

Indigenization of Sociology

- Main Trends –

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Abstract: *This research article is an organised attempt to indicate colonisation of sociology in the form of worldview of Sociology, its presence in system of sociological knowledge in India and roles and contribution of Indian Sociologists who examine global character of sociology and distinctive understanding of Indian society based on its classical traditions popularly known as Indigenization of Sociology. The Contributions of Lucknow School of Sociology and Bombay School of Sociology, are organs of those ways by which Indigenization of Sociology appears and poses some important questions about Sociology developed in West or in Europe. This article helps in understanding of Indian Sociology, Sociology in India, Sociology of India and Sociology for India from the viewpoints of theoretical, ideological and methodological orientations.*

Keywords: Indigenization, ideology, paradigm, self-consciousness, alienation, cognitive structure

Introduction

The worldview of sociology today is at a new turning point. There are critical tensions in its cognitive structure, methodology and theory. One would observe that in the West growth and acceptability of sociology followed in proportion to the corresponding challenges it faced in the emergence of an industrial society. In its formative years

sociology gained acceptability in public and academia by its potential as a secular worldview and as a tool next in significance probably only to economics, for identifying and analysing in depth the concrete problems arising out of the birth pangs of the industrial society. The classical sociology of Karl Marx, Max Weber and Emile Durkheim, reflects this feature in adequate measures. Sociology's strong points as a discipline were its ability to integrate at the existential level, mainly at the level of social structure and values, the philosophical and moral issues of emerging contemporary society which so far had been dealt with in abstraction only.

The contribution of sociology was in its effort to integrate the formal with the concrete, the logical with phenomenological and the transcendent with historical realms of reality. In this endeavour, the sociologists in the West sometimes 'replaced', sometimes 'integrated' and sometimes only elaborated upon the older paradigms of man and society. One finds in Karl Marx emphasis towards replacement. but in Max Weber and Emile Durkheim the tendency clearly is towards integration and elaboration. Durkheim rejects both idealistic apriorism and positivistic empiricism in the understanding of social reality and opts for a kind of sociologism (socially and existentially mediated nature of meanings and categories) in the theory of knowledge. Max Weber offers his ideal types as conceptual bridges between general and specific, between historical and nomological levels of understanding of reality. Even though his social anthropology is subdued his urge for integration between logical and the concrete is more than obvious. In Karl Marx, however, one witnesses a posture for replacement; his method of semantic inversion while he treats of Hegel, Adam Smith, Ricardo and Feuerbach among others, his frontal attack on formalism in favour of humanism, his replacement of essence by existence, rationality by alienation in the conceptual and operational system of social sciences, brings out adequately his replacement orientation.

As sociology emerged slowly from this classical tradition it gained acceptability in the West as it offered a middle path between challenges of positivism of the natural sciences and existential

phenomenology of philosophy and theology. It offered a worldview which maintained the ethical imperatives, a legacy of the past tradition, but it also preserved the freedom of man by socialising the principles and processes behind the ethical imperatives. The ethic ceased to be transcendental; it was located in the existential structure of man and society. All the traditions of sociological theorizing, dialectical materialism, symbolic-interactionism, functionalism and phenomenology concur and converge on this basic premise of sociology. Social basis of moral principles postulated in sociology renders it essentially human and historical in nature. The moral dilemma of society--the structure and process of alienation is to be sought not in the transcendent principles, but in the concrete historicity of society.

This assumption impelled sociological studies in two directions in the West: first, empirical studies on concrete social problems of industrial society, such as poverty, deviant behaviour and marginality, conditions of migrants and working classes women and children, family structure and adjustments, studies of social organisations in formal and informal settings, studies of urban and rural phenomena, population structure and several other groups and activities. Through these studies, sociology contributed to innovation of new tools of social research, new skills of observation and analysis of social data and it developed into the direction of what is called 'scientific sociology'. The critical theory of the Frankfurt School in the forties attempted to synthesise the premises and empirical insights derived from history, psychoanalysis, Marxism, philosophy and other social sciences into a systematic perspective on the criticism of industrial civilization and its ideology. The contributions of Theodor Adorno, M. Horkheimer, J. Habermas, Eric Fromm and Herbert Marcuse among the critical theorists and Morris Ginsberg, Talcott Parsons, P. Sorokin, Karl Mannheim, Lewis Mumford, Raymond Aron, Jean Paul Sartre among many others, ventilate this concern of sociology.

By the sixties, therefore, sociology in the West underwent a new paradigmatic convulsion. It coincided with youth movements all over the Euro-American campuses, a movement which was simultaneously

social and intellectual. In the intellectual realm the traditional philosophical and humanistic matrix of sociology had greater appeal for this generation than formal or empirical sociology. Marxism, existentialism, phenomenology now increasingly came into vogue. A movement arose against positivistic methods in sociology, large scale computer aided surveys and researches in other societies for defence or counter insurgency purposes.

