

Unit 2

Emergence of the Discipline : Issues and Themes

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Learning Objectives

After reading this unit you will be able to

- recall the historical roots of emergence of sociology in India
- explain the different socio-historical, political and cultural circumstances which led to the growth and development of sociology in India
- describe the growth and development of sociology as a profession
- explain various issues involved in the growth of sociology in post-Independence India
- discuss the expansion of teaching and research during the 1950s and 1960s
- outline some of the major research trends during the seventies, and finally
- describe briefly the theoretical and methodological orientations of sociologists in India.

2.1 Introduction

In the previous unit on “**Social Background and the Emergence of Sociology in India**” you learnt that in India, the emergence and growth of sociology discipline bears the imprint of Western sociology. Sociology as a science of society, studies its social institutions, social groups, social processes and organisations. It emerged in the Western society out of a socio-historical background which had its origins in the Enlightenment period. This period embodied the scientific and technological revolution, intellectual revolution and the commercial revolution in Europe, on the one hand, and the French revolution in 1789 on the other. The Enlightenment period stretched from the 14th century to the 18th century and had given rise to forces of social change which rocked the feudal monarchy, as well as, the Church in Europe. The Industrial revolution in England was the result of the technological developments which had taken place during the Enlightenment period brought very deep rooted changes in the nature of society and role of the individual. It had given rise to mass poverty, social evils and cultural problems. All these events gave the scholars and thinkers of that period reason to develop a science of society which could deal with these problems, find solutions, to

understand the nature of these problems and to ameliorate the condition of the poor masses who were living a life of abject poverty, crime and delinquency, and other social evils.

Besides the idea of social progress, these scholars also realised that poverty and its related social evils were not providential but had its roots in the forces of social change which the Industrial revolution in England had set in motion. Thus, the idea that poverty was socially created and could thereby be removed came to be accepted.

Here in this paper, we are going to focus more on the growth of sociology in India than its emergence. However, unless you know the social background of emergence of sociology, both in Europe, as well as, its emergence in India; the nature and growth of this discipline will not be clear to you.

2.2 Historical Roots of Sociology in India

Sociology is a “humanistic” social science even through it aims at objectivity in social observations. It has to take care of ideas and ideals, values and behaviour, aspirations and achievements, problems and predicaments of human beings in society. It cannot be seen irrespective of time and place, history and culture of societies being studied unlike the natural sciences. But sociologists have studied different human groups in particular historical circumstances and drawn generalisations about human relations from these studies.

As you learnt earlier in unit 1 of this course, sociology as a humanistic science found it difficult to fit in the mould of the natural sciences, such as, physics, chemistry, biology, etc. The debate regarding objectivity in social sciences has continued for a long time. However, our purpose to discuss this issue has been to bring to the attention the fact that sociology has developed in different countries in different manner according to their culture, tradition and historical circumstances. Its development in different countries bears the imprint of particular historical experiences and cultural configurations.

Indian sociologists being often trained in the West, were familiar with the basic concepts and categories of sociology as it had developed in the West. They borrowed these concepts and categories and applied them to the Indian context. Thus, unlike their predecessors in the West, such as, during the 19th century Europe, they did not find the need to struggle hard to establish the legitimacy of sociology as a serious intellectual discipline. But this dependence over the Western pioneers of sociology made the Indian sociologists to forget that sociology in the West was “an intellectual response, a cognitive response to the problems which that society was facing as a result of industrialisation and the type of social upheavals and transformations that were taking place.” (Singh, 1979; 107). Sociology emerged as an attempt to come to grips with the new situation which had emerged due to the social changes taking place in Western society; as mentioned earlier.

In India, however, no Industrial bourgeoisie arose when sociology was introduced. As European expansion increased, knowledge about the non-European World increased and the idea emerged under the influence of Darwin’s theory of evolution and the Victorian idea of “progress” that the non-European societies represented various stages of evolution. The

European societies, it was believed, had already reached the higher stages of evolutionary growth.

