



# SOCIOLOGY

**B.A. Semester 1st**

*University of Ladakh*

**Department of Sociology**

20

# Unit-I

## Nature of Sociology

### 1.1 Meaning and Nature of Sociology

#### *Meaning*

Sociology is a new social science. French sociologist August Comte coined the term sociology in 1839. The term 'sociology' is derived from the Latin word 'societus' meaning 'society' and the Greek word 'logos' meaning study or 'science'. Etymologically sociology means the 'science of society' sociology concerns itself with an analysis and explanation of social phenomena. It studies social life, actions, behaviours and incidents. Sociology is the study of social relationships, groups and societies. Its subject matter is our own behaviour as social beings.

#### *Definition of sociology*

Sociologists differ in their opinions about the definition of sociology. Sociology has been defined as the science of society. Some others have defined sociology as the scientific study of social relationships or activities. But what defines sociology is not what it studies i.e. group or family, but how it studies a chosen thing. In this context, it is necessary to discuss some of the definitions of sociology.

1. **Auguste Comte**, "*sociology is the science of social phenomena subject to natural and invariable laws, the discovery of which is the object of investigation*".
2. **Alex inkles**, "*Sociology is the study of systems of social action and their interrelations*".
3. **Emile Durkheim** "*Sociology is the science of social institutions*".
4. **Max-Weber**, "*Sociology is the science which attempts an interpretative understanding of social action*".
5. **Morris Ginsberg**, "*Sociology is the study of human interactions and inter-relations their conditions and consequences*".
7. **H.P. Fairchild**, "*Sociology is the study of the relationships between man and his human environment*".
8. **J.F. Culler**, "*Sociology may be defined as the body of scientific knowledge about human relationships*".

## 10. R.E. Park and F.W. Burgess, “*Sociology is the science of collective behaviour*”.

An analysis of the above definitions shows that sociologists differ in their opinion about the definition and the subject matter of sociology. But the common idea underlying all these is that sociology is concerned with human beings and their relationships.

### *Nature of Sociology*

There exists a great controversy about the exact nature of Sociology. The root question is, **whether sociology is a Science or Not Science?** Sociologists get divided among themselves into **two opposite groups**. For **one group of sociologists, sociology is a science** because it adopts and applies the methods of natural sciences for social investigation. Founding fathers of sociology like **Auguste Comte, Emile Durkheim and others subscribe to this view**. On the contrary, the **other camp holds a different viewpoint that sociology is not a science**. German scholar **Max Weber** does not entirely accept the mechanistic viewpoint of science as advocated by Comte. However, **sociology is a behavioural science** which tries to explore and explain social reality as objectively as possible.

**MEANING OF SCIENCE:** Science is a body of **systematic knowledge**. Science is based on **reason and evidences**. A science is **“a branch of knowledge or study dealing with a body of facts or truths systematically arranged and showing the operation of general laws.”** Science collects facts and links them together in their casual sequence to draw valid inferences. **Science adopts scientific method**. Scientific knowledge is acquired through **observation, experimentation, generalization etc**. Science has the following characteristics such as **objectivity, observation, accurate prediction, experimentation, accurate measurement, generalization and cause-effect relationships**

### *Sociology is a Science*

According to Comte and Durkheim, Sociology is a science because it adopts and applies the scientific method. Sociology does make use of scientific methods in the study of its subject matters. Hence Sociology is a science. It is a science because of the following reasons.

- (1) **Sociology pursues scientific method:** Sociology studies social reality with the application of scientific method. It believes that human action can be subject to scientific investigation like natural phenomenon.

- (2) **Sociology uses observation as a tool:** Sociologist studies social world as a social observer. The whole world is the laboratory of sociology. The sociologist applies fieldwork method in the understanding and interpretation of the human world.
- (3) **Objectivity is possible in Sociology:** Like natural sciences, Sociology engages itself in objective analysis. Sociological insights are based on facts emerging from field investigation.
- (4) **Sociology describes cause-effect relationship:** While studying family or population growth, sociology traces the relationship between family disorganization and divorce and population growth and poverty. Family disorganization is the cause of divorce and population growth is the cause of poverty. Thus, sociology describes cause-effect relationship in social disorganization and population explosion. Hence sociology is a science.
- (5) **Sociology makes accurate measurement:** Sociology, like natural sciences also accurately measures social phenomena or relationships. By using statistical method, socio-metric scale, scales of measurement sociology effectively and accurately measures social relationships. Hence Sociology is a science.
- (6) **Prediction is possible:** On the basis of cause-effect relationship, sociology can accurately predict about future. If there will be dowry in society then it will lead to suicide and poverty. Cuvier opines that this predictive value of sociology is improved day by day. As Sociology matures day by day, it predicts more accurately.
- (7) **Generalization is possible:** Like natural sciences, sociology draws generalizations based fieldwork which is universally applicable. The concept of incest taboo-prohibited sex relationship among blood relatives is a universal truth.

### *Sociology is not a Science:*

There are some scholars like Max-Weber who deny the status of science to Sociology. He said Sociology can't be an objective Science. However, those who deny the status of science to Sociology they put forward following arguments:

- (1) **Lack of Objectivity:** Sociology cannot be called a science because it cannot maintain complete objectivity with social phenomena. Sociologist has his own prejudice and bias hence he cannot observe his subject with complete detachment. Complete objectivity in the study of human behaviour is impossible. Sociology deals with social

relationships which cannot be studied like physical objects. Hence, objectivity is not possible in Sociology.

- (2) **Lack of Experimentation:** Sociology is not a science because it can't make experimentation. Sociology deals with human relationships which cannot be put to laboratory test. We can't see or weigh human relationship because it is abstract in nature. We can't do experiment with abstract things.
- (3) **Lack of Prediction:** Like natural sciences, Sociology can't accurately make prediction. Natural Sciences make prediction on the basis of certain data. But Sociology deals with social relationships and human behaviour which are so uncertain and peculiar that we can't make any accurate predication about it. We can't predict what will be one's behaviour at a certain point of time nor can we predict about the trends or speed of social change. Hence sociology is not a science.
- (4) **Lack of accurate measurement:** There are definite standards of measurement like kilogram or meter by which it is possible to measure things. But in Sociology there are no such measuring instruments. Besides sociology deals with social relationships which are qualitative in nature and which can't be measured accurately in any yardstick. Hence Sociology is not a science.
- (5) **Lack of Generalisation:** Sociology deals with human behaviour and no two individual are alike. Hence the conclusions drawn by Sociology can't be uniform or universally applicable. Social Phenomena is so complex and complicated and is governed by so many factors that it is really difficult to draw a conclusion which will be universally applicable.

