

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Science is knowledge — Classification of Sciences: Physical Sciences and Social Sciences — Social Sciences are less Exact—The necessity for Social Sciences—Sociology as a Social Science — Emergence of Social Sciences: A Brief Historical Back ground — New Intellectual and Philosophical Tendencies and their Impact on the Development of Social Sciences — Development of Different Social Sciences — Different Social Sciences: A Glimpse — The Beginnings of Sociology — Characteristics of Early Sociology—Establishment of Sociology as a Science — Contributions of Auguste Comte, Herbert Spencer, Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim and Max Weber — Sociology in India — The Ultimate Goals of Sociology.

Sociology is the youngest of the Social Sciences. Its major concern is society, and hence it is popularly known as the "Science of Society". But, if we are to understand the entire scope of the subject, how it is to be studied, what sociologists do, how they do, what methods they follow, what problems they face in their studies, it is necessary to know the meaning of *Science* and the classification of sciences into *physical* and *social*.

Science is Knowledge

Science is concerned with knowledge. It refers to the body of knowledge systematically arranged. Knowledge is its purpose and system refers to the method that has to be followed for the acquisition of knowledge. Exploring the different horizons of knowledge is not only a challenge but also a matter of great intellectual delight to a scientist. Knowledge is as vast as an ocean. The more a scientist acquires it, the more it remains to be acquired. Not only a scientist is more interested in acquiring knowledge but also he is better equipped to do so.

Classification of Sciences

It is humanly impossible for any individual to master the whole of knowledge with all its complexity and diversity. One can only attempt to understand more about one or the other branch of knowledge. There are different sciences to deal with different branches of knowledge. These sciences are of two kinds: (i) *Physical Sciences*, and (ii) *Social Sciences*.

Physical Sciences

The physical sciences deal mostly with the natural inanimate objects. They are regarded as more precise, exact and less dubious. Ex: Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Geology, Geography, Astronomy, etc.

The physical scientists make use of the scientific method in order to acquire knowledge in their respective fields. They can conduct experiments to verify the facts. Theories and laws of universal validity are established more easily and accurately in physical sciences. They provide less scope for

doubt and uncertainty. Prediction is not only possible, but also easy and accurate. The problem of objectivity can be overcome easily. The relationship between cause and effect is relatively more clear here.

Social Sciences

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To be social is to interact, to participate in group life. All human beings are social. People interact with other people in order to survive. All human beings live in society, that is to say, every person is a member of the same human group or some social environment. The physicist, the chemist, the astronomer and the biologist study the universe, in which we live and the elements of which it is composed, in an attempt to understand our physical environment. Similarly, the social scientist studies the environment in which we live in, and attempts to understand human society and to predict how people will interact in a given set of circumstances.

Social Sciences are Less Exact

When compared with the physical sciences, the social sciences are less exact and less precise. The social scientists face many difficulties while making their studies. Scientific method, with all its established procedures, cannot be strictly used in social investigations, because experiments of laboratory conditions are difficult to be arranged in the social field. Controlled experiments are almost impossible here. The whole society constitutes the laboratory for the social scientist. Since the social scientists have to deal with man who is more complex and everchanging, their studies become less precise though not completely dubious. Complexity of social data, interdependence of cause and effect, problems of objectivity and prediction etc., have made social science comparatively less exact.

The Necessity for Social Sciences

The two global wars of the 20th century have created new anxieties and new fears for the mankind. These wars the world had to bear with before it could properly maintain its balance which was previously disturbed by the process of Industrial Revolution of the 18th and 19th centuries. The scientists, philosophers, administrators, politicians and many other thoughtful observers have been warning human beings for many years of the dangers of the increasing imbalance in their culture. The recent scientific advances in physical sciences culminating in the atomic bomb, hydrogen bomb, germ warfare and even the tragedy of Hiroshima, have at last awakened even the innocent people all over the world to the need for comparable competence in social sciences.

The science has shown that it is capable of organising the forces of the atom to cause the destruction of the entire world by a single explosion. It has posed a challenge whether it is possible to organise the forces inherent in human beings and in human society to make such destruction impossible. Hence the necessity of social science. This need, the humanity is obliged to fulfil in mutual self-defence.

