

Understanding Social Science

Chapter 1: Understanding Social Science

1. **Meaning of Social Science:** What is Social Science?

Social Science is the study of human society and relationships among people. It helps us understand human behavior, how they live together, share resources, organize their lives, and the relationships between individuals, social institutions, and the physical environment. Social Science draws from History, Geography, Politics (Civics), and Economics. It moves beyond personal opinion to use evidence-based inquiry to understand how humans live together.

Core Purpose: It helps us interpret the human world, understand how society works, and prepares students to participate as empathetic, responsible, and informed citizens in a diverse and democratic society

a. **Why are humans called social beings?**

Humans are social because:

- They live in groups like family, community and society
- They depend on each other for safety, livelihood and learning
- They share resources like water, roads, schools and markets
- One person's actions affect others

Therefore, life is lived together, not alone.

b. **Definitions of Social Science by Scholars**

- **James High:** Social Science studies physical and non-physical factors that influence human relationships.
- **Charles Beard:** Social Science is the study of human affairs, not physical objects.

c. **Nature of Social Science**

Social Science is systematic and scientific as:

- It asks questions
- Collects information
- Compares evidence
- Finds causes and effects

It does not depend on opinions, but on evidence and reasoning.

2. **What does Social Science Study?**

Social Science studies two main aspects:

People and Relationships-This includes the ways in which people interact and support one another in everyday life. It covers family life, community living, social customs, religious and cultural practices, roles and responsibilities, and patterns of behaviour. For example, Social Science may explore how families make decisions, how communities celebrate festivals, how different languages are used in public life, or how social rules influence what people can or cannot do.

This includes:

- Family life
- Community living
- Culture and traditions
- Language and religion

- **Roles and responsibilities**

Systems and Institutions-This includes the organised structures that shape how society works. Institutions such as government, law, courts, schools, police, markets, banks, and local bodies influence daily life. They decide how resources are shared, how public services are provided, and how rights and duties are protected. For example, Social Science may study how elections are held, how laws are made, how budgets affect public services, or how trade and prices influence what families can afford.

These are organized structures in society:

- Government
- Courts
- Schools
- Police
- Markets
- Banks

➤ **Important Idea**

Social Science also studies:

- Why things happen in a society? What are their effects?
- It tries to understand patterns about the socio-economic conditions of people.

Example:

Why do some children complete school easily while others cannot?

Reasons may include:

- poverty
- distance from school
- discrimination
- government policies

One problem can have many causes.

3. Scope of Social Science

What is Scope?

Scope means the areas covered by Social Science. The scope of Social Science refers to the wide range of questions and areas it studies in order to understand human life in society. Human beings live in communities, depend on nature and resources, earn livelihoods, follow rules, and participate in collective decision making.

Because these aspects of life are closely connected, no single subject can explain society fully.

Social Science includes different disciplines:

Main Branches

a. Geography

Geography studies the Earth as the home of human beings. It studies the Earth, its physical features, and the deep, interconnected relationship between human beings and the natural environment. It helps us understand landforms, climate, rivers, soils, forests, and resources. At the same time, it studies how people live in different

places and how they use the environment. Geography answers questions such as:

- Why do some places receive more rainfall than others?
- Why are some regions densely populated while others are not?
- How do climate and soil influence agriculture?
- How do natural resources affect industries and livelihoods?

b. History

History studies the past, but its purpose is not only to remember dates or kings. It helps us understand how society has changed and evolved over time and why the present is shaped the way it is. History structures the present and helps us shape future. History explores:

- People and their lives in different periods
- Major events and changes
- Social and cultural developments
- Movements for freedom and justice
- The rise and fall of institutions and ideas

c. Political Science:

Political Science studies how societies are governed. It focuses on government institutions, laws, rights, duties, and the ways in which people participate in public life. Political Science helps us understand:

- Why societies need rules
- How laws are made and implemented
- How governments work at local, state, and national levels

d. Economics:

Economics studies how people and societies manage resources and make choices. Resources are limited, but human needs are unlimited. Economics helps us understand how goods and services are produced, distributed, and consumed, and how people earn a living. Economics examines:

- Work and employment
- Markets and prices
- Income and expenditure

Important Point

All of these subjects are interconnected; thus, social science is interdisciplinary.

Real-life problems need knowledge of all subjects together.

4. Relevance of Social Science:

Social Science is important because it connects learning to real life. Social science is fundamentally relevant because it provides an integrated understanding of the human world, its functioning, and its deep interrelationships with the natural environment. It helps us understand our lives, the places we live in, the society, governance, and everyday experiences.

Four Pillars of Relevance:

a. Social Science and Society

- Helps understand how diverse groups live together and promote unity in diversity. It identifies problems like discrimination, segregation and inequality and works towards to value inclusivity. It encourages equality at each stage of life.

b. Social Science and Environment

- Explains relationship between humans and nature. Human beings are 100% dependent on environment/nature for their every need/ survival. Social Science helps us understand how human activity affects the environment, and how environmental changes affect human life. It helps understand problems like:
 - deforestation
 - pollution
 - climate change

By understanding these problems social science encourages sustainability (wise use of resources)

c. Social Science and Economy

- Helps us understand daily economic choices. How we earn income, live, spend money, and save for future needs. Social Science helps students understand such choices not only at the family level but also at the level of society. Economics also helps us to understand why development should not only mean more income. Development should also mean better education, health, safety, and dignity.

d. Social Science and Governance

- Explains how government works, and how governance shapes our daily life. Government decisions influence schools, hospitals, roads, law and order, and public welfare schemes. Social Science helps students understand how these decisions are taken and how citizens can engage with them. It also helps citizens participate in democracy and promotes awareness of rights and duties. Democracy is not only voting, but also participation and responsibility.

e. Interconnection of Social Science

Social Science becomes meaningful when we connect its disciplines. Many real life issues cannot be understood through only one subject. They require combined thinking. Real-life problems require multiple subjects.

