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On Sociology in/of India: Toward a Discursive Deviation

'Audacity, audacity, still more audacity!'
—Lenin

Theoretical work, it will be acknowledged, proceeds by constant problematisations and reconstructions. As part of such an exercise, this essay may indicate possibilities which are not wholly borne out by the analysis. Our task is not to present a survey of research in sociology and social anthropology, or to evaluate the contributions of individual sociologists. Instead, we hope to address some issues, primarily of a discursive kind, that bear on the sociological enterprise in India. We ask: can the issue be merely posed in terms that suggest that Indian sociology is 'imitative',[1] that it has not broken from 'colonial and semi-feudal perspectives' and that it has not evolved a 'language' of its own?[2] Or, alternatively, that it has not been 'wholly imitative',[3] that it has been responsive to nationalistic and social concerns?[4] And, that Indian sociology remains grounded on a 'deductive-positivistic' base and is therefore delimited in its comprehension of social reality,[5] that sociologists have neglected 'the concept of the desired type of society' in their studies,[6] that basically 'non-Marxist' approaches have dominated Indian sociology while the Marxist paradigm is the most relevant framework for the study of Indian society,[7] that sociologists must address themselves to issues of social policy,[8] that social epistemology has failed to encounter social reality,[9] and so on? Or, can the issue be posed as Saberwal has done: 'How does an intellectual tradition, arising out of a civilisation with particular kinds of intellectual and social habits and resources become domesticated in another civilisation whose intellectual habits and resources have been very different?'[10]

In this essay, we will focus on the frame, what will be called the discursive core, that sustains the practice of sociology in India. Our way of handling the issues involved here is not by giving a comprehensive account of the development of Indian sociology nor by

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documenting its substantive and methodological foci; in fact, the analysis is deliberately incomplete and 'open'. We will concentrate on what may be considered a purely descriptive excursus, concerned with accounting for the '*how*' rather than the '*why*' in the ongoing discourse/practice of Indian sociology. Indeed, the concerns of this essay approximate to a sociology of knowledge, but it seeks to go beyond simple assertions about the existential determination of knowledge. The thrust will be to provide a glimpse of the logic, both epistemic and 'practical', pervading the discipline of sociology in India. The various analyses and assessments of Indian sociology, or, more accurately, the sociology in and of India, have formed the basis of our reading. Rather than viewing these accounts as reflecting the opinions of their authors, we take them as embodying the dispositions, strategies and ways of perceiving reality that are taken for granted within the discipline. Also, inhering in the very mode of our presentation and reference are the terms of a possible discursive deviation, which, however, has not been taken up for detailed explication. One last reminder: since the issues and positions we examine here are fairly subtle, it is necessary to have the relevant passages before us. The frequent quotations, therefore, are not an appeal to authority but the necessary result when 'texts' are all we have here and now.

I

The discursive core sustaining the practice of sociology in India will not be viewed as a system of abstract categories, but simply as a set of dispositions and strategies within the discipline. It seems to combine (a) an emphasis on the substantiality of the social world and, consequently, of the objects of sociological analysis, with (b) a realism asserting interpretative frames that reveal the 'truth' of the social reality, and (c) an ideationalism which incorporates an understanding of social facts/domains in terms of indigenous ideologies. Although we will represent them separately, in ways that may even seem to run counter to each other, these strategies constitute the intellectual and practical base of the sociological enterprise in India. In other words, the discursive core, by constituting objects of sociological inquiry and suggesting ways of approaching them, represents the conditions of possibility of Indian sociology.[11]

(a) It would not be an exaggeration to assert that the discourse of Indian sociology has been a discourse of substantiality, the tendency being to conceive of the social world as existing 'out there'—as an objective material structure of relations—awaiting, so to say, sociological scrutiny. Associated with this is an emphasis on contextualisation—the situating of particular manifestations of social phenomena within a 'larger' social field. In a general sense, the functionalist and behaviourist underpinnings of most sociological studies in India embody this discourse of substantiality. We would even assert that the ways of theorising characteristic of a Marxist

disposition also exemplify this preoccupation with 'substantiality', as evidenced from such concepts as class, mode of production, the forces and directionality of change identified, and so on.[12]

Particularly, this 'substantial' disposition finds expression not only in the assertions for supplanting (*sic*) the 'book view' of Indian society with the 'field view', but also in the refusal to include indological materials within Indian sociology, often on grounds that suggest a dichotomy between text and context, prescription and description;[13] the denunciation of Dumont's proposal for a sociology of India[14] as 'culturology', as 'narrow' and even parochial;[15] the insistence on shifting from 'cultural' to 'structural' issues,[16] and so on. Saberwal's espousal of a 'world historical view' is a more sophisticated instance of this disposition: 'It would seek to analyse observational fields by way not merely of their internal, synchronic inter-relatedness but also of the long term clash and confluence of ideas, institutional forms and patterns of conduct arising in different traditions—seem to be located in their historical time.'[17]

In the context of his analysis, the historical process comes to be defined in substantive terms—the occurrence of events in time and space—and even (implicitly?) suggests a view of history as accumulated past effects, in this instance, the inability of Indian society to develop 'unified, impersonal codes' that could sustain the institutions of a 'megasociety'.[18]

