

Society

In sociological terms society refers to a complex pattern of norms and interactions.

Individual is the basic component of society. The interaction of individuals with each other gives birth to group. The social groups interact with each other and develop relationships with each other, leads to a society. The term society is the most fundamental one in sociology. It is used in a very wide sense. Society refers to members of a specific group.

In sociological terms society refers not to a group of people but to the complex pattern of norms of interaction that arise among them. A society is intangible .it is a process rather than a thing: motion, rather than structure .society is a web of social relationships .the pattern of norms of interaction by which members of society maintain themselves.

Definition of society by different philosophers...

According to Mac Iver and Payes “society is the system of usages and procedures, authority and mutual aid of many groupings and divisions of human behavior and of liberties. It is web of social relationships.” This definition reflects that society is a network of social relationships. An individual is related to others through the ties of kinship, marriage, neighborhood, caste, occupation, religions, political parties and peers(friends groups). An individual becomes part of several groups through these different multiple relationships. These relationships do not occur at random. Rather these are patterned. Therefore, sociologists define society as the pattern of social relationships formed through interaction of its members.

From Linton’s view: Any group of people who have lived and worked together long enough to get themselves organized and to think of themselves as a social unit with well defined limits”.

Adam smith’s view: Society is an artificial device of Natural economy.

According to Cooley “society is a complex form or process each of which is living and growing by interaction with the other, the whole being so unified that what takes place in one part affects all the rest.”

Sociology

Sociology is the systematic and scientific study of human social behavior, especially the study of origins, organization, institution and development of human society.

In other words sociology is the study of society.

The emergence of sociology

Since the formation of societies and groups men have started thinking about societies and group Yet, Sociology is a modern science not more than 160 years old. The study of society, in a scientific way started only after 1839 when Auguste Comte (father of Sociology) had coined this term.

It is true that in the writings of philosophers and religious teachers of all civilizations we find concerns about society. For example, Kautilya's Arthashastra, Aristotle's Politics, Ibn Khaldun's MUQADDAMA etc. analyse society in those ways which are still of interest to the sociologist. In real sense a new science of society and a new name was created in 1839. It is worthwhile to consider the circumstances in which this had happened.

The conditions which were responsible for emergence of sociology were both intellectual and social. The intellectual ancestors of Sociology are the following,

1. Political philosophy
2. The philosophy of history
3. Biological theories of evolution
4. Movements for social and political reform

Sociology emerged as a response to the forces of changes which took place during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Europe. The ideas which are discussed again and again in early sociological writings are thus essentially ideas of that period. Much of the early sociology was affected by the thinkers of the enlightenment of the eighteenth century. The enlightenment appears as the most appropriate point of departure in the study of the origins of the Sociological Theory, for various reasons.

Firstly, a scientific approach to the study of society dates back to the tradition of the enlightenment. The eighteenth century thinkers began more consistently than any of their predecessors to study the human conditions in a scientific way using the methods of the natural sciences. They consciously applied scientific principles of analysis to the study of human beings and their nature and society.

Secondly, they upheld reason as a measure to judge social institutions and their suitability for human nature. Human beings, they believed, are essentially rational and this rationality can lead them to freedom of thought and action.

Thirdly, they believed that human beings are capable of attaining perfection. By criticizing and changing social institutions they can create for themselves even greater degrees of freedom, which in turn would enable them increasingly to actualise their potentially creative powers.

The Philosophy of History

The basic assumption of this philosophy was that society must have progressed through a series of steps from a simple to complex stage. We may briefly assess the contribution of the philosophy of History to Sociology as having been, on the philosophical side, the notions of development and progress. On the scientific side, it has given the concepts of historical periods and social types.

Biological Theories of Evolution

The influence of the philosophy of history was further reinforced by the biological theory of evolution. Sociology moved towards an evolutionary approach, seeking to identify and account for the principal stages in social evolution. It tended to be modelled on Biology, as is evident from the widely diffused conception of society as an organism and from the attempts to formulate general terms of social evolution. Herbert Spencer and Durkheim are good examples of this kind of writings.