We can conclude the nature of sociology with the famous Sociologist **Robert Bierstedt**, where in his book "*The social order*" clearly explains the nature of Sociology in the following way:

1. Sociology is a social and not a natural science.
2. Sociology is a positive and a normative science.
3. Sociology is a pure science and not an applied science.
4. Sociology is an abstract science and not a concrete science.
5. Sociology is a generalizing science and not a particularizing science.

6. Sociology is both a rational and an empirical science.

## 1.2 Emergence of Sociology: Enlightenment, French Revolution and Industrial Revolution

Social thought is as old as society itself, yet the origin of sociology is traced back to 19th century Western Europe. Sometimes Sociology is called the child of the *'age of revolution'*. The revolutionary changes in the preceding three centuries had decisively changed the way people lived thereby paving the way for the emergence of Sociology as we have today. Sociology took birth in such a climate of social upheaval. The roots of the ideas developed by the early sociologists lie in the then social conditions that prevailed in Europe.

The modern era in Europe and the conditions of modernity were brought about by three major processes. They are:

1. The Enlightenment- *dawning of the 'age of reason'*.
2. The French Revolution-*the quest for political sovereignty*.
3. The Industrial Revolution-*the system of mass manufacture*.

### *The Enlightenment*

It refers to that period in European history (late 17th and 18th centuries) which put human being at the centre of the universe and rational thought as the central feature of the human being. The ability to think rationally and critically transformed the individual human being into both the producer and user of all knowledge. For reason to become the defining feature, it was necessary to displace nature, religion and divine acts from the central position they earlier occupied. Thus the attitudes of mind that we refer today as secular, scientific, progress and humanistic developed.

During this period a belief developed that both nature and society can be studied scientifically.

### *The French Revolution*

The French Revolution which erupted in 1789 marked a turning point in the history of human struggle for freedom and equality. It changed the political structure of European society. It put an end to the age of feudalism and led in a new order of society. It replaced the age of feudalism by indicating the arrival of democracy.

The Revolution announced the arrival of political sovereignty at the level of individuals as well as nation-states. It signalled the liberation of individuals from the oppressive rule of the religious and feudal institutions that dominated French before the Revolution. The nation-state itself was redefined as a sovereign entity with a centralized government. The ideals of the French Revolution- liberty, equality and fraternity became the mottos of modern state.

This Revolution brought about far reaching changes in not only French society but also in societies throughout Europe. Even societies in other continents were influenced by ideas generated during the Revolution. There were many significant themes which arose due to the impact of this Revolution which have been the focus of interest of the early sociologists. These significant themes include the transformation of property, new social class etc.

### **The Industrial Revolution**

The foundation of modern industry was laid by the Industrial Revolution, which began in England in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. It brought about great changes in the social and economic life of the people first in England, then in other countries of Europe and later in other continents.

It had two important aspects:

1. Systematic application of science and technology to industrial production, particularly invention of new machines and attaching of new sources of power. These facilitated the production process and give rise to the factory system and mass manufacture of goods.
2. Evolved new ways of organizing labour and markets on a scale larger than anything in the past. The goods were produced on a massive scale for distant markets across the world. The raw materials used in their production were also obtained from all over the world.

Industrialization threw into turmoil societies that have been relatively stable for centuries. New industries and technologies changed the face of social and physical environment. Peasants left rural areas and flocked to the towns, where they worked under appalling conditions. Cities grew at an unprecedented rate. Social problems become widespread in the crowded cities. The direction of change was unclear and the stability of social order seemed threatened.

The significant themes of this Revolution which concerned the early sociologists were the condition of labour, transformation of property, industrial city/urbanism and technology and the factory system.

### ***Development of Sociology***

Against such background, some thinkers of that time were concerned about building their society anew. Those who dealt with these problems are considered as the founding fathers of Sociology because they were seriously concerned with these problems in a systematic way. Most notable among the thinkers have been Auguste Comte, Herbert Spencer, Emile Durkheim, Karl Marx and Max Weber. All these pioneers came from different disciplines.

**Auguste Comte (1798-1857)**, who is also known as, the ‘father of sociology’, argued that the methods used in physics should be used for the study of society. Such a study would reveal the laws of evolution and the laws of the functioning of society. Once this knowledge was available, we would be able to build society. Auguste Comte, who gave sociology its name, identified three stages of human society: Theological (various phenomena were explained in religious terms), Metaphysical (explanations were philosophical) and Positivism (phenomena were explained in terms of the scientific approach to the social world).

The idea of evolution was carried forward in the works of the British sociologist,

**Herbert Spencer (1820-1903)**. He argued for the universality of the principle of evolution. His view of the evolution of societies is known as Social Darwinism.

**Emile Durkheim (1858-1917)**. The credit for developing sociology as an independent discipline and science goes to Emile Durkheim, a French sociologist. Durkheim said that sociologists study ‘social facts’, which are objective and exist in the consciousness of the collectivity. Thus, social fact is exterior to human mind and but it constraints on human behaviour. Hence, social facts do not have their origin in the individual. Further, they should be explained by other social facts, rather than in terms of biological, psychological, environmental, or geographical acts.

**Max Weber (1864-1920)**. In Germany, the most influential work was of Max Weber. In comparison to Durkheim, Weber said that the sociologist studies ‘social action’, which is an act an individual performs and assigns meaning. The task of sociologists is to understand the subjective meaning of an act.

**Karl Marx's (1818-1883).** German social thinker Karl Marx's ideas were influential in Sociology. He argued that every society was divided into two classes, viz. 'Haves' and 'Have-nots'. He believed that conflict was initiator of change in history. He, therefore, gave central importance to class and class-conflict.