Obviously, the foregoing emphases, though yielding a body of knowledge about Indian society, have gone hand in hand with a positivist approach. This, as Das has noted, 'has been accompanied by a refusal to discuss the epistemological issues about the bases of knowledge and the nature of truth'. True knowledge is seen as imitative/reflective of the external world, as flowing from the experiential encounter between 'reality' and 'conceptions' about it. That is, the external world is seen to have a concreteness regardless of the efforts of human consciousness to constitute it. However, what has been ignored is that such an 'objective reality' with which the anthropologist engages in the field is itself a pre-constructed world, organising and directing the perception of 'relevant' facts.[19]

Nevertheless, we would also be inclined to think that the stress on the substantiality of social phenomena was not meant to constrict sociological analysis to observational fields or to 'facts' encountered therein; it, in fact, subsumed frameworks for interpreting the data gathered, in other words, the theory-laden observation of facts. Srinivas argued that 'micro-studies provide insights while macro-studies yield perspectives' and that 'movement from one to the other is essential'.[20] He went on to constitute the focus on social change in modern India as a core issue of the discipline. Indeed, as part of the attempt to promote a deeper understanding of the microcosm studied (be it the village, caste, family, or even Indian society as a whole), the organising framework of 'social change' has constituted a decisive

intellectual matrix within Indian sociology. It is in this context that we have such concepts as 'sanskritisation-westernisation', 'universalisation-parochialisation', 'the little and the great traditions', 'continuity and change' and the various allusions to the tradition/modernity schema.[21] The decisive character of this intellectual matrix, we would think, consists in its discursive status as an ideological counter to a focus on social reproduction/social domination in Indian 'society'.[22] And this is (in) spite of what Marxists may have to say about 'feudalism', 'capitalism' and/or the sharpening of 'contradictions' in Indian society. It must be pointed out that the trend in the nature of sociological studies, noted by Singh,[23] from studies of social structure to those of social processes in the 1970s and the 1980s does not constitute a rejection of the 'social change' paradigm; rather, the shift, if there has been any, seems to further entrench it.[24]

(b) Closely associated with the foregoing emphases has been a realism, consisting in a concern with revealing comprehensively the social space in which we exist. This finds sustained articulation in Ramakrishna Mukherjee and is worth considering at some length, for it is emblematic of positions dominant within the discipline. According to him, 'the precise, comprehensive, and unequivocal appraisal of the social reality' entails an answer to five 'fundamental' questions, namely, 'what is it?', 'how is it?', 'why is it?', 'what will it be?' and 'what should it be?'.[25] Asserting that sociology is not only concerned with the 'observable' and 'deducible' actions, behaviour, relationships and institutions, Mukherjee recommends that Indian sociology 'cut through the imposed theoretical and methodological constraints of a deductive-positivistic nature and raise the body of knowledge to a higher level of analysis which thus enhances the comprehension of social reality'.[26] This, for him, means the adoption of an 'inductive-inferential' approach:

> In reference to each image (or theory) and exhaustive empirical explorations, a social scientist will have to answer concurrently: 'what is it?' and 'what is it not?'; 'how is it?' and 'how is it not?'; 'why is it?' and 'why is it not?'. Thus, a constant interplay of the positive and negative aspects of the available knowledge, and a dialectical interaction among them, will produce a precise, unequivocal and evermore comprehensive appreciation of social reality.[27]

The approach would also entail answering, on a probability and evaluative basis respectively, the questions 'what will it be?' and 'what should it be?'. In essence, what is being articulated in Mukherjee is a sociology of India 'develop(ing) on (an) inductive and inferential base, and in the course of testing the relative efficiency of different valuations of social reality'.[28]

Considered in these terms, the realism underlying approaches to/of Indian sociology complements the stress on the substantiality of the

social world seen earlier. The central concern is with cataloguing the social environment and thereby revealing the 'truth' of contemporary life in society.[29] The virtues pursued seem to be accuracy and completeness of description. Empirical and/or theoretical formulations are judged on the basis of their capacity to grasp the complex and fluid structure of reality. The practice of social science becomes an encounter between 'reality' and various constructions of it, the former refuting, modifying or validating the latter. Thus, sociological practice comes to reflect positivism's search for ever greater accuracy and inclusiveness resting on the exaltation of the scientific method.[30] We may add that the separation between 'knowledge' and 'reality' underlying the positivist exaltation of method is problematic, as already indicated above. Particularly, it does not permit any possibility of 'communication' between the discursive and non-discursive domains of social life: 'how and in what form (the non-discursive) takes part in (the) conditions of emergence, insertion and functioning' of discourse; and how discourse 'is articulated on practices that are external to it, and which are not themselves of a discursive order'.[31]

(c) Apparently running counter to the emphasis on the substantiality of the social world is the ideationalism of certain approaches to/of Indian sociology. This implies the study of social phenomena 'from the point of view of the cultural meanings associated with their institutionalised manifestations'.[32] The reference (inspiration?) is clearly Louis Dumont, whose reflections on the nature of anthropological explanation has been acclaimed as a 'landmark' in Indian sociology.[33] Stressing the importance of a sociology of values, of explaining social facts through indigenous ideologies, Dumont (and Pocock) asserted:

> For us, social facts are not only things but things and representations at the same time. This means that we cannot abstract directly from behaviour nor evade the ideas of the people that we study. For we look at our data from without (as a natural scientist does) and from within (a position having no equivalent in the natural sciences).[34]

