

S e m i n a r o n

Social Sciences and Social Realities:

Role of the Social Sciences in Contemporary India

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## SOCIAL SCIENCES AND SOCIAL REALITIES

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Although I am going to touch upon most of the themes which are listed for discussion in the Seminar, I would like to concentrate my attention on the pursuit and the practice of theory building in Sociology and the problems attendant on it as well as future prospects. All the themes are inter-connected and important and therefore, there is bound to be some amount of overlapping in one's discussion.

### 1. The Role of Social Sciences in Sociology:

There is no denying that all knowledge including scientific is derived in society. According to sociology of knowledge categories of thought and analysis are significantly related to social structure. Moreover, in the case of social science in particular, there the aim is to understand the nature of society, its processes, structure, stability and change it becomes all the more important that pursuit of social science will certainly affect not only the understanding of social reality but it will also help alter it at least to a certain extent. In a way, it can be said that the pursuit of social science is not a mere academic exercise but it also involves social diagnosis, social prescription, and even social engineering. It would be difficult to draw a very sharp line between the various aims and purposes of social science. Avowedly the aim of social science is claimed to be understanding and analysis of society. However, it is but natural that such analysis is sought to be used not only to understand society but to manipulate it, control it and also to change it in the desired direction. It is not for nothing that social sciences are called upon to give advice and consultation in respect of certain pressing problems, e.g. the entire study of American Soldier emerged out of this felt necessity on the part of the American nation to make use of the expertise of some sociologists like Stouffer, Marton, Lazarsfeld,. It is indeed very well known, that economists like Keynes, Gadgil, Arthur Lewis have been requested to provide guide-lines in respect of various economic problems confronting their respective countries. However, sociologists and social-anthropologists have also been called upon to provide guide-lines which have policy implication, e.g. Gunnar Myrdal, Margaret Mead, Ruth Benedict, S.C.Dube etc.

One of the major characteristics of developing societies is the intense consciousness about the various kinds of deficiencies such as economic, political, industrial, technological and cultural which have been plaguing them. It could be said that the developing societies, such as India, are confronted simultaneously with problems of economic development and prosperity as well as various kinds of technology, industrial, and scientific problems, as also the problems of national integration in the sense of involving its population in the task of nation-building and national development. Economics, social and scientific revolutions have to

be worked out simultaneously in order to make a meaningful impact on the existing state of affairs. It is but natural that a great deal of premium is put on utilisation of existing social science knowledge for the solution of pressing problems. Of course it must be mentioned at the outset that the amount of such knowledge which is readily available is fairly meagre and that is why efforts are made by various developing societies including India to promote social science research. It could be stated that in the Indian case its constitution provides a set of goals which are cherished by the Indian people. On the other hand one knows only too well that a statement of goals does not mean that one is anywhere near the attainment of such goals. In fact, one wants to know as to how and why these goals which have been accepted in the Indian context such as democracy, equality, economic prosperity, secularism, rationality, scientific temper, etc. are not being realised. Therefore, it is in the context of the cherished and accepted goals that social scientist can raise various questions and seek to answer them in terms of their theoretical and methodological sophistication. It is not enough to have a feel of the problems, but it is necessary to formulate the problems in theoretically meaningful terms and evolve appropriate methodology. Otherwise perceptive journalists can have intuitive judgement about the nature of social problems and can also offer suggestions towards solution. But what is needed is a greater degree of certainty and validity of both, analysis and understanding as well as the plausible solutions. There is no denying that sociological Research should have social relevance as well as theoretical and methodological rigour.

## 2. The role of social science research in National Development:

There are two types of problems with which India has to deal, viz. nation-building and national-development. It has been rightly observed that countries like India even though they have been old societies are new nations. The concept of nation is fairly recent in India's case and even now it is difficult to say that the process of nation-building is anywhere near completion. Of course, in all societies, the process of nation-building goes on continuously in response to the various changes. But in the case of India, it is difficult to carry on with desired changes for want of nation-building. All kinds of linguistic and regional rivalries are a case in point of turmoil and problems of nation-building in India. It is observed so many times that India needs an external threat to galvanise the people into a nation. Apart from the fact that India is such a large country, there is also the fact that there are diverse elements in the population with racial and ethnic differences, cultural differences, social structural differences, religious differences, which have posed special problems for the integration of the various elements. In fact, the problem of tiers of loyalties, such as family and kinship, caste, religion, language, locality, subregion, region, state, provide a meaningful challenge to the analysis of Indian society. Everyone knows that there is a concentric circle of group loyalties, but the question is as to how to ensure that a minimum sense of national loyalty is engendered in the minds of the people, so that other loyalties can be kept in check and would not be allowed to conflict with national loyalty. This in itself provides important challenge and opportunity to social scientists in India. Then as regards national development, as mentioned earlier, there is not only the problem of economic development and prosperity, but also

the problem of distributive justice. Attitudes to work and wealth as well as what are the motivations to ensure sustained work and involvement in the programmes of reconstruction provide a very important area of enquiry. To what extent the existing notions of hierarchy and the institution of stratification militate against full utilisation of human intelligence and energy is also another important area for investigation. Some authors have pointed out that the Indian man is essentially a believer in hierarchy. If so, what are the chances, of his acceptance of equality, as a value and a norm of social interaction. It is also said that the concept of humanism in India tends to be very particularistic. Is it really so, what can be done to change it. At the level of practical policy various experiments have been designed for inter-regional and inter-state exchanges of population. Of course, migration in search of livelihood and prosperity has always promoted inter-regional and inter-state experience in living and interaction. Education is promoted to ensure rationality and the preparation of its trainees for absorption in the occupational system. To what extent does education fulfill these two aims needs also to be properly gone into since education is conceived of as an instrument of modernization. To what extent does the traditional structure as exemplified by family kinship and caste militate against the inculcation of new values is also another important problem to be studied from the point of view of national development. Then again, various measures including legislation adopted to bring about change and with what success is also a matter of vital concern for national development. In fact, the entire analysis of patterns of stability and change in India would promote a better understanding of the problems of national-development.