Thus, the context in which sociology, and its kindred discipline, anthropology grew in India was largely a product of the European expansion of the world in the last three or four centuries. Both sociology and anthropology arose in India as a colonial attempt to understand Indian society and culture. This colonial context is very important to the emergence of sociology and anthropology in India.

Bernard Cohn (1968 : pp. 3-28), says that “with the establishment of British suzerainty in the later 18th century, the rapid acquisition of knowledge of the classical languages of India by a few British officials, the need for administrative purposes of knowledge of the structure of Indian society, and the intensification of missionary activities, systematic knowledge of Indian society began to develop very rapidly from 1760 onward. Three major traditions of approach to Indian society can be seen by the end of the 18th century; the orientalist, the administrative and the missionary. Each had a characteristic view, tied to the kinds of roles which foreign observers played in India and the assumptions which underlay their views of India.” These have already been explained in the previous unit.

The British administrative officials, along with the missionaries, made earnest efforts to collect and record information regarding the life and culture of Indian social groups. Some examples are of Dr. Francis Buchanan who conducted the ethnographic survey of Bengal in 1807 at the instance of Government-General-in Council. Cohn (1968 : 13) mentions that ‘consistent with the relatively haphazard collection and reporting of sociological information, usually embedded in revenue reports or in historical works, the Company (i e the East India Company) directly supported surveys part of whose goal was acquisition of better and more systematic information about the peoples of India. One of the earliest and most famous endeavors to collect information was that of Dr. Francis Buchanan.’

Abbe Dubois, a French missionary in Mysore, wrote in 1816, a book entitled, **Hindu Manners, Customs, and Ceremonies** which is still valuable to scholars of India. He was one of the first to study caste and inter-relations between castes. Francis Buchanan’s work in Bengal and Bihar had set the precedent in various empirical studies undertaken by the British officials to collect, collate and publish for official as well as scholarly use detailed information about all aspects-physical, cultural and sociological of every district in India, which ultimately took the shape of Imperial Gazetteer of India published in the early 20th century. (Cohn B. 1968 : 15)

These early studies of Indian society and culture were the forerunners of more systematic attempts in the later part of the 19th century. In 1871 the first all-India census was undertaken by the British government. Census, as an institution, helped collect vast quantity of information which fell outside the normal purview by the British administrations. In 1901 attempts were made by Sir Herbert Risely to establish an ethnographic survey of India which would develop as part of the census.

As you read earlier as well, in the previous unit, the British officials were convinced about the justification and necessity for collecting this vast quantity of data about Indian Society and Culture.

It is the contributions of such officials as Wilson, Risely, Baines, Blunt, Thurston, O. Malley, Hutton and Guha that the census has become an invaluable source of information not only for the demographic studies but for social and cultural analysis as well. The range and quality of data collected have increased greatly since Independence but for an outstanding exception, the omission of the data regarding caste (Srinivas & Panini 1986 : 20).

The Census, had however, led to far reaching disturbance in the society. It had set into motion certain forces of change in Indian society and especially the caste system which has left strong impact. The attempts to collect data regarding castes and their hierarchy or social divisions in each Census sharpened the self-awareness of each caste and gave rise to competition among them to claim higher positions in the caste. This effort was generally proceeded by improvement in the economic status of these castes in their region particularly. Each caste, saw in the Census a ready-made avenue for obtaining the government's approval for social mobility. The Census officers were flooded with applications from caste leaders claiming higher status.

The 1941 Census omitted caste as a category for economic reasons. However, it was only in 1951 that the recording of data on a caste basis, except for data on the Scheduled Castes and Tribes, was omitted as a matter of policy. (Srinivas & Panini 1986 : 21)

Indological studies also simultaneously contributed to as well as received stimulus from the efforts made by the British scholars and officials in order to develop an in-depth knowledge of Indian society and culture. K.M. Kapadia (1954 : XI) mentions that as early as 1776, a treatise on Hindu law in English was prepared, with the assistance of Pandits, for the use of British Judges.

