

ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIOLOGY IN INDIA: A CRITICAL INQUIRY

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Abstract

This paper has attempted to understand the origin and development of sociology in India. In the west the emergence of sociology as a discipline could be traced back to the 19th century. But, the 'political philosophy' and 'philosophy of history' of the discipline sociology goes back to the deep past. Therefore, the social thinkers who contributed to the origin and growth of sociology have given more importance to the 'social history' throughout ages. In India, the roots of sociology could be better located post-1857, when the first war of independence happened against British. But, during medieval India the reformist movements were sociological in nature. Later, the sociology writings have given more consideration to them. This paper critically evaluates two things. One; to understand the origin of sociology in India and second, it discusses the development in India, both in academic and research. It critically evaluates the various challenges the sociology is facing in India.

Keyword: Sociology, Origin, Development, Research, Teaching, Critical, India

1.INTRODUCTION

Sociology emerged as a systematic discipline in the beginning of 19th century. Many social and intellectual factors helped in the growth of sociology in the west. Saint Simon (1760-1825) was the first social thinker who tries to understand the natural and social phenomena. He was greatly influenced by the 'scientific methods' and 'scientific investigation'. Therefore, his approach was to apply the same natural science methodology to the understanding of social phenomena. Later, a French social thinker and philosopher Auguste Comte (1798-1857) helped the discipline in its origin and

development. Comte is considered as the founding father of sociology due to his enriches contribution to the positive sociology. Comte was greatly influenced by Simon's approach of looking at social phenomena. Comte worked as a secretary under Saint Simon and due to the close associations he learned many things from him. Comte's father wanted him to become a politician or engineer, but his mind was influenced by the French and Industrial revolutions. These two revolutions are considered as the biggest revolutions in the history of mankind. Therefore, Comte decided to work to understand the real cause behind such impact by these twin revolutions on human mind and the society at large. Comte's major work, "Course de Philosophie Positive" or 'Positive Philosophy' was wrote in between 1830 to 1842 and has published in 6 volumes. In this work he has developed the idea of the law of three stages, in which he has explained the concept of 'positive society'. Comte's major aim was to implement the natural science model to understand the social phenomena. He was greatly influenced by the way natural sciences are looking at objects. After Auguste Comte, Herbert spencer, Karl Marx and Max Weber works became significant in the origin and development of sociology in the west.

But, in India the origin and development of could find it roots in the colonial history. When the revolt of 1857 took place, Britishers got confused about the complexity of Indian Society and shocked to see the unity among Hindu and Muslims. British were unable to find out the possible reasons for such revolt. At the time the British government was trying to find out the real cause of such unity among huge diverse Indian society. In this way British government decided to understand the religion and culture of Indian society. Therefore, such circumstances led to the introduction of ethnographic studies and the rise of sociology and anthropology in India. There are two possible reasons of

the origin and the development of sociology in India like in the west. One, to understand the impact of colonial rule on Indian society and second, to review the writing by various British scholars on India. Indological studies became the centre of attraction for most of the scholars both in India and West.

Therefore, like west, sociology in India has possible reasons for the emergence and growth of the discipline in India. According to Srinivas and Pains (1971: 181), the growth of sociology in India falls into three phases: the first, covering the period between 1773-1900 AD, when their foundations were laid; the second 1901-1950 AD, when they become professionalized; and finally, the post-independence years, when a complex of forces, including the undertaking of planned development by the government, the increased exposure of Indian scholars to the work of their foreign colleagues, and the availability of funds, resulted in considerable research activity (Nagla, 2008:11). Govind Sadashiv Ghurye (1893-1984) became the first Indian sociologist who systematically developed the discipline sociology in India. Ghurye is considered as the founding father of Indian sociology.

Post-globalization the nature and the scope of the discipline has come down due to the encouragement for more theoretical studies than applied research. In India, sociological research has not contributed such huge in the public policy. Most of the public policy institutes have given more importance to economics, political science, history, etc than sociology. The acquired knowledge of the sociology may be taken by the other social science disciplines but has not given much recognition to the subject matter of the discipline in the applied research. This seems the most challenging for sociological research to grow in India.

