

# SOCIAL SCIENCES IN MORDERN INDIAN KNOWLEDGE SYSTEM: A REVOLUTION IN DIPLOMACY AND SOCIAL EDUCATION

*A strategic framework for the institutional revitalization of India's modern education system*

**DEBMALLYA CHATTERJEE SARKAR**

Postgraduate, M.A. in South and South East Asian Studies Department  
of South and South East Asian Studies University of Calcutta, Kolkata,  
India

## **Abstract:**

This research paper presents a comprehensive, knowledge-based, and practical strategic framework for addressing the institutional weaknesses of social sciences within India's modern education system. Moving beyond a mere theoretical discussion, this article advocates for the re-establishment of social sciences as an active, policy-driven discipline crucial for national development. The proposed framework uniquely merges modern concepts like the 'National Education Policy 2020', the 'Knowledge Economy', and the 'Triple Helix Model' with ancient Indian wisdom, particularly from Kautilya's *Arthashastra*. It emphasizes interdisciplinary and experiential learning, policy-oriented research, collaboration among academia, industry, and government, and the innovative use of literature to explore alternative histories. The ultimate objective is to transform Indian social sciences into a vital tool for national security, economic growth, and diplomatic success, thereby revitalizing the discipline's academic and societal relevance.

**Index Terms - Social Science, India, Education, Triple Helix, Kautilya, Diplomacy, Interdisciplinarity. INTRODUCTION**

## **1.1 The Crisis of Relevance in Higher Education and the Current State of Social Sciences**

As India solidifies its position as one of the world's fastest-growing major economies, a critical institutional weakness within its education system, particularly in the social sciences, is becoming increasingly apparent. The Indian higher education landscape exhibits a clear institutional and financial bias towards Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) fields. This is evidenced by major government funding bodies like the Science and Engineering Research Board (SERB), which primarily focus their grants on science and engineering, severely limiting opportunities for fundamental research in social sciences. Furthermore, India's overall gross expenditure on R&D (GERD) is only about 0.64% of its GDP, with the government accounting for 64% and the private sector for a mere 36%.

This scenario weakens the institutional foundation of social sciences, which are often perceived as overly theoretical and professionally irrelevant. The issue is compounded by a recurring problem of research quality. Research is frequently viewed as a means to obtain a degree or promotion rather than a pursuit of knowledge, which in turn diminishes its quality and impact. This systemic neglect deprives social sciences of their due importance and constrains their true potential, especially at a time when the 'National Education Policy 2020' (NEP 2020) aims to transform the Indian education system to meet the needs of the 21st century.

## **1.2 Research Objectives and Strategic Proposition**

This research paper's primary goal is to reform social science education in India by grounding it in its rich historical and cultural context while developing it into a robust, practical, and policy-oriented discipline. It outlines a multi-layered strategic framework to overcome the limitations of traditional teaching and research methods. The framework is built upon three core propositions:

- To transition social sciences from a purely theoretical and abstract field into a practical and solution-oriented discipline. This will be achieved through a pedagogical approach that encourages students to identify, analyze, and actively participate in solving local, national, and international problems.
- To analyze and apply ancient Indian wisdom, particularly the statecraft and diplomacy found in Kautilya's

*Arthashastra*, within a modern geopolitical and social context. This will help revitalize a unique tradition of Indian strategic thought.

- To foster a new epistemological ecosystem by integrating various social science disciplines and fields like literature, breaking down traditional silos to create new curricula and research areas.

Through these strategic propositions, this paper argues that social sciences are not just for analyzing the past but are an essential tool for shaping a country's present and future.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### 2.1 An Interdisciplinary Model: The Three Dimensions of Social Sciences

Any institutional reform requires a strong theoretical underpinning. This paper challenges the conventional fragmented approach to social science education by proposing a new, integrated, three-dimensional model. This model posits that the three core pillars of social science—Economics, Political Science, and Geography—can function as a cohesive and practical framework, much like the foundational sciences of Physics, Chemistry, and Mathematics.

- **Economics as Mathematics:** Like mathematics, economics uses numbers, data, and analytical modeling to uncover the root causes of social and economic problems. It can be used to analyze demographic data and devise strategies to transform a large population into a valuable human resource, as highlighted in this paper's proposed framework.
- **Political Science as Physics:** Just as the fundamental laws of physics explain the forces governing the universe, political science deals with the foundational principles and rules of state, power, and policy formulation. It helps in understanding the political forces that drive society, paving the way for good governance and ensuring public safety.
- **Geography as Chemistry:** Similar to how chemistry creates new compounds by mixing different elements, geography explains the complex relationship between human society and its natural environment through spatial analysis and geopolitical contexts. It can lay the groundwork for interdisciplinary research on topics like 'Climate Diplomacy' or 'Urban Disaster Management,' where geography, political science, and environmental science converge.