Thus the development of Sociology in France (Comte, Durkheim), Germany (Marx, Weber) and England (Spencer) have been outlined as in above. Their contributions have profound influence in Sociology everywhere in the world.

Sociology thus flowered in precisely those societies that had experienced the most pronounced or greatest social changes. France, Germany and England underwent a truly revolutionary social transformation; and in all these countries, the study of Sociology had emerged by the end of the 19th century.

### **1.3 Scope of Sociology**

Every subject has its own scope and subject matter. Sociologists differ among themselves regarding the scope of sociology. As a result, there is no unanimity of opinion amongst scholars about the scope of sociology. Some sociologists opine that sociology studies everything and anything under the sun, whereas, others opine that the scope of sociology is very limited and it studies only those things which are not studied by other social sciences.

Scope means area of study, field of inquiry or the subject matter. Each subject has its own field of study, so also sociology. Study of sociology is organized within a specific boundary which is known as the scope of sociology. Without a demarcated boundary, it is very difficult to study a subject systematically. Hence, it is necessary to demarcate the boundary or scope of a subject. There are two main schools of thought among sociologists on the issue of scope and subject matter of sociology: Formalistic school or specialistic school of thought and synthetic school of thought.

#### ***Formalistic or Specialistic School***

This school of thought is headed by German sociologist George Simmel. Alfred Vierkandt, Leopold Vonwiese, Max-Weber, Albion Small, Ferdinand Tonnies, E.A. Ross, Park and Burgess are other important supporters of this school. The subject matter of sociology consists of this school opine that sociology cannot study social life as a whole. Hence, the

scope of sociology is very limited. They want to keep the scope of sociology distinct from other social sciences. They consider sociology as a pure and independent science. However, the views of the supporters of this school of thought regarding the scope of sociology are discussed below:

1. **George Simmel:** Formalistic school is headed by German sociologist George Simmel. According to Simmel sociology should confine its study to formal behaviour instead of studying actual behaviour. Sociology comprehends the forms of social science which describes analyses, classifies and delineates the forms of social relationships, the process of socialization and social organization etc. Simmel makes a distinction between the forms of social relationships and their contents and opines that sociology should confine itself in explaining different forms of social relationships and study them in abstraction where as their contents are dealt with by other social sciences. Co-operation, competition, sub-ordination, division of labour etc. are different forms of social relationships. As sociology confines itself in studying forms of social relationships, its scope is very limited.
2. **Alfred Vierkanndt:** Another leading supporter of formalistic school, Vierkanndt opines that sociology is a special branch of study which deals with the ultimate forms of mental or psychic relationships. These mental relationships consist in love, hate, Co-operation etc. which shape particular types of social relationships. He claimed that sociology can be a definite science only when it abstains from a historic study of concrete societies. Thus, in his opinion the scope of sociology is very limited as it deals with the ultimate forms of mental or psychic relationships like love, hatred, co-operation, competition etc.
3. **Leopold Vonwiese:** Another main advocate of formalistic school, Vonwiese opined that the scope of sociology is very limited as it only studies the form of social relationships and forms of social processes. He has divided these social relationships and social processes into many types. He has identified more than 650 forms of human relationships. Similarly there are two types of social processes in society such as associative and dissociative which includes cooperation and conflict respectively.
4. **Max Weber:** Another supporter of formalistic school, Max-Weber opines that the aim of sociology is to attempt an interpretative understanding of social action and

classification of social action and social behaviour. It should confine itself in the analysis and classification of social action and social behaviours. Social behaviour is that which is related to the behaviour of others. As social behaviour does not include the whole of human relations, hence the scope of sociology is very limited.

6. **Ferdinand Tonnies:** Tonnies has supported the formalistic school and the idea of pure sociology. On the basis of forms of social relationships he has differentiated between ‘Gemeinschaft’ (society) and ‘Gesellschaft’ (community) and opined that the main aim of sociology is to study the different forms of social relationship that comes under these two categories.

Form the above views of supporters of formalistic school it may be concluded that sociology studies a particular aspect of social relationships. It studies the forms of social relationships in their abstract nature not in concrete situation. Thus, the formalistic school has confined the scope of sociology to the abstract study of the forms of social relationships.

### ***Synthetic School***

It came into existence in reaction to the formalistic school of thought. It tries to make sociology a synthesis of the social sciences or a general science and encyclopaedic. According to this school of thought, the scope of sociology is very wide and all inclusive. According to this school of thought, different aspects of social life are inter-related. We can't understand society with the study of one aspect only; hence sociology should attempt to study social life as a whole. The main advocates of this school of thought are Emile Durkheim, L.T. Hobhouse, P.A. Sorokin, Morris Ginsberg, Karl Mannheim, Alex Inkeles and many others. Opinions of supporters of this school of thought regarding the scope of sociology are described below.

1. **Emile Durkheim:** Durkheim opines that the scope of sociology has three main divisions or field of study i.e., (i) Social Morphology (ii) Social Physiology and (iii) General Sociology.

i) **Social Morphology:** It includes all those subjects which are fundamentally geographic, such as, population, its size, density, distribution, mobility etc. This comprehends two studies. First, analysis of the size and quality of the population in as much as it affects the qualities of social relationships and social groups. Second, study

of the social structure, or a description of the main forms of social groups of institutions as well as their classification.

ii) *Social Physiology*: Social physiology is inclusive of all those subjects that are studied by particular social sciences, such as religion, economy, language, morals, law etc. In other words, social physiology has different branches, such as sociology of law, sociology of religion etc. which are regarded as special aspects of sociology.

iii) *General Sociology*: General sociology is the philosophical part of sociology. Its function is to discover the general character of these social facts and to formulate general social laws.

2. **L.T. Hothouse**: Famous English sociologist L.T. Hothouse holds similar opinion like Durkheim about the scope of sociology. He represents the philosophical side of sociology. According to him, sociology is a science which shows social life of man as its sphere. He opines that it is possible to have a fuller comprehension of the whole from the study of its parts. Hence, sociologist should interpret social life as a whole. Keeping in mind the interrelatedness of social relations, sociologists should try to interconnect the results arrived at by social science. While studying the parts, sociologists have to correlate the results of the study with an eye to the whole of society. Then only the study of part contributes to a fuller comprehension of the whole.

