

METHODOLOGY AND PERSPECTIVES OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

B.A. SOCIOLOGY

CORE COURSE – I

I Semester



UNIVERSITY OF CALICUT

SCHOOL OF DISTANCE EDUCATION

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MODULE I

INTRODUCTION TO SOCIAL SCIENCES

Social Sciences- Its Emergence

Life on our planet has undergone tremendous changes since its inception. This applies both to the natural world into which we are born, and the social world that we have created and to which each generation contributes. Clearly, at birth all living things enter a physical world that is not of their own making. Early humans did not understand this world and attributed many phenomena to spirits and supernatural beings. Today, the natural world is studied by the methods of science in such disciplines as Biology, Physics, Chemistry, ecology and so on.

Each new born human being, however, also enters a social world that has been shaped by those born previously and is continually reshaped by each new generation. The existence of this social world, while taken for granted by the majority of people, is of tremendous importance to humans. It is what distinguishes them from other animals. Animals, aside from certain biological adaptations to new environments or climates, retain an essentially unchanged lifestyle dramatically. This social world was not always well understood either, but in the last 200 years, disciplines have originated with the goal of examining it with the same scientific methodology that the exact science use. These principles are collectively called the Social sciences.

Science is a special way of knowing the world around us. What is important in science is, of course, 'what we know', but what is more important is 'how we know'. Science is broadly classified into: Physical, Natural and Social Sciences. Physical Sciences deal with matter and energy; whereas Natural Sciences deal with plant and animal life. Social sciences deal with the behavior of individuals or groups or institutions in a society.

Social sciences comprise of various disciplines dealing with human life, behavior, social groups and social institutions. They consist of anthropology, behavioral sciences such as commerce, Demography, Education, geography, history, political Science, Psychology etc.

Though these sciences are treated as independent disciplines with specialization in them, they are inter-disciplinary in nature, since the various aspects of human behavior are inter-related. According to Myrdal no social science by itself is sufficiently self contained nor any social problem. Thus, the problem of poverty is not merely an economic problem, or a social problem or a political issue alone. The approaches and theories of all these disciplines must be blended to provide a meaningful and valid approach to the problem. This inter-disciplinary approach facilitates better understanding of the complex level of Social- Psychological- Political forces interrelated and interwoven in modern life.

The perspectives in Humanities and Social Sciences are deeply influenced by values, beliefs, and historical concerns of social scientists. These factors influence the concepts and theories in these disciplines. Compared to Natural Sciences, social factors are more influential in

the construction of Social Science theories and tools of social studies. Humanities and Social Sciences offer us not only a method to understand social reality around us but also contribute insights into the nature of human beings. The scientific approach to the study of human beings seeks to emphasize the need to blend the perspectives and methods of natural sciences, social sciences and humanities together. This has been done to gain a comprehensive understanding of human nature and social institutions.

Philosophical Foundations

All knowledge factual and speculative comes under the heading of philosophy. A civilization grows in complexity; the knowledge gradually began to separate into different disciplines. The first division made was that between the natural sciences and social sciences.

The most primitive social thought appears in the form of axioms, proverbs and folktales they can in short be termed as folk thinking. As at that time people were living more or less in a state of nature. Natural factors colored their thoughts to a very great extent. The idea of spirits or Gods and of religion was crude and vague. It was merely an apprehension of some superior power. There was also an absence of philosophical speculation in primitive folk thought. A comparative study of primitive social saying of different societies reveals that many of them convey the same idea. This shows that the problem of different primitive societies were also some extend same.

The civilization of Babylonia, Egypt and in Indian emerged several thousand years before the beginning of Christian era. Govt. of Babylonia and Egypt were monarchy and they ruled not only by divine right and but also by divine being. In India the most ancient sources of social thought are religious texts like the Vedas, Upanishads, Sutras and Puranas. The Hindu Epics the Ramayana, Mahabharata and Bhagavat Geetha also present many basic social thoughts of Hindu society. Another very important source in the code of law known as the Laws of Manu (Manusmirithi) in which the rights, laws, customs and social codes have prescribed in detail. Apart from Hinduism properly Brahmanism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism also developed simultaneously on the Indian soil.

The systematic social thinking emerged in the West when some social thinkers like Socrates, Aristotle and Plato devoted themselves to the study of social problem on certain scientific methods. Plato in his 'Republic' attempts to explain numerous social phenomena. He had advanced concept on human nature and behavior. His concept even after centuries is not entirely incompatible with the socio-psychological findings of our time. He explained that man behaves in the same way as his society teaches him to behave. Man's behavior is the product of his society in and by which he has been trained. Later his student Aristotle in his great work 'Ethics and Politics' which still preserve with great importance, put forward the concept about man is a "Social animal".

The Greeks are credited with being the first to establish rational theory, independent of theology, to grasp rational concepts and using them as a way of looking at reality and seeing logical connections and the change to the empirical and anti-mystical from non-empirical and mystical. The Greek thinkers explained how, when all things change. Things must also be simultaneously unchanging. Otherwise, something would have to be created out of nothing, which is a logical impossibility. Thus, the history of social sciences begins with the Greeks.

Since the 16th and 17th century, modern philosophy refers to objectivity as the subject's ability to consider or represent external objects without being impaired by subjective feelings, pre-

notions, prejudices and biases. As a consequence, objectivity emphasized the study of phenomena that is independent of mind or consciousness. Auguste Comte, who introduced the term 'Positivism', was the foremost to import the goal of objectivity in Social Sciences. For him, objective science and observational science were approximately similar.

Middle ages and Renaissance:

The period from about 1453 to the end of the 17th century was characterised by the rebirth and proliferation of ancient knowledge. This came to be known as Renaissance. Going back, during the middle ages, religion was so central to life that the study of religion was taken for granted, and it tied together all other fields of study.

As the renaissance, dawned and continued, the religious tie provoked tension as scholars in the various fields of study came to conclusions different from the Church's doctrines, beginning a long conflict between religious learning and beliefs and so called rationalist learning and beliefs. The tension between religious explanations and rationalist expectations was inevitable. Human reason placed above faith in rationalist approach. Here on looks for logical connections and proofs. But a religious explanation had no need to prove anything. Throughout the renaissance, rationalism replaced religion as the organizing body of knowledge and, as it did, the various fields of knowledge became divided along rationalist lines. The rationalist revolution came much later to the humanities. It was primarily from philosophy, not history, that most of the social sciences emerged.

Universities throughout the world consider the study of social sciences as vital for the future of society, and must cater for many degrees in the multiplicity of social science world. The term 'Social Science' first appeared in the work by William Thompson in 1824, "An inquiry into the principles of Distribution of Wealth most Conducive to Human Happiness; applied to the Newly Proposed system of Voluntary Equality of Wealth". In the first half of the 20th century, statistics became an independent discipline of applied mathematics. Statistical methods were used confidently, for instance in an increasingly statistical view of biology. The first thinkers to attempt to combine inquiry of the type they saw in Darwin with the exploration of human relationships, which, evolutionary theory implied, would be based on selective forces. One of the most persuasive advocates for the view of scientific treatment of philosophy would be John Dewey (1859-1952). As Marx, he made an attempt to weld Hegelian idealism and logic to experimental science.

With the rise of the idea of quantitative measurement in physical sciences, it came to be accepted that any knowledge that one cannot measure quantitatively, is a poor sort of knowledge. Now, the stage was set for the conception of humanities as being precursors to "Social Science". By applying scientific method of study, social sciences have grown and advanced man's knowledge of himself.

There was the belief that the clarity and simplicity of mathematical expression avoided systematic errors of holistic thinking and logic rooted in traditional argument. This trend, part of the larger movement known as 'modernism' provided the rhetorical edge for the expansion of social sciences.

Enlightenment and Development of Scientific spirit:

The period of Enlightenment was 1650 CE and 1700CE, and continued for about a century. In this period rationalism definitely replaced religion as the organizing principle of knowledge. Social Sciences developed and flourished during this period. It had become evident that knowing everything was impossible. It was also impossible to know everything about just one subject, say all of physics or economics. Individuals began to specialize their studies. For instance, Chemistry and Astronomy were separated out *Social Sciences* from Physics. Social Sciences were called sciences, since they were in principle meant to be empirically testable.

