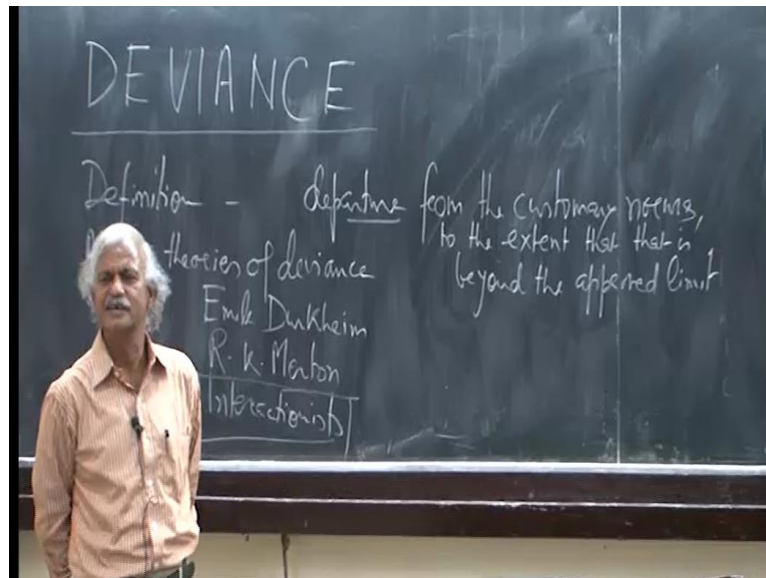


**Introductory Sociology**  
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**Lecture - 27**  
**Deviance – 1**  
**Concept of Deviance**

Friends, now I will take up another interesting topic of sociology, at least I find this topic to be very much interesting; more interesting than any other topic, because I am still not clear about the place of norms in the development of society.

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And in this lecture, I will do two things. One, I will define deviance; definition, like any other topic. Deviation or deviance needs to be defined and I will include one or two major theories of deviance. In the major theories, I will include Emile Durkheim, R. K. Merton and a couple of interactionists; not one person, but contribution of ideas of several interactionists. In study of deviance, contribution of interactionists cannot be ignored; especially in the studies of deviant behavior at the micro level. Why do some individuals become deviant or how do some individuals get classified as deviant. Regarding definition, very difficult to define what is deviance? Deviance is good or deviance is bad; what constitutes deviance. As the dictionary meaning of the term deviance would show, it means a departure; departure, and in sociology, when we will talk about deviance, social deviance, we will talk about departure from what? Departure

from customary norms of society? Departure from values cannot be seen; values are abstract; they are thoughts, ideas, beliefs. What you can observe is, whether a person is departing from the approved behavior patterns of society. So, departure is to be defined in the, departure from the customary norms or rules, and some people will, may even add, to the extent, a small departures are ok; to the extent that, that is beyond the approved limit. In all forms of deviance, an idea of departing, deviating, not conforming to, behaving in a different manner than the approved rules of behavior; in all society, there are approved rules of behavior.

In all situations, in all parts of society, all times, there are some rules of the game which we have to follow; in family, in educational institution, in temple, church, in non-government organization, or civil society organizations, in political parties, in the market, in cinema halls, in malls, everywhere, some rules of behavior are to be followed. You are not completely free. You cannot behave in any manner you like. We may not be very obvious; sometimes, these norms are not obvious and we may not always be conscious of all the norms of society; but because of the long process of socialization, and the fact that, we have interiorized the values and norms of society, we do not have to deliberately decide every time that, we must conform to norms; we conform to norms. If you ask, if you reflect on your behavior in classroom, you have not planned to behave in accordance with rules of behavior in classroom; you did not come prepared today; but because of your long process of socialization of norms of classroom behavior, in Indian society, all of you, or most of you, most of the time conform to norms of society. Only sometimes, some people will deviate.

