

# **SOCIOLOGY**

# TOPICS

- **Sociology:** Meaning, Nature, and Scope.
- **Sociology and other sciences:** Psychology, Economics, Political Science and History.

# SOCIOLOGY

- Sociology emerged as an independent social science in 19<sup>th</sup> century. *Auguste Comte* , a Frenchman, is considered to be the ‘father of sociology’. He coined the term ‘sociology’ in 1839.
- **Meaning of sociology:** “Sociology” is composed of two words: *socius*, `meaning companion or associate; ‘*logus*’, meaning science or society. The etymological meaning of “sociology” is thus the *science of study*. *Auguste Comte*, defines sociology as the science of social phenomena “subject to natural and invariable laws, the discovery of which is the object of investigation”.

*Max Weber* defines sociology as “the science which attempts the interpretative understanding of social action in order thereby to arrive at a casual explanation of its course and effects”.

# NATURE OF SOCIOLOGY

- **Sociology is an independent science:** Sociology has now emerged into an independent science. It is not treated and studied as a branch of any other science like philosophy or political philosophy or history. As an independent science it has its own field of study, boundary and method.
- **Sociology is a Social Science and not a Physical Science:** Sociology belongs to the family of social sciences and not to the family of physical sciences. As a social science it concentrates its attention on man, his social behaviour, social activities and social life. As a member of the family of social sciences it is intimately related to other social sciences like history, political science, economics, psychology, anthropology etc.

- **Sociology is a categorical and not a normative discipline:** Sociology “confines itself to statements about *“what is, not what should be or ought to be”*. As a science, sociology is necessarily silent about questions of value. It does not make any kind of value-judgments. Its approach is neither moral nor immoral but amoral. It is ethically neutral. It cannot decide the directions in which sociology ought to go. In short and sociology as a discipline cannot deal with problems of good and evil, right and wrong, and moral or immoral.

- **Sociology is a pure science not an applied science:** The main aim of pure science is the acquisition of knowledge and it is not bothered whether the acquired knowledge is useful or can be put to use. On the other hand, the aim of applied science is to apply the acquired knowledge into life and put it to use. Sociology is a pure science, because the immediate aim of sociology is the acquisition of knowledge about human society, not the utilisation of that knowledge. Sociologists never determine questions of public policy and do not recommend legislators what laws should be passed or repealed.
- **Sociology is relatively an abstract science and not a concrete science:** Sociology is more concerned with the form of human events and their patterns. For example, sociology is not concerned with particular wars and revolutions but with war and revolution in general, as social phenomena, as types of social conflict. Similarly, sociology does not confine itself to the study of this society or that particular society or social organization, or marriage, or religion, or group and so on. It is in this simple sense that sociology is an abstract not a concrete science.

- **Sociology is a general science and not a special science:** sociology is concerned with human interaction and human life in general. Other social sciences like political science, history, economics etc., also study man and human interaction but not all human interaction. They concentrate their attention on certain aspects of human interaction and activities and specialise themselves in those fields. But sociology studies human activities in general way.
- **Sociology is both rational and empirical science:** Empiricism is the approach that emphasizes experience and the facts that result from observation and experimentation. The other, known as rationalism, stresses reason and the theories that result from logical inference. Sociology is empirical and rational in nature.
- Thus sociology is an independent, a social, a categorical, a pure, an abstract, general and empirical and rational social science.

# SCOPE OF SOCIOLOGY

Every science has its own areas of study or fields of inquiry. It becomes difficult for any one to study a science systematically unless its boundaries are demarcated and scope determined precisely. There are two main schools of thought regarding the scope of sociology: 1) The specialistic or formalistic school and 2) the synthetic school.



- ***The specialistic school:*** This school of thought is led by German sociologist. The other main advocates of this school are Vierkandt, Max Weber, Small, Von Weise and Tonnies.
- **Simmel** and others are of opinion that sociology is a pure and an independent science. As a pure science it has limited scope. Sociology should confine itself to the study of certain aspects of human relationship only. Further, it should study only the ‘forms’ of social relationships but not their contents. Social relationship such as competition, sub-ordination, division of labour, etc., are expressed in different fields of social life such as economic, political, religious, moral, artistic etc. Sociology should disentangle the forms of social relationships and study them in abstraction. Sociology as a specific social science describes, classifies and analyses the forms of social relationships.

- **Vierkandt** says that sociology concerns itself with the ultimate form of mental or psychic relationship which links men to one another in society. He maintains that in dealing with culture, sociology should not concern itself with the actual contents of cultural evolution but it should confine itself to only the discovery of the fundamental forces of change and persistence. It should refrain itself from making a historical study of concrete societies.
- **Max Weber** opines that the aim of sociology is to interpret or understand social behaviour . But the social behaviour does not cover the whole field of human relations. He further says that sociology should make an analysis and classification of types of social relationships.

