

**SOCIAL SCIENCE : AN INTRODUCTION**

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## **1.0 Objective:**

A first and no less important issue concerns the objective to improve society. How is this to be accomplished ? If the funding and support for social scientific research comes from the government and social structures within society it may be difficult for social scientists to separate themselves from the status quo and suggest and implement changes to those very institutions from which they derive support.

## **1.1 SOCIAL SCIENCE: An Introduction :**

Social science has not been a clearly defined area historically, indeed, the classification of the various disciplines as social science rather than humanities or life science has not been consistent over the years, each discipline that can be considered a social science has developed rather independently. Thus the history of the social sciences has generally been divided according to discipline and there have been few attempts to write a history of the social sciences as a whole rather than to relate to a specific historical context.

In ancient civilization, there was no distinction between the disciplines now considered the liberal arts and the sciences. There was no difference between mathematics and the study of history, poetry or politics. Aristotle studied planetary motion and poetry with the same methods and Plato mixed geometrical proofs with his demonstration on the state of intrinsic knowledge. Only with the development of mathematical proof did there gradually arise a perceived difference between "Scientific" disciplines and other the humanities or the liberal arts.

After the fall of Rome, which did little in the way of Science, theorizing was 'transferred to the priesthood and a group of scholars known as the scholastics. Thomas Aquinas of the thirteenth century in his Summa Theologiae, developed ideas about man and society that contain political, social,

economic, anthropological and geographical conceptions. The influence of the church through the scholastics remained strong until the enlightenment, leaving no room for the development of ideas regarding human nature that were separate from theology. Significant contributions to the social sciences were also made in medieval Islamic Civilization. Al-Biruni has been called "the first anthropologist". He wrote detailed comparative studies on the anthropology of peoples, religions and cultures in the middle east, Mediterranean and South Asia.

The Age of Enlightenment advocated reason as a means to allow human beings to obtain objective truth about the whole of reality, freeing humankind from superstition and religious bonds.

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century social science was called "moral philosophy" as contrasted with natural philosophy and mathematics. It included the study of natural theology, natural ethics, natural jurisprudence, economics and finance.

The industrial revolution created a series of social, economic and political problems particularly in managing supply and demand in their political economy, the management of resources for military and developmental use, the creation of mass education system to train individuals in reasoning and problems in managing the effects of industrialization itself. To manage the new enterprises private and governmental bodies required more data. More data required a means of reducing it to information upon which to make decisions. Number and charts could be interpreted more quickly and moved more efficiently than long texts. Increasingly, quantitative and qualitative methods began to be integrated in the study of human action and its implications and consequences.

### **1.2. Definition :**

Social Science is a discipline or branch of science that deals with the socio-cultural aspect of human behaviour. It is defined by many social scientist. According to James High "Social Sciences are those bodies of learning and study which recognize the simultaneous and mutual action of Physical and non-Physical stimuli which produce social relation."

### **1.3. Meaning :**

The term 'Social Science' did not appear until the nineteenth century, when the social sciences began to be recognized as distinct disciplines. However the origins of their ideas and goals are located much further back in time. Human beings have always been curious about themselves and the god. However it is more difficult to study these topics to study the natural environment, or even theorize about the nature of God since the nature of the social scientific inquiry is necessarily subjective. We are studying ourselves. Perhaps, therefore it was inevitable that scholars first developed their understanding of God and nature before making inroads into the study of human beings.

### **1.4. Concept :**

The social science, in studying subjective, inter-subjective and structural aspect of society were often referred to as "Soft Sciences" in contrast to the "hard sciences", such as the natural sciences which focus on objective aspect of nature. In more recent times however this distinction has become blurred with some social science disciplines often employing strictly quantitative methodologies. Conversely the interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary nature of scientific inquiry into human behaviour and social and environmental factors affecting it have led to so-called hard sciences employing aspects of social science methodology.

