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Note from the Editor

The Bangladesh Sociological Society in association with the Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB) and the South Asian Sociological Society (SASS) organized a two day international conference titled "South Asian Sociology Conference" in Dhaka, on March 10-11, 2008 at the IUB premises. The Conference was participated by a large number of sociologists from India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh and delivered on issues relating to sociology both in the regional and global contexts. Besides a number of substantive areas, like poverty, health, gender, environment, and post colonialism, the Conference also focused on the theoretical and methodological concerns. A few selected papers from the conference are presented in this issue.

The first of these, "Sociology: From Science to Pseudoscience" by Nazrul Islam brings forth the age old concern with the status of sociology as a science. The author argues that in spite of the fact that sociology was conceived as a science and is generally treated as one, in the light of the current demarcation criteria, it fails to live up to that promise. Indeed, he argues that, since we continue to treat it as a science, when it is not, we are in reality a pseudoscience. He goes on to suggest that given the present level of technology today, it is possible to penetrate into the body and mind of man and as such experimentation, the hallmark of the sciences, with human beings or their society has become a reality. Thus, the time for sociology, to become a real science, is now.

Following on a similar line of thought, P.K.B. Nayar in his "Sociological Theory and Knowledge Society" argues that since the advent of globalization the societies all over the world have seen substantial changes. This is more so as the IT revolution is taking the societies to a stage identified as the knowledge society. The paper "examines the prospect of sociological theory in the wake of Information Technology and Knowledge Revolution that are overtaking societies the world over".

In the third paper, Moinurul I. Khan raises a few fundamental issues relating to the implantation of sociology into an alien society. Sociology was proposed in relation to the realities that existed in the 19th century Europe but, he asks, to what extent can that sociology be institutionalized in the socio-historical context of Bangladesh or any other non-European society with immensely differing social experiences?

Suvash Biswas similarly questions the possibilities of transplanting Western sociology in the peripheral setting. In the backdrop of the developments up to the 21st century, the paper intends to find out the problems associated with the development of sociology in general and, West Bengal in particular. An attempt is also made here to find out the possibilities involved in the development of sociology as an academic discipline as well as a discipline with practical significance.

Mokerrom Hossain and Shahid M. Shahidullah examine the socio-historical context of the rise and significance of criminology and criminal justice in the societies of South Asia. They look into the need for redefining the traditional meaning and boundaries of crime, punishment, and justice, in the light of the changes induced by globalization. They also look at the spread of cross-border crimes as a recent phenomenon in the South Asian experience. They suggest greater awareness building and the opening up of various institutions for the acquiring and spreading of knowledge in the field.

D. Parimala makes an exhaustive study of the various facets of poverty in the region focusing on the poverty reduction programmes. She notes that the incidence of poverty among women in South Asia is especially high, with women and men experiencing poverty differently and often becoming poor through different processes. The process of feminization of poverty, in South Asia, she argues, is closely linked to the cultural and institutional constraints that restrict women's

participation in economic activity. She then evaluates the poverty reduction programmes in the region.

The other papers presented dealt with major constraints facing the region in terms of environment, women and empowerment questions, and health issues. Lively debates ensued on issues like post-colonialism and the prospect for an indigenous methodology for the region. Some sessions took on the task of evaluating the sociology curricula of the various universities of the region. NGOs, poverty reduction and microfinance dominated the discussions at other sessions.

Participants then met on organizational matters and charted a new course of action for the sociologists of South Asia, by first adopting a draft constitution and then forming an executive committee based on the constitution for a period of four years. The following were elected as the office bearers:

Office bearers:

- (i) **President: Professor Partha Nath Mukherji**, Professor S. K. Dey Chair, Institute of Social Sciences, New Delhi, and former President of The Indian Sociological Society .
- (ii) **Vice-President: Professor Fate Mohammad Burfat**, Professor and Head, Department of Sociology and Criminology (? check), University of Karachi, President, Pakistan Sociological Association.
- (iii) **Vice-President: Professor Tudor K. Silva**, Professor and Head, Department of Sociology, University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka.
- (iv) **Secretary: Professor Nazrul Islam**, Professor and Director (Dean), Independent University, Bangladesh, President Bangladesh Sociological Society.
- (v) **Treasurer: Professor S. Aminul Islam**, Professor and Head, Department of Sociology, University of Dhaka, Bangladesh.

Members:

- (i) Professor Bazlul Mobin Chowdhury, Vice Chancellor, Independent University, Bangladesh.
- (ii) Professor Uttamrao Bhoite, President, Indian Sociological Society.
- (iii) Professor P.K.B. Nayar, former President, Indian Sociological Society.
- (iv) Professor Siri Hettige, University of Colombo, Sri Lanka (proposed in absentia)
- (v) Dr. Professor Mahbuba Nasreen, University of Dhaka, Bangladesh.
- (vi) Dr. Ravinder Kaur, Associate Professor, Indian Institute of Technology, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, New Delhi, Treasurer, Indian Sociological Society.
- (vii) Dr. Rana Saba Sultan, University of Karachi, Pakistan.
- (viii) Professor Krishna Chaitanya, Professor, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu, Nepal (proposed in absentia).
- (ix) Dr. Prema Kumar, University of Colombo, Sri Lanka (proposed in absentia).
- (ix) One member from Bhutan after consultation.
- (x) One member from Afghanistan after consultation.
- (xi) One member from Maldives after consultations.

The Conference ended on a high note with the promises of major future contributions from the region.

Sociology: From Science to Pseudoscience?

Nazrul Islam*

Abstract: *Sociology was proposed by its founder Auguste Comte to be a science, following in the line and logic of the other sciences in the nineteenth century. Based on his dictates, the early sociologists like Herbert Spencer and Emile Durkheim sought to perfect a methodology suitable for a science of society. But over the years, and particularly as sociology crossed the ocean and began its career in the USA, much of the objectives of being a science was lost. And today it is difficult to claim sociology as a science. This paper looks at the demarcation criteria used over the years to designate the sciences and concludes that sociology is no longer a science according to these demarcation criteria. But by posing as a science, which it is not, sociology has relegated itself to the realm of the pseudoscience.*

What would sociologists say to a student who asks for an example of a success of Comte's positivist vision? - John Angle

Let me begin by saying that "sociology is not a science", at least, not any more!

In a gathering of scientists, say the physicists, a statement like "physics is not a science" may meet with raised eyebrows shocked with disbelief or even ridicule for the speaker. But in a gathering of sociologists such statements regarding their discipline will meet with a few all-knowing smiles and nodding heads or at worst, nonchalant indulgence.

The reason for the passive acceptance of the statement is that a sizable number of sociologists do believe that sociology is not a science for, 1. it *cannot be* a science, meaning that it cannot be a science like the natural sciences, precise and churning out numbers. 2. It *should not be* a science, meaning it should not treat human subjects like the objects of nature. And 3. *must not be* a science as there is no such thing as a science, it is all a social construction by the powerful ones in the society. Whatever may be the reason, "sociologists make some of the strongest arguments *against* sociology being a science"¹.

Yet, in the US alone every year 600,000 students who take the Soc. 101² course are told that sociology is a science. And in the public mind the semblance of respect we that we think we have is because we are thought to be doing science. Whatever foolery we do in the name of that doesn't have to leave the room, but it does and we don't get much respect for that either. In a

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¹ <http://answers.yahoo.com/question/index?qid=20061208083245AAA83Ho>

² Robinson. W.C. http://web.utk.edu/~wrobinso/531_lec_socio.html

conference of the evolutionary biologists when it was noted that “sociology is leaving behind the scientific method”, the most common response was “I never knew they used it” and this was usually followed by laughter and even scorn³. Others suggest that the status of sociology as a science is easily questionable when compared to how acknowledged scientists study the natural world.⁴

So then, if sociology is not a science, is it 1. a *proto-science*, that is a “science in intention”, but yet to become one, like the string theory? Or 2. a *pseudoscience*, that is a “science in pretension”, making big claims but is not, like astrology? Or 3. is it a *non-science*, there is no pretension or intention to be a science, like the arts and the humanities or the religions. No, strike that, religion has always had the pretension of being a science, like the Christian Science or the creation science etc.

Indeed, it was because of such claims of religion to be a science that Sir Karl Popper had to devise his distinguishing category between science and non-science. This, in philosophical terms is called “demarcation”, that is, demarcating the boundaries of each. This paper is an attempt to examine the question of whether sociology today is a science or not in the light of the expectation of the founding father of sociology and what eventually happened to that vision and how and why it has degenerated into the status of a pseudoscience.

Sociology, like it or not, began with the claim to be a science of society by its founder, Auguste Comte⁵. That claim rested on the methodology of the then sciences that he thought should be followed by sociology in its inquiry of social life. The methodology of the sciences at the time basically meant the methodology of physics, so his name for the new subject of social life was chosen as “Social Physics”. When someone else used the term “social physics”, for a compilation of social data, Comte promptly, albeit grudgingly, changed the name to “Sociology”. And thought he had solved the problem!

In fact, that was the beginning of all the problems faced by sociology as a “science” today. Had it retained its name as “social physics”, perhaps there would not have been any need to change the methodology from those of physics or “science” to anything else. But by using the term sociology he turned it into the “study” of society. As is well known that *socius* was taken from Latin and “logos” from Greek and combined into the word “sociology”. Incidentally, *socius* actually means “companion” and logos is “knowledge” so that technically speaking, sociology means knowledge

³ <http://answers.yahoo.com/question/index?qid=20061208083245AAA83Ho>

⁴ Jacob (Jake) Barrie Gordon @ www.jakeg.co.uk at <http://www.jakeg.co.uk/essays/science.htm>

⁵ *Auguste Comte and Positivism: The Essential Writings*. Edited by Gertrud Lanzer. New York: Harper Torch Books. 1975. All subsequent references to Comte are made from this source as well.

about companionship (interesting!), but it came to be translated as the “study” of society. Nowhere does the name “sociology” imply a “scientific study” of society. Even the current definition of sociology provided by the American Sociological Association (ASA) calls it a “*study* of social life...” and does not even mention the word science anywhere⁶.

Now, add to this the First Amendments to the US Constitution, that is, the freedom of expression, and you end up with a “study of society” for each person created in his or her own image. To the extent that, as one critic argues, there are really 30 or 40 sociologies, with “a range of research techniques”⁷ “going off in every direction”⁸, and each of these with many sub-specialities⁹ And today, “[t]here is no social activity that does not have its official sociologist”¹⁰. In the chaos that follows, there is no unity of either the subject matter or of the methodology. Indeed, “anything goes” seems to be the tacit understanding even by the ASA definition. So where is the “science” of Comte?

The methodology that Comte wanted sociology (not just social physics) to follow was what goes by the name of the “methodology of the natural sciences” or, often called, the “real sciences”. Which means that “the knowledge must be based on observable phenomena and capable of being experimented for its validity by other researchers working under the same conditions”¹¹ that is, *the results must have the quality of being repeated*. Repeatability is a cornerstone of science. Without it, science is reduced to rumor and hearsay¹². Usually this implies that knowledge is based on “gathering observable, empirical and measurable evidence subject to specific principles of reasoning. A scientific method, thus, consists of the collection of data through observation and experimentation, and the formulation and testing of hypotheses”¹³. For Comte these meant that science (or the so called Positive science) is concerned only with observable phenomena and the establishment of law-like relations among these through the gathering of factual knowledge. This Comte thought could be done by sociology through observation, experimentation and comparison like the other sciences.

“If his sociology had really followed these methods, it would have been a strong case for sociology as a science”¹⁴. Unfortunately, Comte himself did none of that, except probably for the use of historical data, which he claimed was a special case of comparison. Unfortunately, there is

⁶ http://www.asanet.org/cs/root/topnav/sociologists/what_is_sociology

⁷ ASA. http://www.asanet.org/cs/root/topnav/sociologists/what_is_sociology

⁸ Robinson. W.C. http://web.utk.edu/~wrobinso/531_lec_socio.html

⁹ Islam, N. 2005. “End of sociological Theory” in *End of Sociological Theory and Other Essays on Theory and Methodology*. Dhaka: Ananya.

¹⁰ Robinson. W.C. http://web.utk.edu/~wrobinso/531_lec_socio.html

¹¹ Wikipedia. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Main_Page

¹² Lee Moller - <http://www.ntskeptics.org/1989/1989mayjune/mayjune1989.htm#pseudoscience>

¹³ Wikipedia. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Main_Page

¹⁴ <http://www.human.nagoya-u.ac.jp/~iseda/works/soc-sci.html>

very little detailed direction in his writing as to how to go about doing science. After all he was not a scientist; he only proposed what sociology should be, as a *philosopher!*

However, the whole process was supposed to follow the inductive logic, then thought to be the logic of science, and is often called “inductivism”. Accordingly, we have to collect “facts” about the real world and classify these in an objective manner and statistical relations (meaning “correlations”) among these be established. (Hence, comes in the dreaded statistics courses and drives a few reluctant ones to opt for the non-statistical excuses a.k.a. the qualitative methodologies). Once a positive correlation is found, we may take it a step further and show how one fact may be the cause of another and these be built into theories¹⁵.

An unaccountable number of objections have been raised against inductivism in general and its use in sociology in particular. The most important of these is that “facts” about the real world is not self evident, they have to be interpreted as facts rather than simply discovered to be facts. So that, we have to make a subjective judgement about these - and this, clearly, is not what doing “objective science” means¹⁶. So that if the identification of facts is dependent on subjective judgements about what constitutes "a fact", then it is clear that we have no way of judging between “bad” or “good” or even if the theory is valid¹⁷.

Sir Karl came to the rescue of science based on inductivism. Popper argued that a theory could not be tested or verified by inductive logic as the very process of producing a theory, as shown above, to explain the observed “facts”, was its own proof. But without really abandoning the positivist ways, Popper proposed to move from the inductive to the deductive way, although not completely, only hypothetically, as you need a theory before you can deduce but to have a theory you need to collect facts as in inductivism. So, you are back to square one.

In the actual process all you need to do is to have the hypothesis from what ever little observation you can make, and treat the hypothesis as the theory – hypothetically, of course – and the process has come to be known as "Hypothetico-Deductive" form of positivism or "Hypothetico-Deductivism". Here the scientist is expected to observe the world for facts and construct hypothesis about these and then observe further to check if the hypothesis holds, thus allowing for the hypothesis to be “*Falsified*” rather than simply “verified”. Falsification thus demarcates

¹⁵ <http://www.sociology.org.uk/methsci2.doc>

¹⁶ <http://www.sociology.org.uk/methsci2.doc>

¹⁷ <http://www.sociology.org.uk/methsci2.doc>

between scientific and non-scientific theories and helps account for the development of scientific theories, at least, was supposed to, for Popper¹⁸.

Unfortunately sociologists often confuse between hypothetico-deductivism and inductivism and treat them as one and the same method and end up making moral judgements about their theories. So that instead of allowing for total falsification they allow for the probability (using the dreaded statistics, of course) that a theory may be accepted or rejected according to the calculated value of the probability of acceptance and rejection, which, as we are told, varies from zero to one. So that a value close to 0 gives a bad theory while a value close to 1 is accepted as a good theory.

This is because Popperian falsification is based on taking decisions about how and when to observe and what data counts¹⁹. The problem with this is that if falsification is based on “decisions”, then “anyone can accept or falsify any theory based on which decisions they make about observation and data” so that there is “not only no confirmation, but there is no falsification either”²⁰. Also, that a statement like “he has grey hair” that can be easily falsified, is not a scientific statement. Many similar objections have made Popperian criteria unacceptable and *were largely discarded by the 1970s*.

And that practically ended sociology’s adventure into the realm of science. Not because Popper was proved wrong but because sociology had reached its limit as a scientific enterprise. It had refined its methodology, based first on the “verification” principle and then on “falsification”, considerably but very little theory or law-like propositions ever followed. In its nearly 200 years of history it cannot show any thing even close to what is expected of a science. But more importantly, the world has not waited for sociology to fulfill its obligation as a science, the demarcation criteria that followed Popper’s falsification have become far more stringent and as if “by default” relegates sociology to the status of a proto-science or non-science (even pseudoscience), and sociology has no way of rising to the occasion.

The demarcation criteria that followed Popper dealt with paradigms and research programmes and the success of a science is seen in terms of building law-like propositions or theories. For Kuhn²¹ the demarcation problem is not related to falsification at all because if falsification was the criteria, no theory would survive long enough to be of any use as all theories develop anomalies almost from the beginning or soon thereafter. For him the “value of a scientific paradigm is its

¹⁸ Newall, P. “Falsification” (2005). Manuscripts, Galilean Library. <http://www.galilean-library.org/>

¹⁹ <http://todshammer.wordpress.com/>

²⁰ <http://todshammer.wordpress.com/>

²¹ Kuhn T. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 1970

predictive power and its ability to suggest solutions to new problems while continuing to satisfy all of the problems solved by the paradigm that it replaces"²². A new paradigm is accepted by the scientific community for its ability to solve present and new problems²³.

For Kuhn there are two kinds of sciences the "normal" science and the "extraordinary" science. Normal science is the one with a paradigm (the lack of which in sociology caused so much uproar against Kuhn). What Kuhn argued was that disciplines like the sociology did not have a well established set of theories or a proper methodology like the natural sciences so as to be called a "normal" science. The activity of a normal science is "puzzle solving" as it already has a good theory and a set of guiding methodological principles. (This obviously infuriated sociologists for not being called "normal" scientists.) Extraordinary science is that science which falls from the state of normal science and accumulates anomalies or unanswered questions, thereby leading itself to a state of crisis and fails to act like the normal "puzzle solving" science. Sociology, for obvious reasons is not even an "extraordinary" science since it was not a normal science to begin with!

Thomas Kuhn introduced the term proto-science into the demarcation criteria while trying to place the disciplines he could not accommodate in his scheme of sciences. These, including the social sciences, were seen by him like the "arts and philosophy" unable to graduate into the realm of the mature sciences, *in spite of the fact that they do "satisfy popper's demarcation criteria"!*

Kuhn notes, and I quote in detail:

*"In any case, there are many fields — I shall call them proto-sciences — in which practice does generate testable conclusions but which nevertheless resemble philosophy and the arts rather than the established sciences in their developmental patterns. I think, for example, of fields like chemistry and electricity before the mid-eighteenth century, of the study of heredity and phylogeny before the mid-nineteenth, or of many of the social sciences today. In these fields, too, though they satisfy Sir Karl's [Popper's] demarcation criterion, incessant criticism and continual striving for a fresh start are primary forces, and need to be. No more than in philosophy and the arts, however, do they result in clear-cut progress"*²⁴.

Thus, sociology, even if it followed the Popperian logic or churned out numerous statistical tests, is no longer to be treated as a science. It is, as Kuhn would have it, only a proto-science. (The other varieties of sociology, qualitative and postmodernist etc., would not qualify to be demarcated as science by even the Popperian standard). More importantly, Kuhn notes that these proto-sciences are like "philosophy and the arts" resembling the pre-scientific days of chemistry or "the study of heredity and phylogeny", unlikely to be transformed into sciences. He

²² <http://www.soc.iastate.edu/sapp/falsificationism.pdf>.