It was during the European Enlightenment of the 18th century that new ways of thinking about societies emerged, which provided the foundations for the development of specifically social scientific approaches to understanding them. The Enlightenment rejected the assumption that the classical world of the Greeks and the Romans was perfect. In the Enlightenment there was a general belief that civilization has improved and so too should thinking about civilization.

The emergent Social sciences that developed during the 18th century in the work of Enlightenment thinkers needed *two basic conditions* in order to develop as coherent areas of study. Both of these conditions were derived from the natural sciences. The first precondition is *naturalism*, which is the notion that *cause and effect* sequences fully explain social phenomena as opposed to metaphysical or spiritual influences. Secondly, the *control of prejudice* was felt to be necessary if enquiry was to be value-free.

Enlightenment established the three humiliations of human beings. These are;

1. The Earth is not the centre of the Universe
2. Human beings are creatures of nature like other animals
3. Our reasoning ability is subject to passions and sub-conscious desires.

It was only after the beginning of the Enlightenment did people begin to believe that society and culture are themselves products of history and the evolution of culture- that they had changed and would continue to change. Social sciences simply try to understand, and it accepts our limited powers and our place in the 'cosmos', and at other times, it is trying to change the society.

As we have seen, Enlightenment thought laid the groundwork for the development of social scientific thought in a number of important ways. By asking questions about how and why societies had come to be as they were and about the social and historical conditions that prevailed, Enlightenment thinkers opened up new and very significant areas of inquiry. As we have seen, the Enlightenment was to a large extent based on humanitarian principles and a desire to change and to improve social institutions.

Theories on the nature of society: Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, Rousseau

Locke and Hobbes were both social contract theorists, and both natural law theorists, but there the resemblance ends. All other natural law theorists assumed that man was by nature a social animal. Hobbes assumed otherwise, thus his conclusions are strikingly different from those of other natural law theorists. In addition to his unconventional conclusions about natural law, Hobbes was infamous for producing numerous similarly unconventional results in physics and mathematics.

Locke's considerable importance in political thought is better known. As the first systematic theorist of the philosophy of liberalism, Locke exercised enormous influence in both England and America. In his *Two Treatises of Government* (1690), Locke set forth the view that the state exists to preserve the natural rights of its citizens. When governments fail in that task, citizens have the right—and sometimes the duty—to withdraw their support and even to rebel. Locke opposed Thomas Hobbes's view that the original state of nature was “nasty, brutish, and short,” and that individuals through a social contract surrendered—for the sake of self-preservation—their rights [...]

Locke addressed Hobbes's claim that the state of nature was the state of war. He refuted it by pointing to existing and real historical examples of people in a state of nature. For this purpose he regarded any people who are not subject to a common judge to resolve disputes, people who may legitimately take action to themselves punish wrong doers, as in a state of nature.

Thomas Hobbes ,1588-1670

Thomas Hobbes was the greatest of English political theorists, and he had long felt an interest in philosophy an interest which was greatly stimulated by his discovery of the world of Mathematics. His first philosophical work *The Elements of Law* was finished in 1640, but not published until 1650. And his masterpiece the *Leviathan*, was published in 1651.

His Political Theory- His View of Man:

The universe, for Hobbes, is a machine, a machine made up of particles moving according to a mechanical law which he believed that Galileo has shown can be determined. The movement or motion as he calls it, is the very principle of the universe. Man is a microcosm, and epitome of the great universe. He also is a machine, more complicated than plants or beasts, but composed as they are, and as the universe is, of moving particles. It is Hobbes' ambition to find the Law according to which those particles move in man, and in man in relation his fellows, as he believes that Galileo has found it for the universe. Hence his insistence that any study of political society must begin with a consideration of the nature of man. His basic premise on human nature is; Man is not by nature a social animal; Society could not exist by the power of the state.

His View of the State:

Men would, Hobbes is sure, do anything to get out of this desperate position in which they find themselves. They can he believes, get out of it because they are creatures of passion and imagination, reason and will. Passion and imagination teach them “the fear of death” and desire of such things as is necessary to commodious living and a hope by their industry to obtain them”. Reason teaches them to obey natural Laws, will, finally enables men to take the action that their reason dictated to compose a society.

Hobbes' contribution was the suggestion that the social order was made by human beings and therefore could be changed by human beings. This theory marks an important beginning in the transformation of subjects into citizens.

In Hobbes's view, human beings are governed by a selfish and “ perpetual and restless desire for power after power”(1651:49). This lust for individual power continues until death. Anarchy- “every man against every man”- is curbed only by the fact that men fear death. As all

men are rational, they may be convinced to adopt “convenient Articles of Peace” in order to social anarchy and death (1651:66)

Hobbes derived his version of competitive, calculating subjects who make social order to ensure their own happiness from what he believed to be an objective assessment of human psychology. He objectively presented human nature and reached the conclusion that the only way to avoid chaos is to combine with others to curb innate desires and create order in civil society.

John Locke, 1632-1704

Next to Hobbes, Locke is the greatest figure in the history of English Political thought. The writings of Descartes awakened his interest in philosophy, and his friendship with Robert Boyle aroused his enthusiasm for the Natural Sciences. He had a direct experience of practical, political affairs. In 1689, his first *Letter Concerning Toleration* was published in Latin, and in 1690 his greatest work, the *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, which had been nineteen years in gestation, appeared. Theology and Political Economy occupied him largely in his declining years. Moreover he retained his interest in and his connection with practical affairs.

His View of Man:

Locke’s view of man is summed up in his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. Desire, he says, is the spring all human action. Desire is a feeling of uneasiness identified with pain, a feeling of which men want to rid themselves. The object of all human action is to substitute pleasure for pain. In Locke’s words, “what has an aptness to produce pleasure in us is what we call good, and what is apt to produce pain in us we call evil. He demonstrates in his work that there are no universally binding moral laws. History shows clearly, that the morality of one society is the immorality of another. Locke tells us about universal Laws; they are the Divine law and the Natural law. The Divine law is God’s will for man’s behavior, and the Natural law is also an eternal law, the criterion of good and evil, discoverable by reasoning and commanding men to carry out the will of God. It is obvious that Locke’s view of human nature is nothing like so profound, and certainly nothing like as consistent, at that of Hobbes.

The State of Nature:

John Locke also formulated a theory about the nature of human beings in the original state of nature. In contrast to Hobbes’s notion of asocial, competitive individuals, however, Locke believed that human beings were originally social, cooperative beings. Like Hobbes, Locke based his theory on the rights of individuals and the need to curtail the powers of the sovereign.

Locke postulated that individuals were in a “State of Perfect Freedom” and a “State of Equality” before the formation of the state (1711:25). This free and equal state was not a “State of Licence” because it was governed by the law of nature as embodied in reason.

The Social Contract:

To get out of the state of nature, Locke says, men make a contract to enter into civil society. This is a contract of all with all. This is a social, or more truly a political, contract, since it established political society; it is a contract made with the government which is to be set up. It is a

contract to which all must consent. But though itself unanimous, all parties to it agree henceforth to “submit to the determination of the majority”- since unless men agree to majority rule, decision cannot be taken and the state cannot survive.

Making a contract with others means that individuals “ give up Equality, Liberty, and Executive power they had in the state of nature, into the hands of society, to be so far disposed of by the Legislative, as the good of the society shall require”. But individuals do not change “their condition with an intention to be worse”. It is because they are rational and wish to preserve their own “Liberty and property” that they relinquish their powers. The major task of the state is the preservation of the “Liberty, and Property” and the “Peace, Safety, and public good of the people” (1711:30).

The Social Contract theories of Hobbes and Locke were influential with both American and French revolutionaries, but at the same time their ideas were criticized by others, most notably the French theorist Montesquieu.

Jean Jacques Rousseau, 1712-1778

Jean Jacques Rousseau, another precursor of sociology, has been hailed as the philosopher who has seen most deeply into the nature of the State since Plato. Like Montesquieu, Rousseau criticized Hobbes’s view of of human beings as independent individuals in society, but he did agree with Hobbes that society was an artificial construction. Furthermore, like Locke, Rousseau thought that society was formed as a result of a contract among individuals.

