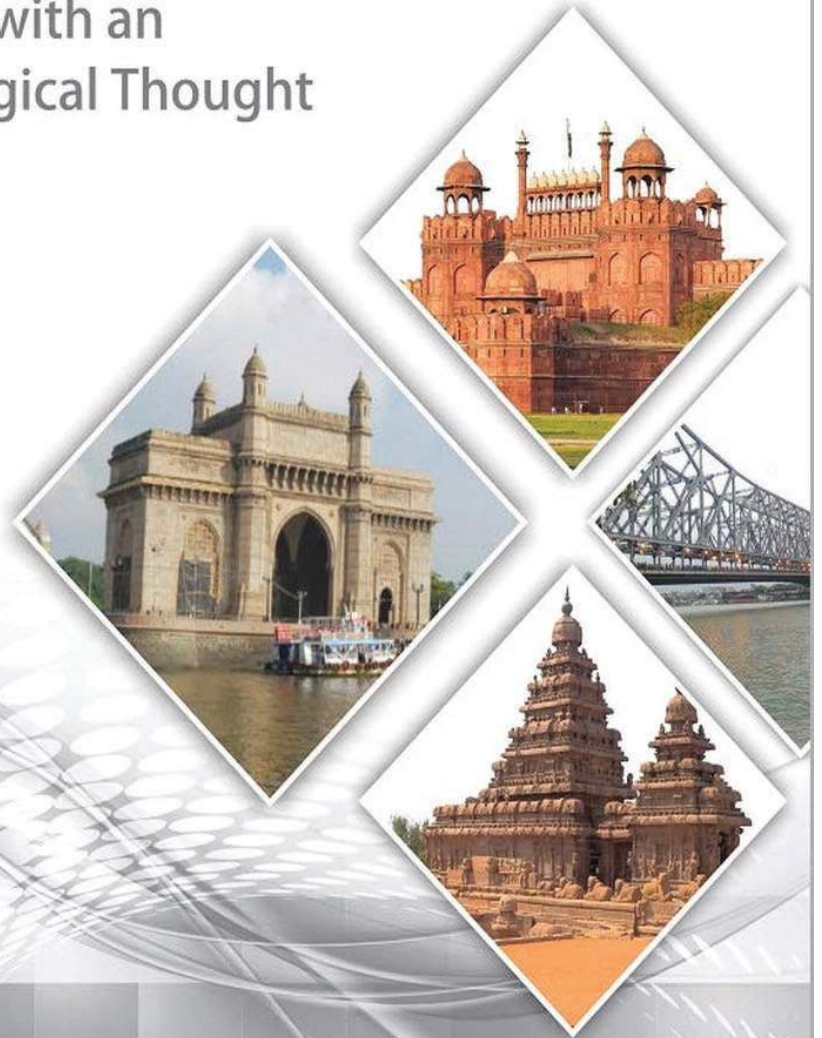


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SOCIOLOGY

Principles of Sociology with an
Introduction to Sociological Thought



S. CHAND

C N SHANKAR RAO

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Introduction to Sociological Thought**

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PREFACE TO THE SEVENTH EDITION

I am happy to present the *Seventh Revised and Updated Edition* of this book within a year.

Two chapters, viz., “Women in Society” and “Social Work, Social Security and Social Welfare: Conceptual Overviews” have been added to make this book more meaningful to its readers. Existing chapter on “Population Problem and Beggary” has been replaced by the “Problem of Overpopulation in India”.

I hope the present expansion of the book will serve the needs of many people, especially the students of undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Constructive suggestions and criticisms to further improve the book are always appreciated.

Mangalore, Karnataka

C N Shankar Rao

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PREFACE

As a teaching subject Sociology is becoming quite popular at present not only at degree level but also at pre-degree level. Hence a large number of students have taken up sociology for study at college level. But these students are faced with the problem of binding good and exhaustive textbooks to help guide them in their studies. I will be very much contented if they feel that this book can reduce their problem a little. The encouraging reception which the readers have given to my previous books, has further inspired me to produce and present this book. I do hope that this book will also be able to win their favour and get a warm reception.

This book mainly intends to meet the needs of degree students of Sociology of all the six Universities of Karnataka who in their three year degree course study one paper in common namely: “*Principles of Sociology*” or “*General Sociology*”, or “*Principles of Sociology and Social Thought*”. This book is designed to cover a wide range of topics and hence it can serve as a basic textbook for the degree students of sociology of the other Indian Universities. The two-year Pre-University students of Karnataka can also take the benefit of this book for it includes all the topics of their syllabi. The book, I am sure, is helpful to all those who want to have a glimpse of sociology at a stretch.

This book consists of 39 chapters in which the last two chapters are devoted for social thought and all the others concentrate on the fundamental concepts and principles of sociology. The basic sociological concepts are introduced in a simple language to enable the students to grasp them without any difficulty. I have also tried to maintain a simple and lucid style. I very sincerely hope that students as well as a teachers will find this book quite useful and interesting and appreciate my strenuous efforts in the task of producing a relatively standard textbook.

In writing this book, I have referred to and drawn much material from the works of a number of writers, to whom I am extremely grateful. In order to be objective in the explanation of sociological concepts I have profusely quoted sentences and statements of various sociologists for whom I am greatly indebted. Hence as an author I do not wish to claim any originality to many of the ideas and descriptions contained in the book. But with all humility I can say that I have presented the matter in my own way.

It is my duty to express my gratitude to all those who have helped me in preparing this book. My thanks are due to my fellow-teachers and student-readers without whose encouragement the book would not have appeared. I am indebted to all those friends and well-wishers of mine who have given valuable suggestions in this venture. I thank my wife Saraswathi S. Rao who has co-operated with me in the preparation of manuscripts.

I thank M/s S. Chand & Co. Ltd. and particularly, their Bangalore Branch Manager Sri Balaraman, for having shown interest in the publication of this book and in bringing it out at the right time.

Readers are most welcome to offer valuable suggestions which will be of great help in improving the book in its next edition.

C N Shankar Rao

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PART ONE

INTRODUCING SOCIOLOGY

1. INTRODUCTION
2. DEFINITION, SCOPE AND USES OF SOCIOLOGY
3. SOME BRANCHES OF SOCIOLOGY
4. METHODS OF SOCIOLOGY
5. SOCIAL RESEARCH: ITS METHODS AND TECHNIQUES
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INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER OUTLINE

- SCIENCE IS KNOWLEDGE
- CLASSIFICATION OF SCIENCES: PHYSICAL SCIENCES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
- SOCIAL SCIENCES ARE LESS EXACT
- THE NECESSITY FOR SOCIAL SCIENCES
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- 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 effects is relatively more clear here.

Social Sciences

The term *Social Science* is often loosely applied to any kind of study which is concerned with man and society. But, in the strict sense, it refers to “the application of scientific methods of the study of intricate and complex network of human relationships and the forms of organization desired to enable peoples to live together in societies”. As *Young and Mack* say, “By *Social Science* we mean those bodies of knowledge compiled through the use of scientific method which deal with the forms and contents of man’s interaction”. Ex: History, Political Science, Economics, Sociology, Anthropology, Psychology etc.

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-defense.

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.

Fortunately, realisation has dawned. It is now felt that the imbalance between the physical and social sciences is to be set right. Advancement in physical sciences alone cannot bring man happiness. Social sciences are equally important in promoting human welfare. Social sciences help in understanding and controlling social interactions. “The anthropologist is the astronomer of the social sciences”, as has been said by the UNESCO in 1954. The U.N.O., UNESCO, W.H.O. are organisations which attempt for the solution of the modern world problems on sociological knowledge.

In conclusion, it can be said that a medical doctor has a basic doctrine that he should prevent disease and save life. Similarly, the social scientist has a basic doctrine that he should prevent friction and violence in human relations and that he should save lives and help in establishing peaceful and self-respecting relations between man and man.

SOCIOLOGY AS A SOCIAL SCIENCE

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.

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*”.

Impact of 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 America 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*”¹

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 *Encyclopedia Britannica*, Vol. 27, p. 367.

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.

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, literary, religious and political communities. Hospitals and sanatoria 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.

Evolutionism

The third of the intellectual influences is that of evolution,² 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.

The impact of **Charles Darwin's** "*origin of Species*", published in 1859, was of course great and further enhanced the appeal of the evolutionary view of things. It should be noted that even before the publication of Darwin's work, **Comte, Spencer and Marx** had already given shape to the idea of evolution in their literary works. "The important point, in any event, is that the idea or the philosophy of evolution was in the air throughout the century, as profoundly contributory to the establishment of sociology as a systematic discipline in the 1830s as to such fields as geology, astronomy, and biology. Evolution was as permeative an idea as the Trinity had been in medieval Europe".³

Development of Different Social Sciences

Among the disciplines that formed the social sciences, two contrary, but powerful tendencies at first dominated them, (i) *The first was the drive towards unification, that is towards a single, master social science*. Some thinkers felt that it was better to have a single science of society [that would take its place in the hierarchy of sciences] than to have a plurality of social sciences. In the 1820s itself Auguste Comte wrote calling for a new science, the one to study man as a social animal. Comte, Spencer, Marx, Bentham and many others to join them, saw the study of society as a unified enterprise. Since society is an indivisible thing, the study of society must be a unified one. This was their basic belief.

² Evolution: Evolution means "*to develop*" or "*to unfold*". It implies continuous change that takes place especially in some structure. Social thinkers like Comte and others borrowed the term from biological science and replaced it with "social evolution". The term "*social evolution*" was used by them to explain the evolution of human society from one stage to another, from simplicity to complexity.

³ *Encyclopedia Britannico*, Vol. 27, p. 369.

(ii) *The second tendency was towards specialisation of individual social sciences.* It was this opposite tendency of specialisation or differentiation that won out. In spite of the dreams of Comte, Spencer, Marx and others, there were to be found at the end of the 19th century not one, but several distinct, competitive social sciences. Development of colleges and universities throughout Europe and America very strongly supported this process. These formal educational institutions in fact, started the “*age of specialisation*”. This began first in Germany and later on spread to England, America, France and other countries. The philosophy of specialisation became so fascinating that no major field of study could escape the lure of specialisation.

Different Social Sciences: A Glimpse

As it has already been said earlier social sciences refer to a related group of disciplines that study various aspects of human behaviour. The main social sciences are—sociology, economics, political science, anthropology and psychology. History is also included in this category. Human behaviour, of course, does not come in such neat compartments. In reality the boundaries between, the social sciences are very vague and constantly shifting. Each one of these sciences has different historical origins and each science is trying to preserve its distinctness. In spite of the specialisation found among the social sciences, they are interrelated and interdependent. Nobody could possibly be an expert in all of them. Because, social scientists are aware that their sciences overlap. This awareness has been responsible for the development of what is known as an “interdisciplinary approach”. This approach stresses the idea that each science is necessarily related to, and sometimes dependent on the other. This approach gives them a free hand to “invade” each other’s territory whenever it seems useful to do so.

Economics

Economics studies the production, distribution and consumption of goods and services. Wealth constitutes the central problem of economics. It studies man as a wealth-getter and wealth-disposer. Economics is in many ways the most advanced of the social sciences. Its subject-matter is often more easily measured than that of the other disciplines. But the economy is also a part of society: goods and services do not produce, distribute and consume themselves. The economic processes depend upon Society. The social aspects of economic life are the subject matter of “*sociology of economics*”, one of the major branches of sociology.

Political Science

Political science is the science of state and government. Traditionally it has focused on two main areas. Political philosophy and actual forms of government. Political science has close links with sociology. In the recent years political science has been very strongly influenced by one of the branches of sociology, known as “*political sociology*”. Political sociology analyses political behaviour and studies the social interaction involved in the process of government. The interests of political scientists and political sociologists have been gradually converging and in many instances they now overlap.

Anthropology

Anthropology is a science of man and his works. Sociology and anthropology are “twin sisters”. Both are mutually helpful and supportive. Anthropology has two main branches: (i) Physical anthropology and (ii) cultural anthropology. Physical anthropology deals with human evolution and studies the physical characteristics of man. Cultural anthropology deals with the cultural evolution. It studies the ways of life of different communities, particularly, the primitive ones.

