

SOCIOLOGY

UNIT - 1

1. INTRODUCTION, DEFINITION, CHARACTERISTICS, METHODS, BRANCHES, IMPORTANCE AND LIMITATIONS OF SOCIOLOGY

SYNOPSIS:

- A. Definition and meaning***
- B. Characteristics/Nature of Sociology***
- C. Sociology as a Science***
- D. Comparative methods of sociology***
- E. Branches of sociology***
- G. Importance of Sociology***
- H. Usefulness of study of sociology***
- I. Limitations of Sociology***

A. DEFINITION AND MEANING

Sociology is the scientific study of society. It studies the patterns of social relationships, social interactions, and culture.

It is a social science. It uses various methods of empirical investigations and critical analysis to develop a body of knowledge about social order, acceptance, and change.

The traditional focuses of sociology include social stratification, social class, social mobility, religion, secularization, law, sexuality and deviance.

Sociology has gradually expanded its focus to other subjects, such as health, medical, economy, military and penal institutions, the Internet, education, social capital, etc.,

Social research helps politicians, policy makers, educators, planners, legislators, administrators, developers, business magnates, managers, social

workers, non-governmental organizations, non-profit organizations, and people interested in resolving social issues in general.

B. CHARACTERISTICS/NATURE OF SOCIOLOGY:

Sociology is a branch of knowledge and it has its own characteristics.

The following are the main characteristics of sociology as enlisted by Robert Bierstadt in his book.

The Social Order” and they are as follows:-

1. Sociology is an independent science
2. Sociology is a social science and not a physical science. As a social science, it concentrates its attention on man, his social behaviour, social activities and social life.
3. Sociology is a categorical and not a normative discipline.
4. Sociology is a pure science and not an applied science.
5. Sociology is relatively an abstract science and not a concrete science.
6. Sociology is a general and not a particular or individual science.
7. Sociology is a general science and not a special science.
8. Sociology is both rational and an empirical science.

C. SOCIOLOGY AS A SCIENCE:

Sociology uses scientific methods in the study of its subject matter. Therefore, it is entitled to be called a science.

The argument in favour of sociology as a science is as follows:

1. Investigation is possible
2. Observation is possible
3. Comparison is possible
4. Generalisation is possible
5. Accurate measurement is possible

6. Prediction is possible
7. Objectivity is possible
8. There is probability of cause and effect relationship in sociological studies.
9. Sociology studies its subjects matter scientifically. It tries to classify types and forms of social relationship, of institutions and associations.
10. It tries to determine the relation between different parts and factors of social life. It tries to deduce general laws from a systematic study. Sociological principles are then applied to the solution of social problems.

Sociology is thus as much a social science like psychology, Economics, political science and other socially sciences concerning man.

D. COMPARATIVE METHODS OF SOCIOLOGY:

Every science employs scientific or experimental method for the study of its material this method consists of observation recording, classification, hypothesis, verification and prediction observation means “Looking At” things.

Observation can be two kinds

1. Spontaneous.
2. Controlled.

But since social action. The subject matter of sociology is complex and variously interpreted it becomes difficult for a sociologist to maintain objectivity in his analysis. It is not easy to obtain objectivity. Sociologist always experience, and compel.

Consciously or unconsciously upon them by the society. That does not mean giving up the objective of a generalizing sociology it is possible to follow certain reasonable amount of objectivity which will help the sociology student for a systematic thinking.

There are different methods.

1. The historical methods
2. The comparative methods
3. Inverse deductive methods

4. The ideal type methods
5. The statistical method.
6. The social survey method.
7. Inverse deductive method et.,

The comparative methods:

1. The comparative method is concerned with space. The comparative method involves comparisons of various kind of groups or people in order to find out the difference as well as similarities in their way of life and to find out clues to man's social behaviour.
2. To a certain relations and inter relatives between different aspects of social life. The unit of comparison (Whole societies major institutions, religious groups and so on) to compare difference or similarities is generally comparable. For example the rate of mobility between different castes and classes. Belong to the same society.
3. This method has been used by many sociologist to find out what elements in social life are functionally co-related. The direct relationship between the partical ethics of the community and the economic system.
4. The comparative method is used in anthropological and ethnological studies. According to Spencer's work comparative method where compared military and industrial types of society. According to Radcliff brown a relationship could be established between ancestor worship and lineage structure.
5. Durkheim regarded the comparative method as a counterpart in social science he recognized that social factors could only be observed artificially produced under experimental conditions. Therefore comparative method is the nearest thing to an experimental method in sociology.

