

PROJECT PROPOSAL

2000

Proposed topic of research: Origin and Development of the Bombay School of Sociology 1911-1980

This study investigates the peculiar circumstances under which Sociology was established as a discipline, and the historical forces which shaped the Bombay School of Sociology or the Mumbai University Department of Sociology as it is now known.

1) Objectives of the study:

- To locate the forces in history that led to the introduction of Sociology, an unfamiliar discipline at a particular point of time, especially when there were no trained teachers either in India or abroad to take up this responsibility.
- To assess the consequences of appointing an untrained candidate to the first chair.
- To find out how Prof Ghurye built the Bombay School, and also its long term consequences on the growth of this discipline in India.
- To locate the forces in history which changed the trend within the department in the late 1960s and how Prof A R Desai took up the challenge and built the Department.
- Yet, why did the Department fail to take off is an importance issue.
- As a postscript, what is the impact of globalization on this Department ?

2) Statement of the Problem:

The University of Bombay established its first Chair in 1919 and that was in Sociology. Neither the choice of the subject nor the date of its establishment tally with the Government of India's (GOI's) mandate. The mandate was very categorically for a Professor of Economic Research -- with emphasis on research. But Bombay University's shift in interest from economic research to teaching of sociology raises many questions. So too the related question, why sociology slipped into a subordinate position to economics in 1924, down grading a Professor and Head of the School of Sociology and Economics, into a mere Reader in Sociology in the School of Economics and Sociology. This is reported to have not only created tensions but also hampered the growth of sociology as a discipline.

Ghurye built the Department, created the data base for its growth, trained promising scholars to occupy chairs in other up and coming universities and all the while taking care to keep the content of sociology apolitical, in a historical period charged with intense political activity. And sociology continued to be apolitical even after the transfer of power to graduate into mainstream apolitical sociology.

But the Bombay School itself changed when it opened itself out to forces of history; and its numerous effects were evident in changes in the curricula and in other academic activities too. Yet, why did the Bombay School let slip its opportunity to become an 'advance centre' when its hopes for growth were soaring and the UGC made this prestigious offer ? We may ask, what is its present status and how is its sociology linked with the present state of political economy ?

This study on the history of the Bombay School of Sociology would be incomplete if the history of the University Department is explored without touching on its tenuous links with the under graduate studies. They share a common Board of Studies, where the contradictions are sharpest. This question merely opens up the area for exploration, our major concern in this study is with the University department.

3) Historical Background:

It is necessary to move back in time by a decade in India and then into the nineteenth century Europe to appreciate founding of Sociology as a counter revolutionary academic discipline.

In India: Lord Curzon feared English education had bred dangerous revolutionary ideas in the educated elite in India. Therefore, by the new University Act of 1904, universities were converted from affiliating to teaching institutions; and a greater control over them was achieved by appointing a large number of government representatives in the university senate.

Numerous commissions set up Curzon was one of the basis of his competent administration. Though Curzon resigned in 1904, yet before the end of that decade GOI possibly decided that Commissions be replaced by more competent University Professors of Economic Research to gather and analyse information. Religion figured among the list of proposed researches. Historically viewed, this new found concern has to be linked with both the effects of religious revival movements of the late nineteenth century, as well as with the Home Rule Movement under the leadership of the theosophist Annie Besant and Tilak. First Tilak and then Gandhi used religious symbolism to mobilize the masses. The Home Rule Movement reached its height in 1916. The Secretary of State's perceptive observation of the situation resulted in the Montague Chelmsford Bill of 1917.

In Europe: When Europe was modernizing, the growing demand of its people for their democratic rights culminated in the French Revolution. One of the counter revolutionary reactions came from August Comte in the form of organismic positivism. Comte was declared as the Father of Sociology. The first chair in Sociology was established in France and was occupied by E Durkheim. It came on the heels of Paris Commune. Herbert Spencer was the founder of Organismic Individualism, a less rigid variant of organismic theory, a product of a more confident England at that point of time. Edmund Burke's Organismic Conception of Society contributed to the formation of conservative political and social philosophy not only in England but on the continent as well.

Elsewhere: It cannot be a coincidence that Japan had closed its door to usher modernization. It was the only Asian country to have introduced sociology before Chancellor Wellington manipulated and introduced this discipline into the University of Bombay.

4) Research Questions:

1. Why did the GOI ask for the appointment of competent Professors in Economic Research in all its 3 universities ? What were the economic issues proposed to be researched ? Why did it also suggest research on the question of religion, a non-economic issue ?

