
UNIT 1 NATURE OF SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH

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1.1 INTRODUCTION

The pursuit of knowledge is one of the prime driving forces of intellectual man. Research is as old as man's intellectual consciousness and the desire to seek. Research is also as old as the academic consciousness of human mind. Man has all along tried to look back at his history for better understanding of the evolutionary process leading to the present stage of mankind. He has also endeavoured to re-examine and, wherever possible to re-interpret the things he has already gone through. Present has its roots in the past and the seeds of future are sown in the present itself. Man's urge to understand the present has obviously induced him to look into his past more carefully and present his interpretations more scientifically in order to give purposeful direction to his intellectual efforts in pursuit of diverse ends to which the human activities are devoted. This urge of human brain to re-examine and to re-understand things may rightly be called research, at least, to begin with. The concept of research is thus closely linked with human endeavour for better understanding of his evolution, environment and growth through diverse stages of human history.

It is understandable that research, therefore, has been an integral part of academic pursuits in the past. It has served twofold purpose of intellectual sharpening and evolving new theories to explain diverse phenomena through which mankind has survived to its present form. It may not only be for academic interest but also more for human

enlightenment that one should study history to understand the dimensional development of mankind. Perhaps it would not be easy to guess that man, in his early stages, did have no idea of economic, social, cultural, political, and anthropological aspects of his existence. As he marched ahead, his awareness also grew and his curiosity led him to understand his environment through different angles. Slowly and steadily this awareness of man manifested itself in a process, now rightly known as research.

Aims and Objectives

After studying this Unit, you should be able to understand

- the nature of social science research;
- the difficulties a researcher faces in social science research;
- the various sources of data in social science research.

1.2 MEANING

Social research has been defined by P.V. Young in the following words – ‘We may define social research as the systematic method of discovering new facts or verifying old facts, their sequences, interrelationship, causal explanations and the natural laws which govern them.’ On the basis of the above definition the following characteristics of social research may be deduced.

1. Social research deals with the social phenomena. It studies behaviour of human beings-as members of society, and their feeling, responses, attitudes under different circumstances.
2. Social research is carried on both for discovering new facts and verification of the old ones. The object of every science of course, is the discovery of new facts, new relationship, and new laws governing the phenomena. But constant verification of the old concepts is also needed, especially in case of dynamic sciences. Verification is needed because of two reasons. Firstly, there may be an improvement in the technique of research and it is necessary to test the old concepts by this improved technique. Secondly, the phenomena under study might have undergone a change and it may be required to test the validity of old concepts in the changed circumstances. In Social sciences a lot of research is being carried on for both purposes and has resulted in the discovery of new facts as well as modification of old concepts.
3. Social research tries to establish causal connection between various human activities. It is really very interesting to note whether various complex human activities, are being performed only at random without any sequence, law or system behind them. At the first causal look at varied human behaviour attitudes, moods and temperaments, the presence of any system may appear to be an impossibility, but a close and patient study of different cases, their scientific analysis and comparison and logical interpretation is bound to disclose the truth, that most of them are not merely haphazard -as they appear but motivated by definite rules perfect system and universal laws. The main purpose of social research is therefore, to discover these laws, so that they may be used in the guided growth of human society.

Redman Peter says that social research is “systematised effort to gain new knowledge.” Stephenson is of the view that “social research is manipulation of things, concepts or

symbols for the purpose of generalising to extend correct and ‘verifying knowledge, whether that knowledge aids in the construction of a theory or in the practice of an art.’ Another definition of social research has been given by F.A. Ogg: “Research may or may not come to success; it may or may not add anything to what is already known. It is sufficient that its objectives be new knowledge or at least a new mode or orientation of knowledge.”

Clifford Moody has said about research that “It comprises defining and redefining problems; formulating hypotheses or suggested solutions; collecting, analyzing and evaluating data; making deductions and making conclusions; and at last carefully testing the conclusions to determine whether they fit the formulated hypothesis.”

In this way it will be observed that every definition focusses on the point namely that social research aims at adding to knowledge of human beings about the problems which face the society. In Webster’s International Dictionary, Research has been defined as “a careful and critical enquiry or examination in seeking facts or principles, diligent investigation in order to ascertain something.” Social research in other words discovers new facts and verifies the old ones. It does not aim at finding the ultimate truths but helps in understanding and classifying the behaviour of individuals in society.

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH

The objectives of social science research may be classified into two parts- firstly, academic, and secondly, utilitarian objectives.

The academic purpose of social research, as of any other research is the acquisition of knowledge. The thirst for knowledge has been responsible for a vast variety of research work even when no material incentive was present. Thus, the primary object of social research is to get true knowledge of human society and its functioning, to know and understand the laws that are operating behind various social activities of man.

The other purpose of social research is utilitarian in nature. According to P.V. Young, “The primary goal of research immediate or distant-is to understand social life and thereby gain a greater measure of control over social behaviour.” Human society suffers from a number of social evils like murders, suicides, thefts, robberies, quarrels and wars etc. It is now conclusively proved that all these evils or at least most of them have their root in the organisation of human society and its working. They are not simply casual or stray cases. A thief, a robber, a murderer is not simply born. He is created and as such if those grounds where these evils germinate are destroyed, the society will be cured of evils and an ever lasting human happiness might be secured.

Social researches have now proved that no amount of remedial measure or a make shift arrangement can cure the society of its evils. In spite of the jails, police and the punishment the crimes have continued and would continue unabated. There is need for going into the root cause of these evils and destroy those grounds where the germs of crime are born and flourish. All this requires a perfect understanding of human society and its various activities. More and more social research is being directed to this purpose.

One thing should be made clear at this stage. The utilitarian view should not lead us to conclude that the purpose of social research is to find a remedy for all social evils. The caution given by P.V. Young is worth noting in this respect. She says, “Social research is concerned with pathological problems only insofar as they throw light on the fundamental

social processes on human behaviour and the development or disorganisation of personality.” She further remarks that “Social research is not concerned with practical and immediate social planning or social engineering, nor with ameliorative and therapeutic measure, it is not concerned with administrative changes and refinements administrative procedures nor with social reform.”

There may be some confusion over the two contradictory opinions expressed above. A close analysis will make the things clear. The cause of social disorganisation may be classified into two types. Firstly, those which are influenced by human nature or fundamental social processes, and secondly, those that are caused by faulty social planning or defective administration, this only the first type of causes that form the subject matter of social research. The second type of causes are dealt by what is known as social surveys. A concrete example will make the point clear. The attention of the government may be drawn to growing delinquency among the school children. A survey may reveal them to be caused by mismanagement of schools, ill treatment of the teachers or guardians or a bad company. Administrative reforms may be undertaken and the prevalence of delinquency may be reduced. But it cannot be stopped altogether. A closer study may reveal its cause to be deeper rooted, e.g., psychological frustration, or temptation to evil. Social research tries to explore these fundamental traits of human nature so that an attempt may be made to destroy these evils root and branch.

1.4 MOTIVATING FACTORS OF SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH

P.V. Young has mentioned four motivating factors of social research.

1. *Curiosity About Unknown*

In her own words, “Curiosity is an intrinsic trait of human mind and a compelling drive in the exploration of man’s surroundings.” It is a natural instinct in the mankind. Even a small child is curious about the unknown objects that he notices around him and tries to understand them in his own ways. The same curiosity drives a scientist to explore unknown factors working behind the social phenomena. When he observes various social activities of man so complex and varied, he simply marvels at their nature and tries to understand them in their true significance.

2. *Desire to Understand the Cause and Effect of Widespread Social Problems*

According to P.V. Young, “The search for cause and effect relationship has been more relentless than almost any other scientific effort upon which human energies have been spent.” More and more research is undertaken to dispel doubts and uncertainties which result from inadequate conceptions of underlying factors shaping social processes. People want not only an account of events but also want to know how they happened.

3. *Appearance of Novel and Unanticipated Situations*

Man is often faced with many acute and difficult social problems. An ordinary person reacts emotionally to these, but a social scientist sets down dispassionately to find out their cause and thus evolves a lasting solution to such intricate problems. In quite a large number of cases such problems have inspired the social scientist to go into their detail and study the basic factors causing these problems.

4. *Desire to Discover New and Test Old Scientific Procedure as an Efficient Way to Gain Useful and Fundamental Knowledge*

Such research is not in fact a research in social phenomena, but a research in techniques or methods used in social research. A number of such researches have been made to evolve better and most refined techniques for dealing with social problems. Of late there has been growing emphasis upon the use of quantitative or statistical methods in the social research in order to make it more definite and mathematically precise.

1.5 SOCIAL SCIENCE VS PHYSICAL SCIENCES

In the beginning it must be clearly understood that nature of social research is quite different from research in physical sciences. In so far as pure sciences are concerned, it is possible to have controlled laboratory situation upon. Secondly, it is also possible to find out cause and effect situation in the case of physical sciences. Still another important factor to be borne in mind is that as in so far physical sciences are concerned it is possible to know with certainty the characteristics as well as behaviour of the products on which experiment is to be carried.

On the other hand nature of social sciences in this regard is quite different. They deal with human beings who have no dependable temperament. The behaviour, habits, outlooks and approaches not only differ from place to place, society to society but also from individual to individual. Thus it becomes very difficult to derive any uniform conclusions and approaches. In social research, therefore, different methods and approaches are to be followed. Nowadays it is being argued out that in spite of complexity of human behaviour there is some social order and some pattern, which means that some reasonable predictions in human behaviour are possible. It is also said that social phenomenon are complex because our knowledge about them is not very developed. As our knowledge develops, this complexity will also become somewhat simple. In the words of G. A. Lundberg, "As our knowledge of variable increases and we are able to judge the effects of various variables involved, it will be possible for us to predict social events with much greater accuracy."

Then, another factor of social research is that whereas in natural sciences, there is no effect of group behaviour, in social research group behaviour very much effects. As we know, individual behaves quite differently when he is outside group situation and when he is in group situation. Group increases his power of suggestibility. A researcher therefore will have to study group behaviour very seriously and also the leadership pattern as well as the way in which individuals who compose the group behave.

Still another difference is that a social phenomenon proposed to be studied is only indirectly known e.g. through traditions, customs and values, which have great subjectivity and less objectivity. All these values have different expressions with different people and it is really difficult to have uniform standards for measuring the placement of these values in society. In society there is always considerable heterogeneity, as compared with natural sciences where there is much of homogeneity in the articles to be experimented.

Then, we come to controlled laboratory situation which is possible in the natural sciences, but which is impossible in the case of social sciences. A social researcher will have to be very much careful in this regard. In the case of social research it is difficult to separate cause from effect. In fact both cause and effect must go hand in hand and one is

responsible for the other e.g. unemployment and poverty. But in the case of pure sciences it is very easy to find out the cause and effect in a particular situation.

It will thus be observed that the nature of social research is quite different from physical science researches. Both have their own problems which are quite different from each other. From the nature of social research it will be quite appealing to say that difficulties are great and real. But these are at least not insurmountable. As our knowledge about individual and group behaviour will increase and our tools of research will develop, with that our familiarity with problems, methods and techniques will also develop. Today physical sciences have got better precision but tomorrow social research can also achieve that precision. With the passage of time more social theories might develop.

1.6 BASIC ASSUMPTIONS OF SOCIAL RESEARCH

The application of scientific methods to social research is based upon certain assumptions which may be classified as below.