And, that deviation, if it is a small deviation, it is ok; we know that, society does not expect that, all of us, all the times, conform to all the norms of society and perfectly. As long as most people, most of the time, conform to most norms of society, it is ok. So, if in a class of hundred, one student is sleeping in the classroom; it is ok; it is a case of deviance, but Hindi dialogue; because otherwise, the cost of controlling deviance, if you want to make your society perfect, that you will not tolerate any deviation, in any situation, from any person, the cost of implementing the agenda, or the norms of society on people will be very high. We do not want that. We only want that, most of the time, most people, conform to most norms of society; or if they deviate, the deviate must be within the approved limit; this much deviation is ok. You do not come to class, that is a deviation; that is a deviation, according to norms of the institute, in summer course,

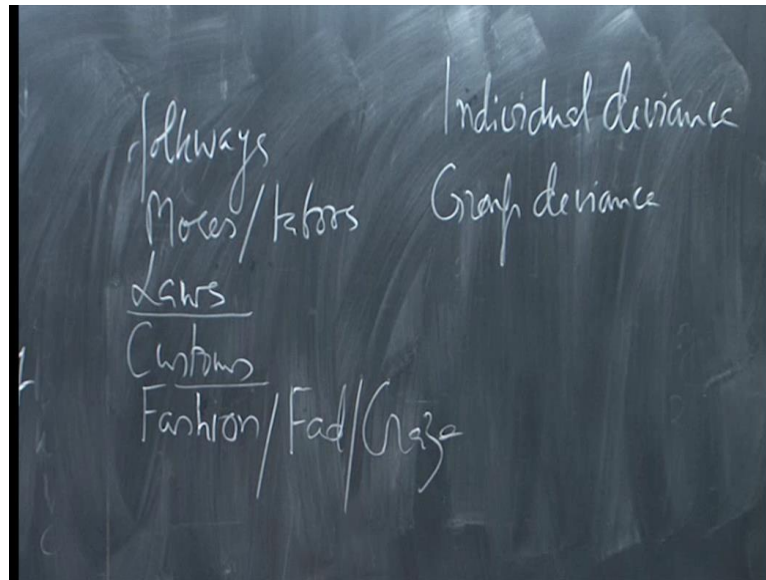
teachers and students are expected to attend each and every class; each and every class. In summer course, leave is not granted. You can experiment; you write to Dean of students' affairs and ask for any kind of leave; maybe to participate in some cultural festival, or maybe someone in your family is unwell, or for some reason other than the medical reason, you will not get leave. This is the rule. But there are many students, who do not come to class; they are deviants.

They are deviating from the norms of society. Most of the time, we permit this deviance. Teachers do not mind, if some students, sometimes, do not come to class. So, limit is also important. The extent, the extent to which; if 10 percent, may be in some cases, 20 percent of students are not coming to class, it is, [FL]. And, after coming to class, again, there are rules; and if some students violate rules, may be 80 students are present and 2 students are sleeping, [FL]; some...It also depends on the teachers; for some teachers, it will be a serious offence; for some other teachers, [FL]. So, because, this not coming to class, by 10 percent, 20 percent; imagine what will happen, if nobody comes to class. If nobody comes to class, then teachers will be highly irritated and forced to take some action; 10 percent, 20 percent [FL]. After coming to class, if one or two students sleep, it is ok; if all of you sleep, then it will be taken as a case of deviance. May be teachers will have to analyze, introspect them; teachers will have to introspect that, something is wrong somewhere and there is a need for correction.

