

Unit 1

Basic concepts of Sociology

Definition of Sociology:

The word sociology is derived from both Latin and Greek origins. The Latin word: “socius” means “companion”; the word “logy” means “the study of” from Greek.

Sociology is a study of society, patterns of social relationships, social interaction and culture of everyday life. It is a social science that uses various methods of empirical investigation and critical analysis to develop a body of knowledge about social order, acceptance, and change or social evolution. Sociology is also defined as the general science of society.

It is the scientific study of society, including patterns of social relationships, social interaction, and culture. The term *sociology* was first used by Frenchman Auguste Comte in the 1830s when he proposed a synthetic science uniting all knowledge about human activity. In the academic world, sociology is considered one of the social sciences.

Sociologists study all things human, from the interactions between two people to the complex relationships between nations or multinational corporations. While sociology assumes that human actions are patterned, individuals still have room for choices. Becoming aware of the social processes that influence the way humans think, feel, and behave plus having the will to act can help individuals to shape the social forces they face.

Nature of Sociology:

Sociology is the branch of knowledge and it has its own characteristics. Sociology has different nature in society. It is different from other sciences in certain respects. The following are the main characteristics of sociology as enlisted by Robert Bierstadt in his book ” The Social Order” and they are as follows:-

1) 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.

2) Sociology is a social science not a physical science:-

Sociology belongs to the family of social sciences, and not to the family of physical science. As a social science, it concentrates its attention on man, his social behaviors, social activities and social life. As a member of the family of social sciences it is intimately related to other social

science like history, political science, economic, philosophy, anthropology etc. The fact that sociology deals with the social universe distinguishes it from astronomy, physics, Chemistry, Geology, Mathematics and other physical sciences.

3) 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 question of value. It does not make any kind of value-judgment. Its approach is neither moral nor immoral, but amoral. It is ethically neutral, but does not mean that sociological knowledge is useless serves no purpose it only means that sociology as a discipline can’t deal with problems of good and evil, Right and wrong, and moral or immoral.

4) Sociology is a pure science and not an applied science: –

A distinction is often made between pure sciences and applied sciences. The main aim of pure sciences 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 to put it to use. Each pure science may have its own applied field. For example Physics is a pure science and engineering is its applied field. Sociology as a pure science has its applied field. Such as administration diplomacy, social work etc. Each pure science may have more than one application. Sociology is a pure science, because the immediate aim of sociology is the acquisition of knowledge about human society, not the utilization of that knowledge.

5) Sociology is relatively an abstract science not a concrete science:-

This does not mean that sociology is an art and not a science. Nor does it mean, it is unnecessarily complicated and unduly difficult. It only means that sociology is not interested in concrete manifestations of human events. It is more concerned with the form of human events and their patterns. For example sociology is not concerned with particular war 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 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.

6) Sociology is a generalizing and not a particularizing or Individualizing Science:-

Sociology tries to find out the general laws or principles about human interaction or situation, about the nature, Form, Content, and structure of human group of societies. It does not study each and every event that takes place in the society. It is not possible also. It tries to make generalization on the basis of the study of some selected events. For example, a sociologist makes generalizations about the nature of secondary groups. He may conclude that secondary groups are comparatively bigger in size, less stable, not necessarily specially limited and so on. This he does not by examine all the secondary group but by observing and studying a few.

7) Sociology is a general Science and not a special Social Science:- The area of inquiry of sociology is general and not specialize. It is concerned with human interaction and human life in general other social sciences like political Science, History, Economic etc, also study man and human interaction, but not all about human interaction. They concentrate their attention on certain aspects of human interaction and activities. Accordingly Economic specializes itself in the study of economic activities. Political science concentrates on political activities and so on. Sociology, of-course dose not investigate Economic, Religious, Political, Legal, Moral or any other special kind of phenomenal in relation to human life and activities as such. It only studies human activities in a general way.

8) Finally, Sociology is both a Rational and an Empirical Science:-

There are two broad ways of approach to scientific knowledge. One, Known as Empiricism is the approach that Empiricists 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. The Empiricists collects fact; the rationalist co-ordinates and arranges them. Theories and facts are required in the construction of knowledge. In Sociological inquiry both are significant. As Immanuel Kant said, "Theories without facts are empty, and facts without theories are blind". All modern sciences, there-for avail them-self of both Empirical and Rational Sciences. Sociology is not an exception.