It is an irony that the material resources like coal, iron, oil, forest, soil and minerals are better organised than human resources like human energy, intelligence, inherent goodness of man etc. Today governments are busily engaged in armament race. Every country spends millions for inventing or possessing destructive weapons on agencies. But no country spends even a fraction of it to stop such dangerous and suicidal works.

Sociology is one of the members of the family of social sciences. As a young social science, it has acquired a distinct status for itself. Its importance and practical usefulness are widely recognised today.

Like all other social sciences, sociology also is concerned with the life and activities of man. It studies the nature and character of human society, and also its origin, and development, structure and functions. It analyses the group life of man and examines the bonds of social unity.

Sociology tries to determine the relationship and inter-dependence between different elements of social life; between the moral and the religious, the economic and political, the intellectual and the philosophical and the artistic and the aesthetic, the scientific and the technological, and non-material and so on.

Sociology also discovers the fundamental conditions of social stability and social change. It analyses the influence of economic, political, technological, cultural and other forces and factors on man and his life. It endeavours to examine the influence of biological and geographic factors on man also. It throws more light on various social problems like poverty, beggary, over-population, crime, unemployment, etc.

1. EMERGENCE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES: A BRIEF HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The beginning of the tradition of social sciences has been one of the major developments of the 19th century. Social sciences such as economics, political science and history though have a long story of their own, could get the recognition as "social sciences" only in the 19th century. Thinkers and writers such as Herodotus [known as the "*Father of History*"]; Aristotle [often known as the "*Father of Political Science*"]; Manu, the great law giver; Kautilya, an authority on "*Arthashastra*", and many others had written good treatises on different areas of social sciences more than 2000 years ago. The political and social atmosphere of ancient Greece, Rome and India also favoured this kind of intellectual exercises. Due to historical reasons these countries could not maintain the same tempo during the Middle Age. [500 A.D. to 1550 A.D.] But during 17th and 18th centuries the processes of Renaissance, and Enlightenment gave a big impetus to the continuation of the tradition of reasoning. This change in the intellectual atmosphere favoured the development of sciences which came to be called "social sciences".

2. IMPACT OF THE TWIN REVOLUTIONS: THE FRENCH REVOLUTION AND THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

It is often said that social sciences in the 19th century are mostly understood as responses to the problem of order that was created in men's minds by the weakening of the old order under the twin blows of the *French Revolution* and the *Industrial Revolution*. The European society was hard hit by these twin Revolutions. The old social order that rested on kinship, land, social class, religion, local community, and monarchy became very shaky. Thinkers were more concerned about finding ways

and means of reconsolidating these elements of social order. Hence the history of 19th century politics, industry, and trade is basically about the *practical efforts of human beings to reconsolidate these elements*. Thus, it is obvious that the history of the 19th century social thought is about theoretical efforts to reconsolidate them - that is, to give them new contents and meaning.

"In terms of the immediacy and sheer massiveness of the impact on human thought and values, it would be difficult to find revolutions of comparable magnitude in human history. The political, social and cultural changes that began in France and England at the very end of the 18th century spread almost immediately through Europe and the Americas in the 19th century and then on to Asia, Africa, and Oceania in the 20th. The effects of the two revolutions, the one overwhelmingly democratic in the thrust, the other industrial capitalist, have been to undermine, shake, or topple institutions that had endured for centuries, even millennia, and with them systems of authority, status, belief and community".*

New Intellectual and Philosophical Tendencies and their Impact on the Development of Social Sciences

The twin revolutions, [the French Revolution and the Industrial Revolution of Britain] that took place in the 18th century in Europe let loose a new intellectual and philosophical wave. Intellectual currents in the form of socio-political ideologies were also witnessed. For example, the ideologies of *individualism, socialism, utilitarianism, utopianism etc.* took their birth. It became fashionable for intellectuals and thinkers to float new ideologies and spread novel ideas.

Of the various types of intellectual influences, the impact of *positivism, humanitarianism and evolutionism on social sciences was considerable.*

1. Positivism

Positivism implied not merely an appeal to science but almost reverence for science. The positivist appeal of science was to be seen everywhere. The 19th century saw the virtual institutionalisation of the ideal of science. The great aim was that of dealing with moral values, institutions, and all social phenomena through the same fundamental methods that could be used so successfully in such areas as physics or biology.