Rousseau’s focus was on the possibility of drastic social change. Rousseau’s ideas were more radical. He believed that man’s original nature was corrupted by society, and that the only way man could become a virtuous, moral being was to totally transform society.

Rousseau suggested that the Hobbesian state of war among individuals was a social phenomenon, not an innate quality of human beings. He cautioned that we must “ beware concluding with Hobbes, that man, as having no idea of goodness, must be naturally bad”(1762a:191). Society with its invention of private property, produced the misery and oppression afflicting man. Rousseau claimed that private property brought about war, conflict, and thus the need for a civil state, noting “there is scarcely any inequality among men in the state of nature.” He tells us both that property is the root of all evil and that it is a sacred institution. He pleads for individual liberty and insists on absolute submission to the state. He wants toleration for all and banishes atheists from his republic.

His Idea of Nature:

Rousseau’s prescription for the rejuvenation of the individual and society was not a return to the original state of nature. Indeed, the concept of the state of nature was for Rousseau “ merely a hypothetical and conditional” form of reasoning, more to “illustrate the nature of things than to show their true origin”(1762a:169). Rousseau believed that reform of society would only be possible if all members shared equally in the construction of laws for their common happiness.

In the *Discourse on the Origin and Foundation of Inequality* he undertook to show what was the nature of man. It is true that his belief that nature is always right was the foundation on which his whole thought rested.

There are, he thought, two original instincts that make up man's nature. There is self-love or the instinct of self-preservation, and there is sympathy or the gregarious instinct. Since these instincts are more beneficial than harmful, it follows that man is by nature good.

His Idea of State:

It is in the Social Contract that Rousseau's idea of the state is most clearly seen. It is much more rational, much less emotional, than the rest of his writings. And it is unquestionably much the most important of his works. In it is to be found most clearly his answer to the question, "What is the State and why should I obey it."

He starts with the belief that the family is the only "natural" society. All other society, he thinks, is of man's making and artificial. But he rejects the view that society other than the family must rest on force. It rests, he concludes, on agreement. Men register their agreement to come together in society in the Social Contract. The idea of some such contract was, of course, a commonplace of political philosophy of his days. This is possible, Rousseau says, where the law leads and men do not obey other men but obey only the law.

Relevance of the Social Science in understanding and solving contemporary problems

Social sciences are sometimes criticized as being less scientific than the natural sciences. The social world is much too complex to be studied as one would study static molecules. The actions or reactions of a molecule or a chemical substance are always the same when placed in certain situations. On the other hand, human behavior is too complex for these traditional scientific methodologies. Humans and society do not have certain rules that always have the same outcome and they cannot guarantee to react the same way to certain situations. Some scientists have expressed their view that social sciences do not qualify as science and it is characterized as pseudo science. According to them, social Sciences do not do things scientifically. Even among these type of criticisms Social sciences help in understanding and solving contemporary problems at the regional, national and global levels.

Social science research is a systematic method of exploratory, analyzing and conceptualizing human life in order to extend, correct or verify knowledge of human behavior and social life. Social science seeks to find explanation to unexplained social phenomena to clarify the doubtful, and correct the misconceived facts of social life.

Research in social sciences aims to find new facts or verify and test old facts like research in physical or natural sciences. Social sciences try to understand human behavior and its interaction with the environment and social institutions. It tries to find out the cause effect relationship between human activities and natural laws governing them. To develop new scientific tools, concepts and theories which would facilitate reliable and valid study of human behavior and social life is another purpose of Social Science research.

Here we are going to examine the main functions of Social Science research and how it helps in understanding and solving contemporary problems. They are;

1. *Discovery of facts and their interpretation on social mysteries:* Research in Social Sciences provides answer to questions of what, where, when, how and why of man, social life and institutions. Discovery of facts and their interpretation helps us to discard such distortions and thus enlighten us and contribute to our understanding of social reality. There are half-truths, pseudo-truths and superstition, and research strengthens our desire for truth and opens up before our eyes, hidden social mysteries.
2. *Diagnosis of problems and their analysis lead to appropriate remedial actions:* The developing countries face innumerable problems such as poverty, unemployment, economic inequality, social tension, low productivity, technological backwardness etc. The nature and dimension of such problems have to be diagnosed and analysed. Research in Social Sciences plays a significant role in this respect. An analysis of problems leads to an identification of appropriate remedial actions. After all it will leads to the prosperity of human beings, society and nation itself.
3. *Systematisation of knowledge:* The facts and knowledge discovered through research are systematised and the body of knowledge is developed. A systematised body of knowledge wills properly helps us to implement a better social planning for the development of entire human society.
4. *Control over social phenomena:* Research in social science areas equip us with first-hand knowledge about the organizing and working of the society and its institutions. This knowledge gives us a greater power of control over the social phenomena.
5. *Prediction and ensures order among social facts:* Research in social science aims at finding an order among social facts and their causal relations. This affords a sound basis for prediction in several cases. Although, the predictions cannot be perfect because of the inherent limitations of Social Sciences, they will be fairly useful for better social planning and control.
6. *Development planning:* Planning for socio-economic development calls for baseline data on the various cross-sections of our society and economy, recourse endowment, people's needs and aspirations etc.. Systematic research can give us the required data base for planning and designing developmental schemes and programmes. Analytical studies can illuminate critical areas of policy and testing the validity of planning assumptions. Evaluation studies point out the impact of the plan, policies and programmes and throw out suggestions for their proper reformulation.
7. *Social welfare:* Research in Social Sciences can unfold and identify the causes of social evils and problems. It can thus help in taking appropriate remedial actions. It can also give as sound guidelines for appropriate positive measures of reform and social welfare.

A recent trend in Social Science research is that it calls for an interdisciplinary approach since human life cannot be compartmentalized into psychological, social, economic or political aspects. According to Karl Pearson, "man lives in a socio-economic and political world and thrives on its varied relationships. It is inconceivable that the study of bare and isolated events on any one aspect of man's life would yield any meaningful result". A discipline-specific study of a social problem from an angle likes, economic or sociology or political science only cannot give a correct and total

view of the problem. According to Myrdal, in reality there are no economic, sociological or psychological problems, but only simple problems, and they are complex also. No Social science by itself sufficiently self-contains any social problem. So the problem of poverty cannot be just studied as a mere economic problem or a social problem or a political issue.

Not only has a method to understand social reality around us, but also insights into the nature of human beings contributed by humanities and social science. There should be a scientific approach to the study of human beings which seeks to emphasise the need to blend the perspectives and methods of natural sciences, social sciences and humanities together. This has been done to gain a comprehensive understanding of human nature and social institutions. Human beings not only share with other biological species the attributes of nature, but also transform nature into culture as a measure of their creative endowments.

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MODULE II

SURVEY OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

Social Science : Nature and Characteristics

Science, whether it is Natural science or Social science, is commonly understood as a body of knowledge that has been systematically collected, classified, analysed and interpreted. The two broad fields of knowledge, that is, Social sciences and Natural sciences, is subdivided into a number of specialised sciences or disciplines to facilitate more intensive study and deeper understanding. Social sciences are generally assumed as a plurality of fields outside the natural sciences deal with various dimensions of society. These include: anthropology, archaeology, criminology, economics, education, political science, sociology, geography, history, law, and psychology. All these disciplines have their own perspectives, approaches and methodology while addressing their major concerns. Sometimes these disciplines share their concerns paving way to inter disciplinary and multi disciplinary approaches. This module discusses the nature of various social sciences and relationship between Sociology and other social sciences.