Anthropology differs from sociology in that it usually focuses on the simple, small-scale, primitive societies. Anthropology studies the society as “whole”. Sociology concentrates more on group processes within larger modern complex societies.

Psychology

Psychology is the science of human behaviour. This science, more than any other social science, focuses on the individual. Psychology shares one major field of interest with sociology, namely social psychology. Social psychology is the science of the behaviour of the individual in society. It studies the way in which personality and behaviour are influenced by the social context.

History

History according to some belongs more to the category of humanities than to the group of social sciences. But for all practical purposes it is also treated as one among the social sciences. History is a systematic record of human past. “*It is the story of the experience of mankind*”. History is a storehouse of records, a treasury of knowledge. It supplies useful

information and facts to the social sciences including sociology. Sociology is also useful to history for it provides the social background for the study of history.

Sociology

Sociology joined the family of social sciences relatively at a later stage *i.e.* in the 19th century, for it had no independent existence before.

In fact, sociology began to emerge as an independent and separate discipline only around the middle of the 19th century. It took almost fifty years before the subject began to assume scientific character that it has today. Prior to the middle of the 18th century, the study of society was dominated by social philosophers rather than by social scientists. These philosophers were less concerned about what society actually is like, than what they thought it ought to be like. But in a relatively short period this emphasis was completely reversed. Hence study of society became more scientific than philosophical.

THE BEGINNINGS OF SOCIOLOGY

Sociology before Auguste Comte

Sociology has a long past but only a short history. Sociology which is known as the science of society, is one of the youngest as well as one of the oldest of the social sciences. It is one of the youngest sciences because only recently it came to be established as a distinct branch of knowledge with its own distinct set of concepts and its own methods of inquiry.

Sociology is also one of the oldest of the sciences. Since the dawn of civilisation, society has been a subject for speculation and inquiry along with other phenomena which have agitated the restless and inquisitive mind of man. Even centuries ago men were thinking about society and how it should be organised, and held views on man and his destiny, the rise and fall of peoples and civilisations. Though they were thinking in sociological terms they were called philosophers, historians, thinkers, law-givers or seers. Thus, “*Broadly it may be said that sociology has had a fourfold origin: in political philosophy, the philosophy of history, biological theories of evolution and the movements for social and political reforms...*”

There was Social Thought during the Ancient Age

Though sociology came to be established as a separate discipline in the 19th century due to the efforts of the French philosopher Auguste Comte, it is wrong to suppose that there existed no social thought before him. For thousands of years men have reflected upon societies in which they lived. In the writings of philosophers, thinkers and law-givers of various countries of various epochs we find ideas that are sociological. For instance, in the writings of Plato, Aristotle, Manu, Kautilya, Confucius, Cicero and others we find major attempts to deal methodically with the nature of society, law, religion, philosophy etc. Plato’s *Republic*, Aristotle’s *Politics*, Kautilya’s *Arthashastra*, the *Smriti* of Manu, Confucius’ *Analec*, Cicero’s “*On Justice*” are some of the ancient sources of social thought.

During the middle ages and early modern times the teachings of the church dominated the human mind and hence most part of the human thinking remained as metaphysical speculation far away from the scientific inquiry. Intellectuals became more active since the 16th century onwards. Their quest for an understanding human society, its nature, socio-political system and its problems now received new impetus. The literary works of some prominent intellectuals of this period clearly reveals this urge to understand and interpret man’s socio-political system.

Machiavelli’s “*The Prince*”, Thomas Hobbes’ “*Leviathan*”, Rousseau’s “*Social Contract*”, Montesquieu’s “*The Spirit of Laws*”, Adam Smith’s “*Wealth of Nations*”, Condorcet’s “*Historical Sketch of the Progress of the Human mind*” serve as examples of such literary works. Thinkers like Sir Thomas More in his “*Utopia*”, Thomas Campanella in his “*City of the Sun*”, Sir Francis Bacon in his “*New Atlantis*”, James Harrington in his “*Common Wealth of Oceana*”, H.G. Wells in his “*A Modern Utopia*” - had made attempts to project a picture of an ideal society free from all shortcomings.

However, it was only in the 19th century that systematic attempts were made by Auguste Comte, Spencer, Durkheim, Weber and others to study society and to establish a science of society called “**sociology**”.

Characteristics of Early Sociology

The science of sociology was taking its shape to emerge as a distinct science in the second half of the 19th century and the early part of the 20th century. According to T.B. Bottomore⁴ early sociology assumed the following characteristics:

⁴ T.B. Bottomore in *Sociology: A Guide to Problems and Literature*, 1971, p. 20.

- (i) Early sociology was encyclopedic in character. It was “concerned with the whole social life of man and with the hole of human history”.
- (ii) Early sociology, which was under the influence of philosophy of history and the biological theory of evolution, was largely evolutionary in nature.
- (iii) It was generally regarded as a positive science similar in character to the natural sciences.’ “Sociology in the 19th century was modelled upon biology”. This fact could be ascertained from the widely used conceptions of society as an organisation and from the attempts to formulate general laws of social evolution.
- (iv) Sociology was virtually recognised above all, “a science of the new industrial society.” Even though sociology claimed itself to be a general science, it dealt particularly with social problems arising from the political and economic revolutions of the 18th century.
- (v) Sociology as “an ideological as well as scientific character”. Various conservative and radical idea entered into its formation, gave rise to conflicting theories, and provoked controversies which continue to the present day.

Factors Contributing to the Emergence of Sociology

Sociology came to be established as an independent and a separate social science in the middle of the 19th century. Various factors paved the way for its emergence. **Ian Robertson** in his book “Sociology”, [Pages: 11-12] has mentioned of three factors that hastened the process of the establishment of sociology as a separate science. They may be briefed here.

Industrial Revolution and Industrialisation

Industrial Revolution that took place first in England during the 18th century brought about sweeping changes throughout Europe. Never before in history did social changes take place on such a massive scale. Sociology emerged in the context of the sweeping changes.

Factory system of production and the consequent mechanisation and industrialisation brought turmoils in society. New industries and technologies change the face of the social and physical environment. The simple rural life and small-scale home industries were replaced by complex urban life and mass production of goods. Industrialisation changed the direction of civilisation. It destroyed, or radically altered, the medieval customs, beliefs and ideals.

Industrialisation led to urbanisation. Peasants left rural areas and flocked to the towns, where they worked as industrial labourers under dangerous conditions. Cities grew at an unprecedented rate providing an anonymous environment for people. Social problems became rampant in the fast, developing cities. Aristocracies and monarchies crumbled and fell. Religion began to lose its force as a source of moral authority. “For the first time in history, rapid social change became the normal rather than an abnormal state of affairs, and people could no longer expect that their children would live much the same lives as they had done. The direction of social change was unclear, and the, stability of the social order seemed threatened. An understanding of what was happening was urgently needed” [Robertson’s “Sociology” Page: 11]

It is clear from the above that sociology was born out of the attempt to understand the transformations that seemed to threaten the stability of European society. Social thinkers like Comte, Spencer and others argued that there was an urgent need to establish a separate science of society. They believed that such a science would be of great help in understanding the nature and problems of society and to find out solutions for the same.

Inspiration from the Growth of Natural Sciences

Nineteenth century was a period in which natural sciences had made much progress. The success attained by the natural scientists inspired and even tempted good number of social thinkers to emulate their example. If their methods could be successful in the physical world to understand physical or natural phenomena, could they not be applied successfully to the social world to understand social phenomena? As an answer to this question Comte, Spencer, Durkehim, Weber and others successfully demonstrated that these methods could be used to study the social world.

Inspiration Provided by the Radically Diverse Societies and Cultures of the Colonial Empires

The colonial powers of Europe were exposed to different types of societies and cultures in the colonial empires. Their exposure to such diversities in societies and cultures provided an intellectual challenge for the social scientist of the day. Information about the widely contrasting social practices of these distant peoples raised fresh questions about society: *Why some societies were more advanced than others? What lessons could the European countries learn from comparisons of various societies? Why the rate of social change was not the same everywhere?* The new science of society called “sociology” had emerged as an independent science in an attempt to find convincing answers to these questions.

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 in 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 development and that progressed towards ever increasing perfection. He felt that the comparative study of societies as “*wholes*” was a 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 contribution 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 organismic theory of society advocated by Spencer.

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 “*laissezfaire 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.

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 the 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 sociologists especially those of analytic school is rapidly increasing. His major works are: *Economics and Society, The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, The City, Bureaucracy* and various other books and essays.

What these four pioneers of sociology did in common? These “four founding fathers” – Comte, Spencer, Durkheim and Weber – it seems, agreed upon the proper subject-matter of Sociology.

1. *Firstly*, all of them urged the sociologists to study a wide range of institutions from the family to the state.

2. *Secondly*, they agreed that a unique subject-matter for sociology is found in the inter-relations among different institutions.
3. *Thirdly*, they came to the common consensus on the opinion that society as a whole can be taken as a distinctive unit of sociological analysis. They assigned sociology the task of explaining wherein and why societies are alike or different.
4. *Finally*, they insisted that sociology should focus on ‘*social acts*’ or ‘*social relationships*’ regardless of their institutional setting. This view was most clearly expressed by Weber.

DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIOLOGY IN THE 20TH CENTURY

In the second half of the 19th and in the beginning of the 20th centuries a large number of sociologists and social thinkers contributed a great deal to the development of sociology. Karl Marx 1818–1883, Lester F. Ward 1841–1913, George Simmel 1858–1918, Alfred Vierkandt 1867–1953, Gabriel Tarde 1843–1904, Small 1854–1926, Giddings 1855–1931, C.H. Cooley 1864–1929, James Ward 1843–1925, Lloyd Morgan 1852–1932, L.T. Hobhouse 1864–1929, E.A. Westermarck 1862–1939, Pareto 1848–1923, Charles A. Elwood 1873–1946, Benjamin Kidd 1858–1916, E.B. Tylor 1832–1917, J.G. Frazer 1854–1941, B. Malinowski 1884–1942 and others are some of them.

Sociology experienced a rapid development in the 20th century, most notably in France, Germany, the United States and England. Recently famous sociologists like P.A. Sorokin, Talcott Parsons, R.K. Merton, R.M. MacIver, M. Ginsberg, Kingsley Davis, W.F. Ogburn, A.W. Green, Kimball Young, P.G. Murdock, W.I.H. Sprott, E.A. Ross, Wilbert Moore, Karl Mannheim, M.N. Srinivas, G.S. Ghurye and a host of others have further enriched the subject by their social investigations and writings. Today, sociology is firmly established as a discipline. The developments of the 20th century provided a great stimulus for the study of social sciences in general, and sociology in particular. All major universities in the world, now offer instruction in the subject. Even in the U.S.S.R. sociology is a legitimate discipline now. “It is not yet in many respects, a mature science and the student will find in it therefore, more divergent points of view and rather less systematic agreement than in such other sciences as physics, astronomy and biology”. (**Robert Bierstedt**)

SOCIOLOGY IN INDIA

Sociology was introduced to India as an academic discipline only after World War I. Since then, being closely allied with anthropology, it is forging ahead in India. The sociological movement has gained some momentum in Bombay with its mouthpiece “Sociological Bulletin” and in Agra with its organ “Journal of Social Sciences.” Some prominent sociologists of our country like G.S. Ghurye, R.K. Mukherjee, D.P. Mukherjee, Humayun Kabir, K.M. Kapadia, R.N. Saxena, Mrs. Iravati Karve, Benoy K. Sarkar, A. Aiyappan, D.N. Majumdar, M.N. Srinivas, M.S. Gore, S.C. Dube, P.N. Prabhu, A.R. Desai and others have contributed their mite to the enrichment of the discipline. India with its diverse cultural peculiarities provides wonderful opportunities for sociological researches and studies. Sociology is now taught in many universities as one of the major disciplines. It is becoming more and more popular at the level of students also. Compared with the English-speaking countries, the sociological movement has not much flourished in India to the extent which it should have been.