Sociology gives us deep accounts of human and social world. It studies society in a scientific way. It studies human interactions, Human organizations, communities, groups, societies, human attitudes, social institutions, actions, etc. Basically, it studies the impact of social phenomena or social institutions on both individual and society. Therefore, sociological research should be more encouraged in social science research in India.

2.LITERATURE REVIEW

R.K.Mukherjee (1979) has focus much in the study of Indian Culture, Civilization, Art and Architecture. His vision of sociology is deep rooted in the Indian tradition. According to Mukherjee, the theory to understand Indian society could be created by looking at the Indian Philosophy, art, culture and tradition.

G.S. Ghurye (1932) whose influence can be greatly seen in sociological literature. He basically has considered himself as indologist for his great interest in the understanding of India culture and society. His work on, '*Caste and Race in India*' in 1932 became much exemplary in the discipline sociology. In this book he has defined the Indian caste structure and its functioning. Later on, another book of Ghurye, '*Culture and Society*', published in 1947, which discusses the Indian societal structure. But, most of the scholars in sociology have criticized Ghurye's work on caste due to less critical and applicability of the work. In spite of that the contribution of Ghurye is still in practice in sociology in both teaching and research.

Louis Dumont's (1966) work to study Indian society became significant in sociology. He was a French sociologist and Indologist. He learnt Sanskrit to understand the ancient texts of Hindu society. His primary focus was to study the caste system of India. He has used indological, structural, dialectical, structuralism and ethnography to know more deeply about the caste practices in India. He argues that hierarchy is against the equalitarian model of society. He has explained the concept of pure and impure in his work, *The Homo Hierarchicus: The Caste and its Implications* (1966). But most of the Indian social thinkers have criticized the contribution of Dumont on caste due to particular world view instead of have show a universal reality.

M.N.Srinivas (1952/1966) has defined Indian society through structural functional approach. His work on, '*Religion and Society among the Coorgs of South India*', published in 1952 became huge famous and still considered relevant in sociology. In his another book, '*Social Change in Modern India*', which was published in the year 1966 has explained the concept *Brahminization*, *Sanskritization*, *Westernization* and *Secularization*. He became popular for introducing the concept,

'Sanskritization' in sociology, which he means adopting the ideology, beliefs, rituals of the higher caste. But, later the concept *Sanskritization* seems less effective in caste system due to temporary groundings.

A.R.Desai (1966/1981) a marxist scholar has also contributed in the origin and development of sociology in India. His was interested in the study of peasants, social movements, Indian national movement, etc. He has critically looked into the transformation of Indian Society and Social background of Indian Nationalism. He has used Marxist method of historical-dialectical materialism. His emphasis was to study the Indian society through Marxian approach and methods.

Yogendra Singh (1973/2000) has given much emphasis on the culture and tradition of Indian society. Therefore, his analysis of various sociological writings has given a deep analytical cultural perspective. His first book, '*Modernization of Indian Tradition*' was published in the year 1973 where he has explained the concept of social change and modernization. In 2000 his book got published titled, '*Cultural Change in India*' is considered as a outstanding book in sociology. In this book he has defined the cultural change in India and the role of globalization and modernization. His approach of understanding Indian society was basically structural-functional, structuralist, structural-historical and Marxist orientation.

N.K.Bose has given a civilizational view of sociology. He has applied historical, inductive, textual and functional methodology to understand Indian society. He had been the secretary of Gandhi. Therefore, such ideology inspires him to write about the nationalism, civilization, national integration and the Indian society. In sociology his works are still relevant to understand the Indian national movement.

B.R.Ambedkar has given a subaltern perspective to sociology. He was not a sociologist but his views on society and social issues are very much sociological in nature. He has studied the Untouchables, Shudra, and Caste. In sociology the subaltern studies has grown in huge manner.

Other sociological thinkers who have critical engagements with the discipline are; Yogendra Singh,

Andre Beteille, Panini, Dipanker Singh, T.K.Oomen, Veena Das, T.N.Madan, etc

3.BACKGROUND OF THE PAPER

This paper tries to understand the roots of Indian sociology. Like west, sociology in India is deep rooted in social, political and intellectual world. Most of the studies in sociology have given much consideration to the development of sociology in the west than in India. The possible reason has been accounted of the discipline origin in west. But, in India most of the scholars starts sociology with the writings of G.S.Ghurye, a renowned Indian sociologist and forgets to look back to the various social, political and cultural historical periods to trace philosophical and historical development of sociology. This paper has highlighted various drawbacks that has been lacking in the writings of various sociological scholars in India.

