

## 1. Details of Module and its structure

Module Detail	
Subject Name	Sociology
Course Name	Sociology 01 (Class XI, Semester - 1)
Module Name/Title	Sociology and Society – Part 1
Module Id	kesy_10101
Pre-requisites	Concept of Sociology
Objectives	After going through this lesson, the learners will be able to understand the following: <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. What is Sociology?</li><li>2. What are the tasks of Sociology?</li><li>3. Some basic concepts of Sociology</li><li>4. Difference between Sociological knowledge and common sense knowledge</li><li>5. Meaning of sociological imagination</li></ol>
Keywords	Sociology, Society, Science, Sociological imagination, Social order, Social change, Social institutions, Social change, Community, Mores, Customs, Folkways

## 2. Development Team

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## Etymology of the word Sociology

Sociology is a hybrid word which is made of the Latin word 'Socius' (Meaning companion) + Greek word (logos) 'ology' (study of or knowledge).



The English word came into use only in 1843.

### What is Sociology?

Sociology can be defined as a study of society or social life, of group interaction and of Social behaviour.

According to **R.E. Park** and **F.W. Burgess**, "Sociology is the science of collective behaviour.

Sociology may be defined as a body of scientific knowledge about human relationships, says **J. F. Cuber**.

"In the broadest sense, sociology is the study of human interactions and interrelations, their conditions and consequences", says **Morris Ginsberg**.

According to **Maclver and Page** "sociology is 'about' social relationships, the network of relationship we call society".

**F.H. Giddings** defines sociology as "the science of social phenomena"

**Max Weber** defines Sociology as "the science which attempts the interpretative understanding of social action in order thereby to arrive at a causal explanation of its cause and effects".

**Harry M. Johnson** writes," Sociology is the science that deals with social groups: their internal forms or modes of organisation, the processes that tend to maintain or change these forms of organisation, and the relations between groups."

A careful examination of definitions shows that sociologists differ in their opinion about the definitions of sociology. However, we may find following views about its definitions.

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1. Sociology is a science of society.
  2. Sociology is the study of groups or social system.
  3. Sociology is the study of social relationships.
  4. Sociology is the study of human interactions and interrelations, their conditions and consequences.
  5. Sociology is the study of social action.
  6. Sociology is the study of social phenomena.

In his book “*An Invitation to Sociology: a Humanistic Perspective*”, **Peter Berger** describes a sociologist as “someone concerned with understanding society in a discipline way. The nature of this discipline is scientific. This means that what the sociologist finds and says about the social phenomena that he studies occur within a certain rather strictly defined frame of reference...As a scientist, the sociologist tries to be objective, to control his personal preferences and prejudices, to perceive clearly rather than to judge normatively.”

Sociology has the following three tasks-

- To unravel the connection between a personal problem and public issue.
- How the individual is a part of more than one society at one time.
- Systematic study of society.

We shall begin by understanding the first task.

### **Personal Problem & Public Issues :**

**C.W.Mills** states that there is a distinction between personal troubles that occurs within the character of the individual or within his/her range of immediate relations with others whereas public issue goes beyond the personal. The second important point that Mills makes and that which bridges personal trouble and public issue is that history and biography are connected i.e. the personal troubles are many a times indicative of a large structural and public issue and that the history of a society is closely linked with the biographies of the citizens of that society.

An example could be the following- “Consider marriage. Inside a marriage a man and a woman may experience personal troubles, but when the divorce rate during the first four years of marriage

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is 250 out of every 1,000 attempts, this is an indication of a structural issue having to do with the institutions of marriage and the family and other institutions that bear upon them.” (Mills: 1959)