THE ULTIMATE GOALS OF SOCIOLOGY

The immediate goal of sociology is to acquire knowledge about society like all the sciences. However, sociology is not content with descriptions, exhibitions and analysis. It has a more remote and ultimate purpose. *Robert Bierstedt's* views are meaningful in this regard. He says: “The final questions to which sociology addresses itself are those that have to do with the nature of human experience and this earth and the succession of societies over the long centuries of human existence.....What are the factors responsible for the disintegration of one social structure, like that of the medieval world, and the coming into being of another? Do human societies like the individuals who comprise them, grow old after a while, and wery and finally disappear from the face of the earth? Is there an ebb and a flow in the affairs of men, a systole and diastole of human history? These too are problems of sociology ... But some day, if sociology, through its intimate analysis of the dynamics of society, can achieve some understanding of problems of this kind, and contribute to their resolution, it will fulfil its initial promise and its ultimate destiny. In brief, as *Samuel Koenig* has pointed out the ultimate aim of sociology is “*to improve man's adjustment to life by developing objective knowledge concerning social phenomena which can be used to deal effectively with social problems.*”

DEFINITION, SCOPE AND USES OF SOCIOLOGY

CHAPTER OUTLINE

- DEFINITION OF SOCIOLOGY
- NATURE OF SOCIOLOGY
- SUBJECT-MATTER AND SCOPE OF SOCIOLOGY
- IMPORTANCE OR USES OF SOCIOLOGY
- THREE MAJOR THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES OF SOCIOLOGY: FUNCTIONALIST PERSPECTIVE - CONFLICT PERSPECTIVE AND THE INTERACTIONIST PERSPECTIVE
- AN EVALUATION OF THESE THREE PERSPECTIVES.

SOCIOLOGY: THE SCIENCE OF SOCIETY

“In all ages and human times, ever since our erect and restless species appeared upon the planet, men have been living with others of their kind in something called *Societies*. Wherever these societies may be and whatever their chapter of history—whether primitive Polynesian or ancient Egyptian, classical Chinese or contemporary Russian, medieval English or modern American—they all exhibit common elements and constant features. These are the elements that give to society its form and shape, that constitute its structure and that, in a word, comprise the social order. It is the task of general sociology to discover these constants, to describe them with an economy of concepts, and to delineate their inter-relations”.

Sociology is the science of society. No other science endeavours to study it in its entirety. *Economics* studies man as a wealth-getter and wealth-disposer and inquires into the relations of wealth and welfare. *History* deals with the human past in accordance with the time order. *Cultural Anthropology* studies man, particularly the primitive man and it concentrates more on the primitive communities and their cultures. *Psychology* studies the man as a behaving individual. *Social psychology*, as a branch of psychology, is concerned with the ways in which the individual reacts to his social conditions. *Political Science* studies man as a citizen, as a ruler and as being ruled. *Religion* deals with man as a spiritual being and inquires into his faith in the supernatural power. *Sociology* alone studies social relationships, society itself, Thus the ‘focus’ of no other social science is identical with that of sociology. Indeed, it is the focus of interest that distinguishes one social science from another.

Sociology is interested in social relationships not because they are economic or political or religious or legal or educational but because they are at the same time, social. “*Society*”, as *MacIver* says, “is the marvellously intricate and ever-changing pattern of the totality of these relationships”. Further, in sociology we do not study everything that happens “in society” or under social conditions. But we study culture, for example, only for the light it throws on social relationships. Similarly, we do not study religion as religion or art as art or inventions as inventions. We study social relationships, their specific forms, varieties and patternings. We study how the relations combine, how they build up smaller or greater systems, and how they respond to changes and changing demands or needs. Hence our study of society is essentially analytical.

DEFINITION OF SOCIOLOGY

‘Sociology’ which had once been treated as social philosophy, or the philosophy of history, emerged as, an independent social science in the 19th century. *Auguste Comte*, a Frenchman, is traditionally considered to be the father of sociology. Comte is accredited with the coining of the term *sociology* (in 1839). “Sociology” is composed of two words: *socius*, meaning companion or associate; and ‘logos’ meaning science or study. The etymological meaning of “sociology” is thus the *science of society*. *John Stuart Mill*, another social thinker and philosopher of the 19th century, proposed the word *ethology* for this

new science. *Herbert Spencer* developed his systematic study of society and adopted the word “sociology” in his works. With the contributions of Spencer and others it (sociology) became the permanent name of the new science.

The question ‘*what is sociology*’ is, indeed, a question pertaining to the definition of sociology. No student can rightfully be expected to enter on a field of study which is totally undefined or unbounded. At the same time, it is not an easy task to set some fixed limits to a field of study. It is true in the case of sociology. Hence it is difficult to give a brief and a comprehensive definition of sociology.

Sociology has been defined in a number of ways by different sociologists. No single definition has yet been accepted as completely satisfactory. 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.

1. *Auguste Comte*, the founding father of “Sociology, defines sociology as the science of social phenomena “subject to natural and invariable laws, the discovery of which is the object of investigation”.
2. *Kingsley Davis* says that “sociology is a general science of society”.
3. *Harry M. Johnson* opines that “sociology is the science that deals with social groups”.
4. *Emile Durkheim* defines sociology as the “science of social institutions”.
5. *Park* regards sociology as “the science of collective behaviour”.
6. *Small* defines sociology as “the science of social relations”.
7. *Marshal Jones* defines sociology as “the study of man-in-relationship-to-men”.
8. *Ogburn* and *Nimkoff* define sociology as “the scientific study of social life”.
9. *Franklin Henry Giddings* defines sociology as “the science of social phenomena”.
10. *Henry Fairchild* defines sociology as “the study of man and his human environment in their relations to each other”.
11. *Max Weber* defines sociology as “the science which attempts the interpretative understanding of social action in order there by to arrive at a casual explanation of its course and effects”.
12. Alex Inkeles says, “sociology is the study of systems of social action and of their interrelations”.
13. *Kimball Young and Raymond W. Mack* define sociology as “the scientific study of the social aspects of human life”.
14. *Morris Ginsberg*: Of the various definitions of sociology the one given by Morris Ginsberg seems to be more satisfactory and comprehensive. He defines sociology in the following ways: “*In the broadest sense, sociology is the study of human interactions and inter-relations, their conditions and consequences*”.

A careful examination of various definitions cited above, makes it evident that sociologists differ in their opinion about the definition of sociology. Their divergent views about the definition of sociology only reveal their distinct approaches to its study. However, the common idea underlying all the definitions mentioned above is that sociology is concerned with man, his social relations and his society.

NATURE OF SOCIOLOGY

Sociology, as a branch of knowledge, has its own unique characteristics. It is different from other sciences in certain respects. An analysis of its internal logical characteristics helps one to understand what kind of science it is. The following are the main characteristics of sociology as enlisted by Robert Bierstedt in his book “*The Social Order*”.

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 and not a Physical Science

Sociology belongs to the family of social sciences and not to the family of physical sciences. As a social science it concentrates its attention on man, his social behaviour, social activities and social life. As a member of the family of social sciences it is intimately related to other social sciences like history, political science, economics, psychology, 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 questions of value. It does not make any kind of value judgements. Its approach is neither moral nor immoral but amoral. It is *ethically neutral*. It cannot decide the directions in which sociology ought to go. It makes no

recommendations on matters of social policy or legislation or programme. But it does not mean that sociological knowledge is useless and serves no purpose. It only means that sociology as a discipline cannot 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. Similarly, the pure sciences such as *economics*, *political science*, *history*, etc., have their applied fields like *business*, *politics*, *journalism* respectively. 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 utilisation of that knowledge. Sociologists never determine questions of public policy and do not recommend legislators what laws should be passed or repealed. But the knowledge acquired by a sociologist is of great help to the administrator, the legislator, the diplomat, the teacher, the foreman, the supervisor, the social worker and the citizen. But sociologists themselves do not apply the knowledge to life and use, as a matter of their duty and profession.

5. Sociology is Relatively an Abstract Science and 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 wars 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 or 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 Generalising and not a Particularising or Individualising Science

Sociology tries to find out the general laws or principles about human interaction and association, about the nature, form, content and structure of human groups and societies. It does not study each and every event that takes place in society. It is not possible also. It tries to make generalisations on the basis of the study of some selected events. For example, a sociologist makes generalisations about the nature of secondary groups. He may conclude that secondary groups are comparatively bigger in size, less stable, not necessarily spatially limited, more specialised, and so on. This, he does, not by examining all the secondary groups 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 specialised. It is concerned with human interaction and human life in general. Other social sciences like political science, history, economics 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 and specialise themselves in those fields. Accordingly, economics specialises itself in the study of economic activities, political science concentrates on political activities and so on. Sociology, of course, does not investigate economic, religious, political, legal, moral or any other special kind of phenomena in relation to human life and activities as such. It only studies human activities in a general way. This does not, however, mean that sociology is the basic social science nor does it imply sociology is the general social science. Anthropology and social psychology often claim themselves to be *general social sciences*.

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 emphasises 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 empiricist collects facts; the rationalist co-ordinates and arranges them. Theories and facts are required in the construction of knowledge. In sociological inquiry both are significant. A theory unsubstantiated by hard, solid facts is nothing more than an opinion. Facts, by themselves, in their isolated character, are meaningless and useless. As *Immanuel Kant* said, "*theories without facts are empty and facts without theories are blind*". All modern sciences, therefore, avail themselves of both empirical and rational resources. Sociology is not an exception.

It is clear from the above that sociology is *an independent, a social, a categorical, a pure, an abstract, a generalising, both a rational and an empirical and a general social science*.

SUBJECT-MATTER AND SCOPE OF SOCIOLOGY

Major Concerns of Sociology (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 emphasis has been oscillating, between man and society. “Sometimes the emphasis was on *man* in society, at other times, it was on man in *society*. But at no stage of its development, *man as an individual was its focus of attention*. On the contrary, sociology concentrated heavily on society and its major units and their dynamics. It has been striving to analyse the dynamics of society in terms of organised patterns of social relations. It may be said that sociology seeks to find explanations for three basic questions: *How and why societies emerge? How and why societies persist? How and why societies change?*

An all-embracing and expanding science like sociology is growing at a fast rate no doubt. It is quite natural that sociologists have developed different approaches from time to time in their attempts to enrich its study. Still it is possible to identify some topics which constitute the subject matter of sociology on which there is little disagreement among the sociologists. Such topics and areas broadly constitute the field of sociology. A general outline of the fields of sociology on which there is considerable agreement among sociologists could be given here.

Firstly, the major concern of sociology is *sociological analysis*. It means the sociologist seeks to provide an analysis of human society and culture with a sociological perspective. He evinces his interest in the evolution of society and tries to reconstruct the major stages in the evolutionary process. An attempt is also made “to analyse the factors and forces underlying historical transformations of society”. Due importance is given to the scientific method that is adopted in the sociological analysis.

Secondly, sociology has given sufficient attention to *the study of primary units of social life*. In this area, it is concerned with social acts and social relationships, individual personality, groups of all varieties, communities (urban, rural and tribal), associations, organisations and populations.

Thirdly, sociology has been concerned with the *development, structure and function of a wide variety of basic social institutions* such as the family and kinship, religion and property, economic, political, legal, educational and scientific, recreational and welfare, aesthetic and expressive institutions.

Fourthly, no sociologist can afford to ignore the *fundamental social processes* that play a vital role. The social processes such as co-operation and competition, accommodation and assimilation, social conflict including war and revolution; communication including opinion formation, expression and change; social differentiation and stratification, socialisation and indoctrination, social control and deviance including crime, suicide, social integration and social change assume prominence in sociological studies.

Fifthly, sociology has placed high premium on *the method of research* also. Contemporary sociology has tended to become more and more rational and empirical rather than philosophical and idealistic. Sociologists have sought the application of scientific method in social researches. Like a natural scientist, sociologist senses a problem for investigation. He then tries to formulate it into a researchable proposition. After collecting the data he tries to establish connections between them. He finally arrives at meaningful concepts, propositions and generalisations.

