

B.A. PART-I(SOCIOLOGY)
Paper-I(Principles of Sociology)

Topic-Nature of Sociology
College-MMC,P.U,(Department of Sociology)

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SOCIOLOGY

❖ **Objectives:**

- ✓ To give a basic understanding of sociology.
- ✓ To understand the nature of scientific study of Sociology.

❖ **Introduction:**

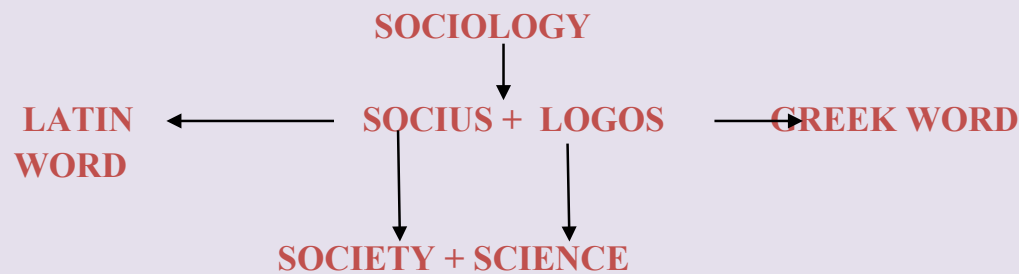
Sociology studies the behaviour of human beings in society. It may, however, be rightly pointed out that other social sciences, such as Political Science, Economics, History, etc., do the same. Sociology studies this social aspect of man. Sociology differs from other social sciences in this particular respect. No other social science takes the study of social relationship as its central theme. The focus of interest of all other social sciences is different.

In the family of social sciences, Sociology is comparatively a new entrant. But because of its dealing with social problems, social relationships and social interactions the importance of the study of this subject has considerably increased. It has considerably developed in methodology, scope and approach. Attempts are now being made to study every social problem scientifically and objectively, eliminating subjectivity to the extent possible a distinctive way of examining human interactions. Sociology is the systematic study of social behavior and human groups. It focuses primarily on the influence of social relationships upon people's attitudes and behavior and on how societies are established and change. As a field of study sociology has a very broad scope. It deals with families, gangs, business firms, computer networks, political parties, schools, religions, and labor unions. It is concerned with love, poverty, conformity, technology, discrimination, illness, alienation, overpopulation and community.

The purpose of sociological study is not, however, simply to describe social relationships, but also to analyse them and to discriminate between their specific forms, varieties and patterns. The sociologists are expected to look ahead and to suggest guideposts for social action in response to the changes which give rise to social problems.

In the 19th century a French philosopher named Auguste Comte (1798 – 1857) gave the name 'Sociology' to this new social science. 'Sociology' is composed of two words: Socius meaning companion or associate, and logos meaning word.

Thus, the term formed from these two words means talking about society, as Geology (geos meaning earth) means talking about the earth, Biology (bios meaning life) means talking about life and Anthropology (anthropos meaning man) means talking about man. Socius is a Latin word and Logos is a Greek word, and the name of our discipline is thus a hybrid offspring of two languages.



In simple word, Sociology means the scientific study of society.

❖ **Definitions:**

- **According to Ward-** “Sociology is science of society”.
- **According to Giddins -**“Sociology is scientific study of society.
- **According to Sorokin -**sociology is a study first of all the relationship and correlations between various classes... second between the social and non social aspects of life and third it studies general characteristics common to all classes of society.
- **According to Ogburn -**“Sociology is concerned with the study of social life and its relations to the factors of culture, natural environment, heredity and group.”
- **E.S. Bogardus-** “Sociology may be defined as the study of the ways in which social experiences function in developing, maturing and repressing human beings through inter-personal stimulations.”

From all these definitions it becomes clear that sociology is concerned with social relationships and studies society, human interactions, inter-personal and intra-personal relations. It tries to study scientifically social institutions, organizations and systems. These definitions also make it amply clear that sociologists view the subject differently and that there is no unanimity in this regard.

❖ **Nature of Sociology:**

There is a continuing controversy about the nature of sociology. According to some sociologists it is a science, while others strongly refute this claim.

✓ **What is a scientific study?**

For a scientific study it is essential that the whole study should be systematic and without any subjectivity. A scientist is supposed to have a clear vision and a pointed approach. He should have capacity to record unbiased decisions and properly classify data's. He should also have vision to collect only such data as is useful for his study. He should conclude his findings after verification of data's and not on morality or

certain pre-supposed philosophies, nations and ideas. The most important element of a scientific study is that a scientist should deal with bear facts and not with ideal situations. Thus this study should be both factual and systematic. Then another element is that its results should have universal application. Then in a scientific study there should be cause effect relationship and it should also be capable of making certain safe predictions.

✓ **Is Sociology A Science?**

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

✓ **Sociology- Not a Science:**

there is other side of the picture as well. Many believe that society is not a perfect science. Like the results of natural sciences, the results obtained by social scientists cannot be generalized and these also cannot be same under all circumstances and at all places. The conditions always differ from society to society and social changes are unavoidable. These are also very complex. Then it is said that each human beings has his own limitations and he provides information keeping those limitations into consideration. He is not prepared to disclose secrets and thus the information provided is not factual. It is also said that the many situations are not within the control of sociologists and repeat experimentation is almost impossible.

Each sociologist has subjective approach to the problem under investigation. There is no stage of investigation in which there is no subjectivity. Each one has some secrets which he is not prepared to disclose to the investigators. Unlike natural scientist, a sociologist has no laboratory facilities and also has no control over material to be experimented i.e. human beings. Not only this, but it is not possible to repeat experiments. It is more or less not possible to make the safe predictions because nature of social problems with which the sociologists are not the same all over the world

❖ **Conclusion:**

What is real nature of sociology about this controversy is likely to continue. According to Robert Stead Sociology is a social science and not a natural science, because it deals with human beings and social phenomena. It is positive and not normative science because it studies social phenomena as it is and not as it ought to be. It is pure and not applied science because it studies underlying factors of a social phenomenon. Sociology is an abstract and not a concrete science because it studies society in general. It deals with society, which in itself is abstract and as such the subject cannot be concrete. It is a science of generalization and not that of particularization because it studies a social problem in general and not in particular way. It does not study a social phenomenon from a particular angle. It is an empirical or rational science because it tries to follow logical method of data collection.