Prior to the 19th century, no very clear distinction had been made between philosophy and science. But now the distinction between philosophy and science became very clear. It was also felt that every area of man's thought and behaviour could be put to scientific investigation. More than anyone else, it was Auguste Comte who heralded the idea of the scientific treatment of social behaviour. His book "Positive Philosophy" [original French name: "*Cours de Philosophie Positive*"] published in six volumes between 1830 and 1842, sought to demonstrate the necessity of the science of man in society. He coined the word "*sociology*" to name such a science. He argued that this science called "*sociology*" would do for "man the social being" exactly what biology had already done for "man the biological animal". Comte was not alone to argue and to think in this manner. He was supported by many thinkers of the day.

2. Humanitarianism

Humanitarianism, though a very distinguishable current of thought, it was closely related to the idea of "science of society". Humanitarianism is an ideology committed to the cause of human welfare or societal welfare. The ultimate purpose of social science was also thought by almost everyone to be the welfare society. Humanitarianism entered the sphere of "*social consciousness*" and made the people to realise *the need for doing something for the improvement of the poor and needy.*

Due to the influence of humanitarianism, several social service organisations, orphanages, poor houses; child protective laws came in. Great concern was shown towards the poor in the artistic,

* Ref: *Encyclopaedia Britannica* Vol. 27 Page 367.

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literary, religious and political communities. Hospitals and sanitaria sprang up in many cities. Making provisions for drinking water facilities, educational opportunities, economic assistance etc. for the benefit of the needy, became a part of the local administrative bodies. The need for more "*social philosophising*" was called for. A genuine application of the science of human understanding was needed. It is clear from the above, that humanitarianism and social science were *reciprocally related in their purposes*. All that helped the cause of the one could be seen as helpful to the other.

3. Evolutionism

The third of the intellectual influences is that of evolution.* It affected everyone of the social sciences each of which was concerned with the idea of "*development*". It was believed that the idea of evolution would help people to understand the *development* in social structures or societies as it had helped the biologists to understand the development in the structure of animals.

called "sociology" had emerged as an independent science in an attempt to find convincing answers to these questions.

3. ESTABLISHMENT OF SOCIOLOGY AS A SCIENCE: CONTRIBUTIONS OF COMTE AND SPENCER

The credit for having established sociology into an independent and a separate science and to obtain for sociology a respectable position in the family of social sciences, goes to Comte and Spencer. Both of them championed the cause of sociology. In addition to Comte and Spencer, other thinkers such as Durkheim, Marx and Weber also took a leading role in making sociology a science. Hence these five thinkers are often called the "pioneers" or "founding fathers of sociology".

Auguste Comte [1798 - 1857] – the Founding Father of Sociology

Auguste Comte, the French Philosopher, is traditionally considered the "Father of Sociology". Comte who invented the term "Sociology" was the first man to distinguish the subject-matter of sociology from all the other sciences. He worked out in a series of books, a general approach to the study of society. Comte is regarded as the "Father of sociology" not because of any significant contributions to the science as such, but because of the great influence he had upon it. It would be more appropriate to regard him as a *philosopher of science rather than as a sociologist*.

Comte introduced the word "sociology" for the first time in his famous work "*Positive Philosophy*" at about 1839. The term "Sociology" is derived from the Latin word *Socius*, meaning companion or associate, and the Greek word *logos*, meaning *study or science*. Thus, the etymological meaning of sociology is the *science of society*. He defined sociology as the science of social phenomena "*subject to natural and invariable laws, the discovery of which is the object of investigation.*"

Comte devoted his main efforts to an inquiry into the nature of human knowledge and *tried to classify all knowledge* and to analyse the methods of achieving it. He concentrated his efforts to determine the nature of human society and the laws and principles underlying its growth and development. He also laboured to establish the methods to be employed in studying social phenomena.

Comte believed that the sciences follow one another in a definite and logical order and that all inquiry goes through certain stages (namely, the *theological*, the *metaphysical* and the '*positive or scientific or empirical*'). Finally, they arrive at the last or scientific stage or as he called the positive stage. In the positive stage, objective observation is substituted for speculation. Social phenomena like physical phenomena, he maintained, can be studied objectively by making use of the positive method. He thought that it was time for inquiries into social problems and social phenomena to enter into this last stage. So, he recommended that the study of society be called the *science of society*, i.e. '*sociology*'.