3 and 6. Claims of pure vs. applied research and whether one of the major roles of social sciences is to create the nation wide data which should go beyond the academic community in respect of basic social and national issues.

The purpose of all knowledge ultimately is its utilisation. Knowledge is not to be looked upon as an intellectual frill but it should be capable of being applied whenever found necessary. If one regards research as an enquiry into the truth, whether one pursues pure theoretical problem or an applied problem is irrelevant in the sense that one would employ sophisticated theoretical frame-work and methodological procedure at one's command to arrive at the truth. When one engages oneself in research, one wants to increase correspondence between ideas, concepts and theories and the facts. However, as one knows all facts are propositional in the sense that they talk about the relationship between phenomena. It this is so, whether one engages in pure research or applied research should not make much difference. Moreover, if knowledge is to be utilised, efforts must be made to so design the research that the results of such research can be put to some practical view. Of course, it is said and very correctly so, that it would be very difficult to suggest very concrete solutions to an existing problem since there are many lacunae in our knowledge of human affairs. While precise solutions may not be available and feasible certain hints would be provided

which may have practical implications. As mentioned earlier, the work of certain sociologists and anthropologists was put to good use for understanding the problems and even to derive certain solutions from such analysis for solving practical problems. It should be mentioned here that Dr. Dube's work on 'India's changing villages' has been also found to be useful for understanding practical problems in the field of community development. Damle also made a study of 'Auxiliary Nurse Midwife' with a view to understand the problems of institutionalised change in the field of public health and medicine. Damle's study was conducted with a view to provide basis for meaningful discussion for the problems of Auxiliary Nurse Midwife in the south-east Asia region and to suggest certain remedies in the light of the discussions that took place the study was found to provide certain hints for the solution of the problem. As a matter of fact even from studies which are not intended for direct use one could derive great amount of implied hints and suggestions for the resolution of the various problems. To cite an example one could mention the study of 'Immigrants and Neighbourhoods in Bombay'.

In a poor country like India it would be very difficult to insist on pure research only. Even in prosperous countries substantially large funds are available for applied research in comparison to those available for pure research. Sometimes it happens that research designed and conducted for use never sees the light of the day and languishes in pigeon-holes. Sometimes information based on research is deliberately withheld if it does not validate the official line and decision. Research is search for truth and as such it should be made available to all and sundry who are likely to benefit from it. If a study is made of the educational system, its results should be made available to all the interested parties and components such as Government, Teachers, taught, parents and the overall citizens. In fact, deliberate efforts should be made to publish summaries of research findings, for the consumption of the wide public. Two types of reports should be prepared one for the professional community and the other for the lay public. In so many cases timely publication and availability of research findings can help alleviate the existing problems. Whatever social and national issues are bothering the people, effort should be made to carry out research on these problems and also to ensure availability of such findings without too much of delay.

4. Broad review of the development of social sciences  
(Especially research in social sciences) in India: its  
strength and weaknesses: the principal lines on which  
development should take place in the next 5-10 years.

I do not intend to enter into a full-scale discussion of the development of social sciences in India, its strength and weaknesses because many worthy minds have already done it. However, I would only like to draw attention to a few points while social science research in India has not suffered for want of intellectual and theoretical sophistication one can say that in the quest for intellectual and theoretical sophistication substantive problems seem to have been lost sight of.



Partly, this is a consequence of taking up such problems for research which have been fashionable in western societies. In order to impress upon the reference group namely the international scholarly community, highly theoretical and sophisticated problems have been studied and complicated methodology and techniques have also been utilised. However, important issues of national concern have not found favour with such researchers. Then again, there is opposite tendency displayed of ad-hoc research which tends to be barren both intellectually and from the point of view of its utility. Hardly any systematic effort has been made to evolve a programme of research which will build brick by brick and provide meaningful analysis on a nationwide scale. Here, methodological prejudices should also be mentioned as inhibiting factor in undertaking this type of research. Macro studies and methodological rigour seems to be the most important needs of research during the coming years. It looks as if the days of a loner have to come to an end and greater cooperation between various scholars is necessary. It would be necessary and useful to ensure collaborative and cooperative research undertakings on a nation-wide scale. This can be done as a result of ensuring the common frame-work, both theoretical and methodological amongst scholars. Rigorous training in theory and methodology can ensure proper development of theory as well as its continuous verification and validation. Then alone, the point that theory is to be tested and used rather than to be regarded as an ornament will go home.

##### 5. Theory building in Sociology:

Whitehead has very rightly observed that 'The Secret of progress is the speculative interest in abstract schemes of morphology.'<sup>1</sup>

He further says that the task of cosmology is two fold. It restrains the aberrations of the mere undisciplined imagination. Moreover, it emphasises those factors in experience which are stable. He also discusses the problem of the confrontation between speculative reason and experience. However, he further points out that there can be no experience without a system of ideas and as such the fact of experience is premeated with thought. On the other hand speculative reason has to be chained by the rigours of methodology and logical procedure. Therefore, there is no denying the need for a properly developed theory in sociology in so far as it claims to be an analytical endeavour. A theory is a system of interrelated definitions and hypotheses. A frame of reference is a set of more or less inter-related definitions. To these two Zetterberg adds<sup>2</sup> descriptive study as the enterprise of describing some aspect of the world, which leads one to develop theories.