3. **P.A. Sorokin**: Sociology studies various aspects of the social relationships hence can't be called as a special science. He also subscribes the view that sociology is a synthesis of the social sciences or a general science. According to him, the scope of sociology includes the study of general features of social phenomena and the study of relationship between the different aspects of social phenomena.

4. **Morris Ginsberg**: According to Ginsberg, Sociology studies and classifies all forms of social relationship, studies the relationship between individual and society and the relationship among different aspects of social life such as economic, political, religious, etc. He divides the scope of sociology into four main divisions such as social morphology, social control, social process and social pathology. Social morphology studies the quality and quantity of population, social group, social structure, and social institutions. Social control studies the mechanisms i.e. both formal and informal by which society controls the behaviour of its members. Social

process studies different types of interaction like cooperation and conflict. Social pathology studies social problems of poverty, population, crime etc. According to him the main functions of sociology is to discover sociological Principles of social life and tries to determine the relation between different parts of social life.

5. **Karl Mannheim:** Another supporter of synthetic school of thought Karl Mannheim opines that the scope of sociology is very wide. He divides sociology into two categories such as systematic and general sociology and historical sociology. Systematic and general sociology deals with main factors of living together found in different kinds of society where as historical sociology deals with the historical variety and general forms of society. Historical sociology has two divisions such as comparative sociology and social dynamics. Comparative sociology is concerned with historical of features. On the other hand, social dynamics is concerned with the interrelations between social factors and institutions in a particular society.

6. **Alex Inkles:** Another protagonist of synthetic school of thought Alex Inkles opines that the scope of sociology includes social analysis, Primary concepts of social life, Basic social institutions and social processes.

Thus, it may be concluded that there is no conflict between two schools of thought about the scope of sociology. Sociology is both a general science and a special science. It synthesizes all special science. Hence the scope of sociology is very wide. One school studies the part and other studies the whole. Both part and whole are interrelated we can't study the part without studying the whole and vice-versa.

## **1.4 Relationship of Sociology with other Social Sciences: Anthropology, History, Economics and Psychology**

### **1.4.1 Sociology and Anthropology**

The relation between Sociology and Anthropology is widely recognised today.

In fact, anthropologist Kroeber pointed out that the two sciences are twin sisters. The relations between sociology and anthropology are closer than those between Anthropology and Political Science that is partly due to greater similarity in ways of work.

Anthropology is a general science like sociology. The word Anthropology is derived from two Greek words —Anthropology meaning ‘man’ and logos meaning ‘study’. Thus, the etymological meaning of ‘Anthropology’ is the study of man.

More precisely, it is defined by Kroeber as ‘the science of man and his works and behaviour’. Anthropology is “concerned not with particular man but with man in groups, with races and peoples and their happenings and doings”.

Though the youngest of the traditional social sciences, it has developed and gone ahead of many of them. It has made outstanding contributions to the study of man. Sociology, in particular, has been immensely enriched by the anthropological studies.

Anthropology seems to be the broadest of all the social sciences. It studies man both as a member of the animal kingdom and as a member of the human society. It studies the biological as well as the cultural developments of man. Anthropology has a wide field of study. Kroeber mentions two broad divisions of anthropology: (i) Organic or Physical Anthropology and (ii) the Socio- cultural Anthropology.

### **The Relationship between the Two Sciences:**

According to Hoebel, “Sociology and Social Anthropology are, in their broadest sense one and the same”. Evans Pritchard considers social anthropology a branch of sociology. Sociology is greatly benefited by anthropological studies.

Sociologists have to depend upon anthropologists to understand the present-day social phenomena from our knowledge of the past which is often provided by anthropology. The studies made by famous anthropologists like Radcliffe Brown, B. Malinowski, Ralph Linton, Lowie, Raymond Firth, Margaret Mead, Evans Pritchard and others, have been proved to be valuable in sociology.

***Table 1: Difference between Sociology and Anthropology***

<b>Sociology</b>	<b>Anthropology</b>
<b>1. Sociology mainly study of modern communities</b>	1. It study of ancient community
<b>2. It is a Social Science</b>	2. It is a Natural Science
<b>3. It uses the methods of social science</b>	3. It uses the method of natural science
<b>4. Sociologist study the institutions</b>	4. Anthropology study human primitive culture

- such as marriage, family or processes such as change, social mobility
5. Sociologist studies small as well as large societies
  6. Sociologist makes use of observation, interview, social survey, questionnaires in its investigations
  7. Traditionally focussed on western societies
  8. Subfields such as gender studies, criminology, social work.
5. Anthropologist usually concentrate on small societies
  6. Anthropologists directly go and live in the communities they study. They make use of direct observations and interviews.
  7. Traditionally focused on non-western societies
  8. Subfields such as linguistic anthropology, archaeology, forensic anthropology, etc.

The conclusions drawn by sociologists have also helped the anthropologists in their studies. For example, anthropologists like Morgan and his followers have come to the conclusion regarding the existence of primitive communism from the conception of private property in our modern society.

### 1.4.2 Sociology and History

Sociology and History are closely and intimately related to each other. Sociology cannot be separated from History and History cannot be isolated from sociology. That is why Professor G.E. Howard remarked “History is the past Sociology and Sociology is the present History”, John Seely says that “History without Sociology has no fruit; Sociology without History has no root”.

History is mainly concerned with past events. It is systematic record of the story of mankind. History presents a chronological account of past events of the human society. It is the social science, which deals with past events and studies the past social, political and economic aspects of the country, According to Gettle “History is the record of the past events and movements, their causes and inter-relations”. It includes a survey of conditions, or developments in economic, religious and social affairs as well as the study of states, their growth and organization and their relation with one another.