But suppose, one student gets up and he starts singing, or he starts dancing, what will happen? It will be a deviance; a case of deviance; if one student suddenly gets up and he starts dancing disco, [FL], it will be a deviance. But how serious? Do you think that, if 4, 5 students get up just now, and treat this classroom as a disco theatre, they start dancing; it is certainly a deviance. But do you think, the teachers will go to Kalyanpur police station and lodge FIR? I do not think so. If, likewise, if one or two teachers, if teachers do not come for the class, once, twice, you feel happy; [FL]. If teacher does not come for 50 percent classes, then you will feel bad; and if teacher does not come for any class, and still grades you on some basis, if he gives all students As, then again, you will have no problem; but if he gives D? He is very strict in the exam; he does not teach, but he is very strict in the exam; he makes a very difficult sociology paper and he fails all the students; then, it will be deviance. What will you do? You will still not go to Kalyanpur Thana and lodge FIR. You will go to Dean; maybe, there will be some meetings between teacher, students, Dean, other authorities and some negotiated settlement will come. So,

deviance, how serious it is; what kind of deviance it is; how serious it is; it depends on what kind of norms you are deviating from. They, there is not one norms; there are so many norms.

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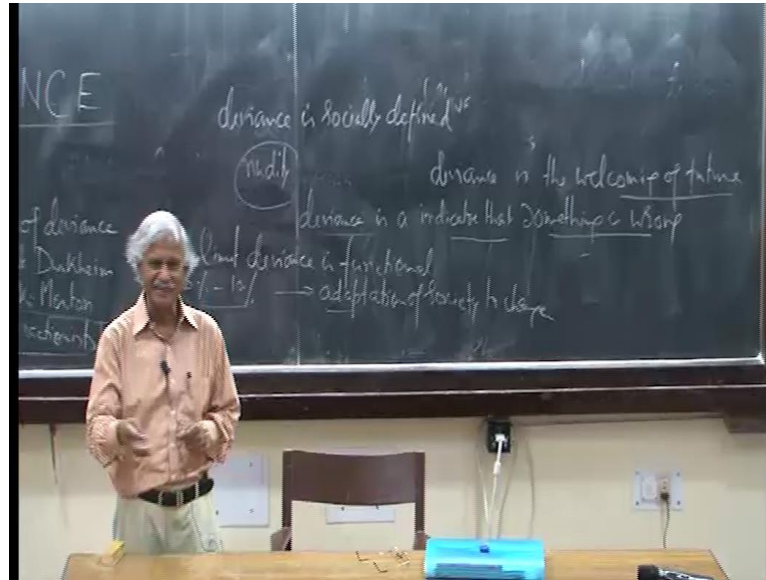


And, when I was talking about norms, I said there are folkways; there are mores, taboos, laws; in laws, we have customary laws, enacted laws; and you have customs and traditions, and also fashions; sometimes, fashions is also seen as part of the norm; fashion, fad, craze. So, departure from folkways does not affect society much. So, sanctions are also small. Mores are more important for society. So, deviation from mores is not permitted; violation of taboos is not permitted. But still, violation of mores does not mean a criminal offence; only when you violate a criminal law, then you have a criminal offence, and legal action for the criminal offence may be taken. Customs, some manners, etiquettes, principles, conventions, customs, mixture of folkways and mores and fashion and fad; this is deviation.

Deviation maybe, some sociologists say that, deviation may be divided into individual deviation, individual deviance and group deviance. When you are deviating from the norms of society as an individual, then you are an individual deviant; and when you are a member of a deviant subgroup, or group, you are conforming to norms of the group, but the group does not conform to the norms of larger society. You may have youth culture, different from the general culture of society. There may be a gang of dacoits, thieves,

gamblers and the members of the group of gamblers conform to the norms of the group, though deviate from the norms of society. So, sometimes, there is individual deviance; sometimes, there is group deviance.

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One big difficulty in dealing with issue of deviance comes in observing the fact that, deviance is not always bad; deviance can be good; deviance can be bad and deviance is social. Deviance is socially defined, because deviance, it is deviance from the rules of society and rules, norms of society, values of society, norms of society; differ from society to society, and they also changed with time. Law changed; in 1975, we decided that, the legal minimum age of marriage will be 18 for girls and 21 for boys. Anyone who arranges for his daughter's marriage below 18, is engaging in criminally offensive action; but only after 1975; otherwise, we have a long tradition of child marriages. Earlier, it was not criminal; arranging for daughter's marriage at age below 18, was not seen to be a criminal thing before 1975; only after 1975, because we have made a law. So, it becomes a criminal offence.