²³ <http://www.soc.iastate.edu/sapp/falsificationism.pdf>.

²⁴ Kuhn T., as quoted in Wikipedia: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Protoscience#cite_note-1

concludes, “in short, ... the proto-sciences, like the arts and philosophy, lack some element which, in the mature sciences, permits the more obvious forms of progress”²⁵.

That, more or less, seals the fate of sociology as a science as far as Kuhn is concerned.

However, in the latest arguments on the demarcation problem, even Kuhn’s distinction between normal science and proto-science is not enough. In this demarcation criterion Lakatos²⁶ rejects both Kuhn and Popper arguing that neither simple refutation nor building up of anomalies kills a theory. Scientists are very tenacious people and hold on to their theories and try to improve these and that the theories themselves have “a vast 'protective belt' of auxiliary hypotheses”²⁷. He thus talks of sciences in terms of “research programmes” with its theories, hypothesis and even anomalies. He then divides the research programmes into “progressive” and “degenerating” ones. In “a progressive research programme, theory leads to the discovery of hitherto unknown novel facts”, while in “degenerating programmes, theories are fabricated only in order to accommodate known facts”²⁸. By giving examples from Newtonian and Marxist research programmes he shows how the Newtonian one is a progressive one which predicted and discovered new and hitherto unknown planets. But, although the early predictions of Marxism were bold and stunning, they failed. Marxism 'explained' all its failures. But their explanations “were all cooked up after the event to protect Marxian theory from the facts”²⁹ Thus for Lakatos a progressive programme is scientific and the degenerating one is pseudoscientific.

Lakatos uses Marxism as an example of a degenerative pseudoscience, as did his teacher Popper as an example of a failed theory. What other theory does sociology or even the social sciences have that may even be considered as a “research programme” with theories and hypotheses and even anomalies? And what earth-shattering discoveries did sociology or any of its “theories” with (or without) predictive power, like those of Newtonian theories, achieve in the past nearly two centuries that we may claim to have a “progressive” research programme? Indeed, if any thing, sociology has failed miserably to build theories that cut across the discipline and /or across time and space³⁰, let alone be predictive of anything. In a recent essay in the *Footnotes* (the monthly news letter of ASA), Bruce Keith noted that, “I find no evidence that members of our discipline have discovered any law or principle that is applicable temporally

²⁵ Kuhn T., as quoted in Wikipedia: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Protoscience#cite_note-1

²⁶ <http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/lakatos/scienceAndPseudoscienceTranscript.htm>

²⁷ <http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/lakatos/scienceAndPseudoscienceTranscript.htm>

²⁸ <http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/lakatos/scienceAndPseudoscienceTranscript.htm>

²⁹ <http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/lakatos/scienceAndPseudoscienceTranscript.htm>

³⁰ Islam, N 2005. *End of Sociological Theory and Other Essays on Theory and Methodology*. Dhaka: Ananya.

across social contexts”³¹. John Angle in his response to Keith notes, “The length of the silence to Prof. Keith’s year-old assertion reveals how Comte’s vision has faded”³². So that, by any definition, sociology, or its parts thereof, constitutes an ideal case of a degenerative research programme or a pseudoscience!

However, the choice is no longer with the sociologists. While they were busy how not to do science or at best building up, often useless and trivial generalizations that had no possibility of being *repeated*, let alone being applicable across time and space, other sciences have moved beyond their grasp. The demarcation criteria have, thus, put science beyond the reach of sociology. It is, as Kuhn notes because of the lack of “certain element, which in the mature sciences, permits the more obvious forms of progress”.³³

The element that has put sociology behind is the *very will to be a science*, to do the hard work that is necessary to conceptualize and measure factors like emotions or motivation, which we give up by making excuses that they are far more difficult to do than the work done by the other sciences with their concepts and measurements. Thus, we have relegated ourselves to the status of a non-science or even a pseudoscience (because without doing the work necessary we continue to pretend to be a science, at least the intro text books continue to claim so).

Beginning with Weber in the first decade of the 20th century alternatives to scientific methodology have been sought actively and many have been proposed in the process. The general theme has been that human beings are different from the objects of nature and are much more complex and so too is the society, indeed far more complex than any thing that the natural sciences tackle. This, I feel not only trivializes the natural sciences but is tantamount to burying the head in the sand.

The great discoveries and inventions in the natural sciences have become so much a fact of life that they may fool us in believing that those discoveries were simple matters. But just think for a moment that it took thousands of years to even discover that the earth was round and not flat. Or that the dome that covers the flat earth, called the sky, where the sun and the moon and the stars were hung to give us light is not a flat screen but billions of “light years” deep. Indeed, can you imagine the leap in imagination that was required to even grasp that light moves at a fantastic speed through the void of space and that the speed itself can be measured and measured in terms of light years? Even the greatest mind in science, Newton, who discovered gravitation, could not believe that distant objects are held together because of gravitational forces. And these

³¹ Keith, B. 2005. “A Century of Motion: Disciplinary Culture and Organizational Drift in American Sociology.” *Footnotes* December, 33(9):6.

³² *Footnotes February 2007*

³³ Kuhn T., as quoted in Wikipedia: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Protoscience#cite_note-1

were just the beginnings of modern science. Few, if any, of us can actually grasp what goes on in the other sciences today.

If we think that the achievements of other sciences are trivial compared to what we face, we should indeed give up science and take up story telling. Some have already begun doing so and are speaking in terms of “narratives” and “discourses”. So, the element lacking in us is the will to do the hard work that science requires. We have been making excuses and trying to convince the intellectual world why sociology cannot be a science more earnestly than trying to make it into a science. If we are convinced that sociology is not or cannot be a science, let’s make a clear cut declaration and be done with it once and for all. If science or theory building is not our cup of tea, so be it. But to pretend to be a science without doing the necessary work, tantamount to demoting it to the level of a pseudoscience and, as Lakatos warns us, that can be a dangerous thing.

Sociology’s status as a science was claimed by Comte to be the result of a logical progression of the sciences. He placed it as the newest of the sciences to take off from the biological sciences with, obviously, using the same methodology of the other sciences such as observation, comparison and experimentation. While he did suggest ways of observations and comparison he himself was not much clear on experimentation. He never offered any clear cut direction as to how to experiment with society (man as a unit of analysis came much later).

Research methodology for sociology was more fully worked out by Spencer³⁴ adopting the survey techniques that were then current in Britain. He was also aware of the limitations of such techniques but assumed that the bugs could be worked out as he himself suggested ways to avoid biases etc. Much of these later got transplanted in the US sociology and developed there to the present state. In France, Durkheim, following in the footsteps of Spencer, showed how currently available data could be successfully manipulated to analyze social trends. He thus showed that mathematics, revered by Comte as well, could help work out trends in the observed data. He went so far as to claim that the facts of sociology are to be treated as “things” like the facts of the natural sciences!

But as sociology traveled to the US the progression of sociology to the domain of the natural sciences was nipped in the bud as it had to meet the overwhelming demand for “social welfare” and “social work” type of use of the discipline. “The early years were shaped by Christian projects of social reform”³⁵ and many of the early sociologists were priests and sons of priests. Some critics suggest that U.S. sociology was really the secularization of American Protestantism’s

³⁴ Herbert Spencer, 1961. *The Study of Sociology*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

³⁵ Robinson. W.C. http://web.utk.edu/~wrobinso/531_lec_socio.html

social gospel³⁶. It even had to contend with the then dominant “Christian Science” movement. Even Albion Small had to placate Christian Science while taking stock of the past ten years of the journal in the editorial of the 10th volume of American Journal of Sociology.

Much of sociology then rested in the hands of the social workers and not scientists, nor even academicians. Over and above that, the first sociological research techniques (in the US) were actually developed outside of the universities by social workers, philanthropists, public health and charity workers, journalists and reformers³⁷. What science could anyone expect from this diverse group of nonscientists? (And the methodology that developed was later formalized with Popperian notion of falsification.) Other disciplines “saw sociology (naturally) more as a movement than an intellectual discipline ...the discipline (itself) began with no focused content and (with) some confusion between sociology and social work”.³⁸ And while “Sociology hoped to be able to explain behavior,” early sociology turned out to be the study of “a hodge podge of poverty, crime, insanity, marriage and divorce, slums and other social pathologies”.³⁹

It would be only futile to look for a “science” or even the agenda of Comte in this muddle. Later developments, particularly from the 1930s onwards, did lead to a well organized set of principles in terms of a “research methodology” based on surveys and observations, including incorporating statistics into it. But, as noted above, it got fossilized in the Popperian version of scientific logic and could never transcend to the level of the natural sciences or be counted among these.

So that although data collection and data analysis became the mode of this science, no one took pains to define these data, or the concepts behind them, precisely to be acceptable to all or to offer a standard technique of measurement of these data. The first object of any science is to define and refine its concepts and their measurements. Concepts as simple or mundane as air, water, sound, light, heat or speed and force needed to be defined and measured, even when the measurements were made in terms of fictitious numbers and scales (Fahrenheit and Centigrade) or assumed constants (like “G” for gravitation, which is yet to have a conclusive measurement) and at a later period each be corroborated by the others. And as Kuhn noted, there is a general acceptance of the concepts and their measures in the given field of science. It is this consensus which, for Kuhn, defines a science and the lack of which in the social sciences forces Kuhn to conclude against these being sciences⁴⁰. Sociology, let alone refined measurements, does not even have agreed upon definitions of any of its basic concepts!

³⁶ Robinson. W.C. http://web.utk.edu/~wrobinso/531_lec_socio.html

³⁷ Robinson. W.C. http://web.utk.edu/~wrobinso/531_lec_socio.html

³⁸ Robinson. W.C. http://web.utk.edu/~wrobinso/531_lec_socio.html

³⁹ Robinson. W.C. http://web.utk.edu/~wrobinso/531_lec_socio.html

⁴⁰ Kuhn T., as quoted in Wikipedia: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Protoscience#cite_note-1

Of course, as it is forcefully argued, that you cannot measure society, culture, family, socialization, class or emotions and feelings even if you could find agreeable definitions. The same could be argued about light, sound, heat or force five hundred years ago, and who knew that the air that keeps us alive is oxygen and nitrogen and these can be measured, along with the fact that a certain *amount* of oxygen in the air is a must for all living things, less would render air unbreathable. Precise definitions and measurements of each of these concepts took decades, if not centuries, and painstaking contributions of scientists, made famous by those same discoveries.

In the hustle and bustle of survey research and probability mathematics, or the fuss over inductive and deductive logic, sociology forgot that much of the advances of the natural sciences, particularly in their measurements of concepts, are dependent on finding the right kind of tools, be they simple inclined planes or dropping balls from a tower. "New scientific disciplines come into being only when tools are invented and discoveries are made that make fruitful work in that area possible".⁴¹ Astronomy could not have taken off without the telescope, or biology without the microscope and X-ray. Much of the sciences today make ceremonial advances because of the inventions of ever newer technologies. Sociology did not invent nor had any use for such technologies so far. But today technologies are available that can "see" inside the body organs and measure agitation in different parts of the brain or secretion by different glands, record postures and facial expressions or voice modulation. And their range of penetrating the human mind and body is advancing by leaps and bounds.

These allow me to be bold enough to suggest that *the time for sociology as a science is now*. Indeed, when Comte proposed his science it was in the wake of the level of development of the natural sciences of the day without the advantages of the modern developments, particularly of technologies. So, much of the science of society was based on whatever data were "observable" superficially, mostly in terms of collective representations or opinions. Comte himself advocated "comparison" of historical data – that's all he could do those days! The limitations of such data are obvious and have failed to advance sociology beyond the study of the "unaided observations" to simply opinions of either the respondents or the researcher. It is like pre-Galilean astronomy, trying to observe the universe with the naked eye. So that, in a way, Comte's proposition was premature, without the advantage of the needed technology to make the proper observations and experimentations.

We also tend to forget that Comte wanted the science of society to be built on the laws discovered by the earlier sciences (in his hierarchy of the sciences), particularly biology. Comte himself divided his science into the "statics" and "dynamics" following the division in physics and

⁴¹ <http://www.dharma-haven.org/science/psuedo-science-or-proto-science.htm#Top>

as adapted in the case of biology in terms of “anatomy” and “physiology”. Spencer, more than anyone else, followed this direction but came to be ridiculed on the very ground that he was using an “organic analogy” and the evolutionary model. Since then it has been treated as bad practice to copy other sciences or areas of knowledge.

However, both Comte and Spencer suggested that we use the other sciences for heuristic reasons and once we have developed our own science we could leave them behind. But we left them much too early, long before we could stand on our feet with our own set of clearly defined and measured concepts and a set of theories with a workable methodology, and that is where we made the first mistake. Just think of the developments the other sciences have made since the mid 19th century and compare it with the lack of progress in sociology. We are still in the nineteenth century or at best in the early 20th century, if we have to quote Marx, Weber and Durkheim as our champions. But even by the 1920s sciences like physics was already way beyond our grasp. We could not have used the laws of those sciences for our purposes. No wonder that by then we started talking of how not to be a science like physics! Interestingly, however, the only other science sociology flirted with was psychology, whose very claim to science also remains questionable.

We decided to go our own ways, mostly because we were not sure of our status as a science. A science can and must cooperate with the other sciences for its and others’ growth. But being unsure of our status we were scared, lest we lose our identity and get sucked into the science we follow, as it almost happened with psychology, thus buried our heads in the sand while other sciences prospered. Today, sciences like astronomy or physics or chemistry are so far beyond our grasp that their theories would be incomprehensible to most, if not all of us, and as such beyond the possibility of any use in sociology. Remember that, for Comte the other sciences were not very far from comprehension as is clearly evident from his analysis of those sciences, while Spencer was a bit of a scientist in every field and was well respected for his scholarship by the great scientists of his day. But, since then we left the other sciences, in reality were left behind by them, and today they are reluctant even to recognize us as a science. And, rightly so!

If sociology were to keep pace with the advances of the other sciences and grounded its observations with the available laws and technological aids, it would not be startling today to find a sociologist beside a CAT- scan machine mind-reading with a brain scan.⁴² Such readings today are already “revealing what a person planned to do in the near future” to the extent that “[i]f brain-reading can be refined, it could quickly be adopted to assist interrogations of criminals and terrorists, and even usher in a ‘Minority Report’ era (as portrayed in the Steven Spielberg science fiction film of that name), where judgments are handed down before the law is broken on the

⁴² <http://machineslikeus.com/news/mind-reading-brain-scan>

strength of an incriminating brain scan.”⁴³ Or a sociologist running with a video camera after a mob, recording its progression from a crowd into the mob; or looking at an oscilloscope focused on the shouting of a quarrel and trying to identify the peaks and troughs at which the quarrel turns into a fist fight; or measuring the secretion from the pituitary glands in trying to fathom the meaning of rites of passage in different societies; or even working on the nature of alien societies of extra-solar planets as sociology would definitely transform itself into “exosociology”, following biology (as in exobiology).

None of the above are farfetched, other sciences are using these same tools, and data generated thereof, in their own fields of work. But sociologists are content just calling up their subjects (respondents) to get an opinion on the impending slum clearance and hoping to predict the result with 99.9% probability of success! Without instruments of observation and in the absence of experimentation the very claim to a science becomes hollow. Sociology failed to keep pace with the development of the other sciences and take advantage of the growth of technology even if that technology was created for the other sciences.

So then, are we a proto-science of the Kuhnian type or a pseudoscience of Lakatos? Some are already in agreement with Kuhn and calls sociology a science in intention⁴⁴ or a proto science. Others have felt that “for various reasons, academic sociology has largely been transformed from the applied science envisioned by the founders into what is essentially a literary pursuit”⁴⁵. Concerned with its future R.W. Connell visualizes that a “quite probable future for sociology is gentle decline into an atmosphere of nostalgia”⁴⁶. Bruce Keith surmises “that sociology is more akin to a profession than a science”⁴⁷. ASA, to be on the safe side, omits the word “science” when defining “What is Sociology?” So that, sociology is no longer in the realm of science even for its own practitioners – thus, a non-science, perhaps!

But does it matter?

Unfortunately, it does matter where it hurts the most. Angle notes that it may not be coincidental that after Richard Bernstein quoted in the *New York Times* a sociologist attending the 1988 ASA Annual Meeting saying that sociology will never be a science like physics and those expecting it are fooling themselves, a few sociology programs were shut down in the years following.⁴⁸ So that, if it does matter to the public for sociology to be a science, then think how would the same public react when it becomes aware that sociology is actually a non science only pretending to be

⁴³ <http://www.guardian.co.uk/science/2007/feb/09/neuroscience.ethicsofscience>

⁴⁴ John Angle: <http://www2.asanet.org/footnotes/feb07/fn9.html>

⁴⁵ Jay Weinstein quoted by Robinson. W.C. http://web.utk.edu/~wrobinso/531_lec_socio.html

⁴⁶ Quoted by Robinson. W.C. http://web.utk.edu/~wrobinso/531_lec_socio.html

⁴⁷ In John Angle: <http://www2.asanet.org/footnotes/feb07/fn9.html>

⁴⁸ <http://www2.asanet.org/footnotes/feb07/fn9.html>

a science, or a pseudoscience? Some, like Irving Horowitz, are already aware of the fate of sociology and notes that "Sociology threatens to join phrenology as a pseudo science and to share the fate of the occult studies in being viewed more as a privileged language of dedicated elites than as a field of investigation broadly reflective of public needs".⁴⁹

⁴⁹ As quoted by Robinson. W.C. http://web.utk.edu/~wrobinso/531_lec_socio.html

Sociological Theory and Knowledge Society

P. K. B. Nayar*

Globalization and its handmaid - knowledge society - are bringing about a major change in the entire social system and this, in turn, is creating several discontinuities in the social order in many parts of the world. In some countries, the traditional economy has been thrown out of equilibrium, in some others the political system has been destabilized and in all countries the existing social order based mostly on conformity has been dislocated or de-railed.

This paper examines the prospect of sociological theory in the wake of Information Technology (IT) and Knowledge Revolution (KR) that are overtaking societies the world over and that are upsetting many of the traditional values and norms of behavior of individuals and organizations in society. It tries to rehabilitate sociology and its theoretical underpinnings in the matrix of the Knowledge Society built on Information Technology.

Information technology has provided sumptuous food for those who want to question the sanctity and usefulness of many precepts in the social and behavioral sciences which have assumed man as being conditioned and regulated by certain socially established parameters. In so far as IT and KR have generated and popularized new values and norms for humans to behave, there is no *a priori* reason to assume that conventional sociological theories of human behavior, and the social processes based on them, would work as smoothly and uncontested as before. In fact, their relevance is being increasingly questioned and their usefulness as tools for analysis and interpretation of social dynamics is getting increasingly devalued at several quarters.

