

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

Topic- Origin of Sociology

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• **Introduction:**

In order to comprehend any subject, it is pertinent to look into the socio-cultural coordinates of its genesis and growth. It is a truism that the history of social life and its problems is as old as human being itself. The origin of sociology is associated with the evolution of man. However the roots of sociological understanding go back to the ancient Greek and Roman literature. But the systematic study of society emerged in the West. Besides, we do find references of law, the state and the society in Plato's Republic (427-347 B.C) and in Aristotle's Ethics and politics (348- 322 B.C.). Similarly, Roman philosopher Cicero's book De Officiis (on justice) was a treasure of insights in philosophy, law, politics and sociology. St.Augustine's De civitate Dei (345-430 A.D) deals with social concepts and questions.

Later on significant works of subsequent ages like the summa theologica and de regimine principum of Thomas Aquinas (1227-1274) De Monarchia of Dante (1265-1321) deals with social concepts and questions of their time. In the modern periods, there appeared some writers who treated problems of life and society on a more realistic level. No clear cut distinction was made between state and society until the 16th century. Machiavelli in his famous work "The prince" made an objective discussion on state and statecraft. Another notable author of this period was Sir Thomas Moore (1477-1535) who, in his book "Utopia" published in 1515, dealt with day to day social problems. Scholars like Thomas Campanella (1568-1639) in his "City of the Sun" Sir Francis Bacon in his "New Atlantis" (1561-1628) and James Harrington in his "The common wealth of Nations" made discussion on what real life ought to be. Similarly, famous Italian writer Vico and French scholar Montesquieu gives stress on scientific investigation of social phenomenon. In his book "The New Science" Vico opined that society was subject to definite laws which could be observed through objective observation. Montesquieu in his famous work "The Spirit of Laws" had analyzed the role of external factors in life of human societies French scholar Saint Simon tried to develop a new science which would study social life like physics studies the physical world. But the origin of sociology is attributed to the numerous developments in the 18th and 19th century especially the Industrial revolution and the French revolution. These two epoch-making events changed

the entire history of human society. It resulted in metamorphic changes in the realm of economy, polity, culture and religiosity of mankind. This altered reality attracted the attention of the scholars like Saint Simon, Auguste Comte and others. They attempted to explain this social transition thereby envisioning their ideas on social reconstruction. Sociology owes its birth to this intellectual endeavour. Comte is rightly called as the founder of sociology because he coined the term and also its theme and methodology. Study of the social institutions was special significance for him. In his famous work “Positive Philosophy”, Comte pointed out the need for the creation of a distinct science of society which he first called “social physics” and later “sociology” that showed concern for analysis and explanation of social phenomena.

- **EMERGENCE OF SOCIOLOGY IN INDIA:**

We find the growth of sociology as a discipline is a product of Western intellectual discourse. However, writings about society can be traced back to the ancient Indian mythological, religious and spiritual texts such as the Veda, Upanishads, Puranas, Smritis, writings of Kautilya and Sukracharya that talk volumes about rites, laws, customs, economy, polity, culture, morality, aesthetics and science. All these writings are replete with insights concerning social order and stability, mobility, human interrelationship and social governance. For instance, Kautilya’s Artha Shastra is a monumental treatise on political economy and Shukracharya’s Niti Shastra offers vast wisdom on morality, social customs, ethics, folkways and mores.

“Charaksamhita” of 8th century B.C advise the healers to take into account the norms, values and customs of the people who would come to them. Most of the classical accounts of Indian Society can be found in the writings of Meghasthenes, the Greek ambassador to the court of Chandragupta Maurya. Detailed socio-cultural description of Indian society is also found in the works of three Chinese travelers, Fa-hien (400-411 A.D), Yoan Change (624-644 AD) and I-Tsing (671-695 AD). Similarly, a sort of sociological approach may be marked in the famous Arab traveler Al-Biruni’s (973-1030) description of the social life and customs of the people. Valuable information on socio-cultural conditions and daily life of people of India are available from the narratives of Ibn Batutta (1333-1347). Famous Muslim scholar in Akbar’s court (1556-1605) Abul Fazal is known for his work “Ain-i-Akbari”. It gives a wonderful description of society in all its aspects in Akbar’s time. Abd-al-Rahman Ibn-khaldun (1332-1406) the famous Islam scholar is known for his popular treatise “Muqaddamah” where he describes the rise and fall of states and gives stress on geographical and climatic factors as causes of social change. However the above scholars were not sociologists in the modern sense. But they were keen observers of social life and society and thereby providing valuable material for sociology.

During British period, the rapid acquisition of knowledge of Indian Society and the intensification of missionary activities began to develop from 1760 onward.

Missionaries and British officials made earnest effort to study the social life and culture of people of India. Dr. François Buchanan conducted an ethnographic survey of Bengal in 1807 which is still considered as a brilliant work of sociological importance. In 1816, Abbé Dubois, a French Missionary in Mysore wrote a book entitled “Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies” which is regarded as a valuable sociological document. Famous social reformer Raja Ram Mohan Roy’s writings on religion, women and society continue to excite the intellectual discourse for their rich sociological content. Besides, Vivekananda Dadabhai Naraji, M.G. Ranade and many others also added the much needed intellectual stimulus to the larger discourse of ‘individual and society’ in India. The making of Indian Sociology can be traced back to this intellectual climate and its corresponding socio-cultural milieu.

- **Emergence of sociology as a profession in India:** Sociology emerged as a separate academic discipline in Indian universities in the 1st half of 20th century. At the beginning it was associated with Anthropology. However, the growth of sociology and anthropology passed through three phases such as.

1. First phase - 1773-1900.
2. Second phase - 1901-1950.
3. Third phase - 1950 till date.

The beginning of studies in sociology in Calcutta University was first started in 1907. But there was no separate department of sociology. Later on in 1914 Social Philosophy and Sociology were introduced in Mysore University. The first department of sociology started in Bombay University in 1919 followed by the University of Lucknow in 1920s. Osmania University offered sociology as one of the options at B.A level in 1928 and as an independent MA programme in 1946. Subsequently, other Indian universities started opening Sociology as a PG program after Independence.

1. **Auguste Comte:** Prominent French Philosopher Comte coined the term sociology and contributed substantially to the making of the discipline. His important works include Positive Philosophy, Systems of Positive Polity and Religion of Humanity. His significant sociological themes include Law of Three Stages, Hierarchy of Sciences, Positivism, Social Statics and Social Dynamics. His major intention was to create a science of society. Comte opined that sociology must follow the method of natural sciences. He believes in the unilinear theory of evolution and opines that human knowledge and society pass through certain definite progressive evolutionary stages.

2. **Emile Durkheim:** (1858-1917) Another French sociologist Durkheim attempted to establish the status of sociology as an independent and distinct science. He was a follower of Comte’s tradition and aimed at developing a scientific sociology. He is considered as the builder of sociology. His major contributions include Division of Labour in Society, Elementary Forms of Religious Life, Le Suicide, Rules of

Sociological Method etc. He was the first modern thinker who emphasized on the reality of society. In his theory the ultimate social reality is the group. He advocates the objective, factual and empirical method of study. For him, sociology is the study of social facts. Social life has to be analyzed in terms of social facts. He considers social facts to be external to individual.

3. **Herbert Spencer:** (1820-1903) Herbert Spencer, a British scholar, played a leading role in the intellectual movement in social sciences in the 19th century. His sociology is essentially evolutionistic. His main focus was on the evolutionary growth of social structures. For him, evolution begins in the inorganic world of matter, goes through the organic or living world of plants and animals and ends in the human and social world of men. He believed that all phenomena organic, inorganic and super-organic follow the same natural law of evolution. His main works are Social Statics, The Study of Sociology, The Principles of Sociology and Man versus the State etc.

4. **Max Weber:** (1864-1920) Max Weber, a German philosopher and Sociologist, contributed significantly to the evolution of Sociology as a scientific discipline. For him, individual is the basic unit of society. Weber opines that it is necessary to analyse human motivations, actions and relationships scientifically. Verstehen i.e interpretative understanding is the method which is more effective in understanding the dynamics of society and culture which cannot be reduced to mere observable objects. The task before the social scientist is to observe the inner meaning of a social phenomenon. Society and culture are not elements to be quantified in line with the objects in nature; rather they are to be interpreted. Social action and human relationships are qualitative in nature. Therefore, it is imperative to make use of empathy along with the property of objectivity for a comprehensive understanding of social phenomenon. Ideal type can serve as the appropriate methodological tool for the purpose. For him sociology is the interpretative understanding of social action. His main works are the Protestant Ethics and the Spirit of Capitalism, Economics and Society, Methodology of Social Sciences.

5. **Karl Marx:** (1818-1883). Marx, a versatile thinker, a prolific writer and a critique was a product of German idealism. His writings carry deep imprints of the ideas of Hegel, Kant, Feneurbach and Adam Smith. However, his writings are highly original and polemical and are not in complete conformity with these scholars. Although he claims to be a Sociologist, his writings are deeply concerned with burning social issues of his times. He has extensively written on class, class formation, struggle, exploitation, poverty, alienation and social change. The issue of class and class struggle is central to Marx's thought. In his words, 'the history of all hitherto existing societies is the history of class struggle'. His main works are Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts, Capital, The Holy Family, the Poverty of Philosophy, The Communist Manifesto, German Ideology etc.

6. **Talcott Parsons** (1902-1982): Parsons is a leading American sociologist. He views sociology as the analysis of social relationship and cultural product. He tried to keep social science as close to natural science. He opined that the role of reason is supreme in sociological theory. The social science, which he calls action science, is that which deals with the realms of interaction and values. His important books are “The structure of Social action and ‘The Social System’”. Some of his salient themes include (i) action frame of reference, (ii) social system and (iii) pattern variable. Parsons opines that a social system consists in a plurality of individual actors interacting with each other in a situation. The core of a social system is the patterned normative order through which the life of a population is collectively organized.

- **Conclusion:**

In order to comprehend any subject, it is pertinent to look into the socio-cultural coordinates of its genesis and growth. It is a truism that that the history of social life and its problems is as old as human being itself. The origin of sociology is associated with the evolution of man.