Consider the metropolis - the horrible, beautiful, ugly, magnificent sprawl of the great city. For many members of the upper class the personal solution to 'the problem of the city' is to have an apartment with private garage under it in the heart of the city and forty miles out, a house by Henry Hill, garden by Garrett Eckbo, on a hundred acres of private land. In these two controlled environments - with a small staff at each end and a private helicopter connection - most people could solve many of the problems of personal milieu caused by the facts of the city. But all this, however splendid, does not solve the public issues that the structural fact of the city poses. What should be done with this wonderful monstrosity? Break it all up into scattered units, combining residence and work? Refurbish it as it stands? Or, after evacuation, dynamite it and build new cities according to new plans in new places? What should those plans be? And who is to decide and to accomplish whatever choice is made? These are structural issues; to confront them and to solve them requires us to consider political and economic issues that affect innumerable milieu.” (Mills: 1959)

“To understand the changes of many personal milieux we are required to look beyond them. And the number and variety of such structural changes increase as the institutions within which we live become more embracing and more intricately connected with one another. To be aware of the idea of social structure and to use it with sensibility is to be capable of tracing such linkages among a great variety of milieux. To be able to do that is to possess the sociological imagination. The sociological imagination enables its possessor to understand the larger historical scene in terms of its meaning for the inner life and the external career of a variety of individuals. It enables him to take into account how individuals, in the welter of their daily experience, often become falsely conscious of their social positions. Within that welter, the framework of modern society is sought, and within that framework the psychologies of a variety of men and women are formulated. By such means the personal uneasiness of individuals is focused upon explicit troubles and the indifference of publics is transformed into involvement with public issues. The first fruit of this imagination - and the first lesson of the social science that embodies it - is the idea that the individual can understand her own experience and gauge her own fate only by locating herself within her period, that she can know her own chances in life only by becoming aware of those of all individuals in her circumstances. In many ways it is a terrible lesson; in many ways a

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magnificent one. We do not know the limits of human capacities for supreme effort or willing degradation, for agony or glee, for pleasurable brutality or the sweetness of reason. But in our time we have come to know that the limits of 'human nature' are frighteningly broad. We have come to know that every individual lives, from one generation to the next, in some society; that he lives out a biography, and lives it out within some historical sequence. By the fact of this living, he contributes, however minutely, to the shaping of this society and to the course of its history, even as he is made by society and by its historical push and shove. The sociological imagination enables us to grasp history and biography and the relations between the two within society. That is its task and its promise.” (Mills: 1959)

The second task of sociology is to bring about the understanding that members of a society are at once members of many other societies as well. For example, when among foreigners reference to ‘our society’ implies ‘Indian Society’; whereas among fellow Indians we may use the term ‘our society’ to denote linguistic or ethnic or religious or caste or tribal society. Thus, we are, at one time, part of many societies and this identity is relative.”

“The phenomena dealt with in the study of society are not, for the most part, external tangible things, or kinds of things, that can be identified directly by the senses. We cannot see or touch social relations or social organisations. Institutions cannot be handled and customs cannot be weighed in a balance. In pointing up the intangibility of certain sociological phenomena we must caution against the assumption of their ‘unreality’.” (Maciver and Page: 2009)

### **What we mean by society?**

Society limits as well as liberates human beings, sets standards for people to maintain; it is a system of norms, rules and codes that have to be internalised and implemented by its members. These norms, codes and rules keep changing and evolving and hence it is a complex system.

### **Introducing Sociology**

There are some important features that define Sociology.

1. Sociology is the study of human social life. Thus, its subject matter is social behaviour, social action, subjective meanings and social relations.

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2. Sociology does study the norms and values of society but not how they ought to be but how they actually are. Thus, sociology studies actual societies
  3. Sociology is an empirical discipline. This implies that sociology studies society irrespective of personal likes or dislikes. Sociologists base their conclusion on evidence and facts and not on personal opinions.
  4. Sociology, as a discipline, uses scientific procedures. Sociologists collect data and arrive at conclusions through observation, analysis, questioning, and verification.
  5. Sociology sifts through masses of connections and looks for unsuspected connections. For example- In many societies, including in many parts of India, the line of descent and inheritance passes from father to son. This is understood as a patrilineal system. Keeping in mind that women tend not to get property rights, the Government of India in the aftermath of the Kargil War decided that financial compensation for the death of Indian soldiers should go to their widows so that they were provided for. The government had certainly not anticipated the unintended consequence of this decision. It led to many forced marriages of the widows with their brother-in-law (husband's brother or dewar). In some cases the brother-in-law (then husband) was a young child and the sister-in-law (then wife) a young woman. This was to ensure that the compensation remained with the deceased man's patrilineal family.

