

**THE DISCIPLINARY FOUNDATIONS OF
INDIAN SOCIOLOGY: A RETROSPECTIVE
READING OF RELIGION**

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation titled, “**THE DISCIPLINARY FOUNDATIONS OF INDIAN SOCIOLOGY: A RETROSPECTIVE READING OF RELIGION**” by Mr. Neredimalli Annavaram, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy** has not been previously submitted for any other Degree of this or any other University. To the best of my knowledge this is an original work.

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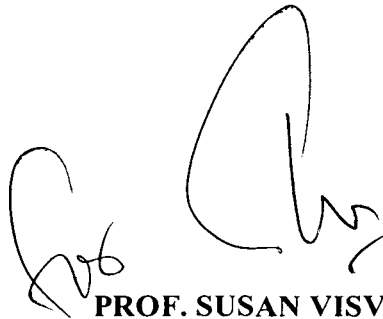

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Chapter I

Introduction

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A sociology that does not cultivate an historical awareness cripples itself, since it cannot begin to encounter some of the central problems of explanation and interpretation (Eldridge, 1980: 193).

The above comment, although made in a work set out specifically to evaluate the trends in British sociology during the 1980s, can hold great significance for every modern Social Science discipline practised anywhere at all times, and a strong case can be made about its greater relevance for Indian sociology in particular. But understanding, far from explaining, the rise and growth of modern Social Sciences is a stupendous task. The present study is, in all its specificities, a small step in this direction.

The present study is set out to examine the place of religious/civilisational analysis in the origin and development of Indian sociology/social anthropology. This introductory chapter will provide a broad outline of the study and explain the rationale of the subject under consideration. But before moving into the substance, a general overview of Social Scientific orientation in India and the place of sociology in the entire gamut has briefly been presented below, so that the timeliness of a study of this kind may be made visible.

The Social Scientific Orientation in India

The origins of modern social sciences have a complex past, and it is only for the last two decades or so that there have been some significant attempts to understand this past and present it in a systematic fashion. The report of the Gulbenkian Commission on the restructuring of the Social Sciences, published under a provocative title *Open the Social Sciences* (1996), can be considered as the first ever major step in this direction. The Gulbenkian Commission, along with other rapid socio-economic-and-political changes across the globe, led to a renewed interest in the academic world to retrospect on the history not only of Social Sciences but of knowledge production itself. The Cambridge series in

History of Science started under the general editorship of David C. Lindberg and Ronald L. Numbers, for example, reflects the real zeal with which this renewed interest is being pursued through a sustained effort.

The Cambridge history of science, the first ever comprehensive series on the production of knowledge in the modern world, dedicated its seventh volume specifically to the exploration of Social Sciences. Aptly titled as *The Modern Social Sciences* (2003), this volume was edited by Theodore M. Porter and Dorothy Ross. It presents a detailed account of the origins and the gradual growth of modern Social sciences, a process which spans a duration of around two-and-half centuries beginning from the eighteenth to the first half of the twentieth century. While it was during the first half of the eighteenth century that the modern Social Sciences began to take a disciplinary shape in the European universities, it was in the post world war II era that they embarked on a large scale professionalisation across the globe. Thus, the time frame chosen by the volume reflects a phase of maturation during which the Social Sciences underwent a major transformation both in their form and content and expanded spatially beyond the West.

The global situation after World War II looked quite different than what it was before, and the governing principles of this situation were shaped by special circumstances. Two devastating wars within a short interval of time, the great economic depression, grand scale decolonisation and the formation of two power blocks which ultimately kept the world in a cold war situation for long, all characterised those special circumstances. The pertinent point is that the altered order everywhere put a great onus on knowledge production, and Social Sciences were deeply implicated in this project. In specific terms, while the Social Sciences in the East were expected to assist their statesmen in creating a feeling of national bondedness in the newly independent societies and to offer them ready made solutions for the alleviation of poverty and illiteracy, their western counterparts were busy redefining the dominant categories of explanation which were thought to be universally valid till then. The binary division between the subject matter of sociology and social anthropology, propounded mainly by the British academia, is one such case in point. This binary division seemed perfect so long as the western

scholars collected ethnographic data of cultures other than their own and presented their analyses under the brand of social anthropology while simultaneously studying their own cultures under the discipline of sociology. But the definitional crises began to arise once the non-western scholars started doing field work within their own societies and wanted to give their analyses a disciplinary shape. But this is a separate topic of discussion, and the present study does not attempt to continue this debate further. The important proposition, however, is that the history of the social sciences is nothing less than a history of ideas and institutions that rise, play a prominent role for sometime, fall apart at certain moments, and as such, this history can offer great insights into a given society.

The works of Bernard S. Cohn (1996) and Roge R. E. Backhouse and Philippe Fontaine (2010) have some revealing insights to offer about the state of the discipline of the Social Sciences in the post world war II global situation.

As far as the history of modern Social Sciences in India is concerned, the real beginnings were made in the late eighteenth century. One can find three major phases in it. The first phase was marked by the “discovery” of India by the European Enlightenment, in which the field of Indological studies played a decisive role (Kejariwal, 1988). The second phase was marked by colonial governance, in which Social Sciences were deployed mainly to assist the newly created Western institutions in the Eastern context. The third phase was dominated by the “project of the Indian nationalist movement” (Chatterjee, 2003:482).

According to Chatterjee (2003:484) “the voluminous published official information” gave European scholars and interested administrators enough impetus for proposing “grand theoretical constructions about the nature of Indian society”. In particular, three institutions – the caste system, the despotic ruler and the village community - were thought to contain “the key to the mystery” of Indian society (ibid). The caste system was held to have imposed a “rigid division of labour” that hindered social mobility (ibid:485). Oriental despotism meant a one-way extraction of the surplus from the peasant communities to a ruling elite immersed in luxury consumption. The largely self-governing and self-reproducing village communities ensured a low-level subsistence production. This, it was argued, explained why,

despite frequent changes in political regimes at the top, Indian society had remained what it was, structurally “stagnant” and historically continuous (ibid: 484-486). As it will be evident in the following pages, the core assumptions of the colonial construction of Indian society, the caste system and village community in particular, continue to be the central concerns for sociology in India.

Sociology in India: a Brief background

Modern sociology took its disciplinary shape in the post-enlightenment west at a time when Europe was thriving by the rapid growth of industrialisation combined with the newly found polity based on the principles of liberty, equality and fraternity. The founding fathers of the discipline at that time were concerned largely with the issues stemming from the socio-political-and-economic conditions governing their lives.

Karl Heinrich Marx (1818-1883) devoted much of his energy to analyse the consequences of capitalism. He argued quite persuasively that the capitalist mode of production not only created, for the first time in the history of modes of production, a market conducive for labourers to sell their labour freely but also exploited quite successfully the surplus labour made available to the market. Emile Durkheim (1858-1917) made out a strong case for, among other things, the existence of organic solidarity which he saw as an outcome of the division of labour actively promoted by the industrial society in the Europe. Max Weber (1864-1920) viewed the development of capitalist economy as an unintended consequence of peoples’ observance of moral principles imbibed in the Protestant faith.

Beyond any doubt, the three beginning figures of modern sociology drew their analyses from very different sources and proposed diverse explanations. But what seems unambiguously similar in their understanding is their conviction about the driving force of industrialisation in Europe. The three of them agreed, although by deploying different approaches leading to different explanations, that the machine driven-industrial growth was the norm of their society and that this phenomenon had profound implications on the lives of people - the affluent and

ordinary alike. This drives home the point that sociology grew as a discipline not by making some simplistic assumptions based on metaphysics but by taking into account the real happenings of the contemporary times. This pragmatic outlook infused into the discipline ever since its inception later proved to be a great strength for the subject to expand itself into new horizons of human life. But unfortunately enough, the complete social context did not remain a defining feature for sociology everywhere. The present case in consideration is Indian sociology which, in terms of being recognised as a pedagogic discourse in the university system, is as old as its western counterpart.

Sociology in India, right from its inception, seems to have been guided by certain underlying assumptions, assumptions which may not really reflect in society but are understood to have been the key social constituents. Caste, Community and Religion are these three projected categories.

Govind Sadashiv Ghurye (1893-1983), the founding member of institutionalised sociology in India, began his academic career by highlighting the first category – The caste – as the overarching social structure of Indian society. In fact, G. S. Ghurye's academic reputation was built on the basis of his doctoral dissertation at Cambridge, which was later published as *Caste and Race in India* (1932). Ghurye's work attracted attention not so much because of its sociological relevance but because it entered into debate with some of the major anthropological questions raised by administrator anthropologists of the time. His *Caste and Race in India*, for instance, engages primarily in refuting Herbert Risley's dominant theoretical finding that caste and race have a close relationship with each other.

Risley and many other British administrator anthropologists believed that India was a unique laboratory to study the evolution of racial types because caste strictly prohibits intermarriage among different groups, and had done so for centuries. Risley's main argument was that caste must have originated in race because different caste groups seemed to belong to distinct racial types. The attempt, therefore, was to blend "western race" and "eastern caste".

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Ghurye critiqued the British anthropological view of Indian caste and argued that the dominant thesis which tried to establish a correlation between Caste and Race was only partially true. He believed that Risley's thesis of the upper-castes being Aryan and the lower-caste being non-Aryan was broadly true only for northern India. In other parts of India, the group differences in anthropometric measurements were not very large or systematic. This suggested that, in most of India except perhaps Indo-Gangetic plains, different racial groups had been mixing with each other for a very long time. Thus, racial purity had been preserved due to prohibition on intermarriage only in Hindustan proper (northern India).

Caste remains the main preoccupation for both the practitioners and theoreticians of Indian sociology till date. Probably it is the most studied aspect in Indian sociology. Still, it is also one of the contentious subjects on which no two scholars would ever agree either in their definition of it or approach to it. But strikingly enough, the literature on caste in India is largely unanimous in pronouncing its ubiquitous existence. According to sociological projections, which may vary in their explanations, caste is the dominant social structure which no serious scholarship can dare to miss, if at all it has to understand the Indian social reality.

The second projected key constituent of Indian society is the village community. S.C. Dube, D. N. Majumdar, M. N. Srinivas and Andre Beteille are some of the prominent figures who ardently emphasised the place of village in Indian society. This shift of emphasis from caste to community had certain methodological implications on the way sociology in India began to be pursued as a discipline. One of those prominent implications was that the Indian village became the basic unit of analysis for discerning social reality. The researchers of sociology and social anthropology (the real difference between both the subjects hardly existed during the initial days at least) had, for the first time, got a concrete site where they could conduct their fieldwork and come up with some empirical findings. Of course, like the contradictory views on caste, the empirical findings on village communities too were not uniform. While Majumdar and Dube felt that the village as a closed community was capable enough to serve the research interests of scholars willing to understand Indian society by making village as the basic unit

of analysis, Srinivas and Andre Beteille came forward with a moderate explanation that the village could not be taken as an independent unit of analysis for understanding Indian society as Indian villages always operate in a particular regional set-up. But at a surface level, both the schools of thought on Indian village agree, with a slight difference of degree but not really of kind, that the village can be efficiently used as the basic unit of analysis for understanding the complex reality of Indian society. Methodologically, then, it meant a steady shift from reconstructing the Indian past through textual analysis to understanding contemporary social life through field work assisted by participant observation. In M. N. Srinivas's conception, it was a shift from "the book view" to "the field view" in Indian sociology (1955).

The third important constituent of Indian society, which has long been projected by Indian sociology to be a category of explanation as important as caste and community, is religion. Religious life in India is often depicted by sociological literature as nothing but the Hindu way of life. D. P. Mukerji, G. S. Ghurye, M. N. Srinivas and Louis Dumont, all upheld, in varying degrees, the view that Indian social life is necessarily religious and that key to the understanding of Indian society, therefore, would lie in the grasp of Hinduism, a religion which is taken to encompass the total social arena in the Indian subcontinent. The prime focus of the present study lies exactly here.

The objectives and outlay of the study

As it has been suggested briefly above, Indian sociology has long been operating on the assumption that caste, village community and religion form the core of Indian society. Of these, the first two seem to have been researched from every angle possible, the former even more comprehensively than the later. It is, however, the third strand, i.e., religion, which received negligible attention despite its presumed significance. The present study is, thus, intended primarily

- ✚ to closely examine the early writings of Indian sociology and find out the prominent categories of explanation chosen to depict social reality;
- ✚ to find out whether religion was taken as a mere tool to offer a given explanation or it was considered as an analytical category capable of

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proposing newer interpretations of complex reality hidden in the Indian social system;

- ✚ to visualise, based on the findings obtained through the first two objectives, the nature and scope of Indian sociology today; and
- ✚ to suggest possible ways in which the discipline can, and should, be made sensitive to the diverse nature of its subject matter.

With a view to achieving maximum precision but in as a concise a manner as possible, this study is divided into three main chapters (besides the present one) and a brief conclusion. The first chapter will trace the colonial roots of Indian sociology, with particular reference to the oriental/Indological studies. Given the vastness of the field of Indological studies and its diverse scope ranging from Metaphysics to philology, the chapter will limit its focus only to religion. Even the examination of religion, that too the colonial construction of a religion like Hinduism, may prove to be too hefty a task for a brief study of this kind. Thus, the attention would be given only to that part of the religion which acted as a precursor to sociology that would develop nearly two decades after Indological studies were introduced in the region.

The second chapter is a concise review of the disciplinary thought and Philosophy of one of the early Indian sociologists, Govind Sadashiv Ghurye (1893-1983). Blessed with linguistic sophistication in Sanskrit, a well-grounded training in social anthropology at Cambridge and, above all, the long drawn academic career as a head of the Department of sociology at University of Bombay – the first institution to offer a post-graduate degree in sociology in the Country, - G. S. Ghurye left an indelible mark on the disciplinary practices of Indian sociology. The areas of his sociological investigation ranged from “the sexual behaviour of the American female” to “the *Rajput* Architecture”; sometimes deeply controversial and on other occasions highly spiritual. Clearly aware of such complexity, the chapter will confine its analysis to the evaluation of the place of religion in Ghurye’s sociology. Howsoever specific it might appear at the outset, a categorical inquiry into the role of religion in Ghurye’s disciplinary orientation is likely to be beneficial, for he conceived, quite in consonance with the then prevailing Indological discourse, that a comprehensive understanding of

the Indian society would be possible only through a systematic exploration of Hinduism. To that end, as will be evident later in the study, he stretched to every level possible the resources available to him and succeeded in providing lengthy, sometimes quite witty, accounts on religion. The propositions made in these accounts were often considered with greater significance, and they subsequently became guiding principles for the young scholars in the discipline. This is precisely what warrants a focused review of the kind being proposed in the chapter.

The third chapter is a broad outline of the major strands in Indian sociology. It will bring together readings of the discipline published on various occasions. One of the specific attempts of the chapter would be to look for both continuity and change in the discipline.

The study will conclude with a brief summary of the main findings and few suggestive remarks. The success or failure of a study of this kind can be judged not entirely on the basis of the new propositions it can make, but on its ability to pinpoint the pertinent areas where such propositions could not even be thought to have any possibility before. The present study, it is firmly hoped, would definitely succeed in doing the latter at least.

Note: Given the terminological ambiguity which the present study may have to encounter more frequently than otherwise, the following will be used as synonyms: sociology/social anthropology, religion/civilisation and Orientalism/Indology. Despite the differences of definition between each of these terms, their synonymous usage is quite common in Indian Social Sciences in general and sociology in particular, which is why they are retained here.