This three-dimensional model can transform social sciences from an abstract discipline into a precise, practical, and interdisciplinary science capable of addressing the complex challenges of the modern world.

### 2.2 The Indian Triple Helix Model: A Confluence of Academia, Industry, and Government

The 'Triple Helix Model' is an innovative framework that promotes a symbiotic, collaborative relationship among academia, industry, and government. In this model, academic institutions generate new knowledge through research and innovation, industry commercializes this knowledge into technologies and products, and the government facilitates this process through policy-making.

In India, this model's application has been predominantly focused on the STEM fields. Government initiatives like the Office of the Principal Scientific Adviser (OPSA) actively encourage industry-academia partnerships, but their focus remains on areas such as health, agriculture, and artificial intelligence, leaving social sciences largely on the

periphery. This gap is a significant problem for a knowledge-based economy. The long-standing institutional bias in India's research policy, which prioritizes science and technology, has confined government and industry funding primarily to STEM fields. This results in social science research failing to be practical or market-oriented, thereby diminishing its academic and economic value. Although the NEP 2020 emphasizes student-centric and skill-based education, social science curricula have not yet adapted to meet the demands of the modern job market. This article proposes specific measures to extend the 'Triple Helix Model' to social sciences to bridge this crucial gap.

### 2.3 Ancient Wisdom, Modern Diplomacy: The Relevance of Kautilya's Arthashastra

Kautilya's *Arthashastra* should be viewed not merely as an ancient political text but as a timeless guide for modern geopolitical, economic, and state management. Kautilya's realist statecraft provides a unique Indian perspective on modern international relations. While Western thought (e.g., Machiavelli's realism) often centers on power and

self-interest, Kautilya's philosophy is rooted in the concept of *Yogakshema*, which means "securing the welfare of the people". This dual objective prioritizes not only the expansion of state power but also the overall well-being and security of its citizens.

Kautilya's Mandala Theory (Circle of Nations) and the Six-Fold Diplomacy (Sandhi, Vighraha, Yana, Asana, Samshraya, and Dvaidhibhava) provide a powerful framework for understanding the complexities of contemporary international relations. The field of international relations has traditionally been shaped by the Westphalian system and Western realism. In contrast, Kautilya's wisdom offers a deep cultural foundation for India's distinct diplomatic history and strategic culture, which is often overlooked in academic discourse. Integrating Kautilya into social science curricula and research would not only revive this ancient wisdom but also help shape a unique "Indian" geo-strategic identity on the global stage.

### 3.1 Trends and Limitations of Social Science Research in India

The primary responsibility for social science research in India lies with the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR), a body under the Ministry of Education. ICSSR provides financial support for research, fellowships, and publications. However, available data indicates that the effectiveness of this institutional structure is limited. A DFID report revealed that less than 12% of the University Grants Commission's (UGC) total research expenditure was allocated to social and basic sciences in 2009-10. Additionally, only 20% of the ICSSR's total funds are used for research, with the rest being spent on administrative purposes, further shrinking the financial resources available for research.

These statistics not only point to a lack of funding but also expose a deep institutional and structural weakness. The mismanagement of funds, coupled with inadequate resources, hobbles social science research, hindering the production of high-quality publications and institutional capacity-building. According to the All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) 2017-18, the total number of PhD students in social science was 18,366. Despite an increase in PhD enrollment, the quality of research remains a concern. Many researchers are driven by a need for a degree or job, which compromises the integrity of their work. This leads to Indian educational institutions' poor performance in international rankings and limits the impact of social science research on policy-making.

**Table 1: Comparative Analysis of Research Funding in India's Higher Education (2010-2019)**

Funding Source & Field	Data & Trends	Relevance
<b>Total R&amp;D Expenditure (% of GDP)</b>	India's total R&D expenditure is ~0.64% of GDP. 64% is from the government, 36% from the private sector.	Indicates a significant lack of investment for world-class research, affecting both science and social sciences.
<b>UGC Research Expenditure</b>	Less than 12% of UGC's total research expenditure was allocated to social and basic sciences.	This data points to a clear institutional bias in policy, limiting financial resources for social science research.
<b>ICSSR Fund Utilization</b>	Only 20% of ICSSR's total funds are used for research; the rest is spent on	Highlights mismanagement of research funds and institutional
Funding Source & Field	Data & Trends	Relevance
	administrative tasks.	inertia, which reduces the actual money available for research projects.
<b>SERB Research Grants</b>	SERB primarily provides grants for science and engineering.	Demonstrates a clear priority for STEM fields by a major government funding agency, presenting a significant challenge for social sciences.
<b>ICSSR Research Grants</b>	As of 2015, 8,316 research projects and 13,112 fellowships were awarded.	While numerically significant, the quality is hampered by low funding and its mismanagement.