Sixthly, sociologists are concerned with the task of “*formulating concepts, propositions and theories*”. “Concepts are abstracted from concrete experience to represent a class of phenomena”. For example, terms such as social stratification, differentiation, conformity, deviance etc., represent concepts. A proposition “seeks to reflect a relationship between different categories of data or concepts”. For example “lower-class youths are more likely to commit crimes than middle-class youths”. This proposition is debatable. It may be proved to be false. To take another example, it could be said that “taking advantage of opportunities of higher education and occupational mobility leads to the weakening of the ties of kinship and territorial loyalties”. Though this proposition sounds debatable, it has been established after careful observations, inquiry and collection of ‘relevant data. Theories go beyond concepts and propositions. “Theories represent systematically related propositions that explain social phenomena”. Sociological theories are mostly rooted in factual than philosophical. The sociological perspective becomes more meaningful and fruitful when one tries to derive insight from concepts, propositions and theories.

Finally, in the present era of explosion of knowledge *sociologists have ventured to make specialisations* also. Thus, today good number of specialised 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 specialised fields. The field of sociological inquiry is so vast that any student of sociology equipped with genius and rich sociological imagination can add new dimensions to the discipline of sociology as a whole.

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 sociologist with regard to the 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.

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*.

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.

Small insisted that sociology has only a limited field. *Von Wiese* and *Tonnies* expressed more or less the same opinion.

Criticism: The views of the Formalistic School are widely criticised. Some critical remarks may be cited here:

Firstly, the formalistic school has unreasonably narrowed the field of sociology. Sociology should study not only the general forms of social relationships but also their concrete contents.

Secondly, the distinction between the forms of social relations and their contents is not workable. Social forms cannot be abstracted from the content at all, since social forms keep on changing when the contents change. *Sorokin* writes, “we may fill a glass with wine, water or sugar without changing its form, but I cannot conceive of a social institution whose form would not change when its members change”.

Thirdly, sociology is not the only science that studies the forms of social relationships. Other sciences also do that. The study of international law, for example, includes social relations like conflict, war, opposition, agreement, contract etc. Political Science, Economics also study social relationships.

Finally, the establishment of *pure sociology* is impractical. No sociologist has been able to develop a pure sociology so far. No science can be studied in complete isolation from the other sciences. In fact, today more emphasis is laid on *inter-disciplinary approach*.

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, the 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 Emile Durkheim: *Durkheim*, one of the stalwarts of this school of thought, says that sociology has three main divisions or fields of inquiry. They are as follows: *Social Morphology*, *Social Physiology* and *General Sociology*.

1. **Social morphology:** Social morphology studies the territorial basis of the life of people and also the problems of population such as volume and density, local distribution etc.
2. **Social physiology:** Social physiology has different branches such as sociology of religion, of morals, of law, of economic life and of language etc.
3. **General sociology:** General Sociology can be regarded as the philosophical part of sociology. It deals with the general character of the social facts. Its function is the formulation of general social laws.

The views of morris ginsberg: *Ginsberg*, another advocate of the synthetic school, says that the main task of sociology can be categorised into four branches: *Social Morphology*, *Social Control*, *Social Processes* and *Social Pathology*.

1. **Social morphology:** ‘Social Morphology’ deals with the quantity and quality of population. It studies the social structure, social groups and institutions.
2. **Social control:** ‘Social Control’ studies—formal as well as informal—means of social control such as custom, tradition, morals, religion, convention, and also law, court, legislation etc. It deals with the regulating agencies of society.
3. **Social processes:** ‘Social processes’ tries to make a study of different modes of interaction such as cooperation, competition, conflict, accommodation, assimilation, isolation, integration, differentiation, development, arrest and decay.
4. **Social pathology:** ‘Social Pathology’ studies social mal-adjustment and disturbances. It also includes studies on various social problems like poverty, beggary, unemployment, over-population, prostitution, crime etc.

Ginsberg has summed up the chief functions of sociology as follows:

- (i) Sociology seeks to provide a classification of types and forms of social relationships.
- (ii) It tries to determine the relation between different factors of social life. For example, the economic and political, the moral and the religious, the moral and the legal, the intellectual and the social elements.
- (iii) It tries to disentangle the fundamental conditions of social change and persistence and to discover sociological principles governing social life.

The scope of sociology is, indeed, very vast. It studies all the social aspects of society such as social processes, social control, social change, social stratification, social system, social groups, social pathology etc. Actually, it is neither possible nor essential to delimit the scope of sociology, because, it would be, as *Sprott* puts it, “*A brave attempt to confine an enormous mass of slippery material into a relatively simple system of pigeonholes*”.

USES OF SOCIOLOGY

Of the various social sciences, sociology seems to be the youngest. It is gradually developing. Still it has made remarkable progress. Its uses are recognised widely today. In modern times, there is a growing realisation of the importance of the scientific study of social phenomena and the means of promoting what *Prof. Giddings* calls *human adequacy* (human welfare).

The study of sociology has a great value especially in modern complex society. Some of the uses of sociology are as follows:

1. *Sociology studies society in a scientific way.* Before the emergence of sociology, there was no systematic and scientific attempt to study human society with all its complexities. Sociology has made it possible to study society in a scientific manner. This scientific knowledge about human society is needed in order to achieve progress in various fields.
2. *Sociology throws more light on the social nature of man.* Sociology delves deep into the social nature of man. It tells us why man is a social animal, why he lives in groups, communities and societies. It examines the relationship between individual and society, the impact of society on man and other matters.
3. *Sociology improves our understanding of society and increases the power of social action.* The science of society assists an individual to understand himself, his capacities, talents and limitations. It enables him to adjust himself to the environment. Knowledge of society, social groups, social institutions, associations, their functions etc., helps us to lead an effective social life.’
4. *The study of sociology helps us to know not only our society and men but also others, their motives, aspirations, status, occupations, traditions, customs, institutions, culture etc.* In a huge industrialised society our experience is comparatively limited. We can hardly have a comprehensive knowledge of our society and rarely have an idea regarding other societies. But we must have some insight into an appreciation of the motives by which others live and the conditions under which they exist. Such an insight we derive from the study of sociology.
5. *The contribution of sociology is not less significant in enriching culture.* Sociology has given training to us to have rational approach to questions concerning ourselves, our religion, customs, mores, institutions, values, ideologies, etc. It has made us to become more objective, rational, critical and dispassionate. The study of societies has made people to become more broad minded. It has impressed upon its students to overcome their prejudices, misconceptions, egoistic ambitions, and class and religious hatreds. It has made our life richer, fuller and meaningful.
6. *Another aspect of the practical side of sociology is the study of great social institutions and the relations of individuals of each one of them.* The home and family, the school and education, the state and government, industry and work, religion and morality, marriage and family, law and legislation, property and government, etc. are some

of the main institutions, through which our society functions. More than that, they condition our life in countless ways. Knowledge of sociology may help to strengthen them to serve man better.

7. *Sociology is useful as a teaching subject too.* Sociology is a profession in which technical competence brings its own rewards. Sociologists, especially those trained in research procedures, are in increasing demand in business, government, industry, city planning, race relations, social work, social welfare, supervision, advertising, communications, administration, and many other areas of community life. A few years ago, sociologists could only teach sociology in schools and colleges. But *sociology has now become practical* enough to be practiced outside of academic halls. Careers apart from teaching are now possible in sociology. The various areas of applied sociology are coming more and more into prominence in local, state, national and international levels.
8. *The need for the study of sociology is greater especially in underdeveloped countries.* Sociologists have now drawn the attention of economists regarding the social factors that have contributed to the economic backwardness of a few countries. Economists have now realised the importance of sociological knowledge in analysing the economic affairs of a country.
9. *The study of society is of paramount importance in solving social problems.* The present world is beset with several social problems of great magnitude like poverty, beggary, unemployment, prostitution, over-population, family disorganisation, community disorganisation, racial problems, crime, juvenile delinquency, gambling, alcoholism, youth unrest, untouchability etc. A careful analysis of these problems is necessary in order to solve them. Sociology provides such an analysis.
10. *Sociological knowledge is necessary for understanding and planning of society.* Social planning has been made easier by sociology. Sociology is often considered a vehicle of social reform and social reorganisation. It plays an important role in the reconstruction of society.
11. *The practical utility of sociological techniques:* The techniques developed by the sociologists and other social scientists are adopted by others. Let us think the example of social survey. Developed and used mainly by sociologists and statisticians, it has become an essential tool of market research and political polling. In the same way, sociologists provide a *great deal of information that is helpful in making decisions on social policy.*
12. Study of society has helped several governments to promote the welfare of the tribal people. Not only the civilised societies, but even the tribal societies are faced with several socio-economic and cultural problems. Studies conducted by sociologists and anthropologists regarding tribal societies and problems have helped many governments in undertaking various social welfare measures to promote the welfare of the tribal people. Efforts are now being made to treat the tribals on par with the rest of the civilised people.
13. *Sociology has drawn our attention to the intrinsic worth and dignity of man.* Sociology has been greatly responsible in changing our attitudes towards fellow human beings. It has helped people to become catholic in outlook and broadminded in spirit. It has made people to become tolerant and patient towards others. It has minimised the mental distance and reduced the gap between different peoples and communities.
14. *Sociology is of great practical help in the sense, it keeps us up-to-date on modern social situations and developments.* Sociology makes us to become more alert towards the changes and developments that take place around us. As a result, we come to know about our changed roles and expectations and responsibilities.
15. Finally, as *Prof. Giddings* has pointed out “*Sociology tells us how to become what we want to be*”.

In conclusion, it can be said that the question of ‘*value of sociology*’ is not a question whether or not we should study a subject. But it is a simple question of how it is actually to be used. Sociology, in short, has both individual and social advantages.

THREE MAJOR THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES OF SOCIOLOGY

The Concept of “Theoretical Perspective”

Sociologists view society differently. They have their own way of understanding society and its dynamics in a theoretical manner. For example:

1. Some see the social world basically as a stable and an ongoing unity. They are impressed with the endurance of the family, organized religion and other social institutions. [This represents the “*functionalist perspective*”]
2. Some other sociologists see society as composed of many groups in conflict, competing for scarce resources. [This denotes the “*conflict perspective*”.]
3. To other sociologists, the most interesting aspects of the social world are the everyday life, routine interactions among individuals that we sometimes take for granted. [This signifies the “*interactionist perspective*”]

It is clear from the above, that the same society or social phenomenon can be approached or viewed or studied from different theoretical perspectives". The theoretical perspectives refer to "broad assumptions about society and social behaviour that provide a point of view for the study of specific problems" [Ian Robertson - Page: 16.]

Types of Major Perspective in Sociology

Our sociological imagination may help us to employ any of a number of theoretical perspectives or approaches in order to study human behaviour. From these approaches sociologists develop theories to explain specific types of behaviour. There are three of these general perspectives in modern sociology. They are (1) *the functionalist*, (2) *the conflict*, and (3) *the interactionist perspectives*. Let us look at each in turn.

1. The Functionalist Perspective

The functionalist perspective draws its original inspiration from the work of Herbert Spencer and Durkheim. In the view of functionalists, society is like living organism in which each part of the organism contributes to its survival. Therefore, the functionalist perspective emphasises the way that parts of a society are structured to maintain its stability.

Spencer compared societies to living organisms. Any organism has a structure, that is, it consists of number of interrelated parts, such as a head, limbs, heart, blood veins, nervous system, and soon. Each of these parts has a *function* to play in the life of the total organism. Spencer further argued that in the same way, a society has a structure - it also further argued that in the same way, a society has a structure, it also consists of interrelated parts, such as the family, religion, state, education, economy, and so on. Each of these components also has a function that contributes to the overall stability of the social system. Modern structural-functionalism [which is usually referred to as *functionalism*] does not insist much on the analogy between a society and an organism. However, the general idea of society as a system of interrelated parts, persists even now.

Emile Durkheim's analysis of religion represented a critical contribution to the development of functionalism. Durkheim focused on the role of religion in reinforcing feelings of solidarity and unity within group life.

The work of Durkheim, Max Weber and other European sociologists greatly influenced **Talcott Parsons (1902-1979)**, a Harvard University sociologist. For over four decades, Parsons dominated American sociology with his advocacy of functionalism. He saw society as a network of connected parts, each of which contributes to the maintenance of the system as a whole. "Under the functionalist approach, if an aspect of social life does not serve some identifiable useful function or promote value consensus among members of a society - it will not be passed on from one generation to the next".