Chapter II

**Colonial Discourse on Religion: A
Precursor for the Development of
Sociology in India**

CHAPTER II

COLONIAL DISCOURSE ON RELIGION

A Precursor for the Development of Sociology in India

The history of social Sciences in general and sociology in particular is linked to the post-Enlightenment project of modernity, a project which is based largely on “the scientific’ approach to the study of man and society” (see e.g. Alatas 2006; Hawthorn 1986). Indian sociology is in no way an exception to this general trend. In a fairly recent work set out to explore the disciplinary origins of Indian sociology/social anthropology through the biographical approach, Nandini Sundar, Satish Deshpande and Patricia Uberoi subscribe, at a superficial level, to the fact that the establishment of sociology and anthropology as academic disciplines in India is the fulfilment of Thomas Macaulay's vision (1835) for Indian education which sought to produce, through English-medium schooling, a class of “interpreters” between Britain and her colony, “Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect” to whom would fall the task “to refine the vernacular dialects of the country, to enrich those dialects with terms of science borrowed from the Western nomenclature, and to render them fit vehicles for conveying knowledge to the great mass of the population” (2007:31-32). Sundar, Deshpande and Uberoi were, of course, not the first to make such a confessional claim. Prior to them, Zastoupil and Moir (1999) also discussed in detail about Thomas Macaulay's vision (1835) and the impact it came to have on the educational system of India. But Sundar, Pande and Uberoi extended this debate further and went on to suggest that almost all the founding figures in the history of academic anthropology and sociology saw themselves as engaged in the production and dissemination of scientific and useful knowledge. “Their purpose was not, however,” according to Uberoi, Nandini and Pande, “merely to serve the Empire—to open India and its peoples to scientific scrutiny and thereby enable its efficient administration and control. On the contrary, they believed that mastery of the science of the coloniser was the essential first step to qualify for self-rule and establish India as a modern nation-state within the world community of nations” (2007:31).

What seems implicitly evident in the above understanding is the fact that Indian sociology was founded on two divergent, almost mutually opposing, principles: while the first one was based on the post-enlightenment, evangelical understanding that the colonizing Britain was endowed with a greater responsibility of producing world-civilising knowledge and transmitting it to every corner of the earth in order to bring into the god's kingdom a great multitude of heathens (peoples of Indian subcontinent included) who have long been living outside the all-saving faith, the second principle was concerned with the rising conscience of colonized *Hindustan* whose western educated elite thought it would be highly essential for them to acquire enlightenment knowledge in order to free themselves from what they perceived to be the shackles of colonial domination. The duality of purpose stated herein is not a mere analytical invention, rather it was clearly at work in the way in which the departments of sociology were initially established and subsequently operationalised. A substantial gap between the real intention behind the British government's decision to introduce in 1914 a department of sociology in the Bombay school of Economics and the nature of research encouraged by Indian Professors working in that department is an evident example.

The apparent connection between the evolution of Indian sociology and the post-enlightenment project of European, particularly British, modernity is, in fact, more complex than it is often projected to be. Consider the following simple but very powerful paradox, for example: the world civilizing mission, pursued vigorously by the English evangelicals particularly during eighteenth, nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries, drew its inspiration from the victory gained by Protestant Christian groups over their Catholic counterparts during the sixteenth century reformation movement. Enthralled by the newfound freedoms and a direct access to god's own word readily translated into their Mother-tongue, a large part of the English speaking literate class then thought that their highest responsibility would lie in "Civilising the Savage", to put it in the words of Milton Singer (1972). Such a civilizing mission, however, soon turned out to be quite different than expected. Contradictions arose, not in the distant lands but from their own circles. One of the prime sources of this

contradiction which stood opposed to the underlying precepts of civilizing mission came from the Oriental School.

The initial findings of the Oriental school, largely guided by William Jones and his followers, brought about a seismic shift in the imperial outlook on the Orient, and Indian civilisational history for long remained as a reference point for those findings. One of the important contributions of the Oriental school was its revealing insistence that the oriental east was a prototype of the occidental west – a thesis that sent the enlightened west a compelling signal to look to contemporary Hindu life where their own past was still a living reality. These and many such other findings of the oriental school about Hindu social life came to have a considerable impact not only on the way in which the European West treated Indian society but also on the way in which Indians perceived themselves and their own society. This is exactly where lies the fundamental paradox, which is somehow connected to the present discussion about the working link between the development of sociology as an academic discipline in India and the post-enlightenment religion of Europe. This will indeed be taken up for a somewhat detailed discussion later in this chapter. It must, however, suffice to say here that the oriental School, by establishing a common link between the Western occident and the Eastern Orient, brought a fresh complexity into the civilizing mission of the evangelical English gentry, a complexity in which both the colonizing agents and the colonized subjects were equally implicated.

To admit frankly, the foregoing discussion is only a sharp reflection of the myriad literature widely available on the historical happenings of the nineteenth century colonial India. As every student of social sciences can clearly recognize, there is no dearth of literature on the colonial discourse in India, and the prime limitation of this literature – both analytical and empirical – is that it is largely one-sided, in the sense that its explicit focus, more often than not, is the influence that Imperial Britain came to have on the process of production and transmission of modern knowledge. One of the weaknesses of this one-sided view, among other things, is that it accords undue importance to political and economic processes which otherwise seem to have had secondary

prominence in the entire colonizing era, especially on the process of knowledge production. The civilizing mission, for example, as has already been explained above, was an outgrowth of post enlightenment European ideals advocated largely by the evangelical Christians, far from being driven by Economic-and-political factors. This is one of the fertile areas of research awaiting concrete attention, and the present study is only a minuscule attempt in this direction.

The present chapter is set out to analyse, by using the recent research findings, the nineteenth century discourse on Indian religions in general and Hinduism in particular. The main conclusions drawn from such analysis will then be deployed in the subsequent chapters whose prime focus would be to demonstrate the intricate relationship between the colonial discourse on religion and the development of Indian sociology as an academic discipline. This chapter is, therefore, going to serve as a historical account for the rest of the present study. But before moving into the real substance of the chapter, it also seems worth clarifying in advance as to why one has to look back to the nineteenth century discourse on religion that too for an analysis intended to understand the development of a discipline whose academic origins squarely lie in the second decade of the twentieth century. Two obvious answers can readily be advanced: first, since one of the prime purposes of the present dissertation is to unearth the invisible but powerful connections between the construction of religion across the borders and the development of sociology in India, a careful review of nineteenth century discourse on religion will be indispensable. Second, the existing literature on the emergence of Indian sociology does not have much to say about the role of religion in the evolution of the discipline, and this is what, of course, warrants the historical account of religious discourse in India and the impact it had, and still seems to have, on the development and growth of sociology in the country. This chapter is concerned specifically with the former, i.e.: the religious discourse of the nineteenth century Colonial India.

The recent debates and their immediate relevance

Colonialism was not a monolithic institution imposed on the colonised, and — as is clear in the Indian case — there were important

differences of perspective between administrators, missionaries, ethnographers, traders, and the military, and between “anthropologically-minded administrators” and other colonial officials, (Guha, 2007:30-60; Sundar, 1997:156-61). In a certain sense, Colonialism served as a platform where “individuals and groups of different interests and persuasions confronted one another in circumstances that varied widely at any given moment and over time” (Pennington, 2005:22). These differences of perspective, interests and persuasions were more clearly evident in the religious interaction of British colonialism in India and had attracted considerable scholarly attention. In the closing lines of his important book on religion and modernity, Peter van der Veer (2001), for example, goes to the extent of suggesting that the existence of a complex web of attractions and resistances at every level of society on both sides of the cultural and geographic divide between Britain and India was nothing less than “a mess of encounters”

The mess of encounters, to be sincere to Peter Van Der Veer’s carefully coined terminological precision, continues to be an academic adventure for interested researchers even till date. The fact that the present-day social science research on the nineteenth century colonial encounter between Britain and India is now being pursued with the same vigour and passion with which it was done almost six decades ago when colonialism was still a living testimony indicates this reality. In fact, the recent explorations into the subject seem to have more nuanced explanations to offer than before.

Religion and the Colonialism

Taking a cue from Talal Asad (1993), Tony Ballantyne suggests: “religion is a relatively recent concept born out of European culture and its encounters with traditions beyond its borders. Although religion is commonly understood as a trans-historical and transcultural phenomenon, it is without autonomous essence: rather its constituent elements and relationships are historically specific and its very definition is the historical product of discursive processes” (Ballantyne, 2002:85). “These discursive processes”, according to Ballantyne, “have been at work over the *longue durée* of Christian

history”, and, one of these practices “fundamental to the Christian tradition throughout the medieval period” was an “accent on faith”, a faith which came to equate itself with an “orthodox monotheism” and “Piety” (Ibid: 88). In the wake of the Reformation, however, the equation of religion with faith and piety, if not orthodox monotheism, underwent a great transformation.

In the opinion of Peter Harrison, there were heated post- Reformation doctrinal debates which sought to define “religion” as a “system of beliefs” rather than as “faith” or “piety”. This shift was clearly visible in the seventeenth-century literature Which increasingly concerned itself with identifying what the Calvinist Richard Younge described as the “fundamental principles of Christian religion”. In this new understanding, “Religion was seen as a series of propositions or beliefs that could be simply summarized and even conveyed in the form of a chart or diagram” (Harrison, 1990:20-25). “In this form”, according to Ballantyne King (1999), “religion could be identified as distinct and self- contained, something that could be separated from economics or politics, a definition that has recently been identified as an important move towards an essentialised and privatized vision of the cultural practices we denote as religion”. If this new understanding of religion as a system of beliefs, practices, and institutions was moulded by Protestant practice and propaganda, encounters with non-Christian communities were another crucial context for delineating the nature of religion. This is exactly where the colonial encounters between Britain and Indian-subcontinent become contentious phenomena. These encounters in the “contact zone” of the imperial frontier, according to Mary Louise Pratt (1992) and Ballantyne (2002), provided opportunities for the analysis of new and unfamiliar belief systems, creating analytical spaces for both the re-evaluation of Christianity and the discussion of the nature of religion at a general or theoretical level.

The nature of debates on religious discourse in the West in general and Europe in particular was going to have a considerable influence on the debates of the same sort here in the Indian subcontinent of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, the Western intelligentsia took upon itself the onus of exploring the

interconnections between the occidental west and the oriental east and subsequently produced a considerable scholarship that provided for the first time a systematic understanding of colonial India. The Oriental school, which initially carried out its activities under the guardianship of William Jones, played a major role in investigating the cultural past of the Hindus. The meticulous inquiry undertaken by the Oriental school in India was predominantly textual in orientation and had a great influence in both the British construction of Indian religion and the self realization of Hindus themselves. Practically, every discovery that sought to establish affinity between the Christian West and the Oriental East became an enabling tool for colonial administrators who were in a constant need for something or the other to justify their policies. This, in fact, sent the educated class of Indian citizens a compelling signal to look back on their faith system to sketch a plan either to accept or to reject the justifications being proposed by the foreign rulers in the form of religious reforms.

Coming back to the Oriental school and the role it played in discovering, if not fully inventing, the Hinduism, there are exceptionally detailed studies on the subject. Ronald B. Inden's *Imagining India* (1990; 2000), Tony Ballantyne's *Orientalism and race: Aryanism in the British Empire* (2002), Brian K. Pennington's *Was Hinduism invented?: Britons, Indians, and the colonial construction of Religion* (2005) Thomas R. Trautmann's *Aryans and British India* (1997), Nicholas B. Dirks' *The scandal of empire: India and the creation of imperial Britain* (2006) and Peter van der Veer's *Imperial encounters: religion and modernity in India and Britain* (2001) are some of them. One of the prominent discoveries of the Oriental school was the "Aryan or Indo-European notion", and no study on the colonial discourse on religion in general and Hinduism in particular can claim finality without paying adequate attention to it.

Aryanism as an Epiphenomenon of Hinduism: the discoveries by Sir William Jones

It might be worth stating at the outset that for a twenty-first century student, the “Aryan Idea” may appear either as a contemptuous intellectual notion responsible for the heinous crime committed against humanity by the German Nazis and Italian fascists or as a mere philosophical invention crafted by a group of European gentlemen during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to fulfil the vested interests they inexplicably represented. Given the past associated with the Aryan notion, be it the political manufacturing in the hands of Hitler and Mussolini during the first half of the twentieth century or deliberate misappropriation by the officialdom working for the East India Company and for the colonial government respectively, there is every reason for one to presuppose either of the above views regarding the Aryan notion. However, Thomas R. Trautmann in the preface to one of his authoritative texts on the subject suggests otherwise.

Admitting that “the Aryan or Indo-European idea has a quite different drift,” especially its complementary “function in the story of fascism”, Trautmann goes on to suggest that it has rather a greater significance for any social science research that embarks itself on understanding the British colonial discourse on India. The reasons Trautmann cites in support of his argument about the importance of the Aryan notion in this regard seem quite pertinent for the present study. According to him, “Aryan or Indo-European idea” is “a sign of the kinship of Britons and Indians” and has “created the history of India, while simultaneously revolutionizing European notions of universal history and ethnology” (emphasis added). “Taken as a whole,” Trautmann further declares, “the Aryan idea in European thought was productive of much that is false and evil, but also of much that is good and of lasting value” (1997:XIII). What is apparently clear in Trautmann’s honest confession about the utility of the Aryan notion is that it was successful in producing simultaneously both “false and evil” and “good and everlasting” (ibid). The real interest of the present study lies exactly here, in discovering what impact this Aryan or Indo-European notion came to have in the evolution and growth of Indian sociology.

Is the impact this notion had left on Indian sociology false? Evil? Good? Everlasting? While it would be too much of a presumption on the part of this dissertation to find out answers for these complex questions, nevertheless, the attempt here is to establish a working link if any, between the highly stimulating civilisational discourse i.e., the Aryan or Indo-European notion and the development of one of the important social science disciplines i.e., sociology in India.

The real credit for inaugurating a new chapter in the western understanding of Eastern religions, particularly Hinduism, goes to none but Sir William Jones. “His contemporaries as well as modern scholars have praised Jones for inaugurating modern Indology by demonstrating a genuine appreciation of Hindu thought and literature.” Most importantly, “today, he is remembered among some as “the first scholar to have looked at the east without a Western bias” and as one who changed the shape of European studies of the Orient by forming “enduring relationships with members of the Bengali intelligentsia” (Pennington, 2005:116).

“Already an established linguist and Orientalist, known especially for a Persian grammar”, William Jones sailed for India in 1783. Jones appointment as a Judge in the Calcutta high-court, however, does not seem to be a straightforward affair. As his biographer S.N. Mukherjee, indicates, “Jones arrived in India with a reputation for a political radicalism that may, in fact, have delayed his appointment to India, for it seems he could muster more indignation at European rather than Oriental tyranny” (Mukherjee, 1968:49). While it cannot be conclusively stated as to what extent Jones really mustered indignation at European tyranny, what one can say with obvious conviction is that he did strive hard to construct civilisational affinity between the Hindu east and the Christian west, a project which was almost unthinkable before.

In a famous essay, ‘On the Gods of Greece, Italy, and India,’ his first historical contribution to the Asiatic Researches, Jones laid out a series of correspondences between the names and characteristics of Roman, Greek, and Hebrew deities, based on the similarities of which he logically “inferred a general union or affinity between the most distinguished inhabitants of the

primitive world, a family of nations descended from Noah” (Jones, 1807, 3:320). In the same essay, Jones further suggests that this unity, however, had suffered at the hands of superstitious forces that conspired to fragment human community and to distance human consciousness from its history and heritage. This idea about human descent Trautmann aptly names a “Mosaic ethnology,” a reference to the “tree of nations” described in biblical books attributed to Moses that portrays a segmentary descent structure that “ramifies endlessly” (1997:9). To put it simply, Jones imagined that a gradual physical and spiritual migration from humanity’s origination point resulted in deviations from an earlier, “rational adoration of the only true God” (1807:319). In Jones explanation, thus, the Oriental Hindus at some point in the history deviated from the original, divine design, kept themselves far away from the rational adoration of the only true God, and have ever since been living a life full of licentiousness, pagan practices and polytheistic worship of idols. If one is allowed to make this much of liberal interpretation of Jones understanding of Hinduism, which, of course, is in no way a great deviation from what Jones himself was trying to convey, then one is sure to make considerable progress in establishing a thoughtful, historical link between the nineteenth century colonial discourse on Hinduism and the twentieth century development of sociology. Such a link, however, is yet to be made visible, and the task of making it possible lies with the subsequent chapters. But to be sure for it to happen, this chapter needs to be ready for further adventure and travel through a few more areas of contention.