Surveys of Social Conditions

Social survey forms an important element in Modern Sociology. It emerges due to two reasons, one was the growing conviction that the methods of natural sciences should and could be extended to the study of human affairs, that human phenomena could be classified and measured. The other was the concern with poverty, following the recognition that poverty was not natural but social. The social survey is one of the principal methods of sociological enquiry. The basic assumption which underlines this method is that through the knowledge of the social conditions one can arrive at solutions to solve the social problems found in society.

Industrial Revolution is the term which is used for the use of new technology and machines in the field of trade and commerce.

With the change in the economy of society several social changes occurred. As capitalism, after industrial revolution, became more and more complex, the development of banks, insurance companies, and finance corporations took place.

The emergence of sociology came about in the 18th century. Auguste Comte a French philosopher coined the term sociology in the year 1839.

Sociology is derived from the Latin word ‘societies’ which means society and ‘logo’ meaning study. Sociology is the study of society.

The main reason for Auguste Comte’s study was the revolution.

Four fathers of Sociology

1. Auguste Comte
2. Max Weber
3. Herbert Spencer
4. Emile Durkheim

1. Auguste Comte (1798–1857)

- Studied Engineering
- Became a pupil of the social philosopher Claude Henri de Rouvroy Comte de Saint-Simon
- Comte believed that Social Scientists have the potential to make the society better
- Comte held - that if the scholars identify the laws that govern the society then the sociologists can find the problems of the people.

2. Max Weber (1864-1920)

- Weber believed that sociologists must discover the meanings, values, beliefs and attitudes of human social behavior.
- He contributed to sociological research.
- He believed that it was difficult to use scientific methods to predict the behavior of groups.

3. Herbert Spencer (1820-1903)

- He is a English Philosopher
- He published the book , “ The Study of Sociology”
- He supported a form of government that allowed market forces to control capitalism.
- He said that societies should evolve from lower to higher forms.

4. Emile Durkheim (1858 -1917)

- He is a French sociologist, social psychologist and philosopher.
- Durkheim compared pre modern and modern societies to hold the society together
- Durkheim used term “Collective Consciousness” which is the set of shared beliefs, ideas and moral attitudes within the society.

Origins of society

Sociologists produced various theories about the origin of society.

1. The organic theory

- The “*purusasukta*”, refers to origin of “*chatur-varna*” which compares the society of the *Brahman*, the *Kshatriya*, the *vaishya* and the *Sudra*, which is compared to the head, arms, trunk and feet of a human body.
- All perform their co-equal functions

2. The social contract

The seventh century social contract thinkers explained the state of nature as:

- ✓ Hobbes->in the state of nature life was “solitary, poor, nasty and short”. One was in constant conflict with the other, by social contract, its existence was put to an end and the state was establishing.
- ✓ Locke-> “peace, goodwill, mutual assistance and preservation”. It is clearly visible that the law and justice were absent. The social contract made this possible.
- ✓ Rousseau-> in the changing conditions, man was losing the idyllic happiness and primitive simplicity and so in consequence of the social contract, every individual gave “in common his powers and all his power “to the general will, that is the will of all.

3. Patriarchal and matriarchal theories

- Patriarchal and matriarchal describes society as an expansion of family.
 - ✓ Sir Henry Maine holds the Patriarchal families to be the basis of society- separate families were held together by eldest male of the family.
 - ✓ Matriarchal- when a commanding position is given to a mother who has more than one husband, her influence and authority is not accepted

3. The theory of force and of the divine origin

- The theory of force- Force is said to have a distinctive role in establishing the social order. In the primitive existence, the self interest dominated and guided individual to put the self first. The strong dominated and disciplined the weak to submissions and made him accept his impositions. State is thus, the result of brute force.

- Divine origin – the theologians in Europe held that the state is the handiwork of God. The society or state came to existence because god willed it.

4. Evolutionary theory

- Society, it is now recognized, is the work of time, it has evolved over time and numerous factors have contributed to its development. The kinship authority and order, obedience and loyalty, expedient values and faith system are its constituent elements, and the expedient co-operation and mutuality stimulated the social progress. It is the theory of the origin of species of plants and animal.

Example: when thinking of evolution the theory that man evolved from apes comes to mind.