

REPRINTED FROM
SURVEY OF RESEARCH IN
SOCIOLOGY AND SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY
1969-1979
(3 VOLUMES)

✓ A Project Sponsored by the
INDIAN COUNCIL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH



SATVAHAN

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SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY

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A GREAT DEAL has been written on Indian sociology ; its content, theoretical presuppositions and methodological preoccupations. Therefore, I do not claim to bring to light any fresh facts. All the same, I would like to pose the whole problem in a different way. First of all, I would like to ask when one talks of theory, what kind of theory one has in mind—explicit or implicit ? It can be said that most of the sociologists whose work has been acclaimed as a very significant contribution to the theory, did not necessarily start their venture with a view to providing a neat sociological theory. The authors of whom I think in this context are Karl Marx and Max Weber. Both of them wanted to theorise about the western industrial civilization and therefore addressed themselves to the different features and dimensions peculiar to that civilization. In the bargain they arrived at important theories of society, which have been very rightly regarded as being of fundamental importance in sociological understanding and analysis.

I would also like to mention that sociology as a social science discipline developed in the West in response to peculiar problems faced by it. The utilitarian and economic explanations of human behaviour were felt to be inadequate and therefore the need was felt of a discipline which would transcend the utilitarian and individualistic explanations and to provide an analytical framework for the study of social solidarities, integration, and rational as well as moral response to the challenges faced by industrial and complex societies.

Nature of Theory

Without trying to repeat the discussion about what is theory, and its purpose I would only raise the question of theory for what ? Very

briefly put, I would regard the following as the objectives of theory : (1) description, (2) analysis, (3) explanation, (4) prediction and control and (5) prescription. There is no denying the fact that theory has both a positivist and a normative content. Similarly, the factual content or correctness is extremely important. Then again, concern for theory in social science is also influenced by the nature of theory in natural sciences. Therefore, one comes across a scientific approach to social science. However, as I have made it clear, I want to emphasize the content of values and their importance for a proper formulation of theories in social sciences and particularly so in sociology.

By and large, it can be said that a theory is not a mere array of concepts which are not inter-related. In fact, theory is such an array of concepts which are logically inter-related and interdependent. Such inter-related and interdependent concepts are further amenable to logical and even experimental verification, ideally speaking. Then again, one must be aware of another problem in this respect, namely, whether a theory is an *ex post facto* exercise or something which evolves simultaneously with observations of contemporary scene. Similarly, there is another dimension of the problem, namely, whether to emphasize deductive reasoning or inductive inferential exercise. Then again, should one treat theory as being provisional or perennial. I have deliberately stated these dimensions of the problem so as to appreciate and appraise properly the theoretical exercise in respect of sociology in India or, rather, sociological studies in India.

While one may think of theory in universal, scientific terms, it would be unrealistic to think of any theory devoid of the existing substantive social reality. There is, in fact, an inextricable relationship between theory and social reality. Every society makes certain special demands in respect of theoretical formulations. There is thus a logic of situation. Sociology of knowledge, phenomenology, etc., have adequately emphasized this aspect. When one tries to judge the theoretical contribution or content in the works of Indian sociologists, one has to bear this point in mind. The main concern of any social science is the reconstruction of social reality. In attempting such construction of social reality, it is absolutely necessary to be aware of the special conditions prevailing in the society at the point of time. Moreover, in the case of society in India, it is equally important to be aware of the various forces which have contributed to the making of Indian society. Briefly put, the dimensions of social space and time have to be properly appreciated. The nature of theory and its content would naturally depend on one's responses to a given set of demands dictated by the situation.

Thus, during the pre-Independence period, it was but natural for sociologists, like G. S. Ghurye, Radhakamal Mukerjee and D. P. Mukherjee to come to terms with Indian social reality in the context of

its historical tradition as well as the special problems it experienced in the wake of colonial rule and Western domination. On the other hand, in the post-Independence period there was naturally a greater concern for the analysis of the challenges posed by modernization and how the traditional social structure was responding to them. This is not to suggest that in the pre-Independence period the problem of change was altogether neglected. But, relatively speaking, there was less emphasis on change than on order and integration. In the wake of political independence and the various efforts made to transform Indian society by (a) economic development, (b) legislative methods and (c) promoting people's participation in development and change, there was a great deal of optimism generated both in the minds of the people and even more so in the minds of social scientists including sociologists.

