

# **Unit 1**

## **Introduction to Sociology**

# Meaning of Sociology

- Sociology has been coined from two Latin and Greek words 'Societus' and 'Logos' respectively in which 'society' denotes the web of human relationship and 'logos' denotes the study or science.
- The etymological meaning of 'sociology' is thus the science of society.
- According to the etymological meaning, sociology studies economical, religious, reproductive etc. aspects of human life which are not static.
- Social phenomena are dynamic and sociology studies these dynamic phenomena.
- It means sociology men's life as a whole.

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- Sociology has been defined in a number of ways by different sociologists. In fact, there are as many definitions of sociology as there are sociologists.
- For our purpose of study a few definitions may be cited here.
- Sociology as the science of social phenomena “subject to natural and invariable ways, the discovery of which is the object of investigation” – Auguste Comte (founding father of sociology)
- Sociology is a science of society – L.F. Ward
- Sociology is about social relationship, the net work of relationship we call society – MacIver and Page
- Sociology is the study of relationship between man and his human environment – Fair Child
- Sociology is a general science of society – Kingsley Davis
- Sociology is the science that deals with social groups – Harry M. Johnson
- Sociology is the science of social institutions – Emile Durkheim
- Sociology of collective behaviour – Park
- Sociology is the study of man-in-relationship-to-men – Marshal Jones
- Sociology is the scientific study of social life – Ogburn and Nimkoff

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- By the definition above, it can be understood that sociology is the systematic description and explanation of society viewed as a whole. Sociology tries to get the picture of total life of individuals in relation to his fellow individual in the human society.
- It observes the social happenings, as every other social science does. But sociology does so with the help of research techniques and tries to seek the information from various sources. Then it relates the social facts with other facts to obtain cause and effect relationship.

# Characteristics of Sociology

- Sociology is a –
  1. science of society
  2. science of social institutions
  3. science of collective behaviour
  4. science of social relations
  5. study of man in relation to other man
  6. scientific study of social life
  7. science of social phenomena
  8. study of relationship between man and his human environment
  9. study of basic structure of the society
  10. scientific study of social aspects of human life

# Nature of Sociology

- The nature of sociology is concern with “is sociology a science or not?”. Regarding this issue there is debate among the Scholars. Some scholars are ready to accept the sociology as a science and some are not ready to accept. By using following bases,
  - Experiment
  - Observation
  - Comparison
  - Cause and Effect Analysis
  - Prediction
  - Hence, we can say that the nature of sociology is debatable. Sociology, as a branch of knowledge, has its own characteristics. It is different form other science in certain respects.
  - Following are the main nature of sociology.
  - Those who believe sociology cannot be regarded as science state the following reasons.
1. **Problem of Experimentation:** The term ‘science’ is often used for physical science. When we consider the physical science, it is related to two process: experiment and prediction. The subject matter of sociology involves human relationship that cannot be analyzed in laboratory. In other words, society is so complex that it is very difficult or impossible to separate and analyze the complex components of society as can be done in physical science.

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2. **Problem of Objectivity** : Social relationships are complex phenomena. They are changeable in nature. Each man shows prejudice and bias behaviour. Considering the natures of an individual, one cannot maintain complete objectivity with the objects of experiment, as does a physical scientist.
3. **Problem of Exactivity**: In physical science, observation and hypothesis are used to under-pin certain laws. These laws are used to accurately predict results which mostly accurate and precise. On the other hand, the results obtained from the study of sociology cannot be expressed in precise terms and its prediction might not be accurate. In addition to this, the findings from sociology are limited from time to time and society to society.
4. **Insufficient Terminology**: Some argue that sociology does not have clear, concise and exact terminology. In fact, sociology has not yet developed a set of scientific words. Most of the terms are confusing and unclear. Words such as caste, class, religion, customs etc are used in unclear sense. Words 'class' is sometimes replaced with the word 'caste'. Therefore, there is no consensus among sociologists on the definition of such terms.

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- Those who believe sociology can be regarded as science state the following reasons:
  1. **Use of Scientific Method:** It is true that sociology does not have the laboratory, as does physical science. However, sociology employs scientific methods for research for the study of social animals. Questionnaires, interviews, case studies etc. are employed for the quantitative measurements to social phenomena. For sociology, the society is the social laboratory.
  2. **Concept of Lab:** The arrangements for the laboratory are sometimes not applied in the case of physical science. The heavenly bodies cannot be put in the laboratory but everybody believes that astronomy is in the subject area of science. This argument leads some social scientists to believe sociology as a science.
  3. **Use of Observation Technique:** Observation is the scientific method to study nature phenomena at the time it occurs. It uses eyes rather than ears. Sociologists also use observation to find cause and effect relationships between social phenomena.



