**SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY**

Social psychology is one of the most important branches of human knowledge. No doubt, it is a new study but its real merit lies in its scope of tackling the multifarious problems with which the individuals are confronted in their interaction with the society. Society, today, has become quite complex From the simple group in which individuals were living on the basis of some natural urges it has assumed very complex shape Today there are large number of groups interacting with one another. There are various types of societies. There are various types of social groupings like clubs associations and institutions. An individual can be a member of more than one group of many societies, of many clubs and institutions or many associations. This complexity of an individual’s membership to various forms of social groupings have raised many typical problems for the individual himself and for the social groupings of which he becomes a member. To understand the man’s conduct in his interaction with the various forms of groupings it is essential that we study social, psychology.

**DEFINITION OF SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY**

Kimball Young says. “Social Psychology is the study of persons in their interactions with one another and with reference to the effects of this interplay upon the individual’s thoughts, feelings, emotions and habits.’ According to this definition social psychology deals with the individuals interrelations with one another and it also studies the effects of individual interactions with one another upon their own thoughts, feelings, emotions and habits. Thus we can say that this definition seeks the roots of social psychology, mainly in Sociology and Psychology. It must however, be remembered that in the development of this psychology, history, political science, economics and philosophy have contributed much. These branches of knowledge have also thrown much light on the interactions of men with one another.

Krech and Crutchfield in their book “Social’ Psychology” define Social Psychology as “The science of behaviour of the individual in society.” According to’ this definition social psychology is put as a science. It is considered as a science of behaviour of the individual in society. Krech and Crutchfield consider that social psychology is the only science of society which is concerned with “Every aspect of the individual’s behavior in society.” Thus, in this definition whole individual in his total behaviour with the society is the subject-matter of the study.

F. H. Allport in his book, “Social Psychology” defines it as “Social Psychology is the study of behaviour of individuals in their relations to other individuals and in social situation.” In the definition Allport has dealt with the study of behaviour of the individual in two-fold ways. He has emphasised the relationship of individual with one another and also the individuals behaviour in social situation. This definition deals not only with the behaviour of the individuals but with their attitudes also. We can quote another definition by Klineberg who says that, “Social Psychology is the scientific study of behaviour of the individuals as related to other individuals.” In this definition scientific study of individual’s behaviour in interaction with other individuals is emphasised.

Another definition of Social Psychology is, “Social Psychology is the study of the way in which individuals are affected by social situation.” (Stephen Worchel and Ted Cooper)

Fisher in 1982 defined Social Psychology, “As the scientific study of how the behaviour of an individual is influenced by and in turn influences the others in the social environment."

Sherif and Sherif consider that, “Social Psychology is the scientific study of the experience and behaviour of individual in relation to social stimulus situations."

Myers has defined Social Psychology as “The scientific study of how people think about, influence and relate to one another.”

Feldman says that; “Social Psychology is the discipline that examines how a person’s thoughts, feelings and actions are affected by others. “

In all the above definitions, the study of the interaction of the individual with society has been emphasised. Thus, all the above definitions point out that social psychology should be defined as a science which is to study the psychology of the individual man, when he is confronted with a social situation. Individual behaviour, when he will interact with the other individuals will always be dependent on his own nature. But the social surroundings, social setting and social situations will also be responsible to a great extent for his behaviour. Thus, to understand what type of behaviour the individual will depict in social situations, the study of individual psychology and sociology is essential. Hence any definition of social –must include both the psychological and sociological aspects of the individual’s behavior. Thus, it can be said that Social Psychology is scientific study of the behaviour of an individual when he comes in contact with the other individuals or interacts with any social group or groups or is confronted with some social situation in which he participates consciously or unconsciously.

**NATURE OF SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY**

Social Psychology in its nature is scientific. This is because it employs scientific techniques in enhancing its knowledge. As in sciences it makes systematic observations and through direct experimentations it studies social problems. It is true that in the study of this subject it does not use the similar type of tools as are used in scientific subjects like physics or chemistry. But the general techniques used in the study of Social Psychology are similar to those used in other sciences.

**Social Psychology Focuses on the Behaviour of Individuals:**

Societies differ greatly in terms of their views concerning courtship and marriage, yet, it is still individuals who fall in love. Similarly, societies vary greatly in terms of their overall levels of violence, yet, it is still individuals who perform aggressive actions or refrain from doing so. The same argument applies to virtually all other aspects of social behaviour, from prejudice to helping. Because of this basic fact, the focus in social psychology is squarely on individuals. Social psychologists realize, of course, that we do not exist in isolation form social and cultural influences – far from it. But the field’s major interest lies in understanding the factors that shape the actions and thoughts of individual human beings in social settings.

