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Course. Introduction to Sociology

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Answer no 1

Meaning of sociology.

The word sociology is a barbaric combination of Latin word 'socius' and Greek word Logus, Logus connotes study on a high level and socius points to society. Sociology is the science of society as a whole. No other social science endeavours to study society in totality. Social sciences like history, economics, political science, anthropology, psychology etc.

Scope of Sociology:

Scope refers to the field of sociology or area of sociological investigation. Unfortunately there is no consensus among sociologists about the scope of sociology. Since the days of Comte, Spencers, Durkheim and Giddings, sociologists have attempted to define and limit the field of sociological investigation.

Even so there is still no agreement among sociologists regarding the proper field of sociology. V.F. Calberton writes, "Since sociology is so elastic a science, it is difficult to determine just where its boundaries begin and end, where sociology becomes social psychology and where social psychology becomes sociology, or where economic theory becomes sociological doctrine or biological theory becomes sociological theory, something which is impossible to decide.

In sociological literature we find, as Ginsberg say, "Two somewhat different conceptions of the scope of sociology". There are two main schools of thought among the sociologists about the scope of sociology – Specialistic or Formalistic school and Synthetic school.

Specialistic or/Formalistic School:

One group of sociologists headed by German sociologists, George Simmel regard sociology as a specific and independent science. These sociologists want to keep the scope of sociology distinct from other social sciences. According to formalistic school sociology should deal with 'forms of social relationships'

Synthetic School:

According to synthetic school, sociology is a synthesis of social sciences or a general science. This conception of sociology is held by the second group of sociologists, best exemplified by Durkheim, Hobbes and Sorokin.

Sociology is a science of sciences and all the social sciences are included in its scope. The contention of this school is that all aspects of social life are interrelated; hence the study of one aspect of social life is not sufficient to understand the entire fact. For this reason sociology should systematically study social life as a whole.

The subject matter of sociology and other social sciences is the same. But there is difference in their viewpoint. Society is the subject matter of all social sciences but they study it in their own perspectives. Sociology has its own perspective and different system of explanation of facts. In political science, for example, authority, Government etc. are studied from the political view point. But sociology explains authority and Government in terms of sociological perspectives.

The scope of sociology differs from each of the social sciences because it studies social relationships, but the study in this sphere necessitates a study of all the social sciences. In studying any social phenomenon, it is necessary to contemplate upon all its aspects.

Answer no 2

Sociologists attempt to help us society functions

In the social sciences, specifically sociology and sociocultural anthropology, **functionalism** (also called **functional analysis**) is a sociological perspective that originally attempted to explain social institutions as collective means to fill individual biological needs. Later, it came to focus on the ways in which social institutions fill social needs, especially social stability. Functionalism is based around a number of key concepts. Firstly, society is viewed as a system – a collection of interdependent parts, with a tendency toward equilibrium. Secondly, there are functional requirements that must be met in a society for its survival (such as reproduction of the population). Thirdly, phenomena are seen to exist because they serve a function [Holmwood, 2005:87]. Functionalism is a major sociological tradition, alongside other schools of thought, such as conflict theory, interactionism, or exchange theory. The theory is associated with Émile Durkheim and more recently with Talcott Parsons.

- Many functionalists argue that social institutions are functionally integrated to form a stable system and that a change in one institution will precipitate a change in other institutions; this is expressed by Durkheim and others as an "organic analogy." **Structural functionalism**, which

was developed by Meyer Fortes and Edward Evan Evans-Pritchard, is the main theory of this concept.

- Functionalism was first developed in the 19th Century by Émile Durkheim (1858-1917), one of the early sociologists. The theory was developed by other sociologists in the 20th Century and was a popular idea until the 1970s when it came under criticism from new ideas.
- Functionalists believe that you can compare society to the human body when looking at how it works. The human body is made up of different parts, organs and systems. However, for a person to be healthy all their organs and body systems have to function together.
- Functionalist sociologists say that you can look at society in the same way. There are different parts of society e.g. the family, education, religion, law and order, media etc. but these different parts have to be seen in terms of the contribution that they make to the functioning of the whole of society. This 'organic analogy' sees the different parts of society working together to form a social system in the same way that the different parts of a human organism form a body system.
- The theory is about the structure and workings of society. Functionalists see society as made up of inter-dependent sections which work together to fulfill the functions necessary for the survival of society as a whole. People are socialised into roles and behaviours which fulfill the needs of society. Functionalists believe that behaviour in society is structural. They believe that rules and regulations help organise relationships between members of society. Values provide general guidelines for behaviour in terms of roles and norms. These institutions of society such as the family, the economy, the educational and political systems, are major aspects of the social structure. Institutions are made up of interconnected roles or inter-related norms e.g. Inter-connected roles in the institution of the family are of husband, father, wife, mother, son and daughter

Answer No 3

Sociology and other social sciences

Sociology is such a vastly dynamic field, that to limit it's definition to a few words would be an injustice to it. It is one of the several social sciences which deal with man and his activities in society; while the other sciences being history, geography, philosophy, political science, economics or even anthropology.

In other words, it won't be wrong to say that sociology is the basic social science which encompasses all other sciences in it. Man's life is multifaceted. It has the economic aspect, political aspect, religious aspect and so on and so forth.

Sociology not only borrows from other social sciences but also has given a lot to them by paving a new path and dimension to other social sciences. As mentioned in the beginning Sociology makes it possible to talk and inculcate various characteristics while studying about it, unlike other social sciences which aim at one particular aspect. However, sociology could be distinguished from other social sciences related to its contents and the emphasis is given on them. There are many parallels amongst almost all fields of sciences. In order to study these parallels, one must know to what extent and on what terms do they differ.

Relationship between sociology and Political Science

According to Morris Ginsberg, "Historically, sociology has its main roots in politics and philosophy of history." By Aristotle's and Plato's findings related to political science, we know that it is an independent academic discipline. Where political science deals with the problems of city or state in which men live; sociology focuses on the social lives and emotions related to the masses. Both are concerned with the study of the society but the opinions being subjectively different.

Whichever decision the government takes it is always regulated by the society and for the society. Any law is constructed, enforced or implemented because it has something to do with the masses.

Relationship between sociology and economics

Categorically speaking, Economics is the study of goods and services. However, Fairchild, Buck, and Slesinger write, "Economics is the study of man's activities devoted to obtaining the material means of the satisfaction of his wants." Sociology encompasses group interactions. The economic

processes and developments improve one's social life. Any economic change would naturally affect one's social life. Not forgetting that these economic processes and changes are largely determined by the social environment itself. Economics is concerned with the material wealth of man, and depending on his wealth it is determined that where he should be placed in the society. His respect, status, and class are all results of his monetary possessions.

The relationship between Sociology and History:

Everything or subject has deep roots which can only be known by studying their history. In order to know the sociology of something, it is necessary to know their history and they both are intimately related. Social institutions are in a way inherited from the past. If there's no solid data or evidence available then the study of Sociology could become difficult and unreliable without important sources. The transformation of Varna to Jati is an example of this reliability because of historical evidence and sources present. Jati was the outcome of societal changes. Without Sociology, history also cannot be understood.

History is the most primitive historical event alive. Sociology emerged in around the 19th century. Human interest and inquiry have always been the subject matter. History can be considered as more practical because it requires records and evidence. Whereas Sociology is more of experiences and observations which are subjective and could be impractical sometimes.