To continue Jones’ point about the deviation from humanity’s origin, in his understanding a large part of humanity (Hindus in particular) deviated from the original path for three probable reasons: “1) the abandonment of historical truth in favour of myth and fable; 2) the abandonment of rational apprehension of the physical world in favour of adoration of heavenly bodies; and 3) the misuse or misunderstanding of poetic and symbolic language as literal” (Pennington, 2005:121).

Jones made it clear that Hinduism lost its past glory, degraded from pure Monotheism to Polytheism, and it was *Brahminical* theology which was

clearly responsible for all that happened. In Jonesian judgment, “priestly apparatus and superfluous deities” were what corrupted the Hindu society (Jones, 1807, 3:126).

Jones discovered, through a careful deployment of his philological knowledge, close enough resemblances among Sanskrit, Latin and Greek, and went on to posit that Sanskrit was the mother of all ancient languages. He found Hindu mythology as a relic of Europe’s own ancestral heritage, advocated that there were fine similarities between Hindu and Hebrew lore, and finally concluded that both peoples were heirs to Noah. Answering a probable question as to why, then, people before him could not realize this long-lasting civilisational affinity, Jones came up with a striking anecdote that the Hindu chronology of the deluge and succeeding human history was so confused and exaggerated that it had mythologized the story almost beyond recognition (See Pennington 2005:122; Trautmann, 1997:66). It is, therefore, here in the deliberately discovered biblical sketch that the “Aryan or Indo-European notion” takes its historical birth.

It is worth clarifying at this stage, perhaps as a caution to be kept in mind always, that “the creation of the Indo-European concept was the outcome of a program (in which Jones was only one of the more brilliant of many participants) of recovering the lost language of Noah and of Adam through the comparison of vocabularies” (Trautmann, 1997:52). Trautmann’s powerful intervention seems quite instructive at this juncture and requires a careful consideration.

After undertaking a comprehensive review of the vast literature on British rule in India, particularly the social history of this rule, Trautmann comes up with a distinct explanation that British Rule in India, which got established effectively after the war of Plassey, was more favourably disposed towards Hindu Society than one could expect under the circumstances of Colonial rule. The reason Trautmann proposes for such a favourable disposition is the well established conviction that Hinduism is basically monotheistic, and that the benevolence of its religion and laws made India a prosperous and peaceful country before foreign-Islamic- conquest (Trautmann,

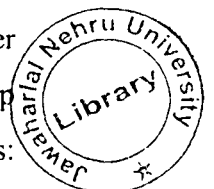
1997:65). Without digging too much into Trautmann's discussion in this regard, which perhaps runs into lengthy pages, it may suffice to say that in Trautmann's understanding British rule in India, ever since its inception, was carried out on the principles of mutual respect and acceptability. Quoting Thomas Ainslie Embree (1962), Trautmann substantiates that "in the decades following the conquest of Bengal there was a significant sector of British opinion that found in Indian culture 'a deep and appealing wisdom', [and] argued that the Indian people had a way of life that was valid for them, however different it might be from western civilization" (Trautmann, 1962:62). Trautmann identifies the mutual trust with which the British developed a close affinity with Hindu Society as "British Indomania". But unfortunately enough, British Indomania was a short-lived dream. It soon faded under the powerful guise of "Indophobia" – a notion which stands for a mutual suspicion by the British rulers and intelligentsia of Indian social customs and cultural practices.

Unlike British Indomania, Trautmann points out, Indophobia was a deliberate construction. Trautmann announced louder and clear, "I am going to argue . . . that British Indophobia was made, not born" (1997:63). To cut the long story short again, Indophobia was a mutually opposing notion based on the conviction that the Oriental East was in need of severe correction and that the enlightened Britain should act decisively and impose social, political and individual discipline. The chief architects of Indophobia that sprung up largely during the last quarter of the nineteenth century were Charles Grant and James Mill – a strong evangelist and a committed utilitarian – respectively.

Conclusion

The significant implication of looking at the colonial discourse on Hinduism through the conceptual prisms of Indomania and Indophobia is that while the former represents a Mosaic ethnology in which Hinduism is given the status of a lost cousin and admitted readily into European kinship, the latter reflects the modern power structure that takes sufficient enough care to keep the enlightened West and the oriental East far apart. The real question, then, is: to what extent is the division between West and the East real? How does such a

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distance between these two worlds play itself out in knowledge production? And particularly, does Indian sociology have any role in the entire gamut of discussion on the affinities or contrasts between the East and the West?

It is worth admitting at this stage that the questions raised above in the present chapter are not completely new. Rather they emanate from the scholarship that clearly recognises the predominance of Hindu civilisational/religious analysis in Indian sociology and sternly advocates for a holistic change in the doing of sociology. One of the notable works in this direction is *Christians of India* by Rowena Robinson (2003).

Highlighting the historical neglect faced by the scholarship on “non-Hindu communities”, Robinson argues: “The study of India therefore was and has been for a long time, the study of ‘Hindu’ India”, and thus This notion led both to the reification of Hinduism and the marginalization and neglect of non-Hindu groups and communities” (Robinson, 2003:12). To quote Robinson again, “the dimensions of this neglect are manifold and are only now in the process of being analyzed systematically” (Ibid). If anything, the present work is only a minute part of the broader scholarship that has begun to rectify the bias in Indian sociological traditions. The thesis makes its own contribution by taking up this idea of the study of India being ‘Hindu India’ and analysing closely and carefully how this happens in the works of one of India's major sociologists: G S Ghurye and how it, in fact, influences his research and career decisions. While all of Ghurye's works cannot be mentioned, a judicious selection of these has been made to trace his ideas regarding the ‘civilizational’ perspective of Indian sociology. Further, the thesis brings out the traces of this idea in later sociologists as well. It is able, through this analysis, to point out the ways in which the ‘civilizational’ perspective has restricted the scope of Indian sociology and limited what it can do. All this will be dealt with in the later chapters.”

Keeping the present chapter as a reference point, the next chapter will try to probe some of the questions raised in the preceding paragraphs, and the specific focus would be on the sociological thought and practice of one of the early Indian sociologists G. S. Ghurye.

Chapter III

G. S. Ghurye and The Indian Sociology:

A New Beginning or

A Renewed Continuation?

CHAPTER III

G. S. GHURYE AND THE INDIAN SOCIOLOGY

A New Beginning or A Renewed Continuation?

Every discipline derives its initial inspiration from the ideas and practices current to a particular time and space, draws its resources from certain institutions and personalities operating under a given historical situation, and only then at some point comes to represent a specific branch of knowledge. British sociology, for example, derived in its initial phases a great deal of benefit from the social philosophy of the eighteenth and nineteenth century industrial Europe, drew its institutional strength from the first chair of sociology established under the headship of Prof. L. T. Hobhouse at the London School of Economics and political Science, and gradually reached a stage, where today it is given a fairly significant recognition in terms of analyzing social change and state policy (see Halsey, 2004). Such a clear pattern is still to emerge in the case of Indian sociology, and the present study is intended precisely to understand and explain some of the subtle nuances that can be helpful to discern it.

The important paradigmatic thought from which Indian sociology seems to have benefited in abundance is the European Discourse on Hinduism, and it is in this context that the previous chapter has already attempted to present a concise view of the Oriental School and its chief explication of Hindu religion. Taking off from the point at which the last chapter ended, the present chapter sets out to examine in brief the disciplinary thought of one of the early sociologists in India – G. S. Ghurye. The prime focus would be to bring out the discernible interconnections between Ghurye's civilisational understanding and the oriental view of Hindu Society and to elucidate how those two viewpoints together determined, and still seem to have been playing an invisible but dominant role in determining, a particular direction for Indian sociology.

Much has already been written about Professor Govind Sadashiv Ghurye (1893-1983) and his distinct contribution to the growth of Indian sociology. Professor Ghurye is probably the only early Indian sociologist whose life and thought have been subjected to considerable retrospection by

almost every generation of scholars in the discipline so far (See Kapadia, 1954; Pillai, 1976, 1997; Narain, 1979; Venugopal 1986, 1993; Pramanick, 1994; Momin, 1996; Upadhyay, 2007). Of these, while Momin (1996) edited the Ghurye centennial volume, Kapadia (1954) and Pillai (1976) crafted the festschrifts for Ghurye. Apart from the secondary analysis, Ghurye himself penned down in the last decade of his life an autobiography entitled 'I and Other Explorations' (1973) which, in fact, serves as one of the major primary sources of his life.

Given the fact that a detailed life sketch of Ghurye has been well painted and is adequately available, this chapter leaves out the obvious in order primarily to look back and point out the nature of Ghurye's sociology, and the focus of such an exercise would be to understand the role of religion as a constant variable in Ghuryean thought and subsequently in shaping Indian sociology. Since Ghurye's influence on the development, if not evolution, of Indian sociology remains highly convincing, an attempt to establish a logical relationship between his religious sentiments and civilisational orientations on one hand and the shaping of Indian sociology on the other should not be a great deviation from the academic fairness. It is with such a conviction that the present chapter sets out to examine some of the pertinent aspects of Ghurye's sociology with a special focus on religion. This unearthing of an interplay between religion and sociology in India relates to a larger goal of establishing a cogent link between the religious discourse on Hinduism and the disciplinary development of Indian sociology, which is the prime objective of the present study.

With a view to achieving maximum precision possible, this chapter is divided into three main parts: the first part will briefly outline Ghurye's influence on Indian sociology; the second will bring into a sharp focus the nature and scope of the Sociological work of Ghurye; and the final part will draw some conclusions on the real roots of Ghurye's sociological thought, the prime focus being an attempt to unearth the neglected, disciplinary history of the Indian sociology. But before moving into the substantive parts of the text, it

seems worth pausing for a moment and have a glossary view of Ghurye's life, at least a few relevant parts of it.

G. S. Ghurye's Life

Govind Sadashiv Ghurye (widely known as G. S. Ghurye) was born on "12 December 1893 in Malvan, a town in the Konkan coastal region of western India" which now roughly falls in the state of Maharashtra. Born into a "Saraswat Brahmin family" shortly after the death of his "great-grandfather, a deeply religious man," Ghurye was believed to be a "reincarnation" of his grandfather. As it can naturally be the case with any lad born in a traditional Indian family under such circumstances, Ghurye was entrusted with the responsibility of carrying on the family traditions of worship (Ghurye, 1973:2-11). But Ghurye's introduction to the family tradition in his young age seems to have benefited him in a quite different fashion later in his career. For example, as Carol Upadhyay rightly points out, "The training he received in the performance of rituals provided his first introduction to Sanskrit, the language that was to become central to his sociological work" (Upadhyay, 2007:198).

Although never stated explicitly anywhere, Ghurye was naturally a strong follower of tradition, and his commitment in this regard needs no special explanation. The choices he made in both his educational career and his academic profession clearly reflect this fact. After completing school education, his choice fell naturally on Elphinstone, a college which was famous for well-known-*Sanskrit* professors and an exciting library and had enjoyed a special recognition in the site of government those days. Ghurye completed B.A. Sanskrit Honours in 1916, winning the Bhau Daji Prize for the best Sanskrit student. He read Sanskrit and English for M.A., which he completed in 1918, winning the Vice-chancellor's gold medal this time. Given his intuitive expertise in Sanskrit, immediately after his M.A., he was invited to join Elphinstone as an assistant to Lecturer in Sanskrit (Ghurye, 1973:26-31).

Quite interestingly, Ghurye's entry into sociology is a mere coincidence, if not a shocking accident. It was the advertisement by the

University of Bombay in 1919 for scholarships in sociology and Economics abroad that was responsible for Ghurye's disciplinary conversion from Sanskrit to sociology. The scholarships were intended to help fill positions in the newly established School of Research in economics and sociology, because "qualified persons with adequate research training in economics and sociology were not easily available" (Tikekar, 1984:121). From what has been recorded in his Autobiography, one gets an impression that Ghurye chose to apply for a Scholarship in sociology out of his genuine curiosity to inquire into certain social institutions. To put it in his own words which are widely known to the students of Indian sociology today: "My study of the Manusmriti at the B.A. with its eight forms of marriage and the dictum 'woman does not deserve freedom' had excited my interest in the study of some institutions" (Ghurye, 1973:37). Whatever may be the cause behind Ghurye's sudden shift from a subject (Sanskrit) which meant more than a mere profession to him to a discipline (sociology) which took him beyond what he might have initially thought of doing, his decision to apply for a scholarship to study sociology abroad and the subsequent selection of his candidature resulted ultimately in shaping Indian sociology in a particular direction, and it is, however, a different matter altogether that the form and substance which Indian sociology acquired under the *Gurukulship* of Professor Ghurye underwent a tremendous transformation in his lifetime itself.

Much like the way he chose to do his Sanskrit Honours in Elphinstone, Ghurye decided that London was the perfect place for doing sociology because one "naturally went in those days to the London School of Economics" (ibid.:43). Of course, under the scheme of the scholarship at offer he was free to go to any foreign country (ibid: 41). Howsoever personal it may appear at the outset, Ghurye's stay at U.K. universities is of some interest here, for his academic preferences were taking a clear shape during this time.

Had he followed the advice of Patrick Geddes, Ghurye would have done his Doctorate under the supervision of Sidney Webb. But what appears from the available records on Ghurye is that he always fixed his predilections in advance and followed them sternly. Ghurye approached L.T. Hobhouse, a

Professor of sociology at the London School of Economics. The reason Ghurye cites in support of his choice to approach Hobhouse instead of Sidney Web is that he could not contact the latter. Ghurye submitted to Hobhouse an essay on his proposed PhD and Hobhouse accepted it without any reservation. But by the time he received a confirmation, he had already decided to leave the London School of Economics and Political Science as the “atmosphere” there did not suit him. (Ghurye, 1973:45). Like many incidents, the precise reasons for his disenchantment with London School are unknown. But what one can clearly discern is that “while in London Ghurye had some interaction with the *LePlay* House group—disciples of Comte, LePlay, and Geddes” and found that “this brand of sociology” was quite unattractive (Upadhyay, 2007:204), a probable reason why Ghurye might have decided to flee away from the London School.

Making use of another referral he got from Geddes, he wrote to Professor A.C. Haddon at Cambridge, through whom he met W.H.R. Rivers. It was finally in W.H.R. Rivers that Ghurye found the person he had long been looking for. In his very first meeting with Rivers Ghurye decided that he would go to Cambridge to study under Rivers, which he did for certain. But that “fortnight” companionship with “such an intellectual luminary” did not last for long (Ghurye, 1973: 46).

Rivers’ sudden death in June 1922 came as a great blow to Ghurye. As Srinivas (1996b:3) rightly puts it, Ghurye considered it as the ‘biggest tragedy’ of his life. To cut a long story short, “with Rivers’ death Cambridge had become a blank” for Ghurye, who finally completed his doctorate under the supervision of Professor A.C. Haddon and came back to India by May 1923 (Ghurye, 1973:53).

After working for a brief time in Calcutta, Ghurye was appointed as a reader in the Department of sociology in the University of Bombay in 1924, subsequently became Professor in 1934 and remained in the same department until his retirement in 1959. During this period (1924-1959) Ghurye was also head of the department (Upadhyay, 2007:194), and according to the first hand

testimony of M.N. Srinivas (1996b) – Ghurye’s own student – Ghurye ran his department like a *Gurukul*.

A serious student of Indian sociology today should not simply be satisfied with what is being factually stated but should attempt to raise deeper questions and find out answers for them, howsoever tentative those questions may be and howsoever hypothetical the answers can turn out to be. For such a reflexive exercise, no other figure in Indian sociology can be more relevant than the one under consideration – Professor G.S. Ghurye. This chapter is intended to move exactly in such a direction. This, however, should not be taken to imply that the existing sociological literature on Indian sociology in general and Ghurye in particular does not ask critical questions, that scholarship in the Indian sociology lacks a credible reflexivity and that the older generation of Indian sociologists were less serious about their job; far from all of this, the truth is quite the opposite. For example: Each piece of work brought out on Ghurye and the early practices of Indian sociology presents a distinct dimension of the subject under study; if it is not an over-emphasis to state, perhaps sociology is the only Indian Social Science discipline that subjects itself to periodic retrospection (anyone who follows regularly ‘Contribution to Indian Sociology’ and ‘Sociological Bulletin’ will easily appreciate this fact); and following the above logic, Indian sociologists (past and the present) appear to be not only serious about their own job but introspective about the job of their predecessors as well. Despite the best of these efforts, however, the incredible history and the underlying Philosophy of Indian sociology still remain a great mystery for younger generations of students in the discipline. This is the precise reason why a serious student of Indian sociology has to ask more serious questions and experiment, in as scientific a fashion as possible, to propose hypothetical answers supported by sufficient reason and historical evidence.