However, as the backlog of economic development accumulated and also the failure of both the legislative methods and people's participation in development came to light, the earlier optimism gave way to despair and pessimism. It had been felt earlier that Indian society was, at the most, faced with the problem of transitional anomie but, when the crises persisted almost beyond repair, it began to be felt that there was no escaping the basic fact of serious contradictions and conflict. Thus, one finds that the prevailing social situation was mainly responsible for the choice of research problems, theoretical presuppositions, approaches, etc. After 1970, there has been a concerted drive to emphasize the study of protest and social movements instead of putting emphasis on organic solidarity, equilibrium, etc.

While I am concerned mainly with the understanding of sociological theory I would also like to mention that other social scientists, such as economists, historians, political scientists had also applied their mind to the prevailing problems, particularly during the pre-Independence period. Likewise, Indologists had also contributed their mite to the construction of social reality in the light of their knowledge of past traditions. Kane's voluminous work on the "History of Dharmashastras" bears testimony to this. Similarly, we know how there was a very wide controversy among the Indian economists about the unsatisfactory state of affairs regarding application of economic formulations, which were developed in the West, to the Indian situation.

There were also men of action or leaders of action who were simultaneously leaders of thought also. I would like to mention particularly the names of Raja Rammohan Roy, B. G. Tilak, Gandhi, Tagore and Nehru as important illustrations of such personalities. All of them tried in their own ways, not only to respond to the challenges posed by the British rule and Western domination, but also attempted to evaluate critically the social framework of India and to point out the viability of the existing institutions and mechanisms or to suggest their modification and

alteration. The special problem experienced by these leaders was that of a loss of nerve on the part of the people, and therefore of the supreme necessity of reassuring them that situation could still be retrieved if proper efforts were made. Inevitably, there was a critical appraisal of the tradition and therefore a careful sifting of the positive features of the tradition, while simultaneously emphasizing the need for introducing important changes. Social criticism tempered by positive guidance and constructive leadership was thus the outcome of the actions and thinking of these leaders.

Indian Society

Indian society has a historicity of tradition and has at the same time been exposed to various forces of change both from within and without. Therefore, it is necessary to emphasize the dimensions of social space and time. In India one finds that even at a particular point of time various groups and strata are influenced by diverse forces. It has been rightly said that Indian civilization is characterized by accretion and not by substitution. Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Christianity, Islam, Western civilization including Marxism have all made their impact on the various components of Indian society. Even while one speaks of historicity of Indian tradition, one can see the undercurrents of change and adaptability inherent in Indian tradition. The various components of Indian society, such as the aborigines and tribals, Dravidians, the Aryans both in their phases as invading tribes and hordes as well as settled people, the Muslims, the Christians, the Parsees, the Sikhs, the Jews, the British and Europeans, Anglo-Indians, Neo-Buddhists, etc., emphasize, (a) the multiplicity of its components, as well as the efforts made to arrive at the process of amalgamation of these diverse components and (b) the blocking of such a process.

It has been mentioned time and again that in the historical past *Varna* was a mechanism for ensuring division of labour and for providing opportunities for everyone to be accepted in terms of his participation in the division of labour. Further, it was noted that participation in division of labour was determined not by birth but by performance and achievement. There was the attendant system of prestige, status and stratification as a consequence of this division of labour. How and why this particular arrangement was disturbed and with what consequences has naturally been of great interest to the students of Indian society.

