

Social Sciences and Social Scientists: Their Role in Shaping Society

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Outline

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- DOMAIN OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
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ROLE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

- THEORY MAKING
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- DECISION MAKING
- POLICY MAKING
- ADVOCACY
- OPINION-MAKING

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INTRODUCTION

- There is **little recognition of the role** that social science disciplines and social scientists play in comparison to that of scientists and technologists.
- This may perhaps be so because their work does not result in **physical forms or in such neat forms as theorems or laws**—both mathematical and statistical, as in physical science disciplines.
- They may **not therefore be attracting best talents** in many of social science disciplines.
- If there are social science technologists providing solution to social problem it is thought that they emanate from **common understanding rather than scientific understanding** of social phenomena.

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INTRODUCTION

- Many **social science practitioners** are not recognized as such but as managers, activists, lawyers, journalists and so on.
- Teachers, lawyers, managers and social workers are **professionals of sorts** and economists are so to a very great extent but sociologists, anthropologists and political scientists were more on the **side of thinkers** rather than practitioners or professionals.
- Even politicians are considered professionals but not political scientists!
- Social scientists do a lot of service and there is a lot of admiration for their work. But it is **seldom recognized** that much of it is a contribution of social sciences.

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Some Caveats

- Analytical/scientific research into broad groups: **physical** and **social**.
- Creative work with the use of natural science research is well recognized as **technology** but that with the creative use of social science research does not have a name though it is felt that **social institutions** have been evolved by thinkers/ scholars with deep understanding of societal processes and phenomena. [Earlier technology was coming more in the shape of instrument/equipment as artisans did; now it is more in form of formulation.]
- Here, their **operative role** is recognized in terms of decision-making, policy-making, advocacy and opinion-making.
- Whether social scientists could be **professional** or **activists** or they could be both or some of them could be professional and others, activists, is not concluded.
- We know that, besides earning their wherewithal through professing and practicing, **most social scientists are found involved in some kind of activism**, only varying in degree,
- Exception being innocent ones who may have a degree in social science but otherwise constitute a lot of ignoramus.

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EMERGENCE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

- Social Sciences as a distinct form of enquiry from natural sciences on the one hand and arts and humanities on the other emerged much later as a scientific discourse.
- The phrase itself was used for the first time in **1824** by Irish Political Economist **William Thompson**, less than 200 years.
- Even usage of word **science** in the present sense (as a body of knowledge) is **not very old**. What Newton did was natural philosophy! For long, physics continued to be called experimental philosophy. Science was more a way to know!
- According to **Durkheim** there have been three phases of inquiry: **theological, philosophical and scientific**.
- Scientific phase used observation as critical desiderata. It was this kind of development that **Karl Max added adjective scientific before socialism to emphasize that his socialism is different than his predecessors'**, not that preceding socialisms were unscientific! Not ideological but scientific!
- Their claim to the **status of science** actually lies in the use of so called **scientific method**, as explained by Kuhn (paradigm) and Popper (falsificationism), in the study of human affairs.

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NATURE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

- Social sciences belong to the **domain of humanities and arts** but follow the **methodology of natural sciences**. Though they arrived late on the scene yet their progress has been pretty fast.
- People found them of great practical significance and of immediate use in socio-cultural domain insofar as **conscious intervention by social agencies could improve the state of human affairs, compared to some of the natural sciences like astronomy, and yet capable of using empirical investigation**.
- While **sciences normally study objective aspects** of nature, social sciences naturally consider **both subjective and objective aspects of society and social interaction**—at times mediated through material world.
- Nowadays there is **emerging interface between scientific disciplines and social science disciplines** as sciences do call for better societal understanding and many social sciences deal with such human phenomena that require scientific/technological interventions.

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Moral Science to Moral Neutrality

- There were phases in the evolution of social sciences when attempts were to pursue a line of moral neutrality much like as in natural sciences which were distinctly dominated by empirical methodology, logical positivism as it came to be known later on, followed by post-positivism of falsificationism
- Precursors of social sciences were dominated by logical interpretation in the manner of syllogism.
- Soon it was realized by a large majority of scholars that human affairs could not be completely divorced from moral questions in the ultimate analysis.
- Note:

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Human Society

- A society is more than that the sum total of its constituents, a reality *sui generis*, pointed out Durkheim. The relationships between humans, whose actions are **actuated by hunger, sleep, sex and fear**, are often mediated through physical and institutional world.
- Humans in a society are likely to be **embodiment of self-interest and social values**. Self-interest may be enlightened by social values or may not, will depend on a lot of circumstances.
- **Envy, jealousy, hate and greed** on the one hand and **love, sympathy, and altruism** on the other will ever remain with Man. Individual differences will however continue to exist.
- Yet, it is clear that studies related to human nature beyond mechanical biology—what humans love or fear, of human action beyond psychomotor, of **group behaviour and its societal consequences**, are all proper provinces of social science pursuits.
- There exists a **social consciousness**, many scholars and thinkers aver, which may be at variance with **community consciousness** in plural societies.