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1 Alfred North Whitehead. The Function of Reason. pp.73.  
Beacon Press Boston: June 1959.

2 Zetterberg Hans L. On Theory and Verification in Sociology. Almqvist and Wiksell. Stockholm. The Tressler Press. New York 27, NY.1954.

Then again there is a verificational study which is an attempt to investigate whether a theory is probably or improbably. Thus, on the one hand there is theory and on the other is description and the two are inter-related or rather the next step of description is some attempt at theorizing. Merton<sup>3</sup> defines sociological theory as logically interconnected conceptions and emphasizes his concern for conceptions which are limited and modest in scope rather than grandiose and all embracing. Merton emphasises the importance of middle-range theories. Zetterberg also distinguishes between inclusive and miniature theories and further observes that inclusive theories flourish where miniature theories are found wanting. Discussing the problems attendant on general theories, Merton observes that "sociological theory consists of general orientations toward data suggesting types of variables which need some how to be taken into account, rather than clear verifiable statements of relationships between specified variables."<sup>4</sup> There can be hardly any denying the necessity and importance of theoretical approach.

Merton elaborates upon the theoretic functions of research and maintains that one has to emphasize the creative role of expressive theory as well as that of observation too. According to him, research plays an active role and performs four major functions, which help shape the development of theory. Empirical research initiates, it reformulates, it deflects and it clarifies theory. Merton's observations about the serendipity pattern are too well-known to need any elaboration. He further states that through research need is felt for the recasting of theory. Then again refocussing the theoretical interest is also necessitated by research in the sense that new methods of empirical research exert pressure for new foci of theoretic interest such as the one caused by small group research and the reassertion of the importance and significance of primary groups even in complex societies. Moreover, empirical research necessitates clarification and extension of concepts, e.g. Shils has tried to both clarify and extend the concept of charisma.<sup>5</sup>

#### Theory building in sociology in India.

It is observed that in India so far theory building has not been attempted on any worth-while scale on the basis of our own struggle to grapple with our own environment. It is also expected that one would suggest remedies for such weakness if it exists. In this context reference must be made to the protracted controversy between the exponents of two different views. One school of thought firmly believes that the nature of Indian society being what it is and with all its special cultural values, beliefs, etc., and the aims and goals of existence as accepted or rather professed by the Hindus and the concept

3 Robert K. Merton. Social Theory and Social Structure. 1957. The Free Press. Glencoe, Illinois.

4 Ibid. p.9.

5 Edward Shils. "Charisma, Order and Status": American Sociological Review, Vol.30, No.2, 1965.

of Dharma as well as the acceptance of the principle of re-birth and Karma, concepts and formulations involved in a western setting would not at all be applicable to the analysis and understanding of social processes and institutions in India. Pocock, Dumont, Leach and some others are exponents of this school of thought and some Indian scholars too like Radha Kamal Mukherjee, D.P. Mukherjee, M.N.Srinivas, A.K.Saran, etc., are quite sceptical about the use of sociological concepts as they have been developed with reference to western societies. It is maintained along with Max Weber that Indian society is a unique cultural configuration. However, after stating this Weber proceeded to make use of comparative method for the study of various social systems and in his attempt to do so he evolved typology of societies. While one may accept the position that each society is a unique configuration one also has to take into account the dynamics of change and the impact of emulation and reference group behaviour. It is not only that there has been a technological and industrial revolution but there has been a revolution of ideas too. Therefore, when new ideas impinge on any system, efforts are made to change that society. Moreover, for any scientific understanding of social process and phenomenon it is necessary to employ ideas, concepts and formulations which are universal rather than specific to a given society. The purpose of scientific endeavour is one's desire to arrive at general propositions. With regard to the use of concepts it is necessary to test certain concepts which may have been developed even in altogether different set of circumstances. The aim of science is to extend the universal teachers of concepts and to reduce their specificity. In sociology too, one cannot for ever deny the responsibility of testing concepts and theoretical formulations which are available. Of course, these concepts and formulations have to be tested and used with the utmost degree of openness of mind and readiness to amend, modify and even reject them if found necessary. It is maintained that hardly an attempt has been made to develop our own theoretical concepts. All scientific endeavour is a matter of both, invention, discovery and diffusion. Therefore, there is nothing particularly wrong if in the field of sociology we start with concepts and theories as they have been made available to us with an open mind and with a keen desire to test them empirically.

