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Indian Sociology : Some Issues

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Indigenization of Indian Sociology

Atal (2003) said that the call for indigenization of social sciences was given in the post-colonial era. He regards this call as an invitation to re-examine the structure of social sciences and to evolve suitable strategies to promote indigenization. Here, culture became the key issue as different societies have different cultures. The demand for, what Atal feels, de-parochialization of Western social sciences is the key emphasis of the demand for indigenization. Indigenization here implies critical re-examination of Western social science methods and theories in the context of developing societies. Because these methods and theories have evolved through a particular cultural content, their unquestioned applicability in the new context could be misleading.

There is gap between profession and practice. Those who have called for indigenization have not given any proof of their not being under the influence of Western Social Science methods; they have also not discarded it. According to Atal (2003), pre-conditions have to be determined at the individual, professional, institutional, regional and national level. For this, it may be necessary to take the debate to the national-personal levels and the social fora of social sciences. Systematic survey and critical review of the social science literature generated in the developing countries may provide some help in this regard.

In the post-colonial era, nation-building exercise involved demolishing colonial structures of administration, and of knowledge generation and dissemination. Atal's called it freeing of captive mind

and initializing a process of development, *i.e.*, economic, political, social and cultural development. Atal (2003) called it replacement of single-aperture model by multiple-aperture model. The colonizer served as a reference group, *i.e.*, language, education system, way of life, and even mode of thinking was influenced by the colonizer country, it was replaced by multiple-aperture models in the post-colonial period when newly independent countries began to look at different countries for ideas and inspiration. However, these independent ideas failed because of newly developed dependency models. The post-colonial phase was marked with many problems as these countries faced crisis since dependencies in economic and political field obvious. A new form of academic colonialism came up; the source was U.S.A. or U.S.S.R. It was felt that the pattern of vertical relationship between scholars from the Third World and the donor countries had not ended with the attainment of political freedom. Most of the scholars were trained in the donor countries and were influenced by them. Though they tried to develop some indigenous syllabus, they were biased towards donor countries and hence they were called captive minds. Some indigenous scholars criticized them. In 1977, in the conference of IFSSO (International Federation of Social Science Organization), call for indigenization was made. Wenner-Green foundation organized a conference on indigenous anthropology in 1978. Canadian social scientists organized a symposium on Canadization of social science. Also, on Korean initiative, Korenization of social sciences was made.

Atal (2003) identified four features of indigenization:

1. Indigenization is a plea for self-awareness and rejection of a borrowed consciousness. It emphasizes the need for an insider view, its proposers wanted to analyze their own societies replacing the existing trend of knowing their society via West.
2. Indigenization advocates the desirability for alternative perspectives on human societies with a view to making the social science less parochial. This would improve the quality of professionalism.
3. It draws the attention to cultural and historical specificities and tries to develop dynamic perspective on national problems.
4. It should not have too narrow parochialism leading to fragmentation of a single definition into several insulated systems

of thought based on geographical boundaries. It is opposed to both false universalism and false nationalism.

Contextualization

Sociology in India has been about a century old now. In the beginning, for about six to seven decades, sociologists have been working under the influence of western theories and methods. Undoubtedly, most of them tried to evolve some approach to study Indian Society and Culture. Oommen (1974) said that so far in the past six decades the context of sociology has been to study order and change, and may be direction of change. He raised several questions concerning — appropriate units of analysis for sociological investigations in India, techniques of data collection, theoretical propositions relevant for India, whether attention has been given to understand the historicity of Indian social reality, academic colonialism, etc. Further, Oommen identified five broad strands of thinking found in India: (1) The traditionalist, who emphasized upon uniqueness of Indian culture and civilization and studying Indian society as a whole, (2) The nationalist, who emphasized upon the analysis through history and tradition and away from the influence of outsiders, (3) The nativist, who wanted to use native categories to reconstruct social reality as people perceive it, (4) The cosmopolitans, who wanted to focus on general and the present, they tend to be ahistorical, and (5) The radicals, who call for a selective rejection of the outside influence.