Indian society and the Indian social structure in particular exhibited different levels, such as the village as an isolate, village as an interdependent system, town, cities, regions, local state, concept of nationhood, etc. There is enough material to suggest the operation of Indian

social structure at these various levels. Then again, one has to bear in mind the distinction between the little tradition and great tradition. As a matter of fact, the existence of these two traditions also made it possible for various stands to be amalgamated. I would like to mention here that in the understanding of Indian society, the choice of the unit of analysis has tremendous significance for both theory and methodology. Thus, if one were to analyse a village, particularly as an isolate, as the unit of analysis, one would necessarily emphasize functional approach.

As if the various levels and components mentioned above were not sufficiently demanding, certain other dimensions like language, religion, education (traditional or modern), technology, the nature of the economy, pre-industrial or industrial, occupational structure, development of sociological profession, modes of production such as pre-capitalist, capitalist, socialist, mixed economy, free enterprise or state intervention, such as planned economy, diffusion or concentration of political power, democracy or traditional power structure, nature of stratification, traditional or modern, ritual or secular, whether status ascribed or achieved, etc., have provided enough challenges to grapple with social reality to the various social scientists including sociologists.

Migration has always provided opportunities for various groups to be absorbed in the economic system. This was particularly necessitated by the economic impoverishment of the villages and the breakdown of the handicrafts as a consequence of colonial rule. Migration and absorption of the migrants in the occupational structure meant competition rather than status. The caste system provides status to everyone but makes one immobile. Along with the introduction of the principle of competition, conflict became inevitable. New aspirations emerged and yet the possibilities of absorption in the occupational structure were severely limited, giving rise to conflict between the new entrants and those who were firmly entrenched. The processes of urbanization and industrialization also had similar consequences. Introduction of commercial crops and new technology in agriculture also meant concentration of resources in the hands of a few, allowing for the inroads of market and capitalist economy into rural society. Consensus and cooperation were thus reduced and confrontation made its appearance on the scene. Confrontation between different interest groups naturally created tensions which had to be attended to either in terms of peaceful or radical solutions.

Nationalist movement tended to curb the divisive forces. However, the emergence of different interest groups and the creation of consciousness in the minds of the deprived and the unprivileged could not stem the tide of discontent. As a matter of fact, various reform movements as well as protest movements are sufficient indicator of this phenomenon. The inability of the Indian social system to sort out some of the inherent contradictions was magnified in the post-Independence

period. As mentioned earlier, the transitional anomie was replaced by persistent crises. This became all the more glaring because of the tall talk of transformation of the society, partly envisaged in the Constitution of India, and partly because of the propagation of new values and ideologies. Therefore, the direction and pace of transformation acquired maximum significance for all the social sciences. The post-Independence scene is that of considerable achievement and equally of considerable failure which has created anguish in the minds of the people. It is but natural that sociological research should reflect the anguish and reality and try to suggest radical solutions. In fact, in one of the all-India sociological conferences, the special theme for discussion was Sociology of Revolution.]

Before we come to the discussion of the contribution of professional sociologists, it should be mentioned that the contributions of non-professional sociologists like Dr B. R. Ambedkar, Jyotiba Phule and some others were totally neglected by professional sociologists, which naturally invited the ire of such contributors, and particularly that of the common masses.*

Professional Sociologists

It is not intended to mention the names of all the professional sociologists or even to take stock of the contribution of all their works but to describe in brief their important concerns and therefore their contributions. As far as the earliest generation of sociologists is concerned, I would mention the names of G. S. Ghurye, Radhakamal Mukerjee, D. P. Mukherjee, Nirmal Kumar Bose and Irawati Karve. All of them were particularly active during the pre-Independence period and some of them continued to be active in the post-Independence period, both by their work and through the guided research. In the next generation I will place M. N. Srinivas, S. C. Dube and Ramkrishna Mukherjee as well as A. R. Desai and I. P. Desai. Next would come M. S. Gore, M. S. A. Rao, Y. B. Damle, Victor D'Souza, A. Bopegamage. After that some of the most prominent sociologists who are equally well known in India as well on international level are Andre Beteille, Yogendra Singh, J. P. S. Uberoi, Satish Saberwal, T. K. Oommen, D. N. Dhanagare, Veena Das, K.C. Alexander, Suma Chitnis and others who have both been actively engaged and are well known for their contributions.

