

# Chapter 1: Understanding Social Science

*Easy-to-Understand Study Notes | Tiwari Academy*

**Chapter at a Glance:** *Social Science is the systematic study of human society. It explains how people, places, institutions, economies, cultures and environments are connected, and how the past and present shape our world.*

## 1. What is Social Science?

- Social Science is the systematic study of human society.
- It explains not only what happens, but also why it happens and how different parts of social life are connected.
- It studies society, institutions, cultures and human interactions.
- Unlike natural sciences, which mainly study the natural world, Social Science focuses on human society and its relationships.
- It uses careful observation, evidence and logical reasoning to understand social questions.

## 2. Social Science in Everyday Life

Our ordinary daily activities depend on many connected systems:

| Everyday Example            | What It Shows                                                                                   |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Food reaching our plate     | Farming, processing, transport, buying and selling involve many people and economic activities. |
| Roads and transport         | Public authorities plan and maintain infrastructure.                                            |
| School education            | Educational policies and programmes influence schools.                                          |
| Electricity                 | Power is generated and delivered through large networks.                                        |
| Languages and traditions    | History and culture help explain diversity.                                                     |
| Floods, farming and climate | Geography and environment influence human life.                                                 |

Society is shaped by history, geography, institutions, resources and human choices. Therefore, Social Science helps us see society as one connected story.

## 3. Understanding Society through Time and Traditions

- Human societies have changed greatly over thousands of years.
- Early communities depended directly on nature. Later, people learnt to grow crops, domesticate animals, build settlements, develop tools and exchange goods.
- Villages developed into towns and towns into cities; inventions, new ideas and cultural exchanges transformed ways of life.

## Indian Knowledge Traditions

- Indian traditions valued discussion, questioning, observation, reflection and logical reasoning.
- Pañchamahābhūtas: the idea of five great elements-earth (Pṛithvī), water (Āpaḥ), fire (Agni), air (Vāyu) and space (Ākāśha). It presents nature as an interconnected system.
- Vasudhaiva kuṭumbakam means 'the world is one family' and expresses the interconnectedness of human societies.
- The Arthaśāstra, attributed to Kauṭilya and composed about 2,300 years ago, discussed administration, economic management, taxation and rulers' duties toward the people.

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**Key Idea:** *Modern Social Science continues the long tradition of understanding society through observation, reasoning and evidence.*

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## 4. How Do Social Scientists Study Society?

1. Observe people's lives and surroundings.
2. Conduct interviews and surveys.
3. Examine documents and other sources.
4. Compare different times and places.
5. Gather information from multiple sources.
6. Build explanations supported by evidence.

This helps explain both continuity (what remains) and change (what transforms), and shows how the past shapes the present and today's actions influence the future.

## 5. Social Science as a Group of Disciplines

No single field can fully explain complex human society. In Grades 9–10, Social Science mainly draws from four core disciplines:

| Discipline        | Main Focus                                               | Typical Questions                                                 |
|-------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Geography         | Earth, environments and people–environment relationships | Where are things located? Why there? How do places affect people? |
| History           | Human past and change over time                          | What happened in the past? How did societies change?              |
| Political Science | Governance, power, rights and responsibilities           | How is power distributed? How are decisions and policies made?    |
| Economics         | Production, distribution and use of resources            | How are limited resources used to meet needs?                     |

Other fields in the broader Social Science family include Sociology, Philosophy, Anthropology and Psychology.

## 6. Geography

- Geography studies the location and distribution of places, objects, materials and people.
- It examines physical features of Earth as well as human communities.
- It studies how people interact with the natural environment and how places influence human life.
- It combines spatial perspective (location and its significance) with temporal perspective (change over time).
- Geography draws from both natural sciences and social sciences.

### Important Tools of Geography

- Maps
- Globes
- Atlases
- Geographical Information System (GIS)
- Infographics
- Other geographical instruments

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**Example:** *India's long coastline helped facilitate historical contact with Africa, Europe and Southeast Asia.*

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## 7. History

- History is the study of the human past, including people's experiences, values and changes over time.
- The itihāsa-purāṇa tradition is an old and influential Indian tradition of preserving cultural memory through stories.
- Modern historiography increasingly uses empirical evidence and scientific methods such as human genetics, carbon-14 dating and archaeology.