Oommen (1974) said that contextualization of sociology in India involves many problems. Differential emphasis given to the study of past and present, indology and sociology, tradition and change. He said that D.P. Mukherji (1958, cf. Oommen, 1974) emphasized on studying tradition but Dumont (1957, cf. Oommen, 1974) said that a sociology of India lies at the point of confluence of sociology and Indology. Oommen said that those who emphasize the study of Indology suggest that this is the surest way to understand Indian social reality as a whole but to the extent the texts, which are actually to be studied are invariably Hindu texts, they provide leads a *Hindu socioloev.* and not for the broader *Indian sociology.* Oommen

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Hinduism; (c) the religions which emerged as the resultant of protest against Hinduism Jainism, Buddhism, Sikhism; (d) the religions which are perceived to be the products of conquest or colonization—Islam and Christianity; and (e) the religious groups which came as migrants—Jews, Zoroastrians and followers of Bahai' faith. Further, in the light of emphasizing Hindu texts, Pali and Gurmukhi texts are ignored, therefore, Hindu texts would only give an understanding of values of the mainstream people of present day in India—the twice-born Hindus inhabiting Indo-Gangetic plain.

In this argument, text and field assume significance. Oommen says that excessive dependence on the book is the characteristic feature of theology and law which attempt norm-setting and value-giving. Therefore, those who are concerned with the behaviour tend to argue that the book-view does not reflect the reality, and for that, one should resort to the field to get at 'facts' (Oommen, 1974:243). Oommen strongly feels that sociology must emphasize upon contextualization *i.e.* the study of multiple Indian reality and structure. According to him, there are two sets of competing value packages found in India: (a) societal value having hierarchy, holism and pluralism, and (b) constitutional values having socialism, secularism, and democracy. The constitutional values are basic human values which are borrowed from the West. He further suggests that Indian sociology should play a critical role in the process of national reconstruction as a part of its commitment to broader human concern. For him, the process of contextualization of sociology in India involves: (a) recognition of fact that tradition/past contains both assets and liabilities viewed in terms of the present needs and aspirations, (b) appropriate values and institutions from other societies and culture should be judiciously integrated into Indian society, and (c) recognizing the tendency of gradual adaptation and reconciliation of Indian society and recognizing the fact that social transformation in India takes place at a slower pace (Oommen, 1974).

Sociology in India

conducted by outsiders but insiders started research only recently. It mainly coincided with the introduction of the subjects in Indian universities. The first generation teachers were either trained abroad in these disciplines or moved from other sister disciplines.

Sociology in India started in Bombay University in 1919 by a New Zealander Sir Patrick Geddes who was an Urban Planner and Geographer. He selected G.S. Ghurye, then a lecturer in Sanskrit, and sent him to England to learn sociology at Cambridge under W. H. R. Rivers, an anthropologist. Another appointee, N.A. Thoothi got his training at Oxford under R.R. Merret, J.L. Meyers and I. Arthur Thomson — all anthropologists. They taught courses on caste, rank, family, marriage, archeology etc., which today no sociologist teaches except those who are anthropologist turned sociologists. I.P. Desai, a student of Ghurye and Thoothi, said that during his student days in 1930s: (a) Methodology as a separate course was not learnt by any of the sociologists, (b) Sociology was not understood as a science as it is done today, and (c) Sociology was supposed to have a bearing on practical life and was future-oriented, i.e., change-oriented. But, Desai does not regard these as un-sociological.