Ideology and Indian Sociology

Although Marx is the first sociologist to clearly recognize the place of ideology in social theory, a similar recognition implicitly or explicitly may be found in the works of classical sociologists, such as Max Weber and, Emile Durkheim. In the contributions of Marx, however, ideology is treated systematically and in greater depth. Ideology according to Marx operates as mystification in the categories of social science through errors of semantic inversion, when subject is falsely substituted for the predicate. It is a fallacy of substitution; instead of formulating the relationship between cause and effect, effect is treated as cause. The proposition, "Man created God" is formulated as "God created man", thus not only the causal nexus but also the centrality of existential forces is lost. The operation of ideology at this universal level is however, also in existence at the specific levels of groups and classes. Here, it operates as "false consciousness". It distorts one's self-definition in the social schemes of day-to-day life, in the areas of kinship and family, patronage and exchange, class consciousness and in a series of structures of human conditions. It established a linkage between material interests and ideas, between existential and intellectual realms and between being and consciousness which is not visible in normal course. Social criticism, de-mystification.

As sociology passed from this classical tradition to its contemporaneity a differentiation between its empirical and the critical orientations took place and the notion of ideology became more specific and more politicalised.

The colonial linkages of modern social sciences in India have right from the beginning sharpened the ideological nuances in the growth

of these disciplines, particularly sociology. The two distinctive characteristics of Indian sociology in its formative period were: first its ideological self-consciousness and secondly its focus on the study of social change. The ideological focus emerged as western educated Indian intellectuals encountered the western models for the construction of Indian reality coming from social scientists, administrators and clergy men. In the nineteenth and early twentieth century western writings about India one finds twofold interpretations; first, by orient lists, who admired Indian tradition, its philosophy, art, language and literature and felt that the west could further be enriched by contact with Indian tradition. The other orientation was that of English utilitarians, whose training in nominalistic rationalism is the study of social and economic institutions led them to find basic institutional faults in the Indian social system calling for fundamental reforms. This group comprised both of scholars and administrators. It is indeed, this section of British experts and administrators who contributed to Indian social anthropology, sociography, ethnology and settlement operations etc. which laid the foundation of modern social science in India. Their contribution, however, was not without the ideological package. Their commitment to utilitarian-rationalist ideology of which 'progress ideology' of the nineteenth century European thought was one of-shoot, and 'unilinear evolutionism' was another, tended to place Indian society very low in the evolutionary hierarchy. This involved cultural judgement which were hurtful and unacceptable to western educated Indian intellectuals and social scientists.

The founders of Indian sociology, B.N. Seal, Radhakamal, G.S. Ghurye, D.P. Mukherjee and others were critical from the very beginning of the application of concepts and methods of western origin for the study of a historically and culturally distinct entity such as the Indian society. They saw in the theory of social evolutionism of the west an ideological interpretation of India which placed it in a relationship of cultural inferiority and dependence. They rejected such a thesis. They also rejected the extension of positivistic-utilitarian model of the western social science, particularly that of sociology

which was based on nominalistic philosophical assumptions about the nature of society. This model started with the individual as the basis and fundamental unit of the social structure, which in aggregate expressed its main attributes. D. P. Mukherji postulated that the western concept of individual has no relevance for the understanding of the Indian social structure as the elemental component of this system was the 'sangha' or community. Ghurye rejected the dichotomy between tribe and caste introduced by western social anthropology and Radhakamal Mukherjee criticised the western notion of democracy based on individual rationalism as the only basis of democracy. He also attempted to establish historically how democratic institutions and practices existed in India long in the past.

As we have analysed the response to this challenge led sociology in several directions. At the meta-theoretical level, the effort to incorporate western concepts with Indian modification have been most common. This was evident in the works of founder sociologists in India. The same could be said to be true for the new generation of Indian sociologists in the fifties and sixties. In the studies of caste, religion, nationalism, social change in the rural-urban communities, power structure and leadership, social movements etc., the areas that sociologists have covered during this period, one would notice that elements of western theoretic paradigms such as that of structural-functionalism, structuralism, historical materialism etc., have been utilised in epistemic and methodological orientations. Yet a few sociologists have rejected the 'synthesis' approach. In their case sociological thinking and analysis emerged as the logical exegesis of the fundamental postulates or western sociology and its worldview. They find this worldview itself to be fraught with logical and substantive Contradiction and worthy of total rejection.