Before inquiring into their contributions I would like to make a few observations about the status of sociological work in India. In this regard would it be possible for one to think in terms of a school of

*Since a special paper has been commissioned on theory in Social Anthropology I have not discussed the very important contributions of colleagues such as T.N. Madan, Gopala Sarana, R.K. Jain and J.V. Ferreira in my paper.

thought or in terms of single concepts which have been formulated or contributed by some of the scholars mentioned above? I think it would be more realistic to suggest that while some of the scholars mentioned above and also others have introduced new concepts and formulations, there has been hardly any such thing as the creation or founding of a school of thought which has influenced subsequent research work or concerns of the incoming generations of students. While it is true that Ghurye trained about more than fifty Ph.D.'s it would be difficult to imagine that he was able to establish a school of thought, which is reflected in the works of his students. In fact, he himself was exploring the various dimensions of Indian social reality without a firm commitment to a particular set of theory.

This is not to suggest that sociological work which has been undertaken during the last sixty years and more has not attempted to take care of the various dimensions of social reality in India, right from order and integration to social change and transformation as well as the serious limits to such transformation. A mere listing of the various branches of sociology such as social demography, rural studies, urban studies, industrial sociology, caste in India, scheduled castes with reference to change, sociology of social stratification, concepts and theories of social change, sociological development and change, community development and panchayat raj, sociology of education, kinship, law, medicine, politics and religion would testify to the diverse fields of inquiry by sociologists. During the last ten years some new fields have acquired prominence, namely, sociology of social movements, study of professions, etc., which will pave the way for a better understanding of the complex social reality. This is not to suggest that the work done in these various areas is of a uniform nature and as one can imagine, some of the areas have been relatively neglected, particularly with regard to theoretical sophistication.

Ghurye who was a distinguished Sanskrit scholar and was later on trained in Ethnology and Sociology at Cambridge brought to bear his knowledge of Sanskrit and Indological sources on his understanding of the institutional framework of Indian society, with special emphasis on Hindu social institutions. While at Cambridge, he wrote research papers on Ethnic theory of caste and later developed special interest in the area of caste. He was trying to come to terms with the understanding of Indian civilization particularly the consequences of its exposure to Western education, Western technology, occupational system and so on. Ghurye was convinced of the importance of religion and social values which provided stability to the social structure. He also inquired into the significance of family and kin as special features facilitating integration and continuity. He also undertook certain inquiries which were of an *ad hoc* nature and therefore are not discussed here.

Ghurye was also fascinated by the process of urbanization in India and

has certain practical suggestions to offer. Similarly he made a study of social tensions in India, analysing the fissiparous tendencies on the basis of religion, language, caste differences, etc. The importance of modern education and the emergence of new occupations also attracted his attention. He has written several books and research papers although most of his work is exploratory rather than definitive. For Ghurye customs, practices, ideas and values, as well as social institutions were equally significant. He was influenced by the diffusionist tradition and also adopted structural functional approach for the study of various social institutions like caste, family and kin, religion, ascetic organizations, etc. He advocated that acceptance of new ideologies and principles should be consistent with traditional structures so that there would not be too much of social disturbance. He espoused a path of accommodation rather than confrontation.

Ghurye employed the comparative method for the study of caste, family and kinship, etc., and was always aware of the importance of universal concepts, as is reflected in his works. He was mainly concerned with the problem of integration of the Indian society and was very apprehensive of the danger of disintegration arising out of the various threats posed by considerations of religion, caste, language, etc. While it should be said that Ghurye did not evolve a particular theory, he evinced awareness and interest in using certain concepts in a limited manner. On the other hand, he encouraged his research students to traverse new fields and areas in sociology right from Marxian interpretation of nationalist movement to communication of culture and ideas as well as the role of industrial technocracy, etc. It can be said that he encouraged autonomy amongst his research students by default in the sense that he did not make it obligatory for his students to adopt a particular theoretical point of view.