The functionalist theory assumes that society tends to be an organized, stable, well-integrated system, in which most members agree on basic values.

In the functionalist view, a society has an underlying tendency to be in equilibrium or balance. Social change is therefore, believed to be disruptive unless it takes place in a slow and gradual manner. Because changes in one part of the system normally brings about changes elsewhere in the system.

Functionalism presumes that a given element in the social system may have its own functions or dysfunctions. The proper 'functions' add to the stability of the order, whereas the dysfunctions may disrupt the social equilibrium.

Functionalism makes a distinction between 'manifest functions', that is, those that are obvious and intended, and "latent functions" that is, those that are unrecognized unintended.

An important criticism of the functional perspective is that it tends to be inherently conservative. This theory, it is said, fails to pay sufficient importance to the changes that take place in the system. Further, it is commented that this perspective ignores the element of conflict and its role in the social system.

2. The Conflict Perspective

The conflict perspective derives its strength and support from the work of Karl Marx, who saw the struggle between the social classes as the major fact of history. In contrast to functionalists' emphasis on stability and consensus, conflict sociologists see the social world in continual struggle.

The conflict theorists assume that societies are in a constant state of change, in which conflict is a permanent feature. Conflict does not necessarily imply outright violence. It includes tension, hostility, severe competition, and disagreement over goals and values. Conflict is not deemed here as an occasional event that disturbs the smooth functioning of the system. It is regarded as *a constant process and an inevitable part of social life*.

Karl Marx viewed struggle between social classes as inevitable because of the exploitation of workers under capitalism. Expanding on Marx's work sociologists and other social scientists have come to see conflict not merely as a class phenomenon but as a part of everyday life in all societies. Thus in studying any culture, organisation, or social group, sociologists want to know "who benefits, who suffers, and who dominates at the expense of others". They are concerned with conflicts between women and men, parents and children, cities and villages, rich and the poor, upper castes and the

lower castes and so on. In studying such questions conflict theorists are interested in how society's institutions - including the family, government, religion, education, and the media, may help to maintain the privileges of some groups and keep others in a subservient position.

The conflict perspective dominated the Western European sociology and was largely neglected in American sociology until the sixties. Modern conflict theory, which is associated with such sociologists as C. Wright Mills (1956) and Lewis Coser (1956), does not focus, as Marx did, on class conflict. It sees conflict between many other groups such as the Whites and Negroes, Asians and the Europeans, and so on.

Conflict theorists are primarily concerned with the kinds of changes that conflict can bring about, whereas functionalists look for stability and consensus.

The conflict perspective is viewed as more “*radical*” and “*activist*”. This is because of its emphasis on social change and redistribution of resources. The functionalist perspective, on the other hand, because of its focus on the stability of society, is generally seen as more “*conservative*”. At present, the conflict perspective is accepted within the discipline of sociology as one valid way to gain insight into a society.

One important contribution of conflict theory is that it has encouraged sociologists to view society through the eyes of those people who rarely influence decision-making. Example, the Blacks in America and South Africa, the untouchables in India, the Hindu minorities in Pakistan, and so on. Similarly, feminist scholarship in sociology has helped us to have a better understanding of social behaviour. Thus a family's social standing is also now considered from the woman's point of view and not solely from the husband's position or income. Feminist scholars have also argued for a gender-balanced study of society in which women's experiences and contributions are visible as those of men.

The conflict perspective has its own limitations. It is also criticized. “*By focusing so narrowly on issues of competition and change, it fails to come to grips with the more orderly, stable, and less politically controversial aspects of social reality*”. (Ian Robertson. Page 19)

3. The Interactionist Perspective

The functionalist and conflict perspectives both analyse society at the macro-level. These approaches attempt to explain society—wide patterns of behaviour. However, many contemporary sociologists are more interested in understanding society as a whole through an examination of social interactions at the micro-level small groups, two friends casually talking with one another, a family, and so forth. This is the interactionist perspective. This perspective generalizes about fundamental or everyday forms of social interaction. From these generalizations, interactionists seek to explain both micro and macro-level behaviour.

The interactionist perspective in sociology was initially influenced by Max Weber. He had emphasized the importance of understanding the social world from the viewpoint of the individuals who act within it. Later developments in this theory have been strongly influenced by social psychology and by the work of early leaders in the Chicago School of Sociology, particularly George Herbert Mead.

“*The interactionist perspective focuses on social behaviour in everyday life. It tries to understand how people create and interpret the situations they experience, and it emphasizes how countless instances of social interaction produce the larger structure of society - government, the economy and other institutions*”. This perspective presumes that it is only through these social behaviour of the people that society can come into being. Society is ultimately created, maintained, and changed by the social interaction of its members.

The interactionist perspective has a number of loosely linked approaches.

- (i) **Erving Goffman (1959)**, for example, takes a “*dramaturgical*” approach to social interaction. He sees social life as a form of theatre, in which people play different parts/roles and “*stage manage*” their lives and the impressions they create on others.
- (ii) **George Homans (1961)** prefers to have an “*exchange*” approach. He stresses on the way people control one another's behaviour by exchanging various forms of rewards and punishments for approved or disapproved behaviour.
- (iii) **Harold Garfinkel (1967)** adopts what he calls an “*ethno methodological*” approach. This is only *an attempt to find out how people themselves understand the routines of daily life*. This approach focuses on how people view, describe, and explain shared meanings underlying everyday social life and social routines.
- (iv) **Blumer and his Symbolic Interaction (1969)**. Blumer preferred to stress on the symbolic interaction approach laid down by G.H. Mead in the thirties. *Symbolic interaction is the interaction that takes place between people through symbols - such as signs, gestures, shared rules, and most important, written and spoken language*. Much of this interaction takes place on a face-to-face basis, but it can also occur in other forms. For example, symbolic interaction is taking place between the author of this book and the readers who read the sentences here. Interaction occurs whenever we obey [or even disobey] a traffic signal, or a “*Stick no Bills*” notice. The essential point is that

people do not respond to that meaning. For example, the words or sentences of this book, the red light of a traffic signal have no meaning in themselves. People learn to attach symbolic meaning to these things, and they order their lives on the basis of these meanings. We live in a symbolic as well as in a physical world. Our social life involves a constant process of interpreting the meanings of our own acts and those of others.

The interactionist perspective, in general, invites the sociologist to ask specific kinds of question: *What kinds of interaction are taking place between people, how do they understand and interpret what is happening to them, and why do they act toward others as they do?* Those who follow this perspective usually focus on the more minute, personal aspects of everyday life. For example, by what process an individual becomes a beggar or a prostitute or a criminal? How does someone learn to experience cigarette smoking as pleasurable? What tactics are used by a college lecturer to have class control? What strategies are resorted to by a political leader to convince the angry mob about a political decision taken by his party on an issue that would affect their interests? What happens, and why, if we stand too close to someone during a conversation? and so on.

The interactionist perspective provides a very interesting insight into the basic mechanics of everyday life. It has the advantage of revealing fundamental social processes that other perspectives normally ignore.

This *perspective is also open to criticism*. It neglects larger social institutions and societal processes, which have powerful effects on social interaction and on our personal experience.

An Evaluation of These Three Perspectives

These three perspectives - *functionalist*, *conflict* and the *interactionist* - represent three different ways of understanding the same reality, that is social phenomenon. Each of these perspectives starts from different assumptions, each leads the investigator to ask different kinds of questions, and each viewpoint is therefore likely to produce different types of conclusions. These perspectives seem to be contradictory also. But we cannot say that one is “*better*” than the other two, or even that they are always incompatible.

Each of these perspectives focuses on a different aspect of reality: (i) *functionalism*, primarily on social order and stability, (ii) *conflict theory*, primarily on tension and change, and (iii) *interactionism*, primarily on ordinary experiences of everyday life. Each of the perspectives has a part to play in the analysis of society.

All these three perspectives could be applied, *for example, to the study of education*, although each would focus on a different aspect of the institution. A *functionalist approach would emphasise the functions that education plays in maintaining the social system as a whole*. A *conflict approach would emphasise that education is believed to be an important avenue to social and financial success in life*. It stresses on the social class background of the pupil affecting his academic achievement. An *interactionist approach would emphasise the daily activities within school*. It would point to the forms of interaction between teachers and pupils, the influence of the student peer group over its individual members. None of these approaches can claim itself to be the only “*true*” one. Because, taken together they provide a broader and deeper understanding of the entire institution of education.

Sociology makes use of all the three perspectives since each offers unique insights into the same problem being studied. These perspectives overlap as their interests overlap.



REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What is Sociology? Write its origin and characteristic features.
2. Discuss the meaning, scope and importance of Sociology.
3. Define Sociology. Is Sociology the science of society? Comment.
4. Write the definitions of Sociology as given by different sociologists. Discuss its nature.
5. What is the subject matter of Sociology? Write its scope and limitations.
6. What are the three major perspectives of Sociology? Discuss each in detail.
7. “Sociology is relatively an abstract science and not a concrete science.” Analyse.
8. “Sociology is the science of society.” Elaborate on this statement in the light of scope of Sociology.
9. Define Sociology and discuss its subject matter, nature and scope.
10. Discuss the relationship of sociology with any three social science disciplines.
11. Write short notes on the following:
 - (a) Major concerns of Sociology
 - (b) Social morphology
 - (c) Uses of Sociology
12. What are the two main schools of thought? Discuss each in detail.

SOME BRANCHES OF SOCIOLOGY

CHAPTER OUTLINE

- HISTORICAL SOCIOLOGY
- SOCIOLOGY OF KNOWLEDGE
- SOCIOLOGY OF LAW
- SOCIAL OR HUMAN ECOLOGY
- SOCIOLOGY OF EDUCATION
- POLITICAL SOCIOLOGY
- SOCIOLOGY OF ECONOMIC LIFE
- SOCIOLOGY OF OCCUPATION
- SOCIOLOGY OF RELIGION
- RURAL SOCIOLOGY
- INDUSTRIAL SOCIOLOGY
- URBAN SOCIOLOGY.

Sociology is a fast growing discipline. Sociologists are at work to bring into its range of study almost all aspects of man's social life. Sociology has a tendency to break down into an endless list of specialities. Thus it has several specialised areas of inquiry each of which may employ its own approach and techniques. Here is a small attempt to introduce some of the main branches or specialised areas of study.

HISTORICAL SOCIOLOGY

Historical sociology has emerged as one of the branches of sociology. In a sense, all sociological research is historical for the sociologists normally go into the records pertaining to the events that have happened or have been observed. "The term historical sociology is, however, usually applied to the study of social facts which are more than fifty or so years old".

In actual practice, historical sociology has become a particular kind of comparative study of social groups. It is a study of social groups, their composition, their interrelationships and the social conditions that support or undermine them. If the social anthropologist looks at these things in contemporary simple societies, the historical sociologist examines them in comparison with the records of earlier societies and their cultures.

Some historians such as *Rostovtzer*, *G.G. Coullon* and *Jacob Burkhardt*, have written *social history*. "Social history is history which deals with human relations, social patterns, mores and customs and important institutions other than monarchy and army." Social history has become "*The history of people with the politics left out*". "It has now become the history of men and women in their social relationships and groupings".

Social history has yet to establish itself as a separate discipline. Only a handful of people are busy with teaching it in British Universities. On the other hand, social history has gained much acceptance by sociologists. They have become aware of the significance of the past in the interpretation of the present. Social history has been acknowledged as 'historical sociology' by sociologists. It is today one of the standard special fields of sociology. *Sigmund Diamond*, *Robert Bellah* and *Norman Brinbaum* may be pointed out as important contemporary practitioners of historical sociology.

SOCIOLOGY OF KNOWLEDGE

'*Sociology of knowledge*' is one of the recently emerged branches of sociology. This branch pre-supposes the idea "that our knowledge is in some measure a social product." Thinkers had recognised long back the importance of economic, religious, political and other interests in shaping human beliefs and ideas. Of late, the view that even human society and its very structure can influence knowledge, gained sufficient recognition. The history of Greece and Rome in particular has strongly supported this view. In his book "*New Science*" (1725) *Vico* tried to show how heroic literature constituted the thought mode of a specific kind of society.