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DOMAIN OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

- The range of social sciences vary greatly as they cover the study of **past events and achievements/failures** of human society and evolution of different societies and their institutions as well as **contemporary** human behaviour, relationships and institutions.
- History to archaeology, cultural anthropology to sociology, political science to economics and political economy, social psychology and industrial psychology to criminology, education to social work, and demography to human geography
- Emerging subjects like sociobiology, neuro-psychology and medical ethics on the one hand and environmental social sciences on the other.
- Many of the humanities disciplines within its fold and call for this broader set within human sciences as they are increasingly using so-called scientific method in their studies.
- **In a way whatever is studied in an analytical fashion in societal affairs and is not a synthetic, creative activity like poetry or painting or dramatics, is social science.**

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DOMAIN OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

- But if we divide the whole spectrum of analytical enquiry into natural and social domains, we get to include commerce, management, law and linguistics within the fold of social science.
- It can be easily seen that discipline of management, if it can be called so, involves as diverse material as psychological on the one hand and financial on the other hand interspersed with economics and sociology.
- Though it is fashionable these days to add words like science and technology with the word management, **Peter Drucker**—one of the best known minds in management education—maintained that **management education is a liberal art.**

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SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY: SOCIAL CONTEXT

- Science and technology, though very much related, are two **distinctly different** human pursuits! Scholars and artisans!
- Science discovers what is already in existence in nature but man is ignorant about while technology invents something which is not in existence in its present form.
- A child when he tries to know what is happening in a machine (say computer), why it is happening, is exploring as a scientist. When a homemaker tries out a new recipe through experiments she is on the technological job.
- It is often remarked that **need is the mother of invention** where need should not be distinguished from greed or want or desire.
- However, it goes without saying that technological experiments, experiments in problem solving, may lead to scientific discoveries (Archimedes) and attempts to discover may result in some kind of invention.

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SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

- Science
 - **discovers** laws (of motion, attraction/repulsion; of progression, of evolution, of formation), species and their characteristics, substances and their properties, etc.
 - builds theories in terms of patterns or cause-effect relationship to explain behaviours, phenomena, processes and episodes and perhaps to predict the future course.
 - Theories are refined, contextualized or refuted.
- Technology
 - may apply the scientific laws consciously or unconsciously but its pursuit **invents** an appliance, instrument or equipment, develops a new process or creates a new substance.
- **Scientific activity is often a product of curiosity**, an inner urge of man to know for its own sake, while **technological activity is an expression of societal needs**, at times insipient, may be at times just of a small section—say farmers or ink makers or managers of sea explorations or even of evil doers like terrorists, as of freedom fighters.

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TECHNOLOGY AND INSTITUTIONS

- **Technology and institutions are seen as two varieties of solutions to human and societal problems.** Man has to deal with man often through or for material world.
- Technology is the relationship of **man with nature** while institution is the relationship of **man with man**.
- Important: They come almost as **twins. One kind of farming practice has one kind of relationship between man and man—for example, owners, tenants, and tillers and of course the State.**
- In a way, technology and institutions are both societal products which arise as solution to problems.
- **Technology and institutions run parallel in their secular journey but not at the same pace** and society faces the tensions but whether it is human incapability to run them parallel or they assume their autonomy, has no final answer.

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Inter-societal Interaction

- Moreover, when one society comes into interaction with another through assimilation or subjugation, the interaction gives rise to certain kind of institutions.
- So, there is a history of **slavery** and there is a history of **federal living** and there is a history of **civil war**.
- In fact, the source of the problem may be lying elsewhere but solutions may often be technological, institutional or a mix of both.
- **Business process outsourcing (institution)**, for example, could not be possible without revolution in information technology but there would have less of need for it if natural migration was made easier through institutional arrangement (visa regime).
- New technology gives rise to new type of institutional arrangement of employment. It has impacted **new fiscal relations** between States involved in the process.

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Institutions as Social Products

- Institutions (production relations, hierarchies, incentive structure) are as much social products as are transformers, planes and roads and bridges, hospitals and schools.
- Creation of the ideas leading to making of instruments and institutions is a social product as they come to resolve and solve one or the other problems a society or a group or a community faces whether it is about getting water within the premises (technology) or resolving a property dispute with the neighbour (institution of panchayat).