## **1.5. Social Science Disciplines :**

There has always been some fluidity over which areas of study are included within social sciences. Nevertheless Anthropology, Economics, Linguistics, Psychology and Sociology are foundational. Communication, education, law, political science and social work may be included as well. Certain sub-fields of other disciplines, such as human geography, traditionally, the study of history has been considered a part of humanities. They may also be classified as social science.

### **1.5.1. Anthropology :**

Anthropology consist of the study of humanity. It is a holistic discipline concerned with all humans at all times in all humanity's dimension - a study of the totality of human existence. In pursuit of this holistic goal anthropology is methodologically diverse, using both quantitative and qualitative methods such as first hand case studies of living cultures, careful excavations of material remains and interpretations of both living and extinct linguistic practices.

Anthropology consists of two major divisions: Physical Anthropology which deals with the human physical form from the past to present and Cultural Anthropology which studies human culture in all aspects.

### **1.5.2 Economics :**

Economics is a social science that seeks to analyse and describe the production, distribution and consumption of wealth. The word "Economics" is from the Greek oikos "Family household estate" and "Custom law" and hence means "household management" or "management of the state". One of the uses of economics is to explain how economics as economic system work and what the relations are between economic players in the larger society. Methods of Economic analysis have been increasingly applied to fields that involve people making choices in a social context such as crime, education, the family health, law, politics, religion, social institutions and war.

### **1.5.3. Geography :**

Geography is the science that studies the lands, the features, the inhabitants and the phenomena of the earth. Geography has been called "the world discipline" and "the bridge between the human and the physical sciences". The field of geography is generally split into two distinct branches : Physical and human, physical geography examines phenomena 'related to the natural environment: climate, oceans, soils and the measurement of earth, Human geography focuses largely on the built environment and how space is created, viewed and managed by human as well as the influence humans have on the space they occupy through fields as diverse as cultural geography, transport icts geometrics and environmental geography which look at the interactions between the environment and humans, combining physical and human geography.

### **1.5.4. History :**

Traditionally the study of history has been considered as part of the humanistic alongside a subject as literature, however in modern academics, history is increasingly classified as a social science. History traditionally refers to the study and interpretation of the written record of past human activity, people, societies and civilizations, and leads up to the present day. It is the continuous, systematic, narrative and research of past events relating to the human species; as well as the study of all events in time, in relation of humanity.

The term "history" comes from the Greek historia "an Account of one's inquiries" and shares that etymology with the English word "story". History can be seen as the total of many things taken together and the spectrum of events and actions occurring in order, leading from the past to present and into the future.

The historical method comprises the techniques and guidelines by which historians use primary sources and other evidence to research and then to write history. Events occurring before the introduction of the earliest known written and historical records a period informed by the fields of palaeontology. In cultures where written records are common, many historians supplement the written records with oral history. The history of, say the Australian aborigines is almost all drawn from oral sources.

### **1.5.5. Political Science :**

Political science is an academic and research discipline that deals with the theory and practice of politics and the description and analysis of political system and political behaviour. Herbert Baxter Adams is credited with coining the phrase "Political Science" while teaching history at Johns Hopkins University. Political Science is methodologically diverse. Approaches to the discipline include classical political philosophy, interpretivism, structuralism, behaviouralism, realism, pluralism and institutionalism.

Political Science is one of the social sciences which uses methods and techniques that relate to the kinds of inquiries sought. Primary sources such as historical documents, interviews and official statements as well as the secondary sources such as scholarly articles are used in building and testing theories. Empirical methods include survey research statistical analysis, case studies, experiments and model building. Political scientists study the allocation and transfer of power in decision-making, the rules and systems of governance including governments and international organization, political behaviour and public policies. They measure the success of governance and specific policies by examining factors such as stability, justice, material wealth, and peace. Some political scientists seek to advance positive thesis by analysing politics. Other advance normative thesis by making specific policy recommendation.