Both Sociology and History depend upon each other and can influence one another. Sociology depends upon History in order to study past events and situations. History of cultures and institutions is helpful in the understanding of sociology and on the collections of materials. In order to understand the past society and activities, we have to take the help of History. Sociology concerned with the study of the historical development of human society. It studies ancient customs, modes of living, various stages of life and past social institutions through the historical analysis. This information about the past is of great importance to sociologists. For instance, if a sociologist has to study family and marriage as social institutions he has to study their historical developments also. Owing to this reason, Arnold Toynbee's book "A Study of History" and Spengler's book "Decline of the West" are very valuable of the study of sociology.

In the same way, Sociology provides social background of the study of History. History is now being studied from the sociological viewpoint. History supplies facts, which are interpreted and coordinated by the sociologists. The historians need social background for writing and analyzing history and this is provided by the sociologists. The study of History would be meaningless without the appreciation of sociological significance. History becomes meaningful in the social content.

**Table 2: Difference between Sociology and History**

Sociology	History
1. It is interested in the study of present social phenomena with all their complexity	1. It deals with the past events of man and silent regarding the present
2. It is analytical and interpretive science	2. It is descriptive science
3. It is a general science	3. It is particular science
4. It used questionnaire, survey, interview methods to find out the information	4. It used chronology; coin etc. to find out the information
5. Test and re-test is possible for the facts which are generalised by sociology	5. Test and re-test is not possible for the events mention in the history
6. It has wider scope	6. It has narrow scope
7. It is young science	7. It is old science
8. Sociology follows the sociological approach. It studies human events from the sociological point of social relationships involved	8. History studies human events in accordance with the time order. Its approach is historical

### 1.4.3 Sociology and Economics

Sociology and Economics as social sciences have close relations. Relationship between the two is so close that one is often treated as the branch of the other, because society is greatly influenced by economic factors, and economic processes are largely determined by the environment of the society.

Economics deals with the economic activities of man. It deals with production, consumption and distribution of wealth. The economic factors play a vital role in the very aspect of our social life. Total development of individual depends very much on economic factors. Without economic conditions, the study of society is quite impossible. All the social problems are directly connected with the economic conditions of the people. That is why Marshall defines Economics as “on one side the study of wealth and on the other and more important side a part of the study of man.”

In the same way Economics is influenced by Sociology. Without the social background the study of Economics is quite impossible. Sociologists have contributed to the study of different aspects of economic organisation. Property system, division of labour, occupations etc. are provided by a sociologist to an economist.

The area of co-operation between Sociology and Economics is widening. Economists are more and more making use of the sociological concepts in the study of economic problems. Economists are working with the sociologists in their study of the problems of economic development in underdeveloped countries. Combined efforts of both the experts may be of great practical help in meeting the challenges.

*Table 3: Difference between Sociology and Economics*

Sociology	Economics
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. It has wider scope because it studies all types of social relationship</li> <li>2. It is abstract in nature. Its variables are very difficult to measure</li> <li>3. It is general science</li> <li>4. Social relationship is the core subject matter of sociology and it study man as social animal</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. It has narrow scope because it studies economic institution and economic activities of man</li> <li>2. It is concrete in nature. Its variables are easy to measure and quantified</li> <li>3. It is special science</li> <li>4. Production and distribution of goods and services are basic subject matter</li> </ol>

<p><b>5. It is young science</b></p> <p><b>6. It is a general science</b></p> <p><b>7. Study of abstract things in the society</b></p> <p><b>8. Considers humans as social beings</b></p>	<p>and study man as a wealth disposer</p> <p>5. It is an age-old</p> <p>6. It is a particular science</p> <p>7. Study of concrete things in an economy</p> <p>8. Considers humans as economics beings</p>
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#### 1.4.4 Sociology and Psychology

While both are considered to be part of the social sciences, sociology and social psychology are more different than they are alike. Despite the similar sounding names, each discipline looks at the world from a different viewpoint, and ultimately with a different purpose.

##### What is Sociology?

Sociology examines human social systems, like groups, societies and organizations, ranging from groups as small as a family to those as large as an entire religion. As a sociology student, you may examine various groups from different perspectives, like race, social class or religion. Sociology is rooted in research, and students can expect to learn research techniques with broad applications. For example, a sociology student may study the culture of prison inmates, corporate decision-making approaches, or family life in a religious group.

##### What is Psychology?

Psychology uses an analytical lens to understand human behaviour. Like sociology, many of the skills a student obtains from a psychology degree have very broad applications. Psychology students will learn how to diagnose and treat psychological disorders, assess learning disabilities, and understand racial and gender identity. Psychology blends these analytical skills with critical thinking to both understand behaviour and treat it.

***Table 4: Difference between Sociology and Psychology***

<b>Sociology</b>	<b>Psychology</b>
<p><b>1. Deals in the collective, or society</b></p> <p><b>2. Explores social behaviour within groups, cultures, organizations, and</b></p>	<p>1. Focuses on the individual</p> <p>2. Investigates the causes of human behaviour at the individual level</p>

**social institutions**

- 3. Fosters creativity, innovation, critical thinking, analytic problem solving, and communication skills**
- 4. Challenges you to see the world through the lens of different cultures and communities**
- 5. Requires courses in statistics research methods, and behavioural analysis, and examines concepts of diversity, social responsibility, human rights, and dignity, and respect for others**
- 6. Sociology studies society from sociological point of view**

using observation, measurement, and analysis

3. Explores the cognitive, emotional, and social means by which individuals relate to one another and to their environments
4. Challenges you to see the world through the individual perspective
5. Requires courses in statistics research methods, and behavioural analysis
6. Psychology studies the individual's behaviour from the view point of psychological factors involved

## Unit-II

### Sociological Perspectives

## 2. Sociological Perspectives: Functional, Conflict and Interactionist

**Table 1: Major Theoretical Perspectives in Sociology**

Perspective	Usual Level of Analysis	Focus of Analysis	Key Terms
<b>Functional Perspective</b>	Macro-sociological- examines large-scale patterns of society	Relationships among the parts of society; how these parts are functional or dysfunctional	Structure Functions (manifest and latent) Dysfunctions Equilibrium
<b>Conflict Perspective</b>	Macro-sociological- examines large-scale patterns of society	The struggle for scarce resources by groups in a society; how the elites use their power to control the weaker groups	Inequality Power Conflict Competition Exploitation
<b>Symbolic Interactionism</b>	Micro sociological- examines small-scale patterns of social interaction	Face to face interaction; how people use symbols to create social life	Symbols Interaction Meanings definitions

Theories in sociology provide us with different perspectives with which to view our social world. A perspective is simply a way of looking at the world. A theory is a set of interrelated propositions or principles designed to answer a question or explain a particular phenomenon; it provides us with a perspective. Sociological theories help us to explain and predict the social world in which we live. Sociology includes three major theoretical perspectives: the functionalist perspective, the conflict perspective, and the symbolic interactionist perspective (sometimes called the interactionist perspective or simply the micro view). Each perspective offers a variety of explanations about the social world and human behaviour.