The contribution of the great British Orientalist, Sir William Jones was also immense. He began the study of Sanskrit and Indology and is well known for having established the **Asiatic society of Bengal** in 1787. One of the main activities of the society was the publication of a journal devoted to antiquarian and anthropological interests. The study of Sanskrit provided a powerful stimulus not only to Indology but to other disciplines as well, such as, philology, comparative mythology and comparative jurisprudence.

Another major development which led to the study of social institutions in India was the introduction of British education and its impact. It set several forces of social change in motion such as, developing a sensitivity amongst the Indian intellectuals and social reformers like Rajaram Mohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar etc. regarding the social evils of sati; child marriages, illiteracy and poverty, orthodoxy of Hindu religion. Thus, the confrontation with an alien culture of the British rulers and the interpretation of ancient Indian literature by scholars like Max Muller, sharpened and redefined the self-awareness of Indian elites. It resulted in a critical appraisal and reinterpretation of Indian culture and led to its social reform.

There have been many other studies of Indian society and culture, village studies, studies of law, which together have sowed the seeds of the emergence and growth of sociology and anthropology in India. In the next section, you will learn about the growth of sociology and its professionalisation in India.

Box 2.01: Sociologists and Anthropologists in Pre-Independence India

Srinivas & Panini (1986 : 16-55) have highlighted a very significant point. According to them, it will not be an exaggeration to say that during the pre-Independence period in India, in spite of being very few in numbers, they i.e. the sociologists and anthropologists had made their presence felt as teachers, researchers and critics. This the sociologists and anthropologists did when their disciplines were not so well established and when they did not have abundance of funds for conducting research. They achieved a lot in terms of research and data collection at a time when the main task of a university Professor was lecturing and examining students.

2.3 Growth and Development of Sociology as a Profession

The discipline of sociology and anthropology has developed in India in broadly three phases; the first phase is the period between 1773-1900, when, as described earlier, the foundations for its growth were laid. The second phase is the period between 1901-1950, when the two disciplines became professionalised; and finally the third phase is the period after India gained Independence. During this phase, a complex of forces influenced the development of the two disciplines. Planned development, introduction of the Constitution and parliamentary democracy led to far reaching changes in the Indian society and its structure. During this period the Indian scholars were exposed to the work of their foreign colleagues which influenced their own work. Also availability of funds helped conduct research in several areas. (Srinivas & Panini 1986 : 19).

So it was in the beginning of the twentieth century that the two disciplines entered the early phase of professionalisation. Srinivas & Panini (1986 : 22) mention that ‘although the bulk of the ethnographic work continued to be carried out by the British officials associated with the Census operations, professional sociologists and anthropologists in Europe began taking interest in India.’ W.H.R. Rivers’ published his study of *The Todas* (1906), based on intensive fieldwork. This was one of the first monographs in the modern social anthropological tradition. Rivers did his fieldwork among the Todas, a tribe in the Nilgiri hills in South India, in the winter of 1901-2 and his interest in India continued almost until his death in 1922. He had also published papers on India, such as, on the origin of hypergamy; kinship and marriage in India in the first issue (1921) of the journal, *Man in India*. His posthumous work, edited by W.J. Perry, “*Social Organisation*” (1924) was intended to be delivered as a course of lectures in Calcutta University.

Two of his students, G.S. Ghurey and K.P. Chattopadhyaya came to play an important role in the development of sociology and social anthropology (which is a branch of anthropology) in India. His influence continued to exist in the works of G.S. Ghurey and K.P. Chattopadhyaya who held important academic positions in their respective universities of Bombay and Calcutta till the 1940s. Influence of Malinowski and Radcliffe Brown came later and they remained relatively unknown till the end of World War II. Radcliffe Brown studied the Andaman Islanders. During this period several European sociologists such as, C. Bogue, M. Mauss and Max Weber wrote on India relying on secondary sources.

Dhanagare (1998 : 37) says that the institutionalisation and professionalisation of sociology and social anthropology in India have two clearly identifiable phases - Before 1950 and after. Moreover, 1950-52 is also a watershed in a historical sense that it was then that free India embarked on programmes of planned development.