Gay marriages, marriages between women, marriages between men, gay and lesbian marriages, till a few years ago, in our country, same sex marriages were seen to be criminal. There are many countries in which gay and lesbian marriages are permitted; they are legal. In those countries, if two men or two women are living together as husband and wife, it is ok; it is not criminal. But in some traditions, and in some

countries, where law forbids this, living with same sex partner is a criminal offence. Now, India's position in 2012, today, is somewhere in between; it is against the rules of society. So, from that point of view, in our society today, if two women or two men are living together as a couple, it is a deviance; it is a deviance from the norms of society, from mores of society; same sex marriage is tabooed. But because of the intervention of courts, Supreme court, it has been decriminalized. So, no criminal action may be taken by any court in India for same sex marriages, but it will be against the customs, or religion, or traditions, or norms of society. So, what is deviance in one respect, may not be deviance in another respect; it is legally decriminalized; but socially, and morally, it is wrong. So, it depends on the definition.

Now, some people who are seen a deviant today, are prayed, worshipped and become icons of national history, and are known as freedom fighters, innovators. Chandra Shekar Azad, Bhagat Singh, Mangal Pandey, they were seen as deviants, criminals, because they were revolting against the British government. But today, we treat them as freedom fighters. Again, it makes the issue of deviance very complex. If there is a teacher in IIT system, who completely ignores teaching; he is a bad teacher, but he is all the time found in his lab; maybe he has some other bad habits also; he drinks; he drinks in the lab and there are cases of sexual harassment against him; many other forms, ignores his family, does not treat his wife well, does not bother about children.

So, many types of deviance he is committing, but he is so much devoted to his research. that , one day, he gets Bhatnagar award; and after a few years, imagine that, he gets the Nobel prize for his research, in his field; is a, is he then a deviant? He is a deviant, but will you say that, this deviant played a negative role in Indian society? Then suddenly, so much praise, money, so much admiration will come for his work. He is deviant; he is not, or he is deviant in all respect, but you can say that, some types of deviance may be good for society. He is deviant, because he is not ignoring his family; he is deviant, he is not taking interest in children's education; he is deviant, because he does not take his classes seriously; he is deviant, because a few cases of sexual harassment are pending against him; he is deviant, he does not maintain good relationships with colleagues; he is also deviant that, all the time he is found in his lab, and he does wonderful research, eventually, which fetches him Bhatnagar award and finally, Nobel prize; great for the country.

So, deviance is not always bad; deviance, sometimes is good; sometimes bad. Most of the time, it may be bad, or we do not like people to be deviant. But sometimes, deviance can help society. Guerillas in China who were part of Mao Tse Tung's army, they were deviants; they were like Naxalites of India. Naxalites are deviants; (( )) are deviants; those who talk of separating from the country are deviants. Those Kashmiri youths, who talk of independent Kashmir, who dream of independent Kashmir are deviants; very serious kind of deviants. They are deviating from expectations of the state. But tomorrow, for some reasons, if Kashmir becomes an independent country, they will be remembered in the history of Kashmir, as we remember Gandhi, Bhagat Singh, Subhash Chandra Bose. So, what is deviance then?

Deviance, when sociologists use the terms deviance, it is in relation to certain norms of society, and if there are conflicts between norms, then somebody, he is a deviant with respect to one norms, may not be deviant, he may be conformist with regard to other norms of society. And, if norms change, then defining deviance becomes all the more difficult. Deviance is also defined in relation to one's position. What is ok for one class of people, may not be ok for others. This, when I was a warden in one of the hostels, this question always disturbed me. We know that, there are many faculty members who drink, and they drink at home. Where will they drink? They will drink at home. Sometimes, they will drink in dinners, when organized for conferences, seminars. Most of the times, they drink at home. Now if drinking is ok, if drinking is permissible, if drinking is good, then students also have the right to drink. And, if faculty members drink in their homes, then the students, hostel study students, home only here; as long as they are in I I T Kanpur, hostel is their home.