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ROLE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES & SCIENTISTS

- **Social Scientists rarely remain purely scientists** establishing laws and delineating patterns; they often transgress, and rightly so, into technology/ institutional areas.
- It does not mean that there are no pure social scientists—just engaged in theory making for historical happenings or contemporary ones, nor does it mean that all social scientists are involved or called upon to undertake all kinds of technological activities of making—decision, policy and opinion or doing advocacy.
- But most professional social scientists end up working in one or the other organization or establishments where they are called upon to provide inputs for at least one of the four. Few could be free lance as well.
- It is often asserted that '**social sciences should aim mainly at promotion of welfare of the people of the people for today, tomorrow and the day after through cultivating institutions in society, economy and polity and also understanding with people co-habiting elsewhere in the world**'.

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Social Scientists as Scientists

- There is no compulsion for a scientist to make the world good.
- **Can we not afford a social scientist to tell a positive process of sanskritisation without spelling out its implication for social engineering?**
- Technology may invent a device to hack the bank account or an email and another, to check that hacking!
- For a moment, we ignore the second issue and dwell on the first.

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Theory Making

- As Scientists they make theories about
 - how a certain group will behave in certain circumstances or react to certain stimuli and
 - how a society is likely to evolve in certain phase or what kind of forces are likely to work in certain social situations or
 - why certain tribes behave in a certain manner or certain institutions emerge in certain groups and not in others or
 - what kind of interface between technological forces and social institutions of relationship between man and man existed in certain phases of evolution or
 - how classes are formed or mutate.
- To illustrate further from the field of economics, the economists have bothered
 - why did market emerge and
 - why do they fail in certain conditions to play the role of efficient allocation of resources and
 - what are the possible solutions, but also
 - what are the conditions for government failure.

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Theory Making: Illustrations

- They have also bothered about why did the institution of firm arise and what kind of arrangements within the firm itself take place as well as in what areas what kind of firms go in for sourcing, in-sourcing or outsourcing.
- In recent past, economic explanations have been offered for demographic processes like birth and decisions like number of children and for social institutions like marriage and family and even the processes for breakup of marriage and division of families rather than division of holdings, which was a pet subject half a century ago.
- Anthropologists have been bothering about how the gift system came into being and when did it become a formal system of barter exchange.
- Why did institution of money emerge and how it keeps changing its form, thanks to technology

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Theory Making: Illustrations

- Economists bothered why was the money invented and what other role did it play.
- They have also worried about why and how other financial institutions originated and how did they shape the role and functions of the State.
- But they also reason out contemporary phenomena like suicides by farmers and youth in terms of pressure and the milieu of their living and who are the ones more likely to commit suicide.
- Many did and do bother about corruption and rent-seeking behaviour among police personnel, bureaucracy and politicians.

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Role of Social Scientists

- But if we try to classify the role social scientist are to play, we find that they provide inputs to the processes of, and their help is solicited for **decision-making, policy-making, advocacy and opinion-making**.
- They may play an **active** role and they may play a **passive** one.
- It does not mean that there are no pure social scientists—just engaged in theory making for historical happenings or contemporary ones, nor does it mean that all social scientists are involved or called upon to undertake all kinds of technological activities of making—decision, policy, advocacy and opinion.
- But most professional social scientists end up working in one or the other organization or establishments where they are called upon to provide inputs for at least one of the three.

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DECISION MAKING

- Decisions have to be made by
 - individuals,
 - groups, communities, nations and
 - gram sabhas, municipalities,
 - sub-national and national bodies,
 - multilateral bodies as well as
 - groups now called as community-based organizations, non-government organizations and civil societies.
- With increasing complexity of the society and growing specialism, even **an individual consults** for one's carrier, children's study, health and personality development, marriage and marital discord, design of the house and its interior decoration, property disputes with parents/children and siblings, investments in reality and financial instruments and tax planning, and so on.

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Decision Making: Illustrations

- **Local level democratic bodies** have often been supplemented by local authorities to take many municipal affairs and they are often said to be a body of experts in planning and development, water and electricity supply, management of sewerage and draining.
- Even if one questions the kind of hierarchical structure that exists between democratic bodies and authorities at local level one may not deny the role of experts.
- Among **the experts** are included social scientists from traditional social science disciplines also.
- Both democratic bodies and expert bodies further **commission such studies as involve social scientists** who are of late developing some expertise in environmental and ecological concerns.
- They also seek advice from **political scientists, economists and financial experts** on the manners of mobilizing resources and sometimes on disbursements.