The problem of the relationship between society and knowledge has been raised by *Marxism*, and it has offered a solution to it also. "According to Marx and Engels, all knowledge has been distorted, directed and conditioned by the interests conscious and unconscious, of conflicting exploited and exploiting classes". In the light of contemporary sociological information, this view is found to be untenable as a total sociology of knowledge.

Durkheim tried to approach this problem in his own way. In "*The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*" 1912 and "*Sociology and Philosophy*" 1952 (essays translated) he argued that our perception and experience are derived from and constitute a part of social structure. This view may be alright for simpler societies and not for complex societies. Even Comte's three stages of social evolution had been regarded as stages of forms of thought of which the last stage, that is, the positivist stage is alone objective.

The foundations of the sociology of knowledge will have to be found in *Karl Manheim's "Ideology and Utopia" 1936* and "*Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge*", 1952. Manheim tried to face "The problem of sociology of knowledge with great philosophical learning and methodological ingenuity". A number of sociologists are attracted by the subject of sociology of knowledge but the problems it raises are unsolved.

SOCIOLOGY OF LAW

'*Sociology of Law*' looks at law and legal systems as a part of society and also as social institutions related to other institutions and changing with them. It regards law as one means of social control. Hence law is often made to be related to a moral order, to a body of customs and ideas about society. From this point of view, sociology of law is itself related to jurisprudence. Still it is not like jurisprudence. Sociology of law requires an understanding of the system of law no doubt. But it is still wider in scope. It seeks "to perceive the relationship of systems of law to other social subsystems like the economy, the nature and distribution of authority, and the structure of family and kinship relationships". In Britain, some social anthropologists have examined the systems of law and courts in relatively simple societies and tried to determine their relationships to the other aspects of the social system.

The study of 'Sociology of Law' is well known in Europe but not in America and Britain. In fact, sociologists have hardly turned their attention towards sociology of law in modern societies. Previously, Durkheim (through his classification of law into retributive and restitutive) and Max Weber (through his "Law in Economy and Society" — Translated work) had made some initial studies in this field. Austrian scholar E. Ehrlich published one of the most outstanding works on sociology of law in 1913 which was translated into English under the title "*Fundamental Principles of the Sociology of Law*" in 1936. Another famous work is that of *Georges Gurvitch's "Sociology of Law" 1942*. Due to the work of some jurists in America considerable interest is now being shown to sociology of law. Due to this growing interest only a number of sociologists and lawyers have made a joint venture to produce an interesting work entitled "*Society and the Law: New Meanings for an old Profession*" 1962.

SOCIAL OR HUMAN ECOLOGY

Ecology is a branch of biology and has been largely concerned with the environment of the lower animals and plants. It refers to the influence of the environment upon animal ecology. The sociologists who adopted the approach of these natural scientists in their study of the community refer to their field as "*human ecology*" or "*social ecology*". The botanists also supplied the sociologists with fundamental principles, concepts, and terminology.

The study of human ecology is nothing but the logical extension of the ecological point of view. Human ecology is that part of sociology which studies human beings' adjustments to their environments which include not only the physical conditions of their geographic environment but also other organisms such as other fellow human beings, plants and animals. Man, the subject of human ecology is less restricted by his physical environment. With the help of culture that man possesses, he can live almost anywhere on the planet. He can grow and produce different kinds of food, wear clothings of various types,

construct houses, bridges and dams, create tools and implements which have different uses, kill beasts that are dangerous, destroy harmful insects with pesticides and so on.

Social ecologists have focused their attention on the community. The ecological factors can more easily and more productively be studied when the community is the unit of observation. Ecology studies community in relation to environment. Culture modifies the influence of natural environment, and as culture changes, communities change.

The *Ecological Approach*: The ecological approach to the study of communities had been used, so far, mainly by American sociologists. *Park and Burgess* were the pioneers in the study of human ecology. They and their student *Mckenzie* formulated its basic principles. They made it a field of study within sociology. Later this approach was very usefully employed by sociologists other than those of the “*Chicago School*”.

Sociologists who study communities from the ecological point of view consider a village, town or city sociological rather than a legal or an administrative unit. It needs not confine itself to the boundaries set by law. “A community, from the ecological point of view, includes a focal area plus the surrounding territory. Its size is determined by the extent of its economic and social influence”. This ecological conception is used by the sociologists in their study of the community. Even economists, social workers, businessmen, and social planning agencies make use of this approach.

SOCIOLOGY OF EDUCATION

Sociology of education is one of the specialised fields of sociological inquiry. It analyses the institutions and organisations of education. It studies the functional relationship between education and the other great institutional orders of society such as the economy, the polity, religion and kinship. It concentrates on educational system or subsystem or individual school or college.

‘Sociology of education’ studies ‘education’ as an agent of transmission of culture. It studies the functional importance of education also. It makes studies of school organisation and the relation between schools and social structure, especially social class, family and neighbourhood. The interaction of these social forces with the internal organisation of the school is explored in order to find out the social determinants of educability. Studies have shown that social class and its correlates have a systematic effect on educability and educational selection. For example, in Britain, the chances of achieving a university degree are six times better for a middle class than for a working-class child. The social determinants of academic success remain powerful even in modern educational systems in spite of the provision of equal opportunities for all. The theoretical notion of “*meritocracy*”, i.e., rule by the educated and talented persons, has to be understood within this context. Sociological studies of higher education have increased since 1950.

Sociology of education stresses upon the social importance of education. The social importance of education is widely recognised today, especially in modern industrialised societies. In such societies education has become one of the means of acquiring social and technical skills. Education has come to be not only a way of training people to work in different fields but also a qualification for jobs in certain fields. It fits people for increasingly specialised roles

More than that, education has become an essential need today to register progress in scientific and technological fields. As such, it is a means of promoting economic prosperity. Education, as a means of bringing about social change, is no less significant. It promotes social mobility, that is, movement of people from one social status to another. It influences social stratification. Education is often made use of in totalitarian and communist countries as an instrument to propagate some **chauvinist** and communist ideologies.

The famous writer, *Newman* said that the main practical purpose of a university is to produce socially responsible people. President Truman of America, stressing the importance of education, once remarked that man with wide experience, practical vision of things, intellectual depth and capacity to take right decisions at right time should be given the reins of administration to rule the country. *Dr. S Radhakrishnan* said that the main objective of education was to give training to students to undertake occupations effectively and to become proper leaders in various social fields in which they happen to work. *Dr. Kothari Commission*, appointed by the Government of India to recommend suitable educational reforms declares in the very beginning of its very comprehensive report that, “*The destiny of India is being shaped in her class-rooms today*”.

POLITICAL SOCIOLOGY

Ever since the time of *Aristotle*, thinkers have been making systematic study of concrete political phenomena. They have been observing how political phenomena influence and get influenced by the rest of the social structure and culture. In this regard, Aristotle’s ‘*Politics*’ may be taken as a work of political sociology. *Ferguson*, *Montesquieu* and *Tocqueville*

were all engaged in what today would be called *political sociology*. The classical sociologists like *Weber* (his essay ‘*Politics as Vocation*’) and *Pareto* (his work “*The Mind and Society*”) were pioneers in including a political sociology in their work. Further, *Karl Marx* in Germany, *Mosca* in Italy and *Graham Wallas* in England advanced so essentially sociological theories of *political elites* and of the processes of consensus and dissent. Also *Andre Siegfried* of pre-1914 France made a detailed study of this social group and interests in voting behaviour. The phrase ‘*Political Sociology*’ to describe this tradition only came into general use after 1945.

Ever since the birth of sociology, the analysis of political processes and institutions has been one of its most important concerns. Sociologists argue and many political scientists agree that it is difficult to study political processes except as special cases of more general psychological and sociological relationships. The term “*Political Sociology*” has come to be accepted both within sociology and political science as encompassing the overlap between the two sciences. However, the *political scientist* is primarily concerned with the dimension of power and the factors affecting its distribution. The *sociologist*, on the other hand, is more concerned with social control, with the way in which the values and norms of a society regulate relations. His emphasis is on social ties, rather than on formal structures and legal definitions.

As *Smelser N.J.* says, “*Political Sociology can be defined as the study of the interrelationship between society and polity, between social structures and political institutions*”. Political sociology is not solely the study of the social factors that condition the political order.

Political sociology employs the methods of sociological research, including those of attitude research to investigate the content of political behaviour. It treats political institutions, both formal or constitutional and informal, as parts of the social system. It has concentrated attention on ‘*elites*’ and their membership, on the expression and regulation of conflict, on formal pressure groups, on the formation of political opinion. Political sociologists have been concerned with political parties as social institutions and with the phenomena of despotic and totalitarian regimes. It is an integral part of sociology which has progressively transformed political science in the direction of a wider attention to empirical reality.

SOCIOLOGY OF ECONOMIC LIFE OR ECONOMIC SOCIOLOGY

Sociology of Economic Life or *Economic Sociology* is a new branch of sociology. As *Neil J. Smelser* defines, economic sociology is “the application of the general frame of reference, variables, and explanatory models of sociology to that complex of activities concerned with the production, distribution, exchange, and consumption of scarce goods and services.”

The *first focus* of economic sociology is on *economic activities* alone. The economic sociologist studies how these activities are structured into roles and collectivities. He inquires by what values these activities are legitimised, by what norm is and sanctions they are regulated, and how these sociological factors or variables interact.

The *second focus* of economic sociology is on the *relations between sociological variables or factors as they manifest themselves in the economic as well as non-economic contexts*. For example, how do familial roles associate with occupational role of a local community and the control of its political structure? This focus includes both situations in which economic and non-economic structures are integrated with one another.

This interplay of sociological variables or factors in the economic and non-economic fields can be observed in two ways: – (i) *Within concrete economic units*. For example, in the industrial firm, the economic sociologist studies the status systems, power and authority relations deviance, cliques and coalitions, and the relations among these phenomena. In fact, ‘*industrial sociology*’ concentrates more on this point. (ii) *Between economic units and their social environment*. At one level, the economic sociologist studies the relations between economic interests and other interests (legal, political, familial, religious) in both the community and the larger society. At a higher level he studies the relation between the economy (considered as an analytic system of society) and the other systems. “This inter-unit focus leads to the “*larger issues*” of economic sociology – e.g., public policy, labour-management conflict, and the relations between economic classes-that lie in the tradition of Marxian and Weberian thought”. Finally, the economic sociologist studies the distinctively sociological aspects of the central economic variables themselves – *money as one of many types of sanctions in social life*.

Sub-divisions of Economic Sociology: Economic sociology has its own sub-divisions. Among these can be mentioned – (a) Occupational Sociology, (b) The Sociology of Work, (c) The Sociology of Complex Organisations (at least that part which deals with economic bureaucracies), (d) Industrial Sociology, (e) Plant Sociology, (f) the Sociology of Consumption and so on.

SOCIOLOGY OF OCCUPATION

'*Sociology of Occupations*' is one of the new branches of sociology. It deals with the problem of examining how the occupational structure and particular occupations associate with other segments of society like the family, the economy, the educational system, the political system and the system of social stratification. Its investigations concentrate upon the following themes: (i) the division of labour, its causes and consequences, (ii) The study of specific occupations of the people like the prostitute, the dockworkers, the clerk, the architect, the physician, etc. (iii) The function and meaning of work and related phenomena such as leisure, unemployment and retirement. (iv) Researches are also undertaken on such topics as the amount and method of remuneration, recruitment and training, career patterns, conflicts inherent in the role, the relation between personality and occupation, interpersonal relations at work, the public image of the occupation, and the distribution of power and prestige within the occupation, etc.

SOCIOLOGY OF RELIGION

The phenomenon of religion attracted the attention of the sociologists because of its great human importance. No society is free from the influence of religion. In established societies, religion is one of the most important institutional structures making up the total social system. A special branch of sociology has now emerged in order to analyse the religious behaviour of men from a sociological point of view. "The sociology of religion is but one aspect of the study of the relationship between ideas and ideals embodied in movements and institutions, and the social situations of their origin, development, flourishing and decline". *Thomas F.O' Dea*.

