, its greatest potential lies in creating a shared civic identity based on **constitutional values, equality and fraternity**, while allowing religious, caste, linguistic and regional identities to coexist. Its central challenge is to ensure that the sacredness attached to the nation becomes a source of solidarity rather than a justification for excluding citizens who interpret the nation differently.

Thinkers at a Glance

Emile Durkheim

National symbols can become sacred representations of society itself. Civic rituals generate **collective effervescence and social solidarity**.

Robert N. Bellah

Modern nations develop their own **sacred symbols, rituals, heroes and moral narratives**, creating collective identity even within secular societies.

Benedict Anderson

The nation is an **imagined political community**, created through shared symbols, narratives, memories and institutions.

Maurice Halbwachs

National ceremonies, monuments and commemorations help societies **construct and reproduce a shared understanding of the past**.

Antonio Gramsci

Civic religion can reflect **hegemonic ideas**, where dominant groups influence what is accepted as the legitimate meaning of the nation.

Pierre Bourdieu

National flags, ceremonies, monuments and official narratives exercise **symbolic power** by legitimising particular identities and values.

Michel Foucault

National identity is shaped through **discourses, institutions and systems of knowledge** that define acceptable forms of citizenship and belonging.

B.R. Ambedkar

In India, constitutional values such as **liberty, equality, justice and fraternity** can provide the basis for a shared civic morality beyond religious and caste identities.

UPSC Connect:

Q1. *“The sacred need not necessarily be religious.” Examine this statement with reference to Durkheim’s concept of civic religion.**

(10 marks, 150 words)

Q2. *Civic religion transforms national symbols, rituals and collective memories into sources of social solidarity. Discuss with reference to India.*

(20 marks, 250 words)

5. Bureaucracy: An Analysis Through the Weberian Lens

By,
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Delhi.



Bureaucracy is one of the most important institutions of modern society. Max Weber did not simply see bureaucracy as government officials or paperwork; he understood it as a rational form of organisation based on rules, hierarchy and specialised functions. For Weber, the expansion of modern states, capitalism and large organisations made bureaucracy almost unavoidable. Its importance can be seen even today: governments across the world employ millions of public servants, while the World Bank estimates that around 400 million people globally work in the public sector.

Weber and Legal Rational Authority

Weber located bureaucracy within his broader theory of authority. He identified three types of legitimate domination: traditional, charismatic and legal-rational authority. Bureaucracy is the

For example, a citizen follows the decision of a District Magistrate not simply because of the personality of the officer, but because the officer occupies a legally recognised position. Similarly, a police officer derives authority from the office and law rather than from personal status. This distinction marks the transition from personal rule to institutionalised authority.



Weber constructed an “**ideal type**” of bureaucracy. Ideal type does not mean a perfect organisation; it is an analytical model used to understand reality. Its first feature is a **clear hierarchy**, where every lower office is supervised by a higher office. The Indian

district administration illustrates this through the relationship between the District Collector, Sub-Divisional Magistrates, Tehsildars and other officials.

Second, bureaucracy involves **division of labour and specialisation**. Officials have clearly defined responsibilities. A revenue officer, health officer and education officer perform different functions. Such specialisation creates technical competence and makes large-scale administration possible.

Third, bureaucratic decisions are governed by **formal rules**. Officials are expected to follow established procedures rather than personal preferences. This creates predictability and consistency. A government employee processing a passport, pension or land record should ideally apply the same rules to similarly placed citizens.

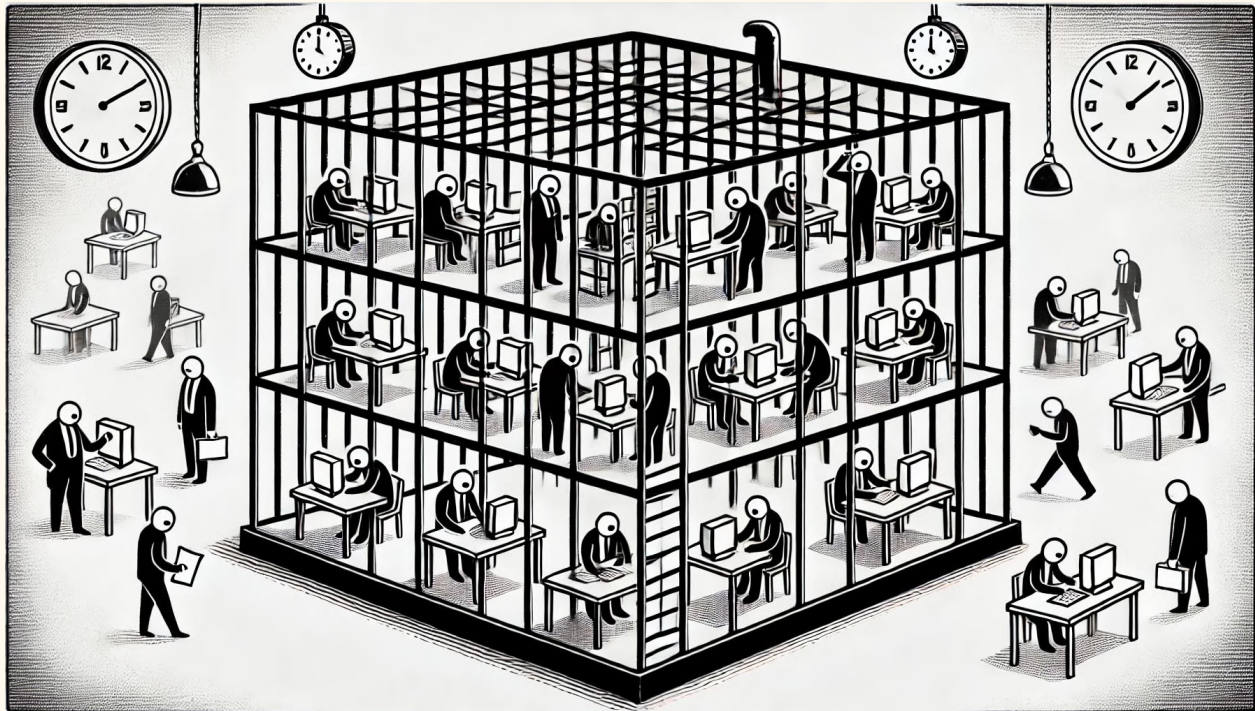
Fourth, Weber emphasised **impersonality**. Decisions should be made without favouritism based on caste, kinship, friendship or personal relationships. In principle, this makes bureaucracy more rational than traditional systems where access to authority depends upon status or personal connections.