It is in accordance with the above conviction that one can ask in the right spirit: why did Ghurye always seem to prefer a particular brand, be it in his learning or in his teaching? How far was he successful in setting for Indian sociology an exemplar that can rightly belong to him? Is Indian sociology still

moving on the path Ghurye and his Philosophy had put it upon? If it is continuing on the path chosen by the scholars of the beginning of the twentieth century, a period which has a historical significance of its own particularly rooted in colonial conditions, what real appeal does it have on offer for the present-day world which has already travelled too far from the Colonial past? Assuming that Indian sociology has long realized the dynamic of social change and is preparing itself to find out alternative paths, what are the recognisable deviations and how are they being viewed within the discipline? Although complete answers to questions of this kind may not always be forthcoming or at times appear too imperfect, they can nevertheless reveal untold truth that may simply go unnoticed otherwise. For example, only by asking such personal questions as the following—why did Ghurye develop so great a disillusionment towards the LePlay House Group that by the end of it he had to leave the London School of Economics and decide against the offer of acceptance by Professor Hobhouse, a noted sociologist of the time? Why was he so attracted to W.H.R. Rivers that just in one meeting he made it “dead certain” that Rivers would be his Supervisor? And after all, why didn’t he show any enthusiasm in working either with Sidney Web (the one who was strongly recommended by Patrick Geddes well before Ghurye left for London) or with A. C. Haddon (the one who was a great source of help for him at Cambridge and, in fact, the one who actually introduced him to Rivers)? Questions which might appear at the superficial level too personal to ask, can help one understand some aspects of Ghurye’s intellectual trajectory. These questions, for example, help one discover that Ghurye had, almost right from the beginning, a great suspicion of the evolutionist thought in sociology, that he not only admired as a student but even promoted later in his career as a teacher the diffusionist thinking propagated largely by British Anthropologists of his times and that he initially preferred Anthropology to sociology and subsequently combined both of them as ‘social anthropology’. This is only one example but is highly relevant one. Before digging slightly deeper into concerns of this kind, however, one owes an explicit explanation of the legacy Ghurye had left on Indian sociology, because one will be fully convinced, after all, about the need to study the life and thought of a particular scholar only when he/she is sufficiently aware of such details as: how, why and to what extent the given scholar has influenced

the discipline under consideration. The following few pages, thus, will attempt to demonstrate in brief Professor Ghurye's influence on Indian sociology. As has already been stated before, there is a significant amount of academic literature that explains in varied ways Ghurye's contribution to Indian sociology and what is going to be presented below is only a cursory outlook in this respect.

Ghurye's Sway in Indian Sociology

The term "Sway" appearing in the above title is deliberate and its significance will be known only at the end of this section; and it may be safe to assume at the moment that "Ghurye was not the first intellectual to attempt to trace the formation of Indian society and understand its structure, nor was this quest confined to sociology" alone (Upadhyay, 2007:209). But he left a great legacy on the form and substance of Indian sociology, some of which is still being proudly preserved. While the contentious questions about the quantity and quality of Ghurye's legacy on Indian sociology are the preserve of elders in the discipline to debate, what seems impeccably clear is that Ghurye's influence on the subject becomes indelible due, perhaps, to a variety of factors:

The first and obvious factor responsible for Ghurye to assume such a great significance in the life of a discipline (that is, Indian sociology) has largely to do with the illustrious career he came to enjoy as a teacher in one of the thriving universities in the country during his times. Almost all the students he taught in his early years occupied prominent positions later in their careers, and a good number of them, with few exceptions, remained true to the learning they received from him. The influence that Ghurye as a teacher could have on the discipline can be demonstrated from a simple historical fact that "at one time almost every sociology department in the country was headed by a Ghurye product" (Pillai, 1997: xiii). Consequently, Ghurye's students played an "instrumental" role in the consolidation of the discipline particularly in the 1960s and 1970s. Thus, it can safely be stated that being strategically placed to train the first three generations of pupils in a subject which was taking institutional shape in the country, he had a special advantage to send his message right across and to mould scholarship in a direction he desired.

The second important factor that corresponds clearly to the additional advantage Ghurye had enjoyed, which probably no other Indian sociologist would have had so far, is that he headed the department of sociology in the University of Bombay from the first day of his appointment up to his retirement upon superannuation (1924-1959), spanning around three-and-half decades. During this time he designed an M.A. Course in sociology - the first ever Masters Programme to be introduced in Indian Universities, - collected a considerably large quantity of ethnographic data (the two research assistant positions at his disposal which were filled most of the time by Ghurye's own doctoral students seem to have been extremely useful to him in this regard), supervised around eighty M.A./PhD theses (majority of them went to press), and at times made necessary interventions in the policies of Nehruian Government. His position as head of the department in the University was, of course, not without bottlenecks. Evidently, his influential colleagues in the Department of Economics working just next door were reported to have created troubles at times. But Given his own stern personality, one can rest assure that Ghurye had his own way of dealing with the hurdles that came on his way, without which he would have hardly been able to sustain his position for such a long time. At any rate, the official position he enjoyed as head of the Department definitely put him in a far better position to play an important role in institutionalizing sociology, and in the bargain he never failed to make his own mark on the discipline.

The third prominent factor that facilitated Ghurye to expand the horizons of his thought beyond Bombay University was the creation of the Indian Sociological society, which he founded and then ran its Journal, 'Indian Sociological Bulletin. For some time, the Bulletin served as an important vehicle for Ghurye and his research students to reach the wider academic audience outside Bombay University. Thus, finally Ghurye and his sociological orientations began travelling far across Bombay and Western India, making Ghurye's influence strongly felt on the subject.

Apart from the important factors above, Ghurye's sociology course also exercised influence far beyond the Bombay department, because many

Universities in the Country subsequently adopted the Bombay Syllabus when they started teaching sociology, and it remained a standard Syllabus for a long time. According to Pramanick (1994), this was a major avenue through which sociology, as conceived by Ghurye, became institutionalised within the discipline, at least until the triumph of structure-functionalism. Moreover, as it has already been pointed out in a different context above, until 1950 there were only a half dozen departments teaching sociology and anthropology, and the department of sociology at Bombay university was the only centre of postgraduate research in sociology in the country (Srinivas and Panini 1973: 194).

Given the strategic advantages he enjoyed, Ghurye left a deep impact on Indian sociology, and no student of the discipline can and should deny this fact. It is precisely for this reason that the title of this section includes the term “Sway”. It also, then, implies logically that an accurate knowledge of the form and content of present-day Indian sociology (assuming that the subject took shape from a concrete past) cannot be obtained without inquiring into the specificities of Ghurye’s thought that played a definitive role in the disciplinary past of the Indian sociology. The rest of this chapter shall, therefore, move exactly in that direction. Since it is over ambitious to think that the intellectual thought and disciplinary style of a thinker whose illustrious career lasted for more than a half-century can be summarized in few pages, what will be attempted below is only a selective but carefully chosen presentation of Ghurye’s orientation of Indian Society in general and Indian sociology in particular.

The Chief Tenets Of Ghurye’s Sociology

The real quest of Ghurye’s sociology was to demonstrate in as explicit a fashion as possible the unity and antiquity of Indian civilization, and such a concern was quite understandable, for the slogan of “*unity in Diversity*” served as a powerful weapon in the last days of the Indian Freedom Struggle. But Ghurye seemed to have travelled an extra mile in his effort. As it is clearly evident in his writings, which Pramanick (1994), Venugopal (1986) and Upadhyay (2007) also rightly point out, Ghurye believed that Hinduism lay at

the centre of India's civilisational unity and that at the core of Hinduism are Brahminical ideas and values that are essential for the integration of society. He strongly promoted the view that Religion was the backbone of Indian civilization, that diverse groups assimilated themselves into Brahminical Hinduism and that caste became universal because each group, subsequent to its assimilation into Hinduism, also accepted Caste as a socially definable category. Thus, in the hands of Ghurye while Indian culture became a product of acculturation between Vedic-Aryan and pre-Aryan cultural elements, Indian social history came to represent the history of the absorption of non-Hindu groups into Hindu society.

By historicizing Indian Civilisation as a product of acculturation between outside Aryans and Pre-Aryan indigenous population and by defining Indian society as essentially Hindu society and its cultural and religious unity as the basis of the Nation, Ghurye was, perhaps, not giving any distinct shape to Indian sociology, rather he was merely bringing into the scope of its subject matter what Orientalists and some nineteenth century Hindu reformers had long been discussing in varied ways. This reflects most of Ghurye's writings.

Ghurye's civilisational orientation, what Upadhyay (2007:213) appropriately terms as "sociology of Indian Civilisation" is clearly outlined in his first book *Caste and race in India* (1932) that subsequently went into several revisions. In this work Ghurye supports the Aryan invasion theory propounded by the Oriental school under the guardianship of William Jones, the only difference being that while Jones bases his theory on a philological approach carefully crafted after an extensive analysis of Greek, Hebrew and Sanskrit languages, Ghurye presents his case by taking the support of equally extensive historical, archaeological, and anthropometric evidence. While Jones analyses were considered under the Indological framework, Ghurye's inquiry was pursued under social anthropology.

In essence, Ghurye's argument in *Caste and race in India* is that the Indo-Aryans were a branch of the Indo-European stock who entered India around 2500 BC, bringing with them the Vedic religion and the "Brahmanic

variety” of the Indo-Aryan civilisation. According to his thesis, the caste system originated in the attempt by the Indo-Aryan Brahmins to maintain their purity by keeping themselves apart from the local population through endogamy and ritual restrictions (Ghurye, 1969:12). In so far as arguing that caste derives from the *varna* classification of the early Vedic age, which purportedly referred to skin colour and differentiated the *Arya* from the *dasa*, Ghurye does not differ so much from earlier British Ethnologists. He, however, rejects the extreme racial theory of caste propounded by Risley and other British ethnologists, and suggests that Brahmanism and the caste system spread throughout India as cultural traits rather than through large-scale physical migration of Aryan Brahmins. It is exactly here that diffusionism acts as a compatible theoretical framework for him.

For a long time, Diffusionism was generally understood in two contradictory ways: On one hand it was portrayed as an embarrassing aberration in the history of anthropology, and on the other, it represented a broader historical and contextual approach that attempted to trace historical links among peoples and assess the effects of culture contact, especially between colonial powers and dominated people (Vincent, 1990). It is the later understanding of Diffusionism that attracted Ghurye’s attention, and is clearly represented in *Caste and Race in India*.

Ghurye’s thesis that Brahmanism and the caste system, originating in the Indo-Aryan civilisation in the Gangetic plain, are the essential features of Indian civilisation, a thesis that remains central to *Caste and Race in India*, continues to be the subject matter for much of his subsequent work. *Family and kin in Indo-European culture* (1955), *Two Brahmanical institutions: Gotra and charana* (1972), and *Vedic India* (1979) in particular not only carry-forward this theme in a quite logical mode but also present it in a highly convincing way. Ghurye always has his own style and technique in giving the civilisational past of India a sociological colour with an anthropological brush. For example, by combining ethnographic data made available to him by his field assistants and the *sanskritic* knowledge taught to him in his early childhood, he undertook a grand comparative analysis of the traditional practices, religious

rituals and social organization as both presented in *Shastras* and visible to the anthropological eye. Accordingly, he demonstrated a cogent link between Modern society and the ancient civilisation of India. *Family and kin in Indo-European culture* (1955) and *Gotra and charana* (1972) address this concern more directly from a sociological perspective.

Gotra and charana, investigates the origin, history, and spread of the *Brahminical* institution of exogamy through an exhaustive study of Sanskrit literature and inscriptions from different periods, ending with contemporary information on exogamous practices in several communities. In this work Ghurye goes beyond establishing a mere historical link between present and the past and introduces into Indian sociology/social anthropology a fresh complexity that the rules of *Brahminical Gotra* are well entrenched even in the family and kinship practices of isolated tribal communities. Furthermore, he considers that the social organization in Indian Civilisation, both the past and present, is only a part in the *Dharmic* whole. Such an assumption would, of course, travel against the grain of Durkheimian sociology that demands a clear separation between the Sacred and the Secular, and it is altogether a different question anyway. As far as *Gotra and charana* is concerned, it represents the finality of certain important debates Ghurye raised in his previous works and as such, stands as a conclusive continuation of a voluminous scholarship that went before it. One such notable text preceding *Gotra and charana* is 'Family and kin in Indo-European culture', and the gap between the two is nearly two decades. Despite such a time gap, the former appears as an apt conclusion to the latter (the order in which they have been mentioned above rather than the sequence in which they were published otherwise).

Family and kin in Indo-European culture examines the earliest evidence on the kinship of the Aryans in India and the Greeks and the Romans in Europe. Such other groups as: the Celts, Germans, and Slavs also find place in the text, but depiction pertaining to them is cursory at best. Ghurye's analyses in the book are drawn primarily from the literary representations of Sanskrit, Greek and Latin. Thus, one finds in *Family and Kin* a general survey of kin nomenclature and behaviour of the ancient ancestral groups who, over a

period of time, spread across diverse geographical spaces, and one should keep in mind that this general survey stems from the revelations made by the classical languages that these groups spoke in their respective spatial locations.

Besides *Gotra and charana* and *Family and kin in Indo-European culture*, Ghurye also wrote several other texts that portray the story of Indian Civilisation but in a slightly theological fashion. From a different spectrum, *Gods and Men* (1962b) occupies the first place in this list. Serious doubts have been expressed over the years about the sociological validity of this book, for a substantial part of it is actually devoted to sketch the inner whole of Hindu Religion. Pauline M. Kolenda, who reviewed the text shortly after its publication, for example, loudly proclaimed: “this is not a sociological work on religion in the current American sense” (1962:585).

Notwithstanding the controversies, which may of course be important for the broader analysis of disciplinary significance but are not relevant so much at the moment, one can consider *Gods and Men* as a text, written by a long time Indian sociologist, that concerns itself with five important Hindu gods linked together in a Hindu *pentad*, the *panchadeva*. The five are Surya (the sun), Siva, Vishnu, Devi and Ganesa. Probably to give a fair deal to the other side of Hinduism which is often explained away as “popular Religion”, Ghurye also discusses Skanda as a contrast to Ganesa; Vithoba and Datta as regional deities; and Hanuman, the popular monkey god. Ghurye’s sensitivity to the Minor deities is also evident in the fact that largest section of the book is given over to a thorough analysis of Skanda and Ganesa.

In essence, the central concern of *Gods and Men* is with “Hindu ideas of Godhead,” Which, Ghurye thought, would be Hinduism’s unique contribution to the sociology of religion in India and civilisational understanding of the Indo-European past. In support of his textual analysis drawn primarily from *Sanskritic* literature, he also uses such varied anthropological and archival sources as: temple inscriptions, iconography, data gathered from regional almanacs, district gazeteers, and sociological studies of his time.

In *Gods and Men*, one of Ghurye's implicit assumptions is that Hinduism, at least in its antique form, is not averse to a Monotheistic God. Taking clue from *Svetasvatara Upanishad*, Ghurye presents a series of arguments in favour of "Theism proper" that postulates one Supreme God to whom personal devotion is rendered as one's religion. For example, by depicting Shiva as the one who occupies a place of *Mahadeva* in the hearts of worshipers (including *Rama* who is otherwise considered as an *avatara* of *Vishnu*), Ghurye brings forth, quite convincingly, an explanation that renders Hinduism readily amenable to theistic explications. As will be shown in the concluding section of this chapter, Ghurye's concerted effort to depict Hinduism as a branch of the Monotheistic religion of Indo-European trait is not without a history, rather it corresponds clearly to two prominent discourses: the Eighteenth century Oriental school founded on the core belief of East-West amalgamation and the diffusionist school in British anthropology that remained instrumental in the propagation of human acculturation.