Radhakamal Mukerjee was trained in economics, political science as well as sociology. He was concerned with the problems of social science methodology. Similarly, he was very much concerned with social and human ecology. He was equally in favour of inter-disciplinary approach. Mukerjee like Ghurye was very much concerned with the understanding of the nature of Indian civilization and the impact of industrialization, urbanization on it. It is but natural that he emphasized the importance of class. Religion and particularly humanitarian religion occupied his mind. He was equally interested in social action and participated in the field of cooperation, improvement of the conditions of labour, etc. Emphasis on inter-disciplinary approach was his major contribution. He also encouraged study of labour movements, communal tensions, social unrest, etc. Continuity of tradition as well as the forces of change were his main concerns.

D. P. Mukherjee was very much impressed by Marxian philosophy and

therefore he wanted to emphasize the importance of dialectical approach in the study of Indian reality. He felt that the foisting of capitalist modes of production on the indigenous system of production created poverty and suffering. He also tried to inquire into the role of art and culture in trying to bridge the gulf between the masses and the elite. Even though he was influenced by Marxian philosophy, he would not give up his interest in the study of Indian tradition and advocated group action instead of rationalistic approach to life and reality. He was able to stimulate his students by his class-room lectures and discussions although one cannot claim any particular theoretical framework which was accepted by his students.

Irawati Karve was trained in Philosophy, Ethnology, Sociology, Sanskrit and Physical Anthropology. Her major concern was to construct Indian social reality in the light of the knowledge of Indian tradition as reflected in Sanskrit and Pali literature. Her study of kinship organization in India has been regarded as a bold attempt to provide ideally typical models of kinship for the Aryans, the Dravidians, and the tribals. Her study of Sanskrit texts enabled her to look for patterns of continuity. Of course, she had also undertaken some survey research to inquire into the impact of urbanization, of certain disasters like earthquakes, etc., but her main focus of interest was kinship organization. In fact, she characterized caste as nothing but extended kinship.

All these scholars were very much interested in highlighting the ramifications of the traditional social structure and the problems encountered by it because of its exposure to the forces of change. Order and change dominated their thinking although the emphasis on the former was perhaps more to their liking.

Although the work of these scholars has been mentioned specially with reference to the pre-Independence period, it should be mentioned that all of them were active in the post-Independence period. Still it must be emphasized that in the post-Independence period different concerns were voiced by scholars like Ramkrishna Mukherjee, M.N. Srinivas, S.C. Dube and A.R. Desai.

Due to his training at Oxford and the influence of Radcliffe-Brown, M.N. Srinivas was very much impressed by functionalism and inquired into the sociology of religion and culture. In his study he introduced the concept of Sanskritization to highlight the possibilities of upward movement in the caste hierarchy. Likewise, he introduced the concept of dominant caste and therefore he emphasized the importance of the interplay between ritual and secular factors in acquiring social status and power in a community. The unit of analysis chosen by him for his studies was mainly the village, so he utilized the functional approach to the study of social reality. At the same time, he was aware of the interdependence of different villages and he exposed the myth of village

self-sufficiency. Even though he was not unaware of the ramifications of the wider economic and social processes, for him the basic units of analysis being village and rural society, he did not pay much attention to the macro-processes.

M.N. Srinivas, who built the Delhi University Department of Sociology, which later on acquired the status of a Centre of Advanced Study in Sociology, was also primarily responsible for emphasizing the field-work tradition which, consciously or otherwise, resulted in the neglect of theory. To cite an example, Andre Beteille, in his work *Class, Caste and Power*, has stated at the outset that "he had no intention of testing any theoretical hypothesis". Srinivas's influence in this respect can be easily discerned. Some of his reflective essays give an inkling into his thinking about the forces of modernity. Yet, according to him the forces of modernity are put through the sieve of traditional groupings and loyalty.