### Sources Used to Study History

| Type of Source           | Meaning / Examples                                                                                                    | What It Can Tell Us                                                  |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Literary/<br>Documentary | Travelogues, memoirs, correspondence, genealogical records, folklore, oral traditions, revenue documents, manuscripts | Ideas, events, social life and cultural memory                       |
| Archaeological           | Monuments, buildings, excavated sites, artefacts, objects, sculptures and paintings                                   | Material life and physical evidence of the past                      |
| Epigraphic               | Texts, decrees or records inscribed on stone, metal plates or rock surfaces                                           | Rulers, administration, society and past events                      |
| Numismatic               | Coins, currency and medals                                                                                            | Economy, chronology, rulers, trade, political boundaries and culture |

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**Important Terms:** *Empirical evidence = information collected through actual observation or experimentation. Genealogical records trace family lineage and relationships across generations.*

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## 8. Political Science

- Political Science is the study of governance and explains how and why power is distributed, decisions are made and policies are implemented.
- It studies constitutions, governments and institutions of the State.
- It also examines social movements, nation building, foreign policy and how power is exercised, shared and regulated.
- The Panchayati Raj system is an example of grassroots democracy because it gives citizens a voice in local development planning.

## Indian Political Thought

- Political ideas were linked with dharma (moral duty), artha (economic well-being) and rājadharma (duties of the ruler).
- Texts such as the Vedas, Upaniṣads and Purāṇas discuss justice, authority, social order and responsibilities.
- The Mahābhārata and Śhukranīti discuss governance, law and ethical leadership.
- The Arthaśhāstra explains governance, taxation, the army and rulers' responsibility for public welfare.
- A key idea is that power is a responsibility, not merely a privilege.

## 9. Economics

- Economics studies how individuals and societies use limited resources to meet their needs.
- It studies how goods and services are produced, exchanged and distributed.
- Consumers decide what to buy; producers decide what and how much to produce; governments make policies.
- Economics is also concerned with well-being, equity and justice—not only numbers and markets.

## India's Economic Journey

- For centuries, India was a leading economy and an important centre of trade, industry and maritime activity.
- Colonial rule disrupted this progress, contributing to poverty, recurrent famines and decline of traditional industries.
- After independence, India began rebuilding its economy.
- Progress has occurred in infrastructure, education, technology, poverty reduction and life expectancy, but challenges remain in raising incomes and sharing the benefits of growth.
- Sustainable growth meets present needs without harming future generations' ability to meet theirs.

## 10. Why Should We Study Social Science?

| Benefit                          | Explanation                                                                                                       |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Understand social systems        | Helps us understand how roads, schools, markets, water systems and digital spaces developed and function.         |
| Respect diversity and unity      | Explains differences in languages, customs and occupations, while showing the underlying unity of Indian culture. |
| Become responsible citizens      | Knowledge of laws, rights, responsibilities and government prepares citizens for civic participation.             |
| Analyse social challenges        | Develops the ability to ask informed questions about environment, health, employment and urban growth.            |
| Connect past, present and future | Past decisions help explain the present and guide wiser choices for the future.                                   |

## 11. The Future of Social Science

- Rapid changes in technology, cities, migration, the environment and global connections make Social Science increasingly important.
- Key skills include careful observation, asking questions, examining evidence and recognising connections.
- Social Science can help societies address climate change, sustainable development, social harmony and equitable use of resources.
- It can guide responsible use of new technologies and help communities adapt to changing conditions.
- It prepares students to become informed, thoughtful and responsible citizens.

## 12. Grades 9–10: The Two-Year Learning Journey

- Study how historical events shaped the modern world.
- Understand how geographical features influence human life and economic activity.
- Learn how political systems and democratic institutions function.
- Understand production, distribution and economic development.
- Explore environmental sustainability, social diversity, citizens' rights and responsibilities, technology and global connections.
- Learn to analyse evidence, compare perspectives and connect the past, present and future.

## 13. Quick Revision Table

| Term                  | Remember This                                                                               |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Social Science        | Systematic study of human society.                                                          |
| Pañchamahābhūtas      | Five elements: earth, water, fire, air and space.                                           |
| Vasudhaiva kuṭumbakam | ‘The world is one family.’                                                                  |
| Geography             | Studies places, environment and people–environment relationships.                           |
| History               | Studies the human past and change over time.                                                |
| Political Science     | Studies governance, power, institutions, rights and responsibilities.                       |
| Economics             | Studies use of limited resources and production, exchange and distribution.                 |
| Empirical evidence    | Evidence based on actual observation or experimentation.                                    |
| Epigraphic source     | Inscribed records on durable materials such as stone or metal.                              |
| Numismatic source     | Coins, currency or medals used as historical evidence.                                      |
| GIS                   | Geographical Information System; a tool used in geographical study.                         |
| Sustainable growth    | Growth that meets present needs without harming future generations’ ability to meet theirs. |

## 14. Chapter Summary

- Social Science helps us understand society as an interconnected whole.
- Human societies change over time, but traditions and past experiences continue to influence the present.
- Geography, History, Political Science and Economics offer different but connected ways of studying society.
- Social scientists use observation, evidence, documents, surveys, comparison and reasoning.
- Studying Social Science develops curiosity, critical thinking, civic responsibility, respect for diversity and the ability to make informed choices.

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**Exam Tip:** Do not learn definitions alone. Try to connect each discipline with a real-life example. This makes answers clearer and easier to remember.

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