Dilemma of Indigenization

This leads us to the fundamental problem faced by modern sociology in India, which is to discover its roots the Indian social reality and tradition, its quest for indigenization. The dilemma in this process can be observed at two levels: first, in the worldview of sociology. In our

analysis of the worldview of western sociology we have tried to show how deeply and organically is the western sociological worldview, in its concern for alienation of man, his moral dilemma, and the interaction between transcendent and concrete social structures, been linked with the past western philosophical theological tradition. The problem that sociologists of non-western world confront in their effort to indigenise sociology is that of integrating its conceptual system with the philosophical worldview of their own tradition. In a new culture context, this problem assumes acute significance. The historicity of the organic linkage of sociology in the west with Christianity, its phenomenological tradition on the one hand, and on the other with Greek and Roman philosophy and phenomenology, renders it possible in the west to view sociological worldview as an integral evolution from its past tradition. The same cannot be said to be the case in India. Our philosophical and theological systems in their individuality and variety have not undergone similar evolutionary transformative extension.

The schools of sociology in India which have consciously attempted to draw the elements of Indian tradition, the Smritis and Scriptures into a language of sociology have only succeeded in exegetic interpretation and not a secularization or alienation of traditional principles as such. None of such attempts go into the existential phenomenology of man and his problems emerging in the process of the growth of industrial society.

This puts the issue of indigenisation of sociology, and its, ideological matrix into an altogether different, shape. The emphasis in the indigenisation strategy shifts from the questions of worldview or normative structure of society to operational strategies in research with suitable modification in the conceptual schemes. Without, however, recognising this fundamental historical dilemma in the process of indigenisation of Indian sociology, much debate related to this issue has focused upon problems of 'universalisation' versus 'particularization' of conceptual systems and theory.

It is indeed an open question as to whether the normative structure of Indian sociological theory with its grounding in the Indian traditional worldview could be evolved through selective transformation of its categories of man and society, their existential phenomenology and relationships. This question has at this level not been raised so far though it could possibly be attempted. In its absence most Indian sociologists while calling for indigenisation of sociology, its conceptual structure and methodology articulate anguish and resentment for continued dependence on the concepts and theories of western origin.

The main issue in the indigenisation of Indian sociology and social science is that of integrating the conceptual and methodological structure with the Indian worldview, its fundamental values of human morals and existential conditions; secondly, the issue is that of operational adaptation to tools and techniques of social research, which cannot be simply borrowed from other cultures. Simple processes of research such as interviews, observations and canvassing of schedules and questionnaires are not value-neutral encounters but involve acts of cultural mediation and interpretation in the process of observation. This aspect of research has now been fully realised in our country. Thirdly, the issue in indigenisation is also that of relevance. The concepts have their contextual and cultural value-loads and cannot be transplanted from one country to another. Moreover, the historicity of social science problem varies and the nature of questions or their priorities differs in a world that continues to be heavily stratified.

But at the normative level, because of the linkages of sociology with the western tradition, because of the alienative quality of the Indian sociological worldview and the consequent feeling of guilt among sociologists in India, effort towards indigenisation has been weak; it has expressed itself more in terms of verbal exhortations rather than deeds. This shows itself in many forms and at various levels. Firstly, if we examine the debates on the choice of theoretical paradigms, in Indian sociology, we will find that at the abstract level there is much thinking, but in empirical studies as such the content of theory is more

metaphoric than real. It is true in case of functional theory, but it may also be found valid in the uses of Marxist or other types of theory. It so happens because the very status of theory in sociology is problematic and nebulous. Indeed, in the West too and there is a growing realisation of the limits in application of formal theory in sociology. Secondly, the issue of relevance has more concretely been brought now to bear upon the sociological research through selective reformulation of concepts and methods in the study of social problems.

In the absence of organic growth of a worldview of sociology in consonance with the cultural tradition in India, sociology in India derives its normative structure and ideology from the national goals of social change and cultural transformation. Ideology in this sense, defines both the parameters of relevance as well as the normative context of its enterprises. It is in this domain that sociology would find its most creative and productive potentials. It may well be that as social researches on the crucial aspects of social structure, power structure, value systems and the entire gamut of processes involved in modernization of Indian society grow into a cumulative tradition, an organic integration of sociology with normative structure of society would have taken place. Since, the objective as well as instruments involved in the process of social change are essentially ideological, such. For the evolution of this organic ideology there should be scope in Indian sociology for researches both in the instrumental and normative areas of social life. The projects of change in any society have deep ideological tensions, and a creative sociologist attempts to capture these tensions through his work and implant, normative meanings of relevance in his studies.

For A Sociology of India

Having reviewed the main theoretic orientations in Indian sociology it may be useful to assess its impact on the process of universalization or particularization of categories and theory. This issue is both ideological and theoretic. Since Dumont and Pocock initiated the debate on "For a Sociology of India" in 1957, this issue has been

debated in response to their and Bailey's writings and also independently. Dumont's emphasis in the study of Indian sociology is on its fundamental idea-structural categories from an "external point of view". He would formulate his sociology from the language of the sources as it were, from the sentiments and ideas of the people themselves. Bailey finds fault with this model for its indifference towards study of relations', which are the main sociological category. With this frame of reference, sociology gets reduced to what Bailey calls 'culturology'. In his statement on "For a Sociology of India" in the final issue of Contributions, however, Dumont clarifies that he does not see the possibility of a particularistic sociology even though the substantive reality he would prefer the sociologist to deal with would be ideas and sentiments and not relations. Thus, without taking a structural position as that of Bailey, Dumont sees the possibility of a general sociology as the only way out.