1. Existence of cause and effect relationship – It has to be accepted as a basis of social research that there exists cause and effect relationship between various social activities. These causes always produce similar results and therefore, if they are known they can be used effectively in checking the evils resulting from them. For example, social crime may be caused by poverty and frustration. In other words wherever there is poverty and frustration it will result in social crime. Therefore, poverty and frustration have to be eliminated first in order to eliminate crimes.
2. Existence of sequence or law in social activities – Another assumption is that various social activities do not occur in a haphazard way. There is some system behind them. If this trend or system is located, it is possible to predict the future course of social phenomena. For example, if it is proved that population of country increases by some specific rate, then the population of the place in any future year can safely be predicted.
3. Possibility of detached study –Although man is a part of the society which he is investigating, yet it is possible for him to study it apart from him. His own feeling and emotions would not be reflected in the study. Although it is a very difficult task, it is not impossible.
4. Existence of ideal types – In society every one is not entirely different from each other. People may be grouped into fairly homogeneous classes known as ‘ideal type’. The deduction drawn from the study of the group may be made applicable to the whole type, wherever it may exist. Thus migrated persons may form an ideal type. All of them show similar tendencies e.g. clinging to their own culture and tradition, greater tendency towards unity among themselves etc.
5. Possibility of a representative sample- The assumption is similar to the previous one. It is generally assumed that a sample, representative of the group may be drawn and the deduction from the study of the sample may be made applicable to the whole group. Human society is very vast and study of each and every individual is a practical impossibility. The social researcher has, therefore, to rely upon the sampling technique under the assumption that a sample may be representative of the whole group.

1.7 SUBJECT MATTER

The subject matter of Social research is co-extensive with the society itself and in any investigation concerning the working of society, its institution forms the part of social research. On the whole, the subject matter of social research may be classified into following three parts.

- Fundamental Research
- Applied Social Research
- Quasi Social Research

Fundamental Research

These researches deal with the fundamental principles of social sciences. They may be conducted either for the verification of some old theory or the establishment of a new one. Need for such a research arises with the emergence of new problems and new situations in the society, the question that the old theories fail to answer satisfactorily. The dynamic character of social phenomena require that old theories should constantly be tested in the light of new situation and necessary modifications be made in them in order to make them more perfect. Emergence of new theories is also made possible by the improvement in the methods of research and its tools of analysis. With more accurate and reliable tools of research, the discovery of new fundamental facts regarding organisation and working of social institutions is possible.

Applied Research

Applied research deals with the possibilities of application of the result of fundamental research to social problems. It, therefore, deals with social therapy or social engineering. For example study of the pattern of leadership in a rural community, social customs in a particular tribe or a study of health conditions, social mobility etc, may be cited as some of the illustrations of applied research. Applied research generally takes the form of social surveys. The major difference between an applied and fundamental research is that whereas the latter deals with the fundamental principles guiding the working of human society, the former pertains to more immediate problems. Fundamental principles have a much wider application while the scope of applied research is narrower. Fundamental research provides the basis upon which the whole super-structure of applied research is built up.

Quasi Social Research

Social sciences have many common boundaries among them. Naturally there are a large number of problems, which we may call as border line problems. An applied research in all these problems may be termed as Quasi-Social research; Social-economic, Social-psychological and Socio-anthropological researches comes under this category. The distinction between a pure applied social research and quasi-social research is thus dependent upon subject matter and not on the use of tools or fundamental principles.

1.8 SOURCES OF DATA

Data required for social research can be made available from various sources. P.V. Young has classified them into two groups: (1) documentary sources, and (2) field sources.

Documentary sources include material already collected whether published or unpublished. Field resources may include living persons, scholars, scientists, research workers, leaders-people who have worked with the social groups or have studied the problem. These persons may be consulted to find their opinions, experiences and ideas about the research problem.

Among documentary sources the first place may be given to the books written by different experts. These books are of two types. In the first category the books which deal with some specific theory e.g. Darwin's *Origin of Species* are included; in the second category are included such books as concern the description of the phenomena. The purpose is a mere description of phenomena and not the criticism or support of any theory. Books of history, travel and autobiographies come under this category. Reports of official and unofficial survey and data published by various agencies also come under this group. The first types of books have theoretical importance while those of the second category have greater information value.

Published data has very little importance in the specific research. Generally, the type of information required is not available. Even if it is available it may be partial, outdated or discontinuous. The researcher must, therefore, collect his own information. Direct information may be collected from many sources. If the observation of the phenomena is possible, then it must be resorted to as the most reliable source. Some of the phenomena are not available for observation either because they cannot be observed, e.g., a man's opinion, his preference, etc., or because the social consideration does not permit observation by outsider, e.g., marriage relationship. In all such cases information has to be gathered from the person concerned by means of direct interview or questionnaire filled by the informant. If the field of enquiry is limited, the information may be collected by the researcher himself but if a wider field is to be covered the help of the field worker has to be taken.

Various sources of information are as follows.

(1) Documentary Sources

1. Books

Different thinkers have described their ideas and theories in the books written by them. A study of all such books is essential for the researcher in order to know what has been said on the subject by people who conducted a similar research earlier. A study of all such work brings greater clarity and avoids duplication of effort. In the absence of such knowledge a researcher might be wasting his time upon a subject upon which much has already been said.

2. Report of Surveys

Various surveys pertaining to social problems are undertaken from time to time by government and non-government agencies. Their reports provide a very useful material to the social researcher. Before using this data, the reliability of the institution, the time of research and their suitability for the present purpose must be kept in view.

3. Memoirs

Memoirs, autobiographies, life histories and letters at times provide useful information on many social subjects. Diaries maintained by important people are sources of revealing information on many problems. Such documents have both social and psychological importance.

4. *Accounts of Travels*

Accounts of travels are especially important in Anthropology. The travellers to Africa and other less frequented parts of the world have given vivid description of native societies and their customs and these can provide useful material in Anthropological studies.

5. *Historical Accounts*

A good deal of material for social research can be available from history. A historical account is of two types, (i) the general history, and (ii) the history of the particular phenomena. To quote- Like Comte himself the early British social scientists leaned heavily on historical or documentary evidence. If we accept social institution as product of evolution these historical accounts of advanced societies can help in throwing light upon the future or less developed ones.

6. *Official Published Data*

A large variety of data on social problems are regularly published by government in most of the countries. These data pertain to health, population, education, employment, crime, etc. They can be used by social scientists for their own purpose. The data thus released are very much valued for their coverage, regularity and reliability of government as collecting agency both due to its resources and unbiased nature.

7. *Other Unpublished Record*

There is a lot of other unpublished material that lies buried in the Official fields or personal records. If the same can be available to any person it can serve very useful purpose. Availability of such data and their suitability for the present purpose are two important aspects that must be taken note of in this respect.

(2) Field Sources

Besides the indirect sources of data described above there are following direct sources also.

1. *Direct Observation*

According to this method, the researcher himself collects necessary information by observing the phenomena. Observation may be carried on in the natural field setting or in the form of an experiment. If the scope of enquiry is small, the researcher himself would undertake the work of observation, but if the nature of subject is such as to demand a wider field enquiry, help of the field workers may be taken. In the latter case, standardisation of the system and proper supervision of the field workers is essential.

2. *Information from the Informants*

If the phenomena is such as cannot be observed or if the presence of the observer is not possible, the only way to get information is through interview. Information by means of interview can be had either by contacting the informant directly or asking him to reply a set of questions by post. Direct interview can also be either in the form of story like narrative or in the form of answers to specific questions.

3. *Information from Witness*

This method is used by committees and commissions. Under this method the committee

does not contact the persons about whom the enquiry is being conducted but those persons who are thought to possess sufficient knowledge of the subject. These persons, so interviewed are known as witness. Thus, for example, in case an enquiry about labour we may contact labour leaders, employees and labour experts. In case of social service a contact with the social workers may yield much useful data.

1.9 DIFFICULTIES OF SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH

Social problems are very complex and if the society is really to progress it is very essential that these problems should be properly identified. But the problem is not so easy as *prima facie* it appears to be. There are several difficulties in the way of social research. Some such difficulties are:

1. *Problem of Finding Good Investigators.* No research can be a success unless the investigator is sincere. In social research it is really very difficult to find out good social researcher. A good researcher should have the qualities of both head and heart. He should not allow his prejudices to enter the research. He must be devoted to the cause which he has undertaken upon -himself. In fact the greatest difficulty is that it is difficult, to find out researchers who can work with missionary zeal. It is a usual complaint that the social research investigators cook the material, 'do not take the trouble of going to the field for getting first hand information'.
2. *Problem of Collecting Information.* Another difficulty is that of collecting information. An investigator is to collect information from human beings. Usually the people are not prepared to co-operate with researchers. They have no interest either in the interest or the research. They find no justification in divulging the secrets. A researcher can be mistaken as a Government servant who could misuse the information once supplied to him. In many cases the people in whom he is interested may not be available for supplying information. Since as human being he has his own prejudices, he might give either suppressed or exaggerated information and both will not serve his purpose.
3. *Dependence on others.* Dependence on others poses another problem in social research. A researcher cannot do everything by himself. He is required to employ the investigators. Similarly he is to collect information from others who may not be prepared to give information and least willing to co-operate. He may not be prepared to spare any time for the researcher, and might not be prepared to take the investigator as seriously as the investigator and researcher might take. Similarly he is required to depend for tabulating, analysing and interpreting data. Thus seriousness of researcher alone does not serve the purpose.
4. *Problem of Analysing Data.* When the Data has been collected, the problem of social researcher does not end. Findings of the researcher would always depend on the interpretation of data. Usually it is seen that data is analysed by the analyses in such a way that that suits his convenience and attitudes. It is usually difficult to find out such analyst who does not introduce bias while interpreting and analysing data.
5. *Problem of Questionnaire.* If the investigator is investigating a problem with the help of a questionnaire, then the problem of constructing a questionnaire arises. The researcher is expected to formulate a questionnaire for which the reply is either in the positive or negative. In the questionnaire such phrases should not be used which

provide communication gap between what is intended, find what is communicated. Similarly a difficulty arises, when a questionnaire is not structured with a view on interpretation and analysis or data to be collected with its help.

6. *Temptation for Generalisation.* Usually difficulty arises on account of temptation of investigator and researcher to generalise research findings forgetting that there is vast variation in the habits of the people, social conditions, environments, not only from society to society but also from investigator to investigator.

1.10 SUMMARY

The idea that all research should provide the basis for new beginning seems especially appropriate as a guideline in concluding this introductory unit. Social science research has a wide field and scope which becomes still more important in a developing country like India. But social research can deliver the good only if there are good researchers, who fully realise the need and necessity of work being done by them.

1.11 TERMINAL QUESTIONS

1. Critically examine the nature of Social Science Research.
2. What are the difficulties a researcher faces in Social Science Research?
3. Discuss the various sources of data in Social Science Research.

SUGGESTED READINGS

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UNIT 2 TYPES OF SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH

Structure

2.1 Introduction

Aims and Objectives

2.2 Fundamental, Pure or Theoretical Research

2.2.1 Discovery of a New Theory

2.2.2 Development of the Existing Theory

2.3 Applied Research

2.4 Various Other Categories of Research

2.4.1 The Ex-post Facto Research

2.4.1.1 Advantages

2.4.1.2 Disadvantages

2.4.2 Laboratory or Experimental Research

2.4.3 Field Investigation Research

2.4.4 Survey Research

2.4.5 Evaluation Research

2.4.6 Action Research

2.5 Summary

2.6 Terminal Questions

Suggested Readings

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Research is an absorbing, exciting, enjoyable, and, enormously productive activity. Many men and women have devoted the greatest parts of their lives to this kind of extremely rewarding pursuit, and have made great contributions to the knowledge, welfare, and progress of the human race. The names of Einstein, Curie, Darwin, Pasteur, and Newton are outstanding. Countless others, perhaps less famous, have just as devotedly made their contributions to mankind. Without research, our world would be vastly different from the one we know. Yet there are many misconceptions regarding research, particularly what its relationships are with other forms of activity. For example, much is heard about research “versus” theory, especially in the social sciences; many things are labelled research which, in fact, is not research; research on certain kinds of subject matter is said to be impossible, and so on.