Sociology and anthropology entered Lucknow University via the Department of Economics and had stalwarts like Radha Kamal Mukherjee, D.N. Majumdar, and D.P. Mukherji. They put emphasis on logico-philosophical approach and Marxism. The Lucknow scholars advocated for a closer link with Indology. Subsequently, anthropology was separated and an independent department came up under the leadership of D.N. Majumdar in 1951. Sociology and Social Work came up in 1954; finally, Sociology came up as a separate Department in 1974. D.N. Majumdar, an anthropology graduate from Calcutta and later on trained from England, was appointed in the Department of Economics at Lucknow University as a lecturer in Primitive Economics.¹ When the new department of Sociology came up, the bureaucracy of university found it difficult to consider people with Economics degree for appointment, e.g. eminent sociologist and anthropologists like T.N. Madan, B.R. Chaudhan, K.N. Sharma, S.P. Nagendra, etc. faced this difficulty.

In Lucknow, people started a debate about the nature of Indian Sociology and also tried to distinguish between Sociology and Anthropology. In Bombay, people did not make such an issue of the distinction between the twin disciplines. M.N. Srinivas and I. P. Desai

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— both Ghurye's students — were identified as Anthropologist and Sociologist respectively. Both worked in the same department in Baroda. Desai said that anthropologists and sociologists were never understood as two castes as they are understood today. They had a common theoretical outlook namely evolutionism. However, later on, the arrival of M.N. Srinivas made the difference. He regarded anthropology as true and real sociology. Srinivas questioned the suitability of quantitative research and survey method.

Srinivas emphasized on empirical research and anthropological fieldwork (see Atal, 2003). Srinivas established department of sociology in Delhi School of Economics and his brand of Sociology continues to flourish there even now. However, these two disciplines had to work on several fronts like: (a) evaluate writings of the foreign scholars in India, (b) distinguish Sociology from Indology and from Social Anthropology, and (c) to formally define the scope of Indian Sociology and to set priorities for research. In India, the theories of unilinear evolutionism, Marxism, structural-functionalism were seen as a part of Western agenda. Further, methodology became an issue, particularly the issue of insider versus outsider research. Anthropology was defined as study of other cultures, whereas many anthropologists studied their own culture like Srinivas. Anthropologists emphasized lengthy fieldwork (at least one year), participant observation and learning native language. Sociologists used mainly quantitative techniques and survey methods and studied large communities; anthropologists emphasized studying small societies or communities, study of tribal or primitive societies.

Some people also said that sociologists studied society whereas anthropologists studied culture. D.P. Mukherji argued that Economics had neglected the social base and provided only an arid abstraction. In his Presidential Address to the first All India Sociological Conference held in 1955, he said that sociology has a floor and a ceiling like any other science but its specialty consists in its being the ground floor of all types of social disciplines and its ceiling remaining open to the sky. Social science should be engaged in the search for some basic neutral and lowest common multiple concepts, common methodological principles derived from modern refinements of logic, reorientation and ways of inter-relations or cross-breeding and a philosophical approach. Further, he said that the first task is to study our tradition; it includes study of changes of tradition by the internal

and external pressures. Mukherji not only talked of Indian themes also Indian origin of sociologists as a pre-requisite for doing Indian sociology, but he also advocated for an Indian brand of technical skill. It means sociological training in India is grounded in Sanskrit, because all ancient literatures are written in that language.

A.K. Saran, also a product of Lucknow, took some extreme position. He believed that sociological cognition and world view is fundamentally alien to the Indian tradition. Hence, any attempt towards its indigenization as adaptation into an Indian cognitive system is bound either to fail or to turn imitative. He rejected the idea of universalistic sociology. The inaugural issues of the *Contribution of Indian Sociology* in 1957, edited by Dumont and Pocock, attracted a long debate. A.K. Saran stood as a strong critique of western sociology and questioned Dumont and Pocock's approach of studying Indian society. Monographic, ethnographic methods are not suitable in India. He criticized Dumont & Pocock as they were not insiders and that through their cultural interpretation reality of Indian society cannot be explored. Most of the Western scholars equated India with Hindu India. They failed to make proper distinction between great and little tradition. How could a multicultural society, like India, be understood only through the forgotten tradition.