In doing so, Dumont is able to transcend the thought/behaviour dichotomy,[35] and address himself to an analysis of the identity (defined in 'structural' terms) of a phenomenon that may lie behind concrete manifestations.[36] For him, it must be reiterated, the identity of a phenomenon, though socialy constituted in terms of the categories of thought used by the people studied, is fundamentally objective and 'real' in that the categories derive from social experience. The social, for Dumont (as for Durkheim and Mauss before him—the sociological tradition to which Dumont subscribes), describes a reality that is prior to individuals; and it is this reality that creates the attributes and capacities of the people studied.[37]

The ideationalist strategy also incorporates a focus on how people organise their material world, what has been designated as 'ethno-

sociology'. In particular, the concern is with delineating the principles of classification used by the people themselves[38] and with 'relating cultural categories and social behaviour to ideas about the person in Indian society . . . show(ing) how a people's cosmological ideas and social theories are linked to their notions of the person, the self and the individual'.[39] It can be seen that whenever these accounts do not amount to an 'objectivist' celebration of society (the individual/person as constructed by society), they often seem to embody the terms of a 'subjectivist' summary (the individual/person as constructing society);[40] but each implying a set of (usually tacit) anthropological theses—the former constructing the objective relations structuring social practices and the latter privileging the primary experience of the social world.

Thus, perhaps in an extreme sense, the ideationalist strategy as routed through Dumont's structural method and/or the ethno-sociological focus as also the substantialist disposition discussed earlier, replicates one of the fundamental oppositions (within general—'western'—sociology) between, what Bourdieu has termed, 'objectivism' and 'subjectivism':

> From the objectivist point of view, social agents can be 'treated as things', as in the old Durkheimian precept, that is, classified like objects: access to the objective classifications presupposes here a break with naive subjective classifications, which are seen as 'pre-notions' or 'ideologies'. From the subjectivist point of view, . . . agents construct social reality, which is itself understood as the product of the aggregation of these individual acts of construction. For this sort of social marginalism, there is no need to break with primary social experience, for the task of sociology is to give 'an account of accounts'.[41]

In essence, we would think that this opposition is endemic to the discursive core of Indian sociology.[42] Within the terms suggested by our discussion, the underlying logic of the discursive core seems to be to stress the wholly determined character of man and society and to imply a mechanistic conception of 'knowledge' and 'reality' (that the former expresses/imitates the latter).[43] The epistemological standpoint, that 'in reality, agents are both classified and classifiers, but they classify according to (or depending upon) their position within classifications',[44] clearly eludes the discursive core. Now, this has tremendous implications for the ways in which we come to reflect on and/or practise a sociology in/of India. Underlying this position is a form of theoretical knowledge that Bourdieu terms 'praxeological', that which is concerned 'not only with the objective relations constructed by the objectivist form of knowledge, but also with the dialectical relationships between the objective structures and the structured dispositions which they produce and which tend to reproduce them, i.e., the dual process of the internalisation of

externality and the externalisation of internality'.[45] The anthropological thesis underlying this standpoint is clearly 'homo structuralis', a suggestion that we take from de Silva,[46] and not as Dumont would affirm 'homo hierarchicus' (the 'Indian' concept of man Dumont constructs as a foil to 'homo aequalis', the 'western' man),[47] or even Alvares' model of 'homo faber'.[48] In effect, 'homo structuralis' marks a thesis which requires working out in and through both the 'field' and the texts that (have) come to be constructed around it, a task which I hope to accomplish in time. But for the immediate task on hand, and in keeping with the perspective indicated, I am suggesting a pronouncedly anthropological basis for our theoretical inquiries, one that is not intended to uncover continuities and/or changes, not to isolate mechanisms of causality, but to define the specific forms of articulation within a (non)discursive field, *pace* Foucault and Bourdieu.[49]

Consequently then, we may point out, by way of concluding this section, that the discursive core of Indian sociology, although emphasising 'text' (the 'book view' of Indian society) or 'context' (the 'field view'), or both (Dumont's confluence of indology and sociology, or even the so-called 'world historical view' of Saberwal), has however failed to investigate the specific set of anthropological theses underpinning its positions and to explore the conditions of possibility of both 'text' and 'context'—problems that, hopefully, the foregoing account and the description to follow have made apparent.

II

The foregoing discussion leads on directly to the question, much discussed by scholars in India, of the identity of sociology in/of India. We have to delve deeper into the configurations suggested by the discursive core. Two elements seem to be particularly influential.

One of them the overriding urge, within the discursive core, to homogenise the ontological domain of India, to illuminate the general through the study of the particular, or to translate the latter into categories capable of refining the former. This urge finds classic formulation in Dumont:

> In sociological studies the universal can only be attained through the particular characteristics, different in each case, of each type of society. Why should we travel to India if not to try to discover how and in what respects Indian society or civilisation, by its very particularity, represents a form of the universal? In the last analysis, it is by humbly inspecting the most minute particulars that the route to the universal is kept open. If one is prepared to devote all the time necessary to studying all aspects of Indian culture, one has a chance, under certain conditions, of in the end transcending it, and of one day finding in it some truth for one's own use.[50]

What Dumont is articulating here is the time-honoured 'anthropological ambition' to deal with a wide range of human societies in a single, comprehensive frame of reference.[51] It is important to come to terms with this comparative project, for in essence, the sociology in/of India seems to bear the brunt of such a disciplinary/cultural scaffolding.