Sociological theories are in a state of stagnation today. Grand Theories remain intact but with reduced halo. They continue to be respected because of their intrinsic worth but sparingly used by practitioners. Middle range theories also have survived many attacks and enjoy the same fate. But this cannot be said about micro level theories, their number being legion. Because the subject matter of sociology has proliferated into many areas and sub-areas and sub-sub areas, theories at micro level do not have similar appeal and are little attempted by researchers or approved by peers. Even if one attempts to build a theory, its applicability will be circumscribed for several reasons. Further, in the prevailing volatile social situation, a new theory will not have long life and may become redundant the moment it comes out of the testing ground. However, there are sociologists who believe that sociology could survive without new theories. Gosta Esping-Adersen (BJS 2000) argues that present day sociology should not worry about being “theory-less” since we have ample number of theories to start our enquiry.

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There are several obstacles to theory building: These may be divided into three Groups. (1) obstacles from within the science of society, (2) obstacles created by IT and related factors, and (3) obstacles created by Knowledge Revolution. Actually the dividing line between 2 and 3 is very hazy and there are several overlaps between them.

Only a summary of the factors from within is given here because my focus is on the other two. Because of the all-comprehensive nature of the science of society and flexible boundary lines, scholars have a tendency to include everything under the sun as coming within the purview of sociology. As a result, a unified theory embracing all the heterogeneous elements in the discipline becomes difficult. This is true of meta theories and more true of micro theories. Commercialization and corporatisation of sociological research has made theory a matter of convenience in research. The funding agencies are not interested in theories as such; they want evidence-based findings. This assumes importance since even the traditional funding agencies – government and research institutions have set their own research agenda and give funds only for earmarked themes. This means that a sociologist theoretician who wants to engage in research of his choice and to build up new theories will find little support for his endeavour from institutionalized funding agencies and even if he manages to do research on his own, his theoretical findings may have few takers.

Fragmentation of sociological knowledge by professional disciplines such as social work, business management, engineering and medicine which need and use only parts of sociology for their work has made theory a dispensable item in their intellectual pursuits. In such circumstances, theory building is a luxury and even application of theory in research may not find favor with many intellectuals and professionals. If building new theory in sociology has been affected by internal factors, there are at least two major external factors that are threatening the validity of older theories. They are new trends in bio technology on the one hand and information technology on the other. Genetic engineering has made possible human engineered organisms. Cloning and organ transplant may result in new species of humankind which may not always behave in socially expected ways. Nano technology is developing fast and its capacity to implant or modify cells that would restore or accelerate intelligence will soon become a reality, given the momentum gained in this field of research. Computer controlled human brain also could be seen as a possibility though remote.

There are manifold ways in which human behaviour can be artificially manoeuvred in the manner desired by the users. Given the incredible power of the new technologies, the question will be how to fit our existing theories of human and social behavior with the genetically

engineered new brand of humans and the totally computerized human surrogates that will not only influence but may compel humans to alter and adjust their behavior vis-à-vis the new species. Biotechnology has reached a stage which would alter the property of genes and, through it, the very nature of human behaviour, creating new problems for the social order. Human engineering, coupled with human cloning, could fundamentally alter the physical and mental characteristics of the human being, and this may challenge not only the accumulated knowledge and wisdom in sociology but those in all human and social sciences.

Even apart from genetic engineering, psychologists are engaged in developing techniques to reformulate human behaviour. Liberalization has contributed an economic dimension for destabilizing the existing social order. The unequal and unethical competition for capturing global markets resorted to by global MNCs and TNCs aided and abetted by their national governments has resulted in transforming the human being into a marketable commodity through aggressive sales promotion and manipulation of consumer behaviour. Sociology will assume a new meaning when social man, the unit of its study, is manipulated by human engineering and acts not according to established and commonly shared social norms and values but on the basis of engineered norms and values that are geared to the needs of the MNCs and TNCs.

Let me give you a couple of examples of how social and family mores are being changed by biotechnology. Son-preference and large scale use of amniocentesis are tilting the sex ratio against women in many States in India and the consequent shortage of women in the marriage market may result in wife-hunting and in the restoration of fraternal polyandry in society. Again, large-scale organ transplant has contributed to a booming racket in kidney transplant in metropolitan cities and with unethical international and touristic overtones.

Yet another threat to the established social order is Information Technology (IT). Its offshoot, knowledge revolution, has become a major factor of profound significance in the new millennium and it has revolutionized society in a manner which has no parallel in history. It has unfolded scenarios that have long standing implications for the humankind. What is more intriguing from the point of human society is that new information and new knowledge are coming in such amazing abundance and with such terrific speed that no reasonable estimation of what all these would lead to in terms of the social order is beyond meaningful prediction or reasonable calculation. The entry of nano technology in this field is another factor to be reckoned with in the years to come as this would make most of man's present achievements redundant. Nano technology will have multiplier effect on all sectors of human life and may lead to an entirely new social order of unpredictable nature and magnitude. Never before in the history of humankind has so much happened in society in such profoundness and within so little time

Thanks to information technology, data is now transformed into information and information into knowledge. But there are two limiting factors here. Human mind will not be able to work as swiftly as the computer and so there is always a time lag between availability of knowledge and its application. Secondly computer aided information, however sharp and precise, cannot provide wisdom to select the most appropriate piece(s) of knowledge. Unless knowledge is converted into wisdom or applied wisely, application of knowledge to situations, however sophisticated and apparently rational the knowledge is, will be of no use. As wisdom varies from man to man, the advantage in the use of knowledge will be in the hands of those who possess superior wisdom. One can only say that those who control knowledge will also control wisdom. But one cannot say for certain that the knowledge will be used wisely by its possessors. The consequence of an unwise decision can at times be catastrophic and disastrous as some recent international decisions and courses of action based on them have shown.

Knowledge is power. Knowledge societies are arguably to be a source of human development and empowerment in that access to knowledge will *ipso facto* contribute an element of power. UNESCO (2005, p.27).) thinks that the revolution in new technologies and the new phase of globalization that accompanies it will add a new source to the third phase of Industrial revolution. However, UNESCO's fond hope that this will strengthen peoples and countries all over the world does not seem to agree with reality. The fervent hope behind the UN Declaration of Human Rights, 1948 is a case in point. Knowledge revolution assumes that knowledge societies will be able to enforce human rights with ease because with the availability of knowledge to everyone, things will become transparent and the fundamental rights of the individual will be known to everybody and will be enforced. However, studies have shown that the fact is otherwise and violation of human rights has continued even in highly developed knowledge societies. If at all it has achieved anything, it is on the negative side; human rights violation has only increased after knowledge revolution. Large-scale violation of human rights in many parts of the world, under whatever excuses, has become a scandal even in UN Circles.

Computer and internet facilities are a *sine qua non* of knowledge societies; for knowledge storage and retrieval depend on these facilities. Here, UNESCO which is itself a proponent of knowledge dissemination admits that this is a privilege which is still in the hands of the countries of the North. According to UNESCO, only 11% of the world's population has access to the internet. Ninety percent of people using internet come from industrialized countries. Indeed, while we speak of a global information society and of a World Wide Web the fact is that 82% of the population account for only 10% of internet connections in the world. This *digital divide* is first and foremost a question of access to infrastructures. Some two billion people are not linked to an electricity grid -

the precondition of mass access to the new technologies. Furthermore, there is a problem of affordability. Computers are expensive. The provision of internet services constitutes a very considerable investment in urban areas and is in short supply in the countryside. In addition, familiarizing oneself with the computer requires computer literacy which is also unaffordable to the poor. (UNESCO p.29).

I have dwelt at length on computer and internet because they are the backbone of knowledge societies and they are a major factor in changing human behaviour and social relationships. The high tide formed by new inventions and discoveries culminating in the knowledge society is going to sweep away part of man's innate characteristics in at least two directions – the biological and the social. In turn the new biological aspects will result in further changes contributing to perhaps an entirely new social order. Already, one of the outcomes of the knowledge society is the new cultural behaviour patterns. A specific web culture is built up by a process of distribution in which there is a radically new cultural behaviour patterns particularly as regards personal projection through the web pages (UNESCO p 53.) According to Manuel Castelles the society of the 21st century will be a "network society". A fundamental feature of the social structure in the information age is its reliance on networks as the key feature of social morphology. While networks are forms of social organizations, they are now empowered by new information/communication technologies so that they become able to cope at the same time with flexible decentralization and focused decision making.

Knowledge revolution is going to add to the stratification of society both within nations and between nations. At the global level, this will further strengthen those who presently control knowledge and to that extent bring a cleavage between the rich and poor nations. Within a nation, the gap between the rich who can afford the internet and the poor who do not have access even to a telephone line is going to widen.

Knowledge is not innocent. The power that it gives to those who have access to it could be used for good or evil. Neo-colonial governments can use it to promote their hegemonies over weaker nations, terrorist groups can use it to streamline and sophisticate their anti-establishment activities. The more of knowledge, the more of its use in these directions.

Let me come to a very homely example. Many people believe that education will be the first social institution to be invaded by IT since giant corporations know the big advantage that will await them if they make education their handmaid for business promotion. Around 75 to 80 percent of IT world now uses education as one of its major inputs. With the growing use of computers and multimedia technology in education there will be commensurate change in the

traditional mode of acquiring, storing and transmitting knowledge. Computers, CD-ROM and Videotapes will increasingly replace school text books. There will be a radical transformation of the structure and dynamics of the school system and with it in the concept of the institution of education. With the commercialization and marketization of educational institutions, the schools will be re engineered in much the same way as business corporations and they will form part of gigantic multinational agencies which will prepare the needed software for the new era education. The new technologies will not be adding to the curriculum, they will be transforming it if not replacing it completely. According to Anthony Giddens, all traditional means of education will change with the growing use of computers and multimedia technologies in education. He warns that the effect of such invasion of educational field by the new technology will be reinforcing the already existing educational inequalities by adding a new category of "information poverty" to the material deprivation which currently exists in a big way.

The crisis that has befallen the university system with the entry of IT and KR has been brilliantly brought out by David Beckett (*e-journal of sociology* 1988). With virtually all orthodox grounds and the justification for the once elevated position either gone or considerably reduced, they need to think and articulate anew their role in a world which has no use for their traditional services, sets new rules for the game of prestige and influence and views with growing suspicion the values they stood for. Emeritus Professor of Sociology at the University of Leeds, Zygmunt Bauman, speaking of education in the post modern era, says that both the entire range of multimedia provisions of courses and subject materials and the pedagogy by which these are meant to advance learning will be globalised and converted into broad banded multimedia technology. In the new setup, knowledge will be separated from the teacher and transferred into online material and pedagogies. Knowledge in computerized societies is becoming "externalized" from the knower; in the new setup education will be marketised and knowledge will be commoditized – the offshoot of privatization which is the offshoot of globalization. In this scheme of things the teacher becomes redundant, the old books become redundant, old methodologies become redundant, in fact, everything old becomes redundant. I made this elaboration on the impending change in education (a familiar ground for all of us) because you can easily visualize the changes that would come to the ontological, epistemological and metaphysical base of education in the years ahead.

According to Feabin there is a major impending threat to human beings from the new technology. This is the flooding of the labour market with robots. He quotes Sun Microsystems's co-founder and chief scientist Bill Joy that uncontrolled self-replication by robots with artificial intelligence could pose a serious threat to human beings in the coming decades. Computer scientists predict that by 2030, computers will be ever more human, conscious and intelligent. Computer capacity

will be a million times greater than and computerized robots will be much smarter than human beings. Given the incredible power of these new technologies, should we be asking how we can best coexist with them?"

According to Stuart Hall (1988 p.528) In the process of changes of all sorts brought about by new technologies, our world is being re made. In the new world, our identities, our sense of self, our subjectivities, all are being transformed.

The arguments that I want to bring forth may be summed up as follows.

Information technology – the newest branch of technology - has given birth to knowledge revolution and this in turn has created knowledge societies. Knowledge societies while bringing many benefits of huge magnitude to mankind also offer new and serious threats to mankind because they can place at the disposal of everybody knowledge update on all fields of human endeavour that fundamentally affect human behaviour and social relationship. The cumulative effect of all these is to create a new human being – social being if you please - who may not always be guided by conventional values and normative social patterns. If this happens, the values enshrined in the social order and the norms and rules of behaviour built on them will be transformed and this will result in the theories based on them becoming redundant.

While the changes portrayed above may not happen immediately, it is likely that many of the elements of change will be experienced in the coming decades and by the end of the 21st century, especially with the entry of "nano" technology, things may take a faster turn. One thing seems to be certain; Old values and norms are going to change but it is difficult to forecast the effects of info-knowledge challenges on micro level man-to-man relationships and macro level social network relationships.

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Process of Institutionalization of Sociology in Bangladesh: Can it be Theoretically Addressed?

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Abstract: The coinage of the term sociology took place in the early nineteenth century with an associated assumption that specific socioeconomic and intellectual developments in Europe at that time catalyzed its emergence. This particular phenomenon has furnished the basis for the formulation of one of the departing points of this paper. Taking the point further, the paper focuses on the question of how to address the issue of institutionalization of sociology in a country. It is asked as to whether the conditions similar to the ones observed in Europe are necessary for the development of sociology in other countries. In the light of this particular question and the experiences of Europe and other countries regarding the emergence of sociology, two particular concepts have been introduced, namely 'organic growth' and 'diffusion', to explain the process of development of sociology, equating the former with Europe and the latter with other countries including Bangladesh. Initiatives from the outside played a major role in the establishment of sociology in Bangladesh. While reviewing the process, an attempt is also made to assess the level of development of sociology in this country in terms of the parameters heuristically chosen, further suggesting that such indicators are not well articulated yet. To analyze the relevant development process of sociology in Bangladesh it is argued that two sets of factors can be identified that determine such development. They include 'structural factors' and 'agency' and a substantial part of the paper comprises of the empirical facts and analysis describing the function of these in the context of Bangladesh.

Introduction

There is a question mark at the end of the title of this paper to indicate the presence of ambiguities in the understanding of institutionalization of sociology in Bangladesh. This appears to be the case while looking at the issue in causal terms. At least two reasons may be attributed to the causes of such ambiguity. Firstly, it is not precisely understood what is meant by institutionalization of sociology (or for that matter, any discipline) and secondly, it is also not clearly spelt out what factors determine(d) the emergence of sociology as a discipline in Bangladesh and elsewhere. However, many text books on sociology are found to include a chapter on the history of the emergence of sociology describing the associated factors and such accounts may suggest that its introduction in other countries (apart from the country of its origin) would be difficult if there is a need for the presence of the same set of factors a priori⁵⁰.

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⁵⁰ Bottomore T. & Nisbet R (ed.). *A History of Sociological Analysis*, Originally 1978 by Basic Books, Inc., Indian Reprint 2004; Ritzer G. *Sociological Theory*, 1992, McGraw-Hill, Inc.

If we accept that the given perspective (i.e., deciphering the process of institutionalization) is really ambiguous then do we mean by institutionalization of sociology just the establishment of a department at the university(s)? Do we mean, given this situation, that the sociologists will effectively explain/theorize major social events or help the policy makers? Or does institutionalization also mean that without 'ideal' economic and political conditions sociology won't grow properly? While posing such questions, it may be recalled that there is a common belief that the emergence of different academic disciplines in natural and social sectors have followed a historical course based on a chain of causality! Such belief also implies that specific events which shaped the context of society, politics or intellectual arena, usually created the conditions for the emergence of a particular discipline. Following few lines from a standard textbook on the background of the emergence of sociological ideas will give credence to the observation made above, "All ideas have ancestors, and no one can write of the rise of sociological ideas in eighteenth century without folding a seamless tapestry and concealing most of the panorama it would otherwise display."⁵¹ Above quotation says that there was a long background to the emergence of sociological ideas and the following discussion of this paper will cast light on the elements commonly believed to have influenced such emergence.

However, one may argue against such assertion (chain of causes) that thinking about society which started in the Greek philosophy gradually reached the present form in a linear manner, being chronologically connected (major Greek philosophers wrote on right type of social order, social equilibrium and other issues which are still given attention to as classical pieces). The relevance of counter argument surfaces when it is found that the development of different theoretical schools in sociology (e.g., later twentieth century) proceeded in a non-linear fashion hardly with any logical/sequential connection to each other. For example, structural functionalism and interactionism (or symbolic interactionism) developed almost side by side in the early and middle twentieth century with hardly any logical connection, except one was concerned with the macro (e.g., system) and the other with the micro (e.g., individual) perspective.

Emergence of Sociology: Structurally Determined or Historically Coincidental

As is commonly known, Sociology as a discipline formally started with the coinage of the term by August Comte in late 1830's. Related myth also says that the progress made in natural science by that time, the emergence of Enlightenment, losing faith in religion that previously held sway over the world of politics and knowledge were among different contributing factors that constituted the background of the emergence of sociology. Although, the very tradition of analyzing society

⁵¹ Bierstedt R., 'Sociological Thought in the Eighteenth Century' in *A History of Sociological Analysis*, Bottomore T. & Nisbet R (ed.) Originally 1978 by Basic Books, Inc., p:3.

preceded the formal emergence of sociology, what was new about sociology (or positivism for that matter) was the supposition that society could also be treated as a natural object, a phenomenon (verifiable, discernible etc.). Similarly Enlightenment allowed free/critical thinking while religion encapsulated thought within the framework of an absolute power (e.g., God) whether it fit the 'practical' experience or not.

If it is assumed that all these factors were necessary for the emergence of sociology as a discipline it may sound like structuralism or determinism! If this is the case (i.e., there were determining elements), how would we come to terms with the question as to why the so called Dark Age was followed by a period of Enlightenment associated with the emergence of sociology (it could be otherwise, e.g., more darkness) or why it happened in the period generally associated with it? More precisely how two opposite types of intellectual regimes could emerge one after another? Similarly why some thinkers (e.g., Marx) living in the same period (i.e., nineteenth century) proposed a completely different set of views regarding society and social change compared to the founding father of sociology August Comte. If it is argued that all the events regarding the emergence of sociology took place in a systematic manner (in the sense of having definite cause and effect), a number of subsequent developments may not be causally explicable or fit in the broader framework of linear analysis. One may also argue that specific causes have been assigned through back projection (perhaps in some arbitrary manner) and thus Renaissance, Enlightenment, French Revolution and other similar historical moments have been connected to explain the emergence of sociology. It may even be argued that without such background sociology would not emerge as a discipline in a particular society. Interestingly, however, with the exception of a few European countries, sociology in most places has been incorporated into the university curricula without any of the countries having a cumulative history (e.g., Dark Age – Renaissance – Natural Science – Sociology) of that nature.

However, one should not ignore the different types of characterization of the period of the emergence of sociology in the West, particularly comparing the Middle Age with Dark Age by the radical philosophers belonging to the school of *philosophes*, who portrayed it as intellectually clouded or suppressed. While sociologists like August Comte subscribed to a different view. In a relevant write up Giddens notes that "Comte rejected the essential idea of "Enlightenment" itself, that the Middle Ages were also the Dark Ages...⁵²" What is notable in this regard is the giving of importance to the contextual factors of society by both groups of thinkers - in other words both groups have assigned relatively less importance to the role of the individual.