The debate between Dumont and Bailey led Indian sociologists to think on this problem from an Indian perspective, where the issue was not of two varieties of general sociology of which the Indian sociology would be a part, but it was mainly whether Indian sociology could be universal or has to be particularistic. A seminar was organised on this problem in 1966 and its deliberations have been published (Unnithan et al: 1967). The conclusion of this seminar was that Indian sociology would have to operate at levels, the particularistic and the universal. Some concepts and categories as Srinivas' Sanskritization-Westernization, would be of primarily particularistic and ethno sociological relevance, but these could be further abstracted for cross-cultural comparisons (see, Singh Y: 1967 in Unnithan et al, 1967).

Methodological Orientations

Indeed, in the sixties Indian sociology underwent a strong change in its orientation towards the tools and techniques of research. The two most common tools used by sociologists during this period were participant observation by social anthropologists and survey research design for urban studies or studies of social categories. Some social anthropologists also used historical methods in their study, but its

vogue was muted only to revive more strongly in the sixties and seventies. Sociology teaching by this time invariably included courses in research methodology. Compared to other social sciences, with the exception of economics and psychology, methodological awareness has been higher in Indian sociology. Whereas survey design using statistical model of investigation has been quite common, the use of mathematical models has been rare. The application of cybernetic model, set-theory, matrix algebra, etc. in sociological researches have been made only recently and by few sociologists (see, Rastogi P.N.: 1976, 1975; D'Souza V.S.: 1972, Mukherjee R: 1976). As compared to the sociological practice in India during 1952-60, the trend in 1960-70 and 1970-77 has been more towards structural analysis from a historical and comparative perspective. This type of study did use simple quantitative techniques, but relied more on observational, case-historical and documentary data. Only the Marxist studies on agrarian structures, we reviewed, conducted mostly by economists than sociologists have used higher mathematical techniques in survey design of research.

Cognitive structure and methods in Indian sociology have been deeply conditioned by colonial historical experience. One does notice in this context some dissociation between the sociological works of the Indian sociologists and the foreigners, especially the colonial administrators turned sociologists or social anthropologists. In the works of C. H. Hutton and W. Wiser the elements of early functionalist orientation tends to be obvious, but not so is the case of pioneer sociologists, G.H. Ghurye, Radhakamal Mukherji and D.P. Mukerjee who were all engaged in monumental effort to understand the Indian reality.

Indigenization Sociology

We need to keep in mind that the western construction of the social sciences was replicated through European colonization in the rest of the world. It is, therefore, perfectly understandable that the paradigms that originated in encounters with problems following the industrialization of the West, and colonization, tended to predominate

the substantive concerns of the postcolonial countries. We not only inherited the British western university system, but also European or the American influences largely conditioned our courses, curricula and research agendas.

It is significant that from the late 1960s till the mid-1980s there was intense debate over the importation and relevance of the western social sciences. Prominent critiques included C.T. Kurien (1968), A.C. Espiritu (1968), Kikuo Yamaoka (1968), S.C. Dube (1978), John Samy (1978), and P. L. Bennagen (1979). Yogesh Atal (1981: 190-92) ably captures the mood and temper of the times of these and other scholars. However, it was left to Syed Hussein Alatas, the Malaysian sociologist, to conceptualise the 'captive mind' to capture the phenomenon. It was, according to him, 'the product of higher institutions of learning, either at home or abroad, whose way of thinking is dominated by western thought in an imitative and uncritical manner'; it is 'uncreative and incapable of raising original problems'; 'incapable of devising analytical method independent of current stereotypes'; 'incapable of separating the particular from the universal in science and thereby properly adapting the universally valid corpus of scientific knowledge to the particular local situation'; 'fragmented in outlook'; 'alienated from the major issues of sociology'; 'alienated from its own national tradition, if it exists, in the field of intellectual pursuit'; 'is unconscious of its own captivity and the conditioning factors making it what it is'; 'is not amenable to an adequate quantitative analysis but it can be studied by empirical observation'; and it 'is a result of western dominance over the rest of the world'.

Indian sociology, therefore, faces a crisis which is historical as well as epistemological. The profession of sociology in India is passing through a phase of sharp identity consciousness. The need for a balance between concepts and methods in the study of sociological problems is essential at this juncture for the progressive growth of the discipline in our country.

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