### 3.2 The Gap between Curriculum Relevance and Employment Opportunities

India's education curriculum often fails to meet the demands of modern industries and the job market, creating a significant "skills gap" among graduates. Social science curricula, in particular, often neglect practical aspects. For instance, curricula may highlight population as a problem but fail to provide detailed guidance on how to transform it into a human resource. This is not just a theoretical limitation; it is a severe economic problem.

Traditional social science curricula do not prepare students for high-paying jobs in the 'knowledge economy' in fields like AI and Fintech. A report highlights that professions such as AI experts or quantum computing analysts can command annual salaries of ₹40 lakh to ₹1 crore. These high-tech fields are primarily open to STEM graduates because social science students often lack the necessary skills in data analysis, technological proficiency, or problem-solving. This disparity erodes the academic relevance of social sciences and deters talented students from pursuing the field, ultimately affecting its overall quality.

### 3.3 Funding for Research and Institutional Challenges

There is a significant lack of a formal, structural link between government policy-making and academic research in India. While think tanks like NITI Aayog and RIS (Research and Information System for Developing Countries) are engaged in policy-oriented research for the government, university-based social science research is often disconnected from this mainstream policy process. This isolation limits the role of social sciences in solving complex social, economic, and geopolitical issues facing the country.

This disconnect stems from a structural gap between the academic freedom of universities and the specific, often short-term, demands of policy-makers. As a result, the government relies on its internal bodies or specialized think tanks to meet its

research needs, and academic research often remains on the sidelines. A similar model in Bangladesh shows how governmental agencies like the National Academy for Primary Education (NAPE) provide research-based support for improving the primary education system. A similar approach in India could directly link social science research to government policy, thereby increasing the discipline's institutional relevance.

## STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK: SPECIFIC STEPS FOR SOCIAL SCIENCE REVITALIZATION

### 4.1 Curriculum Modernization and Expansion of Experiential Learning

Inspired by the NEP 2020, social science curricula must be redesigned to create a student-centric and experiential learning model.

**A. Introduction of Policy-Oriented and Interdisciplinary Courses:** To address the complex challenges of the modern world, it is essential to move beyond traditional subject-based curricula. New postgraduate diploma or certificate courses can be introduced, such as 'Climate Diplomacy,' 'Geo-economics and Supply Chain Management,' 'Urban Disaster Management and Policy,' and 'Indo-Eurasian Strategic Relations' (with a focus on Russia and Central Asia). These courses would integrate disciplines like geography, international relations, economics, and political science.

**B. Experiential Learning:** It is crucial to make field-work, internships, and case study-based learning mandatory for every course. This reform will not only make students more employable but will also enhance their 'problem-solving' and 'critical thinking' skills, which are vital for the Fourth Industrial Revolution. This approach will help students develop the skills expected by both NEP 2020 and the industry.

### 4.2 Building a Research and Innovation Ecosystem

Establishing a robust research and innovation ecosystem is essential to transform social sciences into a practical discipline.

**A. Establishment of an Interdisciplinary Research Center:** A 'Center for Geo-strategic and Policy Studies' could be established to conduct policy-oriented research for government ministries, such as Foreign Affairs, Defense, and Environment. This center could emulate models like the Brazil Policy Center at the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro (PUC-Rio), which provides direct policy recommendations to the government.

**B. International Grant and Fellowship Cell:** A dedicated cell should be created to assist in obtaining research grants from foreign universities and organizations. Connecting with international collaboration projects from bodies like ICSSR (e.g., ICSSR-JSPS (Japan) or ICSSR-ERC (Europe)) can unlock new funding opportunities and increase global exposure for researchers.

**Table 2: Proposed Research Centers and Their Potential Policy-Oriented Research Areas**

Research Center	Primary Research Areas	Potential Government/Private Partners
<b>Center for Geo-strategic &amp; Policy Studies</b>	Geo-economics and Supply Chain Management; Climate Diplomacy and Policy; Urban Disaster Management; Indo-Eurasian Strategic Relations.	Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Environment, NITI Aayog, RIS, various industry bodies.
<b>Center for Social Development &amp; Justice</b>	Gender Studies; Poverty Alleviation; Social Equity; Public Interest Research.	Ministry of Social Welfare, NGOs, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) wings.