The early sociological studies of religion had three distinctive methodological characteristics – *Evolutionist, Positivist and Psychological*. Ex: The works of *Comte, Tylor and Spencer*. But *Emile Durkheim* in his "*Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*", 1912, made a different approach to the study of religion. He argued that in all societies, a distinction is made between the 'sacred' and the 'profane'. He emphasised the collective aspects of religion. He was of the opinion that the function of religious rituals is to affirm the moral superiority of the society over its individual members and thus to maintain the solidarity of the society. *Durkheim's* emphasis on ritual as against belief, later influenced many anthropologists to undertake functionalist investigations of religion. *B. Malinowski* and *A.R. Radcliffe-Brown* and other anthropologists were also influenced by the views of *Durkheim*.

In the study of religion in civilised societies, *Durkheim's* theory has proved less useful. Here, religion not only unites people but also divides. In modern societies, beliefs and doctrines have more importance than ritual. Here, the sociological study of religion differs from that of anthropology. It is more influenced by the ethical doctrines of the world religions. This approach can be witnessed in the works of *L.T. Hobhouse* and *Max Weber*. *Hobhouse*, in discussing religion in his major work "*Morals in Evolution*", –1907, gave more importance to moral codes of the major religions and particularly of Christianity.

Max Weber's treatment of religious beliefs differs in important respects. *Firstly*, it is not based on an evolutionary scheme. *Secondly*, it is mainly concerned with one major aspect of religious ethics. That is, he wanted to examine the influence of particular religious doctrines upon economic behaviour; and the relations between the position of groups in the economic order and types of religious beliefs. He is less concerned with ethical doctrines as such. His famous work, "*The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*" is an example of such an approach.

Comparatively, nothing more has been added to the theoretical development of a Sociology of Religion since the work of *Weber* and *Durkheim*. *Weber's* influence has contributed to two main lines of study; (i) The characteristics, doctrines and social significance of religious sects, and (ii) the interlink between social classes and religious sects. *Ernst Troeltsch's* "*The Social Teachings of the Christian Churches*", 1912, *H.R. Niebuhr's* "*The Social Sources of Denominationalism*, 1929; and *Brian Wilson's* "*Seas and Society*", 1961, can be mentioned here as examples carrying *Weber's* influence.

The Sociology of Religion seeks to offer a scientific explanation to religion. As *Kingsley Davis* says this "*task is not easy. No societal phenomenon is more resistant than religion to scientific explanation*". Two factors seem to be responsible for this— first an *emotional* and second a '*rational bias*'. "The emotional bias springs from the fact that religion by its very nature involves ultimate values, making it almost impossible to view with a disinterested attitude". The '*rational bias*' would also create problems. Religion which involves transcendental ends, strong sentiments, deep-rooted beliefs, and symbolic instruments may appear to be fallacious to a "*rationalist*". He may attribute religion simply to ignorance and error and assume that when these are removed there will emerge the completely '*rational*' man. Some hold that religion is an expression of instinctive emotions. These views are equally false, "*The very non-rationality of religious behaviour is the thing that gives religion its vitality in human life*".

RURAL SOCIOLOGY

Rural Sociology is a specialised field of sociology. As the name indicates, it deals with the society of village or rural society. It is a systematic and scientific study of rural society. The majority of the people on the earth live in villages and rural areas. They follow patterns of occupation and life somewhat different from those living in urban areas. Their behaviour, way of life, and beliefs are conditioned and deeply influenced by their rural environment. A specialised branch of sociology called, Rural Sociology, has, therefore, emerged to study the rural society.

Definition of Rural Sociology

Different sociologists have defined rural sociology in different ways. A few definitions may be examined here.

1. *Sanderson* says that “Rural sociology is the sociology of rural life in the rural environment”.
2. *Bertand* says that in its broadest sense, “Rural sociology is that study of human relationships in rural environment”.
3. *F. Stuard Chopin* defines rural sociology as follows: “The sociology of rural life is a study of the rural population, rural social organisation and the social processes comparative, in rural society”.
4. *A.R. Desai* says that “Rural sociology is the science of rural society... It is the science of laws of the development of rural society”.

It is clear from the above-mentioned definitions that rural sociology studies the social interactions, institutions and activities and social changes that take place in the rural society. It studies the rural social organisations, structure and set up. It provides us that knowledge about the rural social phenomena which can help us in making contribution to the development of rural society.

Origin of Rural Sociology

Rural sociology is comparatively a new branch of sociology. It was first originated in the United States of America. It has taken more than half a century to become established as a distinct academic field or professional study. The main contributors to the development of rural sociology are – *Charles Sanderson, Burthefield, Ernest Burnholme, John Morris Gillin, Franklin H. Giddings, and Thomas Nixon Carver*. It was President Roosevelt who, through the appointment of ‘Country Life Commission’ gave a good encouragement to the development of the rural sociology in 1908. The report of this Commission encouraged the studies of rural society.

In 1917 the Department of Rural Sociology was set up by the American Sociological Society. In 1919, a ‘*Rural Sociology Department*’ was established under the chairmanship of *Dr. C.J. Galpin*. The Great Depression of 1930 provided another stimulus to the growth of rural sociology. In 1937, ‘*Rural Sociological Society*’ was formed. It started publishing a professional journal ‘*Rural Sociology*’ containing results of rural sociological research. C.J. Galpin of the University of Wisconsin developed techniques for defining and delimiting the rural community. His approach is still popular today.

The Great Second World War gave yet another fillip to the growth of rural sociology. The destruction caused by the war demanded reconstruction. The reconstruction work brought further encouragement to the science. By 1958 there were about 1000 professional rural sociologists in America. Rural sociology crossed the boundaries of America and became popular in Europe. A European society for Rural Sociology was formed in 1957, and a similar organisation was started in Japan also. In developing countries, the role of the rural sociologist is primarily in the applied field of more effective planning and operation of rural community development programmes.

Scope or Subject-Matter of Rural Sociology

The scope or the subject-matter of rural sociology is basically the study of rural society with all its complexities. According to *Lawry and Nelson*, ‘*The subject-matter of rural sociology is the description and analysis of the progress of various groups as they exist in the rural environment.*’

The main tasks of *rural sociology* can be mentioned here. They are as follows:

1. **Rural community and rural problems:** This includes the characteristics and nature of rural community and its problems.
2. **Rural social life:** This includes various aspects of the rural people.
3. **Rural social organisation:** This includes the study of various rural social organisations and institutions including family and marriage.

4. **Rural social institutions and structure:** This includes the study of dogmas, customs, traditions, values, morals, conventions, practices and various political, economic, religious and cultural institutions.
5. **Rural planning and reconstruction:** Rural sociology has great practical applications. Hence rural planning and reconstruction are also the main tasks of rural sociology to be dealt with.
6. **Social change and social control in rural social set up:** It is here we study the impact of city on rural life. The mechanisms of social control of the rural society are also examined here.
7. **Religion and culture in rural society:** Religion plays an important role in a rural set up. Culture of rural society exhibits striking peculiarities. These come within the domain of rural sociology.
8. **Rural social processes:** Different social processes such as cooperation, competition, integration, isolation, differentiation etc., that take place in rural society are also studied in rural sociology.
9. **Differences between urban and rural society:** The study of rural society includes the differences between urban and rural society also.

Importance of Rural Sociology

The practical value of the study of rural sociology is widely recognised today. As long as the villages and the rural society assume importance, the rural sociology shall continue to acquire importance. The value of rural sociology can be understood by the following points:

1. **Rural population is in majority:** The world's population is more rural than urban. More than two-third of the people of the world live in villages. In India alone more than 50 crores people (more than 75 per cent of the total population) live in more than 5 lakh villages. It is the village that forms the basis of society. Rural sociology is inevitable for the study of the majority of the population.
2. **Intimate relationship between the land and man:** Man is born out of land and his entire culture depends on it. Land has been the pan and parcel of human life. Progress starts from the village. The type of land partially conditions the type of society and the opportunities for human development. This close relationship between man and land has also been recognised by the economists and political scientists.
3. **Villages and rural life form the source of population:** Cities normally grow out of towns and villages. No city can come into existence all of a sudden without having a rural background. A village, when improved and thickly populated, becomes a town or a city. Thus it is the village population that forms the source of urban life.
4. **Psychological approach to the rural life:** Rural progress, rural reconstruction or improvement of rural societies is possible only when the people have correct idea about the rural way of life and problems. Rural sociology touches upon the rural psychology and provides a good understanding of the rural people and their society.

INDUSTRIAL SOCIOLOGY

The Industrial Revolution that took place in England in the 18th century changed the course of human history. The Revolution, though essentially took place in the economic field, its effects were never confined to the economic field alone. It brought down the cost of production, improved quality and maximised output. More than that, it changed the pattern of human relations. It eased human life, and provided more comforts and luxuries to man. At the same time, it altered human outlook and attitudes. It brought about radical changes in the very structure of the society.

Industrial revolution, in course of time resulted in the continuous process of *industrialisation*. Industrialisation is a phenomenon of world significance today. Development in the field of science and technology further added to the volume and speed of the process. Agricultural economy turned into industrial economy. Industrial area developed into towns and cities. The process of *urbanisation* began. People from rural areas started flocking towards cities. Capitalist economy was born. Social classes with class-hatreds emerged. Social institutions and values underwent changes. New problems and new fears and new anxieties were invariably the results of it. The very face of the society changed. These developments necessitated the birth of a new branch of sociology called "*Industrial Sociology*" which essentially deals with the industrial society with all its complexities.

Definition of Industrial Sociology

1. 'Industrial sociology is the application of the sociological approach to the reality and problems of industry'.
—P. Gisbert

2. Industrial sociology centres its attention on the social organisation of factory, the store, and the office. This focus includes not only the interactions of people playing roles in these organisations but also the ways in which their work roles are interrelated with other aspects of their life”. — Charles B. Spaulding
3. Industrial sociology is the sociology of industrial relations and industrial activities of man.

Development of Industrial Sociology

As a specialised branch of sociology, industrial sociology is yet to become mature. In fact, *Durkheim* and *Max Weber* in their classical styles have made some analysis of industrial institutions. But systematic research in the field has developed only in recent decades. It gained importance about the middle of the present century. The famous experiments at the *Hawthorne Works in Chicago*, of the *Western Electric Company*, conducted by *George Elton Mayo* and his associates during the last twenties and in the early thirties, provided the fillip to the development of industrial sociology.

Industrial sociology gained the grounds comparatively on a wider scale in America. Various factors contributed to the development of industrial sociology in the U.S.A. The development of corporate industry, the achievement of scientific management, the unemployment of the depressed 1930s, the labour legislation of the New Deal (Economic Policy), the rise of ‘*human relations*’, the manpower shortages and enforced restrictions of wartime, the great awakening of the trade unions, the continued emigration of the population from the American farm, the new technology and mechanisation, the desire for a higher standard of living, the occasional labour strikes involving thousands of workers, the investigation of the Congress, the legislative programme of the Kennedy Administration—and other factors contributed to the growth of this branch in America.

In the beginning, in Industrial Sociology much of the work was limited to the analysis of rather restricted problems. But today industrial sociologist’s field of study is developing. It now includes the analysis of industrial institutions and organisation. It also studies the relation between them. It examines the links between industrial phenomena and institutions of the wider society. Theoretically, this is correct. But practically much remains to be done. As regards many of the internal problems of industrial organisations, our systematic knowledge is still fragmentary and inadequate. In respect of the links between industrial and other institutions our knowledge is scattered.

The Concept of Industry

The key term to be explained here is ‘*industry*’. ‘*Industry*’ may be defined as ‘*the application of complex and sophisticated methods to the production of economic goods and services*’. In order to improve the quality of production, reduce the cost and maximise the production, the complex methods, that is, the machines were used. This process of mechanisation of production originated during the Industrial Revolution in the 18th century.

Man, in some way or the other, has always been ‘*industrial*’. He has always used tools to obtain food and satisfy his needs. Advanced industry consists in the use of tools and machines that are far more complicated than the digging stick, the hoe, or the bow and arrow, used by the early stone age man to obtain his daily food. In fact, the original Latin word for industry is ‘*industria*’, which means *skill* and *resourcefulness*. The term ‘*industry*’ is applied to the modern sophisticated system of procuring goods and services which began in the Industrial Revolution.