Another notable work of Ghurye which deals directly with the questions of Religion and Culture is *Religious Consciousness* (1965). This work is part of several planned volumes on the foundations of culture and appears as an outgrowth of the author's idea to establish a museum. Quite interestingly, Ghurye begins this text by pointing out, as any other Oriental Scholar might, that religious consciousness, conscience, justice, free pursuit of knowledge, free expression, and toleration have formed the bases of cultures all over the world. His attempt is to trace the commonality and variety of religious consciousness in three major cultural systems of the world: Mesopotamian, Egyptian and Indian (Hindu). While the larger portion is devoted to the statement of the Hindu cultural perspective, the Mesopotamian and Egyptian systems have received a partial treatment. The six thousand years of human history taken up for the study by Ghurye are replete with evidence to show that the origins of all major cultural systems of the world lie in the coming of religious consciousness. Although a strict comparative approach is not quite evident in the study of this religious consciousness, the intentions are visible. Using the comparative method as an advantage wherever required, Ghurye makes an all round effort to bring to the forefront that essence of Hinduism

which could be regarded as universal and which is evident in the Judio-Christian faiths.

Vedic India (1979) is another occasion where Ghurye presents in detail a collection of elaborate discussions of the religious and social aspects of two magico-religious complexes, viz.: the bull-complex (i.e. the sacrificial importance of the bull, and the horse-complex, of the rise of the gods *Vishnu* and *Siva*, of the ethnic and economic aspects of Vedic society, of non-literate India in Vedic times and of the prehistoric Indo-Europeans. Ghurye's way of dealing with this wide variety of topics is sometimes very messy and without any theoretical direction. For the present purposes, however, it might be enough to state that *Vedic India* is one prominent chapter in Ghurye's volume intended to depict the god head in Indo-European Religion, The final conclusion in this regard being in *Gods and Men* whose summary has already been presented above.

The centrality of religion and culture – two sides of the civilisational coin – remains so significant for Ghurye that even such works as *After a Century and a Quarter: Lonikand Then and Now* (1960) and *Cities and Civilisations* (1962a), which are otherwise studies of Village life and Urban conditions respectively, had to accommodate into their analysis this contention (the centrality of Religion) as one of the prime foci.

The Aborigines-So-called-and Their Future (1943) is another important work of Ghurye which stands firm in affirming the Hindu India. It presents a discussion on the practical problem of the tribal population and their integration or lack of it with the "mainstream". In a larger sense this was also a fascinating problem in the contact of peoples, especially during colonial times. It is not an over-emphasis to state that the Indian tribes have long been presented with the unique challenge of contact. They have been subject to two kinds of contact: the historic and now accelerated contacts with Hindu civilization and the contacts with the missionaries, the British administrators and entrepreneurs. Some among the British administrators have sought to protect the tribal peoples from what they considered the baneful influence of Hindu contacts. Ghurye raised a consistent objection to British policy and

instead argued that the real welfare and development of Indian Tribes would be possible only when their wholesale integration into Hinduism is fully achieved. On that account, this book goes beyond a mere objection and brings out the fact that the tribal people who are grouped together as aborigines by the British government are actually backward Hindus. Ghurye argues in this book that the tribes are Hinduised to a greater or less extent and the transformation of tribes into castes is a characteristic feature of the Hindu social order. Unlike most ethnologists who lament the loss of independent status by the tribes when they become low-caste Hindus, Ghurye moves in a quite opposite direction and claims that the Hinduised tribes actually gain higher status by identifying themselves with the larger Hindu society even though they do occupy the lower ranks. He further suggests that the process of assimilation with the Hindus should not be purposely held back, even if such a process is likely to lead to the disruption of tribal cultures.

The brief literature review cited above suggests that Ghurye's sociology is founded on a civilisational understanding of Indian Society. Beginning from 'Caste and Race in India' (1932) to *Vedic India* (1979), almost all major texts of Ghurye depict Indian society as an ancient civilisation, a Civilisation in whose foundation and eventual evolution Religion came to play a predominant role. In a distinct style, each text written on the subject upholds the idea that the Hindu Social order, as it exists today, was an outcome of a historical interaction that took place between the Aryans who could have travelled from Europe through Central Asia and finally arrived in the Indoganggetic plains probably during 2500 B.C.E. and the Indigenous population living in the hinterlands perhaps for few Hundred or maybe even few thousand years before Aryans could find their way into Indian subcontinent. For example, while 'Family and kin in Indo-European Culture' presents a wide range of philological data to suggest a close resemblance of family and kinship types among Greek, Roman and Hindu civilizations, *Gods and Men* through its rich description of Hindu Godhead demonstrates Hinduism's implicit propensity towards monotheistic God, thereby making Hindu religion a close ally of the Mosaic tradition as has been discussed in detail in the previous chapter.

Hypothetically speaking, be it Ghurye's sociological emphasis on the similarities of family and kinship patterns between Hindu and European societies or his revealing insistence on monotheistic practices in Hinduism, all reflect his ready endorsement of the Oriental construction of Hindu Religion and Indian Civilisation – which were quite often used simultaneously anyway. The later scholars who reviewed Ghurye's sociology too admit aptly that his understanding of Indian Society has much to share in common with the oriental scholarship (see Pillai, 1976, 1997; Venugopal 1986, 1993; Pramanick, 1994; Momin, 1996; Upadhyay, 2007). But what these scholars often seem to leave out in particular is an explicit statement about the exact nature of affinity between Ghurye's sociology and the oriental scholarship on Hinduism.

By having a closely comparative look at the brief summaries of Ghurye's major works presented in this chapter and the essence of Oriental scholarship on Hinduism and Indian Civilisation clearly laid down in the preceding chapter, one can appreciate the fact that Ghurye was not merely continuing the debate started by the British orientalists, rather he often gave these debates a fresh light by examining them with new anthropological methodology, and even verified the new ethnological data at his disposal by subjecting these to the oriental framework. Thus, what one can find in Ghurye's approach, and subsequently in Indian sociology, is a confluence of oriental discourse and anthropological methodology. This supposition has now begun to receive some attention in Indian sociology (see particularly Robinson 2003:11-38), and the prime objective of the present study is to extend this debate further and contribute to the disciplinary betterment of Indian sociology.

Before making a few concluding remarks on the chapter, it is worth pointing out that the review of Ghurye's text presented above has two obvious limitations: it is necessarily highly selective, but it is made after a careful consideration of the thematic relevance and of theoretical/methodological nomenclature. Second, reading and summarizing any text which is full of information and statements of generalization is both a boon and a bane (especially when the substantial arguments in the text are scattered beyond the

tolerance of a cursory reading), the later (the bane) may supersede the former (the boon). Fortunately or unfortunately, most of Ghurye's texts are widely known for scattering the data and for dispersing the arguments beyond the understanding of a normal reader. This is the most common complaint found in the reviews of Ghurye's texts. The second limitation of presenting the review of Ghurye's chosen text, thus, is quite obvious. To state the matter straight before leaving this note: the visible limitation, for example, is that no summary presented above has any direct quotation from the text it is representing, and it is a deliberate choice made primarily to restrict the review to the presentation of wholesome essence instead of getting drawn into the particularities debated in the book being reviewed.

Conclusion

It is now possible to address directly some of the questions with which the present chapter began. Just to recall, it has been suggested that a serious student of Indian sociology today should not be satisfied with the received wisdom and that he/she should raise critical questions and try to dig deeper into them, howsoever tentative the answers they find in the bargain may turn out to be. A set of questions that appeared, initially at least, too personal to ask about Ghurye were: why did Ghurye always seem to prefer a particular brand, be it in his learning or in his teaching? How far was he successful in setting for the Indian sociology an exemplar that can rightly belong to him? Is Indian sociology still moving on the path Ghurye and his Philosophy had put it upon? While it is for the next chapter to answer the last two questions, the first one can certainly find some significant responses at present.

From the life sketch of Professor G. S. Ghurye, a brief mention of which has already been made in the first few pages of the present chapter, it appears that Ghurye was selective in his approach and method. Most often, he seems to have functioned in accordance with his preferences fixed in advance. As a consequence, the doing of sociology, howsoever professional and value—neutral it is supposed to be otherwise, finds no exception in Ghurye's book of pre-configurations. Right from the day one of his entry into sociology, that is: when he started attending seminars given by Professor Patrick Geddes in the

newly established Department of sociology in Bombay University – a task he has undertaken in order to score better in the test for a foreign scholarship in the subject-Ghurye never seemed to have given up his personal/cultural commitment in favour of the discipline. Despite all challenges, he took every possible step (including leaving the London School of Economics and foregoing Hobhouse's offer for doctoral research) and charted his own course of action until he could finally figure out in W.H.R. Rivers an Anthropologist he desired. By moving to Cambridge through a makeshift arrangement, he kept himself away from the influence of evolutionist thought in sociology and became ever closer to the diffusionist ideology in British anthropology. As his later writings reveal, he did all this neither because of the charismatic personality of W.H.R. Rivers nor because of a newfound interest in diffusionist school. Rather, both Rivers and diffusionism came as a perfect match to his understanding of Indian Society. He only seems to have made an advantageous use of them in the course of time.

As far as “diffusionism” and “Evolutionism” are concerned, they represent two distinct schools of thought and have played a prominent role in the overall development of social anthropology in general and British social anthropology in particular, especially during the later part of the nineteenth century and early part of the twentieth century. At a superficial level, both these strands of thought appear quite similar and, in fact, commonly agree that the human culture attains civilisational perfection only after passing gradually through various stages of development. But the point at which both of them disagree is that while Evolutionism is founded on the belief that each society reaches a higher stage in the civilisational scale purely by its own ingenuity, independent of external influence, Diffusionism thrives on the principle of acculturation according to which the high culture of a civilized society absorbs the low cultures, thereby acting as a catalyst in the process of civilising mission as a whole (for a lucid analysis, see Barnard, 2004:27-60). The clash between these two schools of thought in the first decades of the twentieth century meant that by around 1920, a year in which Ghurye took admission at the Department of sociology in LSE, British anthropology appeared virtually torn apart between the biological anthropology of evolutionism and the social

anthropology of diffusionism. The prominent figure who led the diffusionist group was none other than W.H.R. Rivers, who was otherwise a strong evolutionist thinker upto 1911 but made a sudden shift thereafter. Thus, while Ghurye's entry into British academia, especially at a time when social anthropology in the imperial state was heading towards century's great crises, may be considered as a pure coincidence made possible by colonial government's decision to get a young Indian trained in sociology abroad, Ghurye's own choice to do PhD in anthropology rather than in sociology, that too under W.H.R. Rivers – a leading advocate of Diffusionism – is definitely more than a mere chance.

Thus, it may not be an over-emphasis to suggest, in the light of the review of Ghurye's major sociological texts and his academic choices presented briefly in this chapter, that by drawing himself closer to diffusionist tradition in social anthropology and by proposing a civilisational approach to the study of Indian Society, Ghurye, as an active proponent of the early Indian sociology, left a great methodological precedence which is half-diffusionist and half-oriental.

One of the probable, perhaps, quite convincing reason behind Ghurye's choice for either diffusionist or oriental methodologies could have been that each of them would assist him greatly in drawing two most timely conclusions about the Indian Society. Firstly, the central proposition of the oriental school that Hindus were the past cousins to civilized Europeans and that their Vedic Religion was once noble and highly spiritual provided Ghurye with much needed impetus to propose a sociologically substantive conclusion that the present-day cultural practices, customs, traditions, rituals and all other social manners prevalent in the hinterland of Indian subcontinent have a rich heritage of their own, are in no way inferior to their counterparts in the European continent and, in fact, are closely associated with them. Secondly, the idea of human acculturation, a core principle of diffusionism, continued to inspire most of Ghurye's anthropological work through which he argued quite persuasively that the only best course open for achieving national integration was to extend the Hindu social order to other primitive communities whom he

called “Aborigines”, even if that came to mean the uprooting of other cultural systems.

The above two conclusions of Ghurye’s sociology/social anthropology are not stated explicitly anywhere in the disciplinary analysis of Indian sociology, and one of the precise objectives of the present chapter, thus, is to propose them. Now, it is worth pointing out at the outset that Ghurye’s interest in the civilisational past of Indian society and his belief in the principle of acculturation have a specific colonial connotation. Through his focus on the recovery of a supposedly lost past and on the integration of a prospective social order, Ghurye was actually making available for the ready consumption of a newly formed national audience the description of a society which was politically stimulating and culturally conservative.

While this study is not focused on debating the colonial discourse and the role of Ghurye’s sociology in it, the important aspect requiring attention at the moment relates broadly to the shape that Indian sociology acquired initially under the guardianship of Professor Ghurye and subsequently his students and followers.

As far as Ghurye is concerned, being a major stakeholder in the institutionalisation of the discipline in the country, he designed sociology in such a way that it reproduced his vision of the nation or Indian society as constituted by certain basic social institutions and rooted in Hindu tradition. What one can find in Indian sociology in general and in Ghurye’s sociology in particular is “the idea of India as a Hindu nation, a civilization synthesized by Hinduism and critically, by caste” (Robinson, 2003:20). Thus strikingly enough, as Robinson aptly puts it: “once this synthesis between the ancient and the modern is woven around the idea of ‘the caste Hindu’, little historical support or exploration is considered necessary. Hinduism emerges full-blown and complete, transcending time, capturing space, suppressing difference and variation” (ibid).

In the project of constructing India as Hindu nation and giving it a conceptual shape in sociology, Ghurye is not alone. As the next chapter will try to show, a galaxy of Indian sociologists after Ghurye too carried forward strands of his thought. But in a way, this understanding of Indian society is not new; rather it corresponds to the eighteenth and nineteenth century Oriental

Discourse on Hinduism (see Van Der Veer, 1994; Trautmann, 1997; Robinson 2003).

What seems quite surprising, however, is that neither Ghurye nor those who came after him clearly explain the elective affinities between Indian sociology and the oriental discourse on Hinduism, Rather what one can find in their analyses on the subject is only a passing reference.

In the course of time, if it can be ever established that Indian sociology had its disciplinary origins in the Oriental construction of Hinduism, for instance, how can that mere historical fact really help the student of Indian sociology today? While a comprehensive answer to this question can be attempted only at the end of this brief study, it would be safe to assume at the moment that such a revelation would help bring more openness into the discipline, save the beginners from the isolationist ideas about the dichotomy between Western theories and Eastern practices, or vice-versa, and in the final analysis prepare the field workers – both empirical and textual – of the Indian society to be sensitive to the distinctness of every community.

Chapter IV

Indian Sociology: Practitioners and Proponents

CHAPTER IV

INDIAN SOCIOLOGY

Practitioners and Proponents

In the 20th century, Indian sociology grew from the enterprise of a small elite group to a respectable size and visible voice in global sociology. It bears the potential to reconnect the sociological discourse with the classical big questions that haunted sociology for an entire century. But for shaping the global agenda of sociology . . . the sociological discourse in India first had to deconstruct its alter ego (Welz, 2009:635).

The above view of Frank Welz, written as an introductory statement in a recent article set out to examine 100 years of Indian sociology and social anthropology, may or may not be fully convincing. But what Welz is pointing out is that sociology in India began to emerge as a discipline from the work of very few scholars who took up the subject in order to provide answers to a set of particular questions posed by colonialism and anti-colonialism alike in the first half of the twentieth century but now reached a stage where it holds a great promise for creating awareness about some of the pressing concerns resulting from such rapid processes as globalization, transnational migration and cultural interaction. This can be a separate topic of discussion. But the important point in Welz's statement above is in the last line: where he seems to suggest that for all potentiality it bears, the sociological discourse in India has to deconstruct its "alter ego", if at all it has to remain relevant in the agenda of global sociology.