The pre. 1950 phase was essentially a phase of multi-level syntheses. It was not without significance that both the disciplines had their beginnings in the two cities of Bombay and Calcutta which symbolically represented colonialism. The beginnings were more or less simultaneous in the second decade of the present century (R. Mukherjee, 1977 : 1-193).

During the first two decades of the 20th century two Indian scholars, L.K. Ananthakrishna Iyer and S.C. Roy made their mark in anthropology. Both lacked formal training in the discipline, but their achievements were note worthy. Anathakrishna Iyer studied the castes and tribes of Cochin and Mysore and also a study of the Syrian Christians of Kerela. Roy, who was a lawyer by profession, wrote monographs on some of the tribes in Bihar. He was also a 'champion' of his tribe. In 1921 he founded the journal, **Man In India** which is still in circulation. He also wrote a book called **Caste, Race and Religion in India** (1934).

The development of anthropology in India saw a new milestone in 1905 when the British government conceded the demand for establishing the Ethnographic Survey. The output of these surveys can be seen in the form of district gazetteers and Imperial Gazetteer of India (26 volumes, Calcutta 1908-1909). These covered details on different tribes and castes of each province. Many other efforts were made to collect collate and analyse data regarding different castes, communities and tribes in India. In the previous chapter you had a brief description of these developments. You had a brief overview of the growth of sociology and anthropology in Independent India. The next section will describe the later developments a little more elaborately.

2.4 Sociology in the Post Independence India

As mentioned earlier in the first unit, sociology and anthropology were gradually introduced in different universities, initially in other departments of studies, such as, economics, social philosophy, etc. but later several full fledged departments of sociology developed in different parts of India. During the years 1910-1950, the two disciplines became professionalised. But during this phase, too, sociology was not taught in more than half a dozen universities and Bombay was the only centre of post graduate research in sociology and social anthropology in the country. There were about a dozen teaching posts in these two disciplines in different universities. (Srinivas & Panini 1986 : 33) However, as its popularity increased, its acceptance in other universities began to take place. Slowly with the expanding demand for education at all levels, more and more teaching posts in sociology and anthropology in universities and colleges were introduced.

Sociology, being a discipline at this time which did not draw from the knowledge of mathematics and statistics, such as, economics did came to be preferred by a large section of students who found it to be a 'soft option'. It is only later that sociology syllabi became more standardized, and some universities made provision for teaching research methodology and statistics at the masters level. In due course of time sociology gained a prestige and

it is at present one of the coveted subjects chosen by students at college and university levels.

Reflection and Action 2.1

Interview five students who have opted for sociology courses at B.A. or M.A. level at your study centre. Ask them for the reasons for choosing this subject. Now compare their reasons with your own and write a note of one page on “Relevance of Sociology : Nature and Scope.”

You may discuss your note with your Academic Counsellor at your Study Centre.

2.5 Expansion of Teaching and Research During the 1950's and 1960's

In the post-Independence period, with the introduction of planned development in the country and creation of the National Planning Commission, significant changes started taking place in the growth and development of sociology and anthropology in India. Research and training institutes began to multiply in India to meet the demand for information introduced by the state, to analyse and evaluate their functioning. Also, qualified, trained people were needed to man the various institutes, as well as the government agencies which had cropped up during this period.

A Research Programme Committee for funding the social science research related to planning and development was created by the Planning Commission. The creation of a Programme Evaluation Board in the Planning Commission with branches in each state created jobs for sociologists and anthropologists. Along with this development another important development took place, which was an increase in the awareness of the relevance of the social sciences to the process of planning amongst the educated. This, was reflected in the Planning Commissions recommendation in 1966 to found an Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR). V.K.R.V. Rao, member in-charge of Education in the Commission, was responsible for this recommendation. ICSSR came into existence in September, 1969 with the late D.R. Gadgil as its first Chairman. (Srinivas & Panini, 1986 : 37)

Reflection and Action 2.2

Find out a few details about either, Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) or University Grants Commission (UGC). The area of research currently going on and being funded by these organisations these days. You may visit their website, if possible, at any Cyber Cafe, near your home. Write a note including these details and discuss it with other students of sociology at your Study Centre.

