Structure of the Answer and Line of Argument

Sociology- The Discipline

Modernity and social changes in Europe and emergence of sociology
Scope of the subject and comparison with other social sciences
Sociology and common sense

Q. How is emergence of sociology linked with modernization of Europe?

(10 marks)

Structure of the Answer and Line of Argument

Introduction: Briefly discuss the concept of modernity and relate it to the socio-economic and political changes taking place in European society since 14th century (2 marks)

Thesis: Society of paradox: Hope and Despair – Signs of progress and concern: social, economic and political (3 marks)

Anti-thesis: Intellectual conditions – Ideas of Enlightenment scholars and the Conservative reaction to the Enlightenment (3 marks)

Synthesis: Emergence of Sociology as a by-product of the confluence of the two intellectual currents – Enlightenment and Conservatives (2 marks)

A. Modernity refers to the rational transformation of social, psychological, economic and political aspects of society. The beginning of the process of modernization could be traced back to the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century when the socio-economic and political institutions in the Western European society were undergoing drastic transformations due to Industrial and French Revolution.

The newly emerging modern industrial society, however, was a society of paradox. It was a society of hope as well as despair. In socio-economic terms, surplus production and enormous capital accumulation coincide with mass dislocation of the population (enclosure movement), disruption of traditional community bonds, extreme economic exploitation and inequalities. Further, the

orthodox religious ideology of the Catholic Church was being challenged by scientific temper and secular outlook, leading to increasing desacralization of social life. Similarly, on the political front, new liberal ideologies propagating the values of equality, liberty and freedom challenged the divine theory of kingship, and gave rise to the demands for greater political rights, often leading to civil wars and political movements like French Revolution.

Intellectuals responding to these profound changes were divided in their opinion with regard to the nature, impact and direction of such changes. Enlightenment scholars like Rousseau, Montesquieu, Adam Smith, Saint-Simon and Auguste Comte had a positive view of the newly emerging social order. They considered such changes as progressive and hence desirable. Whereas, the Conservatives like Louis de Bonald and Joseph de Maistre had a rather skeptic view of these profound and far-reaching institutional changes that were taking place in society. They were preoccupied with the concern for social stability and order in the society as the new social order was marked by violent political revolutions, class wars, extreme economic inequalities and widespread misery and poverty.

Thus, while social conditions created the need for sociology, intellectual conditions provided the means for building sociology as a distinct discipline. It may be said that while the goals of sociology (i.e., to restore social order and harmony) were influenced by the conservative reaction, the means to discover such social laws that govern social order (i.e., through scientific methodology) were largely dictated by enlightenment scholars.

Q. 'Sociology without History is rootless and History without Sociology is fruitless.' Elaborate. (10)

Structure of the Answer and Line of Argument

Introduction: A brief introduction about the nature and scope disciplines of sociology and history. (2)

Thesis: How sociology without history is rootless? (3)

Anti-thesis: How history without sociology is fruitless? (3)

Synthesis: Highlight the complementarity of the two disciplines in the era of multidisciplinary approach (2)

A. Sociology and history, both, are social science disciplines and concerned with human activities and events. Though both the disciplines share the same subject matter, i.e. society, yet they differ in terms of their approach, objective and methodology. While sociology is primarily concerned with the present and to some extent with the study of recent past and future, history only studies the past. Since the present society cannot be analysed without reference to the past society, it is here that these are related to each other. Commenting on this close relationship between history and sociology, Sir John Robert Seeley, (1834–1895), an English historian, stated that 'History without sociology has no fruit, sociology without history has no root'.

Sociology without History is rootless in the sense that for a comprehensive understanding of the present, knowledge of past is essential. Sociologists must hold up the past to understand the present. Thus, in this sense, history supplies the material in the form of historical data to sociology for analysing the factors responsible for the continuity and change in social customs and institutions. For example, Marx has used historical data in his works to explain the changing nature of the mode of production in human societies overtime. Likewise, Durkheim and Weber too have relied on historical data to develop their theories.