In fact quite a debate has been going on in India during the last decade and more about what should be the proper nature of Sociology in India, and for India. Listing together two different types of sociology for India, Yogendra Singh observes that "the task for construction of a Sociology for India then will be, to establish parallels and correspondences between the general and specific levels of sociological concepts".<sup>6</sup> He also points out that according to the other point of view uniqueness of Indian culture is emphasized and that attempt should be made to understand Indian society only in its own terms and that, therefore, concepts and formulations derived from other situations would not be meaningful. However, he also points out that "cultural reality is not another

<sup>6</sup> Sociology for India. (ed.) T.K.N.Unnithan, Yogendra Singh etc.  
"The Scope and Method of Sociology in India", by Yogendra Singh, p.34.



fact of the social reality but its sub-stratum, the basic element, from which the social structure is derived and rendered comprehensible"<sup>7</sup>. Damle also has pointed out that what is regarded as unique characteristics of Indian culture are really nothing but ideas and value systems which have implications for legitimising and maintaining the structural arrangements."<sup>8</sup> Thus Damle says that "the concept of Purushartha in the Indian setting provides the meaning of existence for the people, and takes care of the functional sub-systems like adaptation, goal-attainment, pattern-maintenance and integration. Similarly Dharma is also sought to be interpreted in philosophical and mystical terms and effort is made to contend that there is no parallel to this concept in western sociology. However, Dharma can be regarded as parallel to the entire theory of role obligations. The idea of Karma and re-birth legitimise social order in all its ramifications and therefore, put a premium on pattern maintaining. As in all other societies the frame of a reference for sociological study would be provided by the study of interrelationship between personality, culture and social system. Yogendra Singh comes to the conclusion that "Sociology would endeavour to understand uniformities of social behaviour and social relationships within the frame work of people's values and ideas both as projections and as realities. Social behaviour would be representation as well as thing; in the former sense it would have an ideational quality and in the latter form it would constitute an objective relational category. The polarity between a sociology for India as a sub-system of general theory of sociology, and as a system of specific cultural categories representing the uniqueness of socio-cultural phenomena would have been bridged, since the 'cultural' would in every case correspond to the 'social'."<sup>9</sup>

Weber has also emphasised the great importance of the problem of subjective meaning in addition to that of pure type of meaning. While it is conceded that the idea systems and value systems are peculiar and special to a given cultural and social system, one has also to bear in mind that in order to understand such ideas and values one has to start by using the method of analogy and proceed to work out universals in respect of ideas and values. Otherwise, it would be impossible to talk meaningfully and particularly scientifically about any two societies. Thus, theory-building in sociology assumes special importance in India and also poses certain problems. The controversy of the insider and the outsider is too well-known to need any elaboration. The understanding of the insider should not be regarded as of an esoteric nature but reveals structural unity and coherence. Srinivas for instance studies the structural unity of Hindu religion and society. It is necessary to give up the undue emphasis on cultural specificities and differences and try to understand common features between Indian society and other societies. It is equally necessary to hazard utilization of sociological concepts and theories as they have been developed elsewhere in the Indian context.

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7 Ibid. p.36.

8 "For a Theory of Indian Sociology", Bulletin of the Deccan College, Vol.25, Y.B.Damle.

9 Op.cit. T.K.N.Unnithan etc. pp.36-37

This means proper awareness of such concepts and theories and one's capacity to use them meaningfully in a different set up such as the Indian. This means that adequate training in concepts and theories and particularly in their operationalization is necessary. For every concept and theory has to be tested empirically. Then alone would it be possible to refine, modify, accept or reject concepts and theories.

Below I want to illustrate from certain studies carried out in India by Indian scholars with a view to test certain concepts and formulations in the Indian set up. As pointed out by Merton one has to accept the possibility of refocussing of theory in the light of empirical research. However one has to get started somewhere. It was pointed out earlier that there are two types of theories viz. general theories and miniature theories. While it is conceded that it is very difficult to employ general theories for a sheer intellectual discipline and training, it is necessary not only to be acquainted with such theories, but it would be a useful exercise to try and apply such theory on a macro level. This is precisely what has been attempted by M.C.Sekhar in his study of 'Social Change in India - First Decade of Planning'.<sup>10</sup> On the other hand Alexander and T.K.ommen, Reddy, Damle and several others have tried to employ theories of the middle range.

Shekhar has made a study of planned social change during the first decade of plan when planning was accepted as a method of process of economic development. In order to study the ramifications of social change Sekhar starts by presenting a background picture of social structure in India on the eve of planning. Not only that the methods of planning are studied but the ideological and value orientations underlying the planning effort have also been described. The impact of planning on different aspects of social system are analysed. The entire study is undertaken with a view to employ the Parsonian system of analysis of society, emphasising the importance of vested interests, creation of new values and ideologies, simultaneous existence of old and new structures as well as the old and new values. It is maintained that such simultaneous existence gives rise to transitional anomie. Moreover, the problem of creation of new vested interests has also been discussed. The role of charismatic movements in bringing about social change, has also been discussed. Directions of social change are delineated by the use of pattern variables after giving a sociological interpretation of planning, economic development and economic planning are analysed. The effort is made to evaluate community development in its structural and functional aspects. The problems of the village level worker are discussed from this stant point of his being regarded as an agent of social change. Similarly, the role played by cooperative movement is also discussed. Charismatic movements have been like-wise discussed and it is hinted that such movements may not necessarily promote radical changes. Vested interests are analysed from the point of view of their thwarting social change. It is pointed out that due to the simultaneous existence of traditional and new structures and old and new values and particularly their permutations and combination, transitional anomie arises and there is a state of uncertainty created which in itself gives rise to several problems. Sekhar points out that institutionalised change on such a large scale which is attempted through

<sup>10</sup> M.C. Sekhar. *Social Change in India - First Decade of Planning*. (1963) pp. 392, Deccan College Postgraduate and Research Institute.