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4. **Cause and Effect Relationship:** Sociology traces cause effect relationship for different social events does physical science. Sociology attempts to find out the answer to how and why questions of different social events. For example, it tries to trace the relationship between family disorganization, divorce and westernization etc.
  5. **Scientific Study:** Sociology studies its subject matter, scientifically. It tries to classify social relationships and tries to determine the relationship between different facts of social life.
- In a conclusion, we find the groups holding opposite views on controversy that weather the nature of sociology is scientific or not. Science is a way looking at reality in a systematic manner. Physicist obtains knowledge about physical reality and sociologists obtain a systematic knowledge about social reality. Science always emphasizes the method and can never gives an importance on subject matter. Any subject matter can be called science if one adopts a scientific way of looking at reality. Thus, sociology should not lose its claim to be science since it has a scientific methodology to explain social reality.

# Subject Matter of Sociology

- Ever since the beginning of sociology, sociologists have shown a great concern in man and in the dynamics of society. The importance has been fluctuating between man and society.
- A general outline of the fields of sociology on which most of the sociologists are agreed:
  1. **Sociological Analysis:** It means the sociologist seeks to provide and analysis of human society and culture with a sociological prospective. An attempt is also made to analyze the factors and forces underlying historical transformation of society.
  2. **The study of primary units of social life:** In this area we can include social acts and social relationships, individual personality, group of all varieties, communities (rural, urban, tribal), associations, organizations and populations.
  3. **Development, structure and function of a wide variety of basic social institutions:** Sociology has been concerned different institutions such as marriage, family, kinship, religion, property, economic, political, legal, educational and scientific, recreational and welfare etc.

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4. **Fundamental Social process:** This process can play vital role in sociology such as cooperation and competition, accommodation and assimilation, social conflict including war and revolution, social differentiation and stratification, socialization and indoctrination, social control and deviance including crime, suicide, social integration and social change assume prominence in sociological studies.
5. **Method of Research:** Contemporary sociology has become more and more rational and empirical rather than philosophical and idealistic. Like a natural scientist a sociologist senses a problem a investigation for a problem then tries to formulate it into a researchable proposition. After collecting the data he tries to establish connection between phenomena then finally arrive at meaningful concept, proposition and generalization.
6. **Formulating concepts, propositions and theories:** Sociologists are concerned with the task of *formulating concepts, propositions and theories* . Concepts are abstracted from concrete experience to represent a class o phenomena. A proposition seeks to reflect a relationship between different categories of data or concepts. Theories go beyond concepts and propositions. Theories represent systematically related propositions that explain social phenomena. The sociological perspective becomes more meaningful and fruitful when one tries to derive insight from concepts, propositions and theories.
7. **Sociologists have ventured to make specializations:** Today good number of specialized fields of inquiry are emerging out. Sociology of knowledge, sociology of history, sociology of literature, sociology of culture, sociology of religion, sociology of family etc. represent such specialized fields.

# Scope of Sociology

- Every science has its own areas of study or fields of inquiry. It becomes difficult for anyone to study a science systematically unless its boundaries are demarcated and scope determined precisely. Unfortunately, there is no consensus on the part of sociologists with regard to the scope of sociology.
- V.F. Calverton comments “Since Sociology is so elastic as a science, it is difficult to determine just where its boundaries began and end, where sociology becomes social psychology and where social psychology becomes sociology, or where economic theory becomes sociological doctrine or biological theory becomes sociological theory something, which is impossible to decide”. It is maintained by some that sociology studies everything and anything around the Sun.
- However, there are two main schools of thought regarding the scope of sociology. They are:
  1. **The Specialistic/ Formalistic/ Particularistic School of Thought (German School of Thought): (George Simmel, Vierkandt, Max Weber, Small, Von Wiese and Tonnies)**
    - Sociology as being a pure and independent science it has limited scope. Sociology could 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.
    - In this context Max Weber has said that “the aim of sociology is to interpret or understand social behaviour. But social behaviour does not cover the whole field of human relationships. So, sociology should make an analysis and classification of types of social relationships”.