To understand what research is and how it is done, we must gain an understanding of the relationship between research and intellectual activities. Just as one cannot fully understand and appreciate the meaning and significance of a bit of observed behaviour without a knowledge of the norms and values of the society in which the behaviour takes place, so must the social scientists engaged in research have an understanding of the philosophical assumptions upon which research is based.

Research is defined as the careful, diligent, and exhaustive investigation of a specific subject matter, having as its aim the advancement of mankind’s knowledge. Thus it

includes a wide variety of activities- the physical scientist in his laboratory, the artist studying in the museum, the archaeologist digging in the ruins, the sociologist observing patterns of marital interaction, management teams competing through computerised business “games,” the physician devising new surgical procedures, the historian or litterateur searching in the library, and the philosopher meditating in his study, to name a few. According to this definition, it is doubtful whether the ordinary undergraduate term paper is properly referred to as a research paper, except insofar as it provides training in doing research. Similarly, an activity undertaken solely for the purpose of personal learning, or growth, or enlightenment, is not research, nor is any casual or perfunctory investigation, regardless of how rewarding and beneficial it may be. But one thing which is definitely implied in this definition, and which is, in fact, a basic assumption of any research, is that knowledge is desirable and is preferable to ignorance.

Aims and Objectives

After studying this Unit, you should be able to understand

- Different Types of Research.
- The difference between Fundamental and Applied Research.

2.2 FUNDAMENTAL, PURE OR THEORETICAL RESEARCH

Researches have been classified differently depending upon the approach, the purpose and the nature of a research activity. Broadly speaking, researches can be classified into two categories such as (1) Fundamental, Pure or Theoretical Research; and (2) Applied Research. This type of research is original or basic in character. An imaginative and painstaking research worker, with his qualities of honesty and integrity and his lust for the search of truth, makes persistent and patient efforts to discover something new to enrich the human knowledge in a fundamental fashion. Such research is known as fundamental or pure. Fundamental research can take shape in two different ways:

2.2.1 Discovery of a New Theory

Fundamental Research may be entirely new discovery, the knowledge of which has not existed so far. Such a discovery may follow from the researcher’s own idea or imagination. This really depends upon how genius a researcher is. The researcher is often born-genius, has a sharp intellect, is thirsty for knowledge and eventually has an ocean of knowledge in his possession and from this ocean emerges a jewel that enlightens the world. This discovery may have nothing to do with an existing theory. Galileo’s or Newton’s contributions are fundamental in character as these depended upon their own imagination and scholarship. Since these fundamental contributions form the basis of different theories, it may not be wrong to call such a research theoretical as well.

2.2.2 Development of the Existing Theory

These days, this type of research is also held to take the shape of an improvement in the existing theory by relaxing some of its assumptions or by reinterpreting it or by developing a new theory with the existing one as its basis. Since theory is always based on assumptions, there often exists enormous scope for altering or formulating new set of assumptions and adding new dimensions to the existing theory. There also exist the

possibilities of re-interpretation of the theory that has already been developed. A researcher may as well take off from the existing theories and come out with a new one of his own. The assumptions of a theory should always be well defined and plausible. Relaxing assumptions, altering them or making new ones altogether depends upon how a researcher views the existing theory. In a dynamic society a scholar may ascertain that earlier assumptions have become obsolete or have been inadequately defined. Thus the theory in its existing form may appear to be outdated and implausible with the prevailing conditions. For example, Malthusian population theory became almost useless in his own country owing to new developments invalidating the assumptions of his theory. Naturally, therefore, by dropping out the invalid assumptions, researchers came out with new theories on population behaviour. There have also been attempts by other researchers to reinterpret the Malthusian doctrine and thus seek to retain its validity character even now. By questioning some of the assumptions of Keynesian theory, Friedman came out with new interpretations of the monetary phenomenon. Theories developed in capitalist countries have often been challenged by the researchers of the socialist block and they have often either re-interpreted or developed new theories akin to those already existing. It is also possible that an entirely new theory may be developed.

2.3 APPLIED RESEARCH

This type of research is based on the application of known theories and models to the actual operational fields or populations. The applied research is conducted to test the empirical content or the basic assumptions or the very validity of theory under given conditions. For example, Lewis's growth model for labour surplus economics assumes that real wage rate of labour shall remain constant till the surplus labour is completely wiped out; it may be of interest to a researcher to investigate if it so happens in every labour surplus economy. Researcher may accordingly apply Lewis' model to an economy if the real wage rate does remain constant. This may or may not happen. The model may accordingly hold or not in case of that economy. In case of a theory or model not holding good, the researcher's interest may further be stimulated to know why a given model does not apply and what modifications would be required to make the model operational in that situation. Inoperation of a model may also form a basis for developing an alternative strategy. In brief, applied research contributes to social science (i) by providing the kind of convincing evidence of the usefulness to society which is necessary to continuing support; (2) by utilising and developing techniques which can also be made to serve so-called basic research; and (3) by providing data and ideas which may speed up the process of generalisation.

Applied research has practical utility in the developing countries. Instead of spending lavishly on fundamental or pure research, a less developed country may benefit by applying the existing theories and seek plausible explanations of socio-economic behaviour. Though fundamental or pure research is a luxury, it does not mean that less developed countries should not indulge in it. There is, however, great scope in applying the already developed theories or models in the less developed countries so as to develop and adopt useful strategy of growth suggested by theory and held operational in a given situation. Developing countries may benefit by the discoveries, scientific and otherwise, that have already been made, either by direct application or by making some modifications wherever necessary.

Applied research often takes the form of a field investigation and aims at collecting the

basic data for verifying the applicability of existing theories and models in given situation. Naturally, therefore, the adequacy and accuracy of data will have considerable impact on the way in which the applicability of a model can be tested. The knowledge of research methods has considerably increased in the recent years and given caution and patience, a researcher can comfortably test the reliability of his data before embarking upon the task of testing the applicability of a given doctrine. Not only should his data be reliable, but must also be very objective, scientific and sharp in identifying the field of application for a given theory. If a field selected is not properly identified as a case fit for the application, the results are bound to give wrong interpretations and a judgement, on whether or not a theory is applicable to a given situation, may not be revealing.

2.4 VARIOUS OTHER CATEGORIES OF RESEARCH

The present view of categorising research is somewhat different. The research these days is categorised as (i) Ex-post facto research; (ii) Laboratory or experimental research; (iii) field investigation research; (iv) Survey research; (v) Evaluation research; and (vi) Action research.

2.4.1 The ex-post facto research

The study is made of the independent variable or variables that have already occurred. The investigator observes the condition or position of the dependent variable, the event and then retrospectively studies the independent variables for their possible effects on the dependent variable. The term ex-post facto was evolved by Professor F. Stuart Chapin. It means that the experiment has already taken place. The consequence is immediately knowable, and the problem is to determine the antecedents. It means that the manipulation of variables by others, than the social scientist, has already taken place. A time dimension is certainly present and if any relation between the manipulated variable and the consequence can be discerned, the argument is more than merely that of association (Chapin, 1947, pp.73-74).

The experimental research design and the ex-post facto research design differ sharply, yet they share the structural and design features. In both the study designs, to provide the test of a causal hypothesis, it is essential to provide grounds for making inferences about causality and safe-guard against unwarranted inferences. However, non-experimental studies cannot provide safeguards as adequate as those in experiment. Like the experiment in the ex-post facto research design as also for the inference of causal relationship, the fulfillment of the three types of evidences, i.e. evidence of concomitant variation, evidence of time order and evidence of control of variance are essential. The steps followed in experimental research to fulfill each of those evidences respectively, are; (i) manipulation of variables, and (ii) assignment of subjects to experimental and control groups by random or matching method, and (iii) pre-test. While experimenting, one can take measures to control the effects of extraneous variables that might occur during the course of the experiment.

To substitute the manipulation of the experimental variable, the steps would include comparison of people who have been exposed to contrasting experience. Since here it is not possible to assign the individuals to experimental and control groups the researcher selects the individuals who have gone through a particular experience and can be called as the experimental group. For example, to study the effect of smoking on cancer he would select those persons who smoked and have suffered from cancer. To study the relationship between slum condition and delinquency one would select persons living in

slum and assess the percentage of delinquents among them. To study the effect of occupancy pattern upon inter-racial, inter-religious or inter-caste relation one will have to select persons who have lived in segregated housing areas. The next phase would be the identification of a control group that would constitute of the persons who have not suffered from cancer or persons who have suffered from cancer but did not smoke. Similarly, one will have to select good housing project areas and see the percentage of delinquents among the people living there. Similarly, one will select persons who have lived and persons who have not lived in integrated housing project areas.

The investigator would then make a comparison of the two types of groups. The selection of the groups should be done in a manner that the control groups have to be equable with the experimental group prior to the study. Formally, this means that both groups must be random samples from the same universe. Practically, however, it is not always possible to draw subjects or assign subjects randomly as the events have already occurred. The administrators of housing project areas might use a set of criteria for allotment of houses to the people in different housing areas, such criteria, practically may be defensible but might be scientifically biased. The administrators might use the criteria of "need". As a result, only a small portion of the population, of which the control group is a random sample, is taken.

Secondly, the possibility of pre-test does not arise in case of the above examples as the experiences with certain situations, like smoking, living in slum condition, or living in integrated or segregated housing projects, have already taken place. So far the control of other events, i.e. the control of variance is concerned, it is possible to a great extent. For example, in study of cancer patients to rule out the possibility of the effect of alcohol or heredity we will have to take only those cancer patients who were not used to taking alcohol and in whose family there was not any previous case of cancer suffering.

A good example of the application of ex-post-facto research is the study by Cook, Havel and Christ (1957). They attempted to study, 'the effects of summer orientation programmes on adjustments of foreign students visiting United States'. They could prepare a list of the students who were selected to study in U.S.A. and which ones from them were going to attend the orientation programme. These students constituted a group which could be identified as the experimental group. The foreign students not selected for orientation programme were equivalent to the units of a control group. The members of the two groups were very similar to each other on several characteristics, i.e. they were foreigners in U.S.A., they were sanctioned some scholarship. Moreover, to make the two groups equal and comparable the investigators selected students from the non-orientation list who were roughly matched to those from orientation list on the characteristics of nationality, age, and field of study. The matching was done on the basis of frequency distribution control method. Like in experiment, pre-test could also be possible. The students could be identified before attending the orientation programme and were given initial tests or measures (the pre-test) to check whether the two groups were originally similar on the dependent variable or not. They were measured again after the orientation camp to examine whether there was any change in the experimental group. This particular study resembled or approximated highly the before-after experimental research design with one experimental and one control group. In very few cases this much approximating of ex-post facto research design to an experimental research design is possible. However, this study also suffered from few defects which could be avoided in purely experimental research design. The students were selected for studying in U.S.A., for grant of

scholarship and also for attending or not attending the orientation programme by the administrators and not by the researchers. Therefore, in selection certain factors might have influenced systematically.

In ex-post facto design these types of limitations have to be faced often. Besides, sometimes establishing time order relationship becomes difficult. For example, in study of effect of childhood experiences upon a person's marital adjustment it becomes difficult to assure whether the experiences reported as childhood ones were really so. Following are the advantages and disadvantages of ex-post-facto research.

2.4.1.1 Advantages

Many social events are such that they have already occurred and cannot be repeated or replicated. Causes behind many events cannot be created or reproduced. Hence conducting experiment on them is not possible. Ex-post facto research method has proved its usefulness in the study of changes in average weight, height, athletic performance, morbidity, mortality, fertility etc. by comparing the present populations with presumably comparable population that lived in the previous times. It can also be used successfully to study changes in crime rates, in marriage rates, in divorce rates, in schooling, traffic accidents, alcoholism, drug addiction etc. With precautions studies through ex-post facto design can be approximated to those of experiment.

In those cases where before comparability can be ascertained, this method is as valid as and as useful as the before-after experimental research design. In some social experiments even if creation of variable becomes possible it takes a long time for the effect to become evident. For example, we might want to know the effect of better housing conditions on lowering the amount of delinquency. It may take years before the difference is significantly evident.