Notwithstanding one's own convictions about whether Welz is right in branding the Indian sociological discourse as having an alter ego or about whether Indian sociology could really play a leading role in shaping a global agenda of sociology, the probable point of common agreement, if not full compliance, is that Indian sociology has, right from its institutional inception, been operating on its own terms often decided by principled scholars and contentious methodologies. It is in this context that the previous chapter has made an attempt to present a concise view of the disciplinary style of one of the early Indian sociologists, Professor G. S. Ghurye. The broad proposition made in this connection is that Ghurye's presentation of Indian social reality stems

largely from the civilisational understanding. Civilisational analysis, in turn, is a contextual construction of the oriental school during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Thus, the last chapter suggested that the Indian sociology under the *Gurukulship* of Ghurye acquired a distinct shape which can be described as oriental/indological in thought and civilisational in practice.

In the light of a discussion on Ghurye's sociology in the previous chapter, two important questions were passed on to be pursued by the present chapter. They are: How far was Ghurye successful in setting for the Indian sociology an exemplar that can rightly belong to him? Is Indian sociology still moving on the path Ghurye and his Philosophy had put it on? Since a comprehensive account of Indian sociology is yet to be written, questions of this kind can hardly hope to get straightforward answers, and even when tentative answers are proposed, they are likely to fall short of decent expectations. Under these circumstances, one of the viable, if not fully reliable, option is to examine the existing literature on the subject as lucidly as possible by treating the questions under consideration as mere reference points rather than specific targets to be achieved with precision. Thus, what follows in the rest of the chapter is a general overview of the disciplinary state and art of sociology in India, with particular reference to the aspects which closely resemble the form and content of sociology pursued and promoted by G. S. Ghurye, wherever such aspects are clearly discernible.

It may also be worth stating at the outset that presenting a general review of any discipline, especially such diverse one as sociology, is often a complex task. In doing the job, one should be extra-cautious not only about what is to be done but also about how it is to be carried out. The examination of a discipline can be undertaken in two plausible ways: first, one can choose to carry on an extensive survey of the areas being covered under the rubric of a given discipline and then present his/her analysis. Second, one can choose to approach the articulations made by concerned scholars at different times on the state and art of a given discipline and then draw his/her conclusions. While the former may appropriately be called as the substantive approach, the latter one

is necessarily a method of general orientation. Due to the constraints of time and space, the present chapter will follow the latter method in principle. The fact that Indian sociologists are quite sensitive to their disciplinary progress and therefore write frequently on the subject not only makes this method more justifiable but also presents enough literature to the researcher following the method. A considerable amount of such literature on the disciplinary state of sociology is available in the form of articulate opinions and interviews published in the professional journals, and the present chapter is going to draw its main analyses from some of these textual sources.

Reflections and introspections

‘Indian Sociology: Reflections and Introspections’, compiled by T.K. Oommen and Partha N. Mukherji (1986), is the first comprehensive volume to be ever published on the state and art of sociology in India. Since then, the terms “reflection” and “introspection” have been in wide appearance in almost every text written on the disciplinary history of Indian sociology. The title of this section too, thus, is in keeping with this tradition. It should be stressed, however, that Oommen and Mukherji’s volume, brought out specifically in the context of the World Congress of Sociology held in Delhi in 1986, merely carried the articles which were published in previous instances. On that account, *Indian Sociology: Reflections and Introspections* is short of an originally researched volume but is still invaluable in so far as it could bring together for the first time the views of prominent scholars on the subject.

After G. S. Ghurye, the next major figure in Indian sociology/social anthropology was M. N. Srinivas (1916-1999) – initially Ghurye’s pupil who, on account of his training in Oxford under the supervision of A. R. Radcliffe Brown and Evans Prichard, charted his own course of action and was responsible for bringing about a paradigmatic shift, if not a paradigm break, in Indian sociology. M. N. Srinivas’s contribution to the disciplinary growth of Indian sociology remains distinct in four prominent areas: first, the take over of sociology by social anthropology; second, the advent of village studies and

their implications for Indian sociology; third, the installation of intensive fieldwork as the preferred method of Indian sociology/social anthropology; and fourth, introduction of “*Sanskritisation*” and “*Westernisation*” as new conceptual categories to explain the continuity and change in Indian society (see Srinivas, 1952; 1955; 1976; 1992; 1996a; 2002; 2003; Beteille and Madan, 1975; Deshpande, 2000; 2002; 2007).

Ever since he arrived in India after his Oxford training, M. N. Srinivas insisted on the unity of sociology and social anthropology. He thought that such unity would be to the advantage of sociology. Although he never stated it explicitly, he seems to have been convinced that sociology in India has very little to offer on its own and the best alternative, therefore, is to integrate it with social anthropology. There are two obvious reasons behind Srinivas’s integrationist principle. First, given their past association with colonial rule, both sociology and anthropology have long been treated with a degree of suspicion. While economics, history and political science were considered as the disciplines essential for the material betterment, recovery of the glorious past and the development of democracy in independent India respectively, sociology and anthropology were received with contempt as they were thought to have been introduced by the colonial rulers and Christian missionaries for the fulfilment of their hidden agendas. Having been in the field in 1948, a year after independence, Srinivas had gauged peoples’ hostile attitude towards anthropological work, an attitude which was borne largely out of the mistaken perception that all anthropologists were the agents of British administration. At one point, Srinivas himself experienced this hostile attitude. As he mentioned in most of his writings, a well-known lawyer in Vijayawada told him to get out of his house when he wanted to inquire about the customs and manners of their family, because the Hindu lawyer apparently suspected him to be an agent of the colonizing Britain. Such was the fate of most anthropologists in the country in those days. Srinivas was, thus, convinced that neither sociology nor anthropology, when pursued separately, would be in a position to gain a favourable acceptance in the post-colonial-India. It is out of this conviction that he emphasises on the unity of sociology and anthropology.

The second possible reason behind Srinivas's emphasis on the integration of sociology and social anthropology is methodological to a large extent. Srinivas realized that sociology and anthropology in India were travelling on two extreme paths. While sociology (especially of Ghurye's type) was concentrating more on textual sources to construct Indian society on a civilisational basis, anthropology (especially of Verrier Elvin's type) was busy demonstrating through exclusive field work among the tribal inhabitants that tribes in India were of a different species and did not have anything to share in common with their caste counterparts. Besides these two dominant trends, there came in about the 1950s a third category that relied heavily on the survey method, and its main purpose was to collect the selective data sought by the policy circles. This third category was the invention of the community development programme run by the first government of Independent India in order to check the rising poverty and hunger in the country. The community based field works conducted by scholars like Robert Redfield and McKim Marriott can be associated with the third trend. Although these scholars might not have made their purpose explicit anywhere, the data they collected were used extensively in the running of the community development programme.

Clearly, M. N. Srinivas did not prefer any of the three trends mentioned above. He thought each of them was being pursued to its extreme end. It was, thus, logical for him to put forward an alternative approach which brought together sociology and social anthropology, with special emphasis on structural functionalism. In his scheme of things, participant observation, as opposed to the survey method, enjoyed the highest sanctity.

As it is clearly explained at length in his *Collected Essays* (2002), Srinivas's attempt for long was to equip Indian sociology with a multilayered, methodological framework by which it can both face the disciplinary challenges being posed by the hostile attitude of the newly decolonized citizenry and contribute to the holistic development of the emerging social order. It is in this process that he sought to unite sociology and social

anthropology. Perhaps the best source for Srinivas's views on this matter is a brief note on 'Social anthropology and sociology' that he wrote for the inaugural issue of the Sociological Bulletin, published in 1952 (reprinted in *Collected Essays* 2002). Written at the very beginning of his academic career in India, soon after he had resigned his lectureship at Oxford to become professor and head of a newly created department of sociology at the Maharaja Sayajirao University in Baroda, this programmatic piece is almost a manifesto. But Srinivas also confesses with equal emphasis that the social anthropologists in India must endure an inescapable "embarrassment because of their discipline's kinship with anthropology and its unsavoury public image outside the West" (2002:457).

It is sufficient to point out at this stage that both M. N. Srinivas and G. S. Ghurye adopted the same principle in so far as their treatment of sociology and social anthropology is concerned. Besides this, quite interestingly though, Srinivas's preference for treating the village as a basic unit of analysis of Indian society too has a civilisational attachment, something which Ghurye stood for in his whole life. Srinivas, for example, admitted that the civilisational idea of the village found in the Hindu scriptures and in sub-continental cultural traditions was one of the driving forces behind the advent of village studies in India (ibid:515-516).

In acknowledging the civilisational idea of village, Srinivas is not alone. The two other prominent figures associated with the advent of village studies in India, S. C. Dube (1955) and D. N. Majumdar (1955) also assume explicitly that the village has a cultural importance in the Hindu social system and that it is this cultural significance which precisely makes it obvious for a sociologist/anthropologist to approach the village as an inevitable category of explanation.

The place of the village in the disciplinary practices of Indian sociology can be a separate topic of discussion, and what is worth pointing out at the moment is only that the notion of civilisation - a specific conceptual

category invented initially by the oriental school and taken up later by G. S. Ghurye-did not leave out even such empirical areas of research as the village studies. Thus, the paradigm shift brought about by the third generation of sociologists during 1950s and 1960s in the way of introducing structural functionalism and village studies through participant observation too seems to have much to share in common with the civilisational approach adopted by G. S. Ghurye to study the Indian society. The only difference the later developments brought about, wherever it is made explicit, was only in form and not in content.

Coming to Srinivas' standpoint on the disciplinary state of Indian sociology, it was M. N. Srinivas and M. N. Panini (1973) who made an attempt to survey the disciplinary history of Indian sociology. In presenting this history they suggest that the origins of sociology in India go back to the days when British officials discovered that knowledge of Indian culture and social life was indispensable to the smooth functioning of government.

Srinivas and Panini historicise the fact that the actual thought of Indian society (and therefore Indian sociology), can rightly go back to the British rule in India. Some of the details they provide here in their article, although known usually to the students of Modern Indian History, can be of some interest. It may be noted here that Srinivas and Panini are not alone in pointing this out, and it is not particularly a new observation either. Their 1973 article cited here, however, stands significant in so far as it presents in concise a manner possible the historical account of events that preceded the development of sociology in India.

In 1769, Henry Verelst, the Governor of Bengal and Bihar realised the need of collecting information regarding the leading families and their customs. That served as a starting point for other British administrators and Christian missionaries to follow. They made earnest efforts to collect and record information regarding the life and culture of their Indian subjects. For instance, Francis Buchanan undertook an ethnographic survey of Bengal in

1807 at the instance of the Governor-General-in Council. Abbe Dubois, a French missionary in Mysore, wrote in 1816 a book entitled *Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies*.

Indological studies, a discussion of which has already been presented in chapter 1, also received considerable stimulus from the efforts made by British scholars and officials to become more familiar with the life and culture of Indians. In the early -days of British rule in India, Sanskrit *Pandits* and Arabic scholars were employed to assist British judges to decide cases involving religious practices, customs and laws.

In essence, according to Srinivas and Panini: the administrative needs of the British rulers led them to collect information about the economic, social and religious life of the people. This task became increasingly complex and systematic as the nineteenth century progressed, and it provided the stimulus for not only social anthropology and sociology but Indology. An ancient civilisation such as India's could not be understood without the aid of the several disciplines subsumed under Indology. The information collected was used by the British for administrative and policy purposes while innumerable groups among Indians used it for achieving mobility. The discovery of India's past, and the antiquity, richness and versatility of its heritage, gave self-confidence to the elite and the material necessary for "national myth-making". The criticisms of Hinduism by European missionaries, and the conversion of poor and lowly Hindus to Christianity, were also factors that fed the nationalist sentiments of the new elite most of whom were upper caste Hindus. There was an urge for social and religious reform, a reinterpretation of the past and an examination of the present. "The soil was being made ready for the planting of sociology" (ibid:179-182).

Thus, as per the genealogy presented by Srinivas and Panini, Indian sociology/social anthropology have had their roots in the British colonial project. Srinivas and Panini are quick to alert the modern reader that this genealogy is not without troubles. For instance, the association of sociology with European, as distinct from British, and American academic traditions,

made it suspect in the eyes of Indian academics steeped as “they thought they were in the traditions of the Cam and the Isis” (ibid: 191). The English local literary metaphor “the Cam and the Isis” that Srinivas and Panini deploy may be taken as a direct reference to the academic traditions woven in and around Cambridge and Oxford. While the Cam is a forty mile long river of east-central England which flows past the Cambridge, the Isis is a south-central river in the vicinity of Oxford. If the above metaphor is to be taken seriously, it would imply that the Indian sociologists have long been sceptical to associate the discipline of sociology in India to the knowledge dispensation coming from these two campuses (Cambridge and Oxford). One can reason out two factors behind such scepticism. First, there is an east-versus-west divide which ultimately translates into the indigenous versus the-foreign. Given the colonial past in which knowledge was often hierarchised on the basis of binaries created between the occident and the orient, sociologists in India are naturally less forthcoming in associating their discipline with the west, be it European, British or American. Second, in a postcolonial context where military power, developmental aid and scientific superiority began to dominate all other spheres of life, self identification with some or the other power block became an imperative, all be it against one’s own will. Under these circumstances, there was also an impression during the 1950s and 1960s that associating Indian sociology specifically with either British or American traditions would be more appropriate than leaving it to the broad contours of European sociology. Srinivas and Panini may, thus, have had either of these two factors in mind while invoking the metaphor.

While the account of Srinivas and Panini (1973) was largely historical, it was in his inaugural address to the World Congress of Sociology (1986), later published in *Economic and Political Weekly* (1987:135-138) that Srinivas actually presents some of his personal views on the craft of sociology in the country. Although slightly lengthy and explanatory at times, the following statements of Srinivas will clearly reveal the essence of Indian sociology and Ghurye’s influence on it, “the Indo-British encounter was in many ways conducive to the growth of sociology and social anthropology.”

There is a bitter historical truth hidden behind such disciplinary conduciveness.

As Srinivas goes on to suggest:

“The conquest of their country by an alien power was humiliating to politically-conscious Indians whose numbers increased with the development of communications and the spread of education. Such humiliation was compounded by the racial arrogance of the rulers, and by European missionary attacks on Indian religions, in particular, Hinduism, and on Indian customs and way of life. This forced educated Indians to reflect critically on their institutions and way of life, to try and discard what appeared to them to be in-defensible, and to salvage and reinterpret what they regarded as worth salvaging. A critical attitude towards their culture and social institutions, and an interest in their history, were the inevitable result” (Srinivas, 1987:135).

In his attempt to manoeuvre the colonial past in order to attribute a particular form to the disciplines of Indian sociology and anthropology, Srinivas bears a close resemblance to Ghurye. As it has been pointed out in the previous chapter, Ghurye determined the practices of sociology in such a way that they met the primary needs of nation-making and rising against the colonizing Britain.

The other point at which Srinivas is in full agreement with Ghurye is, as has already been discussed at length in the previous pages, about the lack of distinction between sociology and anthropology. For Srinivas, “the character of Indian society and culture is such that it does not encourage the erection of barriers between sociology and social anthropology” (ibid:136). Ghurye too was making exactly the same point. For him, the difference between sociology and anthropology is absurd particularly because such a disciplinary division, when accorded a formal recognition, encourages a social division between caste Hindus and tribal population. As it was pointed out in detail in the preceding chapter, Ghurye reposed a strong faith in the transformation of tribes into caste Hindus.

Like Ghurye, Srinivas too felt that historically many tribes have been transformed into castes in the Hindu social system and that there also exist cultural affinities between castes and tribes. Srinivas strongly felt that there are 'continuities' between tribes and castes in a few areas, and drawing a sharp cultural line between the two does violence to reality. This is the same

argument which Ghurye makes in his well-known text, *Aborigines so-called and their future* (1943).

Apart from Ghurye and Srinivas, there are several practicing scholars of various times who have equally been concerned about the disciplinary state of Indian sociology, and they too expressed their views on the subject quite frequently on appropriate forums.