#Scope of Sociology:

If the social being etc are changing then it is difficult to find its scope. Due to its changing nature it is difficult to say what the scope is moreover we cannot even define sociology.

V.F.Cabberton:

"Social is an elastic science, it is very difficult to determine from where its boundaries begin and end". As it studies the human life therefore the scope should be very wide. Some say it is a science so some scholars say it should have a limited scope, because studying a vast scope can pose difficulties (i.e. conducting experimentation), observation ect are necessary for a scientific study.

1. Initial (first) Phase (1838 -1880):

- It studies macro units in broad way .

2. Widening (second) phase (1880-1940):

- It studies micro units .
- In this phase there are two main school of thought regarding the scope of sociology which is micro and macro units which is explained below:

I.Specialistic School/ Formalistic (micro units) –

Sociology is a special science to study society. George Simmel is the supporter. Society has form and content – according to him and there can be no society without form and content and they can be separated i.e. form and content. He says sociology only studies the form but not the content. Eg. Competition – social studies the factor, result and this is the form the area of competition is the content and it is not studied. Sociology does not study the content because there are other social sciences which study the contents. Eg. By him Tables 3 types of glass of similar forms fill them with different types of content but this does not change the form of the glass. Then now you take one glass and fill it by 3 different liquids one by one. Now the form does not change and the content too does not change and therefore these forms and contents can be separated. Similarly sociology studies the form and if there is a change in the content there is no change in the form and thus in the study.

Supporters of formal school Max Webber, Vonwiese, Vierkandt , F.Tonnis.

1. He said it was a science and so should not be wide. He has divided society into many groups (650) and said social should only study these groups.
2. He defined social as, "Social is the study of the ultimate form of mental and psychic relationship which link one to another". He gives important to emotional relationship.
3. He believes sociology to be a pure science. He said that sociology is pure and independent. He divided society into two groups 1. Society and 2. Community. He said society is urban society whereas community is rural society.

II.Synthetic School(macro units):

It means mixed. The supporters of this school say that sociology is a general science. They believe in the organic structure. When other aspects of the society combines together then the society is formed.

Supporters: Durkheim, P.A. Sorokin, Hobhouse, Giddings

Durkheim: "Sociology is a science of collective representation". He believes in the collection of people in society. When there is collection there must be wider scope for collective representation there must be majority of people hence it will be social facts. Since it has a social fact they are instrumental in guiding and controlling the behavior of society. (Those collective symbols accepted by the majority and what they say become social facts. These will help). These social facts will later become a part of society. When we study a collective representation the whole picture of society comes before us.

P.A. Sorokin– "Sociology is the generalizing science". He is the profounder of systematic study. In his book 'contemporary sociology' he observes that social is a general science. It studies the general characteristics of the society of the relationship of social and non-social phenomena.

Hobhouse – "Social is the synthesis of various social sciences". He means social is a general study which studies society as a whole from all aspects i.e. the combination of all social sciences – Sociologist must pursue his study from a particular part of society (social friend). When he studies thus he must interconnect his result with the results arrived from other social sciences and then he should interpret society as a whole.

Emile Durkhen has Prescribed 3 major principal Division.

- 1) Social Morphology
- 2) Social Physiology
- 3) General Sociology (Philosophical)

1. Social Morphology:-

Morphology: - Form, Shape, Structure

- ☐ Basically concerned with territorial basis of people life and its relation to social organization.
- ☐ Concerned with the problem of population
- ☐ Deals with population density & Distribution.
- ☐ EG:-Territorial life of Sherpa Community.

2. Social Physiology:-

Physiology:- Functions

- ☐ Social Functions: - Marriage, Family, Kinship, Religion, Academic etc.
- ☐ Political, Economic, Socio-Cultural entities.

3. General Sociology(as a whole):-

- ☐ It is philosophical part of sociology in general terms.
- ☐ Major Focuses on general theoretical aspect of Sociology
- ☐ Include Social norms, values, Practices, Morals, Ethics, and others Social laws, Rules

& Regulations.

□ Also focuses on emerging issues like Poverty, Crime, Depression, and Disorder of Society.