4.METHODOLOGY

This paper has been prepared by looked upon the contribution of various sociologists in the discipline sociology. It also has tried to go back to the ancient and medieval history to conceptualize the social events and figure out the prominent social thinker. It has used all the secondary sources available. It has used historical and comparative approach to interpret the sources. Historical method means the historical accounts available in the origin and growth of sociology in India. Comparative method means the comparison between the east and west as well as between various sociological thinkers in India.

5.ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis and discussion of the paper has given emphasis on the following points. *First*, it discusses the history of the origin of sociology in India. *Second*, it analyzes the growth and development of Indian sociology. It looks at the contribution of sociology in academics and the role of sociology in research and public policy. *Fifth*, it tries to understand the major drawbacks of sociology in India.

5.1. history of the origin of sociology in india

In India sociology emerged in the beginning of 20th century. It may be considered as a new discipline in the social sciences and humanities. But, it has long historical past. In ancient India, Kautilya is considered as a great social thinker. During 13th and 14th century Mira, Chaitanya, Kabir, Nanak etc., were considered as great social reformists and their writings are still considered as relevant. Later, Brahma Samaj movement by Raja Mohan Roy and The Arya Samaj movement by Swami Dayanand Saraswati in 1875 has greatly influenced the society at large. Gandhian thought is considered as important in sociological literature. In the history, G.S.Ghurye became the first social thinker who developed sociology in India. With indology approach Ghurye's wrote on the major social problems of India.

5.2. growth and development of indian sociology

Post 1910 the growth and development of sociology began in India with the introduction of sociology in Bombay University by Patrick Geddes and G.S.Ghurye from 1914 to 1919. Later on G.S.Ghurye became the head of the department of sociology, Bombay University in 1924. Soon after the introduction of sociology in Bombay university, Calcutta university with the efforts of B.N.Seal & R.K.Mukherjee introduced the department of sociology in Calcutta University. Later on R.K.Mukherjee and D.N.Majumdar started sociology as a discipline in Lucknow University in 1921, B.N.Seal, M.N.Srinivas and S.C.Dube in Mysore University in 1928 and Iravati Karve in Poona University in 1930.

Ghurye's work on, '*Caste and Race in India*', became exemplary in the sociological literature to understand the Indian caste structure. But post globalization most of the Indian sociological thinkers specialized on Indian caste started criticizing Ghurye's explanation of caste as more influenced by brahmanical ideology. On the other the works of A.R. Desai and N.K.Bose have focused more on the Indian National Movement, Indian nationalism, tradition and modernity.

But, post independence India, sociology started developing in India. In 1951, department of sociology, Bombay University, established Indian Sociological Society and in 1952 Sociological Bulletin was issued as

the official organ of the society. During 1960's and 70's the Indian sociology had given more focus to study the rural culture, urban society and industrial sociology. During this period the more emphasis was to understand the agrarian structure of rural India, the growing problems in urban India and the rising industries in India. Therefore, all these aspects of rural and urban became the major topics for sociologists to study it in more detail.

The Indian sociology during 1980's and 90's have given more focus to study Deviance, Sociology of Science and Technology, Historical Sociology, Sociology of Globalization, Social Change, Secularism and National Integration, Ecology and Society and Media & Society. Post 1990's Political Sociology, the rise of globalization, modernization, peace & conflict, gender, naxalism, urbanization, migration, etc (Nagla, 2008).