So, what is wrong, if they are found drinking? You know, same behavior, drinking, taking alcohol, for faculty members is ok; for students, it is deviance. Deviance, what is good for man, may be bad for woman; what is good for woman may be bad for man; what is good for an old person maybe bad for a child; what is good for a child maybe bad for an old person; what it is good for South Indians maybe bad for North Indians and what is good for North Indians maybe bad for South Indians. We got the norms; if norms are different...So, we have to define deviance in relations to positions and norms. There is no activity as such. Sociologists, if you read sociology textbooks, particularly in the framework of interactionism, what can be the worst form of deviance? And, sociologists

will say that, even something like nudity, nudity is deviance; it is against the norms of society. It is against the mores. And, to come out, to come in society, to come to classroom, to go to office, to show nudity in the office, or classroom, or political parties, or celebrations, or temple, church, cinema hall, is one of the worst forms of deviance. But there are occasions, when nudity is natural, or is encouraged. On certain sea beaches, among couples, husband and wife, there are...

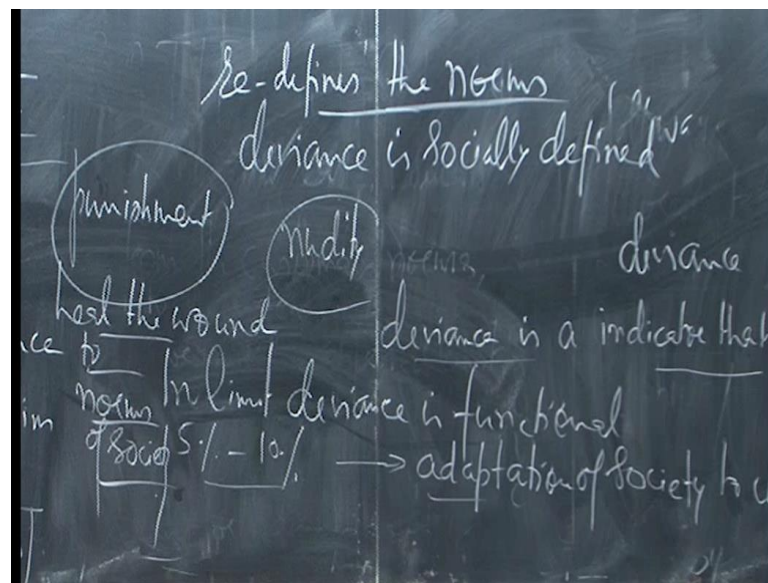
So, what sociologists say that, deviance is not actually the property of act as such; no act as such is deviant; how that act gets defined, in relation to position and norms of society, that decides whether something should be treated as deviance or not. Murder is a deviant activity; homicide is deviance; suicide is deviance; but when at the time of war, our army personnel, army officers, soldiers, engage in murders, then, it is eulogized; then, it is praised. If society comes to know that, there was a soldier, in adverse conditions of Siachen, who at the time of war, without much support from his company, his unit, killed 50 Pakistanis, and removed them all from the Siachen, then he will be praised. So, it is not killing as such, but killing in what condition. In court also, we say that, killing, a murder in self defense is ok. So, no activity as such is right, or wrong; activities are right or wrong, deviant or conformist, in relation to ones position, time and norms of society. And, if there are conflicts between norms, then defining deviance becomes still more complicated. We will take up some definitional issues, when we come to theories of deviance.