Morris Ginsberg has Prescribed 4 major principal Division:

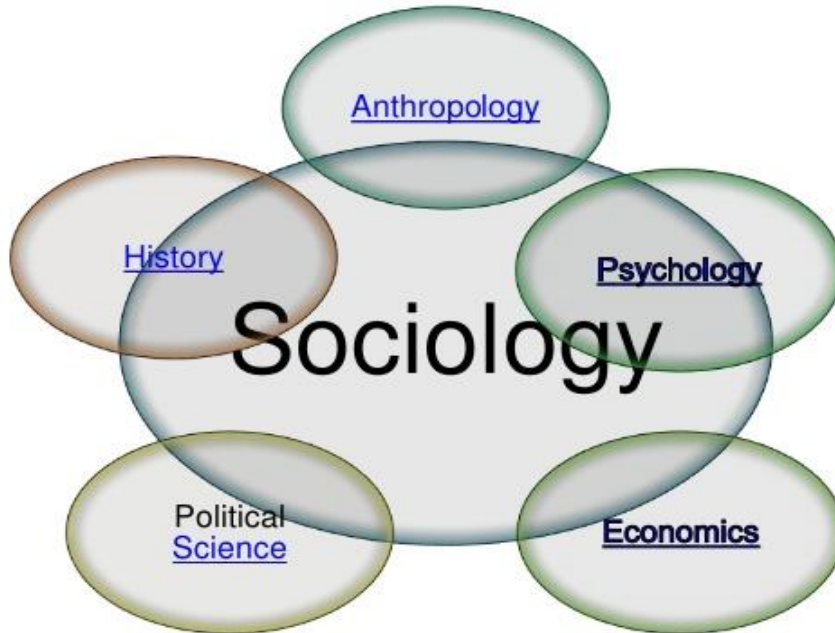
1. Social Morphology
2. Social control (Law, Legislative, Rules and regulations)
3. Social Processes (Change and Growth of society)
4. Social Pathology (Societal Disorder like crime , poverty etc)

3 . Third Phase (1940-1990) :

- Friendship of both first and second phase which says that micro and macro units both are important.

Relationship of Sociology with other social sciences:

Relationship of Sociology to other Social Sciences



Sociology is a science of society. As a social science it attempts to study social life as a whole. But for the understanding of social life as a whole sociology requires the help of other social sciences which studies a particular aspect of society. Economics studies the economic aspects whereas political science studies political aspects.

Hence it is obvious that other social sciences are closely related to sociology. Sociology is considered as the mother of social sciences. Besides sociology synthesizes other social sciences. Hence there exists a very close and intimate relationship between Sociology and other social sciences. For our precise understanding of the relationship between sociology and other social sciences we have to discuss them individually, which are discussed below:

Sociology and Political Science:

As a mother of social sciences Sociology has close and intimate relationship with all other social science. Hence it has close relationship with political science as well. Their relationship is so close and intimate that led G.E.C. Catlin to remark “Political Science and Sociology are two faces or

aspects of the same figure.” Similarly other scholars could not find any difference between the two disciplines.

Sociology is a Science of society. It is a science of social groups and social institutions. It is a general science of society. It studies human interaction and inter-relations their conditions and consequences. Political Science is a science of state and Government. It studies power, political processes, political systems, types of government and international relations. It deals with social groups organised under the sovereign of the state.

Each and every social problem has a political cause. Political Science is a part of sociology. Hence sociology depends on political science to comprehend itself. To understand different political events sociology takes the help from political science. Sociology to draw its conclusions depends on political science. Any change in the political system or nature of power structure brings changes in society. Hence Sociology takes the help of political science to understand the changes in society. Hence both are inter-dependent.

Similarly political science also depends on Sociology. Political Science is a part of sociology. To understand the part it is necessary to understand the whole. Almost all political problems has a social cause and for the solution of these political problems political science takes the help of sociology.

Differences:

- (1) Sociology is a science of society and social relationship whereas political science is a science of state and government.
- (2) The scope of sociology is very wide but scope of political science is limited.
- (3) Sociology is a general science but political science is a special science.

(4) Sociology studied organised, unorganized and disorganized society whereas political science studies only politically organised society.

(5) Sociology studies the social activities of man whereas political science studies political activities of man.

(6) Sociology is a new or young science but political science is an older science.

(7) Sociology studies man as a social animal whereas political science studies man as a political animal.

(8) Sociology studies both formal and informal relations whereas political science studies only formal relations.

(9) Sociology analyses both conscious and unconscious activities of man whereas political science analyses only conscious activities of man.

(10) Sociology deals with all forms of association whereas political science deals with only one form of association named state.

Sociology and History:

Sociology is the science of society. It is a study of systems of social action and their inter-relations. Sociology is a science of social groups and social institutions. History studies the important past events and incidents. It records men past life and life of societies in a systematic and chronological order. It also tries to find out the causes of past events. It also studies the past political, social and economic events of the world.