⁵² Giddens, A., 'Positivism and its Critics' *A History of Sociological Analysis*, Originally 1978 by Basic Books, Inc., Indian Reprint 2004, p:289

Whatever counter arguments are provided against the popular view of the emergence of sociology in Europe it is still the dominant one in the relevant literature. As long as we subscribe to this view we may call it an 'organic model' since it seems to have come out of the intertwining of the society and the intellectuals. Whatever factors (e.g., intellectual tradition, supporting social class or new social process) were there for the emergence of sociology, they were rooted in that society, and took shape gradually over the subsequent period, in an interactive manner. In plain words it was neither an isolated effect of social revolution of that period nor the mere culmination of a certain intellectual tradition.

In the context of Bangladesh the emergence of sociology has been a case of borrowing from abroad. How much importance should we then attach to such factors (so called factors informing the background) regarding the evaluation of the function of sociology in Bangladesh is, thus, a relevant question. If we call these objective or structural factors (in the sense that these were rooted in the class configuration, practical events or intellectual practices in society) then these were hardly present here. Will it then mean that the development of sociology is not possible here (in Bangladesh) in the manner of the West, since the pre-conditions are absent? Of course, the issue is not a simple one and in the remaining part of the paper the complexity of this issue will be gradually addressed. However, before proceeding further, one point may be emphasized that the historical account of the development of sociology is not completely a linear account even if it is uncritically believed for the sake of simplification.

Objective of the Paper

The main objective of this paper is to explore the process of institutionalization of sociology in Bangladesh (both in historical and analytical terms) and the identification of relevant causal/determining factors (if any). The main objectives are:

- i. Identification of the factors that seem to have determined the development of sociology in Bangladesh;
- ii. Assessment of the possibility of propounding a theoretical model to explain this emergence;
- iii. Formulating some ideas about the state of sociology in Bangladesh.

Departing Points: Outlining Factors that Determine its Functioning

Relevant studies on the emergence of sociology in Bangladesh are relatively limited. Apart from offering the history of its emergence, such studies are useful for learning about the functional problems encountered by the discipline in the course of its development. What such study could also do is to cast light on the factors catalyzing the emergence of sociology and creating the

opportunity for theorizing the process (assuming it is yet to be done!). In other words, how far these acted as causal factors and what is the magnitude of such effect?

Most text books on sociology follow a ritual of portraying its emergence in the nineteenth century Europe. We also mentioned that in the causal analysis of the emergence of sociology, a broad social matrix of the corresponding period is depicted with the claim that it shaped the development of sociology, which we have briefly described above. It may sound simplistic if we argue that the introduction of sociology was not a logical step in countries which were different in terms of the elements that characterized Europe in the early nineteenth century. It may also sound ridiculous to say that one can produce a condition similar to Europe in other countries in order to introduce sociology! However, it is not just sociology; many other ideas or institutions that originated in Europe have been introduced later in Asia, Africa or Latin America. The anthropological term 'diffusion' may be appropriate to explain such introduction borrowed from other societies⁵³. Actually, the spirit of diffusion propelled not only the introduction of sociology in different countries in the twentieth century; it has been the case for many other ideas and institutions, such as democracy or the market economy.

In a peripheral country like Bangladesh sociology was borrowed from abroad like many other academic disciplines although its subsequent development was much different from the one that took place, for example, in the United States, where also it was borrowed from Europe. Although problems were encountered in the process of development of sociology in the United States as well, its nature was different from those that took place in Bangladesh. While the problems regarding the institutionalization of sociology in the case of Europe or USA were largely intellectual or theoretical, it was hardly of that nature in Bangladesh. It was more about the process, capacity of the sociologists and the stagnancy of the institution.

One should not spend much time in deciphering the background of the establishment of sociology in Bangladesh while dealing with the process of its institutionalization. A recent paper describes it briefly and the major points noted in it are the following⁵⁴:

- i. It was initially introduced as a course at the Masters level as a part of political science;
- ii. Foreign experts recommended its establishment as a separate discipline;
- iii. Donor organizations such as UNESCO came forward to finance the establishment of the department and bore the cost of running the departments for the initial few years.

⁵³ Harris, M. *Rise of Anthropological Theories*, Thomas Y Crowell Co, 1968.

⁵⁴ Islam S.A. & Islam N., 'Sociology in Bangladesh: Search for a New Frontier, in *Sociological Bulletin*, 54 (3), 2005.

In the article on the state of sociology in Bangladesh referred to above a number of factors were pointed out to explain the problems of its functioning. A simple classification on the basis of these factors as well as others (i.e., of the author) will be made now in the following to outline a framework to analyze the course of development of sociology. These are divided broadly into two categories, namely, subjective/agency related and objective/structure related.

Subjective/Agency Related

- i. The devotion and commitment of the sociologist;
- ii. The tradition of pursuing scholarship regarding society seriously, which is an outcome of the first one;
- iii. The presence of creative intellectuals of *avant garde* genre, pursuing knowledge for knowledge sake, less instrumental for material gains.

All of the above three may also be lumped together under a broad category called 'agency', a term now popular in sociological literature which connotes creative urge in a broad sense. Such a factor (i.e., individual creative initiative) is not typical for a particular social formation or mode of production. However, we have categorized this further to explain the constituting ingredients.

Objective/Structural

i. *Societal demand for scholarship on society*: This implies that the emergence of knowledge is largely related to the social formation and mode of production of a society. For example, the demand for knowledge in information based society like in the post industrial/late capitalist society is much greater than in the early capitalist or pre-capitalist society. To some extent the demand for knowledge is contingent upon the forms of communicative structure any society puts in place. If a social formation (or power structure) heavily draws its strength or legitimacy from distorted or partial communication then societal demand for knowledge including scholarship will be automatically limited and there may be negative efforts for the suppression of such knowledge (think of the opposition of the church against free thinking based production of knowledge in Medieval Europe).

ii. *Level of intellectual development of society*: While certain economic and political factors may determine knowledge development, the very level of knowledge development can be an independent factor not directly emanating from any material premise. For example, the Enlightenment or the *Brahminical* scholarship provided impetus to the knowledge production in Europe and the Indian sub-continent respectively. Perhaps knowledge itself creates a new dynamics of its further production.

iii. *Resources to build infrastructure for knowledge development:* Development of an academic discipline and knowledge production practices also depend on the resources spent for this purpose. In natural science research, resources play critical role to procure equipment while in the social science it is necessary to arrange research fund, books, journals or others.

Outlining Parameters to Ascertain the Functioning of Sociology

At the outset of this paper it was mentioned that there is a lack of precise framework to assess how effectively an academic discipline is functioning in a university, thus, a few parameters may be suggested. These are gathered from both casual and systematic discussion on the issue. In casual parleys the reflection on the standard of a discipline often alludes to the quality of research, quality of the teachers or the quality of the students. Keeping these points in view we have proposed the following:

i. *Research excellence:* Contribution of the academic at the national and international levels in terms of research papers, new concepts or theories;

ii. *Public image:* Image of the discipline in the public;

iii. *Anchoring:* State and other institutions seeking support from academic disciplines;

iv. *Commodity value:* Commodification is a major characteristic of the knowledge industry at the age of capitalism, both at early and late capitalisms. Its extreme example could be found in the auction of paintings, or in the survival of refined aesthetic (e.g., music, art) through the network of market exchange. Academic disciplines at the university level are not free from its effect and the concept of 'instrumental reason' of the Frankfurt School implies why market demand is referred to in the judgment of the 'superiority' of a discipline. We may clarify this point by a simple example: job value of the degree from different disciplines determines interest of the admission seekers to get admitted to the universities in the first year.

What has been Diagnosed up to the Present

In the light of the above parameters what has been found regarding sociology in Bangladesh? What follow below are a brief discussion of these points.

i. *Absence of significant research:* The number of research, as has been noted, conducted by the sociologist is relatively small in number⁵⁵. Regarding the focus of the research that took place so far, the village society is predominant. Reason underlying this trend could be the predominance of agricultural in the country. What is striking is the diagnostic and exploratory

⁵⁵ Islam S.A. & Islam N., Op cit

nature of the village research including mine⁵⁶. The scholars have hardly ventured into building new concepts of village society. If we compare the neighboring country of India it will be found that many of them ventured into such constructions. Just recall the famous e-criterion of Utsa Patnaik⁵⁷. I can remember the concept of 'cyclical kulakism' of Bertocci or the notion of persistence and polarization by Bhaduri et al that may claim the credit of originality⁵⁸. On the other hand the village studies done by the sociologists of Bangladesh scarcely ventured into such coinage. Most of them, including mine, were engrossed in pursuing the Marxist framework to understand the village society. While the work of exploratory and diagnostic nature are equally important the coinage of new concepts can draw attention of a wider public and gives special status to the creativity.

In the context of theory and method also such poor show of the sociologist cannot escape attention. Again we may compare the Indian situation, just recall the notion of Sanskritization of Srinivas, while there is ample scope for debate on the appropriateness of this concept, we have not found any corresponding concept developing here⁵⁹. If I am not mistaken, only in a few works of the sociologists e.g., Nazmul Karim, or Nazrul Islam, such innovative venture could be found⁶⁰. While the former worked on a particular concept (i.e., prebendalization) of Weber for reformulation, the latter, noticing the strong allegiance to the phenomenological or interpretive approach in sociological theories at the cost of positivistic (a la empiricism) kind of approach, bemoan the "end of sociological theory" !

ii. Poor public image: This factor has also to some extent affected the growth of the discipline. There is a perception among the people (e.g., aspiring students, academic or intellectual) that sociology is not a serious discipline or does not require much intellectual efforts to ensure a degree! Extreme example of this image crisis is the following remark circulated over time that sociology department is a "lipstick department", meaning a department of the girls in a derogatory sense. While such attitude reflects overall ignorance of the society about the content or meaning of social science, it also reflects a point that the discipline is yet to earn a favourable reputation in the larger society. Islam & Islam have shown in their paper that for a long time the standard of the curricula of sociology was very

⁵⁶ Khan M.I., *Irrigation and Agrarian Structure in a Village of Bangladesh with a Special Relation to Labor Relation*, unpublished Ph.D. DU, 1991

⁵⁷ Patnaik U., *Peasant Class Differentiation: A Study in Method with Reference to Haryana*, OUP, 1987.

⁵⁸ Bertocci, P. *Elusive Villages: Social Structure and Community organization in rural East Pakistan* Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, 1970; Bhaduri A. et al 'Persistence and Polarization: A Study in the Dynamics of Agrarian Contradiction' in *JPS*, 13:3, 1986.

⁵⁹ Srinivas, M.N., *Social Change in Modern India*, Originally published by University of California in 1966, Indian reprint by Orient Longman, 1995, pp:1- 48

⁶⁰ Karim A.K.N., *Dynamics of Bangladesh Society*, Vikash Publishing, 1980; Islam N. *End of Sociological Theory and other essays on theory and methodology*, Ananya, 2005.

simple and backward⁶¹. This could be one of the factors why sociology failed to produce reasonable impact among the critical (e.g., policy makers) social groups in the country. Image crisis is also believed to have discouraged the top students of the public examinations to seek admission in this department. Actually, the poor image is also related to the function of other parameters discussed in this section.

iii. Limited Anchoring: Present anchors of sociology in Bangladesh are mainly confined to the departments of different universities. This comes to notice more strikingly when it is compared with other branches of the social science disciplines, particularly economics. Sociology has experienced a tremendous growth of branches or sub-fields in the recent time as reflected in the following observation, 'A ...significant change is the more rapid pace of restructuring of subspecialties in sociology. An indication of this, at least in the USA, is that more than one-third...of the sections in the American Sociological Association were founded in the 1990s, while the other two-thirds were formed at a relatively slow pace beginning in the early 1960s⁶². To what extent other disciplines are interacting with sociology to address different issues may be considered as an important factor in judging whether it has multiple anchors. Also, to what extent government and its policy makers have been consulting with the sociologists could be used as another indicator of such anchor. The relevant scenario is not encouraging. For the sake of clarification we may look at the association of the economists of Bangladesh who are at present playing an important role to influence the policy options of the government. We may also cite examples from other countries. From the 1960s onwards American government provided resources to the sociologists in institutional form to explain the relevance of the Welfare State during that period⁶³. On the part of the government of Bangladesh, such requirement has hardly been felt. Experts' knowledge has hardly been sought in our country to resolve major social crises. It may be related to the long tradition of autocratic rule and 'partial' democracy. As we know autocratic rulers hardly bother for public opinion to govern the country and the partial democratic rulers are rather engaged in manipulating public opinion in their favor. They will be interested in the kind of expert's knowledge that approves their legitimacy.

iv. Limited commodity value: How valuable is the certificate of sociology? If compared with the past its commodity value has increased particularly with the opening of job sector through the NGOs. However, compared to economics or business study its commodity value is lower. Although the sociology graduates can take part in the competitive examinations for different government jobs and can also land in the private sector jobs, a department with "major" in

⁶¹ Islam & Islam, op cit.

⁶² Blau Judith R. 'Preface' in *The Blackwell Companion to Sociology*, Judith R. Blau (ed.) 2004, Blackwell publishing

⁶³ Gouldner A.V. *The Coming Crisis of Western Sociology*, Heinemann, 1973.

sociology has not even been launched in the private universities even after more than one and a half decades of the establishment of private universities in the country! We do not have reliable data about the scale of employment of the sociologists in different organizations. Thus, it is not possible to make any judgment on the basis of speculation. However, in the different public universities which are mainly funded with the public money sociology departments have been founded.

Special Features of the Problems in Bangladesh

Apart from the above parameters there are a few other operational features deserving attention in the assessment of the functional status of sociology in Bangladesh. Some uniqueness will be found regarding these features in the sense that they are not universal and are seen in other countries. But their significance has made them a part of the growth of the discipline.

i. Manipulation and Conflict of Power in Academic Arena: Power conflict is noticeable in most institutions including the departments of the universities in Bangladesh⁶⁴. Thus, how power mechanism operates in a department of a university and what implication does it have to improve/affect academic environment is a relevant question. It may be illustrated with several examples. Issue of exercising power arises distinctly in the context of the employment of teachers. University job is still coveted in terms of social prestige. There are other aspects with which the teachers are concerned, such as scholarship for higher study, research grant or housing. Decision making regarding the above benefits involves the exercise of power. Incidentally different sociology departments in Bangladesh on different occasions have gone through a complex process of manipulation of power with the resultant conflict, which has often seriously affected the academic spirit. In this complex phenomenon some teachers/administrators almost overtook the role of institution by manipulating power in the decision making process about employment or for distributing different benefits to the teachers. Entailing power conflict often resulted in the creation of factions and sub-factions within the department affecting the academic environment significantly. Since all sociology departments in Bangladesh at present function in the public universities, which enjoy certain amount of autonomy, negative consequences of power conflict on academic spirit could not come to the proper notice of the outsiders (although sometimes newspapers have reported such occurrences). The so called “teachers’ politics” also contributed to the continuation of such power game at the departmental level. While intra departmental power conflict (in terms of diverse ideological position of the teachers or as an outcome of mere personality conflict)

⁶⁴ Although not directly related to the main focus of the paper, power and the accompanying process is seen as an independent phenomenon in societal mechanism as in the case of Foucault. For example, ‘...it is a modest, suspicious power, which functions as a calculated, but permanent economy. These are humble modalities, minor procedures, as compared with the majestic rituals of sovereignty or the great apparatuses of the state.’ in Foucault M. *Discipline and Punish The Birth of the Prison*, Penguin, reprint 1991 p:170.

may not be unusual in other countries, its extremity and particularly as a manifestation of individual's power exercise has reached a pathological state in Bangladesh.

ii. State and the Universities: A kind of complex relationship has emerged between the state and the public universities, which is also partly responsible for the deterioration of the educational standard in Bangladesh. It is needless to mention that the sociology departments and other respective disciplines and departments have also been affected by such disturbing relationship. In extreme cases many university teachers over the years have built close relationships with the major political parties of the country only to seek personal benefits. Immediately after the independence this relationship was in the form of ideological allegiance of the university teachers but gradually transformed into a kind of partisanship – interest of the teachers was in some instances molded by such partisanship. Since the university teachers command fair amount of dignity and influence in the society the state and the ruling parties did not hesitate to utilize/manipulate such partisanship of the teachers. In the context of the appointment, promotion and distribution of other occupational benefits such partisanship came to be rewarding for many teachers.

iii. Distortion of the process of overall educational process: Not only the university education, pre-university education has also been seen affected in the given situation. A particular mindset characterized by extreme material pursuit has surfaced strongly almost replacing the welfare attitude of the teachers of the preceding generations. In common parlance this issue receives attention. For example, in the past society was used to observe that the teachers pursue moderate standard of living and their reputation was largely dependent on their depth of scholarship, teaching performance or other related parameters, which is no longer the case. The quality of pre-university education has also dropped significantly particularly in the context of necessary background that a sociology student requires. Although there is a need for effective analytical capacity to grasp sociological literature, capacity for understanding abstract concepts and descriptive skill now significantly absent among the students taking admission into sociology.

Social Science, Sociology and Political Design in Bangladesh: Diffusion vs. Organic Growth

The role of UNESCO regarding the emergence of Sociology in Bangladesh is already underlined above, which was actually a part of a larger program. It entailed introducing new institutions based on the ideas originated abroad, particularly in the Urban/Industrial West. Sectors of society that were covered by new ideas were wide ranging. For example, the Institute of Social Welfare was founded to take care of emerging urban problems, while the Rural Academy at Comilla was established to popularize the spirit of cooperatives. Underlying all such initiatives was the urge to

set new processes modifying the older ones. West emerged as a model worthy of replication in terms of its economy, politics, technology and education⁶⁵. In consequence new ideas, rules, procedures were borrowed from abroad – grafting unknown elements in a different context!

Above examples in a body represents the process popularly called ‘diffusion’ in anthropological literature as mentioned earlier. Essentially it is borrowing, assembling, implantation or grafting of ideas, institutions from another society. However, the commentators on the recent social change in Bangladesh were not so sympathetic to the process of diffusion and sometimes believed (borrowing new ideas or institutions) it was actually a part of the design of the ‘Western Imperialism’ particularly to stave off the influence of the Soviet Bloc into the erstwhile Third World countries. Some radical critic could even smell the covert presence of American Intelligence CIA in the Cholera Research Laboratory (CRL later renamed as ICDDR,B) at Matlab, Comilla! While making judgments to what extent such remarks and observations were correct is not possible at this stage what does not miss our attention is the strong urge for the replication of Western Institution including the academic disciplines.

Above process (i.e., borrowing institution) has some theoretical implication. Some hints are already made above, few more may be further offered particularly regarding the concept of diffusion and organic development in the context of the emergence of institutions and ideas including sociology. If an institution/set of knowledge/school of thought develops in a manner that the proponent and the societal perspective are intertwined/inseparable which we have called ‘organically grown’ then fruitful will be noticeable at a greater length. In such process the dynamics/intellectual milieu of the respective society comes to play an important role both in conceiving and articulating the idea/theory, which would be completely different in the case of implantation of idea. In diffusion model the possibility of integrating such dynamics is unlikely/limited which may affect the expected outcome. Finally we may that the underlying objective of diffusion may be significantly disturbed if the societal urge for extracting benefits from this process is not present.