2. Why did the University of Bombay shift its interest from Economic Research to teaching of Sociology in 1916, when it had already selected Prof John Todd, a competent scholar with much research to his credit, for the Chair in Economic Research, and his appointment only needed a formal approval by the Syndicate.
3. Why and how did the Senate stall Prof Todd's appointment; and how did it manipulate for the appointment of a full Professor to teach Sociology rather than research in it ?
4. Why was there a two years gap between the Senate achievement for the appointment of a Professor of Sociology and the actual appointment ?
5. How did the University overcome the Government of Bombay's resistance to sanction the post, and finally for the appointment of an unqualified candidate for the chair. Was Lord Curzon, the Secretary of State for India at that point of time called in to settle the issue ?
6. Why was an unqualified Town Planner selected for a prestigious University chair ?
7. Yet, why was a Professor of Economic appointed within a year i.e. before the end of December 1920. Was it a face saving device for the Bombay University ? How did the University get Government's sanction and resources for the additional chair, in fact for setting up a full Department of Economics ?
8. What is the relevance of political and economic history of India on the pattern of growth in Sociology ?

5) Hypothesis:

Chancellor Wellington and the English members of the Senate were aware of the counter revolutionary content of academic sociology, and the powerful philosophy of the organismic theory of society, which they assumed would perhaps serve as a useful means to curb and even counter the revolutionary tendencies among the University students – the potential future leaders.

Their desperate attempts to introduce sociology in 1916 was a panic reaction to the Home Rule Movement turning into a mass movement under the leadership of Tilak – of the radical section of the Congress.

Montague, the Secretary of States' observation of the deepening political crisis of 1916 resulting in the Montague Chelmsford Bill 1917 for constitutional reform strengthens our hypothesis that Sociology is used as a damage control device.

6) Methodology: Historical

Secondary sources: (1) on the history of higher education

(2) on the history of the Bombay University books on and by Patrick Geddes, G S Ghurye and A R Desai

Primary sources:

- 1) University archives for records of Senate and syndicate meetings, departmental files; clippings file; clippings file and university calender of events

2) University library : for doctoral and masters' dissertations

3) State archives: for Bombay University and Secretary of Education - GOB correspondence

for a closer picture of GOI and GOB correspondence

for Press Reports

for confidential Reports

4) Police Records: On the proposed arrest of Prof Kushal Shah for his political sympathy for Gandhi in 1924

On surveillance over the School of Economics and Sociology

5) Oral sources : former students of Prof Ghurye and Prof Vakil

6) Private papers of (a) Sir Chimanlal Setalvad credited for establishing the Bombay School of Sociology (b) Justice Narayan Chandavarkar – a member of the Senate who asked for the second chair i.e. Professor of Economics and succeeded in having one appointed before the end of the year 1920

(c) Wellington Papers

List of Publications

Books

- 1 And the Bamboo flowers in the Indian forests : What did the paper and pulp industry do ? Manohars, 2003, New Delhi (2 volumes)
- 2 Contradictions in Indian Society (ed. with Indira Munshi) Rawat, 1996, Jaipur, New Delhi
- 3 Labour Movement in India – Documents 1937-39 (3 volumes) Sponsored by ICHR (ed. jointly with K Ganesh) forthcoming, 2004
- 4 Management – White collar relations, Popular Prakashan, 1969 Bombay sponsored by RPC of the Planning Commission, New Delhi
- 5 Freud : on Man and Society, Popular Prakashan 1965, Bombay

Monographs

- 1 The Kumbars of Kumbharwada : an artisan community settlement in an industrial settling, Bombay (Mimeo) 1974 – sponsored by Bombay University, Dept of Sociology
- 2 Structure of an Indian village – Case study of Saravali, a tribal village in Maharashtra (Mimeo) 1976 sponsored by Bombay University, Dept of Sociology
- 3 Under Development of Ratnagiri : A case of rural metropolitan relations (mimeo) 1979 sponsored by Bombay University, Dept of Sociology
- 4 Corporate sector in Rural Development – corporate sector experiments in village India (mimeo) 1984 sponsored by Bombay University, Dept of Sociology

Mumbai

To, Dr. Sujata Patel

Madam,

As desired by Dr. Samr,
a copy of the proposal is sent—
herewith.

Regards,

Sangita Shingankar
WRCTC, SR

Conference Propo

Formation of Sec. Sc. s in Indian
Docu. Know Pr. & Inst. in
Sociology: