

A Review about Sociology, and Need for a Science of Sociology

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Abstract : The term Sociology was coined by Auguste Comte, a French philosopher, in 1839. The teaching of sociology as a separate discipline started in 1876 in the United States, in 1889 in France, in 1907 in Great Britain, after World War I in Poland and India, in 1925 in Egypt and Mexico, and in 1947 in Sweden. Sociology is the youngest of all the Social Sciences. The word Sociology is derived from the Latin word 'societies' meaning 'society' and the Greek word 'logos' are meaning 'study or science'.

Key Words : Sociology, Science

Introduction : The etymological meaning of 'sociology' is thus the 'science of society'. Prof. Ginsberg accordingly defines it "as the study of society, which is of the web or tissue of human inter-actions and inter-relations." In other words, Sociology is the study of man's behaviour in groups or of the inter-action among human beings, of social relationships and the processes by which human group activity takes place.

Need for a Science of Sociology:

The most distinctive feature of human life is its social character. All human beings have to interact with other human beings in order to survive. Aristotle, the great Greek philosopher, remarked that 'Man is a social animal.' Both nature and necessity impel man to live in society. Man's behaviour in society is determined mainly by two forces—physical and social which he has been trying to understand and control from time immemorial. It was quite natural that his attempts to comprehend and control the natural phenomena had started earlier and met with greater success than his attempts to understand the social phenomena because it was easier for him to understand the physical phenomena by virtue of the fact that they were more concrete and hence more observable with a greater degree of detachment.

Nevertheless man has been trying since ancient times to take stock of his social environment and to attempt to understand the problems created by it. But in these early stages man carried on the study not of society but of the different aspects of society and that gave rise to different social sciences, like History, Economics, and Political Science. Anthropology, Psychology, etc. While, broadly speaking, all these social sciences deal with social phenomena and are, therefore, interrelated and inter-dependent, each concentrates upon a particular phase of human conduct and specialises in studying it.

Thus, History is the record of unique events relating to man; Economics is concerned with his activities relating to production and consumption of wealth; Political Science deals with his political activities and institutions; Anthropology studies his activities and institutions as they existed in times long past; Psychology is interested in the springs of human action, the impulses and motives that sustain mental and bodily activity and regulate human conduct.

These social sciences do not give us a complete picture of society. They may give a snapshot view of society from various angles of vision but never a view of society in its comprehensive totality and utility. The need was, therefore, felt for a general science which should purview the society as a whole and 'sociology' was designed to achieve this end.

Thus Sociology appeared when it was felt that other fields of human knowledge do not fully explain man's social behaviour. Sociology is, on the one hand, a synthetic discipline, trying to unify from a central point of view the results of separate disciplines; and on the other, an analytic and specialised science with its own field of research.

Sociology essentially and fundamentally deals with that network of social relationships we call society. No other science takes that subject for its central concern.

As sociologists, we are interested in social relationships not because they are economic, political, or religious, but because they are social. The focus of Sociology is on Socialness.

We should at the same time, recognise that in studying society we are not attempting to study everything that happens 'in society' or under social conditions, for that includes all human activity and human learning. We shall not, for example, study religion as religion, art as art, or government as government, but as the forces that maintain and control social relations. Sociology may thus be interested in all these problems but not primarily. It is primarily interested in man's behaviour in relation to other men, I.e., it focuses its attention on relationships which are definitely 'social' and that is what makes it a distinctive field, however, closely allied to others it may be. The study of social relationship themselves is the main interest of Sociology. However, the common idea underlying them all is that Sociology is concerned with human relationships. Its emphasis is on the 'social' aspect of these relationships. MacIver has clarified that whatever topic may be included in the subject-matter of sociology, its real subject-matter is social relationships.

The basis of social inter-action or social processes is social relationships. It is on account of such relationships that there is human inter-action. Therefore, if we include social processes or any other matter within the subject-matter of sociology, their study can be carried only in the context of social relationships.

Man becomes a social animal only when he enters into social relationships. The different aspects of social life, viz., political or economic are but the expressions of social relationships.

Therefore in studying sociology we are in fact studying social relationships in one form or the other. Its subject-matter is society rather than the individual though the individual cannot be left utterly out of account.

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