### 4.3 Internationalization and Institutional Linkages

Internationalization is a crucial strategy for enhancing the global reputation of Indian educational institutions.

**A. Connecting with Diplomatic Missions:** Regular engagement with foreign embassies and consulates located in cities like Kolkata can facilitate "Ambassador Lecture Series" and cultural exchange programs. This will provide students with opportunities for global learning and raise the institution's international profile.

**B. Annual 'Kolkata Global Dialogue':** An annual international conference, modeled on the Raisina Dialogue, could be organized. Such a conference would not only boost the institution's brand value but also provide a clear roadmap for internationalization and institutional capacity building. South Korea's "10 SNU" initiative offers a similar model for elevating regional universities to global standards, reducing regional 'brain drain' and fostering local innovation clusters.

### 4.4 Collaboration with Industry and Government Policy-Makers

To move the 'Triple Helix Model' from theory to practice in the social sciences, it's essential to follow the OPISA's Science and Technology Clusters program, which focuses on creating innovative solutions for social development.

**Table 3: Proposed Effective Coordination among Academia, Industry, and Government based on the Triple Helix Model**

Area	Role of Academia	Role of Industry	Role of Government
<b>Pedagogy</b>	Develop demand-driven curricula , enhance skills through experiential learning.	Participate in curriculum development , provide training for soft skills.	Formulate policies for skill-based education , encourage blended learning approaches.
<b>Research</b>	Conduct practical and policy-oriented research , engage in joint research projects.	Fund research projects , provide data and real-world problems.	Increase research grants , utilize research outcomes in policy-making.
Area	Role of Academia	Role of Industry	Role of Government
<b>Employment</b>	Launch internships and mentorship programs , organize job fairs for graduates.	Offer internships and job opportunities , recruit personnel trained according to industry demands.	Create platforms to connect industry and academia , simplify employment policies.
<b>Funding</b>	Secure funding for research and innovation centers.	Invest in R&D , utilize CSR funds for social research.	Increase government funding , offer tax breaks for industry-funded research.

## LITERATURE AND HISTORY: THE POWER OF ALTERNATIVE NARRATIVES

### 5.1 Alternate History as a Medium for Social Analysis

'Alternate history' is not a form of factual historical research but a literary genre. It creates a fictional premise where a known historical event unfolds differently, exploring what might have happened as a result. For example, literature has explored scenarios where World War II ended differently. This genre can add a new dimension to social science education. By using alternate history, students are encouraged to think critically about complex historical decisions and their potential consequences, rather than simply memorizing past events. It becomes a tool for social analysis, helping students understand the multifaceted and dynamic nature of social change. History and social sciences are intrinsically linked, with one informing the other. Alternate history provides a novel way to bridge these two fields.

### 5.2 Subaltern Studies and the Use of Literature to Explore the History of the Subaltern

Subaltern Studies is a historical methodology that challenges elitist history by focusing on the lives, struggles, and perspectives of marginalized and lower-class people. This approach, heavily influenced by Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci and pioneered in India by scholars like Ranajit Guha , has redefined the history of colonial India by highlighting the autonomy and agency of the masses.

This methodology can be effectively applied to literature to analyze the lives of the subaltern, social changes, and cultural transformations. Indian post-colonial writers, such as Amitav Ghosh and Shashi Tharoor, have used historical events as a backdrop to explore themes of national identity and the experiences of marginalized groups. This approach challenges traditional, Western-centric historical narratives and makes social science education more inclusive, critical, and relevant to the Indian context. It strengthens the literary and humanistic aspects of social science, aligning with the paper's core proposition of an integrated model.

## EXPECTED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION OF SUCCESS

The successful implementation of this strategic framework is expected to yield the following outcomes within 3-5 years:

- **Increased Relevance in Rankings:** The 'Perception' and 'Research & Professional Practice' scores in NIRF and other international rankings will significantly improve. The number of international students and researchers will also increase.
- **Policy Influence:** Research from the 'Center for Geo-strategic and Policy Studies' will directly contribute to government policy formulation, enhancing the discipline's national impact.
- **Growth in Publications and International Collaboration:** The quality and quantity of publications in international journals will increase, reflecting the global impact of the research.