History of Social sciences

The emergence of social sciences can be traced in ancient philosophy. In Ancient history, there was no difference between mathematics and the study of history, poetry or politics. This unity of science as descriptive remains and deductive reasoning from axioms created a scientific framework. The Age of Enlightenment saw a revolution within natural philosophy, changing the basic framework by which individuals understood what was scientific. Social sciences came forth from the moral philosophy of the time and was influenced by the Age of Revolutions, such as the Industrial revolution and the French revolution. The beginnings of the social sciences in the 18th century are reflected in various works like grand Encyclopaedia of Diderot, with articles from Rousseau and other pioneers. The growth of the social sciences is also reflected in other specialised encyclopaedias. The modern period saw "*social science*" first used as a distinct conceptual field. Social science was influenced by positivism, focusing on knowledge based on actual positive sense experience and avoiding the metaphysical speculations. Auguste Comte used the term "*science social*" to describe the field, taken from the ideas of Charles Fourier; Comte also referred to the field as *social physics*. Following this period, there were five paths of development that sprang forth in the Social Sciences, influenced by Comte or other fields. One route that was taken was the rise of social research. Large statistical surveys were undertaken in various parts of the United States and Europe. Another route undertaken was initiated by Emile Durkheim, studying "social facts", and Vilfredo Pareto, opening meta-theoretical ideas and individual theories. A third means developed, arising from the methodological dichotomy present, in which the social phenomena was identified with and understood; this was championed by figures such as Max Weber. The fourth route taken, based in economics, was developed and furthered economic knowledge as a hard science. The last path was the correlation of knowledge and social values; the anti positivism and verstehen sociology of Max Weber firmly demanded on this distinction. In this route, theory (description) and prescription were non-overlapping formal discussions of a subject.

By the 20th Century the various social sciences developed their own theoretical perspectives replacing the mathematical analysis. These developments paved way to qualitative analysis of

different facets of social life consequently lead to the emergence of subfields. Thus social sciences started adopting more rigorous theoretical analysis with increased specialisation. For example the Medical Sociology developed as a distinct branch of sociology which further differentiated neurosociology, biosociology, primatology, gerontology etc. Increased sharing of their concerns intensified the development of interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary approaches.

Scientific inquiry into human behaviour and social and environmental factors also motivated the natural science academics to learn social sciences..For example the now the Medical practitioners cannot avoid the studies of social epidemiology and social indices of Health. Environment studies also now became more 'social' by giving more importance to ecological and demographic aspects.. In the first half of the 20th century, statistics became a free-standing discipline of applied mathematics which helped the social sciences to adopt survey methods and accurate data analysis .without going behind rigours mathematical methods. Now the social scientists are able to use Statistical methods very confidently.

In the contemporary period, Karl Popper and Talcott Parsons influenced the furtherance of the social sciences. Researchers continues to search for a unified consensus on what methodology might have the power and refinement to connect a proposed "grand theory" with the various midrange theories which, with considerable success, continue to provide usable frameworks for massive, growing data banks; for more, see consilience. At present though, the various realms of social science progress in a myriad of ways, increasing the overall knowledge of society. The Social sciences will for the foreseeable future be composed of different zones in the research of, and sometime distinct in approach toward, the field. The term "social science" may refer either to the specific *sciences of society* established by thinkers such as Comte, Durkheim, Marx, and Weber, or more generally to all disciplines outside of noble science and arts.

Branches of Social Sciences

Sociology

Sociology, as compared to other social sciences, like economics and political science, is a young discipline. One could say, it is about a hundred-and-fifty years old but there has been a more rapid development of the subject in the last fifty to sixty years. This is partly due to desire, particularly, after the Second World War, to understand more about the behaviour of people in social situations. All social science subjects are concerned with the behaviour of people but each of them studies different aspects. Sociology, however, is concerned with social relations in general, and with social group is and institutions in particular.

As mentioned earlier, sociology has a broad perspective. It is concerned with those aspects of social life, which are present in all forms. It embraces every social setting. Most related social sciences have restricted range of specialisations. It must be pointed out that human behaviour cannot be divided neatly into different compartments and each assigned to a specific social science. Hence, the boundaries between the disciplines are often overlapping. Almost all the social sciences get outside their 'own' and into 'somebody else's' domain with great frequency.

Social Psychology

Wilhelm Maximilian Wundt was the founder of experimental psychology. Psychology is an academic and applied field involving the study of behaviour and mental processes. Psychology also refers to the application of such knowledge to various spheres of human activity, including problems of individuals' daily lives and the treatment of mental illness.

Psychology differs from anthropology, economics, political science, and sociology in seeking to capture explanatory generalisations about the mental function and overt behaviour of individuals, while the other disciplines focus on creating descriptive generalisations about the functioning of social groups or situation-specific human behaviour. In practice, however, there is quite a lot of cross-fertilization that takes place among the various fields. Psychology differs from biology and neuroscience in that it is primarily concerned with the interaction of mental processes and behaviour, and of the overall processes of a system, and not simply the biological or neural processes themselves, though the subfield of they have subjectively produced.

Social psychology is the study of social and cultural influences on the individual. It focuses on the behaviour of a single person and hence, differs from sociology, which is more concerned with relations among groups. However, there are areas of common interest such as socialisation, norms and values. Moreover, the influences of the group on the individual and of the individual on the group are also of interest to both social psychology and sociology.

Anthropology

Anthropology is the holistic "science of man," - a science of the totality of human existence. The discipline deals with the integration of different aspects of the Social Sciences, Humanities, and Human Biology. In the twentieth century, academic disciplines have often been institutionally divided into three broad domains. The natural *sciences* seek to derive general laws through reproducible and verifiable experiments. The *humanities* generally study local traditions, through their history, literature, music, and arts, with an emphasis on understanding particular individuals, events, or eras.

There are many fields in anthropology, namely; archaeology, linguistics, physical anthropology and social anthropology. According to A.L.Kroeber, 'Sociology and Anthropology are twin sisters'. Although, anthropology has been regarded as the study of early (primitive) cultures, and Sociology of the more contemporary society. This distinction is no longer valid. Many of the early village studies in India have been done by social anthropologists. The tribal communities in India have, by and large, been studied by anthropologists, in both their physical and social aspects. There is, hence, some overlap between the areas of study of sociology and anthropology, particularly, social anthropology. Culture and social organisations are concepts studied.

Economics

According to Lionel Robbins, "Economics is a science which studies human behaviour as a relationship between ends and scarce means which have alternative uses" [An Essay On The Nature And Significance Of Economic Science 1933]. What does Robbins stress in his definition of economics? Firstly, that economics as a subject deals with human behaviour. A critic can say that a study of human behaviour is not a prerogative of economics only. There are other social sciences, like sociology, psychology, political science etc., which also deal with human behaviour. Like economics these subjects also deal with the behaviour of people in their individuals well as.

Economics, however, deals with the behaviour of people in the pursuit of economic activities. As one author puts it, “What distinguishes economics from the other social sciences, however, is the manner in which it studies people, and Robbins’ statement makes this clear. Economics interprets human behaviour as the conscious attainment of objectives, of ends”.

Sociology and economics both study industry but do so differently. Economics would study economic factors of industry, productivity, labour, industrial policy, marketing, etc., whereas a sociologist would study the impact of industrialisation on society. Economists study economic institutions such as factories, banks, trade and transportation but are not concerned with religion, family or politics. Sociology is interested in interaction between the economic institutions and other institutions in society, namely, political and religious. In the study of the relationship between material conditions and non material conditions especially in the works of Karl Marx and Neo Marxists there are strong arguments regarding the most influential aspect among the two. Some argue that economic conditions determines social conditions while some others oppose this argument . It is still a point of hot debate among the theoreticians. In the words of Silverman ‘economics may be regarded as an offshoot of the parent science of Sociology, which studies the general principles of all social sciences’.

History

History is the continuous, systematic narrative and research into past human events as interpreted through historiographical paradigms or theories, such as the Turner Thesis about the American frontier. History has a base in both the social sciences and the humanities. In the United States the National Endowment for the Humanities includes history in its definition of Humanities (as it does for applied Linguistics). However the National Research Council classifies History as a Social science. The *historical method* comprises the techniques and guidelines by which historians use primary sources and other evidence to research and then to write history. The Social Science History Association, formed in 1976, brings together scholars from numerous disciplines interested in social history.

Geography

Geography as a discipline can be split broadly into two main sub fields: human geography and physical geography. The former focuses largely on the built environment and how space is created, viewed and managed by humans as well as the influence humans have on the space they occupy. The latter examines the natural environment and how the climate, vegetation & life, soil, water and landforms are produced and interact. As a result of the two subfields using different approaches a third field has emerged, which is environmental geography. Environmental geography combines physical and human geography and looks at the interactions between the environment and humans.