Emile Durkheim, a functional sociologist, will say that, in limit, deviance is functional. In some books, I found that, if deviance is confined to 5 percent, or 10 percent, it is actually good. Why, because it leads to better adaptation of society to change; environmental change, economic change, cultural change, climate change. 5 to 10 percent deviation is good, because it leads to adaptation of society; better adaptation to forces of change. Deviation, according to Emile Durkheim, is an indicator that something is wrong; identify that, and correct that. Looked at from this perspective, the problem of naxalites is an indicator that, state has failed in its duty to provide employment to rural youths. So, it is an indication. This, certain amount of deviance is good; it tells us that, state is failing; there is something wrong with the planning commission; something wrong with the government policy; something wrong with the governance; something wrong with the ideology, or development. And, that something must be identified and corrected.



Emile Durkheim also says that, sometimes, deviance is the welcoming of the future. So, Mangal Pandey, or Mahatma Gandhi, they were deviants, because they were responsible actually, for a new era of independence. Subhash Chandra Bose asked our youths to organize violently and defeat the British forces, to make the country independent. And, Mahatma Gandhi attempted to mobilise people nonviolently, and create the idea of independence. They were deviants; but this deviance was the welcoming of a better state of affairs in the future.

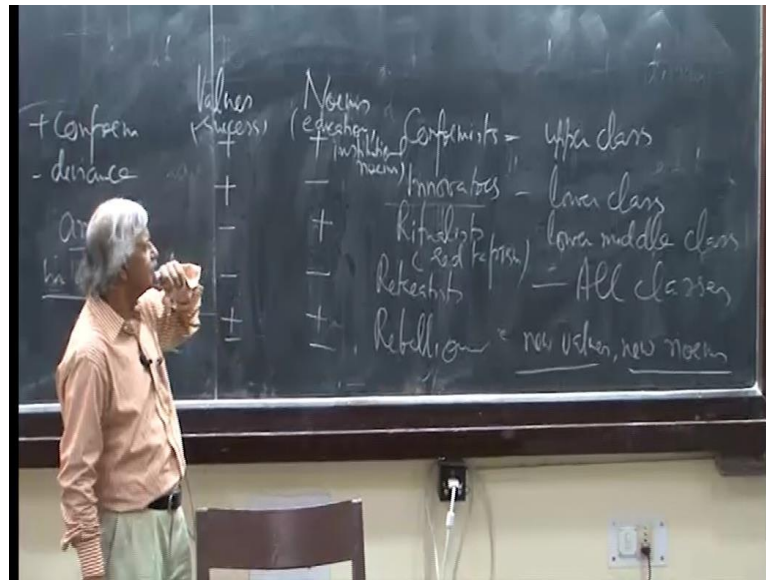
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Then, why do they punish? What is the role of punishment? If deviance can be good, Emile Durkheim says that, in punishment, we heal the wound to norms of society. When somebody deviates, when lot of cases of deviance are noticed, then punishment, heals the wound to society, created by the acts of deviants; and it redefines the norms, sometimes redefines. If no case of liquor is reported from any hostel, there will be no need to make a rule that, students should not drink. People may generally believe that, at this age, it is our response, at this age of students, it is seniors' responsibility to teach them self control; that a student should be in the state of self-control; they must learn discipline. Basic idea is that, they must learn discipline and they must not dissipate their energy in intoxication, or other things. They must concentrate on studies. But if four, five students in some hostel, sometimes are found in a state of intoxication, it helps I I T system in defining the norms. And then, the Dean will pass an order and that order will be put up on the notice boards of all the hostels, that, students are not supposed to drink.

Sometimes actually, deviance helps in clarifying the norms of society. Otherwise, many norms may remain unnoticed and they may subsequently become redundant. So, deviance helps so many purposes. For me, a slightly more interesting theory of deviance comes from sociologist; again, a functional sociologist, R K Merton.

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R K Merton says that, the total cultural system of a society can be divided into two things: values and norms. And, there may be situations in some, in which, some people conforming to, or deviating from values and norms. Now, the moment we say values and norms, and not just one term norm, then, we have several combinations. There may be some people who conforms to values; Merton writes plus sign there; people conform; plus means conform; and minus means deviance; do not conform. There are some people, who conform to value system, as well as to norms. There are some people, who conform with the values of society, but not the norms. There may be some people, who deviate from the values of society, conform to norms. There may be some, who deviate from both; and there may be some, who may be working for some new norms and new values. So, you have lots of combinations.