The increase in the awareness of the relevance of sociology and social anthropology by the educated elites and government officials and policy makers in Independent India can also be seen reflected in the development grants for starting new departments or expanding existing university departments given by the University Grants Commission (UGC). This euphoria of ‘development’, says Dhanagare (1993 : 46), explains to a large extent the institutionalisation and expansion of sociology and social anthropology in Indian universities after 1950. To facilitate this expansion the UGC sanctioned new posts in different universities all over India through the Five Year Plan development grants.

In the pre-1950 period, Indian sociology and social anthropology had followed the dominant trends in British social and cultural anthropology especially that of B. Malinowski's functionalism with its culturalological strain. After 1950 the influence of American rural sociology started being seen on Indian sociology and social anthropology in addition to the British. (R Mukherjee, 1977 : 47). The reasons for this development lay in the increased contacts with America, particularly the role of Ford Foundation was significant and there was acceptance of the ideology and programme of Community Development by the Indian government.

The Ford Foundation in India succeeded in transplanting the idea of community development into Indian planning between 1951 and 1970. Its indispensability as a crucial tool of social reconstruction and as an agency of development, especially in the rural areas, was accepted by the government. It was this package of community development, Dhanagare (1993 : 47) says, that opened up job opportunities for Indian social scientists in general and sociologists and social anthropologists in particular. They could obtain funds for research projects to study Indian villages, to investigate the impact of the community development programmes on the villages and their response to the programme. Large-scale surveys were conducted to assess and evaluate the effectiveness of the community development programmes for the purpose of administrators. This required the sociologists and social anthropologists in India to get acquainted with modern survey research methods and procedures of empirical social sciences developed in the West, particularly in the United States. To meet these demands courses on research methodology were introduced into the teaching curriculum of sociology and social anthropology in India. (Beteille, 1973 : 224-31)

The community development programmes in many ways helped in the growth and development of the twin disciplines, sociology and social anthropology in India but it had its negative side as well. Most of these research studies were quantitative rather than qualitative. The state controlled directly and indirectly the nature of these studies. Thus these studies could not come of age in the true sense of the term. They failed to develop their own identity even after 1950s.

According to Dhanagare (1980 : 25-26) it was primarily the official patronage and the Ford Foundation largesse which attracted a number of sociologists and social anthropologists to this area of study. There was nothing inherently wrong with this trend of research in the two disciplines but the problem was that research priorities were practically dictated by the state whose action as well as policy concerns came to be echoed in social science seminars and conferences.

Another significant impact of the community development programme on sociology and social anthropology in India was that its proximity with the state and government policy formulating bodies became "an index of academic status and recognition. This new status transformed the earlier interaction between two or more disciplines into an almost pathological competition for resources as well as recognition". (Dhanagare, 1993 : 48)

There was stiff competition among various social science disciplines to get the best projects and assignments from the establishment. This competition hampered any inter disciplinary dialogue or cooperation between the different disciplines in social sciences and as a result their growth and development

became compartmentalized and narrow. Although, there was at that time considerable discussion on the desirability of an inter disciplinary approach; in reality the social sciences remained confined to their rigid boundaries until 1970. Dhanagare (1993 : 49); says that not only were sociology and social anthropology estranged from economics, history, political science and philosophy with which they had either co-existed and often interacted in pre-1950 period, but also, in this process they themselves became estranged from each other. In the pre-1950 phase they had maintained a very productive and symbiotic relationship. In the 1960s and 1970s the trend was clearly in favour of a separation of sociology and social anthropology in most of the Indian universities except for Bombay and Saugar. The newly started central universities, like Jawaharlal Nehru University (New Delhi), NEHU (Shillong) and Hyderabad favored the older pattern by setting up a joint department of sociology and social anthropology.