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Decision Making: Illustrations

- Governments at State and Federal levels have created several permanent **corporations, commissions, councils, boards, bureaus, agencies, and authorities** whether it is about education, health, industrial public enterprises, infrastructural development, financial architecture or welfare schemes where social science experts are playing their respective roles.
- But more importantly, for example, agriculture experts, say in farmers' commission, are developing and using their societal understanding besides their scientific knowledge.
- The governments keep setting up **ad hoc commissions and committees like finance commission, education commission, knowledge commission and pay commission and taxation reforms committees** for seeking expert opinion before taking a decision to have impact of permanent nature and experts include social scientists and scientists having social science understanding.

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Specialists for Decision Making

- Governments have created specialized cadres for economics, trade and statistics. They always had those in judiciary, health, education and forests. Even in agriculture research.
- Everywhere social science specialists, including management experts are playing their respective roles.
- Multilateral organizations are often banking upon social science professionals for their activities.

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Decision Making: Illustrations

- All the United Nations expert bodies and other multilateral bodies, including non-governmental international organizations **seek involvement** of economists, sociologists, and anthropologists.
- The **World Bank consults** various social scientists and keeps some of them on payroll to understand the likely impacts of the projects it undertakes and sponsors from the point of view of tribes, weaker sections and environment.
- Likewise other agencies involved in funding like ADB or providing liquidity like IMF do consult social scientists though sometime we have reservations on their decisions.
- **WTO and WIPO run their training programmes for educating government officials, scholars and others** on social science related material—economics and law, negotiation and bargain.
- In addition, in **administration of projects they would need people from accounting, management, law and social work background.**
- Role of social sciences and social scientists seems to be all-pervading in decision-making at any level.

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POLICY MAKING

- Policy making and policy analysis are the exercises undertaken by **businesses** (corporate ones), **not-for profit-organizations** and **governments** as well as by **international multilateral** or plurilateral organizations, which are themselves products of policy analysis of situations, institutions and instruments.
- Whosoever has to take a decision in the long-term perspective is supposed to be having a broad policy framework.
 - Businesses bother about mergers and acquisitions. Whether they should go for vertical mergers—backward with suppliers or forward with industrial customers, or for horizontal mergers— to harness economies of scale, or for conglomerate mergers— to exploit economies of scope, are kind of illustrations of the policy decisions the businesses worry about. What processes could be outsourced is another issue.
 - No-for-profit organizations—philanthropic, political and religious—do develop policies for forging ahead as could do terrorists, militants and insurgency outfits.
- We shall however concern ourselves more with the domain of **public policy**.

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Public Policy

- **Public policy is an affirmation of positive actions and negative sanctions, executed through legislative, executive and administrative channels by a government often in pursuance of the constitutional directives whose interpretation may change in the course of time due to change in ethos.**
 - The set of actions and sanctions is often chosen from the set of possible alternatives, which may subserve the same set of objectives. There can be an agricultural/farm policy as well as an industrial policy.
 - There can be a policy on telecom and on films.
 - There can be an employment policy and there can be a policy on reservation of jobs for certain sections of society for certain categories of jobs.
 - But there can be a prohibition policy or on consumption of tobacco and there can be one littering.
- In simply means public policies are **broad commitments and guidelines** for political and bureaucratic executive in certain areas needing intervention.
- Chosen policy is **purportedly optimum** in certain terms. Allocation of 2G, coal not found proper by many parameters

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Public Policy

- There is hardly any secular matter—even policies on science and technology, nutrition or medical care, industry or pollution—where social scientists will have no say.
- Then there are secular aspects of religious matters where the State may have stakes and social science would provide rationale and reasons, perspective and philosophy for the direction and stand a policy should have.
- There are policies related with religious matters, even if the State is secular for reasons of its social and cultural aspects as well as for protecting the interests of weaker sections and preserving the interests of minorities in a plural society like India.
- With change in ethos things may change. For example, the same set of Directive Principles is now used to justify the policies that are at variance of 180° from the previous ones. Observe trade union activities and pronouncements on them.

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Public Policy Issues

- Social scientists have a great role in advising, for example, whether reservations are needed and, if yes, where—education, jobs and legislatures, and for how long—a limited duration, a long time or indefinitely.
- What kind of riders, like income/status threshold, need to be employed, needs judicious considerations. What are the implications and repercussions are better analysed by social scientists and their inputs are of crucial importance in policy making in such areas.
- What kind of policy the government can have in the matter of civil law—whether to have a uniform set of laws or differentiated along the religious lines and yet permit customary rules in the case of tribes and aborigines, is a matter in which social science scholars have a better say.
- With the kind of controversy which has arisen recently about same-gotra marriage, various perspectives could be provided by social scientists as could be done by scientists.