- ***The Synthetic School:*** The synthetic school of thought conceives of sociology as a synthesis of social sciences. It wants to make sociology a general social science and not a pure or special social science. In fact, this school has made sociology synoptic or encyclopaedic in character. Durkheim, Hob House, Ginsberg and Sorokin have been the chief exponents of this school. The main argument of this school is that all parts of social life are intimately inter related. Hence the study of one aspect is not sufficient to understand the entire phenomenon. Hence sociology should study social life as a whole. This opinion has contributed to the creation of a general and systematic sociology.

# **SOCIOLOGY AND PSYCHOLOGY**

- Psychology has been defined as the study of human behaviour. In other words of Thouless, “psychology is the positive science of human experience and behaviour”.
- The relationship between psychology and sociology is so close that Karl Pearson asserts that the two are not separate sciences.
- Psychology and sociology are closely inter related to each other. Psychology has to depend on sociology to understand properly human nature and behaviour as it is sociology which provides

- the necessary material regarding the structure, organisation and culture of societies to which individuals belong. Similarly, the sociologists have taken the assistance from the psychology. They have recognised the importance of psychological factors in understanding the changes in social structure.
- Sociologists and psychology may have to study together certain common topics such as- individuals disorganisation, crime, juvenile delinquency, social disorganisation, public opinion, propaganda, leadership, war conflicts, socialisation, suggestion, imitation, fashion and so on.

- Psychology helps us a great deal in facing several social problems. Problems such as racial conflict, religious prejudices, communal tensions, crimes, juvenile delinquency, prostitution, gambling and alcoholism are not totally isolated cases in the society. As they are inseparable from normal social processes and normal social behaviour, the knowledge of psychology should be brought to bear on the solution of these problems. Deviant patterns such as stealing, suicide, divorce and prostitution are also normal consequences of our social institutions. As social behaviour and details of the practical problems.

- Emphasising the close relation between sociology and psychology, Lapiere writes that “social psychology is to sociology and psychology, as biochemistry is to biology and chemistry”. MacIver says that, “sociology in special gives aid to psychology, just as psychology gives special aid to sociology”. To quote Murphy, “social psychology is the study of the way in which the individual becomes member of and functions in a social group”.

# SOCIOLOGY AND ECONOMICS

- Sociology and economics as social sciences have close relations. Relationship between the two is so close that one is often treated as the branch of the other. According to Thomas, “Economics is in fact , but one branch of the comprehensive science of sociology”. In other words of Silverman, “It may be regarded for ordinary purposes, as an offshoot of the parent science of sociology, which studies general principles of all social relations”. But this does not mean that economics is a branch of sociology.



- ***Economics:*** Economics deals with the economic activities of man. Dr. Alfred Marshall defines economics as “On the one side the study of wealth and on the other and more important side a part of study of man”. It can also be understood as the science of wealth in its three stages namely: production, distribution and consumption.
- Economics studies man as a wealth- getter and a wealth disposer. Wealth constitutes the central problem of economics. It studies the interrelations of purely economic factors and forces: the relations of price and supply, money flows, input-output ratios and the like. It studies the structure and function of economic organisations like banks, factories, markets business firms, corporations, transport, etc.

- **Sociology and Economics are mutually helpful:** Economics and sociology are helpful to each other. Economics relationships bear a close relationship to social activities. At the same time social relationships are also affected by economic activities. Because of this close relation *Thomas* regarded economics as the branch of sociology.
- Some economists like *Sombart, Max Weber, Pareto, Schumpeter* have explained economic change as an aspect of social change. According to them, the study of economics would be incomplete without an understanding of human society. Economic system is embedded in the social structure as a part of it. The society, its structure, its organisations, its institutions, its strength, and weaknesses etc., are bound to effect the economic activities of its people.

- That is why a celebrated modern economist has said that “economics must be made the handmaid of sociology”.
- **Max Weber**, German sociologist, made classical attempt to show how social factors, and particularly, religious beliefs and practical ethics influence the economic activities of people. He made this clear in his book *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. His contention is that the progressive protestant ethic provided the stimulus to the rapid growth of capitalism in the West, whereas Hinduism and Buddhism, with their so called fatalistic approach, failed to stimulate the growth of capitalism in the East.

- At the other end, there are environmentalist like *Karl Marx* and *Veblen* according to whom the social phenomena are determined by economic forces. According to *Marx*, the infrastructure of a society is nothing but the economic relations among its people. However, there is a growing awareness among social scientist about the mutual interplay between the economic and non- economic forces of society.
- The area of cooperation between sociology and economics is widening. Economists are now analysing the social factors influencing economic growth. Economists are working with the sociologists in their study of the problem of economic development in underdeveloped countries. Economists are more and more making use of the sociological concepts and generalisations in the study of economic problems.

- Further, there are certain socio-economic problems of greater importance to be studied by both economists and sociologists. Such problems like poverty, beggary, unemployment, over population, unregulated industrialisation have both social and economic implications. Combined studies of both the experts in this regard may be of great practical help in meeting the challenges.