Comte proposed sociology to be studied in two main parts: (i) *the social statics* and (ii) *the social dynamics*. These two concepts represent a basic division in the subject-matter of sociology. The social statics deals with the major institutions of society such as family, economy or polity. Sociology is conceived of as the study of inter-relations between such institutions. In the words of Comte, "the statical study of sociology consists the investigations of laws of action and reaction of different parts of the social system". He argued that the parts of a society cannot be studied separately, "as if they had an independent existence".

If *Statics* examines how the parts of societies are interrelated, *social dynamics* focuses on whole societies as the unit of analysis and reveals how they developed and changed through time. "We must remember that the laws of social dynamics are most recognisable when they relate to the largest societies" he said. Comte was convinced that all societies moved through certain fixed stages of

societies", he said. Comte was convinced that all societies moved through certain fixed stages of development and that progressed towards ever increasing perfection. He felt that the comparative study of societies as "wholes" was major subject for sociological analysis.

Contributions of Comte to the Development of Sociology As a Science

1. Comte gave to 'sociology' its name and laid its foundation so that it could develop into an independent and a separate science.
2. Comte's insistence on *positive approach, objectivity* and *scientific attitude* contributed to the progress of social sciences in general.
3. Comte, through his "*Law of Three Stages*" clearly established the close association between *intellectual evolution and social progress*.
4. Comte's *classification of sciences* drives home the fact that *sociology depends heavily on the achievements of other sciences*. The 'interdisciplinary approach' of the modern times is in tune with the Comtean view.
5. Comte gave maximum *importance to the scientific method*. He criticised the attitude of the armchair social philosophers and stressed the need to follow the method of science.
6. Comte divided the study of sociology into two broad areas: "*social statics*" and "*social dynamics*". Present day sociologists have retained them in the form of '*social structure and function*' and '*social change and progress*'.
7. Comte had argued that sociology was not just a "*pure*" science, but an "*applied*" science also. He believed that sociology should help to solve the problems of society. This insistence on the practical aspect of sociology led to the development of various applied fields of sociology such as "*social work*", "*social welfare*", etc.
8. Comte also contributed to the *development of theoretical sociology*.
9. Comte upheld the '*moral order*' in the society. The importance which he attached to morality highly impressed the later writers such as *Arnold Toynbee* and *Pitirim A. Sorokin*.
10. Comte's famous books (i) '*Positive Philosophy*' [in 6 volumes] and, (ii) "*Positive Polity*" [in 4 volumes] are a memorable contributions to the development of sociological literature.

Herbert Spencer [1820 - 1903]

An English scholar, Herbert Spencer, known as one of the most brilliant intellects of modern times, contributed a great deal to the establishment of sociology as a systematic discipline. His three volumes of "*Principles of Sociology*", published in 1877 were the first systematic study devoted mainly to the sociological analysis. He was much more precise than Comte in specifying the topics or special fields of sociology.

According to Spencer, the fields of sociology are: *the family, politics, religion, social control and industry or work*. He also mentioned the sociological study of associations, communities, the division of labour, social differentiation, and stratification, the sociology of knowledge and of science, and the study of arts and aesthetics.

Spencer stressed the obligation of sociology to deal with the inter-relations between the different elements of society, to give an account of *how the parts influence the whole and are in turn reacted upon*. He insisted that sociology should take the whole society as its unit for analysis. He maintained that the parts of society were not arranged unsystematically. The parts bore some constant relation and this made society as such a meaningful 'entity', a fit subject for scientific inquiry.

Spencer's another contribution is his famous organic analogy, in which society is compared with the human organism. Spencer was influenced by the theory of organic evolution of his contemporary, Charles Darwin. Even L.F. Ward, Sumner and Giddings were highly influenced by the or-

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Contributions of Spencer to the Development of Sociology

1. Spencer very strongly supported the views of Comte who insisted on *the need to establish a separate science of society*.
2. Spencer stressed upon the *interdependence of different parts of society*. Spencer argued, the various parts of society, such as the state and the economy, are also interdependent and work to ensure the stability and survival of the entire system.
3. Spencer through his "*theory of Organic Analogy*" contributed to the *development of the tradition of comparative studies* in sociology. Though this theory has its own limitations it influenced Ward, Sumner, Giddings and other later writers.
4. Spencer emphasised the "*laws of evolution*" and tried to universalise them. According to L.A. Coser, the laws of evolution popularised by Spencer could be taken as *his contribution to the philosophy of sociology rather than to the science of sociology*.
5. Spencer's theories had a special appeal for two reasons: (i) they satisfied the desire for unifying knowledge; and (ii) they stressed the need for the "*principle of free enterprise*" [or "*laissez faire principle*"]. Spencer was a supporter of the principle of "*individualism*". The policy of *free thinking advocated by him supported the cause of the development of the new science of sociology*.
6. Spencer's works such as - "*Social Statics*", "*First Principle*", "*The Study of Sociology*", "*Principles of Ethics*", "*Principles of Sociology*", "*The Man Versus The State*" have been a great contribution to the enrichment of sociological literature.