It not only studies the past but also establishes relations with present and future. That is why it is said that “History is the microscope of the past, the horoscope of the present and telescope of the future.

However, both the sciences are closely inter-related and interdependent on each other. Both study the same human society. Their mutual dependence led G.H. Howard to remark that, “History is past Sociology and Sociology is present history.” Both take help from each other. At the same time one depends on the other for its own comprehension.

History helps and enriches Sociology. History is the store house of knowledge from which Sociology gained a lot. History provides materials sociologists use. History is a record of past social matters, social customs and information about different stages of life. Sociology uses this information. Books written by historians like A. Toynbee are of great use for Sociologists. To know the impact of a particular past event sociology depends on history.

Similarly Sociology also provides help to history and enriches it. A historian greatly benefited from the research conducted by Sociologists. Historians now study caste, class and family by using sociological data. Sociology provides the background for the study of history.

Now history is being studied from Sociological angle. Every historical event has a social cause or social background. To understand that historical event history needs the help from Sociology and Sociology helps history in this respect. Sociology provides facts on which historians rely on.

Differences:

- (1) Sociology is a science of society and is concerned with the present society. But history deals with the past events and studies the past society.
- (2) Sociology is a modern or new subject whereas history is an older social science.
- (3) Sociology is abstract whereas history is concrete in nature.
- (4) The scope of Sociology is very wide whereas the scope of history is limited. Sociology includes history within its scope.

(5) Sociology is an analytical science whereas history is a descriptive science.

(6) Sociology is a general science whereas history is a special science.

Sociology and Economics:

Sociology is a science of society. It is concerned with the association of human beings. Sociology is the study of human interactions and inter-relations their conditions and consequences. But Economics deals with economic activities of man. It is a science of wealth and choice. According to Prof. Robbins Economics is a social “science which studies human behavior in relation to his unlimited ends and scarce means which have alternative uses.” It is concerned with the activities of man such as production, consumption, distribution and exchange. It also studies the structure and functions of different economic organizations like banks, markets etc. It is concerned with the material needs of man as well as his material welfare.

Economics takes the help of Sociology. For its own comprehension economics takes the help of sociology and depends on it. Economics is a part of Sociology hence without the help from sociology economics can't understand itself completely. Economics is concerned with material welfare of man which is common welfare.

Economic welfare is a part of social welfare. For the solution of different economic problems such as inflation, poverty, unemployment etc. economists takes the help of sociology and takes into account the social events of that particular time.

Similarly Sociology also takes the help from economics. Economics greatly enriches sociological knowledge. An economic factor greatly influences each and every aspects of social life. Economics is a part of sociology hence without the help of economics we can't understand sociology properly.

Knowledge and research in the field of economics greatly contributes to sociology. Each and every social problem has an economic cause. For the solution of social problems like dowry, suicide etc. Sociologists take the help from economics.

Thus both sociology and economics are very closely related with each other. There are some problems which are being studied by both sociologists and economists. Economic changes results in social changes and vice versa. However, inspite of the above closeness, inter-relationship and inter-dependence both the sciences have certain differences which are described below:

Differences:

- (1) Sociology is a science of society and social relationships whereas economics is a science of wealth and choice.
- (2) Sociology is a much younger science which has very recent origin whereas economics is comparatively an older science.
- (3) Sociology is an abstract science whereas economics is concrete in nature.
- (4) Sociology is a general social science whereas economics is a special social science.
- (5) The scope of sociology is very wide whereas the scope of economics is very limited.
- (6) Sociology is concerned with the social activities of man whereas economics is concerned with the economic activities of man.
- (7) Society is studied as a unit of study in Sociology whereas man is taken as a unit of study in economics.
- (8) Both Sociology and economics differ from each other in respect of the methods and techniques they use for their study.

Sociology and Psychology:

Sociology is a science of social phenomena and social relationship. It is a science of social group and social institutions. It is a science of collective behavior. It studies human behavior in groups. But psychology is a science of mind or mental processes.

It is a science of human behavior. It analyses attitudes, emotions, perception, process of learning and values of individuals and process of personality formation in society. In the words of Thouless 'Psychology is the positive science of human experience and behavior.' But both the sciences are closely related to each other which can be known from the following.