In Delhi, (i e Delhi University) although sociology and anthropology were separate departments from the beginning, the Sociology department, situated in Delhi School of Economics, emphasised social anthropology. According to Dhanagare (1993 : 49) without the interaction with sociology, anthropology was invariably reduced to ethnology and physical anthropologists and social/cultural anthropologists had little in common except shared office space and administrative and financial control. It is due to these reasons that the relationship between sociology and social anthropology in India have an ambivalent status. Even ICSSR which was set up by Government of India in 1969, decided to conduct a combined survey (trend reports) on sociology and social anthropology in India, but for some reason maintained a separate panel of experts for both the disciplines. UGC also followed the same trend.

The ICSSR contributed immensely to the growth and development of sociology and social anthropology in India. It more or less replaced the Research Programmes Committee of the Planning Commission in terms of the functions that it performed. It is an autonomous body and financially independent which has supported several university departments through funds for research projects, seminars and workshops, publication of books and journals, data analysis and consultancy. It also offers short term or long term fellowships both for junior or senior members of the profession. Dhanagre (1993 : 50) writes that ICSSR's many schemes were sufficiently broad based as well as egalitarian to inspire confidence among all social scientists including sociologists and social anthropologists. It has played a positive and constructive role in the growth of both the disciplines in India since 1969 onwards.

2.6 Some Major Research Trends During the Seventies

The seventies period saw a further continuation and diversification of interests and specialisations in substantive areas of research and teaching since the nineteen sixties M.S.A. Rao (1986 : 168-178) says that while village community studies dominated researches earlier, interests in such problems as agrarian relations, land reforms, peasants, agricultural labourers, scheduled castes and tribes began to attract increasing attention of sociologists and social anthropologists. The seventies could be reviewed under three heads: (i) areas of interests and specialisations which get crystallised, (ii) areas of interest which have developed but not yet got crystallised; and (iii) emergence of new approaches in the established areas.

Peasant studies and agrarian social structure emerged as a distinct area of research interest in the seventies (Beteille 1974, Oomen 1975, 1977, Alexander 1975, Joshi 1975, Joan Mencher 1978). These studies marked a departure from the earlier village community studies with emphasis on caste and village solidarity. However, village studies continued to hold the attention of some sociologists (For example Srinivas 1976).

Closely related with the area of peasant studies is the study of peasant movements which attracted the attention of some sociologists (Dhanagare 1974, Ranga Rao 1978, PN Mukharjee 1978, Rajendra Singh 1978 and A R Desai 1979). Besides the sociologists, historians have also developed a major interest in agrarian history. The studies on peasant movements is, however, a part of the study on social movements in general which became crystallized during the 1970s. Studies on several types of movements, such as, the backward classes movements, sectarian movements have been published (M.S.A. Rao 1978, 1979 a, 1979nb).

Three other areas of interest in sociology which got crystallized during the seventies were – (1) industrial sociology, (2) urban sociology, and (3) social stratification.

In industrial sociology there have been works of N.R. Sheth and P.J. Patel (1979) which trace the trends in the development of industrial sociology. There have been studies of trade unions and industrial relations (E.A. Ramaswamy 1977, 1978). A few university departments are teaching industrial sociology at the M.A. and M. Phil levels. Urban sociology had long been neglected in India due to the misconception that India was a village society. But during the 1970s it gained importance. Problems of rural-urban migration, urban development and slums attracted the attention of the sociologists and social anthropologists. Different aspects of urban sociology have been studied, such as, rural-urban migration, demography, and neighbourhoods, slums, stratification, education, ethnic conflict, etc. (M.S.A. Rao 1970, 1974, Saberwal 1976, 1978, Sylvia Vatuk 1972 and Richard Fox 1970). Urban slums also attracted special attention (Desai and Pillai 1970, 1972, Weibe 1975; Alfred De Souza 1979 and others).

