

## 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 3
Module Id	kesy_10103
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. The relation between sociology and the following disciplines-<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>a) History</li><li>b) Political Science</li><li>c) Economics</li><li>d) Psychology</li><li>e) Social Anthropology</li></ol></li></ol>
Keywords	Sociology, Society, History, Psychology, Economics, Social anthropology, Political science

## 2. Development Team

Role	Name	Affiliation
National MOOC Coordinator (NMC)	Prof. Amarendra P. Behera	CIET, NCERT, New Delhi
Program Coordinator	Dr. Mohd. Mamur Ali	CIET, NCERT, New Delhi
Course Coordinator (CC) / PI	Dr. Sheetal Sharma	Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi
Subject Matter Expert (SME)	Ms. Mamta Saha	Sanskriti School, Chanakyapuri, New Delhi
Review Team	Ms. Seema Banerjee	Laxman Public School, Sarav Priya Vihar, New Delhi

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**Society** has been defined as a relatively self sufficient, usually large group of people who maintain direct or indirect contact with each other through a culture. Culture is generally understood as the shared language, beliefs, goals, artefacts and experiences that combine together to form a unique pattern. In other words, culture is a society's way of life (Stebbins, Robert A. 1987; p- 172)

Auguste Comte, Spencer and Emile Durkheim besides several other social thinkers sought to establish the idea of society as a matter of study, unique in itself. They examined society as a whole - which is more than the sum of its parts. Society is more than the actions, thoughts, values, belief and wishes of its individual members. It is a complex and abstract reality; yet all human beings live in a society.

Society which comprises of individuals, groups, communities, values, beliefs and so on needs to be studied in a way that all social phenomena are accounted for. Human behaviour cannot be compartmentalised. Thus, the boundaries between disciplines are often overlapping. Hence, sociology's broad perspective helps social scientists understand the various social phenomena at the emergent level i.e. at the level of the collective.

In the following section we will be studying the relation of Sociology with various other disciplines.

### **Sociology and History**

Historians base themselves on inscriptions for data which might be incomplete, inaccessible, stolen, lost or destroyed, to study specific societies and concrete details. Historians study specific societies and tell us about institutions that prevailed at that time period in that particular society. Historians do compare societies that exist in the same area but vast comparisons across time and scale is not possible.

Sociologists study societies for which they collect their own data i.e. primary data. Sociologists can, therefore, refer back to their field to fill gaps in their data. Sociologists study the abstract from concrete reality, observe, compare and generalise about societies. For this they have to refer to historical material and look at the inter-relationship between various institutions.

Sociology is referred to as a science because it studies specific societies but compares it with others to move from the specific to the general. History studies the past whereas sociology

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studies not just present day societies but also extends its frontiers to include past societies in its scope.

### **Sociology and Political Science**

Political science is the systematic study of the state and other organs of power. It studies the nature and distribution of power in societies; rules according to which competition for power is carried out and the nature and functioning of government. Thus political science studies complex, advanced and modern societies which have the machinery of state and written law. It takes its data from published documents, census records and hence do not go to the field to collect data. Thus, political science studies only political institutions.

Sociology studies all types of societies in a comparative manner. Sociology studies societies as wholes that include various institutions including political institutions. Thus, it studies institutions in relation with others. Sociologists collect data from the field to understand various societies and their institutions. Questions dealing with social stratification and distribution of power, role of taboos and other prohibitions to maintain social order are sociological questions with a relation to political institutions. Sociology studies political institutions as part of a whole society and in relation to other institutions.

Both sociology and political science aim to arrive at generalisations regarding political systems but the way they do it is different.

In the recent Indian elections one has seen the extensive study of political patterns of voting. Studies have also been conducted in membership of political organisations, process of decision making in organisations, sociological reasons for support of political parties, the role of gender in politics, etc.

### **Sociology and Economics**

Economics studies economic institutions such as finance, banking, market and so on. It tries to study the relation between demand and supply and how a balance can be struck between the two by making rational choices and decisions. Thus, economists study the relation between demand and supply; rational use of resources to fulfil one's needs and issues of economic development. The defined scope of economics has helped in facilitating its development as a highly focussed, coherent discipline. But economists' predictive abilities

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suffer precisely because of their neglect of individual behaviour, cultural norms and institutional resistance which sociology studies.