economic line impinges on the different elements of the social structure, causing refraction. Sekhar enquires into the intellectual, ideological and social class background of the leaders of nationalist movements and also maintains that these leaders who were imbued with western philosophy and rationality have been mainly responsible for emphasising economic development and industrialization. The emphasis placed on economic development was also responsible for adoption of neutral foreign policy or rather the policy of non-alignment and non-involvement. Then again the Indian state adopted secularism and welfarism and the corner stones of Indian Constitution. Changes have been sought to be brought about through industrialisation and urbanisation of population as well as technology. Effort must be made to bring about social change by creating institutional frameworks at the level of social structure. This encourages the building up of community development agencies in rural life and in apportioning of the objectives and mutual spheres of private and public enterprise. Economic planning was given definite direction by accepting the socialist goal. Through adoption of socialistic goals, peoples' aspirations were roused considerably. On the other hand the system of stratification remained more or less unaffected and as such the rising level of aspirations created several problems. Sekhar points out that the elite being the advanced element were in a position to benefit the most from various developmental activities both in respect of agriculture and industry. While some openings have been created by the developmental activities as well as education, industrialisation etc. Opportunities seem to have been monopolised by the elite since occupational and social mobility is generally confined to a family group, and that family was a unit of social mobility. Moreover, any efforts to curb monopolies gave rise to reactions in terms of forming political groups and parties such as that exemplified by the Swatantra Party. There has been an emergence of social movements particularly in so far as they try to champion the cause of minority groups and vested interest groups, regional loyalties, casteization of politics in response to the problems created by transitional anomie. Sekhar further observes that a charismatic movement or leader has imbibed the traditional symbolic meanings of Hinduism. In fact, its existence on traditional symbolism renders it rather ineffective in respect of promoting radically modern values. Sekhar locates the problems of transitional anomie in motivational terms in the sense that new institutional norms are not internalised. It is one thing to create new institutions and it is quite another thing to make them acceptable to the people. This is also partly due to the break-down of communication between the elites and the rest of the population. Any effort made by the Government to introduce a large scale change is bound to create certain problems, because there is no redefinition or re-allocation of the objects such as possessions, rights and ownership of facilities and rewards etc. In so far as the system of social stratification cannot be changed, rewards and facilities would not be available to the deprived and disprivileged section. Similarly, there is a breakdown between the system goals and the unit goals as exemplified by the dilemmas faced by the village level worker. Even charismatic movements cannot be of much help because they fail to alter fundamental values e.g. the system of stratification. Moreover, charismatic movements present an

alternative mode of bringing about social change and as such reduce the emphasis on rational modes of bringing about social change. Sekhar concludes by saying that institutionalisation of the social change through economic planning and other measures has given rise to a structural accretion. In fact due to such accretion there is no adequate insistence on a firm choice. Therefore, Sekhar thinks the transitional anomic would be a permanent affair. Sekhar's study points out the complexities of social change in India and also the various problems which are attendant on the Governmental action to bring about large scale change in a society like India. With a help of the theoretical apparatus used by Sekhar he has been able to discuss the problem at a macro level, pointing out important inter-connections between the various sectors and also the difficulties inherent in integrating them effectively.

Alexander examines the problem of Social Mobility in Kerala in the context of the formulation of reference group theory by Merton. Merton has stated that reference group behaviour would not be functional both for the individual and the group in a relatively closed society. Alexander wanted to test this formulation with special reference to Pulayas an untouchable caste in Kerala. Alexander accepts the fact that reference group behaviour would probably have different manifestations in the Indian context from those in western societies in so far as the absorption is concerned. He refers to Damle's observations that in a caste situation ultimate absorption in higher caste is not possible although there is mobility. He wanted to extend the use of Merton's formulations to the Indian setting which is so different from western society. In order to do so, Alexander chose his sample from a rural belt which was a predominantly a Hindu area, from a village where Jacobite Christians were predominant, then a village with puritan predominance which was keen on abolishing caste-discrimination and a city viz. Trivandrum which is the capital of Kerala and because of its urban situation and secular education and occupations provides facilities for social mobility. Alexander enquires into the problem of reference group behaviour and anticipatory socialisation in respect to various facets like religion, family, marriage, education, occupation, styles of living etc. He further enquires into the changing notions of the caste hierarchy which are reflected in the changes regarding mode of addressing the higher caste, giving up the use of object expressions and words for referring to the things associated with the Pulayas, reduction in social disabilities as reflected in serving food to Pulayas by the higher caste and removing restrictions on the entrance of Pulayas into the houses of the higher castes, commensality, observation of untouchability being confined mostly to marriage, etc. Alexander



points out that the change in status of the Pulayas is clearly the consequence of anticipatory socialisation. He also points out that in certain cases due to greater secular achievements, Pulayas have been even able to cross the barrier of untouchability. Alexander mentions by saying that "in spite of such a rigid social system, a dampening religious philosophy, lack of facilities, limited scope for upward mobility and their extremely low status in the relatively closed society, the Pulayas have adopted the higher castes occupying authoritative and prestigious status in the society rather than castes occupying a status similar to them as reference group".<sup>11</sup> As a result of reference group behaviour and the dissatisfaction with one's own lot as well as the institutional arrangements efforts should be made by the members of the low status group to enhance status by emulating members of higher caste. Such emulation need not give rise to hostility on the part of the parent group and thus those oriented towards the outgroup may not become marginal members. In fact, such members can become the elite of the low status group. Then again reference group behaviour and consequent anticipatory socialization by the members of a lower stratum in a relatively closed society would positively improve the status of the low status groups. Therefore, anticipatory socialisation need not be dysfunctional to either individuals or groups and can be a source of mobility even in a relatively closed society. In terms of his empirical investigation, Alexander has suggested certain modifications to the formulations of Merton.

