

INTRODUCTION TO SOCIOLOGY BA (Sociology)

INTRODUCTION

- Sociology is a science based on the study of humans and their culture. It is a combination of the organized study of the growth, architecture, relationships and attitudes of systematic groups of human beings. Sociology paves the way for scientists, social thinkers and activists in understanding the society. It also helps them in improving the quality of life of the people living in the society. The basic principles of sociology are as follows:
 - The behaviour of individuals in social groups is different than that when they are independent.
 - Individuals who are part of a social group follow the rules of that social group.
 - These rules are created and implemented socially.
 - Some people have more authority in the creation of rules than others.
 - Those who follow the rules are awarded and those who break them are penalized.
 - The rules of social groups have a scientific base. In a society, culture is responsible for giving an identity to the individual. Culture is imbibed in an individual at the time of his birth and persists till his death. This book—Introduction of Sociology—focuses on the scope, nature and definitions of sociology and society, behaviour of individuals in societies, effects of culture on the human personality, characteristics, and types and functions of culture. It also analyses the relationship between social interaction and socialization. It familiarizes the reader with the basic concepts in sociology, such as customs, competition and conflict, social institutions, roles, social control, formal and informal agencies of social control, polity and religion, and social conflict and social change. This book is written in a self-instructional format and is divided into seven units. Each unit begins with an Introduction to the topic followed by an outline of the Unit Objectives. The content is then presented in a simple and easy-to-understand manner, and is interspersed with Check Your Progress questions to test the reader's understanding of the topic. A list of Questions and Exercises is also provided at the end of each unit, and includes short-answer as well as long-answer questions. The Summary and Key Terms section are useful tools for students and are meant for effective recapitulation of the text.

NATURE OF SOCIOLOGY

- Sociology is one of the first social sciences to be acknowledged. The word 'sociology' owes its origin to the Latin word socius (companion) and the Greek word logy (study of). Sociology incorporates the study of social phenomena, social life, groups, institutions, associations and societies. It focuses on society from a scientific point of view. Sociology has a vast scope. It ranges from Individual to grouped social systems. The principles of sociology explain the behaviour of human beings and their existence with respect to their mutual interaction. In fact, sociology has always studied societies, both taken separately and together, as 'human societies'. The balance between the two aspects may vary, but at the end, the study of the one absolutely requires study of the other. Neither of them makes sense independently. For instance, considering India as a society, one can think of it in terms of cities, factories, schools, farms or prisons. One can also think of it in terms of politics, media or divinity. It is simple to connect all these factors. They can also be visualized as confined within the boundaries of Indian states and referred under the general heading of Indian society. In this unit, you will get acquainted with the nature and scope of sociology.

- Sociology emerged as a scientific discipline in the early 19th century, as a fundamentally new type of society based on new principles of social organization and new ideas of enlightenment. This led to a change in the mindset of people. Sociologists hoped not only to understand what held social groups together but also to develop an antidote to the social breakdown. In terms of science, sociology pertains to social groups, their hierarchies or forms of organization. It combines functions which are inclined to maintain or modify these forms of organization and their inter-group network. Sociology is concerned with interaction itself. A social group is a system of social interaction. Sociology is interested in social relationships, not because they are economic, political, religious, legal or educational, but because they are social at the same time. Further, in sociology, we do not study everything that happens in a society or under social conditions, but we study culture, social relationships, their specific forms, varieties and patterns. We study the combination of relations, how they build up smaller or greater systems, and how they respond to changes and changing demands or needs. French philosopher and sociologist Auguste Comte invented the term 'sociology' in the year 1838. Comte attempted to combine all the faculties of mankind, including history, psychology and economics. His own pattern of sociology was typical of the 19th century; he put across the theory that every man had experienced the same distinct historical stages and that the success of this progress was the solution to every social ill.

- (iii) Sociology is a categorical and not a normative discipline: Sociology does not make any kind of value judgments. Its approach is neither moral nor immoral but amoral. It is ethically neutral. It makes no recommendations on matters of social policy or legislation or programme. Sociology cannot deal with problems of good and evil, right and wrong, moral and immoral. (iv) Sociology is a pure science and not an applied science: The main aim of pure science is acquisition of knowledge, irrespective of whether the acquired knowledge is useful or can be put to use. On the other hand, applied science applies acquired knowledge into life. (v) Sociology is relatively abstract and not concrete science: It is not interested in concrete manifestation of human events. It is more concerned with the form of human events and their patterns. For instance, sociology is not specifically concerned with wars and revolutions but in the general social phenomena, as types of social conflict. (vi) Sociology is not based on particular subjects or individuals, but is a general science: Sociology tries to find out general laws or principles about human interaction and associations about the nature, forms, and content and structure of human groups and societies. It adopts a general approach on the basis of a study of some selected events. (vii) Sociology is a rational and empirical science: There are two broad ways of approach to scientific knowledge: one is empiricism and the other is rationalism. Empiricism emphasizes experiences and facts that result from observation and experiment. Rationalism stresses on reason and theories that result from logical inference. In sociological inquiry, both are significant.