2.4.1.2 Disadvantages

To fulfill the evidence of concomitant variation it is essential to select one group of people who have gone through a particular experience and another group of people who have not gone through the experience. It is very difficult to assure such distinctions.

Mostly it is not possible to give a pre-test before the experience to assess the initial comparability of the two groups and to know their position in relation to the dependent variable.

2.4.2 Laboratory or Experimental Research

By definition, research of this type is confined to laboratory experiments alone. The basic feature of such research is that there exists a possibility of exercising control over independent variables and isolating their influences for plausible explanations. "A laboratory experiment is a research study in which the variance of all or nearly all of the possible influential independent variables not pertinent to the immediate problem of the investigation is kept at a minimum. This is done by isolating the research in a physical situation apart from the routine of ordinary living and by manipulating one or more independent variables under rigorously specified operationalised and controlled conditions". This type of research has a limited application in social sciences as it is extremely difficult to study social variables in isolation of each other. However, it may, at times be possible to create a situation, wherein a maximum control can be exercised to keep the variations among the independent variables at a minimum. In such cases laboratory experiment type of research

may find its applicability in social research as well. According to F. Stuart Chaplin, pioneer and authority on experimental type research, “while it is a true statement when it means that human beings are not to be physically manipulated in an autocratic or in an arbitrary manner, this does not prevent observation of human relations under conditions of control”(Ibid, p.120). It is obvious that all programmes of social reform, such as work relief, unemployment, social insurance, low-rent housing, etc. directed to uplift the masses do aim to influence individuals and are experiments in the trial-and-error sense of directing the course of events towards certain desired ends. Such programmes are not passive observation of what happens; on the contrary, they are efforts to see that something desired does happen. It is the merit of experimental designs that they supply the social researcher with a reliable method by which to observe under conditions of control the degrees to which social action programmes achieve their objective.

By making use of experimental research we can make out what happens over a period of time to a group of slum families residing in a low-rent public housing project, meanwhile observing also the change in a control group of low income families living in slum dwellings for the same period. To rule out the disturbing effects of differences in family size, income, education patterns, etc. these factors are held constant by matching the experimental group of residents against the control group on these factors.

But use of experimental designs in social sciences research is beset with many problems. There are practical difficulties to random sampling, losses of cases and shrinkage in numbers in each group during the period of observation, and limitations connected with applications of probability tests as a means of estimating the significance of the results. Further, most of the laboratory research may be artificial in character and may only help in finding out some explanations to given situations; on the other hand, social situations are real and pragmatic and have very limited scope for artificial research. Since laboratory situations are artificial, possibilities of wrongly interpreting the experimental findings exist and may pose a threat to the internal validity of such investigations.

Laboratory experiments usually help to discover relations under pure and contaminated conditions. These are also treated as testifiable from known theories and models and are also held as competent to refine or modify the existing theories and a related hypothesis. For these purposes experimental research is most often carried out in the field of physical sciences. Social Science theories and models can be verified, refined and redesigned only when field situations are taken into account.

2.4.3 Field Investigation Research

A field experiment is a research study in a realistic situation in which one or more independent variables are manipulated by the experimenter under as carefully controlled conditions as the situation will permit. Where the laboratory experiment has a maximum of control, most field studies must operate with less control, a factor that is often a severe handicap to the experiment. The weaknesses of field experiment, therefore, are of practical nature. The control cannot be held as very tight, the investigator himself works under several influences and may at times be faced with unpleasant situations and the independent variables may get significantly affected by uncontrolled environmental influences.

A field experiment is generally credited with a few virtues which are supposed to be unique to this category of research. These virtues may be listed as (i) the variables in a field experiment operate more strongly than those used in laboratory experiment. This is because of the fact that field situation takes stock of realistic natural operations. (2)

Secondly field experiments have the advantage of investigating more fruitfully the dynamics of inter-relationships of small groups of variables. (3) Field experimental studies are also ideal to testing of the theory and to the solution of the real world problems.

Field experimental studies, therefore, are important part of the applied research which, at times, play an important role in pointing out the nature and direction of the refinements required for an existing doctrine. A practical difficulty in the field of this research is that of randomisation of units in the given population. Unless the field of operation has been selected in an objective and scientific manner, the investigations may not proceed on the lines desired by the researcher. Many a time the combination of dependent and independent variables may be such that the dependent variables are not responsive to the changes occurring in independent variables. Nevertheless, like other less structure techniques, it tends to be highly suggestive within the context of discovery.

2.4.4 Survey Research

This type of research has become very popular these days as a scientific method for discovering relevant impact and inter-relationships of social and psychological variables from given populations. Survey research studies large and small populations by selecting and studying samples chosen from the populations to discover the relative incidence, distribution and inter-relations of sociological and psychological variables. Populations may be small or large and the survey research can work well by resorting to sampling practices. If survey research is also called as sample survey research, it will not be inappropriate. Survey research has developed as a research activity alongwith the development of sampling theory and its diverse procedures. The advantage of this type of research is that it links sample investigations with populations and thereby offers an easy opportunity of studying population behaviour through sample survey research assessments. Survey research is mostly devoted to the study of characteristics of the populations under investigation. In the field of social sciences, inter-relationships of sociological, psychological and attitudinal variables are framed for purposes of investigation through the social groups from any selected population. As a part thereof the opinions, attitudes and behaviours of individuals are noted and then scientifically studied to examine their impact on the population as a whole. Survey research necessarily is not only meant for sociological and psychological research alone but also its scope can be widened to include variables of economic nature for estimating incidence and distribution of welfare activities from economic point of view.

Survey research is approached through the methods of personal interviews, mailed questionnaires and personal discussions besides indirect oral investigation. These days this type of research is held to be significant in making valuable contribution to social sciences research methodology. It has directly helped in the improvement of the sampling procedures and their applicability to real world situations besides also suggesting improvements in resolving the complex situations to unambiguous experimentation with a view to obtaining research findings. Survey research necessitates a well designed research programme in which objectives are properly framed and the programme of activities is scientifically planned till the final research report is prepared.

This type of research has the advantage of greater scope in the sense that a larger volume of information can be controlled from a very large population. Survey research, no doubt, is more expensive but the amount and quality of information that is collected makes such investigation very economical. This information is also accurate, of course, within the range

of sampling errors because trained and technically knowledgeable personnel are employed for the job.

Survey research, however, suffers from some limitations which could be listed as follows:

- It is charged that survey information touches only the surface of the research field and does not make a deeper thrust into it.
- It is also charged with demanding of more time, effort and money.
- Sometimes if sample information has not been collected very carefully, the magnitude of sampling error may be too large to render the sample results reasonably accurate.
- Since the sample research is based on the respondents' interviews, the problems of personal inhibitions, indifference and unawareness of the nature and purpose of investigation renders survey information invalid or at least imprecise.
- Despite the weaknesses mentioned above, survey research holds a greater promise for social researchers in future for exploring socio-economic information in diverse population.

2.4.5 Evaluation Research

Evaluation research is a recent addition to the types of research. It would be appropriate to call this category of research as a product of developmental programming which has been adopted on a very large scale in recent years, more particularly after Second World War when most of the Third World Countries emerged on the development scene. This type of research is primarily directed to evaluate the performance of the developmental projects and other economic programmes that have already been implemented, the objective being to realistically assess the impact of any such programmes. Evaluation is held to mean comprehensive concept of measurement and it is because of this definition of evaluation that project evolutions have become frequent in the recent years. The evaluation is carried out with respect to the broader changes and major objectives of a programme. Evaluation does not only aim at the physical achievements of a project but also at the size and direction of variables that the project has resulted in attitudes, interests, thinking patterns, work habits, socio-cultural adaptability and psycho-dynamics of the population in which or around which the project has been launched.

The Evaluation Research is of three types, mainly, (1) Concurrent evaluation (2) Phasic or periodic evaluation and (3) Terminal evaluation.

Concurrent Evaluation – Concurrent evaluation is a continuing process of an inspection of the project that has been launched. The word concurrent itself points out to the fact that the evaluation goes on side by side with the implementation of a project. In this manner such type of research not only evaluates the performance but also stimulates it and gives direction and control as and when possible.

Phasic or Periodic Evaluation- This type of evaluation takes place at different phases or stages of performance of the project. If, for example, a project has been launched in three different phases, as is sometimes done, in building up an institutional complex or an urban site or a bigger industrial empire, evaluation research is conducted at the completion of each stipulated phase of the project thus launched. It enables us to evaluate the performance of the completed phase and make adjustments in the subsequent phases after keeping in view the failures and successes of the previous phase.

Terminal Evaluation – Terminal evaluation is the evaluation of the final phase of the project. Once the project has been completed, an overall assessment is made to see how best a project has served the objectives for which it was launched.

It is very essential for the conduct of this type of research that the researcher knows very well the objectives of the programmes and the process of its implementation. While carrying out the evaluation research, a researcher can scientifically look into the performance of the project in relation to the objective that has been laid out and in line with the processes that had been recommended for its implementation.

2.4.6 Action Research

Action research is also a recent addition to the categories of research known to a modern social scientist. By its very definition, it is a research through launching of a direct action with the objective of obtaining workable solutions to the given problems. In conducting research through launching of actions, this type of research has the quality of adapting itself to the changes that take place in a given population. Action research is spread over different phases such as a base line survey, where all the possible information of research interest is collected to enable the researcher to acquaint himself with the existing or operational situations. This also aims at collecting information from other sources that have direct or indirect bearing on the research programme. At the second phase, the planned action is practically launched and then at the next phase action research carries out periodical assessment of the project. At a subsequent stage, changes, modifications and other improvements are made in the functional aspect of the project and finally the whole process culminates in the evaluation of the project as a whole.

The methods used for this type of research are usually personal interview method and the survey method. Sometimes attitude measurement techniques are also made use of. Some problems associated with action research are the personal values of the individuals, lack of social scientist's interest and exclusive locations with the respondent.

Action research in its phasic order may not be much different than merely conducting survey research at different stages. It has, however, the advantages of direct-action oriented solutions to the real world problems and sometimes has the potentialities of suggesting significant improvements in the existing solutions. Action research warrants a thorough insight into the research problem and an equally effective command over the actions proposed to be launched for research findings. If the collaboration of the researcher with the respondent is not smooth or the relevant field has not been chosen or there exists lack of understanding of the pertinent issues or there is reluctance on the part of two parties to interact their views and opinions, the foundation of action research may become too weak to permit plausible explanations and solutions to the problems for which action research was adopted. However, at times, it may serve useful purpose to launch action research in a bid to prepare some basis for further meaningful research.

2.5 SUMMARY

All types of research are variations of one or more of the above stated approaches, based on either the purpose of research, or the time required to accomplish research, on the environment in which research is done, or on the basis of some other similar factor. To understand what research is and how it is done, we must gain an understanding of the relationship between research and intellectual activities. Just as one cannot fully understand and appreciate the meaning and significance of a bit of observed behaviour

without a knowledge of the norms and values of the society in which the behaviour takes place, so must the social scientists engaged in research have an understanding of the philosophical assumptions upon which research is based. In this Unit, the different types of research have been dealt with in detail.

2.6 TERMINAL QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the different types of Research.
2. What is the difference between Fundamental and Applied Research?
3. Write short notes on the following:
 - (a) Evaluation Research
 - (b) Survey Research
 - (c) Field Investigation Research.