Following Said,[52] it can be argued that the entire project of a comparative sociology constitutes a means of representing the power of the 'west' over/to the 'non-western' world. As Said claims, 'no production of knowledge in the human sciences can ever ignore or disclaim its author's involvement as a human subject in his own circumstances'.[53] In effect, the task of 'constituting cultural domains in and through the dialectical encounter of universal and particular'[54] becomes a project of power—the 'universal' (read 'west') coming to define the orientation of and to, even constraining the possibilities in and of, the particular (read 'non-west'/India). Indeed the 'comparative, relational linking' of universal and particular cannot be unmediated by standards of interpretation derived from an 'alien' culture—the construction of an 'other' for 'self' constitution and rule. We may note, in this context, the 'ideology of internationalism' that underlies comparative studies. This ideology concretises the internationalist aspirations of the European man which received their supreme formulation in the Enlightenment.[55]

Take, for instance, the recent discussions of the 'person' held to serve as a useful way of introducing 'new' considerations for a sociology of India.[56] The protagonists of this approach display a concern with formulating what they call 'an epistemology for anthropology' which would eschew the 'use (of) other cultures merely as a kind of foil for extending the domain of the rationalising process'. They reaffirm that 'we can understand something of ourselves in terms of other cultures; and we can understand something of others in terms of ourselves'.[57]

If, as the protagonists themselves seem to imply, the other cannot be understood as the other and the ourselves as the ourselves, the practice of a comparative science becomes necessarily an 'alien' act of interpretation—an act not of approximating to the meaning *in* a culture but of founding a meaning *for* a culture. In the specific context of societies like India (indeed, the entire non-western world), where the contact with the west has necessarily meant conquest, colonialism, modernity—relationships pregnant with implications for the overthrow of the 'traditional' order—the comparative project inevitably becomes a project of 'extending the domain of the rationalising process'. To the extent that comparison and conceptual (re-)formulation cannot come to terms with the fundamental irreducibility of cultures and their diversities, even their incommensurability, the practice of a comparative science, whatever its rhetorical appeal, becomes a discourse of power in the sense given above. The homogenising urge within Indian sociology participates in

this project of power and, consequently, remains an undertaking caught in the thraldom of a schizophrenic existence combining calls to indigenisation with dreams of a 'universal' science of society.

Nothing illustrates this better than the quest for relevance with Indian sociology as also the debate for a sociology of India.[58] The sociology in/of India is no more than a reflex of general (western) sociology.[59] It would not be an exaggeration to assert that scholars of the post-colonial world live their conditions of existence through the forms of dominant intellectual discourse in the west; this can often mean that they live their revolt within the frames of reference of the dominant legitimacy, the west. Also, the process of indigenisation[60] as well as the protestations about 'academic colonialism'[61] seem to concretise the striving within the social sciences to become hegemonic disciplines. Perhaps a systematic reflection on the principles governing the production and immanent ordering of discourses within the social sciences will bear this out.

The other particularly influential element is the overwhelming pragmatism that encapsulates the discipline in India.[62] The reference here is not simply to the imbrication of (generally) social science research with the state or to the technology of social engineering and control of scholarship suggested by this overlap;[63] it is also to the pragmatism as a perfectly modern cosmogony that places 'science' and efficacy for the purpose in hand—that truth is what 'works' (which of course does not mean that 'anything goes')—at the pivot of methodological strategy.[64] Indeed, the relativist implications of such a pragmatist disposition seems to fold into an instrumentalist view of political ideology,[65] and, consequently, unable to disclose the subtle workings of power (even state power) underwriting human practices. In other words, pragmatism implies a specific configuration linking the practice of sociology (more generally, the social sciences) to the constitution of political power. Take, for instance, the thematisation of the question of social change within Indian sociology, briefly considered in the first part of this paper. Clearly the scholars involved were not simply describing an independently occurring series of changes. Indeed we could argue that they helped constitute the forms of state power that emerged from those changes. While a precise handling of this linkage must await a detailed consideration of the materials generated within Indian sociology and the trajectory of India's political development, it is possible to clarify some of the levels at which the pragmatism manifests itself.

The first and most fundamental level is the body of knowledge that has been generated about the various aspects of Indian society and culture.[66] If this body of work cannot be conceived outside the framework disclosed by the discursive core, then, the latter can be viewed as a permanent, seemingly central, matrix of sociological enquiry, and serving as the source of epistemic authority. In particular, the discursive core seems to provide the framework of a pragmatic

epistemology, apparently adjudicating between contending claims to truth, and yet hegemonic in its exaltation of science, of method and of the professional ideal.

Mapping this epistemology, we can broadly locate it in the context of the various specialisations in Indian sociology. Discussions generally tend to underestimate the significance of this development. While a preoccupation with, say, the institutional and ideological complex of caste and village may have meant a focus on what was most distinctive about Indian society (indeed, to the colonising eye), clearly, the development of the discipline seems to have proceeded along lines that suggest both its diversification and specialisation. This development, it seems to us, is particularly significant since it has kept pace with, and paced by, the growth and development of the profession of sociologists in India.[67] Indeed, it would be interesting to study the process, suggesting thereby the constitution of the knowledge base of a professional group in the context of the opportunities thrown up by the welfare state.