### **1.5.6. Sociology :**

Sociology is defined as the science of society, and society must be defined by sociology. Such a situation often occurs at the initial steps of scientific inquiry. The problem can be solved by giving to the object of study, a working definition, an approximation sufficient for the present purposes. So in a preliminary way, society may be defined as men (human beings) in interdependence. Men in interdependence therefore may be taken as the subject matter of sociology.

It is a social science involving the application of social lives of people, groups and societies, sometimes defined as the study of social interactions. Generally it concerns itself with the social rules and processes that bind and separate people not only as individuals, but as members of associations, groups, communities and institutions and includes the examination of the organisation and development of human social life.

Sociology includes demography, which studies changes in population size or type, Criminology, which studies criminal behaviour and eviance; Social stratification, which studies the quality and class structure, Political sociology which studies government and Laws, Sociology of race and

Sociology of gender, which examine the social construction of race and gender as well as race and gender, inequality.

Lastly we can say that it also include diversity of research methods, including case studies, historical research, interviewing, participant observation, social network analysis, survey research, statistical analysis, and model building, among other approaches.

### **1.6. Scope & Significance :**

The scope of social science is very vast and wide as the world itself and as lengthy as the history of man. According to Michaelis "the breadth of social studies programme should provide for a variety of experiences so that the child's learning will be well rounded. and well balanced." The main points are as follows

**1.6.0.** Vast and wide as the world. It is as wide as the world and as long as the world. It is the study of human relationship in areas such as :

**1.6.1.** People of one's own nationality and people across the world.

**1.6.2.** People and various kinds of institutions.

**1.6.3.** People and Earth.

**1.6.4.** People and time

**1.6.5.** People and resources.

**1.6.6.** A functional study of natural and physical science and fine arts.

Social science - Natural science - Physical science are inter related.

Development, change etc. in one field effect the others.

**1.6.7.** A study of current affairs

**1.6.8.** A study leading to international understanding

**1.6.9** Practical study of various resources.

### **1.7. Nature :**

The real nature of this discipline can be well understood by analysing the above definitions.

**1.7.1.** A unique combination of various disciplines.

**1.7.2.** A study of human relationships

**1.7.3.** A study of man's development through ages.

**1.7.4.** A realistic courses of study.

**1.7.5.** It forms an important part of the core-curriculum.

**1.7.6.** It includes commitment to action.

**1.7.7.** Aims at preparing the learner for wholesome social living.

### **1.8 Future :**

The Social sciences are still relatively new, not more than two centuries old, and there are a number of issues and directions about which there is still no consensus. One issue concerns the possibility of a 'general theory' of the social sciences. There continues to be little movement towards consensus on what methodology might have the power and refinement to connect such a "grand theory" with the various middle -range theories that have been developed within the various social sciences.

### **1. 9 Summary :**

In this way we can say that social science is related to society and it is discipline or branch of science that deals with Socio-cultural aspect of human behaviour. It emphasizes on inculcating good qualities like truthfulness, sincerity in human being. Social Sciences help to understand the various aspects of society and utilize them.

Social science must be accurate and reliable and useful. Social Sciences are larger bodies of organized and authentic knowledge representing human affairs. The purpose of social sciences is to find out new truth about human relationships. In social science social utility is the primary object. Social science are the part of cultural knowledge having direct bearing on man's activities in every field.

### **1. 10 Questions for Exercise :**

1. What do you mean by Social Sciences? Discuss its scope.
2. Define Social Science. Discuss its nature.
3. Give a brief note on the subject of Social Science.
4. Throw light on significance and future of Social Science.

### **1. 11 Suggested Readings :**

1. C.N.ShankerRao– Primary Principles of Sociology with An Introduction to Social Thought, S.Chand& Co. Ltd. Ram Nagar, New Delhi - 110 055.
2. E.H.Car– What is History Penguin Books, London, 1964.
3. T.B.Bottomore– Aguide to Problems and Lit~rature, Blackie & Sons (India) Ltd. Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, New Delhi.
4. Michael Haralarnbus with Robin Heald - Sociology Themes and Perspectives, Delhi Oxford University Press, Bombay, Calcutta, Madras.

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