The Sociological Approach

A complex reality like ‘*industry*’ can be studied from various points of view – technological, physical, psychological, economic, sociological etc. Sociology is essentially a science of society, of social relationships, associations and institutions. It analyses the social relations, their forms, contents and the systems they assume. Its method is scientific. Its approach is rational and empirical.

Industrial sociology is that branch of sociology which concerns mainly with the *industrial relations of man*. It examines the various industrial organisations and institutions, their interrelations and links with the other institutions and organisations of the wider society.

Scope of Industrial Sociology

Industrial sociology is an applied discipline. It is concerned with the study of human relations as they grow and operate in the field of industries. It deals with the sociological concepts that have relevance to industry. It concentrates upon the social organisations of the work place or industry. It studies the patterns of interaction between people in terms of their roles in industrial organisations.

Industrial organisations are also studied by other disciplines such as—*industrial management, industrial engineering, industrial psychology* and *economics*. But they study the phenomena of industry in different ways. Their studies sometimes may overlap.

Industrial engineering deals with the design of products and equipments. *Industrial management* is more an art than a science. *Industrial psychology* studies—the selection of personnel, job satisfaction, motivation and incentive to work, team spirit, accident proneness and such other personal matters and behavioural problems. *Economics* concentrates on such matters as—prices, wages, profits, full employment, finance, monopoly, marketing, taxation, etc. But none of these sciences focuses its attention on the social or human aspects of industrial organisations. This task is done only by industrial sociology.

Industrial sociology studies industrial organisation not as a technological or economic organisation, but more than that, as a social or human organisation. It stresses upon the social or interactional factors in industrial relations, formal and informal organisation, team work, communication etc. “When interaction among two or more persons is affected by the fact that one of them is a doctor, a teacher, a plumber, a factory worker, a stenographer, a boss, an employee, a union leader, or an unemployed person, we have before us the raw material of industrial sociology”.— Charles B. Spaulding

The industrial sociology deals with the total organisation of the workplace. It also deals with three different organisations which may be conceived of as distinguishable but interrelated: namely, (a) *management organisation*, (b) *informal organisation of workers*, and (c) *union organisation*.

(a) ‘*Management organisation*’ refers to the relations between management and the workers. It also includes policies, programmes-structure and the functioning of the management. Its main emphasis is on the formal relations developed by the workers with the management.

(b) ‘*Informal organisation*’ of workers consists of informal relations developed voluntarily by the workers themselves. Such relations are established by the individuals and small groups within the factory or industry. Such organisations assume the forms of cliques, gangs, friendship groups, bands etc. These organisations develop their own informal norms to control the activities of the members.

(c) ‘*Union organisation*’ refers to the role of trade unions and the participation or involvement of workers in union activities. Trade unions are playing a vital role in creating industrial unrest and maintaining industrial peace. They also control the formal and informal relations of the workers.

These three organisations of the industry are affected by the physical conditions of the work place, fashions in management thinking, governmental and other social control, the personalities of employees and their experiences in playing roles in other organisations.

Importance of Industrial Sociology

Industrial sociology is of great practical importance.

1. Industrial sociology has been of great help in finding solutions to many of the industrial disputes and instances of industrial unrest.
2. It has reduced the gap between industrial management and industrial workers. It has also helped both to develop friendly relations.
3. Industrial Sociology has stressed upon the important role of trade unions in settling industrial disputes.
4. It has thrown light upon the problems of industrial workers. It has suggested ways and means of improving the living conditions of workers.
5. Various industrial sociological studies have impressed upon the management and the government the need to undertake social security measures for promoting labour welfare.
6. Industrial sociology studies the relations between man’s industrial activities on the one hand, and his political, economic, educational and other activities, on the other.
7. Industrial sociology also analyses the processes of industrialisation and urbanisation, their magnitude and their mutual interaction.
8. Finally, industrial sociology plays a vital role in contributing to planned industrial growth.

URBAN SOCIOLOGY

Our modern industrial civilisation is dominated by cities. ‘*Urbanisation*’ or the growth of cities is a phenomenon of recent years. It is ‘*an extremely new phenomenon in human history, so recent that its rapid growth and full potentialities are not yet thoroughly understood or realised.*’ Not only the existing cities of the world are growing today but also new cities are emerging. Urban sociology is born to study cities and their unprecedented growth.

Definition of Urban Sociology

1. 'Urban Sociology' is that branch of sociology which deals with the city or the urban community, with urbanisation and urbanism. — J.A. Quinn
2. Urban Sociology is the sociology of urban life and activities.

Urbanisation and Urban Sociology

The city is not a phenomenon limited to civilised life, for it has existed in some preliterate cultures. However, the first small urban centres appeared only some 5 to 6 thousand years ago. True urbanisation, however, is much more recent than that. The earliest urban centres such as Memphis, Thebes, Babylon, Athens, Rome, Carthage, Pataliputra, Ujjian, were of course, called 'cities'. But in modern context they would be called "*towns*". "They were mere urban islands in a vast sea of rurality".

'Urbanisation' refers to the growth of cities. It also indicates an enormous increase in the size of population in urban centres. "Urbanisation covers the movement of people permanently or temporarily from village to city; it refers to the effect upon village manners of city habits..."

Urbanisation became a world phenomenon only in the 19th century. In 1800 there were only 21 cities in the world each with a population of not less than one lakh. They were all in Europe. By 1950 their number increased to 858 and their total population exceeded 313 million. The populations of the major cities ranged from one million to about twelve million. The population of New York, Tokyo and Shanghai has already exceeded one crore. Some countries became more urbanised than others. America, England, Germany and Israel became the most urbanised countries of the world. In these countries more than 50 per cent of the people live in towns and cities today. This increase in proportion in cities is what we mean by 'urbanisation'.

Importance of cities is today widely recognised. But cities are more often studied with '*moralistic*' rather than '*scientific*' approach. Some have highlighted the significance of city, past and present, and its dominant role in the building of civilisation. They have argued that cities have led in the creation of art, advancement of science and the spread of knowledge. They have also stated that without huge cities the modern complex and industrial civilisation could not have developed.

On the contrary, some other scholars have condemned cities '*as abnormal seed-beds of sin, scepticism, greed, misery, filth and congestion*'. The cities are branded as centres of '*corruption, vice and misery*'. They further maintained that "the urban way of life inevitably encourages attitudes of selfish pleasure-seeking, exploitation of one's fellowmen, and indifference to human suffering."

Whether in condemnation or in praise, these scholars have implicitly paid great tributes '*to the human significance of the city*'. Although a more detached point of view is emerging, the scientific study and literature on cities are very much lacking.

Origin of Urban Sociology

The phenomenal growth of cities or what we call the phenomenon of '*Urbanisation*' with all its attendant merits and demerits necessitated a systematic and a scientific study of the urban communities of cities. Accordingly was born that branch of sociology called '*Urban Sociology*'. Though studies of cities were made even earlier, urban sociology, as a systematic discipline came into being in the 20th century only. As it is in the case of Rural Sociology, maximum work in the field of Urban Sociology has been done in the specialised fields of urban sociology today. For example, many books have appeared on classification of towns, citizenship, development of towns, urban environment, social disorganisation in cities, demographic trends, community life and its impact on personality, family, marriage and divorce in cities etc. Intensive research has also been made regarding the mechanism of social welfare, proper use of leisure, religious, cultural and educational institutions in cities, town planning and rehabilitation and such other topics.

Scope of Urban Sociology

The scope of urban sociology is really vast. In addition to the study of the general principles of urban sociology, it deals with the development of towns, social disorganisation, problems of urban life and town planning. It studies the interaction between the urban environment and the development of human personality. It studies the structure and functions of urban family, its role and changing patterns. It deals with the institution of marriage in urban context, and the recent trends in it. It studies the class structure and class struggle in urban societies. It concentrates on such features of social disorganisation, such as—crimes, juvenile delinquency, prostitution, beggary, unemployment, diseases, environment pollution, slums, gambling, alcoholism and night life. It analyses the factors and causes of social and personal disorganisation. It undertakes an investigation of industries and industrial relations, the causes of disharmony between the labour and the management and the ways and means of bringing about harmony between the two.

Urban sociology makes its study with its basic assumption that the city is '*not a static phenomenon, but a series of dynamic inter-relationships*'. "In the ever-changing modern city institutions are altered; old problems change or disappear and new ones arise. Likewise, new methods for solving these problems are constantly being tried in urban sociology. It gives suggestions for urban planning and control. Hence, it not only studies the facts of urban life but also evaluates the facts in order to understand their causes and means of improvement. Though the immediate task of urban sociology is to make an analytical study of the structure and functioning of the urban community, in doing so, it gives suggestions to overcome the problems of city life, which are of great practical importance.

Value of Urban Sociology

The value of urban sociology is widely recognised today. The process of urbanisation has been greatly hastened in advanced countries due to industrialisation and technological changes. The cities today '*embrace in one way or another nearly everything in life*'. The studies on urban society and urban life have also been diverse and many. They may deal with "urban traffic or urban housing, with municipal government or finance, with fire protection or park maintenance, with juvenile delinquency or commercialised vice." Urban sociology seeks to find ways of solving some of the difficulties, nuisances, dangers and derelictions of city life.

As a result of urbanisation there is a change in personal tendencies and trends. The norms and standards of marriage and family have undergone considerable changes. It has given rise to various social, economic and sanitary problems. It is in this context that the need of urban sociology is strongly felt. An urban sociologist is a social doctor who is busily engaged in diagnosing the social diseases. "The emphasis on problems is natural and necessary because the close-packing of thousands and millions of people in small space inevitably creates conditions universally regarded as unfortunate." Some of these conditions are so new that there are no traditional modes of handling them. They can be dealt with only by investigating, by inventing new institutional arrangements. The value of urban sociology under these conditions can hardly be exaggerated.

Rural Sociology and Urban Sociology Interrelations

Various branches of sociology study the different aspects of the same reality, that is, society. It is but natural that all the branches are interrelated. Accordingly, rural sociology and urban sociology too have interconnections.

Rural sociology studies the village and urban sociology deals with the city. The city life depends on the village and what it produces. Similarly, the village is very much influenced by the city. Due to the pressures from within and attractions from outside people are flocking towards the cities from the villages. The economic necessity and social deficiency are '*pushing*' the people out of the village, while the attractions of the city are '*pulling*' them towards their centres. This has resulted in phenomenon known as 'urbanisation'. Both rural sociology and urban sociology are interested in studying this phenomenon.

Rural sociology and urban sociology are mutually contributory. Rural sociology is helpful to urban sociology in studying such matters as—the causes for the growth of population in cities, the nature of urban problems and their solution, the reasons for the laxity of urban social institutions, rural trends in urban centres, the phenomenon of "loss of community", etc. Similarly urban sociology is helpful to rural sociology in studying such matters as—the limitations of rural life, the urban impact on the village, the 'rush' of people towards the city, rural change, rural problems, rural development, rural reconstruction, etc.

Rural sociology and urban sociology are so interrelated that one cannot be separated from the other. Just as it is difficult to draw a line of demarcation between the urban society and rural society, it is equally difficult to draw a hard and fast line of difference between urban sociology and rural sociology. Urban trends are found in rural societies and rural tendencies are often continued in urban societies. In small cities and towns and also in sub-urban centres we find the intermixture of rural urban trends and features which is often described in terms of 'rural-urban convergence'.

A rural sociologist must have a basic understanding of urban sociology and similarly an urban sociologist must know the fundamental principles of rural sociology. There is no city in the world which does not have its rural background and similarly almost all the villages are influenced by the cities in one way or the other. This fact further emphasises the inter-relationship between urban sociology and rural sociology.

Interconnections between Urban Sociology and Industrial Sociology

Urban sociology and industrial sociology are interconnected and interdependent. Their interdependence is such that one is often looked upon as the branch of another.

Urban sociology studies the origin of the city, its growth, the city life, the problems of the city and their solutions, urban reconstruction, the city planning, etc. Industrial sociology studies the industrial system, industrial relations, industrial problems, industrialisation etc. Industrialisation and urbanisation often go together. The growth of cities is associated with the growth of industries. Similarly, the growth of industries accelerates the growth of cities. It is from this point of view we