Another related level at which the pragmatism of Indian sociology comes through is the authority that continues to be lent to sociology itself—as a practical aid to social policy. Not only is the sociologist called upon to assist in the task of 'nation-building' and the promotion of a 'scientific ethos', but the patterns of practice endorsed imply a clear connection between sociological research and policy-making. Research is not just seen as a means of giving effect to already formulated objectives; it must also shape the ends of policy making. Likewise, calls for 'interdisciplinary dialogue and collaboration' and for 'recollect(ing) the umpteen human or social disciplines into a human science' have been made—the effort being directed toward re-establishing the policy credentials of the social sciences and fostering the instances of our contemporary modernity.[68]

III

Perhaps we are now in a position to see the issues that bear on the sociological enterprise in India in an entirely new light. We have stressed the discursive core that sustains the practice of sociology in India and noted its urge to homogenise and pragmatise the ontological domain of India. In particular, we would stress the schizophrenia to which Indian sociology seems to be condemned, an identity that alternates between mild protestations about 'swaraj' and indigenisation and the grand ambitions of participating in the discourse of the universal and the particular.

It is obvious that the discursive core valorises the sociology in/of India by placing it beyond the reach of ideological/cultural critique. There is hardly any attempt at posing the central issue of the ontological status of sociology, in particular, to formulate 'sociology' as a problem in the history of ideas.[69] Any serious attempt at engaging

with the possibility of doing a sociology in/of India must necessarily come to terms with this issue.

Sociology, far from being a generalising, comparative science of society, has been bound up with the 'project of modernity' conceived by the west and projected as the process for all mankind.[70] As bound up with the 'project of modernity', sociology remains, necessarily, an 'alien' undertaking in India, irrespective of what scholars may have to say about its distinctive or imitative character.[71] The practice of sociology in India (or in any non-western context) is bound to be dialogical in the sense that within it the ideological imperatives of at least two consciousnesses—the western and the Indian—intersect. It is primarily the contours of this intersection that are problematic, as our description of Indian sociology as schizophrenic has sought to reveal. Obviously, and in a fundamental sense, the schizophrenia (re)inscribes the dominance of the west.

Our suggestion that the ontological status of sociology must be posed as a core issue, as also the imperative to study the entire western tradition, may thus seem contradictory, even counter-productive. But this seems to be the only way of situating ourselves in relation to questions of sociology.[72] Far from Indian society being the object of study, we would define a focus for a sociology in/of India that would attempt to 'narrativise' (as distinct from mere historical study)[73] the development of sociological thought in India; and, to the extent that this has been 'co-temporaneous with her contact with the west which . . . also meant conquest',[74] to offer a parallel narrative about the west.

The discursive deviation envisaged here eschews a search for a 'method' which will be superior to others in objectivity and comprehensiveness. Rather, the attempt will be to forge cultural frames which germinate in the political-intellectual conflicts of the present, that is, the contemporary manifestations of our modernity and its interfaces, its discontents,[75] as well as, and this is perhaps more important, transcending the 'civilisational' problematic of, say, Dumont for the 'praxeological' framework *a la* Bourdieu/Foucault. In keeping with this focus, we would define as a basic problem for a sociology in/of India the means by which systems of domination and/or subjectification persist and reproduce themselves within India's diverse social terrain.[76] Surely there is more to understanding societies than specifying the mechanisms, manifestations and implications of change or merely studying social movements!

Paradoxically, we have been talking of a problematic for a sociology in/of India that can proceed only by engaging with (negating?) the conditions of its possibility (that is, the discursive core and the configurations suggested therein). It is by seeking to become 'de-disciplinary', rather than by being 'inter-disciplinary' that we can hope to inaugurate discourses which hold out the promise of bridging theory and practice, text and context. But how would the archetypes of

the sociological establishment—those soaked in the logic of the discursive core—react to such discursive deviations?[77]

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2. See P.C. Joshi, 'Reflections on Social Science Research in India' in P.C. Joshi and H. Rao (ed.), *Reflections on Economic Development and Social Change*, Allied, New Delhi, 1979, pp. 429–50. Also, J.P.S. Uberoi, 'Science and Swaraj', *Contributions to Indian Sociology* (N.S.) 2, 1968, pp. 119–23.
3. See M.N. Srinivas and M.N. Panini, 'The Development of Sociology and Social Anthropology in India,' *Sociological Bulletin*, 22(2), 1973, pp. 179–215.
4. See Y. Singh, *Indian Sociology: Social Conditioning and Emerging Concerns*, Vistaar Publications, New Delhi, 1986.
5. See R. Mukherjee, *Sociology of Indian Sociology*, Allied, New Delhi, 1979.
6. See I.P. Desai, 'The Concept of Desired Type of Society and the Problems of Social Change', *Sociological Bulletin*, 28(1&2), 1979, pp. 1–8.
7. See A.R. Desai, 'Relevance of the Marxist Approach to the Study of Indian Society', *Sociological Bulletin*, 30(1), 1981, pp. 1–20.
8. See M.S. Gore, 'Social Policy and the Sociologist', *Sociological Bulletin*, 32(1), 1983, pp. 1–13.
9. See K.R. Rao, *Religion, Society and State*, ICSSR, New Delhi, 1985.
10. See S. Saberwal, 'Uncertain Transplants: Anthropology and Sociology in India', *Ethnos*, 47(1 & 2), 1982, p. 36.
11. Issues connected with the social determination of the discursive core have not been handled here. In fact, the model of the sociology of knowledge sustained here eschews the prevailing tendency to reduce knowledge to social conditions. This tendency is clearly manifested in Y. Singh, op. cit., in the context of his reductionist reading of the developments within the Indian sociology of the 1970s and 1980s. Rather, 'knowledge' is viewed as having a specific weight of its own—as practice—and, therefore, amounts to a rejection of the dichotomy between consciousness/knowledge and reality/structure, the former as merely expressing/reflecting the latter. Surely, the concept of 'conditioning' need not just imply social determination, as Singh seems to be assuming; it also signifies production, discursive production in relation to and/or in conjunction with non-discursive (that is, institutions, political events, economic practices and processes) co-ordinates (see n. 31 below and the relevant portion in the text). The inspiration here is clearly M. Foucault, in particular the mode of analysis codified in his *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, Tavistock Publications, London, 1972. However, within the confines of this paper, we can only delineate some of the issues that bear on such a perspective.
12. For an overview of this disposition to define social phenomena in 'substantial' terms, see the essays reproduced in T.K. Oommen and P.N. Mukherjee (eds.), *Indian Sociology: Reflections and Introspections*, Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1986. See also R. Mukherjee, op. cit.
13. See, for instance, M.N. Srinivas, 'Village Studies and their Significance', in his *Caste in Modern India and Other Essays*, Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1962, pp. 12–35; F.G. Bailey, 'Two Villages in Orissa (India)' in M. Gluckman (ed.), *Closed Systems and Open Minds*, Aldine, London, 1964, pp. 52–82; T.K. Oommen, 'Sociology in India: A Plea for Contextualisation', *Sociological Bulletin*, 32(2), 1983, pp. 11–36.
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15. See, for instance, F.G. Bailey, 'For a Sociology of India?' *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, 3, 1959, pp. 88–101; Y. Atal, 'Sociology in the Indian Campus' in G.R. Gupta (ed.), *Contemporary India: Some Sociological Perspectives (Main Currents in Indian Sociology–I)*, Vikas, New Delhi, 1976, pp. 117–31.