R K Merton was trying to answer why so much of normlessness, or anomy in advanced countries; particularly in America, why there is so much of deviance, or so much of departure from norm? Why so much of normlessness, or restlessness, or disturbance, lack of trust in American society. And, Merton felt that, there are some people, who are

actually conforming to both. Their number may be small, but yes, there are; they maybe called conformists. Usually, the people belonging to upper class, or upper middle class would be conformists. For them, success is the highest value. We must succeed in life, make money, be politically powerful, become ministers, or take up occupations with which high prestige is associated. Norms, education, institutional norms, by following institutional norms, contesting elections, investments, innovations, creativity, by proving to be an efficient and effective officer, they rise; they succeed in life; conformists; mostly people from upper class are like that. But there are people from the lower classes; as far as socialization of this people is concerned, imagine that, they have also perfectly internalized the value of success. They are part of the same society. And American society today, lays greatest focus on material success.

And, there are many people from lower classes, who have acquired the value of material success. But because they are low, and this means education and institutional norms are not, these facilities, opportunities are not available to them to succeed; what they will do? They will try to succeed by departing from the norms of society. There are many people, who try to succeed by following an alternative course; not the course prescribed by the norms of society. And, Merton calls them innovators. It is a difficult for us to say, whether they are deviants, or not deviants; they are trying to achieve the same thing, which conformists are trying to achieve, but by following alternative means, because the prescribed means to succeed are beyond their reach.

So, they become innovators. Then, there are people from lower middle class, who have already come to a certain level and they anxiously protect their achievements. But they also have some kind of insecurity; the (( )) the norms of society, then they will fall into the trap of poverty; they will lose their job, and with that, many facilities, good food, housing, entertainment, leisure. So, what these people will do? They will follow all norms of society. People belonging to lower middle class, they have already come up to certain levels. They know that they cannot rise further; but they are more concerned about maintaining their present status in society. So, they will follow all the norms and they are not worried, what happens to the values. They are called ritualists.

You must have heard about something called redtapeism; not taking decisions. Many bureaucrats, who want to play safe, do not take decisions; redtapeism. In the license and permit (( )), when foreign funders, capitalists, would apply for a license to establish an

industry in India, the files will be moving in different ministries for as many as 10 years, 15 years; nobody wants to take a decision; because they are not concerned with what will be the consequence of not taking decisions for the national interest. They are more interested in, that nobody should blame them. One reason, why for several years and to some extent even now, Bihar did not develop, nobody wanted to take any action; government servants would not like to take any action; let people charge them for corrupt practices; contactors will not apply and those who can afford, they will not buy car. Then, they did not want to attract attention of the wrong elements in society. Files will not move; action will not be taken. So, they are conforming to norms of society; redtapeism; ritualists. They are ritualists. They are not concerned about the values; whether the, whether they themselves succeed or not, whether the country develops or not, is not their concern. They are ritualists.

Then, there are retreatists, like hippies, vagabonds, beggars, drug addicts, various types of neurotics, psychotics; at one time, they conformed to both values and norms of society; but maybe due to some accident in their life, some bad happening, some mishap, something made them frustrated. Many people become frustrated; many brilliant people become frustrated, and give up everything. Then, they stop making any efforts; for various reasons; some physical problem, problem of relations. We know that, there are many bright people, who for the reason of relations, or because of some accident, or something, with them, or somebody in the family, they become disinterested in life; they withdraw. Merton says that, they are retreatists; but they are also not dangerous people. Even you cannot equate retreatists with ritualists, or innovators. Innovators are very clever. They are trying to be successful. Our country is full of [FL].