Geographers attempt to understand the earth in terms of physical and spatial relationships. The first geographers focused on the science of mapmaking and finding ways to precisely project the surface of the earth. In this sense, geography bridges some gaps between the natural sciences and social sciences. Historical geography is often taught in a college in a unified Department of Geography.

The field of geography is generally split into two distinct branches: physical and human. *Physical geography* examines phenomena related to climate, oceans, soils, and the measurement of earth. *Human geography* focuses on fields as diverse as Cultural geography, transportation, health, military operations, and cities. Other branches of geography include Social geography, regional geography, geometrics, and environmental geography. Sociology and Geography are so much related especially in the studies of urban and rural spaces, migration , ecology, Environmental studies, Planning etc.

Political science

Aristotle asserted that man is a political animal in his *Politics*. Political science is an academic and research discipline that deals with the theory and practice of politics and the description and analysis of political systems and political behaviour. Fields and subfields of political science include positive political economy, political theory and philosophy, civics and comparative politics, theory of direct democracy, apolitical governance, participatory direct democracy, national systems, cross-national political analysis, political development, international relations, foreign policy, international law, politics, public administration, administrative behavior, public law, judicial behaviour, and public policy.

Political science also studies power in international relations and the theory of Great powers and Superpowers. Approaches to the discipline include rational choice, classical political philosophy, interpretivism, structuralism, and behaviorism, realism, pluralism, and institutionalism.

Sociology and Political Science share so many aspects like Power relations , Authority, Social Mobility etc which are discussed in the works of Mosca, Pareto, Foucault ,Bourdieu etc.

Inter disciplinary and Multidisciplinary approaches in Social Sciences

Interdisciplinary approach involves the combining of two or more academic fields into one single discipline. An interdisciplinary field crosses traditional boundaries between academic disciplines or schools of thought, as new needs and professions have emerged.

Originally the term interdisciplinary is applied within education and training pedagogies to describe studies that use methods and insights of several established disciplines or traditional fields of study. Interdisciplinarity involves researchers, students, and teachers in the goals of connecting and integrating several academic schools of thought, professions, or technologies - along with their specific perspectives - in the pursuit of a common task.

Interdisciplinary studies is an academic program or process seeking to synthesize broad perspectives, knowledge, skills, interconnections, and epistemology in an educational setting. Interdisciplinary programs may be founded in order to facilitate the study of subjects which have some coherence, but which cannot be adequately understood from a single disciplinary perspective (for example, women's studies or medieval studies).

Perhaps the most common complaint regarding interdisciplinary programs, is the lack of synthesis—that is, students are provided with multiple disciplinary perspectives, but are not given effective guidance in resolving the conflicts and achieving a coherent view of the subject.

A multidisciplinary approach to problem solving involves drawing appropriately from multiple disciplines to redefine problems outside of normal boundaries and reach solutions based on a new understanding of complex situations. Multidisciplinary working is a fundamental expression of being guided by holism rather than reductionism, One of the major barriers to the

multidisciplinary approach is the long established tradition of highly focused professional practitioners cultivating a protective (and thus restrictive) boundary around their area of expertise. This tradition has sometimes been found not to work to the benefit of the wider public interest, and the multidisciplinary approach has recently become of interest to government agencies and some enlightened professional bodies who recognise the advantages of systems thinking for complex problem solving.

The diffusion of theories across disciplinary borders is one of the arguments that could be invoked by those who advocate more interdisciplinary strategies in the social sciences. The borrowing and lending of methods among disciplines have itineraries different from those for the spread of concepts and theories. A distinction must be made between interdisciplinary approach and multi disciplinary approach through recombination of specialties belonging to different disciplines.

MODULE III

OBJECTIVITY IN SOCIAL SCIENCES

The term objectivity is central to the methodological discussion in sociology. Generally the term is closely associated with scientific method of investigation. Before going to analyze the problems related to objectivity it is desirable to have an idea about science and scientific method.

Science and scientific method

The word science is derived from Latin word ‘*Scientia*’ which means knowledge, thus the word science means knowledge. Albert Einstein stated that “*the essence of science is the attempt of human mind to find a connection between the world of ideas and world of phenomena. All the essential ideas in science were born in a dramatic conflict between the reality and our attempt to understand the same*”. This implies that science explains the world around. It includes in discovery and invention which in turn helps to advance the existing state of knowledge. Every existing knowledge provides some questions or instances that demand further explanation. The core of science is based up on empirical facts and scientific ideas. Science rejects all kind of speculations, only ideas that are proven to be true matters in science.

Science is not just an exercise to accumulate exact knowledge. Classical notion of exactness of knowledge has been subjected to controversy for a long time. The exactness of knowledge is fundamentally based on the hunting of objective knowledge. The objectivity of knowledge has encountered numerous problems. To overcome such issues, science depends upon scientific procedures. In his “Grammar of Science” Karl Pearson says: “*There is no shortcut to truth.... no way to gain knowledge of the universe except through the gate way of scientific method*”.

Scientific Method

In the 17th Century, the idea of Bacon, Newton and Boyle gave shape to what is popularly known as the scientific method. The scientific method is a systematic step-by-step procedure following the logical process of reasoning. It means gaining knowledge of the universe. The scientific method is one and the same in all branches and that is the method of all logically trained minds (Karl Pearson: 1911). It is clear that science has a reference to a method; not so much to a field of specific subject matter. Lastrucci, in his scientific approach; aptly observed “*Science is an objective, logical and systematic method of analysis of phenomena devised to permit the accumulation of reliable knowledge. It is systematized form of analysis*”. It is characterized by an intellectual attitude.

All scientists use common methods for their enquiry. All sciences whether natural or social agree upon methods of studying phenomena. But their materials differ. A biologist studying the structure of flower, a chemist studying radioactive properties of an element, and a sociologist studying crime in an urban slum, all follow similar scientific methods of inquiry. But the subject matter of their studies is different. Therefore, they use different techniques of investigation for their studies. As their materials are different, their purposes also differ. All of them will observe the phenomenon and analyze them to find out their logical sequences. This is the essence of scientific method.

Basis in scientific method

The scientific method consists of the following aspects.

a. Reliance on empirical evidence

Scientific method involves a systematic process. The answer to a question is not decided by intuition or imagination, relevant data is collected through scientific method, and data are checked and analyzed with appropriate methods of analysis. Then the conclusion is reached on the basis of the analysis.

b. Use of relevant concepts

Concepts are logical constructions or abstractions created from sense impressions, percepts and experiences. Concepts are symbols that science works with; they constitute the linguistic apparatus of science. While explaining phenomenon science use these concepts in scientific terms of logical enquiry.

c. Commitment to objectivity

The subjective - objective dichotomy is very old in the field of research. This dichotomy suggests that there are two fundamentally opposite ways of theoretically treating man and his social organization. The very base of scientific methods is referring to the objective frame of reference. It means forming a judgment upon facts unbiased by personal (subjective frame of reference) impressions. The conclusion should not vary from person to person. It should be same for all persons.

d. Ethical Neutrality

Science does not make normal judgment on facts. It does not say they are good or bad. Science aims at nothing but making true and adequate statements about its objects.

e. Generalization

Scientists try to find out the commonality of a series of events. They aim at discovering the uniformity. Scientist is consistently engaged to discover the thread of uniformity under the level of diversity. From this logical thread of uniformity a pattern of generalization is formulated.

f. Verifiability

The findings of a research should be verifiable. Scientist must make others aware of how he arrived at his conclusions or his findings undergoing critical scrutiny. When others test his conclusion under the same conditions, the result will be the same, and then it is accepted as correct.

g. Logical reasoning process

The scientific method involves the logical process of reasoning. This reasoning process is used for drawing inference from the findings of a study or for arriving at conclusion. This logical reasoning process consists of induction and deduction.