Determining Factors in Terms of Functioning: Further Reflection

Two sets of specific factors, as mentioned earlier apart from the unique one, may be analyzed further to explain the growth of sociology in Bangladesh. In a simple manner they have been categorized as subjective/agency and objective/structural factors.

⁶⁵ Some critics may find in it the attitudinal legacy of Western colonialism in which anything Western is praise worthy. Following Said one might even say that the construction of the ‘Orient’ in Western discourse has actually produced the sense of inferiority among the policy makers, intellectuals and literates of the erstwhile colonial countries presenting the West a model for replication. See in particular Said, E. *Orientalism, Western Conceptions of the Orient*, Penguin, 1995 (later edition) & *Culture and Imperialism*, Vintage, 1994 (later edition).

By the factor agency what has been implied is the initiative and motivation of individual sociologists. It may also refer to in this context drive and commitment of the Bangladeshi sociologists to pursue a creative goal (e.g., writing good papers/ books, giving talks) in strong psychological terms despite different structural disadvantages (e.g., indifference of the colleagues, unavailability of good books/ journals, lack of competent peer group) .

Although it is difficult to ascertain the commitment level of a sociologist in concrete terms, actual scenario (functioning of the sociologists) does not show that we have many of the kind with a high level of commitment. Despite this apparent stagnancy over the years a few sociologists would be found with the distinction of commitment, following quote lends credence to the above observation, "Thanks to a handful of enterprising sociologists trained in western universities, not only has the number of courses taught in Bangladesh, and the University of Dhaka in particular, multiplied many times over, but also the content of those courses closely resemble the offerings in other parts of the world"⁶⁶. While the paucity of committed sociologist is underlined the significance of the agency factor is also pointed out.

Bangladesh is yet to produce a notable tradition of philosophical or social science exercises which could go beyond the national boundary in terms of uniqueness (e.g., some outstanding theories). Such factor (i.e., presence of a notable intellectual tradition) could have inspired the agency of the sociologists particularly in terms of intellectual production. Having been a predominantly peasant society even the other day and with a limited spread of literacy, sociological scholarship at the institutional level could not yet emerge in a significant manner. If the establishment of the higher educational institution (e.g., university) is believed to be one of the preconditions for the emergence of such tradition then Bangladesh would still be a weak candidate to such claim. We might say that the available agencies were not productive and strong enough to overcome the given structural disadvantages. The issue of structural disadvantages has other levels as found in the reflection of the following paragraph.

Islam & Islam pointed at the political economy of Bangladesh to explain the limited growth of sociological discipline. They called the social system as one based on 'booty capitalism'. Effective capitalism where surplus accumulation takes place in a productive manner there is a need for strong growth of the knowledge (particularly technical one) which was absent in the context of Bangladesh, Islam & Islam observed in this regard, "The growth of the middle class has largely been in the form of a rentier class that has benefited from economic windfalls of a booty capitalism and pervasiveness of patron-clientilism in the political sphere." What is implied here is

⁶⁶ Islam & Islam, *ibid.* p:379.

the absence of a class 'necessary' for the development of sociology as a concomitant of the absence of 'productive' capitalism.

Conclusion

It has been transpired in this paper that the present level of development of sociology discipline in Bangladesh is yet to reach a stage of distinct intellectual maturity. In order to understand the limitation of the emergence in the context of Bangladesh attention was given to the 19th century Europe when and where it first crystallized. Like many other countries it has been brought from abroad to be taught in the university. We have called the emergence of sociology in Europe as 'organic model' and in our country as 'diffusion model' in this paper. The factors which are generally put forth to explain the emergence and growth of sociology in the West have been divided into two sets, namely, subjective/agency related and objective/structural in order to ease our understanding. While it is easy to pull these factors together not so easy to point out their relative significance, which is the reason why at the outset skepticism has been expressed whether it (institutionalization of sociology in Bangladesh) can be theoretically addressed or not. While we do not intend to sound like the post-modernist that theorizing a social event is not possible, we also do not want to undermine the fact that there could really be a problem in properly theorizing a particular social event, in this case institutionalization of sociology. Such problem particularly emanates from the difficulty to identify the relative significance of different causal factors (e.g., agency vs structural) as well as point out an exhaustive list. What is said above of course nothing new but reminding its relevance yet today!

If the middle class is believed to have spearheaded the advancement of sociology in Europe and elsewhere, the same class is also responsible to produce ideological divergence within the discipline, how could then one come to term with this particular fact (i.e., ideologically divisive middle class) in a theoretical sense. Moreover, available theoretical tools are also not enough to explain a number of developments presently noticeable in the universities in Bangladesh affecting the growth of different disciplines particularly in the context of relationship to political parties/state and power conflict among the academic.

Finally, the process of institutionalization of a discipline or ideas by 'diffusion' is a problematic in a developing country like Bangladesh ranging from economy (e.g., initiative to develop market economy) to politics (e.g., initiative to develop democracy), the main reason of such problematic are structural and subjective both. In the given scenario there remains the opportunity for further causal analysis and the theory building about the development of sociology in Bangladesh and elsewhere.

Challenges and Promises of Sociology in the Twenty-first Century: A West Bengal Experience

Subhash Biswas*

Abstract: *To explore the possible course of sociology in the twenty-first century is intriguing and challenging for analogy, particularly, sitting at the initial decade of the century. To claim absolute correctness for the result of such an exploration ahead of actual social happenings may seem to be smacking of positivism and accompanying determinism. Human creativity reflected in social and cultural activities of men and women is by nature indeterminate. At the same time, paradoxically enough, human mind wants to chart out its course of action and put a shape to the flow of activities engaged in and shared by human minds collectively since the alternative is dreadful uncertainty and insecurity. This fear of uncertainty has haunted the origin and development of sociology in the earlier centuries. Any discussion of the coming crises of sociology or its soaring aspirations for achieving a better understanding of human ability to get over the crisis, thus, needs a discourse beset with a frank confession of trepidation and humility by those who are committed to the honest pursuit of sociology.*

I

Development of sociology in the last century has sensitized its students to the problem of imposition of grand theory originating in the West prevailing there. There is a gradual but reluctant acceptance by the sociologists on their attempts in the rest of the world to understand the socio-cultural realities. Their attempts have been to understand those who dominate the realm of sociology, of the veracity and validity of the local(s) as against or, at the least, vis-à-vis the global which is alias the occidental. However, the sociologists in the world outside the dominant or metropolitan Western hemisphere have not up-till now risen to the challenge of the autonomy of presenting their own narratives of their lived experiences and the future imagined by them and thus enriching sociology with alternative discourses. It has been the task before the succeeding

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generations to watch whether and how far the task is accomplished and will they, hopefully, contribute to its fulfillment. Sociology in its attempt at being objective must have to take account of the subjectivity of the millions spreading over the globe, who have been mostly taken for granted so far.

Apart from the subjective-objective debates over the realm of sociology, a major concern has erupted from the increasing polarization of the discipline on the grounds of standards and forms. In fact, there exists immense inequality in the field that may instigate one to speak of sociologies – central and peripheral. While the elite centers of sociological research and teaching institutions enjoy the centre-stage, the peripheral sociology is pursued in the rest of the areas, especially in vernacular languages. It is true that the volume is remarkably increasing in the peripheral areas. It has been a serious problem as vernacular languages have often not been successful in initiating appropriate exercises despite tremendous expansion in the field. While central sociology nurtured at the elite centers could have managed to bridge the gap between the Western and Eastern sociology and has been the mediator between the two, the non-elite peripheral sociology could not fill up the vacuum. The conditions at the periphery still stand troublesome to innovate and experiment in the areas of sociological research and teaching. It has thrown up the major challenges before the twenty-first century sociology, particularly in the South Asian countries. The paper intends to find out the problems associated with the development of sociology in general and, West Bengal in particular. An attempt is also made to find out the possibilities that also involved in the development of sociology as an academic discipline as well as a discipline with all practical significance. A probable course of action may also be unearthed following the discussion and exercise of the theme under study.

II

Sociology and humanity have a common interest in upholding civil society; a society which keeps both the market and the state at bay. It is already established that neither the state nor the market can ensure the civil life as both of them are prescriptive by themselves and want society to follow their whims on the plea that both of them are actually meant for the betterment of society. The situation has further aggravated with the passing of different phases of marketisation. Initially started with the commodification of labour it has traversed a long way and now there is almost nothing which are not commoditized and eventually it necessitates a reshaping of sociology having the problems and challenges facing mankind in the current phase of growth and development. We are passing a phase where marketisation has been sweeping every corner of the world in general and the civil life in particular. In fact, all of the early efforts to fight against the onslaughts unleashed in the early phases of commodification are no longer in operation and they

are not even treated as adequate to tackle the challenges. The days of labour movements to force the owners in favour of them are over. It is futile to remind the state about the social rights that were guaranteed by the state itself in the early centuries. We are now passing a world where nothing is sacrosanct and anything can be used against anything to gain one's immediate interest just on the plea of state and market. Commodification of all natural resources, public utilities has been an assault on day-to-day survival but without any remedy. Here and there certain inhumanitarian steps have definitely been arrested, but other inhumanitarian grounds have been deepened. Unemployment is taken as a curse but natural rights are curved by the same name of employment. Special economic zones (SEZs) are coming to boost the economy through ensured investment, but evictions are also looming largely on the part of the hapless people even without intimidation. Even the administration controlled by the so-called pro-poor parties is sufficiently ahead of others. Reduction in social protection and suspension of industrial regulation for a more liberal economy has been suitably formulated and executed to clear the obstacles before the power-monger hungry framers and executors. It has smoothened the aggressiveness of the state and the market but, proved to be disastrous for the toiling masses.

The changing nature of the market and the process of marketization can not be ignored to have an idea about the changes that have pauperized humanity over the phases and that again explain the complexities, problems and prospects of sociology in the 21st century. It is pointed out that we have already crossed certain major waves of marketisation that have affected the humanity at large and civil society in particular. The first wave of marketisation started with the commodification of labour and it invariably resulted into certain counter movements as well. The second wave emphasized on the commodification of money and that also gave rise to resentments among the civil society people. The current wave is the wave of marketisation of land, nature and environment and that have been very serious. The commodification of labour and money still persists and in states like ours it even could not sensitize people as it is expected to be. But, in the mean time, we have entered into the third wave which is simply a challenge towards humanity. The commodification of nature, land and environment, the proliferation of special economic zones for giant investments, malls for the destruction of retail varieties, have been the latest wave which calls for immediate attention as well as reshaping of all social sciences like sociology.

The malady of the current phase of development is actually marked by its unprecedented and limitless scale. It is termed as globalization and it has severed all of the early barricades of state socialism, colonialism or expansionism. Issues like global warming, nuclear radiation, contagious diseases etc, really know no bounds and affect all corners of life. The all pervasive development has by-passed almost all defences against it. The claims, movements and recognition of labour

rights, social rights etc have lost much of their meanings. The notion of human rights has also gathered a number of connotations. While it has been the sole resort for those who suffer the assaults from both the state and the competitive market, in many cases it has been a tool for the exploiters to suit the particular interest of the same state and the market. Electoral democracy is often used to justify the activities like invasion, nuclear explosion etc, again in the name of the right to freedom of choice and protection of private entrepreneurship. It is such a complex situation at which the responsibilities of the social scientists have become much more serious, challenging and practical.

Having such a backdrop at hand, we can analyse the problems and prospects of sociology in the current century. It is true that sociology grew up in the last century in response to the waves of marketisation and the consequent repercussion of people. Sociology came into existence as a norm-oriented discipline to defend society against the aggressiveness of the market. The so-called development could not ensure the stability of social relationship, rather antagonized it through the destruction of community life, increasing proletarianization and degraded integrity among the people. Early thinkers diagnosed the situation and definitely prescribed for moral integrity. In the later phase also, when political and social rights were ensured following public demand, sociology grew up to dissect the situation and to assist the policy framers. Specialist fields like criminology, sociology of deviance, urban sociology, etc., extended the horizon of sociology and came up to embrace the issues related to policy-framing, execution, administration, evaluation etc, into the orbit of the discipline. The current phase has been more severe and the state has become more or less non-regulatory. It has rather been a facilitator of private enterprises and the free market economy. Society is thus under a double attack from the market and the state. Sociology, in this milieu, can not remain to be a stoic or indifferent spectator or simple analysis of society. It requires not only an involvement to analyse society either from the global or the local perspective, but a task to knit the society together.

The current phase of sociology can not ignore the ongoing processes of sweeping change following globalization. A strong tendency of homogenization is in operation everywhere. The impact of such process is drastic on societies like India and states like West Bengal which are marked by their inherent pluralistic character. The myth that both the pro-globalization and anti-globalization specialists have orchestrated in every sphere of social analyses has proved to be simplistic. It is naïve to state that the changes that are taking place in the cities and countryside of Bengal, be it positive or negative, are the manifestation of globalization only. Nor it is correct to say that the state remains non-responsive to the influences of globalization world-wide. Knowingly or not the state becomes a facilitator of globalization and it welcomes market as the most pragmatic alternative. But, the fact is that both the perspectives are exclusivist and

hegemonic. A nexus is in existence and the unwarranted influences often create serious problems both in the proper analysis of the situation as well as in framing and execution of the policies regarding social issues. Statistical analyses often unnecessarily project that the recent changes in the country and especially in the countryside have taken place following globalization, establishment of SEZs, liberalization of trade facilities, etc. It is also claimed that the non-development of certain areas are due to non-response towards those inevitable scopes for global development. The alternative explanations show that the so-called development can only take place if the internal dynamics are strengthened. Areas like health, education, gender parity etc, are the bases on which directed changes are erected. The perspective, no doubt, often invites parochialism, championing of localism etc. It forces one to think locally and transform globally to maintain parity between the indigenous strength and forthcoming pushes towards social change. The global-local perspective of analyses thus invite serious attention and forces all social scientists to think over the issues that otherwise may plague the explanations on society in the 21st century.

The changing situation and the mixed responses towards globalization invariably place the social scientist in general, and sociologists in particular, to apprehend the issues related to social analysis from a different perspective. Sociologists have definitely developed paradigms in the early centuries following the major issues of those days. They were not even ready to foresee such a vigorous change that has taken place within a few decades in the world at large and in the little communities in particular. A bewildering situation has developed as both the dynamism and stagnation are noticed in different areas often in connection with the presence or absence of structural changes or adjustments with the global forces. It has made the issue more complex and a re-orientation of sociology has become immediate to its discussants as well as practitioners.

III

Sociology as a body of knowledge is now on the eve of a complex trajectory of modernity. At least two dangers or threats are there that haunts the consciousness of the practitioners of sociology. The so called process of homogenisation is dangerously negating the inherent plural and diverse social relations which the people have nurtured for long. Rather we find an assertion of fundamentalism that plagues all aspects of collective existence: politics, culture as well as the domain of knowledge. Another threat involves that of the globalization, rather, in-egalitarian or asymmetrical globalization. Despite certain infrastructural facilities, information and communication technology, we are actually experiencing a one-sided America-oriented

globalization. The principle of global feeling i.e., live locally and think globally, has not been a saviour. It has rather been a costly one and forced us to follow an alternative principle i.e., live locally and transform globally.

Fundamentalism and globalization, though they appear qualitatively different from each other, is proved to be exclusive and hegemonic. Both of them denies and rather creates obstacles before the onward march of the civil society. Nobody can deny the fact that the resurgence of fundamentalism, revivalism etc., have been the result of unwarranted globalization, hybridization of culture and even the denial of indigenous sanctity. Except in the political domain, nowhere the unholy alliance between the two can work for the development of civil society, least of the emancipation of men. It is, however, not to say that the mainstream indigenous analyses are free from biases, nor it can be said that the so called revivalist or conservative discourses are immune from tension-breeding exercises. But what is urgent is to acknowledge the critical and complex nature of the situation and to find out the explanations related to the politics of globalization or the resurgence of fundamentalism that cripples not only the nationalistic aspirations but forces the people to become a passive spectator of growing hegemonic globalization that invariably results into a situation of attrition.

The twenty-first century thus, must make a public turn to face and win over the challenges before the discipline. Sociology can no longer remain a passive analysis of society only. Since sociology lives and continues with sociology, any threat to the society also irks sociology. It is the dynamism that also keeps sociology vibrant and up-to-date. In the absence or failure of state intervention to contain market aggression, sociology requires intervening in public affairs more meaningfully. It is not that the sociologists only dissect the public plans and programmes or evaluate and prescribe the inertia and dynamism involved in them, but they must intervene into the processes of the framing of public policies. Plans and programmes must be preceded by elaborate participation of the beneficiaries and the elaborate public policies. The twenty-first century sociology requires to be much more intervening to the public policy with more open perspective rather than the early sociology which was more or less contained with moral infusions and speculations, comments etc.

IV

The new era of global change, thus, requires a shift in the field of sociology too. It is so required to equip sociology to accept the challenges of the twenty-first century and to continue its

prospects. It is a shift from policy sociology to public sociology. Gone are the days when sociologists used to participate only on the issues related to the drafting of policy statements, preparation of development schemes for the specific areas only. Sociology was mostly concerned with social welfare, policy problems, suggestions, administrative advices on specific areas concerning specific people like working women, marginal people, victims etc. A few sociologists were also asked to chair the commissions for the marginal people, down-trodden etc, or the sanctioning of the telecasting of programmes to ease the situation or to highlight governmental programmes etc. But sociologists' participation in public issues was minimal and only a welfare paradigm used to guide the research activities of the sociologists. It is almost total in cases of government-funded projects in maximum cases. There is little scope to have an integrated opinion of the sociologists on any public issue. Departments of sociology hardly find it practicable to conduct surveys or organize seminar, symposium etc to deal with the issues related to public intervention in the framing up of social policies. Similarly, the field of sociological practice is also vertically and horizontally divided. What is percolated in the cities, particularly in the metropolitan cities, is quite different in other parts of the country. It is again vertically divided within a region as the standard in the city is different from the rural areas. As such there is no sociology, but sociologies to deal with the challenges having no integrating thread. The same is there in the disintegration between research and teaching. The interior parts of the country are not linked with the sociological research procedures as if the teaching in those areas is not supposed to be encouraged and enriched with researches. Nor the areas are placed at the centre of attention of the researchers despite the potential inputs present there.

The experience of West Bengal shows that it is no exception in this respect. Despite the rapid changes in the state following the penetration of market in public life with all its hazards, the discipline of sociology could not respond to the call of the day. In the current decade, when the state has undergone certain government sponsored or government desired changes amidst public protests, the state has expressed a strong governmental aggression and witnessed strong peoples' reaction, sociologists could neither intervene into the formation or preparation of public policy nor could have made arrangements for academic exercises. In fact, it is not yet realized to unearth the spheres where and how the sociologists can intervene into the preparation of public policy. Not a single sociology department of the entire colleges and universities has ventured to invite any public discussion or any thread bare interactions among the teachers and researchers in sociology regarding the most important issues like land acquisition and its consequences in West Bengal, which has left tremendous impact on the politico-economic and social landscape of the state. In fact, a tendency is there to extend a tacit support to the governmental plans and programmes even if they are inimical to peoples' interest. A strong competition is there among the practitioners of sociology either to serve the media or to serve the government ignoring all

types of critical outlook which is necessary to equip sociology to face the problems and challenges of the current century and to find out the prospects.