Ramkrishna Mukherjee who was trained at Cambridge and Germany was exposed to Marxian analysis and he wanted to inquire into Indian reality through this particular framework. Moreover, his training in Statistics and Mathematics also enabled him to follow rigorously the procedure of verification of any theory which he chose to test. Even though he was influenced by Marxian thinking he was not averse to the formulation of Max Weber. In fact, as he himself admits, he attempted to study Indian reality in terms of the formulations of both Marx and Weber. His insistence on the methodological rigour has enabled him to refrain from large-scale generalization.

Ramkrishna Mukherjee is very sceptical about the utility of deductive positive reasoning in respect of sociological studies in India and rightly so because he feels that sociology and particularly its deductive positivist reasoning has developed in the West and therefore it is certainly not applicable to the Indian setting. He, instead, suggests an inductive inferential approach which, according to him, has important theoretical implications. He, in fact, suggests that by employing the inductive inferential approach, appropriate theory building would be possible so as to link sociology with praxis. Mukherjee is very much concerned about the ideological underpinnings of deductive positivist approaches in contemporary sociology. Therefore, he is very particular that ideological underpinnings must be steered clear and the only way to do so is to adopt what he calls the "inductive inferential approach" which will give rise to the generation of appropriate sociological theory. His analysis of the contributions of Indian sociologists, is too well known to need any repetition. He has clearly emphasized the importance of desired future in determining research interest and priorities.

A.R. Desai has been very much influenced by the Marxian framework and has throughout attempted to utilize it for his understanding of Indian

society. His study of the social background of nationalist movement in India is a clear exercise in the direction, and has provided a useful introduction to the field of political sociology in India. He has tried to employ the dialectical method for the study of Indian society, which is clearly reflected in his analysis of post-Independence developments. Emphasis on Marxian approach and utilization of dialectical method for the study of Indian reality should be mentioned as his main contribution.

S.C. Dube, a trained political scientist and anthropologist, got involved in research as a result of inter-disciplinary cooperation. Therefore, even though his very well-known work is on a village, he is very well aware of the interdependence of the village with the rest of the society. In fact, he has tried to study the village as a representative of what goes on in the wider society. Therefore he was conscious of the linkage between village and the rest of the society in all its ramifications. As regards the theoretical concerns, I would like to emphasize that Dube wanted to treat traditional past as a point of departure and thus study the village society from the point of view of change and development. He has made a special study of the changing patterns of Indian village, wherein he has inquired into the impact of development on villages. He was concerned with analysing transition from traditional features to those of modernity. Even though he has not been able to provide any particular theory he has been using some theoretical concepts meaningfully and critically. Dube's contribution mainly lies in his perceptive understanding of the challenge of change and his desire and capacity to use relevant concepts both meaningfully and with an open mind.

M.S. Gore who was trained at Columbia has initiated work in the field of sociology of education, although he has also done a good study of the changing structure of family with reference to the urban situation. In this study, he has diligently used structural-functional framework and has particularly examined the changing role and interaction within the structure of family. His awareness of modern sociological theory has helped him to utilize meaningfully some concepts, although he is a believer in middle range theories and feels convinced that stage is not yet ripe for arriving at generalizations of a theoretical nature.

M.S.A. Rao has been actively engaged in research and has been examining the impact of urbanization on fringe villages. He has examined critically the theory of urbanization and has suggested that even a traditional society can absorb the process of urbanization with the help of traditional mechanisms and groupings. He has been also engaged in the study of social movements and, therefore, has been using concepts like reforms, protest, dissent, etc. Even then no particular theoretical framework has been provided by him.

Victor D'Souza has been engaged primarily in urban studies and has examined critically the existing theory of urbanization and has suggested

certain modifications to some of the concepts. He has also been engaged in studies of caste ranking. In his case also one cannot say that he has provided any particular theoretical framework.