5.3. sociology in academics, research and public policy

Post independence India, sociology in teaching has grown. But, if compare and contract with the other social sciences disciplines, the situation is derogatory. There are many scholars Veena Das, Deshpande, Rege, Beteille who have pointed out the problems the sociology is facing in the context of teaching and research in India. Scholars also have pointed towards the outdated social thinkers still beings taught in sociology. *Second*, Indian sociology as compare to the western sociological scholars have not contributed in the theory and methodology of sociology. Few Indian sociologists have given their valuable contribution towards sociological literature like G.S.Ghurye, M..Srinivas, S.C.Dube, D.P.Mukherjee, A.R.Desai, N.K.Bose, Surajit Sinha, Yogendra Singh, Andre Beteille, Dipanker Gupta, etc. But still the Indian sociological research finds more domination of Eurocentric theories as compare to the indigenous origin. *Third*, the subject matter of sociology may have been grown but still the applied sociological research is centred towards caste and religion due to the various factors. One can find the sociological research done more on caste and religion as compare to the other topics of study. Least sociological research has focused on non-caste and religion. Two, a person belong to a particular caste, class or religion seems more interested to study the same area and later continues

with such research in the future. Therefore, division of research on the basis of various ideologies can be seen in the nature of sociological research. *Fourth*, the Indian sociological Association, who claims to represent the issues and challenges of sociology, has limited its nature of work to conduct one annual conference and few publications in year. Due to such kind of issues and challenges in sociology, the future of most of the young trained sociological scholars is at stake. The scope of sociology is limited to academics only where also have the challenges to flourish the discipline in most of universities, colleges etc across the country. For instance, the Delhi university who represents the entire country's in education or seen as a role model for other institutions has 12-13 colleges out of its approximately 77 colleges where sociology is being taught. But, one can find history and political science in almost all the colleges of the Delhi University. *Fifth*, still the sociological background scholar have not given such considerations in the public policy institutions as compare to the scholars from political science, economics and history backgrounds.

Therefore, the challenges are both at theoretical and applied level in sociological research in India. The sociological discourse should be held more to look into these major challenges. There is a need to inspire the scholars to conduct more research on the applied subject matter of sociology.

6.FINDINGS

This paper has looked into the major issues and challenges of sociology facing both in its theoretical and application of it. This paper has discussed the historical context of the origin and development of sociology in India. In this way this paper seems significant from the viewpoint of historical sociology. *Second*, this paper has highlighted the major challenges of the discipline sociology in India. Like west, the discipline sociology has enlarged its roots in every sphere, but still it has limitations in public policy research in India. Still most of the sociological research is up to the writing a book or an article, conducting seminars, conferences or workshops or teaching in universities etc. Sociology has given low weightage as compare to the other social sciences. It could be seen by observing and analysing the social institutions. Sociology in practice is facing

major challenge in India. It also finds that there is great need to work for the subject matter of sociology. There is a need to have the engagement of the discipline sociology with the public policy institutes, governmental organizations, etc. for the betterment of the modern society. It also finds that the associations looking after sociology in India has taken limited initiatives for the role of sociology India or the contribution of sociological research in the decision making bodies.

7.RECOMMENDATIONS

Different associations who represent sociology in any capacity should engage debates or conducts seminars or conferences to review and rethink on the subject matter of sociology. They should invite academicians or research scholars to give their opinions on the nature of the discipline sociology. The contemporary issues and challenges should be taken into account when looking into the discipline boundaries. Sociology should be given due recognition as like the other disciplines. Sociology studies society in a systematic manner. It gives more scientific results when studies social phenomena. There has been grown interdisciplinary approach in sociology to understand the social issues more holistically. Post emergence of the discipline sociology in the west, it developed various methods, approaches and theories to understand the society. Now the disciplines like political science, history, economics, etc are taking help of sociological approaches and methods to understand their field of research. Sociology is also known as the mother of all social sciences. Therefore, there is great need to train more and more scholars in sociology for deeper understanding of society and the emerging social problems. The government should create more space for sociology background scholars in public institutions.

8.CONCLUSION

This paper has given deeper accounts of the sociological history, theoretical perspective and sociological research in India. It has drawn the major issues and challenges the sociology is facing in India. This paper engages the debate on the growth of the discipline in India, where it discusses the work of various sociological thinkers. This paper also has given recommendations to the research institutes and the government for more

advancement of the discipline. Indian society is more complex in nature due to its heterogeneous character. Sociological research helps us to understand that complex society in a more scientific way. Sociology studies both organized and unorganized sectors of society. Its major aim is to acquire more and more knowledge. Therefore, such deep understanding of social phenomena could be more significant for the welfare of both individual and the society.

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