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Economic Policy

- Economic policies vary in range and variety. There is trade policy on the one hand and industrialization policy on the other; tendu patta policy on the one hand and tribal policy on the other.
- There is a policy matter related with value added tax on the one hand and medium term fiscal policy on the other, priority sector lending on the one hand and broad monetary policy on the other and foreign direct investment on the one hand and privatization of profit-making public sector enterprises on the other.

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Types of Economic Policies

- If we concentrate on policies related to economic matters, we can easily classify them as **macroeconomic**, **sectoral** (often called as microeconomic), and **sectional**.
- Macroeconomic policies are indirect but their influence is normally economy-wide. Monetary policy through bank rate, repo and reverse repo rates (open market operations), cash reserve ratio, statutory liquidity ratio and is usually administered by the central bank but is influenced by the reading of movements in the economy as much as by the policies of general government. A whole lot of external flows and happenings need to be considered.
- Clearly economists, bankers—commercial and development, and financial experts are called upon to tender advice in this policy arena.

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Macroeconomic Policies

- Then there is fiscal policy dealing with taxation, non-tax revenue sources like profit/dividend, royalty and fees on minerals on the one hand and expenditure on revenue/capital and plan/non-plan heads.
- How public utility services can be charged and whether there ought to be sectoral/sectional cross-subsidization is better advised by economists.
- What are implications and repercussions of each element in the gamut of actions and the total fiscal matrix are analysed by economists and government economists do advise.
- But more importantly they help delineate a mid-term fiscal policy.
- Then there is the issue of environment policy, which encompasses most sectors of the economy and the society.
- Policies on foreign capital inflows, on export promotion and import substitution, and on foreign banking operations are economy-wide yet often they have indications on sectors.
- There is also competition policy about ensuring that acquisition and mergers are non-monopolistic.

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Sectoral Policies

- Sectoral policies range from agriculture to industry to power, from coal to textile to mineral extraction, from export-import to transport, from tourism to sports, from insurance to telecom, from space to nuclear.
- Let us take the example of industrial policy, which has been evolving over years. Perusing them, one gathers that an industrial policy involves parameters which indicate about ownership spheres of public, private, and joint, participation of foreign capital and its extent, operation of large/medium/small/micro enterprises, level of technology, reservation of certain products/industries for certain sections, availability of credit on concessional terms and tax exemption for some years if industries are located in backward regions.
- Likewise agriculture policy is likely to suggest the kind of agrarian relations, the kind of technological applications, the kind of cropping pattern and the kind of irrigation system it would like to promote and the ways of doing so. There will also be indications about regulatory mechanisms before the start of business and during the course of business.

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Telecom Policy

- Let us take up for example telecom policy. Whether there have to be only state sponsored players or there should be fair competition between public and private players; if in public sector, whether departmental ones or corporations—if corporation, whether everywhere or in some selected cities/circles, and if in private sector what level of foreign direct investment may be permitted; whether the department which provides the service should also regulate the players or a separate regulatory authority should be set up are all parts of the telecom policy. Which authority should allocate spectrum, which authority should determine the charges which players may have to pay for uplinking or downlinking between different levels and so on. Whether the mode of generating resources through these types of non-tax sources can be considered legitimate, prudent and expedient.

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Transport Policy

- Transport policy deals with promotion and coordination of different modes of transporting goods and people as also different types of players with a view to economize resources. Sometimes we find that one or the other mode is being protected, like our transport policy till the other day was to protect the railways from competition with road transport in passenger segment and the argument was that it was a national monopoly but then why not in goods segment, which actually cross-subsidize other segments of the railway operations. At the same time air traffic was nationalized in early 1950s through compulsory merger to salvage the private operators from going broke, despite indirect subsidy and business by the government, with the argument that it will help realize the full potential of technical developments rapidly taking place in civil aviation. Today, we have fashioned a variety of ways for involving private sector in the name of public private partnership in terms of costs, revenue and risks through ownership, lease and operation.

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Social Sector: Education

- Social sector has occupied a prime importance. Education has its sub-sectors of academic, vocational and professional streams.
- For each of these there has to be a policy well dovetailed with overall education policy, which has to be seen in the context of manpower requirement of various sectors of the economy.
 - Whether institutions have to be entirely private or both the sectors to compete and to what extent,
 - whether foreign players are to be allowed and if so with what terms, and whether lateral entries are to be permitted,
 - whether reservation for certain sections have to be made among the entrants and staff,
 - whether some of the streams have to be subsidized whereas others have to be sort of taxed (fee to be higher than cost in government-run institutions),
 - whether and to what extent autonomy to be given to educational institutions—schools, colleges, institutes and universities, are some of the elements.
- How education policy has to be dovetailed with training policies and where training has to be on-the-job and to what extent and where it has to be institutional. What are the skills being demanded by the market/economy and what is the present capacity and how is the gap to be filled?