**CONCLUSION**

This paper proposes a comprehensive strategic framework to transform social sciences in India from a discipline in crisis to a vibrant and practical field. It demonstrates that social science is not merely a theoretical subject but a vital and pragmatic tool for a country's development. By integrating ancient Indian wisdom from Kautilya with modern models like the 'Triple Helix', this field will not only become a hub for knowledge creation but also a critical asset

for national security, economic prosperity, and diplomatic success. While potential obstacles such as bureaucratic inertia, funding limitations, and institutional rigidity exist, strong leadership, strategic planning, and collective effort can re-establish this historic discipline as a guiding light for a knowledge-based India in the 21st century.

**REFERENCES**

- [1]Government of India. (2020). National Education Policy 2020. Ministry of Human Resource Development. [2]Etzkowitz, H., & Leydesdorff, L. (2000). The dynamics of innovation: from National Systems and “Mode 2” to a Triple Helix of university–industry–government relations. *Research Policy*, 29(2), 109-123.
- [3]Bhowmick, S. (2024). Analyzing India’s Shifting Economic Landscape. ORF Online.
- [4]Bangladesh Open University. (2023). Social Science Curriculum in Bangladesh. School of Education.
- [5]Ministry of Primary and Mass Education. (2023). NAPE Research Guideline 2023. Government of Bangladesh.
- [6]Korea National University of Education. (2013). Higher Education Reforms in South Korea. ResearchGate.
- [7]Press Information Bureau (PIB). (2024). India is the world's fastest-growing major economy. Government of India.
- [8]Sarkar, P. K. (2023). University and Industry Collaboration. The University Grants Commission (UGC).
- [9]Office of the Principal Scientific Adviser. (2024). Innovation Science Bharat. Government of India. [10]Samakal. (2023). The Need to Increase Social Science Research.
- [11]Sahu, B. (2025). Trends in social science PhDs in India: Thematic Analysis of Doctoral Studies. *JETIR Journal*.
- [12]Ghosh, S. (2014). From Dandaniti to Realpolitik: A Study of Kautilya's Arthashastra. Hooghly Women's College.
- [13]Sharma, A. (2023). Statecraft and International Relations: The Relevance of Kautilya's Arthashastra. ORF Online.
- [14]Anjum, M. (2025). A Comparative Study on the International Political Thoughts of Han Feizi and Kautilya. ResearchGate
- [15]Quora. (2023). What is the relationship between social science and history?.
- [16]Quora. (2023). How is historical fiction related to social science?.
- [17]Mominddin, M. (2014). The relationship between literature and history. Shilpo Shahitto Blogspot.
- [18]Culler, J. (2023). Literature and Sociology. *Banglatribune*.
- [19]DFID. (2011). Mapping Report: Social Science Research in India.
- [20]SERB. (2024). Core Research Grant (CRG) Guidelines. Science and Engineering Research Board.
- [21]Sharma, A. (2023). Why are social science graduates not getting high-paying jobs? News18 Bengali.
- [22]UGC. (2023). University-Industry Linkages. The University Grants Commission.
- [23]Climate Policy Initiative. (2024). Brazil Policy Center.
- [24]The Cambridge Companion to Science Fiction. (2003). Alternate History. Cambridge University Press.
- [25]The Historical Novel Society. (2024). Indian Historical Novels.
- [26]Subaltern Studies Collective. (2024). Subaltern Studies. Wikipedia.
- [27]Ghosh, A. (2025). The Historiography of India. *English Language, Literature & Culture*.
- [28]Ministry of Education. (2024). Evaluating and Reforming India's Educational System. ResearchGate.
- [29]ICSSR. (2025). Indian Council of Social Science Research.
- [30]NITI Aayog. (2025). About NITI. Government of India.
- [31]ResearchGate. (2024). The Triple Helix Model for Innovation.
- [32]Kate, A. (2015). Kautilya's Arthashastra and Modern International Relations. *International Journal of Historical Insight and Research*.
- [33]The Indian Science. (2024). Research Grants in India.
- [34]ResearchGate. (2024). Social Science Research in India: Concerns and Proposals.
- [35]International Journal of Social Impact. (2025). National Education Policy 2020 and Social Justice. [36]Testbook. (2023). National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.
- [37]Research and Information System for Developing Countries. (2024). About Us.
- [38]CPRG. (2022). Social Sciences Research Grant. [39]East Asia Forum. (2025). South Korea's plan to decentralize higher education excellence.
- [40]Desidoc Journal of Library & Information Technology. (2025). A Decade of Social Issues Research in India: Thematic Analysis of Doctoral Studies Through Topic Modeling..
- [41]Quora. (2023). What is alternate history?.