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UNIT 3 MAJOR DEBATES: NORMATIVE AND EMPIRICAL PARADIGMS

Structure

- 3.1 Introduction
 - Aims and Objectives
- 3.2 Normative Paradigm
 - 3.2.1 Constitutive Norms and Ethics of Science
 - 3.2.2 Values and Value Judgements in Social Science
 - 3.2.3 The Feasibility of Argumentation about Norms
- 3.3 Empirical Methods and Applications
 - 3.3.1 Nature of Assumptions
- 3.4 Normative vis-à-vis and Empirical
- 3.5 Natural Law
- 3.6 Dialectical Materialism
- 3.7 The Recent Trends
- 3.8 Summary
- 3.9 Terminal Questions
 - Suggested Readings

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Procedural specificity and strict observation of methodology is necessary for any attempt at research. One has to lay down the schemata and “plan of research-oriented action”. The collection of information has to be designed so as to avoid “loss of path” in steps ahead. When this information has to be used to find answers, we need ordering of the information and, then, logical speculation and statistical manipulation has to be applied to the given set of information. These steps also need a given frame of working. The greater the experience, mental speculation and piles of knowledge, the higher becomes the need of “procedure”, “method” or “technique” for arranging knowledge in order to make it useful for projecting inferences. Mankind has strived hard round the history to order knowledge and to encompass every realm of situation. Thinkers have worked in isolated spheres of human experience to draw-out definite facts. Then the process of ‘cross fertilisation’ occurring between the soisolated disciplines has helped in developing methods in nearly unified pattern. The terminology of various disciplines has influenced each other and new tools and techniques of analysis have emerged in course of these interdisciplinary dealings.

Standardisation of tools of analysis is a must for research. In a long history of trial and error, the nature of exercise towards finding best suitable modes of arrangement of knowledge, thinkers have been able to refine their tools, apparatus and methods. In furthering the application of past experience, they deducted the weaknesses of their ways

and tried to reshape and re-teeth their tools for a quicker, smoother and faster grip on the subject matter. “How” and “Why” questions to analyse various phenomena have led to evolution of techniques towards arranging the gained knowledge. The analysis requires measurements, quantification, sealing, grading, categorisation or classificatory skills. These are the integral parts of a research methodology. Inter-relating the findings of one situation with those of others and locating their mutual links by use of logical verification is the art of research. Every derivation is checked and counterchecked under specified standard expressions. Standard techniques duly recognised in the discipline, and only standard measurements can be applied for research analysis. This is to avoid any ambiguity in interpreting a fact. From unsystematic to systematic is the path of research. Systematic means reference to a system design or arrangement of facts which renders a set of information more usable and turns it suitable for comprehension and pointed to specific meaning. Thus the “approach” or “method of looking at things” may be so designed that we can inter-relate the causes with resultant effects as quantifiable expression. The summation of facts gives the best realm of inter-relating cause and effect; therefore, it makes a scientific arrangement of knowledge. Adding of imagination or speculation to the facts, gives us an entry into philosophy. Philosophy is abstraction from the field of facts. The experienced situations analysed methodically with the help of logical reasoning make the way for finding truths. These truths are generalised into a body to derive further conclusions.

Aims and Objectives

After studying this Unit, you would be able to understand

- Major debates about the research paradigms; and
- The difference between Normative and Empirical approach.

3.2 NORMATIVE PARADIGM

Since their very beginning, genuine concern about the scientific character of social sciences has continuously stimulated the development of sophisticated methodologies for this group of discipline and also shifted interest away from the variety of normative aspects ineluctably connected with them. Most important among these widely differing aspects are (1) object and objective of the social sciences and their bearing on methods and possible results, (2) the role of value judgements in social science, and (3) the feasibility of rational argumentation about norms.

3.2.1 Constitutive Norms and Ethics of Science

Unquestionably, science neither originated, nor continued to exist, as a natural event; it has always been a purposeful enterprise, established for the benefit of mankind. Soon after the social sciences had been called into being, they were considered by some of its greatest exponents to fulfill this function best if they be kept ‘value-free’, which, of course, did not mean to say that their functions were itself without value. Regrettably, confusion about the proper place of value in the social sciences has accompanied theoretical reflection on them since the nineteenth century until now.

Historically, social sciences originated from the need for scientific guidance (and, if possible, foundation) of political efforts towards improvement of the economic condition and social status of sections of the population. Up to this day, social workers, as well

as many social scientists, are motivated in their activities by a strong commitment to the amelioration of social states-of-affairs and the discovery and correction of social disadvantages. Generally, this does not inhibit the objectivity of their scientific work, to which its motivation, despite its normative character, remains external. Likewise, the choice of fields of research and of particular problems, however dependent on practically, mostly normative pre-considerations, will generally not influence the scientific character of investigations into the fields and problems chosen.

Yet, this independence from historical roots, individual motivation, and problem-guided selection of research areas must not blind us to the fact that the object of the social sciences is indeed a peculiar one: to restrict the study of human action and behaviour to properties and relations accessible by methods effective in the natural sciences would amount to foregoing the acquisition of additional knowledge available due to the human nature shared by investigator and investigated object. The world of experience is not static, it is essentially a world of becoming and the world investigated by social and behavioural scientists, comprising human action and behaviour, exhibits throughout a becoming, events directed towards certain ends, a change from something that is, to something that, in the agent's opinion, is to be. Purposeful action, guided by norms (for the choice of particular ends and of suitable means for their realisation), distinguishes man from inanimate objects (and from most living beings), enriching the equipment of human investigators of human actions by the faculty of interpretive understanding. Even though the investigator and his or her subject may belong to fundamentally different cultural contexts and may follow mutually incompatible norms, they share the orientation towards purposes and norms in general.

Needless to say, social sciences conform to the norms constitutive for science in general, such as commitment to impeccable objectivity, unbiased interaction with other persons as objects of social inquiry, and strict observance of methodological norms for scientific investigation (e.g. collecting a sampling of data, accurate data processing, complete and unmanipulated presentation of results). The ethics of science, however, has more and more transcended these normative aspects of the scientific community and is now mainly investigating the import of general moral considerations on the production and use of scientific knowledge, particularly the (individual and general, in some cases even global) consequences of the application of technological and medical knowledge. It will be clear that, despite the novelty of many pertinent problems (e.g. those connected with analysis of the human genome), this is merely an extension of ethical reflections on prohibitive or restrictive norms concerning experimenting with human beings, manipulation of their behaviour, their reproduction, their physical and mental equipment, or of the use of scientific or technological knowledge and results for the impairment or destruction of human lives, e.g. for purposes of eugenics, of euthanasia or of warfare. Among the normative aspects of social sciences, one of the most important is that opened up by the insight that 'a procedure may satisfy criteria of methodological adequacy and be morally unjustified' (Beauchamp, 1998, p.578) at the same time.

3.2.2 Values and Value Judgements in Social Science

Traditionally, problems of the kind just mentioned have been dealt with in philosophy as questions of 'values'. Individuals often prefer an object, or a state of affairs, or actions; they 'value' them positively, considering them more desirable than the other ones and declaring them to be 'higher' values. For example, truth is a scientific value, charity a moral value, reliability (of a person, or of a report, or of a tool) a value in everyday life.

Values as reasons behind valuations and thereby behind actions are omnipresent in society and are a legitimate object of social sciences. Investigators from these fields may or may not share the values of the persons whose (valuation-guided) actions they investigate, but they must by no means let these values influence the conduction or the results of their scientific work. There is no problem in scrutinising the compatibility of a person's values and to describe and analyse the inner conflicts of this person in case they are incompatible, or to investigate (as an historian or as a sociologist) the controversies, open hostilities, or even material combats between adherents of conflicting values. Doubt would, however, be cast on the scientific character of such research if the investigator would 'take sides', approving or disapproving of values and actions of his subjects, and even more so if the researcher would use his scientific findings for a denouncement of, or as apologetics for, some state of affairs or situation in which his subjects are involved.

Max Weber (1864-1920) propounded his famous demand for a value-free social science explicitly with the intention of clearly separating the (fully justified) domain of scientific investigation from the (equally justified, but fundamentally different) domains of social commitment and social policy. In his opinion, it should be possible to discern, in a social scientist's report on his research, the parts that may be accepted by any one independently of his or her valuations and to argue for changes of social situations, of laws etc. without abusing for this purpose the results of scientific research as if they cogently implied practical consequences. This last-mentioned step has frequently been repudiated as a typical case of the 'naturalistic fallacy' of overlooking that a normative conclusion can never be logically inferred from descriptive premises alone (i.e. without at least one further normative premises). However, the position of the 'value-supporters' is not that simplistic, as is shown by the debates in the Werturteilsstreit (the controversy over the role of value-judgements in social science). The differences of opinion concerned not only the role and legitimacy of value-judgements in science, but also on a deeper level the (extension of the) concept of science, the concepts of foundation and justification and the possibility of rational argumentation for or against normative propositions.

3.2.3 The Feasibility of Argumentation about Norms

Max Weber as well as the 'critical rationalists' were convinced that objectivity of normative propositions could never be reached since the necessary inter-subjectivity seemed to them precluded by the essential subjectivity of all valuation. At most, norms could be shown to be inconsistent, or to be incompatible with other norms. The other side, representative of the 'critical theory' of the Frankfurter Schule, criticised the restriction of 'foundation' and 'justification' to deductive procedures and envisaged an ultimate foundation of norms by the exhibition of necessary presuppositions of any speech, acts whatever, i.e. of human communication in general. They failed to convince their opponents since, pragmatically, proving that something is necessarily presupposed does not entail evidence that it is well founded (Gethmann, 1979). More recent approaches from the perspective of 'methodological constructivism' have shown how to reach inter-subjectively acceptable foundations for norms relative to the best possible consensus among all persons concerned, i.e. exposed to possible consequences of actions that are guided by the norms in question.

Apart from this, attempts have been made to reach consensus as to fundamental (or primordial) situations which constitute ultimate purposes or ends for any human living together, i.e. community and communication. The most fundamental ones derive from the condition humane including the facts that men are born, have to grow up, have to

reproduce within a limited period of reproductive potency, and will die some day; that they are reliant on other human beings and on material support etc. Institutions of society, deliberately created for the fulfillment of such needs, may be valued as suiting their purpose to a higher or lower degree. Even though one must admit the striking fact that human beings can willfully repudiate submission to even the most fundamental exigencies, there is no reason to deny the possibility of rational argumentation for or against the acceptance of certain norms and actions (in a group, or society, or culture) if other norms or actions have already been accepted (Geer, 1969, p.49).

3.3 EMPIRICAL METHODS AND APPLICATIONS

Empiricism is the theory which states that experience rather than reason is the source of knowledge, and in this sense it is opposed to rationalism. This general thesis, however, can receive different emphases and refinements; hence those philosophers who have been labeled empiricists are united only in their general tendency and may differ in various ways. The word “empiricism” is derived from the Greek *empeiria* the Latin translation of which is experiential, from which in turn we derive the word “experience”. Aristotle conceived of experience as an unorganised product of sense perception and memory, this is a common philosophical conception of the notion. Memory is required so that what is perceived may be retained in the mind. To say that we have learned something from experience is to say that we have come to know of it by the use of our senses. We have experience when we are sufficiently aware of what we have discovered in this way. There is another, perhaps connected, sense of the term “experience” in which sensations, feelings, etc. are experiences and in which to perceiving something involves having sense experiences. These are experiences because awareness of them is something that happens to us. Indeed, the suggestion of passivity is common to uses of the word. To go into refinements here would not be relevant, one need only appreciate that the statement that experience is the source of knowledge means that knowledge depends ultimately on the use of the senses and on what is discovered through them.