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## **Criticism of Formalistic School of Thoughts:**

- I. This view is very much narrow.
- II. The distinction between forms of social relationships and their contents are not possible.
- III. Every aspects of society are interrelated and interconnected so it is impossible to study separately.
- IV. The establishment of pure sociology is impractical. No sociologist have been able to develop a pure sociology so far.

## **2. The Synthetic School of Thought:**

- Durkheim, Hob House, Ginsberg, and Sorokin have been the chief exponents of this school of thought.
- The synthetic school of thought conceives of sociology as a synthesis of the social sciences.

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## **Criticism of Synthetic School of Thought:**

- I. All parts of social are intimately interrelated and inter-dependent.
  - II. Study of one aspect is not sufficient to understand the entire phenomenon.
  - III. Sociology should study social life in totality.
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- The scope of sociology is indeed very vast. It studies all the social aspect of society such as social process, social control, social change, social stratification, social group, social system etc.
  - In conclusion, we can say sociology is both general as well as special science, because in some extent it studies in depth and in some extent in general but more it is general science not specialistic.

# Emergence of Sociology

## 1. French Revolution in 1789 AD

- The French Revolution was a period of far-reaching social and political disorder in France that lasted from 1789 until 1799.
- The Revolution overthrew the monarchy, established a republic, experienced violent periods of political turmoil, and finally culminated in a dictatorship under Napoleon that rapidly brought many of its principles to Western Europe and beyond.
- Eg: positive and negative changes, freedom and crime, suicide etc.

## 2. Industrial Revolution and rise of Capitalism

- The productivity gains of capitalist production began a sustained and unprecedented increase at the turn of the 19th century, in a process commonly referred to as the Industrial revolution.
- Starting in about 1760 in England, there was a steady transition to new manufacturing processes in a variety of industries, including going from hand production methods to machine production, and the increasing development of machine tools.
- Eg: agricultural based economy to industrial based economy.

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## **3. Rise of Urbanization and Social Changes**

- Eg: Rural joint family to urban nuclear family

## **4. Rise of socialism**

- Eg: Karl Marx and intellectual discourse

## **5. Religious Changes**

- Eg: religious to non-religious life styles

## **6. Growth of sciences**

- Eg: priority for natural sciences

## **7. Contributions of social scientists (the enlightenment)**

- Eg: Auguste Comte, Emile Durkheim, Max Weber and Herbert Spencer



# Development of Sociology

- Sociology is the youngest social science.
- August Comte coined the word “sociology” in his Positive Philosophy published in 1838. He believed that a science of sociology should be based on systematic observation, not a speculation.
- Courses in sociology appeared in many universities in the 1890s (Hortan and Hunt, 2004)
- The American journal of sociology began publication in 1895, and the American Sociological Society (now the American Sociological Association) was organized in 1905.
- In Nepal, Nepal was almost closed for foreign scholars to pursue studies about Nepalese societies and cultures until 1950.
- In 1981, department of sociology and anthropology was established. (Master's Level).
- In 1985, bachelor level degree for four campuses and; M.M.A. M campus in Biratnagar, P.N. campus in Pokhara, Tri-Chandra in KTM and Patan M. Campus in Lalitpur.
- Now Master's level teaching in 18 constitutes campuses and 15 affiliated colleges of T.U.
- Started to teach in Master of Philosophy and Doctor of Philosophy in sociology and anthropology in Nepal.

# Relationship of Sociology with Economics

- Economics and sociology have close relations. Relationship between the two is so close that one is often treated as the branch of other in this regard Thomas says “Economics is in fact, but one branch of the comprehensive science of sociology.”
- Some economist like Sombart, Max Weber , Pareto have explained economic change as an aspect of social change. According to them the study economics would be incomplete without an understanding of human society . Karl Marx and venlen says that social phenomenon are determined by economic forces. However, there is growing awareness among social scientists about the mutual interplay between economics and non-economics forces of society.
- Sociologists have contributed to the study of different aspects of economic organization such as division of labour, property system, occupation etc and there are certain common economic problems of sociology & economics such as poverty , unemployment, over population, beggars etc. which cannot be solved unless and until the social attitude of the people.
- There are some theories / principle which are commonly use in both sciences theory, capatilism & Socialism etc.