## 2.1 Functionalist Perspective

The functionalist perspective is based largely on the works of **Herbert Spencer, Emile Durkheim, Talcott Parsons, and Robert Merton**. According to functionalism, *society is a system of interconnected parts that work together in harmony to maintain a state of balance and social equilibrium for the whole*. For example, each of the social institutions contributes important functions for society: Family provides a context for reproducing, nurturing, and socializing children; education offers a way to transmit a society's skills, knowledge, and culture to its youth; politics provides a means of governing members of society; economics provides for the production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services; and religion provides moral guidance and an outlet for worship of a higher power.

Functionalism interprets each part of society in terms of how it contributes to the **stability of the whole society**. Society is more than the sum of its parts; rather, each part of society is functional for the stability of the whole. Durkheim actually envisioned society as an organism, and just like within an organism, each component plays a necessary part, but none can function alone, and one experiences a crisis or fails, other parts must adapt to fill the void in some way.

Within functionalist theory, the different parts of society are primarily composed of social institutions, each of which is designed to fill different needs, and each of which has particular consequences for the form and shape of society. The parts all depend on each other. The core institutions defined by sociology and which are important to understanding for this theory include family, government, economy, media, education, and religion. According to functionalism, an institution only exists because it serves a vital role in the functioning of society. If it no longer serves a role, an institution will die away. When new needs evolve or emerge, new institutions will be created to meet them.

Let's consider the relationships between and functions of some core institutions. In most societies, the government, or state, provides education for the children of the family, which in turn pays taxes on which the state depends to keep itself running. The family is dependent upon the school to help children grow up to have good jobs so that they can raise and support their own families. In the process, the children become law-abiding, taxpaying citizens, who in turn support the state. From the functionalist perspective, if all goes well, the parts of society produce order, stability, and productivity. If all does not go well, the parts of society then must adapt to produce new forms of order, stability, and productivity.

Functionalism emphasizes the **consensus and order that exist in society**, focusing on social stability and shared public values. From this perspective, disorganization in the system, such as deviant behaviour, leads to change because societal components must adjust to achieve stability. When one part of the system is not working or is dysfunctional, it affects all other parts and creates social problems, which leads to social change.

Functionalists use the terms **functional and dysfunctional** to describe the effects of social elements on society. Elements of society are functional if they contribute to social stability and dysfunctional if they disrupt social stability. Some aspects of society can be both functional and dysfunctional. For example, crime is dysfunctional in that it is associated with physical violence, loss of property, and fear. But according to Durkheim and other functionalists, crime is also functional for society because it leads to heightened awareness of shared moral bonds and increased social cohesion.

Sociologists have identified two types of functions: **manifest and latent** (Merton 1968). Manifest functions are consequences that are intended and commonly recognized. Latent functions are consequences that are unintended and often hidden. For example, the manifest function of education is to transmit knowledge and skills to society's youth. But public elementary schools also serve as babysitters for employed parents, and colleges offer a place for young adults to meet potential mates. The baby-sitting and mate-selection functions are not the intended or commonly recognized functions of education; hence they are latent functions.

## Criticism

Functionalism has been critiqued by many sociologists for its neglect of the often negative implications of social order. Some critics, like Italian theorist Antonio Gramsci, claim that the perspective justifies the status quo and the process of cultural hegemony which maintains it. Functionalism does not encourage people to take an active role in changing their social environment, even when doing so may benefit them. Instead, functionalism sees agitating for social change as undesirable because the various parts of society will compensate in a seemingly natural way for any problems that may arise.

## 2.2 Conflict Perspective

The functionalist perspective views society as composed of different parts working together. In contrast, the conflict perspective views society as composed of different groups and interest competing for power and resources. The conflict perspective explains various aspects of our social world by looking at which groups have power and benefit from a particular social arrangement. For example, feminist theory argues that we live in a patriarchal society a hierarchical system of organization controlled by men. Although there are many varieties of feminist theory, most would hold that feminism “demands that existing economic, political, and social structures be changed

Conflict theory, first purported by **Karl Marx**, is a theory that society is in a state of perpetual conflict because of competition for limited resources. Conflict theory holds that social order is maintained by domination and power (rather than consensus and conformity). According to conflict theory, those with wealth and power try to hold on to it by any means possible, chiefly by suppressing the poor and powerless. A basic premise of conflict theory is that individuals and groups within society will work to maximize their own benefits.

### *Key Takeaways*

- *Conflict theory focuses on the competition between groups within society over limited resources.*
- *Conflict theory views social and economic institutions as tools of the struggle between groups or classes, used to maintain inequality and the dominance of the ruling class.*
- *Marxist conflict theory sees society as divided along lines of economic class between the proletarian working class and the bourgeois ruling class.*
- *Later versions of conflict theory look at other dimensions of conflict among capitalist factions and between various social, religious, and other types of groups.*

### *Understanding Conflict Theory*

Conflict theory has been used to explain a wide range of social phenomena, including wars, revolutions, poverty, discrimination, and domestic violence. It ascribes most of the fundamental developments in human history, such as democracy and civil rights, to capitalistic attempts to control the masses (as opposed to a desire for social order). Central

tenets of conflict theory are the concepts of **social inequality, the division of resources, and the conflicts that exist between different socio-economic classes.**

Many types of societal conflicts throughout history can be explained using the central tenets of conflict theory. Some theorists, including Marx, believe that societal conflict is the force that ultimately drives change and development in society.