A few possibilities of sociology can, of course, be mentioned to understand the probable areas of prospect in the twenty-first century. Sociology is increasingly being perceived as the most methodical discipline to deal with the day-to-day activities, problems and prospects. Applied sociology is increasingly being acknowledged as a practising discipline by the project formulators and executors. The DFID, USAID, WB etc, are extending their supports to implement several schemes and projects for the alleviation of mass problems. Gender coordinator, adolescent councilor, urban planner etc, are the posts where the students of sociology are being preferred than any other discipline. This means that sociology requires more practical orientation towards the public issues and a concern to frame up public policies and to upgrade the discipline so that it can tackle the situation including preparation of public policy and their implementation that the programme formulators find serious and timely. The areas like evaluation, social audit, consultancy, counselling and clinical sociology are the applied fields in which the discipline of sociology required to be more oriented. Irrespective of the debate of diagnostic versus prescriptive science, the students of sociology must adept the skill in those areas and thereby enrich the field with necessary arsenals to face the problems and challenges in the fast changing world.

It is true that sociology as a theoretical science has developed with the primary focus to advance the theoretical understanding of some phenomenon. But as an applied science, it has also its focus on solving some real-world problem. The primary focus of basic sociology is in the theoretical realm: developing theories of human social behaviour and testing hypotheses derived from those theories. Sociology, as a basic scientific discipline, refers to sociological research whose purpose is to advance our knowledge about human social behaviour with little concern for any immediate practical benefit. This is the point which put sociology ahead of other disciplines to deal with the society, particularly in the fields of analysis and understanding of the situation from a very value-neutral scientific perspective. But, the on going century can not deny the increasing necessity of applied sociology which consists of research and other activities designed to focus on sociological knowledge or research or findings on a particular problem identified by some client with some practical outcome in mind. The primary focus of applied sociology is on the policy or action realm: making recommendations about social programs or policies that might be implemented or changed. Basic Sociology remains to be an attempt to develop theories that explain how societies work and why people behave the way they do. Hypotheses are derived from those theories and are made subjected to empirical tests. Confirmation of the hypotheses

provides some verification for the theory. The overall goal remains to advance our knowledge of human behaviour. Applied Sociology on the other hand uses Sociological theories and research tools to tackle some particular problem that somebody wants to get them solved.

The challenges before the discipline of sociology in the twenty-first century lie in the appropriate understanding of the society both at the micro and macro level. It is a high task to scale the state or society by way of its level of commodification. It is similarly challenging to accept either of the pro-globalization or anti-globalization perspective. It is harder task to realize the exclusive and hegemonic perspective of both globalization and fundamentalism which are likely to continue at the absence of another. But the prospect of sociology lies in the acquaintance with the appropriate pragmatic methodologies to grasp the situation and grapple with it. As an applied science, sociology is equipped enough to address any problem, be it micro or macro, as suggested by the client who needs the problem solved. The sociologist's task is to develop a systematic assessment of the problem given the needs and goals of the client.

The prospect of sociology in the twenty first century lies in its skill in applied sociology. Applied sociologists can work in a number of spheres like that of the applied researcher, in which a client's problem calls for the collection and analysis of data in order to recommend solutions to the problem. The expertise in such areas can easily show prospect of the discipline, particularly to those of the future students of sociology. Applied researchers may work in a variety of settings, such as government agencies, private corporations, private research organizations, or under individual contract with some agency or organization. They also conduct many different kinds of research as the situation and the client require. An applied sociologist can work as a sociological consultant, whose role is to make recommendations to clients for changes in programs or practices based on the existing body of sociological knowledge about human groups and human social behaviour. Unlike applied researchers, consultants don't collect and analyze data themselves but rather rely on the conceptual and theoretical knowledge distilled from the basic and applied research of others. Using this knowledge, the consultant offers a solution to a problem or offers a general understanding of the socio-cultural environment relevant to a client. For example, a sociological consultant might use past research on the link between socioeconomic status and attitudes towards crime to help a lawyer pick a jury that would be most favorably disposed towards the lawyer's client. Another sphere in which applied sociologists work is that of the clinical sociologist who attempts a sociological diagnosis of group problems and behaviour and develops a planned programme of change. Some clinical sociologists, for example, conduct family counseling directed toward helping families to overcome problems; others help people change undesired behaviours such as overeating or alcohol abuse. As do sociological consultants, sociological clinicians utilize existing sociological knowledge without

conducting research themselves and that can provide quick and timely response to the emerging demands of the clients as well as that of the fast changing society.

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Global-Local Nexus and the Emerging Field of Criminology and Criminal Justice in South Asia: Bangladesh Case

Mokerrom Hossain and Shahid M. Shahidullah**

Abstract: *This paper examines the socio-historical context of the rise and significance of criminology and criminal justice in the societies of South Asia. The growth of a scientific specialty in a society is closely linked to its socio-historical evolutions. Applying the concept of C. Wright Mills' "sociological imagination," the paper argues that the historical process of globalization has created two competing demands in the realm of governance in the nations of South Asia. The first is the demand for the growth of the values of democracy, justice, and human rights. This has raised the need for redefining the traditional meaning and boundaries of crime, punishment, and justice. The second is the spread of new global crimes. A new set of trans-boarder and transnational crimes such as illegal human trafficking, illegal drug trades, illegal trading and trafficking of human organs, illegal trading of conventional weapons and nuclear materials, and cyber crimes are rapidly spreading in South Asia. The rise of new global organized criminal groups and new groups of global terrorists are major threats to governance and national security. These two competing demands—the need for redefining the traditional institutions of crime and justice and the need to contain and control the global crimes—are contributing to the rise of criminology and criminal justice in South Asia.*

Introduction

Globalization has changed the institutional settings of each society of the world and some have described this process as a 'world in motion' (Inda and Rosaldo, 2002). The changes in the economic and political institutions have been noticed mostly and have become topic of discussions for economists and political scientists. The corresponding changes in law and order situation are also noticeable and gradually becoming a part of the political discourse of many South Asian countries. The fact of the matter is that the process of globalization has changed the nature of crime and criminality. The criminals have also turned global in terms of their operations that are mostly known as 'transnational' acts or activities. Illicit drug trafficking along with human trafficking became such dominant 'transnational' activities that concerted efforts are needed to address them. Thus, we have several UN agencies to deal with these kinds of illegal transnational activities. However, for many these issues have Western biases, "and the proclamations of global solidarity in the Western media tend to be primarily reserved for affluent global capitals and tourist resorts rather than third world cities and countries" (Aas, 2007, 283). Though migration and movement of people across the boundaries of nation-states have been

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with us for a long time, the issues related to transnational organized crime, human smuggling and trafficking, money laundering and transshipment of weapons for the purpose of terrorism need a global approach to be dealt with. C. Wright Mills' sociological imagination (1982) allows us to explore the causes of these deviant behaviors but for the overall comprehension, we need to move beyond the societal approach and develop a criminological and criminal justice approach. These problems demanded stricter regulation and control; however, we also need to study the breeding factors of crime and criminality for the development of effective intervention and prevention programs.

At this critical juncture of globalization and transnational transformation of deviant behaviors across the South Asian societies, sociology has, we believe, a great role to play and this is the theme of the present paper. Sociology has a long and enduring tradition of studying crime, deviance, law, morality, justice, and punishment. Durkheim, Weber, Marx, and Simmel among others in classical sociology left a great tradition of studying crime and deviance in particular and the understanding of the complexities of governance in modern societies in general. South Asian sociology can be of great value in policy-making if the needs and strategies for reforming criminal justice in South Asian societies are researched and understood in the context of both their specific history and cultural peculiarities and the global trends in law, justice, and human rights. In this backdrop, we are making a case for the introduction of a new emerging science of behavior known as Criminology and Criminal Justice in Bangladesh.

The Origins and Evaluation of Criminology

Crime is as old as human society and attention to crime can be traced back to ancient Babylon and the Code of Hammurabi. The Ten Commandments, the Christian perspective, the Hindu Laws and the Muslim Laws have all had their own way of dealing with their respective law and order situation emerging due to violations. Punishing the criminals was one of the ways to maintain social order. However, with the Enlightenment the social and intellectual reforms focused criminality differently than the religious perspectives. The Enlightenment period introduced a new way of thinking that provided an alternative to the logic of spiritual explanations. One of the major developments that came in the wake of modernization in the West, particularly from the middle of the twentieth century, has been the emergence of the notion of criminal justice as a separate but highly interconnected system within the structure of governance. A separate system of criminal justice emerged to redefine the boundaries of crime, develop new strategies of crime control and prevention, reform the traditional institutions of police, prison, and the court, and protect human rights, freedom, democracy, privacy, and justice (Maquire et. al., 2007). These institutional transformations came in the context of ideals of modernization, renewed

understanding of the science of human behavior, and the philosophy of enlightenment. Criminology now has a strong base to provide theoretical explanations of why do people commit crimes. "For example, some scientific theories in criminology make statements about the relationship between the certainty and severity of criminal punishments and the volume of criminal behaviors in society. Other scientific theories make statements about the relationship between biological, psychological, or social characteristics of individuals and the likelihood that those individuals will engage in criminal behavior" (Vold et.al., 1998, 2). During the 1970s and 1980s, almost all advanced countries of the West, particularly the United States, Canada, England, France, and Germany reformed their criminal justice systems as an integral part of reforming their institutions and culture of governance.

Growth of Criminal Justice Professionals

With the advance of reforms in criminal justice, there also began the growth and expansion of the field of criminology, and a new group of criminal justice professionals. These professionals came from a variety of fields such as sociology, public administration, political science, psychology, law, and even biology and chemistry. Sociology has made the dominant impact on the rise and theoretical legitimacy of the field of criminology. Today, criminology and criminal justice together is one of the most rapidly advancing areas of social and behavioral sciences (Miller et. al., 2008). Major world-class universities such as Oxford, Cambridge, Harvard, Yale, Stanford, and Berkeley have established centers and programs for criminology and criminal justice. Oxford's Center for Criminology, for example, has been training a new generation of criminal justice professionals for many developing countries including those of South Asia. In the United States, about thirty major universities offer doctoral programs in criminology and criminal justice. Two hundred universities offer Masters in criminology and criminal justice. There exist also thousands of undergraduate programs for training a new generation of criminal justice professionals. The growth of criminology and criminal justice in the advanced countries has helped the growth of effective governance and effective policy-making in crime and justice areas. Similarly the contemporary global situation of national security, the crisis related to the human trafficking, cyber crime phenomenon, sophisticated money laundering schemes and the constant threat of terrorism require highly specialized trained group of professionals who will have skill, knowledge, and training to protect the people. Thus across the USA we see the expansion of criminal justice education and training. These developments have made them able to face the challenges of crime and justice in more effective and efficient manners.

Impact of Globalization

Criminology and the institutions of modern criminal justice are spreading all over the world as a result of globalization. Similarly criminal justice problem of one society hardly remains as a problem of that particular unit. "In the emerging global (dis)order, the notion of 'society' is transformed beyond recognition by the growing trans-border flows, and can no longer preserve the illusion of being a discrete and separate entity. Consequently, one can no longer study, for example, Italy simply by looking at what happens inside its territory, but rather one needs to acknowledge the effects that distant conflicts and developments have on national crime and security concerns, and vice versa" (Aas, 2007, 286). Drug trafficking, human trafficking and corruption became global in nature and their containment must be approached globally. Is this process requiring wholesale removal of national and international borders or is it creating an environment for collaborations and cooperation? In a global economy nation states enjoy less autonomy in regulating capital and labor movements. In economy, the slogan is 'let's break the barriers,' whereas, in the field of criminal justice, the trend is towards more control and restrictions. "Economic globalization suggests the unfettered freedom of the market; legal globalization suggests universal regulation through the instruments of human rights" (Vold, 1998, 57). The United Nations Drug Control Programme (UNDCP) and about half-dozen other world organizations are currently operating to contain corruption and punish perpetrators (see Table 1). At micro level, the national-political demarcations are becoming less effective for the movement of capital, labor and technology but on the other hand, criminal justice procedures and laws are turning into hegemonic. There are other reasons for that; the nature of the criminal activities as such requires transnational approach. How are we to address appropriately phenomena such as cyber crime, smuggling, money laundering and trafficking, which by their nature call for a global, rather than simply a comparative inter-national standpoint (Aas, 2007)?

At the international level, many regulatory laws are passed to enhance the power of law enforcement authorities across the board (Summer, 2007). The world bodies will create more regulatory agencies as time goes on. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, have now made it possible to talk of global juvenile/youth justice (Muncie, 2005). In recent years, emphasis on global terrorism has not only framed the state's agenda, but it stands as a gateway to exert significant influence over the range of possible outputs. The hegemony of the Western interests within the political arena becomes a normative mechanism to be used by them to achieve its objectives. Globalization has provided an opportunity to many powerful nations to expand the jurisdictions of their own courts over other countries. In the United States, there emerged some Federal White-Collar Crimes Acts with international scope, for example, Foreign Corrupt Practices Act (FCPA), International Anti-Bribery and Fair Competition Act, International

Anticorruption and Good Governance Act of 2000, and last but not the least, the Organized Crime – Travelers Act. These acts allow US agencies to go beyond its political jurisdiction to combat corruption and illegal activities.

Other international organizations are also developing over-arching agencies with jurisdictions over more than one country. The International Criminal Court (ICC) was established in 2002 as a permanent tribunal to prosecute individuals for genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, and the crime of aggression, although it cannot currently exercise jurisdiction over the crime of aggression. The Court came into being on July 1, 2002 — the date of founding the treaty, the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, entered into force — and it can only prosecute crimes committed on or after that date. As of February 2008, 105 states are members of the Court. A further 41 countries have signed but not ratified the Rome Statute. However, a number of states, including China, India and the United States, are critical of the Court and have not joined. A number of other courts developed with wider jurisdictions; the International Court of Justice (ICJ), the Hague (Netherlands), International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) and the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR). After 9/11 the perspective of global trend has changed significantly and the change is towards the growth of a single dominant ideology, which intends to control crime and criminal behavior by reaching over political boundaries of other suspected countries. In this kind of environment, it is important that the small and poor nations should be vigilant and be aware of the process of globalization of criminal justice agencies and issues so that the process of globalization should secure their national interests and reduce true threats of international terrorism. Big and small, all countries are truly interested in curbing terrorism and violence. The nature of today's terrorism is as such that it needs international cooperation to develop effective measures to contain them. As a result of this we see the growth of transnational efforts and agencies. The global expansion of criminal justice agencies made it more than important for small countries to develop their own methods and perspectives to comprehend and understand the criminal justices issues for the protection of their won interests. The science of Criminology and Criminal Justice will provide the knowledge, ability and skills that will not only help us to protect our interests it will also help us to play our required roles in shaping the future direction of forthcoming regulatory laws at the international level.

Criminology and Criminal Justice In South Asian Countries

In South Asia, criminology and criminal justice, however, is still in their infancy. Although in one sense, criminal justice in South Asia is as old as South Asia. In a more modernizing or in a sociological sense of institutional differentiation and integration, criminal justice in South Asia is still very archaic in nature. In most countries of South Asia, the criminal codes and the penal

institutions developed by the British colonial governments have not changed in any significant way. The institutions of police, court, and prison are still very ancient in nature and most of them are incompatible with the modern notions of human rights, freedom, justice, equality, privacy, and democracy.

However, what we see today is that a new discourse for modern criminology and criminal justice has now been spreading in all South Asian societies including among their policy-makers, leaders of civil societies, women groups, NGOs, and local international assistance communities. The educational institutions of India compared to Pakistan and Bangladesh is ahead in imparting criminal justice and criminology education. In 1957, the UNESCO Report on teaching of Criminology provided required impetus to introduce this subject worldwide. This Report advocated the need of Criminology in reducing crime and develops theoretical understanding about crime not merely as judicial abstraction but as human act, a natural and social fact. In response to the report, the University of Saugar became the first University in India to have established the very first full-fledged Department of Criminology and Forensic Science in the year 1959. Gradually other universities followed and introduced the education of criminology and criminal justice. Some major Universities offering courses on criminology are (Table 2); Lok Nayak Jayaprakash Narayan National Institute of Criminology and Forensic Science, Aligarh Muslim University, Nagpur University, Punjab University, Tata Institute of Social Science, the University of Madras, and the Utkal University. These universities offer degree programs in criminology and some of them offer graduate programs at master and doctoral levels. There are other universities that offer master program in criminology only for those who have completed Bachelor of Law degree and they are; the University of Jammu, the University of Lucknow and the University of Pune Ganeshkind. The University of Madhya Pradesh offers MA in Criminology, Diploma in Criminology & Forensic Science for Police Department and Ph.D in Forensic Science & Criminology. The following are the universities that offer masters degree in the subject: the University of Chennai offers M.A. degree in Criminology; Harisingh Gour Vishwavidyalaya offers M.A. degree in Criminology & Forensic Science and M.Sc. in Criminology; and Karnatak University offers M.A. degree in Criminology & Forensic Sciences. The Punjabi University offers M.Sc in Forensic Science.

The following are some of the universities offering M.Sc./MA in Forensic Science / Criminology: Dr. B.R. Ambedkar University, M.Sc. in Forensic Science; the University of Mysore, M.A. in Criminology & Forensic Science; the Osmania University, M.Sc. in Forensic Science in collaboration with Andhra Pradesh State Forensic Science Laboratory; the Bundelkhand University, M.Sc. in Forensic Science & Criminology; the National Institute of Criminology, M.A. in Criminology; the Banaras Hindu University, M.A. in Criminology; the Manonmaniam Sundaranar

University, M.Sc. in Criminology & Criminal Justice Science. Many other universities offer pure Forensic Science degree for science graduates. In no measure, this list is complete and comprehensive.

There are five levels of teaching of criminology in India:

- 1) Independent departments of criminology;
- 2) Joint departments of criminology and Forensic Science;
- 3) Diploma Courses;
- 4) Distance education courses; and
- 5) Criminology in training institutions.

Indian Society of Criminology, as a professional organization has been operating since 1971 and its membership has reached about 1500 and it routinely meets annually for sharing ideas and research findings. Last February it had its 30th National Conference in Calcutta and its theme was Crime and Justice in the Changing World. The Indian Journal of Criminology is published from Delhi quarterly. This journal has developed a tradition in publishing established and emerging scholars' research works in the field of criminology and criminal justice.

In Pakistan, the sciences of Criminology are growing with the time and as needs are changing. The Department of Criminology is one of the prestigious departments of Karachi University, and was established in 1995. Karachi University introduced Master Program in Criminological Sciences for the first time in Pakistan. Criminology has emerged as a branch of Sociology. Recently, the Sihala Police Training College an affiliate of the Punjab University of Lahore introduced a BSc program in criminal studies for the probationer assistant inspectors (ASIs) selected by the Punjab Public Service Commission are given admission to the program. The University of Sindh, Hyderabad campus also has a Criminology Department. The Islamic University of Bahawalpur offers criminology course at Master level. The Bahauddin Zakaria University of Multan also offers criminology course. Many colleges and universities of Pakistan may not have separate departments of Criminology and/or Criminal Justice but many of them offer courses covering areas of criminology and criminal justice. The National Higher Education Commission encourages research work in the areas of Criminology and provides annual award for best criminal justice research paper.