One of the powerful messages that seem to have a long-lasting influence on the sociological practices in India was the presidential address by D. P. Mukerji to the Indian sociological society in 1955, later published in his edited volume (1958). Giving his profession a personal touch, D. P. Mukerji declared in 1955: "I had come to it (Sociology) because, being interested in developing my personality through knowledge, I realised that none of the social or the natural sciences I had to study in my earlier days, could give me, at one and the same time, the synoptic view, the large vision and the understanding of the milieu of knowledge which were necessary for the fulfilment of my being. It has all been a personal affair, not a matter of sociology for the sake of sociology" (Mukerji, 1958:228). He further went on to explicate:

My main purpose is to tell you frankly that I am not a sociologist as sociologists would like me to be. So I guess that deep below my acceptability to the conveners of the conference flows the common feeling that knowing is more important than knowledge, that living comprehends knowing, that for an Indian, this business of living, despite India's increasing involvement in the world, is primarily Indian living which, in its turn, is essentially social living, that is, living in groups through stages of growth, until one is to be so socialised that freedom will have become co-terminus with existence and institutions turned into agencies of growth (ibid:229).

This inaugural address delivered by D. P. Mukerji was pursued very vigorously by some of his colleagues. Ramakrishna Mukerji (1974), for example, writing almost two decades after the event, took up the substance of this message as the pertinent subject matter for his critical article on the sociology of knowledge. It may not be an over-emphasis to state that Ramakrishna Mukerji's inductive method proposed in his (1974) article could

have probably had its origin in the implicit assumptions underlying D. P. Mukerji's inaugural address.

D. P. Mukerji clearly advocated that it was not enough for the Indian sociologist to be a sociologist. He must be an Indian first, that is, he is to share "in the folk-ways, mores, customs and traditions for the purpose of understanding his social system and what lies beneath it and beyond it. He should be steeped in the Indian lore, both "high and low" (Mukerji, 1958:234). Mukerji's binary division between "high" and "low" is again quite interesting. Where does he infer such a classification from? As it was discussed in chapter 1, the classification of Hindu culture into lower and higher rungs was purely an invention of the eighteenth century orientalists. As a justification for their proposition that the Aryan culture lost its original charm gradually as a result of its contaminating interaction with the low cultures of the natives, orientalists identified two types of culture: what they called popular Hinduism which was associated with lower culture and Vedic Hinduism which was associated with priestly religion of Brahmins. Although details of this kind might seem too much to infer, equally important is that scholars like D. P. Mukerji would not have definitely used these conceptual categories without knowing their historical connotations and truth values attached to them. Logically, then, if Mukerji was implying these terminologies, he was definitely operating in the realm of oriental thought. As a way of substantiation, Mukerji also states in clear terms: "For the high ones Sanskrit is essential, and for " the low ones the local dialects". He goes on to add: "I do not think that many social scientists operating on Indian problems today know Sanskrit; and none care for Persian or Arabic. This state of affairs is deplorable. Unless sociological training in India is grounded on Sanskrit, or any such language in which the traditions have been embodied as symbols, social research in India will be a pale imitation of what others are doing" (ibid:239).

To cut a long story short, D. P. Mukerji believes that the study of sociology is principally the study of traditions; the study of traditions, in the ultimate analysis, involves that of symbols which, under certain conditions and

on particular levels, are explosively creative and dynamic; and, therefore, the values and norms retain and enrich their connection with specific social structures and concrete historical situations. For him, all this becomes very relevant to Indian conditions. D. P. Mukerji's final judgment is that "Indian sociologists should take courage in both hands and openly say that the study of the Indian social system, insofar as it has been functioning till now, requires a different approach to sociology because of its special traditions, its special symbols and its special patterns of culture and social actions" (ibid:241).

I. P. Desai (1981), Y. B. Damle (1974), M. S. A. Rao (1979), Nasreen Fazalbhoy (1997), Imtiaz Ahmad (1972), Sujata Patil (2002) are the other prominent scholars who on various occasions took stock of the disciplinary situation of the sociology in the country.

In his autobiographical article on the craft of sociology in India, I. P. Desai (1981) offers a critique to the increasing scientificity in the discipline and its impending consequences. He declares that in a country where science is still in the process of development, it would be harmful to entertain the belief that the ultimate nature of sociology as science will be realised by only one particular view of science.

Writing on the teaching and status of sociology in India, Damle (1974) begins with the good old assumption that sociology was developed primarily by the British rulers with a view to understanding the customs, manners and institutions of the ruled so as to govern the Indians better and with less difficulty. One of the persuasive arguments of Damle is that while in Western countries sociology emerged and crystallized with a view to understanding the new social order which was arising in the wake of industrial, technological, economic and political revolutions, in India, on the other hand, various Britons made it a point to study local manners, customs and institutions precisely to maintain this stability. Thus, in his opinion, sociology was developed to cater primarily to the needs of the rulers rather than to those of the ruled. To put it slightly differently, since sociology did not emerge in response

to Indian problems, there has always been an element of unreality about it in relation to the existing situation and particularly to the aspirations for changing the institutional order.

M. S. A. Rao's article on the development of sociology during 1980s is of a general nature. As a retrospective and prospective survey of work in sociology and social anthropology in India, it begins with a brief summary of the developments till the 1970s in teaching and research in these disciplines. It then goes on to indicate the possible trends in the 1980s, with particular reference to the status of research and teaching, institutional developments and developments in the profession. Through a logical corollary, Rao shows that teaching and research are closely interlinked in the development of specialisations.

The interrogations by Imtiaz Ahmad (1972) and Nasreen Fazalbhoy (1997), articles of a rare category in Indian sociological circles, undertake a sharp appraisal of sociology's take on Muslims in India. Both of them, although situated in the time span of almost three-and-half-decades gap, argue that the research interest has got focused on a few selected areas relegating to the background issues of everyday cultural practices among Muslims. Most importantly, they argue that politicisation of Hindu-Muslim relations has resulted in essentialising their religious identities, and is acting as a disincentive to understand them in historical perspective.

Commenting on the professionalism in Indian academic sociology, Sujata Patel (2002), points out the widening gap between the teachers of sociology in central universities and those in the regional universities. In her observation, there exists a hierarchy within the sociology professionals in the country, and this is due largely to the medium of language, accessibility to quality texts and information on new happenings in the discipline. While the teachers at central government institutions are often well-equipped with their command over the English language, good libraries and easy access to new

information, the same are lacking for their counterparts at the regional institutions.

This general overview of the debate on the state of Indian sociology would be incomplete if mention is not made about Veena Das' provocative article 'Sociological Research in India: The State of Crisis' (EPW, June 5, 1993). Rightly concerned with the state of affairs in sociology in the country, Das raises alarming questions especially on the professionalism, quality of research, student and teacher commitment, sustained disciplinary interest and over all handling of sociology. In fact, the significance of the article is demonstrated in the fact that it generated a fruitful, sometimes provocative ideas in the minds of both and young and old scholars in the discipline. While it would not be possible to review the entire spectrum of the discussion in these pages, two particular responses, one by Ananta Giri and the other by Satish Deshpande seem pertinent.

The questions that Ananta Giri (1993) poses as a response to Veena Das' reflexive opinion appear quite instructive as they echo, both in form and substance, the same expression and anxiety which one can find in the voices of G. S. Ghurye, D. P. Mukerji and Ramakrishna Mukerji. Ananta Giri asks:

Over the last 70 years of practice of sociology in India have we really cared to create a curriculum of sociology and anthropology in India which takes seriously our own cultural predicament and the Indian point of view? Das finds it alarming that many students whom she has met in interviews have forgotten where Malinowski did his fieldwork. But is it not equally alarming that some of the thoughtful interpreters of the human condition from within the Indian tradition such as Gandhi, Sri Aurobindo and Tagore do not find a place in the sociological curriculum of even the centres of advanced study in our country? Das takes for granted the discursive field of sociology in India. But apart from the lack of competence in the average research scholar that she points to, the real crisis of Indian sociology continues to lie in the fact that it is a colonial and metropolitan implant. Our curriculum is flooded with material coming from the west. If one is teaching religion in a department of sociology then why should one teach only Emile Durkheim's Elementary Forms of Religious Life? Why, for instance, is a student not also taught Sri Aurobindo's Life Divine? If one is teaching theories of culture and society, then why should only Giddens and Geertz steal the show? In our curriculum does a scholar such as Govind Chandra Pande find a place (Giri, 1993: 1538-1539)?

Taking part in the same debate, Satish Deshpande responded otherwise. In order to get a clear picture, let the relevant parts from Deshpande too be restated below:

“Having made much of the question, I am constrained to confess that I do not have any- thing like a worked out answer, only tentative suggestions about where one may be found. The place to look, I think, is in the genealogy of Indian sociology-the processes of discipline-formation at work during the transition from a colonial to a post-colonial regime” (Pande, 1993:575). He then goes to explicate the unequal relationship that existed between economics, History and sociology, obviously sociology being placed at the receiving end. In his final analysis, Pande suggests that “sociology inherited a profoundly ambiguous and disabling self-identity. In the areas where it could have had a role to play in the process of nation-building, it suffered encroachment from both of its more assertive neighbours – economics and history. Where its territorial claims were undisputed, they ran counter to the ideological and practical needs of the new nation” (ibid: 576).

A careful comparison of the responses offered by Ananta Giri and Satish Deshpande, both participating in the debate raised by Veena Das' article about the disciplinary state of Indian sociology, can offer some valuable insights: Ananta Giri's counter questioning echoes the essence of early sociologists who campaigned strongly for a sort of indigenous methodology. His response reflects an uncritical acceptance of received wisdom. In brief, his line of argument is that the challenges facing Indian sociology today are largely the result of disregard shown to the tradition and its proponents. The disciplinary revival would be possible, in Giri's understanding, only when Indian sociology awakens itself and takes seriously the cultural elements of the society it is studying. Deshpande's suggestion that one should look to the genealogy of the discipline for answers, although it looks different from Giri's insistence on cultural prerogatives, seems to carry nevertheless the same substance. His assumption that the territory of sociology was encroached by its more assertive neighbours, economics and history, as a result of which sociology could not play a constructive role in the process of nation building

and that its claims at times ran counter to the ideological and practical needs of the new nation is a reminder to this fact. In a precise sense, Satish Deshpande seems to have been convinced that sociology has failed to prove itself as a patriotic discipline. It is a different matter altogether that the effectiveness and the relevance of any discipline depend on a complex array of things, not simply on the contribution that a given discipline can make to the development of a nation in which it operates. For the time being, however, it suffices to notice that in Indian sociological circles there continues a long drawn impression that the discipline has not been successful in playing its expected role.

Contemporary outlook

Since this chapter is concerned specifically with the articulations by some of the important personalities over the disciplinary state and art of sociology, it would, in all respects, not be apt to conclude this without taking note of three relevant texts that were published just in the present decade. Those texts are: Yogesh Atal's *Indian Sociology from Where to Where: Footnotes to the History of the Discipline* (2003), Yogendra Singh's *Ideology and Theory in Indian Sociology* (2004) and T. K. Oommen's *Knowledge and Society: Situating Sociology and Social Anthropology* (2007). In a certain sense, each of these texts not only presents a distinct view of Indian sociology but also has a great deal to share in common with each other.

Yogesh Atal's collection of articles includes discussions ranging from the Development of Social Sciences in Asia via The Call for Indigenisation upto the final question of Indian Sociology: From Where to Where? According to him, Indian sociology began when in 1914 the School of Economics and Sociology was created at Bombay University under the leadership of Patrick Geddes, a town planner and human geographer. Sociology has been taught as a discipline in India ever since. At that time, the country's two prestigious universities were Calcutta and Bombay. Long before independence from the British, of course, the colonial government introduced sociology as a discipline, established the aforementioned School in Bombay and a department of anthropology at Calcutta University in 1917. At other universities, sociology

and anthropology were started as part of the curricula in subjects such as economics, philosophy or political science. Whereas at Mysore University sociology papers were introduced in the 1930s, at Delhi the sociology department was established in 1958 and at old universities like the Banaras Hindu University in Varanasi or the Aligarh Muslim University, even later. In 1970, there were 49 sociology departments at universities and 34 departments at affiliated colleges in India.

Apart from the factual data, Atal presents his views on some of the contentious questions in the discipline. With regard to the Indianisation of Indian sociology, Atal is extremely critical. He adds two arguments to his sociological reasoning. If the outsider cannot understand an alien culture, then anthropological research is impossible. In his opinion, those holding views of a distinct Indian sociology equated India with Hindu India. Thus, Atal presents a middle course for Indian sociology.

Yogendra Singh's text too brings out the chronology of Indian sociology. But what is distinct in his case, however, is that he identifies four prominent schools of thought around which, in his explication, Indian sociology took its disciplinary shape.

Singh argues that "Indian sociology, like most other social sciences in India, has grown through an encounter with the Western philosophical and social scientific tradition" (2004:135). Soon after Indian independence, according to Singh, the major impact on Indian sociology came from American sociology. Since The US emerged as the dominant power after the Second World War, American sociology offered "advances in policy-oriented research methodologies and techniques" (ibid:151). At the same time, Indian sociologists were, as they are today, concerned about the uncritical import and application of western theoretical concepts and research tools in the Indian context.

In the chronological scheme brought out by Singh, it was from the 1950s to the 1980s that Indian sociologists were recognizing the "need for

indigenization of concepts and tools of sociological investigation” (ibid: 164). Consequently, it was from the 1990s that Indian sociology began to gain a substantial identity of its own which is evident from the size of sociological researches in India. Placing Indian sociology between those two poles is a “dialectical method” that Singh applies for explaining its history and development (ibid: 165). Without going into the complexity of the argument, it can inferentially be said that for Singh, Indian sociology has always been on a constant struggle, and this will continue unabated as long as the discipline strives to maintain its own identity.

T. K. Oommen (2007) discusses main themes and sources of tension in several decades of Indian sociology and relates them to the impact of society and polity in producing and disseminating knowledge in the disciplines of sociology and social anthropology.

Although he too was committed, like any Indian sociologist, to the unity of sociology and anthropology, Oommen is explicit in recognizing the tension between these two disciplines. He goes to the extent of suggesting that it is the tension between sociology and anthropology which is a major source of ambiguity in Indian social science. Instead of seeking for logical failures in intellectual programmes, something which Yogender Singh and Yogesh Atal are more interested in, Oommen contextualizes social thought and its institutional basis. It is at this backdrop that he brings forth two main contexts relevant for understanding the relationship between sociology and anthropology in India. In the first place, both sociology and anthropology were born in Europe under two different conditions and had long been used for two distinct purposes. While sociology took shape as a discipline as a logical response to, and as an analytical tool for, rapid industrialization in the continent, anthropology grew in the hands of colonial administrators and Christian missionaries who were curious enough to describe and explain the customs and practices of a great mass outside their social and religious pale. Thus, the former was understood to be the study of complex societies with civilisational past, whereas the latter came to be known as a subject intended to

observe and describe the simple societies living under primitive practices. These definitions, which remained relevant for long during the colonial era, got problematised in the post-colonial context. To be specific, as Oommen himself explains, “Asian sociologists are labelled as sociologists at home but as social anthropologists in the West” (Oommen, 2007:1). This labelling became possible because those categories are defined by the centre (west) and not by the periphery (global south). Seen from this perspective, thus, the insistence on the integration of sociology and anthropology in India assumes a post-colonial significance.

The second most important context in which Oommen situates the relationship between sociology and anthropology in India is methodological. As has already been indicated above, while sociology was used mainly to study one’s own society, anthropology was deployed to survey others. Given this difference of orientation in the subject matter, both the disciplines came to employ two different methodologies. While sociology increasingly adopted the survey method, anthropology began to embrace the participant observation. After giving a detailed, historical account of the distinction between sociology and anthropology in the west where they still seem to operate in peaceful co-existence, Oommen, perhaps, reminds the readers of an accepted fact that the boundaries of these two disciplines are ambiguous in post-colonial societies (ibid:5).