Sociology studies economics as an institution of society along with many others and in relation with them. Sociology throws on light on important social factors that play a vital role in how people make decisions. Sociology studies the social aspect of economy. A sociologist does not provide technical solutions but encourages questioning and critical perspective. This helps question basic assumptions. And thereby facilitates discussion of not just the technical means towards a given goal but also about the social desirability of the goal itself.

### **Sociology and Psychology**

Individual and society are two main elements of society. Society is made up of individuals as well relations between individuals. Each individual in the society possesses a unique identity, autonomy, and mental make-up. The knowledge about how one should behave in society is internalised by the members of the society but even then we experience variation. The discipline that focuses on individuals is psychology. It studies the mental structure of the individual, his/her memory, intelligence and deep-rooted complexes and psychological problems, etc. Psychology for its study uses qualitative as well quantitative techniques for precise measurement. Also psychology tries to understand individual mental make-up by trying to understand the human biological system and nervous system too.

The branch of psychology that studies human behaviour in a crowd or a mob is called social psychology. Social psychology studies human behaviour in relation to other people in the society and in various social groups. Sociology studies status and role which people occupy and play respectively. This helps the social scientists understand the reasons behind particular individual behaviour in a social situation and social group. These are taught by individuals from childhood and hence, all behaviour is according to certain societal norms.

### **Sociology and Social Anthropology**

Sociology studies complex, modern and urban-industrial societies. Thus it came to be understood that sociology studies one's own societies whereas social anthropology studies 'other cultures'. Social anthropology developed in the west at a time when it meant that western-trained social anthropologists studied non-European societies often thought of as exotic, barbaric and uncivilised. The anthropologists of the past documented the details of

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simple societies apparently in a neutral scientific fashion. In practice they were constantly comparing those societies with the model of the western modern societies as a benchmark. The traditional study of simple, non-literate societies by social anthropology had a pervasive influence on the content and the subject matter of the discipline. Social anthropology tended to study society (simple societies) in all their aspects, as wholes. In so far as they specialised, it was on the basis of area as for example the Andaman Islands, the Nuers or Melanesia. Social anthropology was characterised by long field work tradition, living in the community studied and using ethnographic research methods. Social anthropology developed in the west at a time when it meant that western-trained social anthropologists studied non-European societies often thought of as exotic, barbaric and uncivilised. This unequal relationship between those who studied and those who were studied as not remarked upon too often earlier. But times have changed and we have the erstwhile 'natives' be they Indians or Sudanese, Nagas or Santhals, who now speak and write about their own societies. The anthropologists of the past documented the details of simple societies apparently in a neutral scientific fashion. In practice they were constantly comparing those societies with the model of the western modern societies as a benchmark.

Sociologists study complex societies and would therefore often focus on parts of society like the bureaucracy or religion or caste or a process such as social mobility. Sociologists have often relied on survey method and quantitative data using statistics and the questionnaire mode.

Modernity as we saw led to a process whereby the smallest village was impacted by global processes. The most obvious example is colonialism. The most remote village of India under British colonialism saw its land laws and administration change, its revenue extraction altered; its manufacturing industries collapse. Contemporary global processes have further accentuated this 'shrinking of the globe'. Today the distinction between a simple society and a complex one itself needs major rethinking. India itself is a complex mix of tradition and modernity, of the village and the city, of caste and tribe, of class and community. Villages nestle right in the heart of the capital city of Delhi. Indian sociology has been far more eclectic in borrowing from both traditions. Indian sociologists often studied Indian societies that were both part of and not of one's own culture. It could also be dealing with both complex differentiated societies of urban modern India as well as the study of tribes in a holistic fashion. It had been feared that with the decline of simple societies, social anthropology would lose its specificity and merge with sociology. However there have been

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fruitful interchanges between the two disciplines and today often methods and techniques are drawn from both. There have been anthropological studies of the state and globalisation, which are very different from the traditional subject matter of social anthropology. On the other hand, sociology too has been using quantitative and qualitative techniques, macro and micro approaches for studying the complexities of modern societies.