In recent days, the Care-Taker Government (CTG) of Bangladesh has made 'fighting corruption' as its prime goal and it is steadily moving to nail down the perpetrators. There is no dispute to say that the pre January 11, 2007 situation was the lowest point of our social decadence and now it seems that people are willing to save the society from total disorganization. Criminal acts should

not go unpunished, however, mere punishment will not guarantee future crimes unless we succeed in identifying, through scientific research, the social, political and economic factors that led us to our current situation and make adjustable measures to bring the necessary changes to the system. In another word we need a paradigm shift, let us not only look at the individuals as the main cause of criminal behavior, rather find out what are the societal factors—the social contextual environment—that lead to criminal actions to take place. “Corruption is an outcome—a reflection of a country’s legal, economic, cultural and political institution” (Svensson, 2005, 20). The knowledge gained through criminal justice and criminology will provide proper methodology and perspective to comprehend the causes of corruption and other white-collar crimes. In Bangladesh, there are no special anti-corruption courts. At the zila level (sub-district), judges who deal with corruption cases are called special judges. However, they are part of the whole judicial system. Of late, Transparency International Bangladesh has prepared a working paper on the proposed structure of an Independent Anti-corruption Commission, where one of the suggestions was to establish a special court for trying corruption cases. The sociology departments at the University of Dhaka, University of Chittagong and Shahjalal University of Science and Technology and North-South University offer courses in Criminology and there are a few faculty who are teaching at different universities of Bangladesh mentioned Criminology as their research interest area and will be interested to teach the course in future.

Conclusion

It is now being increasingly recognized that an effective and modern system of criminal justice is an integral part of economic growth, democracy, and effective and transparent governance. Sociology in South Asia has long tradition and I believe that it has a great role to play in this discourse to improve criminal justice and governance.

Two competing forces are shaping this emerging discourse about the need and significance of modern criminal justice in the societies of South Asia. The first is the event of the rapid integration of South Asia within the global culture, politics, and economy. This rapid integration is creating new demands not just for improved economic equality and opportunities. It is also creating new demands for human rights, reform of penal institutions, modernization of law, and the growth of equal and effective systems of justice. These demands, in turn, are pushing an agenda for redefining and restructuring the whole system of criminal justice in South Asian societies.

The second factor that is shaping the discourse for modern criminal justice in South Asia is the emergence of new types of global and transnational crimes such as illegal human trafficking, trafficking of illegal drugs, illegal trading and trafficking of human organs, illegal trading of

conventional and nuclear materials, and global terrorism. The old crimes of gangs, sex, and violence did not go away. They are growing with new intensity because of new weapons, new technology, and newly organized transnational criminal groups. These global-local nexus have created enormous problems for governance in South Asian societies. In some societies, as in Bangladesh, crime and corruptions have almost completely eroded the legitimacy of the government. This in turn contributed to the rise of the discourse for modern criminology and criminal justice. In Bangladesh and other South Asian societies, UNDP, ADB, EU and many other international assistance organizations as well as civil society groups are now pushing an agenda for improving criminal justice as an integral part of improving transparent governance, economic growth, and social justice.

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Appendix

Table 1. Global Crime and Justice Regime

UN Inter-regional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI)

UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNDOC)

Transparency International (TI)

UN Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice

UN Crime and Justice Information Network

UN Commission on the Status of Women
UN Commission on Human Rights
European Crime and Safety Survey Commission
International Crime Victims Survey
European Commission on Cyber Crime
World Congress of Criminology
US National Institute of Justice-International Center
Crime and Justice Programs of EU, ASEAN, SAARC

Table 2. Institutions Offering Post Graduate Programs in Criminology: India

Aligrah Muslim University, Aligarh
Andhra University, Waltair, Visakhapatnam
Dr. Harisingh Gour Vishwa Vidyalaya, Gour Nagar, Sagar, Madhya Pradesh
Gujarat University, Navrangpura, Admedabad
Karnatka University, Pavate Nagar
Maharashtra Gandhi Kashi Vidyapith, Varanasi
Nagpur University, Nagpur, Maharashtra
Punjab University, Chandigarh
Tata Institute of Social Science, Mumbai
University of Madras, Chepauk, Chennai
Utkal University, Vanivihar, Bhubaneswar
Institutions offering courses in Criminology for those who have completed LLB degree.
University of Jammu, Jammu Tawi
University of Lucknow, Lucknow

Challenge of Poverty Reduction Programmes: A Study on Women and Poverty in Developing Countries

D. Parimala*

Abstract: *It is estimated that nearly 40 per cent of the world's poor, who earn less than a dollar a day, live in South Asia. While this estimate reflects income or consumption expenditure, poverty has other attributes such as powerlessness, dependence, or isolation. Low economic status and social exclusion combine to influence health and educational status, nutritional levels, access to sanitation and safe drinking water, to credit and ability to exercise one's democratic rights. So the incidence of poverty among women in South Asia is especially high, with women and men experiencing poverty differently and often becoming poor through different processes. The process of feminization of poverty in South Asia is closely linked to the cultural and institutional constraints that restrict women's participation in economic activity, the macro economic framework and technological choices that have often tended to reinforce pre-existing constraints. Women continue to largely concentrated in informal employment, as unprotected and sub-contracted labour, there are persistent wage gaps between men and women, and women bear near total responsibility for care and nurture. With increasing migration and displacement, new groups of vulnerable women and greater numbers of female headed households have emerged.*

This paper attempts to explore and understand the challenges involved in making the policies on poverty and gender issue a reality. To understand the ways and manner in which poverty and other forms of deprivation affect women participation decisions in variety of contexts. Further, to discuss about the micro credit programmes, the role of commercial banks; To analysis the current policy frameworks in the sub-sector with perspective developed through the above understanding.

Introduction

While poverty studies are innumerable and are on the increase, unfortunately very few of them throw light on poverty among women. This issue assumes special significance in view of the fact that the incidence of women headed households is on the increase due to various reasons such as divorce, widowhood, separation, desertion, male migration in search of wage labour, increase in the number of unmarried women and finally breaking up of the joint family system and consequent non-absorption of widowed daughters-in-law by husband's families. Another reason as to why poverty among women needs special concentration is the absence of equality in consumption of food by members within the family. For reasons well known, women show a lower amount of calorie intake when compared to men. The assumption of equality in intra-family

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consumption of food hides much of the deprivation suffered by women especially at the lower rung of society.

Poverty among Female Headed Households (FHH)

As per Census (of India) definition 'Head' is the person who is the household's chief decision maker, chief economic provider, a person who is entitled to claim certain benefits such as land or membership in a co-operative on behalf of the household and he is a person whose characteristics provide the best indication of the status of the household as a whole. This definition assumes total harmony within the household and completely ignores the power exercised by different members within the household. The commonly used economic criteria such as 'principal earner', 'chief provider' and 'person who takes decisions on behalf of the household' are all misnomers especially in a traditional society like India where kinship relations, family ties and obligations are very strong. So for purposes of identification of FHHs one simplest way of defining FHHs is to define it as a household where a female member is the chief provider/protector and the contribution of all others are negligible or nil.

While some studies conclude that FHHs are severely disadvantaged and poverty stricken (Merrick and Schmink, Buvinic and Youssef 1978) some others conclude that FHHs are not disadvantaged than male headed poorer households (Visaria 1980). Studies undertaken in India come to the conclusion that majority of the FHHs are either close to poverty line or below poverty line. (Parthasarathy 1984; Visaria and Visaria 1983; Ranjanakumari 1987). So research studies are highly warranted for highlighting the variability in the characteristics of FHHs so that one could understand the basis for the diversity of opinion on the economic status of these households. Besides economic deprivation these households suffer additional social segregation, stigma and oppression. For purposes of analysis of poverty among female headed households, the following things need to be identified and ascertained – the composition of the household, females level of economic responsibility in family maintenance compared to that of others in the household; data about remittance from the migrant members, the amount and regularity of remission, allocation and control over remittance, women's access to land and other resources, her age, marital status and finally her work load as compared to that of males in the family.

Accentuation of Female Unemployment and Poverty

Green revolution and consequent mechanization has increased the incidence of unemployment among women in agriculture. In 1951 there were 408 women workers for every 1000 men. By 1971 this had declined to only 210 women per 1000 men. In agriculture the number of women workers declined from 31 to 25 million while in the non-agricultural sector it declined from 9.3 to

6.2 million. Women's employment in village industry has decreased since 1964, their share being reduced from 11.43% in 1951 to 9.1% in 1971. According to the National Plan of Action for Women the number of women employed in mines declined from 109,000 to 75,000 between 1951 and 1971.

Poverty among women is not only an issue in developing countries; it is equally an issue in developed countries. The I.L.O. notes that pensioners are the least affluent social group in the industrialized world. But here too women are the worst off partly because inequality during their working life is reflected in the lower pensions. In the U.S. for example the eight million women who are over the age of 65 make up by far one of the poorest groups in America with almost half of them living below the poverty line (Kapoor 1985). Social security and tax systems in advanced countries take the family as the basic unit of assessment on the assumption that money coming into the family is shared equally. In this connection Jane Lewis (1980) rightly observes that in regard to the division of resources within the family, studies have shown repeatedly that wives often do not know how much their husbands earn and that money controlled by the wife (which often takes the form of house keeping allowance paid by the husband) frequently fails to keep up with wither inflation, increase in the husband's pay or increases in family size.

In a country like India where men hardly allow their working wives to enjoy their earnings, it is impossible to think of economic equality within the family. Rights and privileges enjoyed by women are few. Since most of the men at the lower rung of society are addicted to social evils like smoking, gambling and alcoholism, they not only do not contribute to family maintenance but even grab women's earnings. They accumulate debt and the women of the family are forced to pay back the loan. Devaki Jain (1985) is quite correct when she says that the concept of 'Household' is an issue since the family hides the devastation taking place within the household. She deplors that the tendency for all statistics to be shown in the aggregate with stratification being done either as educated/uneducated, rural/urban, agricultural labourer/non-agricultural labourer and self employed fails to take notice of the critical issue viz. the economic situation of the family and the individuals within it.

Empirical Evidence on Female Poverty

The poor nutritional intake of women has never been paid attention to by the government. Researchers on sex bias in population characteristics of India find greater extent of malnutrition among females when compared to males and this malnutrition including shorter period feeding among females starts even from their childhood (Sen Amartya 1981; Sen Amartya and Sen Gupta Sunil 1988). The reports of the National Nutrition Monitoring Bureau (1980) reveal that while only 28.4% of the adult Indian males are suffering from caloric inadequacy, for non-pregnant, non-lactating Indian women the percentage suffering from caloric inadequacy is 57.3 and for lactating Indian women it is 46.5. Gopalan (1982) has referred to a household survey in the villages around Ludhiana showing 50% of the girls and 20% of the boys below five year of age as severely malnourished. Maitreyi Chaudhuri (1980) in her work 'Sex bias in child nutrition' comes to the conclusion that the percentages of severely and disastrously malnourished girls are higher than the percentages of severely and disastrously malnourished boys. Even in households having a small number of children the discrimination exists against girls. Another survey by Batliwala (1985) shows that Indian women's caloric intake is about 100 calories (per woman per day) less than they expend. Women contribute 53% of human energy required for survival tasks but their food intake is less than what they require. This disparity between women's caloric expenditure and caloric intake has manifested into illness especially anaemia. Intervention at the time of maternity does not make any impact on the well being of women. But unfortunately since the caloric gap suffered by women has not been brought to lime light, women's health has been identified only with maternal health by policy planners. The only women oriented programmes in the national health sector are maternal and child health schemes and to some extent family planning. The realization has not yet dawned that there are a large number of women in need of health care who are neither pregnant nor lactating.

Many rural health surveys reveal a much higher incidence of illness among women and girls than men and boys. This is noted in health surveys for Maharashtra and Gujarat (Dandekar 1975) West Bengal (Chakraborty et al 1978) and Uttar Pradesh (Khan et al.). It is also found that while more males get medical treatment, majority females do not receive medical treatment at all. Even if it is provided, less is spent on female medical care (Dandekar 1975). Female ailments are ignored in the initial stages and medical help is sought only when the disease becomes chronic or serious. (Khan et al., 1983, Chatterjee 1983; Miller 1981).

Gender inequality, poverty, and human development

At the World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, the UN said that "poverty has a women's face" and that 70% of the worlds poor were female. This simple statement hides a complex reality. The 'bottom line' measure of poverty is lack of income, but it also consists of lack of

access to services and opportunities for human development, lack of a voice in political life and decision making, and social subordination and exclusion. All poor people experience these deficits, but in almost all cases women and girls suffer from them to a greater degree than men.

In the same year as the Beijing conference, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) launched two new measures to track progress in tackling inequalities between women and men. These were the Gender-related Development Index (GDI) and the Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM). These measures have been used every year since then in UNDP's annual Human Development Report, alongside a broad-based Human Development Index (HDI), to assess the progress of nations towards the elimination of poverty.

Since 1995- the GDI and GEM have shown the gender gap it shows: in no society do women fare as well as men; while there has been a closing of gender gap in human development, there is still a long way to go in sharing political and economic opportunities; women continue to suffer high levels of violence and abuse; many countries continue to discriminate against women in the law. A key conclusion drawn from the UNDP analysis is that progress towards gender equality is not dependent on the income level of society, but is more dependent on political will. Governments have made the most progress when they have been willing to put concerns about women empowerment at the heart of policy, and drive through the changes necessary for real progress. The income level of society appears to be less important than a serious commitment to improve opportunities for women. Some developing countries outperform much richer countries in the opportunities they afford women.

Key areas of inequality:

Inequalities between women and men manifest themselves across all key areas of development in a variety of ways which vary significantly from place to place.

Economic development and livelihood security: The women perform 53% of all economic activity in developing countries, but only about a third of their work is currently measured and acknowledged in national accounts: - share of national income provides a rough measure of economic inequality between men and women – in South Asia- women with Rs.1000/- (and men Rs.7000/-) are in bottom of this GDP per capita. Moreover the distribution of income and consumption within the household show the inequalities. In South Asia, there is evidence that women get a lesser share than men of food and other consumption goods. Again the women receive only a very small share of credit from formal banking institutions, often because they are unable to provide collateral (for example, micro credit and its role in poverty alleviation policies). Privatization of the banking sector and the withdrawal of the State for the provision of easy loans

are some aspects of the program. The theory of micro credit as a poverty alleviation program was picked up by the World Bank on the basis of the experience of the Grameen Bank.

What is Micro credit?

Micro credit would appear to have become the mantra of today's development orthodoxy. While the World Bank hosts annual international micro credit summits, our own SIDBI has created a Foundation for Micro Credit and NABARD does not lag far behind. But what is it about?

Micro credit is a scheme whereby the poor lend to the poor. This is in the background of current policies of structural adjustment where it is taken as a given that the formal banking sector has no such responsibility. Since the gap is being filled by usurious moneylenders reflected in higher figures of rural indebtedness, funding agencies like the World Bank are pushing micro credit as a viable alternative. The micro credit strategy is to organize a Self Help Group of 15-20 local residents in a neighborhood, usually women, who meet regularly to save and circulate their savings as low-interest loans within their group, whenever a member needs a loan. The peer pressure exerted by the groups and the local context of its operation usually ensure prompt repayment of loans. The safe savings mechanism that the SHGs promote also meet a desperate need of its members to save safely, as their savings capacity of Rs.5 or Rs. 10 a week cannot be accommodated by today's rigid banking structure.

Women's need for credit:

Millions of women working in the household sector, in home based work, in dairy and animal husbandry and other sectors of the unorganized sphere, desperately require credit to make their work viable as also as a means to break dependence on the middlemen. But women's credit needs, particularly poor women's credit needs have been completely ignored both in the earlier schemes as well as in the structural adjustment blueprints. Credit is almost always given to male members of the family. Women were rarely consulted. Yet in a situation where more and more women are taking primary responsibilities for family survival reflected in Government statistics, credit becomes a crucial element in poor women's economic strategies. This requires immediate recognition and redress. Women do look at micro credit as a means of immediate relief. Immediate relief from moneylenders

Indebtedness of poor rural families for personal loans for expenses like doctors' bills, medicines, marriages, repair of huts etc is increasing. Moneylenders charge high interest rates between 60 and 120 percent per annum, which vary from region to region. Self help groups provide some relief from these blood sucking money lenders. That even the small, easy access consumption loans provide women immediate economic relief is evident from the number of members who used these loans to retrieve mortgaged ration cards and family' jewellery and repay earlier high-

interest loans from usurious moneylenders. Even this credit assistance can enhance their maneuverability in an economic environment growing increasingly hostile to their survival struggles.

Women's independent access to easy credit certainly plays a role in enhancing her status both within the family and the community. There are some examples from Orissa where groups who have saved a substantial amount of money decided to extend loans to the community at rates that were much less than rates charged by moneylenders. They certainly earned the wrath and enmity of the moneylenders but their standing in the community went up.

Poor women are sometimes forced to leave their savings group due to inability to save the required minimum monthly amount and to repay any future loan due to the death of a husband and consequent setback to family income. The group sympathizes with the woman's predicament but its capacity to accommodate her crisis in such circumstances, is limited unless the organization has an easy-access, and highly effective, emergency or contingency fund. Even Grameen Bank's track record in this area is unimpressive.

Low economic status and social exclusion combine to influence health and educational status, nutritional levels, access to sanitation and safe drinking water, to credit and skill training, and ability to exercise one's democratic rights. The incidence of poverty among women in South Asia is especially high, with women and men experiencing poverty differently and often becoming poor through different processes. The process of feminization of poverty in South Asia is closely linked to the cultural and institutional constraints that restrict women's participation in economic activity, the macro economic framework and technological choices that have often tended to reinforce pre-existing constraints. Women continue to be largely concentrated in informal employment, as unprotected and sub-contracted labour, there are persistent wage gaps between men and women, and women bear near total responsibility for care and nurture. With increased migration and displacement, new groups of vulnerable women and greater numbers of female headed households have emerged.

Tables 1 and 2 show the persistence of high levels of poverty, and the disparities in earned income of men and women.

Table 1: Persistence of High Levels of Poverty

Country	Population below Income Poverty Line (%) \$ 1 a day (1990-2002)	Population Below Income Poverty Line (%) National Poverty Line 1984-1999
Bangladesh	36	49.8
Bhutan	**	**
India	34.7	28.6
Nepal	37.7	42
Pakistan	13.4	32.6
Sri Lanka	6.6	25
Maldives	**	**

Source: HDR 2004.

Table 2: Estimated Earned Income of Men and Women (US\$) 2002

Country	Women	Men
Bangladesh	1150	2035
Bhutan	**	**
India	1442	3820
Nepal	891	1776
Pakistan	915	2789
Sri Lanka	2570	4523
Maldives	**	**

Source: HOP 2004

This paper seeks to highlight some recent initiatives taken to eradicate poverty, with a focus on women. The need for sex disaggregated data to evaluate the impact of such policies and

programmes is an area in which sustained effort is still needed. In South Asian countries poverty levels vary across regions (including rural-urban gaps), gender, and ethnicity (such as caste).