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Health and Housing

- Likewise there has to be formulated a health policy in any civilized society which has however to consider its ethnic and geographical diversity along with interest and role of private sector, including own account physicians, by the State.
- How to efficaciously reach sparsely populated tribal population engaged in primary sector activities like agricultural operations, for medical aid without dislocating them from their livelihood occupations, is an important consideration for a country like India.
- With the passage of time notion of a new kind of housing with certain civic amenities is developing fast and modern States are engaged in finding out how to go about shelter for all.
- The matter gets complicated in large urban habitations as the distinction between **workplace and living space** is the accepted norm here.
- Whether to permit high rise buildings and in which areas so as to ensuring minimum risk of natural disaster and keeping in view possibility, availability and economy in providing utilities will all be elements worth considering as would be the factors of congestion of people and traffic and pollution of air, water and noise.

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Migration Policy

- Differences in work opportunities between cities and villages encourage economic migration.
- But different countries are found to have different policies, depending on their perception whether there works a push-and-pull or a push-and-push mechanism.
- Whether migration has to be stemmed, and if so whether it has to be stemmed through indirect mechanism or direct intervention.
- Why existing metropolitan cities are expanding while towns are not or why villages are transforming into cities. (Theory)
- If counter-magnates have to be created to decongest overcrowded metros, resources are needed.
- Even if in the long-run most activities synergize, in the short-run, all sectors and activities compete with each other for scarce resources, a careful optimization exercise has to be conducted through planning and budget processes.

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Project Policy

- In fact, no development project activity comes with ease, that is, without problems to some people.
- Take for example the case of **major dams** and **power projects** or **special zones** or large factory establishments whether under private or government ownership, some people have to be displaced from their home, hearth and livelihood.
- Should we go for such projects? If a decision is taken for going for such projects, what could be a reasonable **rehabilitation and resettlement policy**?
- We need **economists, sociologists and anthropologists** to advise the government to choose a wholesome policy, which is **politically acceptable, financially feasible, economically viable** (overall returns in terms of social cost benefit analysis are found to be good) and **ecologically sound**.
- If it has international dimension, how to tackle the same.

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IPR Policy

- These days intellectual property is a matter of intense discussion. All member- countries of the World Trade Organization have complied with the TRIPs provisions.
- How strict should be the enforcement policy regarding piracy and infringement and before that there is question of awareness for general public, education policy for various stakeholders and training policy for registrars/controllers of different forms of intellectual property rights and enforcers like police, customs officials and judiciary.
- Where there was more disagreements and little agreement, member-States of the WTO were allowed to adopt a *sui generis* mechanism.
- India adopted a *sui generis* system in the case of plant breeders' rights and protected farmers' right to retain a portion of yield for self-use.

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Policies Enumerated

- **Competition policy, consumer protection policy, labour policy, child labour policy, social security policy, job reservation policy, population policy, employment policy,**
- Sports policy, Drug policy
- Science policy, technology policy,
- Tribal policy, criminal justice policy, policy for physically/ mentally challenged
- Foreign policy, policy for election funding Illustrations could be provided on each of these.
- There are many more in any real and sizeable society.

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Decision Making vs. Policy Making

- While decision-making may be at individual, family or organization level, policy-making is invariably at some level of government, normally with legislative power, though corporate and religious bodies may also be resorting to some kind of policy-making.
- In literature on organizational management, phrase **business policy is being substituted by strategic management.**

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Extra-State Policies: Political Parties

- One can of course think of policies which may be extra-State in nature.
- For example there may be electoral policy of a political party to go alone or seek support of like minded parties or to decide whether work for society from outside the government and often against it or through government by using State power, and if outside the government whether to go against it or support it and if inside the government whether to work in unison or pursue its own agenda—social or political.
- The parties have been found growing in wisdom in a way.
- They have learnt about median voter theorem through experimentation, as it seems to be the case in India, and seem to be gearing towards median in their policy agenda.
- If more parties are assuming centralist posture it is because of the realization that majority of voters have single-peaked preference which entails what is known as 'median voter wins'. Or, is it the social composition of the parties that have reduced the distances between the parties? This slimming of demarcation line has made it easy for politicians to behave as a kind of professional in their approach towards parties.

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Advocacy

- Emphasis is being laid these days on **advocacy**, which is slightly different than opinion-making.
- In advocacy, **we normally approach the agencies** which have power to make public policies, amend rules and execute schemes.
- In opinion-making, **we approach the people** to mould their views of looking at things. For example, suppose we are against sati-burning or cruelty to street dogs or age of consent.
- If we approach the government with suggestions to help them stop/curb practice, we are in advocacy role.
- On the other hand, if we approach the people to enlighten them and seek their cooperation in doing away with the evil practices, we are in the opinion-making role.
- There may be need for preparing both the people and the agencies—State and extra-State.