Thus, conclusions arrived at through sociological methods are based on evidence and purely scientific.

### **What is the difference between Sociological understanding and common sense understanding?**

Common sense view is the grown up view taken for granted. Location in society constitutes a definition of rules which have to be obeyed. Social location tells the individuals what people may or may not do. All this comprised the common sense view of society. Sociologists don't contradict this but analyses its roots, sometimes modifies or extends it.

Common sense explanations are generally based on naturalistic and/or individualistic explanation. Common sense is unreflective since it does not ask questions about its own origins. Common sense explanation does not look for unsuspected connections. A naturalistic explanation for behaviour rests on the assumption that one can really identify 'natural' reasons for behaviour. Observations of philosophical and religious thinkers are often about what is moral or immoral in human behaviour, about the desirable way of living and about a good society.

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Sociological explanation looks for meaningful and unsuspected connections by sifting through masses of connections. Sociology follows the systematic and questioning approach which it derives from the broader tradition of scientific investigation and studies actual societies.

Now that we have come to a basic understanding of what the discipline of Sociology and is and its tasks, this is a right time to discuss some of the basic concepts of Sociology.

An example to explain this difference is as follows- Naturalistic or common sense explanation of poverty would be that people are poor because they are afraid of work; they come from problem families; are unable to budget properly; and suffer from low intelligence. Poverty would be explained by sociology as a result of structural inequality in class society and is experienced by those who suffer from chronic irregularity of work and low wages. (Jayaram 1987:3)

### **Some basic concepts of Sociology**

#### **What is Community?**

“A community is an area of social living marked by some degree of social coherence. The bases of community are locality and community sentiment. A community always occupies a territorial area. There must be the common living with its awareness of sharing a way of life as well as the common earth”. (Maciver and Page: 2009)

#### **What is Social Group?**

Social groups are central to the discipline of Sociology. Social groups are different from aggregates. Aggregates are collection of people in a given place at a given time without any connection or relation with each other. They also lack any sense of belonging. A social group is exactly contrary to an aggregate.

A social group consists of members who have a sense of belonging to the group; they have persistent and stable interactions with each other; the group has a definite structure; they have shared interests and beliefs; and they have shared goals.

#### **What is Social Change?**

Social change refers to the process by which alterations occur in society or social relations. Social change is a continuous process. Social change can be caused by many factors-Increased population can bring about changes; Innovations-i.e. new ideas or an object can bring about new

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relationships. It is also possible that one society can borrow ideas or objects from other societies, which may cause variation in social relations.

There are other multiple forces that cause social change. For example-according to **August Comte** society undergoes a process of unilateral evolution through the **Theological stage** which talks of supernatural; **metaphysical stage** in which explanations are not supernatural but are based on traditions and intuitions and are not supported by evidence; and the **positive stage** in which explanations are based on evidence and logical reasoning.

According to **Karl Marx**, social change comes about through a revolution between two parties in every phase of society i.e. the “haves” and the “have-nots”. It is the struggle between these two parties that a new social order emerges.

He states, “the history of all the hitherto societies is the history of class struggle”

### **What is Social Order?**

Social control is a process to regulate behaviour within society. In a sense, social control is to discourage people from deviating from the established values and norms. Because of social control, people live up to what is expected of them. Social control is an aspect of all social institutions and thus, it is pervasive to social life on the whole.

Behaviour of people is controlled both by positive and negative sanctions. The aim of both these types of sanctions is to encourage people to conform to the norms. Positive sanction can include praise, gifts and promotion whereas negative sanction can be punishment, demotion, ridicule or boycott. Social control is not necessarily always successful. (ESO: 13)

Order is needed to control deviant behaviour.