Fifth, recruitment is based on **technical qualifications and merit**, while officials generally follow a career structure involving salary, promotion and professional training. India's UPSC examination reflects this Weberian principle. The scale of this system is enormous: the World Bank notes that more than **3 million candidates applied for about 3,500 positions advertised by UPSC in 2021**, demonstrating the bureaucratic complexity involved even in selecting bureaucrats.

Bureaucracy and Rationalisation

Bureaucracy cannot be understood separately from Weber's concept of rationalisation. Modern society increasingly replaces customs, emotions and personal relationships with calculation, written procedures and predictable rules. For example, digital tax filing, online passport applications and electronic welfare databases represent newer forms of rationalised administration. They reduce dependence on individual officials and create records that can be monitored. Thus, technology has not necessarily replaced bureaucracy; in many ways, it has created digital bureaucracy.

The “Iron Cage”



However, Weber's analysis was not simply an appreciation of administrative efficiency. He also warned about the darker side of rationalisation. Bureaucracy can become an “**iron cage**”, in which individuals are trapped within increasingly rigid systems of rules.

An official may know that a poor citizen urgently needs a service but still refuse to act because a particular document or procedure is missing. Similarly, a government department may focus on completing forms and meeting procedural requirements rather than solving the actual problem. This is called **goal displacement**—the means become more important than the original goal.

The result can be red-tapism, delay, excessive paperwork and a loss of human judgement.

Indian Bureaucracy: Weberian Strengths and Deviations

India provides a useful example of both the strengths and weaknesses of Weberian bureaucracy. The civil services provide continuity despite changes in elected

governments. An IAS officer can implement policies under different political administrations, reflecting Weber's distinction between office and individual.

At the same time, Indian administration often departs from the Weberian ideal. Political interference, frequent transfers, patronage and corruption can undermine bureaucratic neutrality. A World Bank study found that senior Indian officials had a **53% probability of being transferred in a given year**, with the probability rising further when there was a change in government. Such instability can discourage officials from developing long-term expertise.

The problem is therefore not simply “too much bureaucracy”; sometimes it is **weak bureaucracy, insufficient** staff, poor coordination and political interference. The World Bank's recent work on India also highlights understaffing in public recruitment institutions, showing that administrative capacity itself can become a constraint.

Critique of Weber

Weber's model has been criticised for presenting bureaucracy as more rational and neutral than it actually is. **Robert K. Merton** argued that strict adherence to rules can produce dysfunctions such as goal displacement and trained incapacity. **Michel Crozier** showed that bureaucratic organisations can generate power struggles and uncertainty rather than complete rationality.

Marxist scholars question the neutrality of bureaucracy. From this perspective, bureaucracy can serve dominant class interests rather than representing society equally. **Feminist perspectives** further point out that apparently neutral rules may reproduce existing gender inequalities because institutions themselves are shaped by social power relations.

Moreover, Weber's ideal type largely assumes formal rationality, whereas real bureaucracies operate through informal networks, political pressures, personal relationships and organisational cultures. India's administrative system demonstrates this clearly: formal rules coexist with informal practices, political negotiations and social pressures.

Conclusion

Weber's theory remains valuable because it explains why bureaucracy became central to modern states and large organisations. **Hierarchy, specialisation, written rules, merit-based recruitment and legal-rational authority** provide stability and

predictability. Yet bureaucracy can also produce rigidity, red-tapism and an “iron cage” when rules become more important than human needs.

Therefore, the challenge for contemporary governance is not to eliminate bureaucracy but to **humanise and reform it**. Digital governance, transparency, accountability, citizen participation and performance-based administration can retain Weberian rationality while reducing its dysfunctional consequences. In this sense, Weber's bureaucracy remains both a **foundation of modern governance and a warning about the limits of excessive rationalisation**.

UPSC Connect:

Q1. “Bureaucracy is the most rational form of organisation, yet it may become an ‘iron cage’ for individuals.” Discuss this statement in the context of Max Weber's theory of bureaucracy. (10 Marks, 150 Words)

Q2. Explain Max Weber's concept of legal rational authority and examine how his idealtype bureaucracy differs from the functioning of bureaucracy in contemporary India. (20 Marks, 250 Words)

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For feedback and suggestions: info@sociologus.com