How far the technique is applicable to the subject matter of social sciences is always the bone of contention. The basic premises where empiricists stay is that the past should bear a probability to occur in the future. This may be a clue to the prediction but in a probable style rather than with certainty. If a theory has the perfection of making valid predictions, it has a greater merit. The assumptions behind a theory may be unreal yet the predictive ability may be greater. Distinction between the “world of exact laws” which is pure theory based on logical reasoning and “empirical generalization” which is often a helping tools for the former should be made clear. Theory is made of pure constructs of man and human reasoning. These have correspondence with reality but in measure part, a theory is likely to be unrealistic as well, insofar as it bases on ‘idealisation, hypothecation and assumptions and heuristic function’. These are essential for analytical convenience of the theorists. Against this, inductive generalisations are based on operational constructs. These are empirical. A theory depends on experience but the hypothetical assumptions may turn it fictitious. There is a radical difference between the empirical and deductive reasoning based theoretical constructs. The deductive method has an advantage over the other for its logical consistency. In the light of the logic, broader generalisations are made possible, which affords adequate tools to interpret wide ranges of empirical phenomena. The logic of theory equips the researcher to interrelate the causes with their effects in a systematic way. The inductive generalisations or experiment-based experiences have the nature of statements which bear correlation. At the most these have some probability

value. These are precise but narrow, while the logical method of deduction produces some factual relationship. These are only interrelated statements of deriving a fact and not a fact in themselves. The casual relations can be explained with the help of the deductive reasoning but the logical sequence has to contain the basic of interrelating two variables. The inductive experimented statements explain the experience not the causality. It does not establish the generality and has no scope for interrelating this correlation statement with any lower order proposition. This is done by the logical reasoning alone. There may exist logical inconsistencies in statements based alone because the measurements may be wrongly recorded or the sensory observation may be illusory. But in Social Sciences for logical understanding some fictitious states are constructed and then some conclusions are drawn on the logical corollary from them. It is more common in the theory of Economics. "Perfect competition" for instance does not exist nor even existed but this logical construct is used for moving ahead to practically complicated states of real world. The fictitious state is a first approximation to experience as it simplifies complex phenomena where several factors act intricately to yield a consequence. Without simplification and isolation, the relevance of each variable cannot be tested. The real phenomena can be explained much more accurately if the extent of its being fictitious is quite negligible. The predictive reliability and explanatory values of the theory depend on the assumptions being close to reality. This initial approximation is a stepping stone for a further hypothesis. The logical deduction is much sure and independent method of reaching a fact solely for its explanatory value lacking in inductive system which affords an illustrative value in a narrow width.

Nature of Assumptions

The nature of assumptions determines the nature of the hypothesis insofar as its provability and testability are concerned. If the assumptions do not contradict the observed fact, there can be a case of treating their specifications as true and dependable for predictions. The stringent empirical standards in application in case of positive science have uncritically been admitted procedures of filtering conclusions in Economics. As an evasion the economists have resorted to deductive reasoning. In order to comprehend the complex social situations, reliance has been made on the oversimplified assumptions which are very often not testable and are hypothetical to the deepest core of their content. They should stand for the empirical testing at prediction level and its accuracy will justify the instruments used. The typical nature of the tract of enquiry, of course, delimits the scope of using empirical methods. The hypothesis in case testable empirically makes the problem easier but when these are also not proved empirically the complication that arises is that the conclusions may be unrelated to reality. The alternative suggested that the assumptions should bear correspondence with the conclusions being put to prediction. This is very often done.

The predominance of unavoidable value judgements and highly varying human motivations among the social complexities make the realm of social sciences highly limited to pure scientific apparatus and, to that content, the subjects remain imprecise and poor in predictability. Methodological theorising may succeed in affording some sort of sanction for virtually any practice. In affording them sanction, it abets the perpetuation of practices whose costs are not small. These entail continuing diversion of intellectual effort into channels that produce little of importance for new knowledge and impairment of perceptive and judgement in making use of knowledge we already possess.

The real world presents very complex and complicated social situations and intricacies of human behaviour which are quite uneasy phenomena to comprehend without the theoretical imaginary constructs. The entire framework of the complex behaviour cannot be understood by human brain. Therefore, the situations are isolated and defined then in each situation by logical method of reasoning reaches us to the state when interrelationships can be identified. Gradually more complicated situations are handled to sort out the jointly formed effects and hypothetical assumptions are dropped out one by one to come closer to a real situation. Only this method can help a social scientist derive conclusions intelligible to a common man who practices economics or acts as a social being. The social scientist, in order to construct a theory, makes assumptions about the economy or the society and certain conditions are imagined which are only over-simplified. On the basis of the assumptions hypotheses are formed quite broadly relating to the ways human being is expected to behave or act, the environment and conditions in which such behaviour is likely to emerge or the social and economic institutions which animate such behaviour or the mental states wherein behaviour is most likely to get such a twist. These assumptions help in drawing inferences and conclusions by application of logic. Such hypothetical constructs are not directly empirically verifiable but parts thereof are a part of human experience.

3.4 NORMATIVE VIS-À-VIS AND EMPIRICAL

Most of the early writings were normative in character. Even when writers claimed to be describing 'human nature' they were often dealing with transcendent ideals embodying their different views of what should be. Theorists writing from this point of view have been displaced from the center of the discipline, as the weight of the disciplines has shifted from the normative to the empirical approach; however, they are not extinct. They are, in fact, very much alive and vocal. Perhaps their principal representative at the present time is Leo Strauss and he and a number of his students from his days at the University of Chicago present their position forcefully. Normative criticisms of existing states of affairs are certainly not dead, being produced in great volume, as are proposals for political action. To the extent the latter are explicitly based on a well-developed philosophy, rather than produced from unarticulated assumptions, they are properly classified as political doctrine.

One reason that the normative approach has not been completely displaced is that the normative and empirical traditions of thought have ignored each other; advocates of each have found something important on their own. Without feeling it necessary to eliminate the other side, many social scientists also realise that both approaches can be useful in daily life, even if they do not think both have an equal place within social sciences.

3.5 NATURAL LAW

A body of transcendental, permanent principles which can be discovered by 'right reason' and which is supposed to govern man's activities; for those who believe in Natural Law, man-made "positive" law is proper only to the extent it is based on Natural Law. Natural Law should be distinguished from the "laws of nature" that is, rules indicating the actual behaviour of the universe and its elements.

For example, the discovery that the universe is moving towards increasing randomness contradicted the Natural Law philosopher presumption of a fixed fundamental order.

These scientific findings did not by themselves bring about the downfall of normative political philosophy; they merely helped to put in proper perspective an approach which had earlier begun to lose intellectual stature as a result of other shifts in philosophical outlook, such as the emphasis of Dialectical Materialism on the dynamic rather than the static in the world.

3.6 DIALECTICAL MATERIALISM

Karl Marx combined the Hegelian dialectic, meant to explain the development of ideas, with material (social and economic) factors. In the dialectic, one position (the thesis) results in the formation of its opposite (the antithesis) and the combination of the two results in a third position (the synthesis). For Marx, the bourgeoisie (owners of the means of production) represented the thesis, the proletariat the antithesis, and classless society the synthesis.

Although the empirical approach has to a large extent superseded the normative social science is not without its philosophising but with the normative aspect removed. There has been an increasing integration of theorising and research through the development of what has come to be called “modern empirical theory”. It is distinguished from the older utopia developing social sciences by its attempt to develop a set of interrelated value free statements descriptive and explanatory of common properties of human behaviour. On the surface, writers of the philosophy of old and philosophers of the modern empirical school may seem quite similar in their attempts to describe human behaviour. However, each builds on a different set of assumptions about the procedures for developing such descriptions and on a different degree of consciousness about the possible impact of values on such description. It should be noted that some empirical theorists do not restrict themselves to contemporary work, but in addition are willing to attempt to develop their theory from classical works, such as those of Aristotle. However, the questions they ask of this older material and manner in which they ask it are not the same as those employed by the social scientists.

The intimate relationship between theorising and research can also be shown by the connection between facts and theory. Much of the early empiricism was largely a collection of facts, perhaps based on the hope that “facts speak for themselves”. The approach has been entitled “brute” or “raw” or “barefoot” empiricism. It does not have a high standing among most leading social scientists. Facts cannot be collected without theory and facts exist only as the result of a theory, however implicit it may be and however unaware the researcher may be of its existence in his mind. This being the case, it is argued that theory ought to be made explicit, and the consensus among empirically-oriented social scientists conducting research today is that empiricism ought to be enlightened by theory. In fact, attention to theory may be the only way to avoid being trapped by a mass of facts.

There was a time in the history of social sciences when it was possible to master the facts essential to the available level of understanding of social phenomena. But as in all other areas of life, the increasing specialisation of labour in scientific inquiry has proceeded at such a pace that today the absorption of known facts has passed beyond the capacity of any individual or small group. The belated recognition of the function of theory is itself a response to what would otherwise be an impossible situation. It is a means of rescuing the study of social life from need to be the master of all the facts that he might possibly wish to survey.

Thus, in order for empiricists to carry out their work properly, they need to become involved in a variety of activities such as concept development prior to the gathering of data. This discussion should show that the empirical social scientist is a philosopher as well as a “fact-grubber”, although not a philosopher in the same sense as the man who spins normative theories. This integration of fact and theory has led some to say that what has been called here the empirical approach to social sciences should be called the analytical approach. Regardless of the term used, the difference from the normative approach is quite clear.

3.7 THE RECENT TRENDS

Research in any discipline starts with observation of phenomena and followed by theoretical analysis and explanation. This is true of any discipline of knowledge. However, in the course of the development of the research, one encounters a dilemma regarding the relative importance of theory and observation. Early research in social science research was dominated by master theories of Spencer and utilitarian philosophies. These master theories attempted to provide comprehensive and blanket explanations for all social processes and action. Very soon it was felt that such blanket theories which were reductionist, were far from adequate. The explanations offered by these theories were very stretched and tenuous. This experience resulted in a swing towards observation as primary and theory building is secondary and perhaps even unnecessary. This reaction against logical analysis and theory building led to a strong empiricist movement. The empiricist movement led to an accent on collection and analysis of data very often without any reference to theory. A rationalisation of this trend was the argument that social research should deal with actual day-to day problems and serve as an instrument of practical change rather than aim at developing theoretical models and concepts.

To a certain extent perhaps, this view is undisputable. But anything in excess tends to become not only useless but also counter-productive. One may pass to think whether this state of affairs has not been reached in the social sciences. Paradoxically enough much of the research in contemporary social sciences seems to fall into two inadequate categories: (a) too much of data and too little of theory, (b) too much of theory and too little of data. The number falling in the first category far outweighs the number in the latter. Fortunately, however, there are few instances where there is adequate balance of theory and data.

The consequence of this over-emphasis on empiricism has been a fall in the substantive quality of social science research resulting in unnecessary duplication of irrelevant micro-research. The undue premium based on amassing of empirical data has led to a flood of research which has been found to be not backed by logic nor followed by any practical utility.

3.8 SUMMARY

Useful research in social sciences should aim at an optimum combination of data and theory. One may start either with theory or with data. But if one starts with theory, it would be supported by data and data collected should confirm result in theory. The mushroom growth of survey research has contributed in no small measure to this tragic situation in social science research. Along with empiricism has grown an obsession for quantification and statistical analysis. Any one who looks into some recent research papers

in social sciences is both amazed and amused by the tendency to fill in pages with statistical tables which very often the reader finds unintelligible. Quantitative analysis is, no doubt, a helpful and useful device for arriving at reliable and valid conclusions. But quantitative logic alone can never ensure the validity and reliability of research findings; the normative aspects have their own significance.

3.9 TERMINAL QUESTIONS

1. Critically examine the debate between normative and empirical paradigms of research.
 2. Discuss the difference between normative and empirical paradigms.
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UNIT 4 GANDHIAN APPROACH TO UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL PROBLEMS

Structure

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Aims and Objectives

4.2 Characteristics of Gandhian Approach

4.3 Gandhi as a Social Scientist and Social Inventor

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4.6 Methodological Analysis of Gandhian Framework

4.7 Summary

4.8 Terminal Questions

Suggested Readings

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Gandhi believed in the unity of human life, which is a synthetic whole. It cannot be divided into separate, watertight compartments- religious, moral, political, economic, social, individual and collective. All the seemingly separate segments are but different facets of man's life. They act and react upon one another. In reality, there can be no problems that are purely moral, economic, political, social, individual or collective. They are inextricably intertwined.