T.K.Oommen who makes a study of Charisma, Stability and Change - An analysis of Bhodan - Gramdan Movement in India starts by questioning Weber's delineation of charismatic authority and points out that one may legitimately refer to the power of charismatic leaders while there is no such thing as authority, since legitimacy and sanctions are attached to the office that a leader occupies. The power of a charismatic leader depends on voluntary obedience by the followers. Then he points out as to how leaders like Nehru, Nkrumah, Khrushchev, Nasser etc. had authority which emanated from legal rational sources on which was superimposed charisma. Thus Oommen points out that the concept of charisma needs an extension to secular context. Then again, the quantity and quality of charismatic authority differ from system to system and social situations. He points out that charisma and charismatic leadership cannot be divorced from the nature and type of the social system. Similarly, the attributes of charisma are contextual because they are in response to the situational means and demands. Charisma not only helps innovate but can also help maintain and stabilise a social order. It is also pointed out that rational-legal leader can also be Prophets of modernization and change through the use of governmental machinery. On the other hand a charismatic leader need not

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11 K.C. Alexander. (1968) Social Mobility in Kerala. p.258 and 227. Deccan College Postgraduate and Research Institute.



necessarily be an agent of change. Charisma is attributed to personality either when the ends which certain leaders want to attain are so appealing to the people or because the means they want to employ are so difficult, and have behind them the sanction of symbolism rooted in a lost tradition. Oommen refers to Gandhi and Vinoba as exponents of the latter case. The emergence of charisma is explained in terms of the conditions. In the first place awareness has to be created among the people of the social problems and suggesting the possible solutions to the problems. Then again a new approach has to be involved for the solution of the problem. A goal to be chosen for such consideration and attention should be one which is widely acclaimed by the people, e.g. land-hunger in India.

Oommen maintains that charisma has to be transformed into movements in order to further realisation of goals. He mentions that nationalistic movements in under-developed country are oriented to both modern and traditional values, thereby emphasising the change-orientedness or system stability and solidarity. Analysing the emergence of social movements Oommen points out that social movements emerge due to certain malintegration in society. However, two distinct kinds of movements emerge such as ideological movements and organisational movements, and of course the third type of movement is charismatic movement. It is pointed out that a charismatic movement emerges from a critical situation as a result of stresses and strains in the social structure. The origin of the movement is couched in mysterious terms. The end or goal of the movement is the transformation of the social system which may be "system change, revival, restoration, protection or stability."<sup>12</sup> The movement throws new ideas or new mode to deal with the existing problems. Charisma is upper most although the need for ideology is not denied. The relationship between the charismatic leaders and its followers should be of a purely voluntary nature and there should be no office of any kind. The programme of the movement should be essentially non-economic and the movement should be undertaken with a sense of mission. However, Oommen also points out that a charismatic movement to be really effective must develop an ideological base as well as a minimum amount of organisation. Of course, the development of ideology and organization ultimately is responsible for reducing the element of charisma. As a result of the erosion of charisma such a movement might emphasise pattern maintenance and tension management. Oommen does not point out that some charismatic movements emerged in response to certain radical ideologies and programmes with a view to divert the attention of the people from such radical ideologies and programmes and that, therefore, unwittingly such movements may contribute to

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12 T.K.Oommen, Charisma, Stability and Change (1972).  
See esp. pages 1-25 and 177-183. Thomson Press (India) Ltd.  
New Delhi.

tension management and pattern maintenance. It is also emphasized by Oommen that while a purely charismatic movement can propel change it cannot sustain the process of change for any long period.

On the basis of empirical investigation of Gram Dan movement as an illustration of charismatic movement, Oommen points out certain incongruities. Thus if a charismatic appeal is uppermost then ideology will be accorded a subordinate importance. Equal emphasis on tradition and modernity by the movement will enlist amongst its adherents both revivalists and modern people, which may not ultimately be conducive to the goal of the movement. Then again if the movement is manned by vested interests and career seekers, it will ultimately destroy the movement. Any association with Government will further reduce the efficacy of such movements. Emphasis on ameliorative programmes gives rise to the negation of the principles upheld by such movements. In the context of Gram Dan, there is getting together of the donors and donnes whose interests are incongruent with each other and as such their cooperation with the movement becomes questionable. He further points out as to how the upper caste and the landed elements are equal beneficiaries of land distribution, and therefore, the real aim of the movement has not been realised. Similarly, due to lack of proper organization, land distribution could not be affected on a rational basis. He further points out that gram dan did not create a kind of social order which it was expected to create. He also points out the limitations of communitarian organization because of its emphasis on consensus. The cleavage between the ideological and the organizational orientation makes it difficult for such movements to become agents of change. In short charismatic movement cannot sustain social change. Thus with the analysis of charisma and social movements and their occupation to a concrete situation, efforts are made to examine and refine concepts and to suggest the extensions of concepts and theories.

In his study of Education in a Cross-cultural setting, Reddy<sup>13</sup> investigates into the problems of non-Maharashtrian students, who migrated to Poona for higher studies from different parts of the country. Reddy wanted to study the problems of students caused by their exposure to the different social system or sub-system. He has suggested the concept of optimization of gratification, in place of the usual concept of adjustment used in cross-cultural study. Enquiring into the primacy of various goals which the students want to attain, Reddy makes use of the functional problems. The reference group behaviour of the students is analysed and the concept of relative deprivation is meaningfully used in order

13 P.H. Reddy, (1967) Education in a Cross-cultural Setting (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis) pp. 292.

to pinpoint attention on the problems left by the students. The impact of educational sojourn on the students has been studied in respect of certain changes in the outlook and attitudes regarding religion, caste, region, nation etc. Similarly, individuation, autonomy development, intellectual maturation, etc. have also been studied. The study employs meaningfully the concept of relative deprivation and reference group theory. Instead of merely listing the problems faced by such students an attempt is made to explain them in theoretical terms.