# SOCIOLOGY AND POLITICAL SCIENCE

- Political science and Sociology very closely related. Political science deals with the political activities of man. It studies social group organised under the sovereignty of the state. It studies man as a ruler and being ruled. Laski, Gettell and Gilchrist, the eminent political scientist, are of the opinion that the scope of political science embraces the study of both state and government.
- Political science has its own topics such as the origin, evolution and functions of state, the forms of government, types of constitution, administration, law, legislation, international relations, methods of the political representation, elections, voting, political movements, political ideologies, etc.

- ***Sociology has its roots in politics :***
- Morris Ginsberg writes: “Historically, sociology has its root in politics and philosophy of history”. The main works on social subjects such as *Plato’s Republic*, *the Politics of Aristotle*, *Arthashastra of Kautilya* and other classical works were treated to complete works on political science.
- Political science and sociology are so intimately connected as Garner said that the “political is embedded in the social that if political science remains distinct from sociology, it will be because of the breadth of the field calls for the specialist, not because there are any well defined boundaries marking it off from sociology”. Both the sciences are mutually helpful. In fact, political activity is only a part of social activities..

Thus political science appears to be a branch of sociology. However, we can say that political science is just *Political Sociology*.

Political activity influences and is influenced by the social life of man. In fact, political activities will have no meaning outside the social context. Politics is after all the reflection of society. This is made clear by the common saying, that '*people have the government which they deserve*'. Political science gives sociology facts about the organisation and functions of the state and government. Political science derives from sociology a knowledge of the political authority.



- Political science is concerned with the state. But sociology also studies state *as one of the human associations*. The state, in its early form, was more a social institution than a political one. Moreover, a political scientist must also be a sociologist. The laws of the state have a great influence upon society. These laws are largely based on customs, traditions, conventions and usages. But these customs, traditions, etc., are the concern of sociology. The institution of family, for example, is an element in social life. It is the concern of sociology. But the laws of marriage, made to regulate the family, fall within the field of political science.

- ***Common foci of attention*** : There are some common topics of interest for both sociologists and political scientists. Such topics as war, mass movements, revolutions, government control, public opinion, propaganda, leadership, election, voting, political minorities, social legislations like civil code and like may be cited here as examples.
- Further, many of the social problems are also deep political problems. Communal riots, racial tensions between Whites and Black, Asians and Europeans, etc., border disputes between different states, caste conflicts, etc., are problems that have political as well as social implications. It has become quite common to use political instruments to solve such social problems like beggary, unemployment, prostitution, poverty, crime, etc.

# SOCIOLOGY AND HISTORY

- Sociology and history are very much interrelated. Like political science, sociology is becoming one of the most genuine fruits of history to which it is ultimately connected. The two sciences are so close that some writers like G. Von Bulow refused to accept sociology as a science different from history.
- History is the reconstruction of man's past. It is the story of the experience of mankind. It is a record of the human past. It is a systematic record of man's life and achievement from the dim past to the present. The historian studies the significant events of man in the order of time. The historian is interested in what happened at a particular time in the past.

- Further, a historian is not satisfied, however, with mere description. He seeks to learn the causes of these events to understand the past – not only how it has been but also how it came to be. Nevertheless, he is, in a sense, interested in events for their own sake. “He wants to know everything there is to know about them and to describe them in all their unique individuality”. The historian concentrates only on past. He is not interested in the present and is unwilling to look to the future.

- Sociology as a science of society, on the other hand is interested in the present. It tries to analyse human interactions and interrelations with all their complexity and diversity. It also studies the historical development of societies. It studies various stages of human life, modes of living, customs, manners and their expression in the form of social institutions and associations. Sociology has thus to depend upon history for its material. History with its record of various social events of the past offers data and facts to sociologists.

- ***History supplies information to sociology*** : History is a storehouse of records, treasury of knowledge. It supplies materials to various social sciences including sociology. History contains records even with regard to social matters. It contains information about the different stages of human life, modes of living, customs and manners, social institutions, etc. This information about the past is of great help to a sociologist. A sociologist has to make use of the historical records.
- A sociologist is, no doubt, concerned with the present day society. But the present day society can be better understood from the knowledge of its past because what people are today is because of what they had been in the past.

Further, sociologists often make use of comparative method in their studies for which they depend on history for data. Historical sociology, one of the fields of sociological inquiry, depends very much on historical data. It is true that the sociologist must sometimes be his own historian, amassing information from all the available sources.

- *Sociology helps history too* : Historian also uses sociology. Until recently it was perhaps from philosophy that the historian took his clues to important problem and historical concepts and ideas. But now these are drawn increasingly from sociology. Indeed, we can see that modern historiography and modern sociology have both been influenced in similar ways by the philosophy of history. Further sociology provides the social background for the study of history. History is now being studied and read from the sociological point of view. It is said that history would be meaning less without the appreciation of socially significant events. Further, it is often remarked that history would be boring, monotonous, prosaic and uninteresting unless the social events are narrated. Historical facts



without reference to socially important matters would be like a body with flesh, blood and bone, but without life.

G.E. Howard says that 'history is past sociology and sociology is the present history'.

THANKS