Similarly, a mere chronological and descriptive account of events of the past would be fruitless if certain cause and effect relationship between historical events vis-à-vis several socio-economic and political factors is not established. Such generalizations not only facilitate a comprehensive understanding of historical phenomena but also enable the social scientists to predict and caution about future developments. For example, historical social practices of sati and child marriage in India, which were largely described in religious terms could be better understood when explained from a patriarchal and socio-economic perspective. Likewise, though India's struggle for independence is a historical event but Indian sociologist

A.R. Desai in his famous book Social Background of Indian Nationalism has explained the emergence of nationalism in India in Marxist terms. Desai explains that how the convergence of economic interest of various social groups laid the foundation of early nationalism in India. Thus, it is rightly said that 'Sociology without History is rootless and History without Sociology is fruitless'.

Q. Is sociology common-sense? Give reasons in support of your arguments.

(10)

Structure of the Answer and Line of Argument

Introduction: Meaning of sociology and common-sense (2)

Thesis: Nature of traditional form of knowledge (common-sense) and its limitations (3)

Anti-thesis: How sociology is different from common-sense? (3)

Synthesis: Complementarity between sociology and common-sense (2)

A. Sociology as a discipline basically implies a systematic and scientific study of society. It emerged in the early nineteenth century and is one of the youngest among social sciences. Common-sense beliefs, on the other hand, are often based on traditional customs and values, religious beliefs and practices. Common-sense may also consist of a group's accumulation of collective guesses, speculations, and trial-and-error learnings. Prior to emergence of sociology, most of the ideas, concepts and theories related to society and its ideal form, were largely based on common-sense.

To many people, sociology appears to be a laborious study of the obvious, an expensive way to discover what everybody already knows. To these people, sociology is merely common-sense. But this is not true. Common-sense to a large extent tends to be speculative and intuitive. It is contextual and subjective. One person's common-sense could be non-sense for another. Most importantly, common-sense is non-reflexive in nature. That is, it does not question its own origins. As a result, it tends to be conservative in outlook and status quoist in nature. Since common-sense beliefs are not always supported by a systematic and scientific body of evidence, there is a possibility that some common-sense conclusions could be based on ignorance, prejudice, and mistaken interpretation. Hence, there is high possibility for some common-sense beliefs to be mutually conflicting and contradictory. When facing such conflicting common-sense ideas, how can we tell which are correct and which are false? We can get the answer from sociological research. Common sense thus, preserves both folk wisdom and folk non-sense, and to sort out one from the other is a task for science.

Thus, sociology is more than common-sense because it is based largely on scientific evidence. Today, science is replacing common-sense as a source of dependable knowledge. Early sociologists distinguished the subject matter of sociology from that of common-sense. For example, positivists like Emile Durkheim (Structural Approach) focused on the study of only those aspects of social reality which could be empirically observed and quantified. Their primary objective was to discover universal laws of human behaviour, in other words, to arrive at universal generalizations. Hence, they completely ignored the subjective dimension of human behaviour (unique meanings and values) for the simple reason that it could not be subjected to empirical observation and quantification. As stated earlier, common-sense is contextual and subjective.

However, other sociologists belonging to non-positivist or anti-positivist tradition like Max Weber (Social Action Approach) also focused on the study of subjective or contextual aspect of social reality. These scholars suggested that at best only limited generalizations are possible in social sciences.

To conclude, it may be said that both sociology and common-sense share a complementary relationship with each other. While common-sense acts as a source of ideas which facilitate the formulation of hypothesis to carry out sociological research, sociology, on the other hand, serves to verify and validate various commonly held beliefs.