The division of human life into different compartments is often undertaken to facilitate analysis and study. The artificial individual thus created has, however, no existence in real life. Any knowledge derived from the study of such an individual will be partial and lopsided. It will not be true to the integrated facts of life. If relied and acted upon, it will create in the individual a split personality and in the social group a state of imbalance. Analysis and study are not the ends of human life. Life, individual and collective, is meant to be lived. Study and resultant knowledge are useful only in so far as they help man to act correctly and live well and worthily. Every seer, prophet or reformer, seeks to find an integrated way of life.

If life cannot be artificially divided in actual practice and if it is to be lived well and worthily, it must be regulated in accordance with a plan or an integrated scheme. It must be guided by certain basic principles and values. Bereft of them it would lack direction and purpose. Human conduct is largely social conduct, if it lacks direction and purpose, no expectations for the future can be built on it. Under such circumstances there is bound to be uncertainty. If life is a unity, the principles and values guiding it, must also be properly unified and integrated. They must also form a coherent system.

Gandhi's own life was lived in conformity with certain basic principles and was, therefore, integrated and co-ordinated. It made a harmonious whole. His teachings and schemes of reform also reflect the same integration and co-ordination. There is a basic unity of purpose and aim. This unity, however, is not always apparent to a superficial student of his life and his speeches and writings. The elements of the unity are there, but they have not been reduced to a system. Gandhi himself never attempted a systematisation of his thought. Like many of the old reformers and prophets, he was content to act in a given situation and solve life's problems, as they arose or presented themselves to him, in the light of his basic moral principles. Like them he left the task of logical ordering and systematisation to others. The solutions he offered to the problems that confronted him, the country and even the world, were practical and often coloured by the times and circumstances in which they arose.

Aims and Objectives

After studying this Unit, you should be able to understand

- Gandhian Approach to Social Problems;
- Main issues highlighted by Gandhi as a Social Scientist;
- The problems and issues a researcher faces while understanding Gandhian Approach to Social Problems

4.2 CHARACTERISTICS OF GANDHIAN APPROACH

For a proper understanding of the ideas of Gandhi on any subject, it is necessary to bear in mind a few things. First, he was not a social scientist in the conventional sense of the term. As Acharya J.B. Kripalani puts it, "if ever there was a planner without elaborate blue prints Gandhi was one". Unlike other social scientists, he did not study academically. It was not in his nature too. He did not assign to himself the task of setting up an academic discipline. He did not present his ideas in any systematic form and at one place; they have to be culled from innumerable passages occurring in his articles, interviews, speeches and answers to the questions, etc. He was not a theorist; he was primarily a man of action- a Karmayogi. He himself admitted: "I am not built for academic writings. Action is my domain. What I understand according to my lights to be my duty and what comes my way I do". He did not spin his theories in the cloistered atmosphere of his study; they grew and developed in the crucible of experience, in the course of his attempt to wrest freedom for his country and to solve the various practical problems as and when they emerged in the course of his long struggle against foreign domination. It could not have been otherwise in the situation he was placed in. The solution he offered for the alleviation of the social ills did not derive out of any rigid doctrinaire approach. His solutions were rooted in necessity. Thus Gandhian techniques were primarily a response, to use a Toynbee expression, 'to the challenge that poverty ridden India flung at a

particular phase in the process of the development of Indian history'. For a person in the position which Gandhi occupied, it was incumbent that he took the most pressing social problems and issues into account and offered his own solutions.

As soon as Gandhi had an idea or a plan, he tried to put it into practice and induced others to do likewise. In the latter case, he had naturally to explain his ideas and plans. But the explanations were brief and suited to the person, place and occasion. The guidance given was practical. Generally, the instruction and the explanations were conveyed through correspondence, newspaper articles or brought out in committee discussions and speeches. Gandhi has written a few books. But even these are concerned with particular problems. They are not written with the object of explaining his system of thought rationally and logically argued in all its implications. The writings are generally free from references to other thinkers and authors. For popularising his ideas and converting the people to his way of thinking and action, Gandhi, as a practical reformer, relied more on example than on precept or preaching. The result is that from the point of view of theory there are not only gaps that need filling but also apparent contradictions that need to be reconciled in the light of his thought as a whole.

Second, whatever their external form of presentation and expression, Gandhi's ideas are new and revolutionary. They arise out of the creative mind of an individual to whose reforming zeal the social situation and the difficulties of those times are a challenge. For him, the historical precedents and examples are no barrier to fresh thinking and discovery. Gandhi did not acquire his ideas and knowledge merely from books. He did not pass his time in libraries and museums poring over musty volumes. Much of his knowledge was the result of direct contact with life and the practical experience it offered. He, therefore, placed his ideas before the public not in the language of the learned but in that of the average intelligent man and woman. In explaining them he did not use the philosophic and technical language of the Schools. He was a man of the masses and spoke to them in their own simple language, which they understood. He addressed them not about what he had read and studied in books but what he had seen, sensed, experienced and thought about. He described his own observations and his reactions to them. This is the method that has characterised great religious reformers and prophets. Also, his method is more suited to the intellectual capacity of the common man than that of the learned. It readily appeals to the former and carries conviction.

Third, his genius was more spiritual and moral than intellectual. His whole life was cast in the spiritual and moral mould of which truth and non-violence were the fundamental tenets. His approach has to be studied from the view point of his own moral and spiritual principles and ideals. Gandhi did not consider political philosophy as a distinct, autonomous intellectual system separated from ethics, economics, sociology, etc. He viewed life in its totality. He looked at life en face, not in a profile. For Gandhi, therefore, there was no line of demarcation between economics and ethics, ethics and politics, politics and economics etc. This might have been due to the influence of the Indian Philosophical tradition. Every problem is discussed by the Indian philosopher from all possible approaches – metaphysical, ethical, logical, etc. This tendency has been called the synthetic outlook of the Indian philosophy.

Last but not the least, Gandhi has become a part of our national being. We respond to his name, achievements and memory rather emotionally. It may be explained in terms of his too closeness to us, both in respect of time and space. Too much of proximity usually stands in the way of an objective appreciation which demands an intellectual-analytical

approach. Emotion is not intelligence. Enthusiasm is not understanding. Emotion is helpful and good in its own sphere but when it overpowers our intellect we lose our perspective and fall victims to a sort of optical illusion. We get ourselves bogged in utter confusion. Emotion divorced from and unrestrained by intellect degenerates and issues in blind adoration, dogmatism and fanaticism. Bhakti is not a sure guide to comprehension. The utter cynical and contemptuous disregard for Gandhi and his philosophy, on the other hand, is equally emotional. The fount is the same. It is not intellect but emotion that rules such a judgement or rather the lack of it. Both the extreme points of view-gushing adoration and angry condemnation-though apparently opposed to each other have a common bond of kinship in their allegiance to emotion as the determinant in their evaluation. Anti-intellectual approach unites the two extremes. But judgment presupposes analysis, i.e. an intellectual approach. The plea for an intellectual approach to understand Gandhi and his techniques might evoke skeptical derision. But to move away from the line of this approach would be inexcusable. The job is indeed difficult, but it is nevertheless rewarding.

4.3 GANDHI AS A SOCIAL SCIENTIST

Gandhi was a social scientist because he followed social truth by the scientific method of observation, intuitional and intellectual hypothesis, and experimental test. He once told Richard Gregg that he considered Western scientists not very thorough because not many of them were willing to test their hypothesis on themselves. He, however, always makes the first test of a hypothesis on himself, before he asks anyone else to try (Radhakrishnan, 1939, pp.72-73). That is so, whether the hypothesis relates to a matter of diet, sanitation, spinning wheel, caste reform or Satyagraha. The title he chose for his autobiography was *My Experiments with Truth*.

Gandhi was a great social scientist because of his choice of problems, methods of solution, the persistence and thoroughness of his search, and the profundity of his knowledge of the human heart. His greatness as a social inventor was shown by the close adaptation of his methods to the culture and modes of thought and feeling of the people and to their economic and technological resources. This greatness was also shown by his discrimination in choosing what to try to discard and what to try to conserve. Again, it is shown by the rate at which he applied and pushed for reforms. He knew that in any society there is an organic rate of change peculiar to it at that stage. He acknowledged that while certain processes in gestation may come suddenly to birth, other changes may require at least three generations to bring about the complete change, to slough off old inherited habits and attitudes and master the new with its major implications. Another mark of his uniqueness in social invention is that whenever he proposed a social reform, he created an effective organisation to accomplish it. He was a master of all the details of both organisation and administration.

4.4 SOCIAL PROBLEMS

The widespread and difficult social problems on which he had especially worked are: (1) poverty and unemployment (2) violence-between individuals, groups, and nations, (3) disunity and friction between social groups, (4) education, (5) sanitation, public health, and nutrition.

4.4.1 Poverty and Unemployment

Gandhi's solution for the problems of poverty and unemployment is the revival of hand-carding, hand-spinning and hand-weaving of textiles and the re-development of other handicrafts. The validity of this proposal is widely and deeply decried in the West, and in India, too, by Indians educated in Western and urban modes.

It is realised well in India, but hardly at all elsewhere, that because of the Indian climate, with its concentrated short rainy season and its long period of heat and dryness, there are periods ranging from three to six months all over India when the peasants are completely idle. During the worst of the heat, they cannot cultivate the hard soil nor can they sow or reap. The extent of this seasonal rural unemployment every year is tremendous, both absolutely and relatively to the total population of the country. The economic losses are excessive. The psychological and moral depression and deterioration caused by it is appalling. Before the advent of mill-made cloth from the West, the peasants used this idle time to spin and weave their own clothes and to work at other supplementary handicrafts. Cotton grew in practically every province in India. The cost of hand-tools for this work was within the low financial means of the peasants. The traditions of handcraft were not yet lost. The market cost of hand-made cloth was not much above that of mill cloth, and for those who spin their own yarn it was less. In most parts of the population, clothing cost amounts to form one-fifth to one-sixth of the total cost of living. For people close to the margin of subsistence, a saving of one-tenth of the total cost of living was vital. Such handiwork was not only economically valuable, it was also subtly but powerfully restorative of hope, initiative, self-respect, and self-reliance which were all so badly damaged by prolonged unemployment and poverty. This curative power of handicraft is well recognised by modern psychiatrists, and handicraft under the name of "occupational therapy" depressive insanities. For these reasons, the proposal to revive this industry as a remedy for Indian unemployment is not as absurd as would at first seem.

But, even so, many laugh the idea to scorn and say it is going backward, an anachronism, an attempt to turn back the clock, an abandonment of the immensely fruitful principle of the division of labour, a discarding of machinery and science.

A technological system exists presumably for the benefit of the entire mass of people who live under it. If the given technology does not benefit a considerable minority, it is not folly for that minority to adopt any other mode of technology which will really improve their economic condition. When for millions of people, a given technology no longer provides their material needs, it is for them a blind alley, and it is silly of them not to retrace their steps until they can find a real way out – a way subject to their own control. For them, the economic clock has stopped, 'To adopt any technology which will actually provide, at whatever rate of speed, one of their chief material needs is not putting the clock back, but starting it again'.

Modern industrialism has reduced the social function of work to a rather more primitive stage than it was when handicraft prevailed. Our actual practice of moral unity has not got much beyond, if at all, what it was at the handicraft stage. We must realise and act on the conviction that human society is a unit, and to choose methods and tools and media of exchange which would express that unity in detailed daily transactions and work.

Adopting handicrafts would not be an abandonment of the principle of division of labour. In some respects that principle has been outmoded by automatic and semi-automatic machinery. In other respects, the previous intense application of the principle can no

longer operate effectively because of a change in two necessary factors—a shrinkage of previously large markets and a weakening in the complementary co-operation, interdependence and harmony between labour, management and capital. Division of labour has its limits of advantage and those limits have recently shrunk.