This contrasts sharply with the field of sociology, which studies some of the same topics as social psychology, but it is concerned not with the behaviour and thoughts of individuals, rather it focuses on large groups of persons of persons or society as a whole. For example, both social psychology and sociology study the topic of violent crime. While social psychologists focus on the factors that cause specific persons to engage in such behaviour, sociologists are interested in comparing rates of crimes in different segments of one society (Ex: high and low income groups), or in comparing such rates in several different societies.

**Social Psychology is Study of the Causes of Social Behaviour and Thought:**

Social psychologists basically interested in understanding the factors and conditions that shape the social behaviour and thought of individuals – their actions, feelings, beliefs, memories and inferences concerning the other persons. Obviously, a huge number of variables play a role in this regard.

**SCOPE OF SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY**

Taking into consideration the above mentioned problem of social psychology we may consider the following topics under the scope of social psychology.

**1 Socialisation of the Child**—The study of the process of socialisation is an important topic of social psychology.

**2 Social Motivation**—What do we mean by social motivation? What are its influences on individual behaviour? These are some of the problems which are included in the scope of social psychology?

**3. Attitudes and their Measurement**—In the study of social psychology the attitudes—their definition social-attitudes the development and measurement of attitudes are included.

**4 Social Interaction—** To understand social behaviour it s essential to understand the nature of social interactions It is because of its importance that social interactions fall under the scope of social psychology.

**5 Social Perception**—Our perceptions are influenced by the perceptions of others. How and why we are influenced by the other's perceptions? To understand these and similar problems the study of social perceptions is made Along with social perception we also study person perception.

**6 Social Learning**—The learning of an individual is very greatly influenced by social environment Some of the learning takes place on the basis of individuals capabilities and much of it takes place because of the association of the individual with the society.

**7. Culture and Personality**—Every society has its own culture. It influences the members of the society. The study of these influences provide us much information about’ the developmental process of the individual.

**8 Language and Communication—**In the scope of social psychology the topic of language and communication is also included. We are in contact with others through language. The language helps us in communication of our thoughts. But communication can also be non-verbal. Our facial expressions, eye contacts, movements of hands and feet convey many of our messages to the others. Hence the problems of language and communication need careful and deep study.

**9. Group Structure, Group Morale, Group Decision and Leadership**—The understanding of the formation of groups and the influence of groups on individual behaviour is essential’ for finding the solutions of social problems. Hence the topics like group structure etc. come under the scope of social psychology.

**10. Public Opinion, Propaganda & Rumour**—The formation of public opinion, the influence of propaganda on individual and social behaviour and the psychological aspects of rumour are all very important topics of social psychology.

**11. Social Change**—In every society there is social change do we mean by social change? When does it take place? What are the factors and dimensions of social change? Why do some societies strongly resist any reforms or progressive outlook ? These are unique problems on which social psychologist conduct many of their investigations.

**12. Prejudices, Stereotypes and Social Tensions**

In every society there are some disruptive elements. These create social tension. Some such elements are prejudices and stereotypes. The study of these elements or factors lead us towards an understanding of disruptions in the society and the social tensions.

**13. Altruism, Aggressiveness, Cooperation and Competition**—Altruism means helping an individual without any hope for reciprocity. Aggressiveness refers to that behavior which harms or injures the others. Cooperation is working together by two or more individuals. In competitive behaviour the individuals try to push ahead of others. These four are social behaviours which have their own specificity and are adopted in special situations. The social psychologist want to understand the various aspects of such behaviours so that they can know the importance of these in social behaviour.

**14. International Tensions and Industrial Conflicts**— Modern social psychologists are conducting investigations for finding the cause of social tensions. They are concerned with the problems of war and peace terrorism at national and international levels and the industrial disputes and disharmony in labour-management relationships. All these are being studied so that there may be refinement in social life patterns.

**15. Applications of Social Psychology in Education Business, Military, National Affairs etc**.—The knowledge of social psychology is now being widely used in various activities. Its application in Education, Business etc. have benefitted both itself and those branches of knowledge or the social activities which make use of its knowledge. Hence now under the scope of social psychology are included its application in various fields.