Another major area of interest and specialisation was social stratification in the seventies. A large number of studies were published in seventies, such as, the efforts of Andre Beteille (1977), Yogendra Singh (1977), Victor D'Souza (1977). Several studies of elites appeared in the seventies (Singhi 1974; Sheokumar Lal 1974). Social stratification is a common course taught in almost all the universities and colleges teaching sociology.

Several studies in different areas of specialisation appeared during this period, such as, in the area of sociology of development, sociology of education, and so on. Many new areas appeared, such as, sociology of profession, sociology of organisation, medical sociology, studies on women, etc.

Dhanagare (1993 : 51) mentions that inspite of a lot of changes taking place in the field of sociology and social anthropology since the 1950s, not all the research concerns were abandoned. Infact, the continuity of research concerns is striking. New trends have emerged too, but the old ones came to be consolidated in the 1950s and 1960s. Most important of these themes were such as caste and stratification, family and kinship, religion and ritual, and village social organisation. These topics continued to preoccupy

sociologists and social anthropologists. Above all, caste and stratification proved to be such a significant structural reality in Indian society that it continued to hold the attention of Indian sociologists and social anthropologists. But, here too, one can observe a qualitative difference in the caste stratification studies conducted in recent years.

Srinivas's studies of caste and religion (1952, 1959, 1962, 1966) employed not only the structural-functional nature of caste and religion but also the dynamics of caste system in Indian villages. He developed the conceptual tools to study the processual aspects of caste such as, sanskritisation, westernisation; concept of 'dominant caste' to understand the power relations within the village society. YB Damle (1968 : 95-102) advocated the use of reference group theory in explaining caste mobility, Andre Beteill'e (1965) used the Weberian framework of class, status and party to study 'caste, class and power' in a Tanjore village.

Box 2.02: Relevance of Sociology : An Opinion

D.N. Dhanagare opines (1993 : 28) about the role and relevance of sociology in strong words. He says that "vast sections of the under-privileged in the Indian society, who have failed to make it through the 'mobility' route, are going to resort to the alternative 'mobilization' route to social transformation. What are the prospects of 'mobilization', where is it likely to lead, and would social scientists, including sociologists, like to be just silent, indifferent spectators of the transformation process or would they like to contribute to it in some measure? These are some of the questions the sociology profession as a whole must address itself to, sooner than later."

Louis Dumont, a French sociologist studied caste in India using the structuralist method in his famous book *Homo Hierarchicus* (1970). He revived the interest in 'caste' studies in the 1970's. He focused on the need to understand the ideology of caste as given in the Hindu scriptures and classical texts. He advocated the use of an Indological and structuralist approach to the study of caste system and village social structure in India.

Different aspects of caste and stratification system attracted the attention of sociologists and social anthropologists. Political developments in India, impact of community development programmes, panchayati raj, democratic decentralisation and several other developments during the 1950's had far-reaching consequences. Indian sociologists and social anthropologists were concerned about studying the impact of these changes on the Indian social and rural social structure. (S.C. Dube, 1969, RN Haldipur, 1974). Studies on caste and power structure in rural society came to occupy a predominant position. (Dhanagare, 1993 : 52)

A new trend in sociological research developed in the 1960's and 1970's in the area of rural sociology. The new interests focused on the basic changes in the rural social structure initiated through land reform measures since Independence. The new trends gave more attention to class formation among the peasantry, social mobility among different rural strata and the newly emerging contradictions in the rural areas. This new trend turned from 'micro' level inquiries to 'macro' level analytical exercises. (Yogendra Singh, 1977 : 22-23)

Closely affiliated to the new trend in agrarian studies in sociology has been

the trend of studying social movements, particularly among the peasantry. AR Desai's (1948) study of the Indian National Movement and its social background, describing its class character and its inherent contradictions was a very significant and pioneering contribution from the pre-1950 era.

During the 1980's several of the areas of interest from the 1950's, 1960's and 1970's onwards continued to gain strength. Many new areas also emerged, such as of sociology of deviance, sociology of law, sociology of knowledge, sociology of science, etc. These and several other areas have been increasingly been the focus of study of sociologists and social anthropologists in India.

