

Behaviour of people is controlled both by positive and negative sanctions. The aim of both these types of sanction 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.

### Emergence of Sociology

During the 19th century sociology emerged as a separate social science in Europe and its objective was the study of society. 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.

A sociologist is interested in the general study of social behaviour as it occurs in groups, large or small, and lays special stress on understanding social life in the contemporary world. The word 'general' has been used as other social science disciplines deal with more specific areas. For example, a political scientist studies governmental functions and activities and an economist studies production and distribution of goods. It is, however, difficult to draw an exact line of difference. Social psychology, social anthropology, political science and economics, all in a sense, have human social life as their general subject.

As sociology is a relatively young discipline compared with the discipline of philosophy, economics and political science, sometimes, people confuse it with social work. Sociology is used in the discipline of social work to analyse and understand social problems. Social work is concerned with the uplift of those socially deprived, physically handicapped, etc. Sociology is not concerned with the reformation of society as such nor is it directly involved in social planning or directed change. The sociological understanding and research can help in better planning and in finding ways and means of acceptance of improved practices, in the formulation of development policies and programmes. It is

generally accepted that sociologists do not interfere with social process. They are supposed to be value-neutral, i.e., they are not supposed to have any bias or prejudice in the analysis of the social behaviour. There are, however, at present, some, who question this and feel that sociologists must take an active role in the development process.

Sociology is defined as the study of social life and group interaction and social behaviour. In order to understand social life, sociology is interested in the study of the organisation and the functioning of societies or social groups.

### Major Concerns of Sociology

Sociology seeks to study the society and to analyse it in terms of the social relations that have a pattern. Sociology addresses itself to three basic questions:

- (a) how and why societies emerge?
- (b) how and why societies persist? and
- (c) how and why societies change?

Sociology has been concerned with the evolution of society. It has tried to analyse the factors and forces underlying the historical transformations of society. For example, societies have evolved from primitive tribal state to rural communities. How villages have become important centres of commercial activity or of art and culture and grown into towns and cities.

Sociology has also been concerned with the units of social life. The attempt has been to look at various types of groups, communities, associations and society. The effort has been to study the pattern of social relationships in these units. An important area which sociology deals with is social institutions. The institutions provide a structure for the society and perform functions, which enable the society to meet its needs. In any society, there are five basic social institutions including: (a) Family, (b) Political institutions, (c) Economic institutions, (d) Religious institutions; (e) Educational institutions. However, in more complex societies, there may be many other institutions such as bureaucracy, military organisations, welfare and recreational organisations, etc. Caste is also an institution, which is more or less peculiar to India.