Steps In Scientific Method

Following are the major steps in scientific enquiry:

a. Define the problem:

Any scientific enquiry starts with a particular or theoretical question. Such question is worthy to be studied through the method of scientific enquiry.

b. Review of literature:

Second important step of scientific method is study of related literature. It would be waste of time to repeat the findings of others scholars. It is better to conduct a detailed survey to know whatever research has been done on this particular problem under study.

c. Formulate the hypotheses:

The third and important step in scientific enquiry is to develop one or more formal propositions which can be tested.

d. Plan the Research Design:

Any action need appropriate plan. It is necessary to make an outline about what is to be studied, what data will be sought, and where and how they will be collected, processed and analyzed.

e. Data collection:

Next step is collecting data in accordance with the objectives of the study. Research Design provide proper tool for data collection. It is determined by the style of approach. Different tools are designed to meet some unforeseen difficulties.

f. Data Analysis:

Classifying, tabulating, comparing data and making necessary tests and computations which helps to find out the results come under this step.

g. Draw conclusion:

After careful examination of the findings of the study, researcher draws conclusion to the problem. It enables the researcher to check whether the original hypothesis can be confirmed or rejected? What has the study added to our knowledge etc?

Scientific Method And Objectivity

From the above discussion it is clear that ceaseless observation of phenomena, gathering information and theorizing on their interconnectivity are the task of scientific method. Objectivity is central to the procedures of scientific method. Freedom from personal prejudices and value free attitude are the hallmark of objectivity.

Meaning of objectivity

The term objectivity is universally ill-defined and poorly understood. There exist two widely accepted meanings. First one is; there is the traditional dualist philosophical concept involving the possibility of the existence of externally “real” facts or knowledge, independent, of the mind of the observer. According to this view of the objectivity of knowledge, bodies of knowledge exist external to humanity as “Social facts” “historical facts”, “Physical facts” etc....

The second concept commonly identified by term has to do with the presence or absence of bias or prejudice on the part of the observers as they pursue their task of selecting, documenting and interpreting facts. Objectivity in social science is much related to the later definition. It means the willingness and ability to examine evidence dispassionately. It is the first condition of any research.

Objectivity means basing conclusion on facts without any bias and value judgment. The conclusion should be independent of one's personal beliefs, likes, dislikes and hopes. Both the data and the inference drawn from their analysis must be free from bias and prejudices.

The term objectivity may be defined as "*The actions of scientists; assuming a position of disinterestedness or impartiality, or being open minded in the assessment of evidence*". It is nothing but an attitude of the investigator.

Objectivity in Sociology

To what extent the degree of objectivity is possible in social science is a matter of debate. There exists a division of opinion regarding the same. Some theorist hold that objectivity in social science is possible, others do not. To what extent social science can satisfy the condition of objectivity is a historical question. The demands of objectivity are properly addressed by early classical theoreticians in sociology. Let us examine how the classical thinkers of sociology try to answer the questions of objectivity in sociology.

The turmoil around classical sociologist was, to what extent sociology can satisfy the condition of objectivity. Advocating positivism, Comte proposed a shift from social philosophy to social science. Drawing knowledge away from spiritual metaphysics, positivism placed greater stress on sensory experience and the data observed.

The essence of this view was that the experience was the only reliable source of human knowledge. In fact, Comte confirmed these shift from social philosophy to social science encompassing all aspects of human society. In his 'General View of Positivism (1848)' Comte advocated the positivist method as the most appropriate one for sociology. The issue of objectivity was well addressed in Comtian positivism.

Emile Durkheim (1858 - 1917), the French sociologist contributed a lot to develop sociology as scientific discipline. He considered not everything and anything could be studied by sociology, but only a select group of social phenomena qualified to be its subject matter. These phenomena are to be termed as social facts, and the task of sociology is to explain the causal relation of social facts objectively.

Then the purpose of objectivity is served by Durkheim by defining the subject matter of sociology as social facts. Arguing against the early conception of society as a subjective and an artificial entity, Durkheim proposed that society could be studied like an objective reality. Like natural science it could be studied scientifically and the subject matter had to be open to empirical methods of investigation.

Durkheim's 'Rules of Sociological Method' provide a complete guide for positivistic study of society. It ensures objectivity in social science investigation in general. Social facts are defined as properties and realities of a collectivity. "*All individuals are essentially shaped and governed by external social environments, and in turn are constrained by them*". Social facts exist independently; so it can be studied logically.

Durkheim treated social facts are to be considered as things. One must study them objectively as external things. To be objective; one must be free from all kinds of prejudices and preconceptions while observing social facts. Observe a set of facts and classify them together give them specific name. Order the facts and investigate as independent of their individual manifestation.

The German Sociologist, Max Webber (1864 - 1920) argued against subjectivity in sociological research and if sociology want to became a true science; comparable to physics and chemistry; it

would have to be value free. In his view a social scientist as an objective investigator must remain neutral about value system. Weber admitted the difference between the subject matter of social sciences and natural sciences. Even then, he held view that objective social research is still possible. An objective social science has to be unbiased and value - free.

This value freedom is the corner stone of Weber's contribution to social science research. He viewed society as a result of a web of human interaction. Every human being is an actor fused with values and meanings. The 'means' and 'ends' of human interactions are governed by values, motivations and interests. The value judgments are an outcome of one's moral political and aesthetic choices. The aim of social science is to keep the casual explanation free from such value based preference of the researcher. He called for a clear perception of reality as the scientific vocation, but Max Webber stated that objectivity was an "impossible obligation" in sociology.

Major Criticisms

As noted earlier the question of objectivity is criticized in particularly in sociology in several ways. Karl Marx(1818-1883) first managed to break out of the traditional conceptual frame work of objectivity. He wrote in the preface to 'A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy' :*"it is not the consciousness of the men that determines their social existence but on the contrary, their social existence determines their consciousness"*. Marx contributed the original insight to the problem of objectivity.

The subject matter of sociology itself pause the question. *"The problem in fact that sociologist themselves are both subjects and objects of sociology. As subjects (sociologist), they aspire to a detached or objective view of society; as objects (human beings) they are rooted in a particular society and have personal beliefs about it"* (Bert N Adam 2000).

The philosopher sociologist Alfred Schutz(1899-1959) point out that social science could not and should not be value free. The observer and the observed are placed in the same realm of world. So the essence of social behaviour is what it means to people. Philosophically speaking objectivity is always paired with its opposite; subjectivity.

Phenomenological sociology argues that sociology can't objective because sociological judgments are subjective and coloured by the actors' own experience.

Ethnomethodology rejects objectivity in sociology because in sociological explanation all prepositions are limited in their meanings to particular language context. Karl Mannheim criticized objective social science and argued all sociological theories are product by particular social group. Sociology of knowledge treats all knowledge as a function in social location.

Feminist researchers and critical sociologist argued research is moral political activity that requires the researcher to commit to a value position, value freedom is a myth.

All the members of society have different values premises and beliefs. Social scientists as a member of society intimately linked with the subjective elements. Such subjectivism creates new consequences with respect to the goal of science.

Factors affecting objectivity

The points discussed above made clear that to achieve objectivity in social science is very difficult. The hurdles to achieve objectivity arise out of (a) personal prejudices and bias (b) value judgment (c) ethical dilemma and (d) complexity of social phenomena.

a. Personal prejudices and biases

Gibson, in his 'The logic of social enquiry' says: "*Prejudice and biases are like fantasies to believe what is comforting to believe*". It make one believe something without considering evidence. Habit of thought, temperamental weaknesses, skeptical attitude, wishful thinking and vested interests are the components of personal bias in scientific research.

b. Problem related to value

Value problem arise from the social context within which research occurs. Gunnar Myrdal observed "*Value premises are needed even in the theoretical stage of establishing knowledge about facts and factual relations. A view is impossible except from a view point. A disinterested social science has never existed and can never come to exist; for logical reasons valuations are always implied in our search for truth*". Research attitudes towards a social problem may influence by his/her pre occupied value judgments. His judgments is coloured by the 'ism' capitalism or communism or socialism etc. the philosophy or writer who inspired him. Even great social scientists project their theories. The proletarian interpretation of Karl Max, Bertrand Russel's power interpretation of social order, Freud's sex interpretation of society, Fabian socialism of George Bernard Shaw and Gandhiji's philosophy of limiting wants and trusteeship are some examples.

c. Personal Preconceptions

Personal preoccupation of a social scientist not only makes a restoring effect on the data but is also highly insidious. It is very difficult to find out the level and depth of personal preoccupations by scientists.

d. Ethical issues

Ethical issues arises out of the researchers relation with other aspects of research e.g.: (a) relation with sponsors, (b) relation with those permitting access to sources of data, (c) related to project and (d) relations with research, and (e) subject themselves.

e. Nature of social phenomena

Social phenomena are too complex and too vast to comprehension. A physical scientist is limited within the four walls of laboratory and conduct controlled experimentation. On the other hand, the laboratory of social scientist is entire society; it is too vast to conduct research precisely. Strict objectivity is impossible in social science research. Let us discuss major limitations in social science to attain scientific objectivity.