4. CONTRIBUTIONS OF MARX, DURKHEIM AND WEBER

It is relevant here to make a brief mention of the contributions of other founding fathers such as Marx, Durkheim and Weber to the development of sociology.

Karl Marx (1818 - 1883)

Karl Marx was one of the most important thinkers of the 19th century. He wrote brilliantly on subjects such as *philosophy, political science, economics and history*. He never called himself a *sociologist*, but his work is very rich in sociological insights. Hence he is regarded as one of most

profound and original sociological thinkers. His influence has been tremendous. Millions of people throughout the world accept his theories with almost religious fervour.

Marx believed that the task of the social scientist was *not merely to describe the world, it was to change it*. Whereas Spencer saw social harmony and the inevitability of progress, Marx saw social conflict and the inevitability of revolution. *The key to history, he believed is class conflict* — the bitter struggle between the capitalists and the labourers or between those who own the means of producing wealth and those who do not. Marx also believed that the historic struggle would end only with the overthrow of the ruling exploiters, and the establishment of a free, harmonious, classless society. *Marx placed too much emphasis on the economic base of society*. Marx believed that the economic base of society influences the general character of all other aspects of culture and social structure, such as law, religion, education, government etc.

Modern sociologists though reject many of the ideas of Marx, do generally recognise the fundamental influence of the economy on other areas of society. The '*conflict approach*' to the study of social phenomena developed by Marx is still in currency. Later sociologists and social thinkers could hardly escape the influence of Marxian ideas and theories. Good number of writers and thinkers still subscribe to his views and theories.

Emile Durkheim (1858–1917)

Prof. Durkheim, the French thinker, like Spencer, considered societies as such to be important units of sociological analysis. He stressed the importance of studying different types of society comparatively. "Comparative Sociology is not a particular branch of sociology; it is sociology itself," he maintained.

In Durkheim's theory the ultimate social reality is the group, not the individual. Social life has to be analysed in terms of '*social facts*', according to him. Social facts are nothing but collective ways of thinking, feeling and acting which though coming from the individual, "are external" to him and exert an external "constraint" or pressure on him. These social facts are the proper study of sociology and to them all social phenomena should be reduced, he opined. Further, each social fact, he felt, must be related "*to a particular social milieu, to a definite type of society*".

Durkheim also mentioned various fields of sociological inquiry such as—*General Sociology*, *Sociology of Religion*, *Sociology of Law and Morals*, including sub-sections on political organisations, social organisation, marriage and family; *The Sociology of Crime*, *Economic Sociology* including sub-sections on measurement of value and occupational groups; *Demography*, including studies on urban and rural communities; and *Sociology of Aesthetics*. His major works are: *The Division of Labour in Society*, *The Rules of Sociological Method*, *Suicide*, *The Elementary Forms of the Republic Life*.

Max Weber (1864–1920)

Max Weber's approach is almost contrary to that of Durkheim. For Weber, the *individual* is the basic unit of society. He opines that the finding of sociological laws is but a means to understand man. In his system, sociological laws are "empirically established probabilities or statistical generalisations of the course of social behaviour of which an interpretation can be given in terms of typical motives and intentions. Sociological method is a combination of inductive or statistical generalisation with *verstehen* (understanding) interpretation by the aid of an ideal type of behaviour, that is, assumed to be rationally or purposefully determined".

Weber devoted much of his efforts to expound a special method called the *method of understanding* (*verstehen*) for the study of social phenomena. He stressed the importance of maintaining objectivity and neutrality of value-judgements in social sciences. He wrote much on such topics as religion; various aspects of economic life, including money and the division of labour, political parties and other forms of political organisation and authority; bureaucracy and other varieties of large-scale organisation; class and caste; the city; and music. His influence on contemporary soci-