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OPINION-MAKING

- We all make opinions **about people**—friends, foes, acquaintances and relations, **about things** we possess and wish to possess including toothpaste, car, gold and television channels, **about issues** that immediately affect us but also those with which we may be remotely connected.
 - We wish to advise American Presidents as to whether they should have gone to war in Vietnam or should have dealt with Iraq the way they did or Afghanistan the way they are dealing.
 - We wish to advise China and Chile on their missions in Antarctica.
 - We wish to advise political parties on the lines they should adopt to win.
 - We all advise parents whether or not they should send their children to English-medium schools.
 - We also advise whether we should all be vegetarians or there is no harm if liquor is consumed in small doses or morning yoga is preferable to morning walk.
- But more importantly, **we try to convince people through arguments** by using facts, axioms and logic but also by likely consequences.

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Public Opinion on Public issues

- More about public opinion on public issues, avoiding personal opinions about things like fruits and candies but surely not avoiding those related to smoking and drinking.
- **Merit goods** though private in consumption are the goods which society opines good for the individuals even if they have little externality factor much like mother who makes child have milk in the latter's interest or parents who compel unwilling children to go to school primarily in the latter's interest.
- However, it is from **the angle of externality that smoking and drinking become a part of public policy domain.**

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Public Opinion

- Public opinion is understandably an aggregate of individual attitudes or beliefs about a given issue which individuals may not severally be facing. The issues may vary
 - abortion to child marriage to sati-burning to widow remarriage to ease in divorce;
 - discouragement of smoking to dealing with drug peddlers;
 - Tamil problem in Sri Lanka to monarchy in Nepal to democratization in Bhutan;
 - relations of India with Pakistan and China to cooperation with powerful nations to seek permanent seat in the United Nations to international intervention in Myanmar.
- The issues may just relate to new developments in cricket world or dealing with thieves and chain snatchers in some areas of the country.
- These opinions **may be at variance** with policies pursued by governments.
- Different governments may again think and act somewhat differently.

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Public Role of Public Opinion

- Speaking about the public role of public opinion, somebody has remarked that public opinion plays **the same role** in social function as religion plays for a community. Though there are others who think public opinion in a western style democracy is often susceptible to **elite manipulation**.
- **Propagandists and other manipulators** use the communication media to disseminate the ideas on which opinions are based. For example, in the opinion of certain scholars two-child norm for families is typically cut-off from need-perception of the poor as well of the rich—definitely for different reasons, but elites could successfully manipulate it. And today failure in achieving it is termed 'population dividend' as we are left with large population but of younger age structure.
- In many countries **people aspect was completely ignored in policies** pressed in controlling population growth.
- It has been well remarked that while people have a population aspect, population too has a people aspect.

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Opinion on Public Opinion

- Some analysts hold say that there is an unhappy truth about public opinion that it has at times been **destructively wrong** at critical junctures and people have been found to impose critical veto upon the informed and responsible officials. Anna and Arvind!
- Actually such scholars are too opinionated as they criticize the extra-establishment elements as 'too late with too little, too long with too much, too pacifist in peace and too bellicose in war, too neutral or appeasing in negotiation or too intransigent'.
- All diverse opinions are grounded in ones' understanding of empirical reality about the society and implications of the alternative resolutions of a social issue.
- A social issue goes beyond a person or a group and affects much larger society. **Suicide and euthanasia** are not seen as personal as a choice of dessert for supper but duly seen as social issues as they may have larger ramifications.

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Opinions Can Make or Unmake!

- Opinions are so powerful that they can make and unmake nations! Gandhi, Ambedkar and Jinnah
- They indeed decide the complexion of nations, societies, communities, and groups by inculcating social values, including group values, and modifying behaviour through ethical practices.
- Various brutal practices if could be done away with were not solely due to state action but due to education of masses against them. Raja Rammohun Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar
- Whether it is slavery or child labour, whether widow-burning or child marriage, if any policies succeed with finality, it is because of opinion in their favour. It took more than 100 years for the US after civil war to end discrimination (KKK)
- Propaganda has a value in spreading a view, was recognized by all ideologues, as advertisement has a value in creating market, and is duly recognized by economists and other social scientists.

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Thinkers in Different Camps

- Thinkers were often divided in two groups, though not always warring. Some worked on society through the State and some through other channels, media being one of them.
- There were pamphleteers too in Europe in the eighteenth century who either advocated a policy or a change in existing policy. The Poor Laws and Corn Law are famous for debates. Protection from competition through free trade had occupied and still occupies a lot of debate. These were major economic debates once upon a time.
- Today globalization occupies that space. In fifties, nationalization dominated the policy space but opinion makers made a lot of arguments against it.
- Now it is privatization but there are many researchers against it.
- Similarly, if mergers and acquisitions are disallowed today, it is in the interest of **market efficiency, not that industrial concentration** could be discouraged from the angle of equity.