16. See Y. Singh, 'Role of Social Sciences in India: A Sociology of Knowledge', *Sociological Bulletin*, 22(1), 1973, pp. 14–28; R. Mukherjee, 'The Sociologist and the Social Reality', *Sociological Bulletin*, 23(2), 1974, pp. 169–92; P.C. Joshi, op. cit.
17. S. Saberwal, *India: The Roots of Crises*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1986, p. 2.
18. Ibid., pp. 10–35. Such a purely instrumental understanding of history also comes across, in most gross terms, in T.K. Oommen's writing:

    > To the extent the sociologist's concern to understand the past is tempered by his interest to comprehend the present, there is a critical slice in history in which he ought to be interested, not more and not less. Admittedly, this critical slice of relevant history would vary depending upon the problem under investigation. . . That is, the options here are not between . . . history or sociology, as is usually made out to be, but *how much* . . . history as the case may be, given the prime concern of the sociologist, namely, understanding and explaining the present. (Op. cit., reprinted in Oommen and Mukherji, op. cit., p. 253.)

    In a similar vein, M.N. Srinivas' claim that the studies of the 1950s and the 1960s (under the impact of British social anthropology and American cultural anthropology) 'enhanced our understanding of historical processes' suggests the endorsement of an instrumental view of history ('Development of Sociology in India: An Overview', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 22(4), 1987, p. 137).
19. See V. Das, *Structure and Cognition*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1982, second edition, pp. 1–2.
20. M.N. Srinivas, *Social Change in Modern India*, Orient Longman, Bombay, 1972, p. 2.
21. See R. Mukherjee, *Sociology of.*., op. cit. and Y. Singh, *Indian Sociology.* ., op. cit. for an overview.
22. In asserting thus, I am seeking to dissociate myself from a conception of 'society' as 'founding totality of its partial processes'; alternatively, the attempt is to confront the 'openness of the social as the constitutive ground (. . .) of the existing'. See E. Laclau and C. Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Stragety: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*, Verso, London, 1985, pp. 95, 138–9, passim.
23. Y. Singh, *Indian Sociology*. . ., op. cit.
24. That there are significant continuities between studies of 'social structure' and those of 'social processes' is very evident from Singh's analysis. However, he tends to gloss over them in his preoccupation with outlining the various approaches to the study of Indian society. Indeed, the defining problematic in studies of social movements remains 'social change'. See P.N. Mukherji, 'Disciplined Eclecticism', *Seminar*, No. 254, 1980, pp. 38–43; also, T.K. Oommen, 'Social Movements', in ICSSR, *Survey of Research in Sociology and Social Anthropology 1969–79*, Vol 2, Satvahan Publications, New Delhi, 1985. Even those employing Marxist frames have persisted with the totalising 'social change' paradigm. See A.R. Desai, op. cit.
25. See R. Mukherjee, *Sociology of.*., op. cit., pp. 1–5.
26. Ibid., pp. 138–9.
27. R. Mukherjee, 'The Sociologist. ., op. cit., reprinted in Oommen and Mukherji, op. cit., p. 90.
28. See the appraisal of I.P. Desai's contribution to Indian sociology by R. Mukherjee, 'I.P. Desai and Sociology of India', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 21–(4), 1986, p. 166. The terms of the appraisal are very suggestive.
29. In other words, the 'truth' is what corresponds with the real. We shall see later that this is not the only standard of 'truth' dominating the discourse of Indian sociology. A pragmatic view of 'truth'—the truth is what 'works'—also characterises the discipline.
30. These dispositions clearly represent the naturalised ethos and disciplinary concentration of Indian sociology. The 'reflections and introspections' reproduced in Oommen and Mukherji, op. cit., as also the autobiographical probings of I.P. Desai, 'Craft of Sociology: An Autobiographical Perspective', in his *The Craft of Sociology and Other Essays*, Ajanta Publications, Delhi, 1981, pp. 18–64, are suggestive of this ethos. Likewise, the underlying empiricist dogma in the postulation of research priorities reflects the search for certainty and comprehensiveness in the appraisal of social phenomena.
31. M. Foucault, op. cit., pp. 163–4. See also n. 11 above.
32. V. Das, op. cit., p. 1.

