BSOC 106: SOCIOLOGY OF RELIGION

Tutor Marked Assignment

Course Code: BSOC 106
Assignment Code: BSOC-106/ASST/TMA/2026-27
Total Marks: 100

There are three Sections in the Assignment. You have to answer all the questions.

Section I

Answer the following Descriptive Category questions in about 500 words each.

1. Compare the perspectives of Karl Marx and Max Weber on religion. 20

2. Examine the role of myths and symbols in religious life. 20

Section II

Answer the following Middle Category questions in about 250 words each.

3. Explain Durkheim's concepts of sacred and profane. 10

4. What do you understand by 'civil religion'. Explain. 10

5. What is 'religious pluralism'? 10

Section III

Answer the following Short Category questions in about 100 words each.

6. What is animism? 06

7. Explain the concept of totemism. 06

8. State the main features of a sect. 06

9. Outline social functions of religion. 06

10. Explain the concept of charisma. 06

1. Compare the perspectives of Karl Marx and Max Weber on religion. 20

Answer

Religion is not only a matter of individual faith. It is also connected with economic conditions, power, social relationships and the way people understand their lives. Karl Marx and Max Weber both treated religion as an important part of society, but they explained its relationship with social change differently. Marx emphasised material inequalities and the use of religious ideas in maintaining existing arrangements. Weber examined how religious meanings and ethical beliefs could themselves influence economic and social action.

Marx: religion in material and unequal society

Marx's approach begins with the material organisation of society. People need to produce food, shelter and other necessities, and this process produces relations between classes. In a class-divided society, those who control property and production enjoy greater power than those who work for them. Marx argued that dominant social ideas are closely related to these arrangements. Religion should therefore be understood in its social and historical setting, not simply as a collection of theological statements.

He considered religion a response to real human suffering. For people experiencing poverty, insecurity or injustice, the promise of divine care or a better life after death can provide emotional comfort. His famous description of religion as the 'opium of the people' has this double meaning: religion can express suffering and provide relief, but it may also discourage people from challenging the conditions that produce suffering. To call it an illusion, in Marx's analysis, is not to deny that believers experience genuine sorrow or consolation.

Religion can also offer moral approval for hierarchy. For example, social inequality may be explained as fate, a divine command or the result of past actions. When such explanations make unequal conditions appear natural and permanent, they can help reproduce the existing order. Marx was particularly concerned with the way ideas become associated with class power. Yet he did not claim that every religious person consciously supports exploitation. His basic question was why conditions exist in which people need such consolation and why social institutions make inequality seem legitimate.