In his study of Communication of Modern Ideas and knowledge<sup>14</sup> in Indian Villages, Damle enquires into the problem of dissemination and acceptance of new information and ideas by employing the paradigm of functionalism as given by Merton. On the basis of his empirical study Damle points out that only such items which have a functional relevance for the people in the village, find acceptance.

A study of Auxiliary Nurse Midwife, a Study in Institutionalised change,<sup>15</sup> Damle analysed the problem of change in terms of the status of the change agent, social stratification, cultural beliefs and prejudices, etc. Thus it is pointed out that a change agent cannot be effective unless and until he or she enjoys requisite status in society. Similarly, there is no point in over-burdening change agents with responsibilities for which they have not been adequately trained or prepared. The intricacies involved in bringing about change are discussed in structural functional terms.

The study of Social Structure of Intellectuals in Poona,<sup>16</sup> by Damle, brought up certain unexpected relationships. Thus enquiring into the social background of University and College teachers in Poona, it was found that the sons and daughters of fathers who are themselves highly educated and highly placed in occupational structure were continuously subjected to pressure of invidious comparison between themselves and their fathers giving rise to strain and dissatisfaction with their own profession. It was found that such persons tended to be the least involved professionally.

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- 14 Y.B.Damle. (1955) Communication of Modern Ideas and Knowledge in Indian Villages.p: 29 MIT. Cambridge Mass.
  - 15 Y.B.Damle (1959). Auxiliary Nurse Midwife - A Study in Institutionalized change. Deccan College Bulletin Vol. XIX Nos. 3 and 4. pp.237-279.
  - 16 Y.B. Damle (1968) Social Structure of the Intellectuals in Poona. A Study of College and University Professors. Deccan College Postgraduate and Research Instt. pp.135.

In his Study of College Youth in Poona,<sup>17</sup> Damle wanted to examine the process of socialisation and autonomy development in the context of social structural features like family and kinship, caste, region and language, education, peer groups etc. It was found that socialisation and individuation are not always antithetical to each other and that certain types of socialisation are on the other hand conducive to individuation. The process of change from traditional ideas and values to modern ideas and values was studied with reference to the students and analysis was made of the forces and mechanism which facilitated such a change. It was found that voluntary groupings played an important role in effecting autonomy development. The scheme of pattern variables was utilised for analysing change. Structural functional method was employed.

Bureaucracy and its role in Agricultural Development<sup>18</sup> was studied with a view to find out the patterns of interaction between bureaucracy, the farmers and the leaders. It was hypothesised that the usual formulations about bureaucracy as given by Weber in respect of impersonality, social distance, concept of office, and so on may not be relevant in a field situation. Particularly when bureaucrats had to work as agents of change and facilitators of development, what would be the expectations of a bureaucrat on the part of the people, whom he was supposed to serve? In the light of the empirical study certain modifications have been suggested to the Weberian theory of bureaucracy.

A study was made of 'Two-hundred life termers'<sup>19</sup> in order to find out the problems of prisoners in the Jail setting and also to find out if the various measures adopted to train the prisoners for rehabilitation after release were meaningful at all. The problem was studied by focussing attention on the central institution viz. family and its disruption caused by the arrest of the prisoner. By posing the problem in this manner, it was found that most of the problems experienced by the prisoners centered round his relationships with his family members or rather the difficulties that he has experienced in this respect. The estrangement

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17 Damle, College Youth in Poona - A Study of Elite in the Making. (1966) Deccan College Postgraduate and Research Institute. pp.700.

18 Bureaucracy and Agricultural Development (1972) Deccan College Postgraduate and Research Institute. pp.407

19 Two-hundred Life-termers - A Sociological Study (1972) Deccan College Postgraduate and Research Institute. pp.137.

between the prisoner and his family seemed to give rise to most of the problems. As a matter of fact, the family was the worse sufferer. This also resulted in the alienation between the prisoner and his family, complicating or rather queering the pitch for rehabilitation. Therefore, in order to have effective programmes of rehabilitation, it was necessary to accord proper importance to the family of the prisoner and prisoner's relationship with the family. In fact the family of the prisoner needed all the support, both economic and moral as well as legal in order that the family would not be disorganised. In fact such disorganization of family would make it impossible for the prisoner to be rehabilitated. Any ameliorative action should be based on scientific analysis of the the problem. Here also structural functional approach was employed.

7. The major concerns of social science research for the next 5-10 years.

Nation-building and national-development broadly speaking constitute together the major themes of research for the next decade. As mentioned earlier what are the various tiers of loyalties and how can they be made to be congruous to each other is an important theme of research. The nature of group relations and interaction as well as the problems of leadership, whether traditional or modern also assumes importance. The process of elite formation and the confrontation between the old and the new elite is another area which needs proper attention. Occupational and social mobility and the openness or otherwise of stratification is a crucial area for a proper appraisal of the avowed aims of our constitution. Role played by education in the inculcation of rationality, scientific spirit, universalistic values and emphasis on achieved status as well as the furtherance of the process of identity formation has to be studied in all its ramifications. Education as a system has to be studied with reference to its linkages to other sub-systems like family, economy, stratification, polity, etc. The involvement of people in various productive activities and problems attended by them such as incentives needs a proper study. The problem of work and the discipline required for it needs to be properly analysed in order to help resolve the increase in tension between labour, capital and government. All these years one was inclined to emphasise the conflict between labour and capital; however, with the intervention of Government in a big way, both as a protector of the labour and also as a promoter of public enterprise this problem of tripartite relationship assumes great significance and needs proper attention. National integration and development is linked up with international relations and alignments. The way India would align herself with other nations of the world, and its repercussions for various fundamental policies also needs careful study. Economic