33. Ibid., p. 3.
34. L. Dumont and D.F. Pocock, 'For a Sociology of India: A Rejoinder to Dr Bailey', *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, 4, 1960, p. 84.
35. It may be noted that such a dichotomy underlies an emphasis on 'substantiality' seen above. The dichotomy, with its focus on observable regularities, consequently formulates concepts as replications of observed reality. See also V. Das, op. cit., pp. 2–3.
36. See L. Dumont, *Homo Hierarchicus*, Paladin, London, 1972, pp. 73–80.
37. Ibid., pp. 38–42 on the 'sociological apperception'.
38. See V. Das, op. cit., p. 4.
39. D. Maybury-Lewis, 'Foreword' in A. Ostor, L. Fruzzetti and S. Barnett (eds.), *Concepts of Person*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1983, p. viii.
40. For these extremes, see A. Ostor et al. (eds.), ibid. The essays contained in this volume reproduce these extremes in good measure. Also, it is important to reiterate that the ideationalist strategy of studying social phenomena from 'within' and 'without' cannot avoid what A.K. Saran has termed 'the positivistic hubris—the insistence on seeing the human social reality from both the symbolic and the non-symbolic, the internal and the external points of view' ('Review of Contributions to Indian Sociology, 4', *The Eastern Anthropologist*, 15(1), 1962, p. 68).
41. P. Bourdieu, 'What Makes a Social Class? On the Theoretical and Practical Existence of Groups', *Berkeley Journal of Sociology: A Critical Review*, 32, 1987, pp. 1–2.
42. A more detailed consideration of the materials generated within Indian sociology is necessary to consider the terms of this opposition. It would also be illuminating to see the problematic of order, that is to say, a specific configuration of knowledge and power, that underlies this discursive core. I make suggestions towards this end in section II of this paper.
43. Dumont's insistence that explanatory models need not be, and cannot be limited to, a replication of observed reality seems to transcend such a mechanistic conception. But this is clearly not sufficient. It is imperative to consider the problems that follow from a recognition that the explanatory models have as their object entities which are both made of and by knowing subjects.
44. P. Bourdieu, op. cit., p. 2.
45. P. Bourdieu, 'The Three Forms of Theoretical Knowledge', *Social Science Information*, 12(1), 1973, p. 53. Bourdieu has insightfully worked out this form of theoretical knowledge in his *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1977.
46. See W.R. de Silva, *From Rta to Dharma*, Pragati Prakashan, Kanara, 1985, p. 39. I have disagreements with how and what de Silva works through the formulation 'homo structuralis', which, in the context of his analysis, is equated with Dumont's concept of 'homo hierarchicus', even if in criticism (pp. 39–67). But then de Silva may still claim ambivalence!
47. See L. Dumont, *Homo.*, op. cit., and *From Mandeville to Marx*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1977.
48. See C.A. Alvares, *Homo Faber: Technology and Culture in India, China and the West 1500–1972*, Allied, New Delhi, 1979, Ch. 1.
49. We may here recall the coment made in n. 22 above.
50. L. Dumont, *Homo.*, op. cit., p. 38.
51. Consider, for instance, this exchange: L. Dumont responding to T.N. Madan's, op. cit., statement that Indian scholars have merely imitated the westerner's in the matter of sociology, observes:

> Does (it) mean that Indian scholars could have made an original contribution within the framework of ('western') sociology and failed to do so—which may be true—or does (it) mean that they should have built up a sociology of their own, basically different from ('western') sociology—in which case he would be entirely wrong? A Hindu sociology is a contradiction in terms. . . (cited in T.N. Madan, 'For a Sociology of India: Some Clarifications', *Contributions to Indian Sociology* (N.S), 1, 1967, p. 92.

Characteristically, clarifying his statement, Madan notes:

> The fault of the Indian sociologist has not been that he has not built a Hindu sociology, but that he has not made an original contribution to the development and refinement of sociological concepts. . There cannot be many sociologies, but sociological understanding must take account of social specificity. (Ibid.)

Likewise, D. Narain, in his observations on the debate for a sociology of India, notes:

> If Dumont and Pocock are for comparison and they repeatedly assert they are, then one must agree with Bailey that Indian society, granting all its uniqueness, must still be seen in the context of the general principles of sociology. Concentration on the unique, inevitably tending to exclude, or at least reduce comparison and generalisation, will severely limit knowledge and understanding. ('For a Sociology of India: Some Observations', *Contributions to Indian Sociology* (N.S), 5, 1971, p. 133).

See also Maybury-Lewis, op. cit., pp. 8–9.