Q. Sociology and Anthropology (10)

Structure of the Answer and Line of Argument

Introduction: Sociology and Anthropology (Social Anthropology) – Context of their emergence (2)

Thesis: Initial phase of divergence: Subject matter – Objective – Methodology

(2)

Anti-Thesis: Later phase of convergence: Subject matter – Methodology; Factors responsible for convergence: industrialization, urbanization, and globalization

(3)

Synthesis: Mutual exchange between the two disciplines – social anthropological data and studies have informed sociological theories (for example, Durkheim's study of religion) (3)

Q. Sociology emerged as a conservative reaction to the Enlightenment. Comment. (20)

Key words: 'emerged', 'enlightenment', 'comment'

Phrase: 'as a conservative reaction'

The examiner expects from the candidate a basic understanding of social conditions in Europe that influenced the emergence of sociology as a discipline. A deeper and more analytical understanding is expected from the candidate on the intellectual conditions, particularly during the early period of emergence of sociology, that shaped the initial theoretical and methodological thrust in sociology. Last, but not the least, this initial theoretical and methodological focus in sociology needs to be discussed within the overall context of philosophical debates taking place during the period of enlightenment. The candidate must clearly highlight that how sociology as a discipline emerged 'as a conservative reaction' to the enlightenment. Answer should be analytical, rather than descriptive.

Evaluation Guidelines

Meaning of enlightenment and conceptual clarity of social and intellectual conditions that influenced the emergence of sociology (6)

Concern among conservatives (Maistre and Bonald) as well as early social theorists about the spread and threat of revolutionary ideology in Europe, particularly after Industrial Revolution and French Revolution (4)

Enlightenment philosophers emphasized on 'individual', 'freedom' and 'autonomy' but early sociologists emphasized on 'society' as a unit of analysis, focused on the process of socialization, interdependence among parts of society for the maintenance and sustenance of equilibrium in society (functionalism), highlighted the significance of scientific research for corrective social legislations to bring about social reforms – gained support from the governments in Europe (8-10)

Discretion of the examiner with regard to sociological articulation and presentation by the candidate (2)

Q. Is society a process or a structure? Explain. (10)

A. The concept of society constitutes the core of the discipline of Sociology. Sociology is nothing but a scientific study of society and a variety of interactions that unfold within and between individuals and groups. According to MacIver, society is the web of social relationships and it is always changing.

Society can be looked at both from functional as well as structural perspective. When looked from functional perspective, society is understood as a complex network of constantly evolving reciprocal relationships among the members of a society, with individual members helping each other to fulfill their respective interests. From this perspective, society appears as a process – a process involving 'mutual recognition' or 'reciprocal awareness' of the interacting individuals on one hand, and, a 'sense of belongingness' on the other. However, when looked from structural perspective, society appears as a structure – a structure of relatively patterned social relation- ships and institutionalized social norms in the form of social statuses and roles. The term social structure refers to the pattern of interrelated statuses and roles found in a society at a particular point of time and constituting a relatively stable set of social relations. Although, the social structure itself remains invisible, it silently shapes our actions.

It is important to understand that if we consider just a point of time, then, society appears to be structure. For example, in pre-British period, the Indian society was characterized by rigid caste hierarchy. Each caste was defined in terms of purity and pollution, and identified in terms of certain privileges and prescriptions. Thus, to an extent, a hierarchical and inegalitarian social structure of traditional Indian society could be identified. The same holds true for gender roles as well. However, when we look at society over a period of time, then, it appears to be a process. For example, we can notice significant changes in the caste system as well as gender roles. These changes are basically the changes that occur in the rights and duties associated with a particular social status in society. This subsequently leads to overall social change in society.

The society is thus viewed both as a process as well as structure. One who studies society must take into account both these views. As MacIver has also said: 'Society exists only as a time-sequence. It is a becoming, not a product'. This is the essence of society. Thus, society is to be interpreted in a wider sense. It is both a structural and functional organization. It consists in the mutual interactions and mutual interrelations of the individuals but it is also a structure formed by these relations.

DIALECTICS IAS

Old Rajinder Nagar, New Delhi – 110060

Email: dialectics79@gmail.com Ph: 9811633903 (Messages Only)

Website: www.dialecticsias.com

Telegram Channel: Dialectics IAS (Sociology)