On a different plane, Oommen responds to M. N. Srinivas’s call that

“the anthropologist should be able to empathise with the Brahmin and the untouchable” (Srinivas, 2002: 583). Oommen replies, “Ideally yes, but actually is it possible” (Oommen, 2007:7)? He goes on to add that it is not possible when the Brahmin social scientist is prevented from interviewing or interacting with the ex-untouchable. But Oommen is silent on the vice-versa situation where a dalit sociologist may equally be prevented from interviewing or interacting with Brahmin participants. Keeping the caste question aside at the moment, one can appreciate Oommen’s point that participant observation may not yield the desired results all the time.

In Oommen's opinion, an anti-western reaction shaped social science in India. "The capital concern of the pioneers of Indian sociology, who had started practising their profession by the early twentieth century, the heyday of the anti-imperialist struggle, was to Indianise and not to professionalize sociology" (ibid:122). As it is generally known to the students of Indian sociology today, while the modernizers of Indian sociology followed the British social anthropologists in the 1950s and American sociology in the 1960s, the old and new academic imperial powers, there have also been traditionalists who have overemphasized the uniqueness of Indian civilization. In Oommen's judgement, the former produced "intellectual alienation", while the inward-looking traditionalism of the latter created "intellectual claustrophobia" (ibid: 125).

Conclusion

This chapter set out to explore the disciplinary practices of Indian sociology and the impact that Ghurye's civilisational approach has on these practices. To be specific, there were two particular questions with which the present exploration began: How far was Ghurye successful in setting for the Indian sociology an exemplar that can rightly belong to him? Is Indian sociology still moving on the path Ghurye and his Philosophy had put it upon? As it is indicated in the beginning, these questions have been taken only as reference points rather than as specific targets to be met with precision, for the precision in this case is hardly forthcoming. But at the end, after undertaking a comprehensive review of major views on the art and state of sociology in India, it now appears that this chapter has raised more questions than proposing substantive answers.

Hypothetically speaking, Ghurye's impact on Indian sociology is long lasting but deeply implicit. Be it his views on the relationship between sociology and anthropology or his treatment of Indian society as having a civilisational past requiring a distinct methodological consideration, much of his disciplinary thought received, and still receives, significant attention. The

wider acceptance of Ghurye's thought is quite evident from the fact that even M. N. Srinivas – who is otherwise a reluctant student of his former teacher – and people like D. P. Mukherji and Ramakrishna Mukherji – who at Lucknow Department developed their own style of pursuing sociology – all accepted some of the fundamental assumptions Ghurye had proposed.

Based on the existing disciplinary practices and philosophy of major Indian sociologists, whose review has been briefly mentioned in the present chapter, it can be inferred that Ghurye succeeded in setting for Indian sociology an exemplar that rightly belongs to him and paved a distinct path on which the discipline is often expected to move. The path set by Ghurye, however, could not remain a fine walking point for all scholars in the discipline as it failed to provide right methodological tools to study “the non-Hindu communities”, (Robinson, 2003:12). But the sociologists wishing to understand and depict Indian realities in their own diversity seem to have always been compelled to walk an extra mile. Their persistent efforts, however, benefit the discipline of sociology in India in terms of making it more inclusive than it is originally otherwise. In this direction the works of Saurabh Dube (1992), Susan Visvanathan (1993), Harjot Oberoi (1994), Rowena Robinson (1998) and (2003) have been some of the major works treading on the alternative path in the last two decades.

Thus, what seems to be noteworthy at this point is that While the disciplinary continuity on the lines of Ghuryean thought must have definitely proved beneficial for those who are interested in demonstrating the relevance of the subject and in getting immediate acceptance for it in the postcolonial context, it has nevertheless left a deep ambivalence for others in the discipline who are interested in exploring the diverse life worlds functioning alongside, if not inside, the Hindu social segments. It is in this context that the concluding section will discuss in brief the scope of the civilisational approach in Indian sociology and its prospects and consequences for the discipline.

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CONCLUSION

Looking to the past for inspiration or as a point of reference in the attempt to build something new is an almost intuitive tendency and a necessary condition for sociologists, irrespective of their own theoretical persuasion (Quah and Arnaud, 2000:5).

The present study began with a firm conviction in the historical awareness and its relevance for the contemporary times. The focus has been on the origins of Indian sociology. An attempt has been made throughout the study to look for change and continuity in the disciplinary thought and practice. A careful examination of the material presented in, and the discussion offered by, each chapter reveals that sociology in India has been shaped by multiple factors and diverse contexts.

The first chapter suggests that a fertile ground for sociology in India was prepared by Indology. It may be worth recalling in this context that it was Indology which propounded a grand theory of Indian society based on the textual analysis of major Hindu writings of the ancient times. Based on the knowledge they obtained by a meticulous study of the voluminous *Puranic* resources translated for them by courtly priests and the pundits appointed for the task, the Western Oriental scholars drew some significant conclusions on the social structure and cultural practices of the people living in the Indian Subcontinent. The precepts drawn by the Oriental scholars of the life in this part of the globe came as a great boon for the colonial administrators who were struggling hard to sustain their governance. Quite interesting, though, is the fact that the conceptual conclusions drawn by the Oriental scholarship were equally manoeuvred somehow in a great way by the Social Sciences in the Country during and after the colonial regime. Few would disagree that sociology has probably been the major shareholder of this benefit.

If one were to believe that Indology was the precursor to sociology in India, he/she should be able to demonstrate with enough evidence that the principle tenets of the Indological thought could continue well into the first half of the twentieth century and that the early sociologists were serious about these principles

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and ready to incorporate them in their discipline. It is precisely for this reason that the second chapter chose to examine the disciplinary style of one of the early Indian sociologists, G. S. Ghurye, who is, perhaps, often regarded as the chief architect of sociology in India.

A close review of Ghurye's important texts and their underlying assumptions undertaken by the second chapter indicates that sociology pursued and actively promoted by Ghurye had close affinities with the Indological discourse of Indian society. Ghurye adopted a civilisational approach to the study of Indian society. Like a perfect Orientalist, although he never claimed himself to be so, he relied heavily on the ancient Hindu texts in order to reconstruct the Indian society. For him, the ancient knowledge held the key necessary for unlocking the mystery of Indian social order. Thus, the textual analysis he adored throughout his life was, in his opinion, not only a dire necessity for an early sociologist like him who was desirous of proposing a grand theory for a relatively old civilisation, but a sheer inevitability for any sociologist wishing to explore Indian society in all its diverse forms. This can, of course, be a contradictory position, and a slightly detailed discussion on this aspect will follow later. What is important for the time being, however, is that in Ghurye's scheme of things a sociology of India would be fulfilling only when it is in full compliance with the *Shastras* of Hinduism, to be specific. It is worth mentioning here that Louis Dumont – a French scholar more specifically interested in a comparative analysis between the Hindu and French civilisations – too had equal contribution to the Indological approach in Indian sociology.

At a time when the Indian sociology appeared to have gradually been drifting away from the textual analysis to the field work tradition, Louis Dumont introduced a caveat into the disciplinary practices during 1950s and drew attention back to the text as a main source of meaning. His 1957 article in *Contributions to Indian Sociology* reflects some of these concerns. Subsequently, therefore, there was an opening up for new line of scholarship which took sufficient enough care to keep both the text and the context on equal footing. As Robinson (2003:21-22) recalls: "Veena Das' *Structure and Cognition and The Word and the World*, R.K. Jain's *Text and Context*, Khare's *Hindu Hearth and Home*, Madan's *Non-*

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Renunciation, Heesterman's *The Inner Conflict of Tradition*, Pocock's study of religious beliefs and practices in a Gujarat village, Fuller's work on temple priests in Madurai, Parry's *Death in Banaras*, Diana Eck's work on the Hindu cosmos, Susan Wadley's work on Shakti, chart the course of this opening up”.

As one can see in his highly influential work *Homo Hierarchicus: The Caste System and its Implications* (1980), Dumont suggests that the study of India lies at the confluence of indology and sociology.

Coming back to Ghurye, he felt that the binary division between sociology and social anthropology would be methodologically untenable and practically futile. A slightly deeper probe into Ghurye's Sociological analysis, which the second chapter attempted to its best, also suggests that he does not incline to make any sharp division between “sacred” and “profane”, a division which is central to Durkheimian sociology.

One of the prominent questions with which the second chapter comes to a convincing conclusion, thus, is: are the strong views expressed about the Indian society in general and Indian sociology in particular the sole preserve of Ghurye alone? Do they have any universal validity in Indian sociology? in other words, was Ghurye successful in setting for Indian sociology an exemplar that could rightly belong to him? it is with these questions that the third chapter begins its analyses.

The third chapter puts together differing theses proposed on various occasions by concerned scholars on the nature of Indian sociology, its subject matter and its methodological framework. While some of these theses are descriptive and concerned specifically with the current state of things, others are interpretative and would envisage a particular future for the discipline.

The focused attempt in the third chapter was to identify if there has been any continuity, especially of Ghurye's sociology grounded on Indological discourse. Strikingly enough, not only the continuity but also the unanimity with which this continuity is passed on from one generation to the next in the discipline

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is enormous. For example, the civilisational approach to the study of Indian Society, with which the present study is specifically concerned, came to have a profound significance in the disciplinary history of Indian sociology. Even M. N. Srinivas, who raised exceptionally serious objection to the textual analysis actively promoted by Ghurye, seems to have felt at some point that the Indian society is grounded on a strong civilisational foundation and that no sociologist, including himself, would ever be able to escape this reality. Making clear his intentions in his edited volume on village studies in India (1955), Srinivas confesses that he is convinced of making the village as a unit of analysis primarily because of the prominent place it has long enjoyed as “*Agrahara*” in the “*Puranas*” (Sacred texts). Thus, it can be safely assumed that even the structural functional paradigm introduced into the Indian sociology by supposedly moderate scholars could not completely break away from the civilisational analysis.

As it has been discussed in detail in the third chapter, Ghurye’s underlying assumption that Indian society is uniquely grounded in its tradition has been well entrenched in major sociological research. Be it D. P. Mukherjee’s inaugural address to the Indian Sociological Society (1955) or a powerful essay in the sociology of knowledge by Ramakrishna Mukherjee (1974) or the patriotic responses offered by Anantagiri and Satish Deshpande (1993) in exchange to Veena Das’s retrospective article, all reflect the central tenets of Ghurye’s sociology.

Besides the civilisational approach, the other prominent area where Ghurye’s disciplinary impact lies is the unequivocal acceptance of uniformity proposed between sociology and social anthropology. In a certain sense, this is one of the unnoticed aspects. In Indian Sociological circles today, the difference between sociology and social anthropology is almost taken for granted. Only striking similarities are often highlighted at the expense of sharp differences. A close examination of the early Indian Sociological debates suggests that it is a deliberate attempt made in order primarily to avoid the stigma attached to both sociology and anthropology. By combining both of them in a new disciplinary regime, it appears, Indian sociologists sought to build a unique stature for sociology in India. this is one of the fertile areas of research, and the present study

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could not deal with it in a desired manner possible. But one thing that comes out plainly is that social anthropology, given its original position in the British academia where it actually took a disciplinary shape, comes as an effective grand framework for those who want to validate the past (which is chiefly immersed in Hindu religious texts) with the contemporary practices (which are often researched by using the method of participant observation). Although works of this kind seem to be on decline in the recent past, they were the major sources of disciplinary growth once upon a time. As the third chapter clearly indicates, very few scholars even in the present generation would dispute the blurred distinction between sociology and anthropology.

All the three substantial chapters bring to light a great continuity in the disciplinary thought and practices of Indian sociology. Such a continuity, however, can turn out to be both beneficial and harmful for the growing discipline like Indian sociology. The present study, after undertaking a comprehensive but highly selective review of the literature, seeks to point out four important areas where the existing Sociological framework has yet to make real inroads or to redefine its scope and character.

In the first place, the civilisational analysis, which definitely has its own significance, can be of very insignificant use as an approach to the study of a diverse society like India. Particularly, given the highest premium it has placed ever since its inception on the Hindu view of life as the prerogative in the Indian social order, the limitations of this approach are more pronounced than one might wish them to be.

Beyond any doubt, the predominance of certain customs, traditions and cultural practices, which have long been understood as religious in character, considering Hinduism as the central tenet of understanding the life in the subcontinent is definitely a fair deal. But subsuming everything under these received labels is what makes the case more problematic. Take, for example, the unsettled social circumstance of those Indians who at some point wish to change their faith and leave the customs and traditions in which they have been brought up. Often, such new “converts” (the most inappropriate but the only term at

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disposal to refer to them) seem to live a disjointed lives, being neither fully here nor fully there. Quite interestingly, religious conversion has been a ubiquitous process in India. Hinduism itself has undergone tremendous changes over the ages. Now the question is, does the civilisational analysis, adopted by sociologists as an effective approach, have enough scope for accounting for these life worlds? The answer seems to be often in negative. The much celebrated diversity is touched only at the surface level, the deeper analysis of its nuances being treated either as untouchable or unnecessary.

Thus, the civilisational approach being pursued quite unquestionably in the Indian sociology requires a re-examination.

The second important area where the existing Sociological framework has to introspect itself is on the rigid imposition of uniqueness. One of the very strong perceptions which guided the elders in the discipline and, still seems to guide the younger ones today, is that Indian society is unique and requires a unique science of its own. While there is definitely some truth in the story of uniqueness in Indian social composition, taking it to extreme ends is more likely to lead to a methodological narcissism than to facilitate a holistic Science of social reality, and anyone who is really convinced of the diversity and uniqueness of Indian society should particularly be vigilant about the former provocation.

Thus the uniqueness of the Indian social system should be reconsidered critically along with its equal corollary, diversity. The existing Sociological framework should ensure that there is enough room for such methodological openness.

The third prominent area where the Indian sociology seems to be maintaining an ambiguous position is its loud pronouncement on the “East-West-divide”. As the last part of the third chapter suggested in particular, a majority opinion in Indian Sociological circles today is that the Western theories and concepts are incapable of explaining the Eastern, particularly Indian, reality and should therefore be rejected in their entirety. This view stands for a sociology that should be indigenous both in form and content. Like the saga of unique Indian

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social composition again, there is no harm in calling for indigenous methodologies and research techniques suitable enough to capture the particularities of a given society. But the wholesale rejection of anything and everything that comes from a particular region is an untenable act in the production and dissemination of knowledge.

One of the precise reasons why one needs to be extra-cautious about the isolationist precepts is simply because they always stand far away from the dynamic reality, which quite often brings the diverse social groups to a close proximity never imagined before and, in another slightest instance tears them apart for reasons which these groups must not have even thought about before they were implicated in this nuanced process. The concrete example is globalization, which often creates meeting points for some cultures to interact with one another in a new arena and at the same time gives rise to unpredictable tensions between other cultures that often resemble each other but suddenly realize that they differ in some essence. The point to be kept in mind for the moment, however, is that the Science of modern society, if at all it has to remain relevant for the present age, no longer has the luxury of treating its subject matter as a distinct entity discoverable by a specific methodology or a research tool. The need of the hour, however, is the comparative approach. This is where the fourth area comes to the forefront.

The fourth major area where Indian sociology is yet to make real inroads is the development of comparative approach. Given the variety of social groupings to which it has an easy access, Indian sociology should have developed a comparative methodology by now. However, such an effort is not quite evident.

Given the rapidity with which life on this subcontinent is undergoing tremendous changes in the recent past, partly inspired by internal causes and partly guided by external factors, there can be no other better opportune time for Indian sociology than now to develop a framework that can account for a comparative analysis of relations and circumstances operating at a distance both in time and space.

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Although the study of religion/civilisational analysis in Indian sociology appears to have nothing to do with the above mentioned four areas, a close reading of the priorities in the discipline suggests otherwise. The inconspicuous attraction offered by the civilisational approach for the construction of a grand theory seems to have made the scholars in the discipline oblivious to the subtle nuances in several areas. Such a conclusion drawn by a learning student in the discipline may or may not be fully convincing, or may even turn out to be completely untenable at a later date. But what seems certainly significant is that this is one of the fertile areas of research awaiting concrete attention, and what has been carried out in the preceding pages is only a minute step in this direction.

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