Comparative method is not simple as it may appear. Social institutions have different meaning in different countries. The choice of material at one place and the material may not be of uniform standard. A sociologist must be vigilant.

He must check and cross- check the sources. There may arise of financial difficulties and non availability of foreign literature including language problem while using comparative method in sociological studies.

E. BRANCHES OF SOCIOLOGY:

Sociology is the study of human society.

CLASSIFICATION/BRANCHES OF SOCIOLOGY:

I. DURKHEIM CLASSIFICATION:

According to sociologist Durkheim, there are three branches of sociology namely

- a. Social morphology
- b. Social physiology
- c. General sociology

a. Social morphology:

It covers the geographical settings, the density of population and other preliminary data which is likely to influence the social aspects.

b. Social physiology:

It is concerned with processes such as religion, morals, law, economic and political aspects.

c. General sociology:

It is an attempt to discover the general social laws which may be derived from the specialized social processes. This is also considered as the philosophical part of sociology.

II. SOROKIN'S CLASSIFICATION:

According to Sorokin, Sociology can be divided into two branches-

- a. General Sociology.
- b. Special sociology.

a. General sociology:

It studies the properties and uniformities common to all social and cultural phenomena in their structural and dynamic aspects.

In the structural aspect, sociology studies various types of groups and institutions as well as their inter-relations to one another.

In the dynamic aspect, sociology studies various social processes like social contact, interaction, socialization, conflict, domination, subordination etc.

b. Special sociology:

It studies a specific socio-cultural phenomenon which is selected for detailed study.

According to Sorokin, some of the most developed sociologies are Sociology of population, rural sociology, sociology of law, sociology of religion, sociology of knowledge, sociology of fine arts and many others.

III. GINSBERG'S CLASSIFICATION:

Ginsberg has listed the problems of sociology under four aspects-

- a. Social morphology.
- b. Social control.
- c. Social processes.
- d. Social pathology.

a. Social morphology:

It includes investigation of the quantity and quality of population, the study of social structure or the description and classification of the principal types of social groups and institutions.

b. Social control:

It includes the study of law, morals, religion, conventions, fashions and other sustaining and regulating agencies.

c. Social processes:

It refer to the study of various modes of interactions between individuals or groups including cooperation and conflict, social differentiation and integration, development and decay.

d. Social pathology:

It refers to the study of social maladjustments and disturbances.

F. IMPORTANCE OF SOCIOLOGY:

Prior to the separate study of sociology as a subject, the study of society was carried on in an unscientific manner and society had never been the central concern of any science.

It is through the study of sociology that the truly scientific study of the society has been possible. Sociology, because of its bearing upon many of the problems of the present world, has assumed great importance and it is considered to be the best approach to all the social sciences.

1. Sociology studies the role of the institutions like home and family ,the school and education, the church and religion, the state and government , industry and work ,the community and association in the development of the individuals.
2. Study of sociology is indispensable for understanding and planning of society.
3. Sociology is of great importance in the solution of social problems.
4. Sociology has drawn our attention to the worth and dignity of man.
5. Sociology has changed our outlook with regard to the problems of crime

The criminals are now treated as human beings suffering from mental deficiencies and efforts are accordingly made to rehabilitate them as useful members of the society.

6. Sociology has made great contribution to enrich human culture
7. Sociology has made a rational approach to questions concerning oneself, one's religion, customs, morals and institutions. It has further taught the people to be objective, critical and dispassionate.
8. Sociology also impresses upon the necessity of overcoming narrow personal prejudices, ambitions and class hatred.
9. Sociology is of great importance in the solution of international problems.
10. Sociology keeps people with update information on modern situations.

G. USEFULNESS OF STUDY OF SOCIOLOGY:

Sociology is the study of human relations, institutions, behavior and its origins, and development. It is useful because it helps us to understand society and why people think the way they think and why they do what they do.

Thus sociology helps us to better understand ourselves and other peoples, cultures and environments.

H. LIMITATIONS OF SOCIOLOGY:

1. It is hard to predict individual actions accurately because human behavior is complex:
2. Humans respond to their surroundings and the presence of the researcher could affect their behavior
3. Social patterns change; what is true in one time or place may not hold true in another.
4. Since sociologists are part of the social world they study, it's hard to be value-free when conducting social research.

UNIVERSITY QUESTIONS:

1. *Define sociology. What are its characteristics?*
2. *Explain the meaning of sociology with special reference to its characteristics, importance and usefulness.*
3. *Write short note on- a) Characteristics of sociology b) Methods of sociology c) Branches of sociology d) Importance of sociology e) Usefulness of sociology f) Limitations of sociology g) Sociology as a science.*