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Opinion Makers

- Many opinion-makers may not be designated as social scientists but they are of that sort. **Smith and Malthus, Marx and Mills, Keynes and Pigou**, they were all engaged in opinion-making and they were all known social scientists, and to wit, economists.
- What do we say about **Gandhi**? Gandhi was a great opinion-maker of our times. It was through the Indian Opinion, Young India and Harijan that he was moulding opinion of the people, the rulers, the ruled and the bystanders. He has been acknowledged as a journalist but rarely a social scientist. But look at his writings, every other sentence is a pure logic and every other sentence is an empirical observation. No doubt there are axioms and assertions. But total submission he makes is disarming logic. He seems to be scoring on logical basis. He could not be anything but a social scientist as defined in this paper.
- So were all reformers: **Raja Ramohun Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Rabindra Nath Tagore, if not Jawaharlal Nehru, Ballabh Bhai Patel and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad**, who had in later years great role in policy making. But many of the revolutionaries (like **Bhagat Singh**) in our country as elsewhere are in that category only.
- Through a lot of popular writings many scholars are waging an opinion war on matters of civil, social, cultural, political and economic relevance.

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Secularism, an example

- For example, on what is secularism, we have variety of shades of the notion.
- Some start from the European debate about sharing of domain of human activities and discourse between the king and the pope and hold that the State should have nothing to do with religion and it should be a-religious in approach.
- Others tend to ascribe it a new meaning of equidistance from or equal respect for all religions.
- Some hold a secular state is not theocratic but it need not be atheist too.
- Still others hold the opinion about certain communities that such and such communities are secular by nature, and such and such are not.
- Each opinion has its own set of arguments based on one's understanding of empirical reality, even if fragmented in others' views and social/moral values.

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Opinion on Policy Matter

- Then there is hardly a policy matter where there does not exist an opinion in favour of a particular angle, which is more likely to be a majority one.
- But there invariably exist more than two opinions against it, which may not be very dominant at that point of time. The seeds of improvement in terms of contents of policy are in these so-called minority opinions.
- Most of these opinions are grounded in understanding of empirical reality and prevailing views about fairness, justice and equity. These opinion-makers are the people who lead movements. The movements often precede the policies. For example, it is the opinion in favour of climatic change that some research agenda and some policy changes are in offing.
- If something good has come out in the matter of rehabilitation and resettlement of victims of development projects it was because popular opinion could not be ignored altogether.
- **Opinions are supposed to represent popular sentiments but in fact are invariably backed by social science understanding of social locale.**

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Role of Public opinion

- Public opinions play a great role, is undoubted in shaping the complexion of a society, truly speaking of the world as a whole.
- They mould opinion of peoples, nations, governments and other actors whether it is about wild life or climate change, whether it is about peace efforts and imposition of war, whether it is about work participation of women, children and old or about role of man in home making.
- Whether chopping of hands of thieves, is justified at all. Should capital punishment be abolished altogether? How should terrorist problem be articulated as a problem of socio-economic deprivation or as a problem of law and order, whatever the meaning of that phrase? How militancy and insurgency has to be dealt with? Whether groups like Naxalites sre only against the State, not against people?
- This role of articulation by social scientists is well accepted, as the resolution of the issues depends on the articulation.
- **But what is little less realized, is the great role that social sciences and social scientists play in creating a public opinion, molding it, refining it and suggesting strategy and tactics of putting it forward to people, to governments, to civil society organizations and community-based organizations and to international community.**

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Social Sciences

- Our social science understanding is not confined to the faculty of social science in a typical university nor our social scientists are only professors in social science subjects, appointed in colleges, institutes and universities.
- They are widely spread across many walks of life in academia, in business, in government, in media, in multilateral organizations, in NGOs and CBOs—practically everywhere, except in technical laboratories; but technologists therein are not oblivious of the direction, complexion and institutions that society has and should have and the problems that need to be resolved through technological intervention.

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Social Scientists

- Social scientists are engaged in
 - developing theories,
 - explaining social phenomena, processes and events,
 - making predictions about future course of events, and
 - examining scenarios of polity actions in terms of consequences.
- They act as professionals and activists too. Social scientists, as broadly defined in this piece, help
 - individuals, groups, communities, governments, international bodies, non-government organizations and people at large
 - by providing inputs in processes of decision-making, policy-making and opinion-making and do play the role of advocacy.

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