Analyzing the contribution to the debate on sociology for India, Yogendra Singh (cf. Atal, 2003) finds substantial continuity of concern on the issue of indigenization. The focus shifts from a concern on sociological colonialism on dependency to the constructive formulation and investigation of grounds on which the specific cognitive structures of Indian sociology could be constructed. The use of conceptual categories, historical data or linguistic and symbolic techniques adds new depth and dimension to the study of social structure. The Marxist historical method of analyzing gained momentum through studies of peasantry, agrarian structures, and working classes. A new series of studies, sensitive to theoretical orientation such as structuralism, ethnosociology, systems analysis and historical materialistic method of Marxism and neo-Marxism have been conducted to analyze logical structure. Such studies are analytical in nature and this is the new direction of Indian sociology.

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them were editors of the journal and started a debate on what kind of studies should be conducted in India. Dumron did fieldwork in Tamil Nadu and used Indological approach to study Indian society. He analysed caste system through Indology. Pocock did fieldwork among the Patidars of Gujarat. They continuously analyzed various aspects of Indian society and culture sociologically and wrote in the journal. They edited the journal for 10 years and left it in 1966. In 1972, T.N. Madan became its editor and started a fresh debate on sociology for India. He continued for 25 years as editor. In 1997, Dipankar Gupta, Veena Das and Patricia Oberoi became its editors and continued for 10 years. Then, Amita Baviskar and Nandini Sunder became its editors upto 2012. Now, Satish Deshpande, Deepak Mehta, and Surendra Srivastava are its editors. In Lucknow, anthropology had a great beginning with D.N. Majumdar establishing the department in 1951. In 1945, D.N. Majumdar established the Ethnographic and Folk Culture Society and started the international journal *The Eastern Anthropologist* in 1947. The journal continues to attract serious academic research conducted on Indian society and culture as well as abroad.

The major criticism of sociology in India has been the use of Western concepts, categories and methods for the study of Indian society and culture. Those who advocate contextualization of sociology in India criticize the use of Western models, theories, and concepts. Functionalism of Malinowski, Merton, and Parsons, structure-functionalism of Radcliffe-Brown, and others, Marxism and other Western theories and methodology continue to influence Indian sociologists, particularly those who try to analyze urban and industrial society. Besides, the major debate was found to be on the relationship between Sociology and Anthropology. Most of the people had training in both the disciplines. There were many departments which combined both the disciplines. There were many departments of sociology which had anthropological orientations like Delhi University's Department of Sociology headed by M.N. Srinivas (1959-74). Because they were separate departments in various universities, therefore, it was decided by the UGC not to merge them but to keep them separate.

Text and Context

As said earlier, book-view (text) and field-view (context) have been a
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<i>Varna</i>	<i>Jati or Caste</i>
<p>It is textual or book view of Indian society, i.e., Varna is now found only in texts and not in reality.</p>	<p>This is the contextual or field view of Indian social system and is found in reality.</p>
<p>Throughout India there are only four Varnas : Brahmins, Kshatriya, Vaishya, Shudra</p>	<p>About 4000 jatis are found; all jatis are not found in every region. Srinivas says that about 200 occupational jatis are found in every region.</p>
<p>It has a pan-Indic hierarchy, i.e., Brahmin at top, Kshatriya on the second position then Vaishya, and then Shudra.</p>	<p>It does not have a pan-Indic hierarchy i.e., from region to region hierarchy differs.</p>

<p>from the shoulder, Vaishyas from trunk, and Shudras from the feet).</p>	<p>to be dominant in different areas economically and politically.</p>
<p>5. Untouchables are kept outside the system because they are not considered as human beings. There are two opinions on it: Untouchables came in later Vedic era. Shudra got divided into Sat Shudra and Asat Shudra. Those doing menial jobs were put into untouchable category or Asat shudra category and the service providers doing pure service were put into Sat Shudra category. The second opinion says that a fifth Varna was created after 1000 B.C. namely Asat Shudra.</p>	<p>Untouchables are an integral part of the jatis system, without them high jatis cannot live functionally. They have a lot of work to do in the day-to-day life of high jatis.</p>
<p>6. It is immutable (not changeable).</p>	<p>It is changeable through the process of modernization, etc. s a n s k r i t i z a t i o n , westernization, urbanization, industrialization and democratic decentralization.</p>