52. See E.W. Said, *Orientalism*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1985.
53. Ibid., p. 10.
54. A. Ostor *et al.*, op. cit., p. 224.
55. See R. Flower (ed.), *A Dictionary of Modern Critical Terms*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, p. 33.
56. See A. Ostor *et al.*, op. cit.
57. Ibid., p. 231. Incidentally, the authors are here reaffirming Dumont's formulation of the anthropological project (pp. 231–2).
58. See Y. Singh, *Indian Sociology. .*, op. cit.
59. Recall the positions articulated in n. 51 above by way of illustration.
60. Reviewed in F.H. Gareau, 'The Third Revolt against First World Social Science', *International Journal of Comparative Sociology*, 27 (3–4), 1986, pp. 172–89.
61. See *Seminar*, no. 112, 1968—issue devoted to discussing 'Academic Colonialism'.
62. It is important to see that the homogenising urge need not necessarily articulate into the comparative project; it can also be reflected in, even overlap with, the pragmatist underpinnings of Indian sociology.
63. For contrasting viewpoints, see A.K. Saran, 'India' in J.S. Roucek (ed.), *Contemporary Sociology*, Peter Owen, London, 1958, pp. 1013–34, and P.C. Joshi, op. cit.
64. Surely there is more than a suggestion of complicity in the following observation:

> An emphasis on change was inevitable in post-independent India. So many things were happening and so fast. And the government had embarked on planned development, and was passing legislation at breakneck speed, was understandably eager to tell everybody that a new order was being ushered in. This appealed to the patriotism of the elite including sociologists and anthropologists. And government funds were available for carrying out research on problems of change and development. (Srinivas and Panini, op. cit., p. 41).

See also the various presidential addresses of the Indian Sociological Society (Y. Singh, *Indian Sociology. .*, op. cit., has an overview; some of these addresses have been reproduced in Oommen and Mukherji, op. cit.). The 'purpose' and focus of sociological research is invariably defined in the context of social policy.

65. See D.P. Dimitrakos, 'Gramsci and the Contemporary Debate on Marxism', *Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, 16(4), 1986, pp. 415–88, esp. 470–1, although I am not favourably disposed to his presentation of the Gramscian scheme.
66. See the body of work reviewed in the Survey Reports of the ICSSR (*Survey of Research in Sociology and Social Anthropology*, Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1974; the developments from 1969 to 1979, and also covering some new fields of study, has been surveyed in *Survey of Research In Sociology and Social Anthropology*, 1969–79, Satavahan Publications, New Delhi, 1985) and systematically discussed in R. Mukherjee, *Sociology of . .*, op. cit., K.R. Rao, op. cit., and Y. Singh, *Indian Sociology . .*, op. cit.
67. See Srinivas and Panini, op. cit; M.S.A. Rao, 'Sociology in the 1980s', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 19(4), 1980, pp. 1810–5; S. Saberwal, 'Uncertain Transplants. .', op. cit.
68. A sampling of this pragmatism can be had from Oommen and Mukherji, op. cit. We may note in this context that A. Giddens, *Social Theory and Modern Sociology*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1987, pp. 44–8, sees the possibility of a deepening involvement of sociology with the formation of practical social policies or reforms. In essence, this form of pragmatism is endemic to sociology itself. The implications of this for the ordering of scholarly discourses can only be imagined. The marginalisation of the viewpoint represented in, say, A.K. Saran ('India', op. cit.,

and 'Review of . .', op. cit., pp. 53–68), we would think, testifies to the power connotations of this pragmatism.

69. It is precisely this issue that Saberwal's formulation, indicated at the outset of this essay, seems to avoid. An assessment of a 'transplant' cannot be separated from an analysis of its generative sources and principles.
70. A. Giddens, op. cit., pp. 15–6. See also K. Kumar, *Prophecy and Progress*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1978, pp. 13–68. We may note in passing that Marxism (at least as doctrine) cannot be located outside this project of modernity.
71. At the specific moment of the introduction of sociology in India, it was already constituted in the west. Consequently, sociology offered, and continues to offer, an already constituted field for the interpretation of social domains.
72. Of course, this is not to ignore the significance of the sort of questioning and analysis offered in part I of this paper.
73. I am collapsing a whole range of complexities in this one statement. For an inkling of the issues involved, see Hans Kellner, 'Narrativity in History: Post-Structuralism and Since', *History and Theory*, Beiheft 26, 1987, pp. 1–29.
74. A.K. Saran, 'India', op. cit., p. 1013.
75. See, for instance, A. Nandy, 'Cultural Frames for Social Transformation: A Credo', *Alternatives*, 12, 1987, pp. 113–23; J.P.S. Uberoi, *Science and Culture*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1978; or even T.N. Madan, *Culture and Development*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1983. G.C. Spivak, *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics*, Methuen, New York, 1987, is also illustrative. I am presently engaged in encountering the terrain these discourses inhabit.
76. If the reader is sensitised to my celebratory reception of Foucault or Bourdieu or, more generally, of the entire range of post-structuralist theorising, he/she is forewarned. I may well be living my revolt within the frame of reference of the dominant legitimacy! And yet, it seems to me that the ongoing critique of the west's most characteristic discourses, routed either through western or non-western critics, seems to be the point at which Western Rationalism preserves the boundaries of sense for itself. I have, perhaps perfunctorily, made indications in this direction with reference to Martin Heidegger (see my 'The Gnostic Vision: Incursions into the Heideggerian Field—A Combative Note', mimeographed). And, Foucault et al. , even Bourdieu, cannot be far behind. In Gandhi, and perhaps the Bhakti vision/movement, one could discover possibilities incommensurable with Western Rationalism. Until then, I remain compicit, schizophrenic.
77. To Prof. T.N. Madan, Seemanthini Niranjana, Willie de Silva and Valerian Rodrigues, among many others, I am grateful for the encouragement and support. I have hardly had the opportunity to work through their comments and suggestions in their entirety. And that I defer for a more elaborate reading of the discourse(s) of Indian sociology.