Example: Flood in a city

- Geography → rainfall, rivers
- History → city development
- Economics → loss of jobs
- Political Science → government response

Social Science is a connected study, not separate subjects.

Guiding Values in Social Science :

Social Science teaches important values based on the Constitution.

1. Diversity :

Diversity refers to wide range of differences within a society. These differences are social, cultural, religious, linguistic and other types. Social Science helps us recognize and respect difference among people. Diversity exists naturally because communities have different histories, environments, and traditions. Understanding diversity is crucial as it helps us manifest need for unity.

India is a diverse country which can be seen in language, religion, region, caste, tribe, gender, age, occupation, physical ability, food habits, clothing, and cultural practices. According to the 2011 Census of India, there are 121 languages and 1,369 rationalised mother tongues spoken across the country. Among these, 22 languages are recognised under the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution, providing them with social status.

2. Inclusivity :

It means ensuring that everyone feels welcomed, respected, and able to participate fully in shared spaces such as classrooms, playgrounds, neighbourhoods, and public institutions. It reminds us that some groups have faced exclusion or discrimination, and that fairness requires active steps to remove barriers. Inclusivity can be seen in everyday situations. Everyone should be included and respected without discrimination.

3. Sustainability

It means ensuring that everyone feels welcomed, respected, and able to participate fully in shared spaces such as classrooms, playgrounds, neighbourhoods, and public institutions. It reminds us that some groups have faced exclusion or discrimination, and that fairness requires active steps to remove barriers. Inclusivity can be seen in everyday situations.

4. Equity

It means fairness in opportunities and outcomes. It recognises that people do not start from the same position. Some face disadvantages because of poverty, discrimination, disability, remoteness, or lack of access to services. Equity requires additional support where it is needed so that everyone has a genuine chance to study, stay healthy, and live with dignity.

UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL SCIENCE FROM AN INDIAN PERSPECTIVE

Social Science studies people and society, but society does not look the same everywhere. The questions a country asks, the problems it faces, and the solutions it chooses are shaped by its geography, history, economy, and systems of governance. This is why perspective matters. When we study Social Science from an Indian perspective, we try to understand India as it is, with its unique experiences and realities.

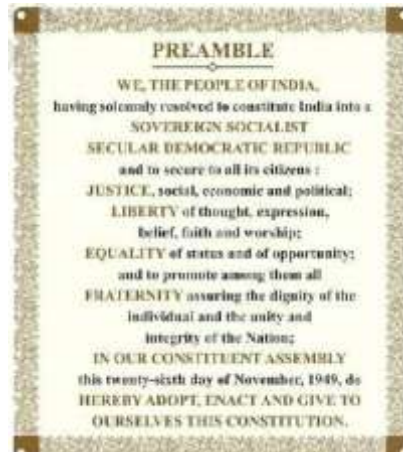
India is often described as plural and diverse, but diversity is not only a description of culture. It also shapes questions of language policy, access to public services, employment, and representation. In many places, people of different communities live side by side and share common facilities. In other places, differences can become reasons for prejudice and exclusion. A grounded understanding of India therefore involves recognising diversity while also examining how equality and dignity can be protected in daily life and in public systems.

Indian secularism is often discussed as distinctive because it focuses on protecting religious freedom while ensuring that the state treats all faiths fairly in a diverse democracy. This becomes important when we examine questions such as minority rights, public order, and equality before the law.

The Constitution as a guiding framework for public life

India's Constitution is central to understanding public life because it defines the ideals of justice, liberty, equality, and fraternity and sets out how institutions should function in a democracy. These values are not only for courts or parliament. They guide how we think about discrimination, unequal access to resources, and the responsibilities of government.

An Indian perspective also stresses scientific temper and the spirit of inquiry when we examine social issues. This means we should question rumours, stereotypes, and single-story explanations, and instead look for evidence and multiple causes. The Fundamental Duties include developing scientific temper, humanism, and the spirit of inquiry and reform, which supports this approach.



The past and the making of modern India

To understand India today, we need to understand how the past shaped present institutions and identities. Colonial rule influenced land revenue systems, education, transport, industries, and patterns of inequality. The freedom struggle shaped ideas of rights, justice, and citizenship and helped create a commitment to democratic governance. This historical understanding helps us see that present day debates and laws about equality, development, and national integration have deep roots, and cannot be understood only by looking at current events.

Economic life and Development

Economic life shapes our daily choices because livelihoods, inequality, and development affect what we can afford and what opportunities we can access. Work in India ranges from agriculture and fishing to crafts, factories, construction, transport, retail, and services, with many people depending on seasonal or informal jobs and uncertain incomes.

Development can improve roads, electricity, digital access, healthcare, and employment, but its benefits are not shared equally across regions and social groups. An Indian perspective therefore asks who gains, who remains excluded, and how prices, wages, and public services influence mobility. Migration for work also shows these links, as it can raise incomes while putting pressure on housing, water, transport, and public services.

An Indian perspective encourages us to connect disciplines rather than keeping them separate. A single issue such as migration, drought, unemployment, or urban overcrowding involves geography, history, economics, and political institutions at the same time. It also encourages us to judge choices using constitutional values, respect for diversity, inclusivity, sustainability, and equity.