There are, similarly, two different opinions regarding Joint Family. In the textual view, it is: 1. Big family, 2. Many members, 3. Chief is known as karta, 4. Joint kitchen, 5. Joint ritual, 6. Worship of kul devata, 7. Rights and responsibilities are equally shared by the members of the family, 8. Safety and protection for all members, 9. Cooperation, 10. Woman is considered as devi, and 11. After the death of karta, eldest son controls the property and other affairs of the family. In the contextual view, joint family has the features of: 1. Conflict among members, 2. Status of women is at the lowest level, 3. Mostly nuclear families are found, 4. Small joint families are found, 5. Strict rules of joint family have got slackened, 6. People are functionally attached to the joint family,

7. A Family and its members are not equal. Men are more influential than women.

When we analyze gender relations, we find status of women in the text as contradictory: 1. Women are given high status and are compared to Goddess — *yatra maryati pujanite tatra ramanam devaya* [१३ अर्थात् यत्रा ३३ तत्रां देव्या] means gods live where women are worshipped, and 2. Women are considered as sensuous, greedy, root of all evil; and men should protect women in all aspects in all her roles — mother, daughter, wife, sister, beloved. Whereas, in the context we find: 1. Gender equality is being spread, 2. Feminist liberalism is being adopted, 3. education, health and other opportunities are being given, 4. Violence against women is on the rise, and 4. women's movement is picking up.

Use of Native Category

The word 'caste' came from the Portuguese word 'casta'. Britishers used it both for Varma and Jati. It created confusion because they were different concepts and products of different period. Hence, Srinivas suggested using native categories of Varma and Jati only instead of caste. Family and kinship ties are dominant in India; therefore, these two categories are also given importance in sociological analysis.

According to Yogendra Singh (see Atal, 2003), most of the categories used to understand Indian society have also some western influence. Initially, categories like caste, tribe, and nation; caste, class and power; mind, body and wealth were used by the researchers without following a rigorous methodology that requires conceptual clarity and dependable tools for investigation. These researchers only focussed on highlighting change without caring much to portray the pre-change profile. This was also the period of substantive differentiation of sociological research interest. The question of equality and inequality; peasantry and social movements particularly became new interests of sociology.

The exposure of sociology to economics and history with ensuing new trends in these disciplines introduced new theoretical and conceptual sensitivities in sociology. Marxological orientations in agrarian studies also influenced sociologists studying peasantry and peasant moments. Historical studies in the areas of kinship and family were conducted. They used historical material and genealogies and also family cycle and its self-reproduction from one generation to another. I.P. Desai's study of family cycle in a township effectively understood the theory of continuum in the family change.

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Further, Yogendra Singh says that there were three conceptual and methodological orientations in sociology—structuralist, typological, and dialectical. Structuralist studies, there has been knowledge and culture. In the typological studies, there has been predominant role of observation in the construction and interpretation of concrete institutions and relationships. In fact, a neo-Weberian influence was found in some sociological studies. These studies bear close resemblance with monographic studies of rural class structures doing the 1950s. Dialectical study came from systematic dialectical social theory for the understanding of social reality. Yogendra Singh says that it is still in nascent form in sociology; it is more used in economics and among historians. However, the debates on notion of caste and clan, the nature of infrastructure vs. superstructure; the role of structural differentiation and integration, or even institutionalization in the socialist revolutionary societies and their sub-system, all depend on Marxist paradigm. According to Yogendra Singh, if one wishes to examine the nature of dialectical materialistic orientation in the sociological studies, one faces two-fold problems in theory building : (1) Near impossibility of formalization; and (2) Metaphoric content of the structure of the categories and their conceptualization for research.

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