

NATURE OF SOCIAL THOUGHT

Aristotle has well said that man is a social animal and as a logical corollary he affects as well as is affected by the activities of other members of society. Each individual has his own attitudes, aspirations and outlook towards society. Moreover, he is also aware of the views and ideologies prevalent in the society. This necessitates a scientific and systematic study of social thought with all its implications and repercussions for the society at large. In order to fulfil this need a thorough study of history of social thought is made in sociology.

All subtle thinking is highly abstract and so is the case with social thought. Indeed the problems of society investigated by thinkers and social scientists are all abstract. These problems are scientifically investigated by the sociologists who look into their causal relations and subsequently generalization of conclusions. Based upon the conclusions patterns of human behaviour and social norms are defined. These investigative processes are part of abstract thinking which in its very nature is scientific and is pursued only by social thinkers, philosophers and scholars.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY OF HISTORY OF SOCIAL THOUGHT

Individuals and groups are confronted with problems many of which are social, born out of their social and cultural milieu. The concern of the individual or group is generally the cause behind the desire to run the society and the daily life of the individual in smooth and undisturbed manner and to avoid the mal-functioning which such problems may generate. The desire for resolution of social problems necessitates the study of society and social processes. Thus it is the process involved in the development of social thought that a professional social scientist or a student of sociology finds an acceptable solution and a degree of confidence in formulation of proposals or strategy for the solution of the social problems.

1. Representation of Contemporary Scene: The social thinking does not originate in vacuum. It takes birth in the context of society. Peculiar social circumstances give birth to social ideas and thought. Therefore we can easily understand and appreciate the social environments and circumstances of a particular society by the study of social thoughts and ideas of that society. Social thought mirrors

the environment of a society at any particular period. The social ideology is always linked with the contemporary situation in a society by way of cause and effect. This causal relation is made plain by the study of the history of social thought.

2. **Helpful in the Solution of Social Problems:** A knowledge of the social history of thought acquaints us with the various social problems encountered in different societies at different time. We also learn the background and the causes of these problems and also the attempts to solve them and what consequences these had led to. This knowledge can be helpful in solving the problems of our own age. Indeed no contemporary social problem can be grasped fully without an extensive knowledge of the history of social thought.
3. **Rectification of Errors:** Both man and society are fallible. Some wrongs and misdeeds are committed both at the individual as well as collective level. These erroneous acts can be rectified by experience. No man nor any collective group can have all kinds of experiences. We need the knowledge of social history in order to widen the horizons of our experience. Indeed the history of social thought is nothing but a narration of the experiences of societies at different stages in history. Thus a study of the history of social thought can be of much help to sociologists, social workers, planners and administrators etc. in understanding social problems.

DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL THOUGHT

The origin of social thought can be traced back to the period when the individual under the pressure of complex social problems began thinking in terms of inter-personal relationship for their understanding and solution. In this way, social thinking did originate. But in ancient period social thought was unorganized as there was no systematic study of social problems.

EARLIEST SOCIAL THOUGHT

Pre-literate people produced some of the simplest forms of social thought. Their loose forms of family life displayed some sort of social organization. The clan suggested social fealty and communal property was a testimony of an elementary type of social thinking. Likewise, warfare generated a feeling of tribal loyalty.