Deviance implies any kind of behaviour that does not conform to the norms or values held by most of the members of a group or society. What is regarded as ‘deviant’ is as widely variable as the norms and values that differentiate different cultures and subcultures.

Social order is ensured through social control. Social control may be **informal** or **formal**. When and other formal mechanism of control is used, it is known as formal social control. There are agencies and mechanisms of formal, for example, law and the state. In a modern society formal mechanisms of social control are emphasised.



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In every society there is another type of social control that is known as informal social control. It is personal, unofficial and uncodified. They can include smiles, laughter, ridicule, etc.

### **What is Social Institution?**

An institution is something that works according to rules established or at least acknowledged by law or by custom. And whose regular and continuous operation cannot be understood without taking those rules into account. Institutions impose constraints on individuals. They also provide him/her with opportunities. Examples of social institutions are Religion, family, marriage, politics, and education and so on.

### **Customs, Folkways and Mores**

“Underlying and sustaining the more formal order of institutions and associations there exists an intricate complex or modes of behaviour. The socially accredited ways of acting are the customs of society. We conform to the customs of our own society, unconsciously, for they are a strongly embedded part of our group life. They are so strongly embedded that we frequently make the error of identifying our particular customs with the only correct ways of doing this or that.

The folkways, then, are the recognized or accepted ways of behaving in society. They include conventions, forms of etiquette, and the myriad modes of behaviour men have evolved and continue to evolve. They vary from society to society and from time to time.” (Maciver and Page: 2009)

### **Macro sociology and Micro sociology**

Macro sociology: The study of large-scale groups, organisations or social systems.

Micro sociology: The study of human behaviour in contexts of face-to-face interaction.

Here, for example, the sociological problem has to do with the life chances of students of a particular context. This problem needs to be understood both at the micro and the macro level.

To understand the link between micro sociology and macro sociology, below is the example.

Some suggestions given to young students are-, “Study hard and you will do well in life.” The second advice as often made is, “If you do this subject or set of subjects you will have a better chance of getting a good job in the future”. The third could be, “As a boy this does not seem a correct choice of subject” or “As a girl, do you think your choice of subjects is a practical one?”

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The fourth, “Your family needs you to get a job soon so why choose a profession that will take a very long time” or “You will join your family business so why do you wish to do this subject?”

Let us examine the suggestions.

Do you think the first advice contradicts the other three? For the first advice suggests that if you work very hard, you will do very well and get a good job. The onus rests upon the individual. The second advice suggests that apart from your individual effort, there is a job market that decides which subject choice may increase or decrease your chances in the job market. The third and fourth advice complicates the matter even more. It is not just our personal effort or just the job market that makes a difference — our gender and family or social background also matter. Individual efforts matter a great deal but do not necessarily define outcomes. As we saw there are other social factors that play an important role in the final outcome.

“Who decides what a ‘good job’ is?” Do all societies have similar notions of what is a “good job?” Is money the criteria? Or is it respect or social recognition or individual satisfaction that decides the worth of a job? Do culture and social norms have any role to play? The individual student must study hard to do well. But how well h/she does is structured by a whole set of societal factors. The job market is defined by the needs of the economy.

The needs of the economy are again determined by the economic and political policies pursued by the government. The chances of the individual student are affected both by these broader political and economic measures as well as by the social background of her/his family. This gives us a preliminary sense of how sociology studies human society as an interconnected whole and how society and the individual interact with each other. The problem of choosing subjects in the senior secondary school is a source of personal worry for the individual student. That this is a broader public issue, affecting students as a collective entity is self evident.

This exemplifies that macro sociology looks at grand theories and micro-sociology deals with individual contexts, interactions and so on.

In this case, even though the student should pick a subject or do a job or design life as per his/her choices and preferences but the history of the context where the individual is located and its theories do apply to these personal biographies. Hence, the study of society or sociology is not only about the individual or only the society but both.

A very important point to reckon with is that sociological problems have to be understood as having connections with multiple social institutions and hence, has to be studied in its entirety.