Limits to objectivity in social sciences

The problem of objectivity closely related to the methodology used in studying society. It is not easy to produce general laws of social development like natural science. The folk ways, mores and social usages usually come to be accepted as naturally and help to provide a complete and adequate scheme to living and thinking. For a social scientist to detach him from them is an extremely difficult task.

We must consider precisely the influences which may prevent social scientists from objectivity. These influences may be summed up as (a) personal motives, (b) customs and (c) social situation of which the social scientist himself is a part. A social enquirer should not let his/her belief be influenced by the above said factors.

Another aspect related to produce objectivity may be a person's social situation. It gives rise to certain interests. This particular interest leads in turn to prejudice and bias.

The failure of objectivity in social enquiries is often attributed to the simple fact that social scientists as a social being is also actively participated in social affairs. The problems that limit objectivity in social sciences are listed as follows:

a. Social scientist - a part of what is studied

A social scientist being a part of human society, the subject matter of his study, is often guided by his values and motivations. It limits the objectivity, more precisely, the phenomena in the world around them are largely determined by the things they have learned, the beliefs to which they subscribe and the value they had. These preconceptions of sociologists limit the scope of objectivity.

b. Complexity of the subject matter

The subject matter of social science is human society. The relation between environment and individuals' reaction towards environment construct too complex structure of human behavior. This complex behavioural pattern makes difficulties to apply the natural science technique of experimentation. Goode and Hatt, points out that "*human behaviour can be studied only by other human beings, and this leads to the distortion of fundamental procedure to attain truth*". So there can be no objectivity. This criticism is most frequently occurring when sociologist study things close to home for example; family life, community organizations, political parties etc.

c. Human problems

Basically the subject of enquiry in social science is human being. Social scientists face problem related human being like; their loss of memory, their reluctance to furnish certain information, proper understanding of research situation etc. All of these problems cause biases and invalidate the research finding and conclusions.

d. Researcher's personal values

Most often social scientists as members of society carrying certain personal values, such inclination or interest create elements of subjectivity.

e. Cultural aspects

A researcher's perception may be disturbed by the cultural norms, beliefs and ideas especially when a researcher studies cultures other than his/her own.

f. Methodological issues

In social sciences, where the method of data collection involves a constant interaction between the observer and observed. The observer may lose his/her impartiality.

g. Social institutions

Researchers are conditioned by social situations and institutional parameters in such cases a researcher may opt available 'soft' evidences and data instead of digging out 'harsh' data.

h. Wrong decisions

The quality of social science research findings depends upon aptness of decisions made by the social scientists and the concepts, methodology, sampling techniques are used in the study. Any mistake in any of these factors effect validity.

Ethical issue in social science

The dictionary meaning of the word ‘Ethics’ is nothing, but a set of moral principles and values’. Webster’s new world dictionary is typical among dictionaries, defining ethical as “conforming to the standards of conduct of a given profession or group”

In science it is more than the presence of basic set of values. It is base of action in any science. The search for objective truth is the ethics of social science. The very nature of the subject matter of sociology raises the question that who is to decide the objectives of social science. Whether the scientists or the society. Thus the ethical content of social sciences became central to social science research. As Wilkinson points out, “*the community of scientists with its set of intellectual values and community with its own set of cultural values , should together settle for or define the true objectives of science and thus, the obligations that a scientist feels he owes to himself would represent a working compromise between rival thrusts of scientific values on one hand, and the social values on the other.*”

When we talk about the ‘ethic’ in social science research we are addressing those issues that concern the behaviour of social researcher and the consequences that their research brings to the people they study. The conflict between the ethics of science and personal beliefs and values of researcher is not less important issue.

Issues of ethics have the potential to create impact at every stage of the research process. There for all social researchers need to have a clear understanding of the ways in which ethical dilemmas can arise when carrying out their social research. Issue of ethics arise primarily out of researchers relation with different sections of society research subjects, sponsors of research, research process etc.

Ethical issues related to the subjects of study

In social science the prime subject of enquiry is human being. The individuals constitute the research subjects. Their response and behaviour is closely observed and studied by social investigator. Hence the human beings are treated as raw material for the end result of the study; of all ethical issues, the issues concerned with the individuals under study are major important. The major issues related to respondent and investigator is sum up as follows.

- a. In some cases individuals are participating in a social research without their knowledge or consent. For example, rural or tribal communities became subjects of investigation without their consent or knowledge. They are participating in research without proper awareness. In such cases the researcher infringes upon their right to make their own decision to participate or not to participate. It is an intrinsic attack on an individual’s freedom.
- b. In some cases the consent of respondents is obtained by the research without informing them the real purpose and aims of research.
- c. In some other cases the researcher forced to provide incorrect or misleading information about the project. Such deceptive steps are highly questionable under the ethical frame work.
- d. Another questionable non-ethical practice is to expose participants to physical or mental stress to study their reactions. For example, mock- hijacking of an aircraft, mock - panic situation in a crowd etc.
- e. In-depth interviews or disguised projective tests and participant observations are generally used in social research to gather information. These methods may be an attack on one’s privacy.

- f. Another ethical issue related to maintaining anonymity of the respondent. Anonymity might be violated through reports and publications.

Ethical issue related to the research funding agencies

Ethical issue may arise between researcher and funding agencies. Research may be funded by private or governmental bodies like universities grants commission, planning commission, Govt. departments, Business undertaking and financial institutions.

The terms and conditions put forwarded by the different agencies create ethical issues. Funding agencies have their own implicit ideological aims. Generally the sponsoring agencies specify the nature of work to be done, the time period for completion and the condition relating to the use of results. Highly structured and restricted nature of such research implicitly poses an ethical question whether the researcher wants to operate within the confines of such restrictions and whether he is willing to accept the restrictions regarding the publication of the research findings. These issues must be decided before accepting the sponsorships.

Other Issues:

Some other ethical issues arise during the course of the research process in social science. They are:

a. The research problem itself

The research problems like alcoholism or child sexual abuse and prostitution etc itself contain some moral and ethical issues.

b. The research setting

The research settings like prisons, hospitals have posed some sort of ethical question of re-victimization.

c. The research procedure

The procedures of research for example, an experiment method have a negative effect on research participants.

d. The respondents

In many cases, the kind of people who serve as research participants are relatively powerless to resist being studied. They had been chosen without their consent. For example, children, patients, homeless peoples etc.

e. Data collection

Social scientists may dig out information from respondent regarding personal matters such as marital like, religious faith, financial information etc. Such practice is considered to an invasion of privacy.

f. The interruption of external agencies

The constraints put up on research participants by external agencies such as govt. employers etc are also considered as leeway to ethical freedom.

g. The research report

The communication of final research findings arise ethical issues. The sponsors withheld certain results that do not accord with their objectives. In such cases the researcher's freedom to communicate research findings is crashed under the iron law of sponsorship.

The above said categories of ethical difficulties arise in social sciences research. The crucial question related to these topics are to what extend a social scientists can adopt some unethical practice for the sake of his/her research or one should abandon his/her project only in terms of ethical aspects. It is very difficult to keep a balance between ethics and research. Better to keep a balance between the social obligation of the researcher and the moral const of unethical practices. The potential benefits of research exceeds the moral cost, it is desirable situation to go ahead.