Now, those who are intelligent [FL], they are not retreaters; they are innovators. Why corruptions, because by engaging in [FL], they are trying to succeed; and there is nothing to wrong in succeeding. Everybody wants to succeed. It is difficult to say, whether it is, whether glass is half full, or half empty. They are also trying to conform. In this, in their case also, socialization has been quite well; quite perfect. They want to conform. They are not sanyasins; sanyasins are here, retreatists. Those who withdraw from society, those who take sanyas, they are here; they are retreatists. They are not concerned with values, or norms of society, anything. Many...Although, I will not call Aurobindo Ghosh completely a retreatist kind of person. But there is an element of retreatism in

Aurobindo Ghosh. Aurobindo Ghosh, a highly westernized, English educated person, qualified (( )) for civil services, deliberately failed in sports and retreated to Pondicherry; lost interest in politics. At one time, he took a lot of interest in politics, independence of the country. He was a revolutionary. He could have been a top ranking civil servant. He could have been a top ranking revolutionary. Maybe somebody like Subash Chandra Bose, or maybe like Charu Majumdar, a naxalite, or Marxist, we do not know. But he had potential to do that. But eventually, for various reasons, Aurobindo Ghosh retreated and stayed in Ppondicherry and just focused on meditation. And, many devotees are of Aurobindo Ghosh believe, that is, why they believe, I do not know, to, whether it is a rational; his devotees believed that, what Subash Chandra Bose, or Mahatma Gandhi could not do, Aurobindo Ghosh did, and India became independent, because of meditative practices of Aurobindo Ghosh; [FL] his devotees believed that. But he was a retreatist; he left everything.

Then, there are others, rebellions. Merton says that, these people, retreatists, can come from any class; they may come from upper class; they may come from lower classes; they may come from middle classes, and they may come from any class. And then, there are rebellions. Rebellions are fighting for new values and new norms; new values and new norms. So, Marxists revolutionaries, in capitalist countries, they are not deviants of this type. They have to be, the violent Marxist revolutionaries, have to be distinguished from those, (( )) somebody for, for money, or, or political reasons. They are not working for themselves. Rebellions are not working for themselves. Rebellions are trying to establish new values and new norms. So, it is difficult to say, whether they are conformists, or they are deviants. Mostly, sociologists will say that, people belonging to rising classes. Rebellions will come mostly from people belonging to rising classes; inconsistent status; rising; at one time, they were low; now, they are rising; or, in some respect, they are low. Merton did not say this, but I am just trying to explain this, by using other sociological concepts. Then, mostly rebellions will come from those classes, which have inconsistent status.

To simplify the matter further, like sociologists would say that, those who have consistently high status, or consistently bad status, poor status, all of them are likely to be more conformist type; but those who are high in some respects, and low in other respects, like poor Brahmins, and rich dalits. Mostly revolutionaries, in our kind of

society, would come from poor Brahmins and rich dalits. They are high in some respect; low in other respects; inconsistent status. Merton says that, they will come mostly from rising social classes. You cannot have revolutionaries from the poorest of the poor; poorest of the [FL]. So, people have to come to certain level first, and because they are not the part of the affluent upper classes, they also had empathy and they can empathize with the poor classes, or the vulnerable sections of society, or the disadvantaged sections of society, and they have more (( )); they are more aware; they are more educated, more understanding of culture. So, they become revolutionaries. So, that means....

So, by introducing the dichotomies of values and norms, Merton made the subject of deviance slightly more abstract, complex and more interesting. I think, to understand deviants of various... You can place, you see all kinds of deviants, all kinds of problems that you see around, and you can see that, they will fit in one of these categories. And, motivations are different, class background is different, or people deviating in different categories, motivations are different, class backgrounds are different and there is some degree of association between socialist structure and what kind of deviance it will produce. So, Merton was saying that, deviance will always remain, because deviance arises from certain stresses generated by the social structure itself. We will continue this discussion in the next class.