Along with the areas of interest even the sociological approach to study these areas have varied. The theoretical underpinnings of the research studies and the methodology used by different sociologists has been different.

2.7 Theory and Methods Used by Sociologists in India

According to Dhanagare (1993 : 63) the theoretical orientations of Indian sociologists and social anthropologists seems to have changed. It may be said that the appeal of 'philosophical theoretical orientation' (a la Radha Kamal Mukherjee), and 'structural-functional' and 'culturological' approach (a la Radcliffe Brown. MN Srinivas. etc.) is declining. Dialectical historical orientation-often based on Marxist methods and propositions - has, of late, shown a profound capacity for adaptation and innovation (Singh, Y. 1977 : 25-26). This orientation has now become popular amongst the younger generation of sociologists.

The 'structuralist' approach or theoretical orientation too has been quite popular and is reflected in the works of such sociologists as J.P.S. Oberoi (1974, 1978), T.N. Madan (1975) and Veena Das (1977). This trend is likely to gain more popularity in the coming years. (M.S.A. Rao, 1979 b : 1812) The systemic theoretic orientation is seen in some of the writings of MS Gore, Yogendra Singh, Y.B. Damle, Yogesh Atal and a few others. But no significant advances have been made on this front in recent years. P.N. Rastogi has been the lone follower of the cybernetic approach (See Rastogi, 1973, 1975).

Briefly described, these are some of the major trends of research in sociology and social anthropology in India. The theoretical approaches and methods to conduct research has been very many and some of the important theoretical approaches used by different sociologists has been mentioned here only as an example to explain to you the rich literature that exists in the field of sociology and social anthropology.

2.8 Conclusion

The first paper "Social Background of the Emergence of Sociology in India" of this block Number 1 **Emergence of Sociology in India**, and the present paper on "Emergence of the Discipline : Issues and Themes" are the introductory papers on the general theme of this course on **Sociology in India**. The social background which enabled the discipline of sociology and social anthropology to take root in the rich soil of India where a classical

literary tradition already existed laid the intellectual moorings of the new discipline and its institutions.

As described in the beginning of both the papers, sociology and social anthropology bore a strong imprint of the sociology in the Western society. It came as a product of an intellectual response of the Indians to the Western interpretation of Indian society and culture by the Westerners. As the European invasion and expansion over the non-European territory increased, the need to understand the new societies and communities developed. For several reasons, some philanthropic, some pragmatic, the scholars from the Western societies tried to interpret social reality in India and use this knowledge for other purposes, of proselytisation, for amelioration of social evils and orthodoxy of the traditional Hindu society, welfare of the tribals etc.

Thus, the colonial impact and the confrontation of the Western outlook with the Eastern way of life produced a body of literature which became the foundation for the emergence of the sociology and social anthropology disciplines.

Later, in the present paper the description of the professionalisation of the discipline from 1900-1921 onwards has been described. It was not a coincidence that the disciplines developed professionally first in cities like, Bombay, Calcutta and Lucknow and slowly spread throughout the country after the 1950's. The colonial context, therefore, cannot be denied. It was during the 1950's that later professional developments and acceptance of the discipline in different universities took place. The prestige of sociology and social anthropology grew, after the Independence period when planned development was introduced. Trained manpower to staff the Institutes etc. and to conduct research and training for collecting information about the impact of the various Community Development Programmes, Panchayati raj, etc. developed.

ICSSR was founded in 1969 and the University Grants Commission (UGC) provided funds for research to the social scientists. Relevance of the social sciences generally and sociology and social anthropology particularly developed.

Finally, we have described some of the research trends in Indian universities in sociology and social anthropology from the 1950's, 1960's, 1970's till the 1980's. Briefly the theoretical orientations have been described to explain the development of the disciplines in India.

2.9 Further Reading

Dhanagare, D.N. 1995 *Themes and Perspectives in Indian Sociology*; Rawat Publications, New Delhi

Singh, Y.1986 *Indian Sociology : Social Conditioning and Emerging Concerns*; Vikas Publications, New Delhi