Y.B. Damle started his research career by inquiring into the relationship between social stratification and income. In this study, after examining the various theoretical frameworks for the study of stratification, he has come out with the formulation that social stratification and income are not directly related to each other, but via the variable of skill which is socially prized. Even though he has been greatly influenced by Talcot Parsons and Robert K. Merton, he has not made an extensive use of their theories except perhaps the reference group theory as developed by Merton. Damle has written on reference group theory with regard to mobility in caste and was also responsible for guiding systematic fieldwork on this problem. By and large he has been actively interested in the analysis of social change in India by making use of certain concepts. Both Weber and Marx are found to be extremely significant for the understanding of Indian society by him. He is convinced increasingly of the importance of understanding contradictions and conflicts in society. His special interest in the study of education and bureaucracy as agents of change have enabled him to examine some of the important ideas of Weber and Marx. Even then one cannot say that he has been able to provide a particular framework.

Bopegamage has been engaged in urban studies and has also inquired into the changing status image in the villages. He has also made use of a few concepts in this context. Recently, he has written on Neo-Buddhist movement and change.

Andre Beteille who has been nationally and internationally famous has been engaged in examining the inter-relationship between caste, class and power and he is committed definitely to Weberian approach. It must be said to his credit that he almost initiated studies in agrarian structure, although he has not been able to study the problem at the macro level because of his micro approach and the emphasis on village studies. His interest in the study of social equality is also evinced in his numerous papers and works on the theme. Andre Beteille has made a meaningful use of Weberian concepts and formulation, although he has not been able to provide a meaningful Weberian model suitable for Indian conditions because of the specific areas of research and his approach.

Yogendra Singh has also been very well known nationally and internationally for his contribution. He is very well versed in Western sociological theory including Marxian theory and therefore has always been sensitized to the dimension of class even while examining social interaction in a rural setting. His work on modernity of tradition is rightly famous for his capacity to use critically the existing theoretical formulations and to suggest meaningful modifications. His work on the

academic role structure and modernization also evinces theoretical insight and methodological sophistication. Apart from his own work, his critical writing on the existing state of knowledge in the field of social stratification and social change offers one proper insight and appreciation of his contribution. In his critical work on social stratification one can see his attempt to provide a meaningful theoretical framework suitable to Indian conditions. Similarly, in his critical appraisal of the existing concepts and theories of social change he emphasizes the importance of a variety of approaches for a meaningful study of social change in India.

Satish Saberwal made a very interesting study of occupational and social mobility in the Punjab and has pointed out the structural constraints to such efforts. He has been engaged consistently in the study of social structure with its inherent contradictions, so he has advocated use of dialectical approach. He is convinced equally that structural analysis without the help of history would be sterile and unrealistic. His interest in the problem of equality in the Indian setup, also stems from his concern for structural contradictions in Indian society and the wide propagation of equalitarian values and ideologies.

Oommen started by examining the concept of charisma with reference to Bhoodan and Gramdan movements and has been able to suggest modifications to the existing conceptual and theoretical framework. His interest in the study of agrarian tensions enabled him to inquire into the nature of the economic and political structure and its consequences for social structure. He has also been engaged in the study of professions. One can see a serious attempt at examining the existing conceptual and theoretical framework on his part and a capacity to suggest modifications and improvements.

J.P.S. Uberoi has been insisting on discarding academic colonialism and has advocated a meaningful use of indigenous categories and concepts although he has not been able to substantiate. D.N. Dhanagare has been engaged in the study of agrarian movements and has examined the contradictions in the Indian social structure both in terms of empirical research and appropriate use of historical material. The imbalances inherent in the division of urban and rural society in India and the various mechanisms utilized for exploitation of the peasant have been highlighted by him. Appropriate use of dialectical approach and reliance on historical material can be said to be his contribution.

Veena Das's work on 'Structure and Cognition' has been very well received and she has made a very serious plea for the adoption of structuralist point of view for the study of Indian society. She has, in fact, emphasized the importance of proper knowledge of tradition in all its structural ramification for the understanding of social reality. Veena Das has been influenced by Levi-Strauss and his structural

approach. She has made a very meaningful attempt to link up cognitive structure with social reality. Ideas and knowledge may not correspond completely to social reality and still they influence behaviour in the sense that they provide terms of references for people. Veena Das has made a very forceful plea for structural approach. To that extent, she has underscored the limitations of raw historical empiricism.

