

# NATURE AND SCOPE OF SOCIOLOGY

# SOCIOLOGY AS A SCIENCE

- IS SOCIOLOGY A SCIENCE? There is a continuing controversy about the nature of sociology. According to some sociologists it is a science, while others strongly refute this claim. What is a scientific study? For a scientific study it is essential that the whole study should be systematic and without any subjectivity. A scientist is supposed to have a clear vision and a pointed approach. He should have capacity to record unbiased decisions and properly classify data's. He should also have vision to collect only such data as is useful for his study. He should conclude his findings after verification of data's and not on morality or certain pre-supposed philosophies, nations and ideas. The most important element of a scientific study is that a scientist should deal with bear facts and not with ideal situations. Thus this study should be both factual and systematic. Then another element is that its results should have universal application. Then in a scientific study there should be cause effect relationship and it should also be capable of making certain safe predictions.

Is Sociology A Science? Now a question arises as to whether sociology is science or not. Those who support the cause of sociology as science plead that a present day sociologists must be methodological. He must base his conclusions on impartially collected, analyzed and interpreted data. He should also be willing to get his data tested anywhere to established its validity. They also argue that like natural scientists, Sociologists are concerned with hard facts and not with ideal situations. They try to analyses facts of social life as these are. They also believe that there are many social facts and theories which the sociologists have developed after hard labor and these are universally applicable, under similar circumstances. They also point out that like natural scientists, the sociologists are very much concerned with cause effect relationship e.g. social stratification and social disorganizations are the outcome of certain causes, which have their effects as well. As with the natural scientists, so with the sociologists, it is equal true that like the former the latter can make some safe predictions. They thus argue that “sociology is a science which attempts the interpretative under-standing of social action in order to arrive at a casual explanation of its causes and effects.”

Sociology- Not a Science: there is other side of the picture as well. Many believe that society is not a perfect science. Like the results of natural sciences, the results obtained by social scientists cannot be generalized and these also cannot be same under all circumstances and at all places. The conditions always differ from society to society and social changes are unavoidable. These are also very complex. Then it is said that each human beings has his own limitations and he provides information keeping those limitations into consideration. He is not prepared to disclose secrets and thus the information provided is not factual. It is also said that the many situations are not within the control of sociologists and repeat experimentation is almost impossible. Each sociologist has subjective approach to the problem under investigation. There is no stage of investigation in which there is no subjectivity. Each one has some secrets which he is not prepared to disclose to the investigators. Unlike natural scientist, a sociologist has no laboratory facilities and also has no control over material to be experimented i.e. human beings. Not only this, but it is not possible to repeat experiments. It is more or less not possible to make the safe predictions because nature of social problems with which the sociologists are not the same all over the world.

# NATURE AND CHARACTERISTICS OF SOCIOLOGY

- **Nature and Characteristics of Sociology:**
- To begin with, sociology has developed as a value-free discipline. It is concerned with what is, not with what ought to be. The values which a society upholds and which influence the social behaviour of men are accepted by sociologists as facts' and analyzed objectively.
- They do not analyze values themselves. It is thus not a normative discipline like Ethics or Religion. Further, the sociologists simply indicate the directions towards which the society is moving and refrain from expressing views on the directions in which society should, go. In this respect it is to be distinguished from Social and Political Philosophy.
- Secondly, Sociology is an empirical discipline. It is guided by rational considerations in its analysis of social phenomena, and not in terms of ideology.
- Thirdly, Sociology has developed as an abstract discipline like Physics, Chemistry or Mathematics, and not as an applied science like Engineering or Computer Science. A sociologist analyses society from different angles and acquires knowledge about society and patterns of social interactions.

# NATURE AND CHARACTERISTICS OF SOCIOLOGY

- Fourthly, Sociology is a general and not a -special social science. It is concerned with human relationships and patterns of social interactions in general, and not any particular aspects of the same. An economist confines his attention to interactions in the economic sphere only.
- Likewise, a political scientist is primarily concerned only with interactions in the political field. A sociologist, however, focuses his attention on human or social relationships which are common to all these 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.

# SCOPE OF SOCIOLOGY

- V.F. Calberton comments, “since sociology is so elastic a science, it is difficult to determine just where its boundaries begin 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”.
- However, there are two main schools of thought regarding the scope of sociology: (1) The specialistic or formalistic school and (2) the synthetic school.



# SPECIALISTIC OR FORMALISTIC SCHOOL

- **(1) The Specialistic or Formalistic School:**
- This school of thought is led by the German sociologist George Simmel. The other main advocates of this school are Vierkandt, Max Weber, Small, Von Wiese and Tonnies.

# SPECIALISTIC OR FORMALISTIC SCHOOL OF THOUGHT

- Simmel and others are of the opinion that sociology is a pure and an independent science. As a pure science it has a 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 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

- **2. The Synthetic School:**
- The synthetic school of thought conceives of sociology as a synthesis of the 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 encyclopedic 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.
- **The Views of Morris Ginsberg:**
- Ginsberg, another advocate of the synthetic school, says that the main task of sociology can be categorized into four branches: Social Morphology, Social Control, Social Processes and Social Pathology.

# CONCLUSION

- In this way the whole concept of sociology is a great path of our society which enlightens the whole process of nature of society, special behaviour of our different social change of our society which concern with possibility of concise, consistent and concrete formation of our origin and development of social unity where it shows branch of knowledge that deals with body of facts or truths that is systematically determine the relationship of social life which is independent of social science, categorised by positivity and normative discipline ,pure science or applied science where we can generalized by rational and empirical nature of society. Thus, scope of sociology is very wide it is general science but it is a special science of society.