Marx's version of conflict theory focused on the conflict between **two primary classes**. Each class consists of a group of people bound by mutual interests and a certain degree of property ownership. Marx theorized about the **bourgeoisie**, a group of people that represented members of society who hold the majority of the wealth and means. The **proletariat** is the other group: it includes those considered working class or poor.

With the rise of capitalism, Marx theorized that the bourgeoisie, a minority within the population, would use their influence to oppress the proletariat, the majority class. This way of thinking is tied to a common image associated with conflict theory-based models of society; adherents to this philosophy tend to believe in a pyramid arrangement in terms of how goods and services are distributed in society; at the top of the pyramid is a small group of elites that dictate the terms and conditions to the larger portion of society because they have outsized amount of control over resources and power.

Uneven distribution within society was predicted to be maintained through ideological coercion; the bourgeoisie would force acceptance of the current conditions by the proletariat. Conflict theory assumes that the elite will set up systems of laws, traditions, and other societal structures in order to further support their own dominance while preventing others from joining their ranks. Marx theorized that, as the working class and poor were subjected to worsening conditions, a collective consciousness would raise more awareness about inequality, and this would potentially result in revolt. If, after the revolt, conditions were adjusted to favour the concerns of the proletariat, the conflict circle would eventually repeat but in the opposite direction. The bourgeoisie would eventually become the aggressor and revolter, grasping for the return of the structures that formerly maintained their dominance.

### ***Conflict Theory Assumptions***

In current conflict theory, there are four primary assumptions which are helpful to understand: competition, revolution, structural inequality, and war.

### **Competition**

Conflict theorists believe that competition is a constant and, at times, an overwhelming factor in nearly every human relationship and interaction. Competition exists as a result of the scarcity of resources, including material resources—money, property, commodities, and more. Beyond material resources, individuals and groups within a society also compete for intangible resources as well. These can include leisure time, dominance, social status, sexual partners, etc. Conflict theorists assume that competition is the default (rather than cooperation).

### **Revolution**

Given conflict theorists' assumption that conflict occurs between social classes, one outcome of this conflict is a revolutionary event. The idea is that change in a power dynamic between groups does not happen as the result of a gradual adaptation. Rather, it comes about as the symptom of conflict between these groups. In this way, changes to a power dynamic are often abrupt and large in scale, rather than gradual and evolutionary.

### **Structural Inequality**

An important assumption of conflict theory is that human relationships and social structures all experience inequalities of power. In this way, some individuals and groups inherently develop more power and reward than others. Following this, those individuals and groups that benefit from a particular structure of society tend to work to maintain those structures as a way of retaining and enhancing their power.

### **War**

Conflict theorists tend to see war as either a unifier or as a "cleanser" of societies. In conflict theory, war is the result of a cumulative and growing conflict between individuals and groups, and between entire societies. In the context of war, a society may become unified in some ways, but conflict still remains between multiple societies. On the other hand, war may also result in the wholesale end of a society.

### **Special Considerations**

Marx viewed capitalism as part of a historical progression of economic systems. He believed capitalism was rooted in commodities, or things that are purchased and sold. For example, he believed that labour is a type of commodity. Because laborers have little control or power in the economic system (because they don't own factories or materials), their worth can be

devalued over time. This can create an imbalance between business owners and their workers, which can eventually lead to social conflicts. He believed these problems would eventually be fixed through a social and economic revolution.

Max Weber, a German sociologist, philosopher, jurist, and political economist, adopted many aspects of Marx's conflict theory, and later, further refined some of Marx's idea. Weber believed that conflict over property was not limited to one specific scenario. Rather, he believed that there were multiple layers of conflict existing at any given moment and in every society. Whereas Marx framed his view of conflict as one between owners and workers, Weber also added an emotional component to his ideas about conflict. Weber said: "It is these that underlie the power of religion and make it an important ally of the state; that transform classes into status groups, and do the same to territorial communities under particular circumstances...and that make 'legitimacy' a crucial focus for efforts at domination."

Weber's beliefs about conflict extend beyond Marx's because they suggest that some forms of social interaction, including conflict, generate beliefs and solidarity between individuals and groups within a society. In this way, an individual's reactions to inequality might be different depending on the groups with which they are associated; whether they perceive those in power to be legitimate; and so on.

Conflict theorists of the later 20th and 21st centuries have continued to extend conflict theory beyond the strict economic classes posited by Marx, although economic relations remain a core feature of the inequalities across groups in the various branches of conflict theory. Conflict theory is highly influential in modern and post-modern theories of sexual and racial inequality, peace and conflict studies, and the many varieties of identity studies that have arisen across Western academia in the past several decades.

### ***Examples of Conflict Theory***

For example, conflict theorists view the relationship between a housing complex owner and a tenant as being based mainly on conflict instead of balance or harmony, even though there may be more harmony than conflict. They believe that they are defined by getting whatever resources they can from each other.

In the above example, some of the limited resources which may contribute to conflicts between tenants and the complex owner include the limited space within the complex, the

limited number of units, the money which tenants pay to the complex owner for rent, and so on. Ultimately, conflict theorists see this dynamic as one of conflict over these resources. The complex owner, however gracious a landlord he or she may be, is fundamentally focused on getting as many apartment units filled as possible so that he or she can make as much money in rent as possible. This may introduce conflict between housing complexes, among tenant applicants looking to move into an apartment, and so forth. On the other side of the conflict, the tenants themselves are looking to get the best apartment possible for the least amount of money in rent.

This example illustrates that conflict can be inherent in all types of relationships, including those that don't appear on the surface to be antagonistic. It also shows that even a straightforward scenario can lead to multiple layers of conflict.

### *Criticism*

The conflict perspective has its own limitations. It is also criticized, 'by focusing so narrowly on issues of competition and change, it fails to come to grips with the more orderly, stable and less politically controversial aspects of social reality'.

