



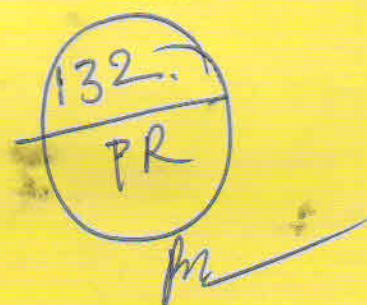
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K Radhakrishna Murty

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– Convocation Address

Let's Create Atmanirbhar Bharat Together

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Social Sciences in India, Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow: An Emic's Critical Appraisal

K Radhakrishna Murty*

Generally speaking, social science can be defined as the science of society that explores the laws of motion of society. If there are no laws of motion or no generalizations about the social phenomena possible, then there can be no social science. As all are aware, the social phenomenon is a product of intra or inter-cerebral interactions of human beings. Such phenomena are open to generalizations and theory construction as evident from the history of humankind. In other words, social life has always been subjected to inquiry and critical probing throughout human history. It has been a human drive to push the boundaries of knowledge further, to come out of ignorance, the basic motivation being to explore the secrets of life. Much before the organisation of knowledge in a systemic form about social life, thinking human being from great sages and saints to social reformers have had incisive contemplation of their social environments. So we have a prehistory of social theory contributed by the sharpest Jural-religious thinkers or philosophers of great antiquity. The common thread of all such speculative as well as incisive thinking is to seek answers to the organising principles of social living. The twin concerns as to how a society holds meanings for its people and how to make such living better, have remained at the core of every social thinking and thought pattern. In other words, starting with speculation, man's thinking and thought reached to a stage of positivism with the help of rationalisation and enlightenment as contributed by the European Renaissance movement of the 18th century. Exactly during that period, social sciences took their birth influenced by the currents and counter-currents of conservatism, liberalism and radicalism advocated and propagated by classical thinkers drawn from different branches of the so-called social science all over the world.

Birth of Social Sciences in India

In India, the roots of social science, social research, and normative social thought can be traced at least as far back as Manu's *Dharmasastra*. This was a comprehensive study of Indian society as it existed at that time though its emphasis was more on the moral and normative aspects of social and economic actions. On the other hand, Kautilya's *Arthasastra*, was essentially a treatise on State Craft describing the political and economic structure and functioning of the then-Indian Society (Sharma: 1992:26-42). India has also been the subject of social science research for both Asian and Western Scholars for many centuries (eg. Megasthenes (324-300 BC); Al Biruni (1030

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