development and particularly the problems of enhancing income as well as its fair distribution need attention on our part. The emergence of new groups such as youth, women, and all types of minorities also deserve careful attention. Similarly, the development of India into a pluralistic society needs to be studied. It is usually said of India that it presents remarkable co-existence of both tradition and modernity and that it has been able to avoid a confrontation between the two. A careful study needs to be plotted in respect of this assertion with reference to important institutions, like family and kinship, caste, religion, education etc.

8. The complementary and auxiliary programme will have to be developed for improving teaching, training of research personnel, providing institutional and other infrastructures and finance to promote an optimum effort in social science research:

One of the best ways to improve teaching of social sciences, of Sociology in particular, is to promote the incorporation of research material into programmes of instruction. Normally the procedures of introducing new courses and research material in the university system are extremely cumrous. In fact everything is done to prevent changing of courses and introduction and use of new material. Therefore, at the M.A. level there should be free courses whereby a teacher who in a given area can give courses on the basis of his own work or even on the basis of the work done by others. As regards the various areas suggested above, it would be useful to develop centres of excellence in various universities and institutions. As things stand to-day, universities cannot provide funds on a continuing or a long term basis. I would suggest that a few centres be developed which specialise in social mobility and stratification, sociology of education, sociology of work, sociology of professions, implications of international relations etc. It is only after such specialisation that meaningful contribution can be made to the understanding and analysis of some of the problems facing the country. Moreover, the training of research personnel will not be wasted as usually happens when research grants and funds are made available on a purely ad-hoc basis.

9. The measures necessary to convert "knowledge" or the findings of social science research into 'action' at various levels such as Government, Industry, and even to modify and influence the behaviour of the average citizen.

It was already mentioned earlier that the results of researches conducted in the field of sociology, should be presented at two different levels. Thus, the professional community will utilise such findings for undertaking meaningful research and to improve both in theory and methodology

while Government and other consumers of such research will be encouraged to utilise the findings for policy formulation, implimentation, and execution of various programmes. If work is carried out in some of the areas mentioned above, Government, industry, educational institutions, employers of all kinds, decision makers and the general public would be able to utilise the research findings. As an illustration I want to mention Dube's work dealing with the problem of the role performance of village level worker. Similarly, Damle also had questioned the very concept of auxiliary personnel in view of the situation wherein there was neither supervision nor guidance offered to such personnel. This situation had important consequences for role performance by the auxiliary personnel involved and for the acceptance or rather rejection of the programme such personnel was put in-charge of executive. Likewise, certain ideas like the premium put on proper age, marital status, the status in the caste hierarchy etc. militate against the proper function of the personnel and the programmes. As a result of such a study, at least the authorities concerned were sensitised to the various dimensions of the problem, and became alive to the need of applying some of the insights provided by studies. Communication, is an extremely important field for both, development and change and such studies would enable not only the Government and industry and employers but also the general public to realise the importance of communication either for ensuring stability or for bringing about change. In this context, mention may be made to the use of 'Harikatha' for conveying secular, political and social reform, ideas and ideologies to the people at large and particularly to the masses. In fact, such a medium of communication as - 'Harikatha' can cater to different kinds of audiences with differential message and content and of course impact. If proper use is made of sociological material, it can help in resolving various practical problems by sensitising persons concerned about the ramifications of the problem and thus by providing hints towards solution.

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## APPENDIX I

A perusal of the list of some of the studies undertaken would bear out the importance of social relevance as well as theoretical and methodological orientation.

1. (Social Differentiation and Differentiation in Emoluments' Poona, Deccan College Dissertation Series, 1955.
2. Communication of Modern Ideas and Knowledge in Indian Villages, Cambridge, MASS, Centre for International Studies, MIT, 1955.
3. A Review of the Literature on Caste, Cambridge, MASS, Centre for International Studies, MIT, 1961.
4. Group Relations in Village Community (in collaboration with Dr. (Mrs.) Karve, Poona, Deccan College Monograph Series, 1963.
5. 'College Youth in Poona: A Study of Elite in the Making', Poona, Deccan College (Mimeographed) p.vi + 729.
6. Social Structure of the Intellectuals in Poona: A Study of College and University Professors, Deccan College, 1968.
7. Two-hundred Life Termers - A sociological Study, p.137, Poona, February 1972.
8. Bureaucracy and Agricultural Development - p.497. Poona, May 1971.
9. Social Change in India (Planning Period) 1968.
10. A Study of the Changing Pattern of Behaviour of an untouchable Caste: The Pulayans of Kerala, 1967.
11. Impact of Community Development Programme on Rationality, 1968.
12. Education in a Cross-Cultural Setting, 1968.
13. The Phenomenon of Anomie, 1968.
14. Charismatic Movements and Social Change (Analysis of Dhoodan, Gramdan Movement in India), 1969.
15. Educated Women and Social Change, 1969.
16. A Study of Maratha Community, 1972.
17. Incentives in Industry.
18. Second Generation of Immigrants in Bombay.
19. Changing Status of Scheduled Castes: A Comparative Study in an Urban Setting.