Gandhi's proposal did not discard machinery or science. It tried to bring simple machinery to a now unused reservoir of manpower — the unemployed. The use of that particular type of machinery will not create too difficult additional social and economic problems at a time when difficulties are already very great.

In all countries, there is now a steady increase in the amount and proportion of State funds devoted to military equipment and activities, and thereby a steady lowering of the common standard of life and reduction of public services like education, public health, and so on. The economic system is in a period of decline. In the West, anyhow, there is a steady social deterioration and disorganisation, marked by increases in the rates of insanity, suicide and crime. If another world war comes, mankind will need occupational therapy on a large scale. Khaddar and handicrafts of all kinds will become still more valuable to people everywhere—valuable both economically and therapeutically.

4.4.2 Violence between Individuals, Groups and Nations

Gandhi was very much conscious of the violence between individuals, groups and nations. He directed all his efforts to eliminate this violence. He was of the firm opinion to give back violence for violence is to sink to the level of the tyrant, who understands power only in terms of death and destruction; the power of non-violent methods of resistance is the power of life, of the unquenchable spirit. By his teachings, Gandhi liberated the soul of India; from abject and servile slaves they became men again, their heads held high, a light of faith and hope in their eyes, a people capable of marching on to their ultimate liberation as a nation, without recourse to the degrading tactics of their oppressors.

4.4.3 Disunity and Friction between Social Groups

Gandhi had made great strides in persuading separated social groups to harmonise their differences, especially in the instance of Harijan reform. No country where there has been so great a voluntary and therefore real (inner as well as outer) movement of social unity as in this instance. For Gandhi, the problem of Hindu-Muslim unity was no less important than that of the removal of untouchability. He often said that if this problem was not satisfactorily solved, rivers of blood would flow in India. He also held that the Hindu-Muslim unity was vital to our struggle for freedom. Gandhi's objective as defined by him was to see the Universal Spirit of Truth face to face. For this, he said, "One must be able to love the meanest creation as oneself". This love, without distinction of race, nationality, caste, creed or sex, was the basis of Gandhi's universal toleration.

4.4.4 Education

In the realm of popular education, Gandhi had initiated a scheme called *Nai Talim*. Under this, education became life-centred, instead of text-book-centred and Nai Talim was defined as education for life, through life and throughout life. Nai Talim became divided into Pre-basic, Basic, Post-Basic, University and Social education. Pre-Basic was the Nursery school part, between 7 to 15 years of age, Post-Basic was high school education, and Social education became adult education in the widest and most relevant sense. In this scheme, all education will come to the pupils through some handicraft, all desirable knowledge being related to or implied in the processes and relationships of that

particular handicraft. In the economic stresses probably lying ahead, this scheme had high promise. Not only was it to enable students to earn their tuition as they go, and thus make education available to the masses with a minimum of State aid, but prune off much useless frippery and make education relevant to life. Furthermore, it is wholly consistent with the close dependence of mind upon hand and eye throughout the evolution of the human species.

4.4.5 Sanitation and Public Health, Nutrition

Gandhi was of the firm opinion that divorce between intelligence and labour has resulted in criminal negligence of the village. Instead of having graceful hamlets dotting the land, there are dung-heaps. The approach to many villages is not a refreshing experience. Often one would like to shut one's eyes and stuff one's nose; such is the surrounding dirt and offending smell. People should make the villages the models of cleanliness in every sense of the word. But in the field of sanitation and public health, Gandhi realised that many of the problems cannot be solved until the poverty of the people can be mitigated. Yet he had tried out and put into practice in his ashrams many simple measures of sanitation which were within the means of the peasants who formed the bulk of the population. He had trained many workers in these measures and they were put into effect in numerous places.

4.5 PROBLEMS AND ISSUES

Relevant primary and secondary data is available to find (a) that Gandhi was the topmost leader of India's freedom movement; and (b) that he led it by employing the ultimate values of religion, truth and nonviolence which suited most to the people under the prevailing circumstances; (c) that he successfully used these values to organise the people of India thereby playing a dominant role in wresting freedom from the mighty British Raj; (d) that his were the best value weapons to awaken the Indian masses on a national scale; and (e) that in the entire history of mankind, Gandhi was the uppermost in using the religious and spiritual values of truth and nonviolence for a public cause.

However, problems and issues relate to the understanding of the meaning, form, and effect of these values of religion, God/ Truth and nonviolence in an 'inner-subjectively transmissible' manner. Seeking such explanation may help others to employ these conceptual categories elsewhere also. For Gandhi they are the ultimate values of the whole mankind. Scientific Value Relativism (SVR) therefore does not find any empirical evidence as regards their source, nature, and form. Religion, God and Nonviolence of Gandhi per se are beyond its reach. Only Gandhi himself stands a witness to them. Therefore we have to accept what he said about them. Besides the personal evidence of Gandhi, there are some other saintly and religious persons who happen to confirm them. They corroborate them, besides the evidence of holy books, on the basis of their experience emerging from introspection, meditation, and some divine message. But their experience does not amount to be a part of scientific knowledge as others have not been able to confirm or deny them. Some scholars may take clue from introspection and imagination. However, Gandhi himself has from time to time written a lot about them describing, explaining and defending his values.

4.5.1 Religion

The ultimate values of Gandhi from religion to nonviolence come out of subjective experience, tradition, belief or intuition. They are beyond empirical experience. For him,

they simply existed and were universal. They are not ideological confabulations, wishes or figments of imagination. They are abstract realities broader than Platonic 'ideas'. He felt that all religions were equal and contained common principles of morality. However, none of the claims can be tested empirically. It is observable that every religion regards itself superior to others. It refuses to regard other religions equal to it. By maintaining his religion and dharma as special and over and above sectarian religions, Gandhi gave the impression to have innovated a new religion.

4.5.2 God and Truth

As God is the ultimate value of Gandhi, it is not subject to any empirical investigation. He is Sachchidananda, perfect, all-powerful, source of morality etc. and resides in the form of a divine spark in every human being. Man being a part of His divinity is essentially good. Such a God has been conceived by almost all religions of the world. Still Gandhi is selective in his appreciation of the attributes of God. He visualises God more as Creator, Regulator, Benevolent, Blissful, Truth, Righteousness etc. and avoids his other known aspects, such as Death, Destruction, Dissolution, Absolute Power and others. Gandhi's God is preferably a Sanatani Hindu Vaishnav God, involving principles of law of Karma (action), transmigration of soul, salvation (moksha), re-incarnation (avatar), and Personal God, Heaven and Hell. He claimed to have communion with him through intuition, 'inner voice' conscience, and prayers. He put faith, love, or heart over reason and intellect. The goal of his life was the realisation of God or Truth through selfless service of man. God or Truth was the Supreme End or Ultimate Value of Gandhi. Thus nobody could have questioned him in religion and politics.

Later, in order to come closer to other religions, Gandhi preferred Truth to God which he equated with Reality or Creative Force of the Cosmos. The other side of Truth, according to Gandhi, was Nonviolence; Creation contains both Truth and Nonviolence. Negatively, Ahimsa or nonviolence was non-injury to body and mind of human beings, positively love, compassion and charity. As man cannot have perfection or whole Truth or God, he must strive for relative truth: a corrective process of experimentation with his own experience. Thus he affirmed moral autonomy and authority of the individual. Relative truth was equated with means which led towards the end or Truth. If we stick to means, it would automatically lead to the end. Ahimsa was the means and Truth was the end. He attached them all with the soul force of a man which was a part of the creative force, Truth or God; thus Gandhi proceeds from supernatural to natural world. His means could have been empirically examined only after their separation from ends.

4.5.3 Ends and Means

Methodologically, when ends and means are treated parts of the same ultimate value of Truth or God, their conceptual separation becomes difficult, and understanding fuzzy and confusing. As Gandhi's end of Truth or God is ubiquitous, everything else turns a part of it. In his scheme, ends and means are identical. To pursue means is to realise ends. God or Truth was the end or supreme value. But he regarded this end as unattainable. So he moved towards the relative truth. The latter permitted experimentation, trial and error, and slow progress based on personal experience. Ahimsa as relative truth was the means. Ahimsa was the means to realise Truth- absolute or relative. When this concept is adhered to both end and means, Truth and Ahimsa, would appear relative. They are part Truth and part Ahimsa, now attainable to man. In other words, one end or goal can be realised by varying means. A particular means may also lead to differing goals. Means automatically do not take up to the end. Result is attained proportionately to action:

means to end. Gandhi does not agree and continues them both as part of his ultimate value of Truth. In this process, he easily converts his means into ends.

4.5.4 Non-violence

Scientifically, the use and choice of the term 'violence' are both value- laden. Nonviolence is non-injury to any living being by body or mind. Violence is not simply injury. It causes harm with evil intention. Thus it did not remain a neutral term and Gandhi made it an ethico-religious concept: every act of injury was considered to have been committed with evil intention and was 'violence'. It means no act of injury, causing harm to an enemy or adversary could be done without evil intention. All such acts were automatically treated as violence (himsa) and hence ethically wrong and depreciable. Thus Gandhi treats all acts of force, coercion, and compulsion as violence.

Gandhi preached and practiced nonviolence of the brave as his supreme religion, swadharma or creed. It stood on the firm foundation of God or Truth. It was soul force. It was invincible and never-failing and heads the unique capacity of winning adherents, building up morale and invoking sacrifice, arousing public opinion, and weakening the adversary. Superiority over physical strength is the core of such nonviolence. However, it must be made clear that nonviolence is neither invincible nor infallible, and the causes of its effectiveness do not reside in the leader's subjective appreciation of nonviolence. Power of nonviolence rests with the people themselves. The leader simply initiates, prepares and mobilises them.

4.6 METHODOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF GANDHIAN FRAMEWORK

From the methodological standpoint it can be said that Gandhi's approach to the formulation of social generalisations is both deductive and empirical. He deduces certain moral, social and political conclusions from his metaphysical assumptions. Since he believed in the University of God, he accepted the theory of human equality because, in spite of apparent divergences and disparities, all men are really one in their essential spirit. He was a thorough believer in metaphysical and ethical idealism and therefore, he accepted the sanctity of moral technic in politics. From his conception of the absolutely binding character of loyalty to Truth, his theory of Satyagraha followed that means resistance to untruth, injustice and tyranny. Thus, it is clear that he follows the deductive methodology.

But Gandhi's approach is also empirical because a considerable number of the political and social propositions are based upon his own observations and experiences. His stress on the removal of untouchability, his plea for communal concord and his emphasis on rural rehabilitation and reconstruction are grounded upon the pragmatic lessons derived from his experiences as a social and political leader. The richness of personal experiences gained in social and political activities was Gandhi's strong point. It must be pointed out, however, that there is slender use of the historical method in Gandhi's approach. He did not use historical materials for the construction of his ideas, although, sometimes he did refer to the examples of historical figures to corroborate some of his own statements. Although a trained barrister and successful lawyer, Gandhi was no exponent of the juristic approach to social science. Furthermore, there is no place for the application of the more sophisticated, quantitative and behavioural methods and models of social science in the writings of Gandhi.

4.7 SUMMARY

Gandhi adopted a religious and moral approach to social problems. Hence he would have disfavoured the modern stress on the study merely of the processes, procedures and dynamics of social phenomena. There is no distinct department called social. It is only a phase and aspect of life. Since life is a concrete organic unity, all its actual phases, sectors and dimensions have to be made perceptible to the mind in their interconnectedness. According to him, action and moral self-determination should be synthesised. The problems of society have to be studied in the context of life itself. The purified will is to be the source of all kind of action-social, political and moral.

4.8 TERMINAL QUESTIONS

1. Critically examine Gandhian Approach to understand Social Problems.
2. Which are the main issues highlighted by Gandhi as a social scientist?
3. What are the problems and issues a researcher faces while understanding Gandhian Approach to Social problems?

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