Sociology receives help from Psychology. Psychology is a part of sociology hence without the help from Psychology Sociology can't understand itself fully and properly. There are many psychologists like Freud, MacDougal and others who have enrich Sociology in many respects. They opines that the whole social life could be reduced finally to psychological forces. Each and every social problems and social phenomenon must have a psychological basis for the solution of which sociology requires the help from psychology. A new branch of knowledge has developed with the combination of sociology and psychology which is known as social psychology.

Similarly, psychology depends on Sociology to comprehend itself fully. Psychology also requires help from sociology in many cases. As human mind and personality is being influenced by social environment, culture, customs and traditions hence psychology take the help from Sociology to understand this.

To understand human nature and behaviour properly psychology depends on sociology. There are many Psychological problems which must have a Social Cause. Psychology requires the help from Sociology to understand these social problems. A research in Sociology richly contributes to

psychology. Contributions and theories of many Sociologists also are of great help to Psychologists.

Thus Sociology and Psychology are mutually dependent on each other. One can't comprehend itself without the help from others. Besides there are some common area of study such as social disorganization, public opinion etc. which are being studied by both Sociologists and Psychologists.

Psychology is developed with the combination of the two. In the words of Kretch and Crutchfield Social Psychology is the science of behaviour of the individuals in society.

Differences:

However, inspite of the mutual relationship and dependence both the sciences differ from each other in the following ways.

- (1) Sociology is a science of society but Psychology is a science of mind.
- (2) Scope of Sociology is wide whereas scope of Psychology is limited.
- (3) Society is the unit of study in sociology but individual is the unit of study in case of Psychology.
- (4) Sociology studies social processes whereas Psychology studies mental processes.
- (5) Sociology studies and analyses human behavior from Sociological angle whereas psychology studies and analyses human behavior from Psychological angles.

Sociology and Anthropology:

The term Anthropology is derived from two Greek words 'anthropos' meaning man and 'logos' meaning study or science. Accordingly anthropology means study of man. As a science of man it deals with man, his works and behavior. Anthropology studies the biological and cultural development of man. Anthropology has a wide field of study which can be broadly divided into three main divisions such as physical anthropology, Archeology cultural anthropology and social anthropology. Physical anthropology studies bodily characteristics of early man and thereby try to understand both primitive and modern cultures.

Archeology studies cultures of pre-historic period. This study facilitates sociologists to make a comparative study of present social structure. It is concerned with the early periods of human existence. It reconstructs the origin, spread and evolution of culture by examining the remains of the past societies. Social anthropology deals with the behaviour of man in social institutions. Social anthropology and sociology are one and the same. Evan Pritchard considers social anthropology as a branch of Sociology.

Anthropology contributes to the growth of Sociology. Without the help of anthropology the study of Sociology can't be complete. It is a part of Sociology. Anthropology provides knowledge about ancient societies. To have a comprehensive understanding of present society Sociology takes the help of anthropology. Contributions of many Anthropologists like R. Brown, Linton, Mead and Pritchard enriches sociological knowledge's. The origin of family, marriage, religion etc. can be better understood through anthropological knowledge. The concepts like cultural area, cultural traits, and cultural lag etc. sociology accept from anthropology.

Similarly, Sociology contributes richly towards the growth of anthropology. Anthropology accepts many concepts of Sociology. Research and contributions of many Sociologists like Emile Durkheim, Herbert Spencer is of great help to anthropology. Anthropologists greatly benefited by

the Sociological researches. Ideas and conclusions of Sociology contributes to the research in anthropology.

Thus there exists a great deal of relationship between Sociology and Anthropology. Both study human society and both are concerned with all kinds of social groups like families, friends, tribes etc. Many of the ideas and concepts are used in both the discipline. Hence both are interrelated and interdependent. But in spite of the inter-relationship both differ from each other.

Differences:

- (1) Sociology is a science of society whereas anthropology is a science of man and his behavior.
- (2) The scope of Sociology is very wide whereas the scope of Anthropology is very limited. Because anthropology is a part of Sociology.
- (3) Sociology studies society as a whole whereas anthropology studies man as a part of society.
- (4) Sociology studies civilizations which are vast and dynamic on the other hand Anthropology studies cultures which are small and static.
- (5) Sociology studies modern, civilized and complex societies whereas Anthropology studies ancient and non-literate societies.
- (6) Sociology is concerned with social planning whereas anthropology is not concerned with social planning. On the basis of social planning sociology make suggestion for future but anthropology do not make any suggestion for future.