MODULE IV

APPROACHES AND CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE STUDY OF INDIAN SOCIETY

Major Approaches to the Study of Indian Society

The study of Indian society is an elaborate effort which requires theoretical as well as practical orientations. The analysis of social change forms a major aspect of the same. To understand social change in particular and Indian society in general certain approaches are used. Some of the important approaches used in the study of Indian society are

- a) Evolutionary approach
- b) Indological approach
- c) Structural approach
- d) Dialectical approach
- e) Integrated Approach

Evolutionary Approach

The evolutionary approach analyses social change as a gradual development from simple to complex forms. Every society passes through different stages of transition. The society and structures that we see today are the result of this gradual process of change. In evolutionary approach, the different stages of development of social institutions and organisations is analysed. Change, as we know, is a continuous process. Each change results in a minor modification of the system. Such minor changes cumulate over a long period of time into new forms which are usually more complicated than the earlier ones.

In the evolutionary approach, four different models are used. They are

- 1) Unilinear
- 2) Universal
- 3) Cyclical
- 4) Multilinear

Unilinear approach analyses change in stages. According to this approach, every stage of development is better than its preceding stage. Change occurs in a single direction and it results in the creation of a much better form.

Universal approach concentrates on change as a transition from simple to complex. It does not deal with change in stages, but views it as a process of transition.

The cyclical approach discusses social change as a modification through a cycle. According to this approach social structures and institutions pass through different stages and ultimately reach back at the stage of origin. Thus it continuously passes through a cycle of social change.

The multilineal approach talks about social change as a process occurring at different levels and proceeding in different directions. According to this approach, social change is not always a change towards a better condition. Change may also result in the formation of alternative structures. From a common point of origin, different types of change and varying type of structures may be created. Thus change is not unidirectional or one-dimensional according to this approach.

Indological Approach

The Indological approach examines social change in the context of Indian culture and philosophy. It studies social change through the records of Indian history. This type of analysis is relevant in the study of emergence and development of institutions like family, caste etc. the changes in these dominant institutions are studied pertaining to different periods of Indian history. This approach was much popular in the early times, but now it faces a lot of criticisms. A limitation of this approach is that all historical evidences related to a study might not be available. Even if it is available, its reliability cannot be assured.

Structural Approach

Structural approach focuses on the network of social relationships or structures to study about social change. These structures emerge out of human needs and so they are connected to each other as well as within themselves. Any study about their change involves an analysis of these structures and their interconnectivity. The stability of a structure depends on the culture of the society. Any change in the structure influences the culture as well as vice versa. Structural analysis discusses the adaptations made in the structures to suit the changing needs of the society from time to time. It attempts to explain the social facts and the subsequent changes that have occurred.

The structural approach is not much popularly used for the analysis of social change in India. But it has not been totally neglected too. There have been some studies on village communities, family structures etc which make use of the structural approach.

Dialectical Approach

The dialectical approach is influenced by Marxist tradition. This approach is based on economic interpretations of society. Economic change creates different classes with conflicting interests. This results in struggles and conflicts which are the causes of social change. Thus an analysis of the economic basis of society might be helpful in understanding the process of social change more clearly.

Two of the prominent sociologists who were influenced by dialectical approach were D.P.Mukherjee and A.R.Desai. Mukherjee studied Indian social processes from a dialectical frame of reference. He said that an encounter between Indian and western traditions created cultural contradictions. This generated a dialectical process of conflict out of which arose a synthesis which was the new middle class.

The dialectical approach was used to explain the emergence of nationalism in India by A.R.Desai. according to him nationalism was a product of the material conditions created by the British which led to economic disintegration. The economic reforms created a new class structure and class consciousness which resulted in the emergence of nationalism.

The dialectical approach has its own limitations too. One of the major drawbacks is the lack of empirical data to support its findings.

Integrated Approach

Yogendra Singh proposed the integrated approach as a comprehensive perspective on Indian Social change. In this approach he integrates a series of concepts related to social change to develop a new paradigm. The concepts which he integrates are

- a) Direction of change
- b) Context of change
- c) Source of change
- d) Substantive domain of phenomena undergoing change

The underlying theoretical similarities of the different approaches of social change are identified and they are co-ordinated for a comprehensive explanation of social change. In the study of social change it is noted that most of the approaches follow a unilinear nature. Though regressive movements of social change are also accepted, mostly change is conceived to be evolutionary and linear. The context of change is also relevant in integrated paradigm. Both micro and macro structures are used in the explanation. The causes of social change ranging from external to internal causes are also taken into account in the approach. The substantive domain of the phenomena undergoing change is also relevant in the discussion. It includes both structure and culture.

Major Contributions to the Study of Indian Society

Dominant Caste-M.N.Srinivas

The concept of dominant caste was introduced by M.N.Srinivas. He explained the concept by citing the example of Okkaligas. The Okkaligas were the dominant caste in the Mysore village he studied.

A dominant caste may dominate a set of contiguous or closely related villages. They exercise certain powers in the village over other caste groups. A caste is considered as dominant if it possesses the following determinant features

- a) *It should own a sizable amount of cultivable land locally available*
- b) *It should have numerical strength*
- c) *It should have a high place in the local hierarchy*
- d) *It should have economic and political power*
- e) *It should have more number of educated and well employed members.*

When a caste enjoys all elements of dominance, it is said to be dominant in a decisive way. The dominant caste have a role in settling the disputes between people of both their own as well as other caste groups in the village. The power of the Dominant caste is accepted normatively. Members of the dominant caste have a role in caste panchayats.

Occasionally, there may be more than one dominant caste in a village and over a period of time, one dominant caste may give way to another. An upper caste need not always enjoy the status of a dominant caste.

The dominant castes are found to be socially, economically and politically powerful. They act as reference groups in the process of Sanskritisation. The dominant caste keeps watch over the culture and value system of the village. They also have an influential role in the political life. On the whole the dominant castes have a significant social role to play.

Purity and pollution-Louis Dumont

Louis Dumont's book, *Homo Heirarchicus*, is an important work on caste system. In the book he discusses the hierarchy and principles of caste system. The underlying principle of this hierarchy is purity and pollution.

Dumont defines purity as "*the irruption of the biological into social life*". The condition of not being pure is called pollution. Pollution is of two types, *permament and temporary*. Hindus are considered to be temporarily polluted when they come into contact with the twelve secretions of the body. Death, birth and other family events are found to be associated with temporary pollution. Temporary pollution can be removed by purificatory agents and acts. Pollution which cannot be removed by any such acts is called permanent pollution.

The concept of purity and pollution acts as the basis for caste system. It ensures that the upper and lower castes are segregated from each other temporarily or permanently. The difference in the degree of pollution creates closed segments which try to maintain their degree of purity. The concept of purity and pollution helps to keep the groups separate from each other but at the same time interdependent.

Household dimensions of Family- A.M.Shah

The distinction between household and family is a point of elaborate discussions in sociology and social anthropology. One sociologists who extensively studied about the household dimensions of family is A.M.Shah. According to him, household is one of the several dimensions of family and should be viewed in relation to other dimensions. A.M.Shah studied the households in a village called Radhvanaj in Gujarat and substantiated his concept of household.

Based on the size, Shah classified households into

- a) *Small households with three or less members*
- b) *Medium households with four to six members*
- c) *Large households with seven to nine members*
- d) *Very large households with ten or more members*

Based on the composition, Shah classified households into two

- a) *Simple*
- b) *Complex*

Simple households are defined as those which consisted of whole or part of the parental family while complex households are defined as those which consisted of two or more parental or part of parental families. The parental family is defined as consisting of a man, his wife and unmarried children. This concept is distinguished from the basic concept of elementary family. It is the concept of parental family which is used as the basis for identifying different types of households.

A.M.Shah maintained that a simple household had six possible compositions

- a) a man and his wife*
- b) either only a man or only his wife*
- c) a man, his wife and his unmarried children*
- d) unmarried brothers and sisters*
- e) a father and his unmarried children*
- f) a mother and her unmarried children*

According to him, a complex household has three possible compositions

- a) Two or more parental families*
- b) One parental family and part of a parental family*
- c) Part of one parental family and part of another parental family*

The classification of households into simple and complex is often compared with nuclear and joint families but Shah considers them as distinguished from each other His study proved that the percentage of simple households is much larger than that of complex households. This was also a pointer to the disintegration of jointness among families in rural India.

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