### ***2.3 Interactionist Perspective***

The functionalist and conflict perspectives both analyse behaviour in terms of society wide patterns. However, many contemporary sociologists are more interested in understanding society as a whole through an examination of social interactions such as small groups conducting meetings, two friends talking casually with each other, a family celebrating a birthday and so forth. The interactionist perspective generalizes about fundamental or everyday forms of social interaction. Interactionism is a sociological framework for viewing human beings as living in a world of meaningful objects. These “objects” may include material things, actions, other people, relationships and even symbols. Focusing on everyday behaviour permits interactions to better understand the larger society.

The interactionist perspective in sociology was initially influenced by Max Weber. He has emphasized the importance of understanding the social world from the view point of the individuals who act within it. Later development in the theory has been, strongly influenced by social psychology and by the work of early leaders of sociology, particularly George Herbert Mead, George Simmel, Charles Cooley, and Erving Goffman. Interactionist perspective emphasizes that human behaviour is influenced by definitions and meanings that are created and maintained through symbolic interaction with others.

The interactionist perspective, in general, invites the sociologist to ask question. What kinds of interaction are taking place between people how do they understand and interpret what is happening to them and why do they act towards others as they do?

Sociologist W.I. Thomas (1966) emphasized the importance of definitions and meanings in social behaviour and its consequences. He suggested that humans respond to their definition of a situation rather than to the objective situation itself. Hence Thomas noted that situations that we define as real become real in their consequences.

Symbolic interactionism also suggests that our identity or sense of self is shaped by social interaction. We develop our self-concept by observing how others interact with us a label us. By observing how others view us, we see a reflection ourselves that Cooley calls the “looking glass self.”

**George Herbert Mead** (1863–1931) is considered a founder of symbolic interactionism though he never published his work on it. Mead’s student, Herbert Blumer, coined the term “symbolic interactionism” and outlined these basic premises: humans interact with things

based on meanings ascribed to those things; the ascribed meaning of things comes from our interactions with others and society; the meanings of things are interpreted by a person when dealing with things in specific circumstances. If you love books, for example, a symbolic interactionist might propose that you learned that books are good or important in the interactions you had with family, friends, school, or church; maybe your family had a special reading time each week, getting your library card was treated as a special event, or bedtime stories were associated with warmth and comfort.

Social scientists who apply symbolic-interactionist thinking look for patterns of interaction between individuals. Their studies often involve observation of one-on-one interactions. For example, while a conflict theorist studying a political protest might focus on class difference, a symbolic interactionist would be more interested in how individuals in the protesting group interact, as well as the signs and symbols protesters use to communicate their message. The focus on the importance of symbols in building a society led sociologists like Erving Goffman (1922–1982) to develop a technique called **dramaturgical analysis**. Goffman used theatre as an analogy for social interaction and recognized that people’s interactions showed patterns of cultural “scripts.” Because it can be unclear what part a person may play in a given situation, he or she has to improvise his or her role as the situation unfolds.

Studies that use the symbolic interactionist perspective are more likely to use qualitative research methods, such as in-depth interviews or participant observation, because they seek to understand the symbolic worlds in which research subjects live.

**Constructivism** is an extension of symbolic interaction theory which proposes that reality is what humans cognitively construct it to be. We develop social constructs based on interactions with others, and those constructs that last over time are those that have meanings which are widely agreed-upon or generally accepted by most within the society. This approach is often used to understand what’s defined as deviant within a society. There is no absolute definition of deviance, and different societies have constructed different meanings for deviance, as well as associating different behaviours with deviance. One situation that illustrates this is what you believe you’re to do if you find a wallet in the street. In the United States, turning the wallet in to local authorities would be considered the appropriate action, and to keep the wallet would be seen as deviant. In contrast, many Eastern societies would consider it much more appropriate to keep the wallet and search for the owner yourself; turning it over to someone else, even the authorities, would be considered deviant behaviour.

## *Criticism*

Interactionist perspective neglects larger social institutions and societal processes, which have powerful effects on social interaction and or our personal experience.

## **SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY TODAY**

These three approaches are still the main foundation of modern sociological theory, but some evolution has been seen. Structural-functionalism was a dominant force after World War II and until the 1960s and 1970s. At that time, sociologists began to feel that structural-functionalism did not sufficiently explain the rapid social changes happening in the United States at that time.

Conflict theory then gained prominence, as there was renewed emphasis on institutionalized social inequality. Critical theory, and the particular aspects of feminist theory and critical race theory, focused on creating social change through the application of sociological principles, and the field saw a renewed emphasis on helping ordinary people understand sociology principles, in the form of public sociology.

Postmodern social theory attempts to look at society through an entirely new lens by rejecting previous macro-level attempts to explain social phenomena. Generally considered as gaining acceptance in the late 1970s and early 1980s, postmodern social theory is a micro-level approach that looks at small, local groups and individual reality. Its growth in popularity coincides with the constructivist aspects of symbolic interactionism

## **Table 2: FARMING AND LOCAVORES: HOW SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES MIGHT VIEW FOOD CONSUMPTION**

The consumption of food is a commonplace, daily occurrence, yet it can also be associated with important moments in our lives. Eating can be an individual or a group action, and eating habits and customs are influenced by our cultures. In the context of society, our nation's food system is at the core of numerous social movements, political issues, and economic debates. Any of these factors might become a topic of sociological study.

A **structural-functional** approach to the topic of food consumption might be interested in the role of the agriculture industry within the nation's economy and how this has changed from the early days of manual-labor farming to modern mechanized production. Another examination might study the different functions that occur in food production: from farming

and harvesting to flashy packaging and mass consumerism.

A **conflict theorist** might be interested in the power differentials present in the regulation of food, by exploring where people's right to information intersects with corporations' drive for profit and how the government mediates those interests. Or a conflict theorist might be interested in the power and powerlessness experienced by local farmers versus large farming conglomerates, such as the documentary *Food Inc.* depicts as resulting from Monsanto's patenting of seed technology. Another topic of study might be how nutrition varies between different social classes.

A sociologist viewing food consumption through a **symbolic interactionist** lens would be more interested in micro-level topics, such as the symbolic use of food in religious rituals, or the role it plays in the social interaction of a family dinner. This perspective might also study the interactions among group members who identify themselves based on their sharing a particular diet, such as vegetarians (people who don't eat meat) or locavores (people who strive to eat locally produced food).