K.C. Alexander has also been engaged now in the study of agrarian tensions wherein he takes into account the consequences of enrichment of land owning classes as well as the capacity for bargaining on the part of the landless labourers. He has emphasized the importance of organised labour for bringing better wages and conditions of work.

Suma Chitnis has been engaged mainly in research in the field of sociology of education and has examined the impact of social structure on the working of education as a social institution particularly for change. She has pointed out limits to such change. Meaningful use of concepts and adherence to structural-functional framework can be mentioned as her contribution.

In the West a school of thought developed, which was very critical of sociology, its theory and the ideological presuppositions. In India there are scholars who are very critical of sociology as a discipline and contend in all seriousness that sociology as a scientific discipline is not viable. A.K. Saran can be said to be the main exponent of this point of view. A.K. Saran, a disciple of D.P. Mukherjee, initially started by emphasizing the importance of tradition for proper sociological understanding. But now he has taken the position that sociology, or for that matter social science, is not a viable discipline.

As mentioned earlier, it has not been my intention to list the various contributors and their contributions exhaustively, but to highlight some of the important scholars and their work. At the end of this exercise one is left with the inescapable impression that the contribution of these scholars has not resulted in producing a satisfying and comprehensive theoretical framework for the analysis of Indian society. At least such a framework is not evinced in the writing and work of any of these authors. However, instead of ending on a note of despair I would say that taking into account the diverse areas in which sociological research has been carried out and particularly the critical examination of existing concepts, theories and models while undertaking such work, one is convinced that there is enough material out of which one could evolve a meaningful theoretical framework.

Apart from the survey reports published by the Indian Council of Social Science Research in the field of sociology we come across a critical appraisal of the work of Indian sociologists by Ramkrishna Mukherjee, Yogendra Singh, Saberwal, Dhanagare, Damle and others, which has enough potential for developing a proper theoretical model. I would

further like to add that in the construction of such a theoretical framework proper attention must be paid to the various dimensions and levels of Indian social structure. It is not enough to be merely aware of this but it is extremely important to work out their inter-relationships. In order to arrive at a unified theory of Indian social structure a proper structural analysis is called for. Structural analysis includes consciousness about contradictions inherent in the structural framework. Therefore, I would suggest a simultaneous use of dialectical approach.

After Independence the rising level of aspirations and the failure to satisfy them has resulted in tremendous frustration and has even meant a rejection of the existing system. The struggle for equality of opportunity and material comforts, consistent with human dignity on the part of the oppressed has posed a serious challenge to the existing system. Every now and then one hears of various kinds of protest movements to get a better deal, for example, Dalit movement, movement of the farmers for getting a fair deal, struggles by agricultural and industrial workers, etc. Imbalanced development between the urban and the rural sectors, between different states and regions, has also been a matter of grave concern. The policy of accommodation and co-optation followed by various political parties, and particularly the ruling party has assuaged feelings of deprivation, neglect and oppression, only to a limited extent. Every now and then there is demand for confrontation and conflict.

In India we have the peculiar paradox of the utilization of traditional groupings and structures for furthering the process of modernization. Various interest groups which centre upon caste, kinship, language and region stake their claims for advantages out of secular prosperity. While there has been an erosion of legitimacy as far as traditional institutions like caste and joint family are concerned, adroit use is made of these institutions and groupings for furthering one's claim and for deriving maximum advantages out of economic prosperity, industrialization, etc.

Similarly one finds a resurgence of the cultural symbolism, particularly in so far as religion is concerned. Therefore, a framework which will take cognizance of the peculiar relationship between tradition and modernity is needed. Of course even the resurgence of cultural symbolism has its political and economic dimension. Therefore, to have an appropriate theoretical framework, sociologists will have to have a meaningful interaction with economists and political scientists who are concerned with the problems of distribution of goods and services as well as power. The crucial problem is the eroding of traditional notions of legitimate status, power and domination, which is accompanied by increasing demand for changing the basis of status, power and domination. Neglect of the economic and political dimension of the social reality would be a grievous error on the part of the sociologists.

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