A broad picture of poverty levels is presented below with some selected indicators

(a) Choice of an indicator: It is not always obvious which is the best indicator. For example, in the case of education, one could use gross enrolment ratio of women in primary education, or adult literacy rates, or the level of computer literacy among women. While composite indices can be used, the process of averaging may hide important differences. Selection of indicators, therefore, gets influenced by the objective behind any particular comparison, as much as the data availability itself.

(b) Lack of correlation among various gender-based indicators: In addition, not all indicators may show the same pattern of change.

(c) Incompatibility of data from different sources: There may be contradictions among the data from different official and non-official sources.

(d) Unavailability of data: Sometimes it might happen that sex disaggregated data in specific areas in all the countries for all the years are not available. Thus, the human Development Reports from 2000 to 2004 show that Gender Empowerment Measures could not be calculated for all countries in South Asia for all the years.

(e) Qualitative versus quantitative data: Some aspects of discrimination are difficult to quantify, such as mental health and well being. Similarly, data generated from micro-level surveys and studies cannot be aggregated at the national level, and have limited use in cross country comparisons through estimates of the head count ratio and Gini-coefficient figures (see Appendix A). For all the countries, the head count poverty ratio (or poverty incidence) is higher in the rural areas compared to the urban areas, whereas the value of the Gini coefficient (or inequality) is higher for the urban areas and lower for the rural areas.

Strategic Objectives and Steps Taken

1. Review, adopt and maintain macro-economic policies and development strategies that address the needs and efforts of women in poverty:

The PRSP process (Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers) has been introduced in several countries, and some efforts are under way to ensure gender sensitivity of the process. In Bangladesh, the PRSP is in the final stages of formulation. The process is under way In India. The Ninth Plan introduced the Women's Component Plan to ensure that 30% of funds! Benefits under various welfare and developmental schemes were to be earmarked for women, and the Tenth Plan reaffirms the major strategy of mainstreaming gender perspectives in all sectoral policies and programmes and plans of action. Women specific interventions will be undertaken to

bridge the existing gaps. The commitment of the Government of Maldives to sustainable human development and gender equity is reflected in its allocation of 40 per cent of public expenditures for social services in 2001. In Nepal the Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MIF) and associated budget reforms provide an effective mechanism to adjust the annual expenditure programme to the changes in the government's resource position. while protecting the Tenth Plan's priorities including poverty alleviation programmes. In Pakistan, a number of tangible recommendations have been made for gender mainstreaming in the PRSP. In Sri Lanka the Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) is being launched. The impact of conflict on women and households is an area of concern, and Sri Lanka has given top priority to developing poverty eradication programmes for female headed households' in areas affected by conflict.

2. Revise laws and administrative practices to ensure women's equal rights and access to economic resources:

The Government of Bangladesh has formulated a National Policy for the Advancement of Women in 1997. This seeks to make women's development an integral part of all national development programmes, remove barriers to equal participation, create awareness and increase commitment. Promoting gender equality, and "realizing the constitutional goal of equality between all citizens - women and men", was a major aim of the Fifth Development Plan (1997-2002).

India announced the National Policy for Empowerment of Women in 2001 to bring about the advancement, development and empowerment of women. One of the commitments made in the National Common Minimum Programme for the empowerment of women concerns ensuring women's equal rights in ownership of assets like houses and land. The Government of Tamil Nadu has already taken steps towards increasing women's access to land. The Comprehensive Wasteland Programme, initiated in 2001-02, allows the allotment of land to Federations of Self Help Groups and Self Help Groups with a minimum of one year track record

In Bangladesh, an estimated 12 million women are micro credit borrowers, with loan of Tk.1.2 billion and a loan repayment rate of over 90%. The Vulnerable Group Development Programme, a multi-donor nationwide programme, currently reaching 7.5 million hard core rural women, seeks to provide poor women with training to encourage self employment, and nutrition support. An innovative intervention has been the 'Village Phone', Grameen Bank's unique method of bringing the information revolution to the rural people of Bangladesh. There are currently 1,425 Village Phones in operation and the emphasis is on developing women's entrepreneurial skills.

In India, the Self Help Group (SHGs) movement has been supported through schemes of a large number of departments including the Women and Child Development, Rural Development, Urban Development, Handlooms' and Handicraft, Sericulture, Agriculture, etc., at the national and state levels Rashtriya Mahila Kosh (RMK provides credit for livelihood and related activities to poor women The Indira Mahila Yojnana has been more successful in states like Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. An estimated 19 million women are beneficiaries of schemes run by the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD and RMK) (March 2003). SHGs have also been formed under the South Asia Poverty Alleviation Programme (SAPAP). The Kudumashree programme in Kerala is a poverty alleviation initiative based on the SHG concept, Skill and capacity building interventions for self-employment are supported through programmes such as STEP (Support to Training and Employment Programme), Swawamban, Swashak Swayamsiddha, Integrated Women's Empowerment Programme and Swarnajayantram Swarozgar Yoj'na. Wage employment programmes such as Sampoorna Grameen Rozgar Yoj'ana (SGRY) aims at 30 per cent of the employment opportunities created to be provided to women. Programmes such as the targeted Public Distribution System, Antodaya Anna Yojana are also run by the government to ensure food security for the poor. The Indira Awas Yojna stipulates that houses under the scheme are to be allotted in the name of the female member of the beneficiary household.

In Nepal, a Poverty Alleviation Fund has been incorporated into the government's Tenth Five-Year Plan. Gameen Bank facilities are available in some areas to provide low interest loans for income generation to poor women who have no collateral. NGOs and CBOs are conducting various income generation and micro-enterprise development programmes for women in low income families. Provisions are being made by the Council of Technical Education and Vocational Training for skill up gradation among women.

Pakistan is working towards providing women's access to micro-credit especially through channels such as Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF), Rural Support Programmes (RSPs), First Women Bank (FWB), Agricultural Development Bank (ADB) and Khushali Bank. The Government of Pakistan is making targeted interventions to address poverty and generate income and employment through public works, Programmes such as Khushal Pakistan programme, Tameer-e-pakistan programme, Tameer-e-Punj'ab, Tameer-e-Sarhad Programme, Drought Emergency Relief Assistance and micro-credit are aimed at improving life in the rural areas, and facilitating development of small and medium enterprises.

3. Develop gender based methodologies and conduct research to address the feminization of poverty

In Bhutan, the Gender Pilot Study has helped to know the extent to which women have access to resources. Efforts are on in India for systematic production and dissemination of gender disaggregated data, with the lead being taken by the Central Statistical Organisation. In Nepal, UNIFEM and the U', system collaborated to engender the Population and Housing Census, 2001. One of the activities of the engendering process was the adoption of the System of National Accounts (SNA) 1993, to capture women's work in the care economy. For the first time, the Central Bureau of Statistics produced classification beyond 4 digits in the Occupation and Industry Sector, The National Planning Commission in collaboration with the Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare has developed gender sensitive indicators with support from the Mainstreaming Gender Equity Project. The National Planning Commission with assistance from UNIFEM has started the setting up of a Gender Management System. The Ministry of Women's Development in Pakistan commissioned a study of the interim PRSP document with the assistance of members

Continuing Gaps and Challenges

- Poverty reduction strategies need to examine the impact of macro economic policy on poverty, and address gender as a cross cutting issue
- Strengthen efforts to increase women's access to productive resources, skill training, new technologies and social protection
- In addition to micro credit programmes, ways in which commercial banks could mainstream credit programmes for women need to be developed
- Ineffective
- Need for more extensive sex disaggregated data

Gender budgeting is another tool to sensitizes development strategy. Pilot work by the Policy Research Unit of the Ministry of Health in Bangladesh has attempted to link gender disaggregated beneficiary assessment with local service delivery. In India, the Government of India with UNIFEM support has introduced the concept and all Departments have been advised to present gender budgets. The Gender Sensitive Budget initiative in Nepal consisted of a gender audit of the health education and agriculture sectors. Sri Lanka has undertaken a gender-disaggregated public expenditure incidence analysis.

Poverty Alleviation Programmes

Rural development in India is identified largely with the poverty alleviation policies. Perhaps no country in the world has invested so much time and resources on poverty alleviation and achieved so little as India. Over the 25 year period, 1973-74 to 1999-2000, the poverty ratio, i.e.

the percentage of the poor in the total population, has been halved from 55 per cent to 27 per cent.

Poverty Alleviation Programme

The rural poor can be divided into three main categories: (i) those with land, (ii) those with skills and (iii) those without land and skills. During the initial stages of rural development through the community development program (CDP), a holistic approach to develop agriculture, infrastructure and basic facilities in the villages was adopted. It was assumed that as the process of development progresses, it would take care of each and every category of the rural population. During the 1960s, when the CDP was gaining momentum, the country was faced with food crisis and, therefore, the entire rural development effort was directed to the development of agriculture. As a result, we achieved green revolution towards the end of that decade and the country gained self-sufficiency in food production. While this event was most welcome, it was not without side-effects. The farmers with small and marginal holdings did not gain from the green revolution and they remained poor. The benefits of agricultural development did not percolate to the large numbers of agricultural labourers either. Introduction of modern farm technology and use of modern factory made equipment rendered a large proportion of rural artisans jobless. The overall situation was that a visible disparity between the rich and the poor emerged. There were many reasons for this situation. Some of the important ones are as follows:

Modern farming being cost intensive, the small and the marginal farmers could not adopt modern farm technologies due to the lack of credit facilities and thus remained poor.

The green revolution was confined to agro-climatically rich areas, while the other regions remained backward.

Intensive farming did increase the absorption of labour, but it was proportionately too low as compared to the supply of manpower in the labour market due to population explosion.

There was no appreciable growth in the non-farm sector to absorb surplus labour from the farm sector.

There was no attempt for upgrading the skills of artisans for them to stay in the job market. This resulted in vast unemployment among them.

In order to counter these maladies of the development process, a series of special rural development programs as corrective measures were introduced during the early seventies. The most important among these, which was directly focused on the small and marginal farmers, agricultural labourers and rural artisans, was Small Farmers Development Agency (SFDA), introduced in 1973-74. In 1974-75, Marginal Farmers and Agriculture Labourers (MFAL) Agency

Program was also introduced to take specific care of the marginal farmers, the rural artisans and the agriculture labourers. The MFALA, which was similar to SFDA, was merged with SFDA in 1976. Though SFDA was supposed to take care of all categories of the rural poor, it mainly concentrated on those with land assets and neglected labourers, causing serious problems of unemployment among them. Unemployment was severe among the asset-less and the skill-less poor in the villages.

To provide relief to the rural poor, who mainly depended on daily wages, a Crash Employment Programme was introduced in 1974-75 in selected districts followed by another wage employment programme called Pilot Intensive Rural Employment Programme (PIREP). It was introduced during 1975-76 in the blocks which had chronic unemployment problem. These programs emerged with two distinct characteristics: (a) programs for self-employment mainly focused on those with assets and/or skills; and (b) programs for wage employment targeting those who did not have any source of income other than their physical labour. During 1978-79, SFDA and the beneficiary oriented element of all other programs were merged into one and a new programme for self-employment, called Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP), was introduced in 2000 blocks, initially with a provision to bring 300 blocks under the programme every year. Similarly, all programmes aimed at wage employment were merged and brought together under the food for work Programme. In 1980, IRDP was expanded to all the blocks in the country and simultaneously the Food for Work Programme was also reorganized as the National Rural Employment Programme (NREP) and extended to all the blocks of the country.

In order to upgrade the skills of the rural artisans and also develop skills among those without any skill, a sub-programme of IRDP called Training of Rural Youth for Self-Employment (TRYSEM) was introduced in 1981. Though the provision of covering 40 per cent of women under IRDP and TRYSEM was already there, a new programme called Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWCRA) was introduced on a pilot basis in 50 selected districts, again as a sub-programme of IRDP. Towards the end of the eighties, DWCRA was to organize the poor women into groups and help them in self-employment by providing them income generating activities.

In the case of wage employment, it was realized that NREP was not able to provide the minimum guaranteed wage employment to the rural labourers and therefore a programme fully financed by the Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India, called Rural Labour Employment Guarantee Programme (RLEGP) was launched in 1983 with universal coverage.

The year 1987 was the worst drought year of the century and the small and the marginal farmers suffered most. For relieving them from the vagaries of the monsoon, a programme called Jeevan Dhara (later named Million Wells Scheme - MWS) with hundred per cent subsidy to the small and

the marginal farmers, belonging to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes mainly, was introduced. The NREP and RLEGP, with similar objectives, caused overlapping and therefore the Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India, decided to merge these two into one programme in 1989. It was named Jawahar Rozgar Yojana (JRY) and the Village Panchayats were assigned the task to implement it. Again, to supplement the wage employment efforts, a new programme called Employment Assurance Scheme (EAS) was introduced in about 1700 blocks with chronic unemployment problems during 1992-93. Later, EAS was extended to cover all the blocks of the country during 1996-97.

During 1991-92, another programme for self-employment with specific focus on rural artisans was introduced. It was called Supply of Improved Tool-Kit to Rural Artisans (SITRA). In 1994-95, a minor irrigation programme called Ganga Kalyan Yojana (GKY) was introduced for those small and marginal farmers who were not eligible under MWS. While MWS was a fully subsidized programme, GKY was only partly subsidized. A detailed list of programmes and the events related to rural development in India is provided in Annexure – I.

Towards the end of nineties there were six programs for self-employment and two programs of wage employment being implemented by the Ministry of Rural Development (see the boxes).

Box 1

Programmes for Self-Employment (IRDP and its sub-programmes)

IRDP (Integrated Rural Development Programme)

TRYSEM (Training of Rural Youth for Self-Employment)

DWCRA (Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas)

MWS (Million Wells Scheme)

SITRA (Supply of Improved Tool-Kit for Rural Artisans)

GKY (Ganga Kalyan Yojana)

Box 2

Wage Employment Programmes

JRY (Jawahar Rojgar Yojana)

EAS (Employment Assurance Scheme)

Since the target group for all the self-employment programmes was the same and the procedure of selection of beneficiaries was also more or less the same, the multiplicity of the programmes created a number of problems in their execution. The more troublesome ones were as follows:

Due to multiplicity, many influential persons were able to get the benefit of more than one programme at the cost of many poor families.

Since considerable amount of subsidy was involved, in some cases hundred percent subsidy (MWS & SITRA), it encouraged the involvement of middlemen and local leaders and even senior politicians in the selection of beneficiaries resulting in considerable number of non-eligible families taking the benefits of these programmes.

Lack of proper planning was another cause of low performance.

Poor recovery of loans made banks reluctant to advance loans causing significant set-back to these programmes.

Marketing of the produce by the beneficiaries was also a major problem which led to the failure of a large number of income generating schemes taken up by the beneficiaries.

Keeping the above factors in mind, the Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India, decided to restructure the self-employment and wage employment programmes. Accordingly, all the six self-employment programmes namely, IRDP, TRYSEM, DWCRA, SITRA, MWS and GKY were merged into a single programme called Swarnjayanti Gram Swarozgar (SGSY) made operative on the first of April, 1999. Also, JRY was redesigned and named Jawahar Gramin Rozgar Yojana (JGSY) on April, 1999. In 2001, however, JGSY and EAS were also merged into a single programme called Sampoorna Grameen Rojgar Yojana (SGRY).

Impact of Poverty Alleviation Programmes

In the foregoing details we have discussed the various programmes for rural development and poverty alleviation. Here, let us examine the impact of these programmes on the poverty reduction.

Based on the 55th round of the NSSO estimates, the percentage of people below the poverty line in 1999-2000 has, for the first time fallen below the 30 per cent mark. The Rural poverty ratio was 27.1, the urban 23.6 and the overall poverty ratio for the country was 26.1 by 1999-2000. The rate of decline in poverty was highest during 1993-94 and 1999-2000, as it fell from 36.0 per cent to 26.1 per cent recording an average annual rate of decline to a little above 1.6 per cent (see Table 2). In the field of human development also, there has been favourable trends of improvement. Indicators like health status reflecting in Crude Birth Rate, Crude Death Rate, Infant Mortality Rate (IMR), and Life Expectancy reveal encouraging trends. The literacy status,

particularly the female literacy, of the rural people too shows an upward trend. Even in the states like Rajasthan, where gender discrimination is high, the literacy levels show upward trends.

The process of reduction in poverty, however, has not been uniform all over the country. Some states have done exceptionally well, while a few states have not recorded much change in their poverty status. Table below provides state-wise percentage of the population below the poverty line. It is clear from the table that

Table 3: State-wise Poverty Ratios (% of population below the poverty line) During 1999-2000

States	Rural	Urban	Combined
1. Andhra Pradesh	11.05	26.63	15.77
2. Arunachal Pradesh	40.04	7.47	33.47
3. Assam	40.04	7.47	36.09
4. Bihar	44.30	32.91	42.60
5. Goa	1.35	7.52	4.40
6. Gujarat	13.17	15.59	14.07
7. Haryana	8.27	9.99	8.74
8. Himachal Pradesh	7.94	4.63	7.63
9. Jammu & Kashmir	3.97	1.98	3.48
10. Karnataka	17.38	25.25	20.04
11. Kerala	9.38	20.27	12.72
12. Madhya Pradesh	37.06	38.44	37.43
13. Maharashtra	23.72	26.81	25.02
14. Manipur	40.04	7.47	28.54

15. Meghalaya	40.04	7.47	33.87
16. Mizoram	40.04	7.47	19.47
17. Nagaland	40.04	7.47	32.67
18. Orissa	48.01	42.83	47.15
19. Punjab	6.35	5.75	6.16
20. Rajasthan	13.74	19.85	15.28
21. Sikkim	40.04	7.47	36.55
22. Tamilnadu	20.55	22.11	21.12
23. Tripura	40.04	7.47	34.44
24. Uttar Pradesh	31.22	30.89	31.15
25. West Bengal	31.85	14.86	27.02
26. A & N Islands	20.55	22.11	20.99
27. Chandigarh	5.75	5.75	5.75
28. D & N Haveli	17.57	13.52	17.14
29. Daman & DIU	17.57	13.52	17.14
30. Delhi	0.40	9.42	8.23
31. Lakshadweep	9.38	20.27	15.60
32. Pondicherry	20.55	22.11	21.67

ALL INDIA	27.09	23.62	26.10
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the states and the Union Territories with poverty ratios below 10 are Goa, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Punjab, Chandigarh, Daman & DIU AND Delhi. The states between 10-20 per cent intervals are Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Kerala, Mizoram, Rajasthan, D & N Haveli and Lakhshadweep. The states with poverty ratio between 20-30 are Karnataka, Maharashtra, Manipur, Tamilnadu, West Bengal, A & N Islands and Pondicherry. The remaining states, which include most of the North-Eastern states, Orissa, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh continue to show a poverty ratio above 30 per cent – Orissa (47.15%) and Bihar (42.60 %) being the poorest states in the country. Some of the reasons for not achieving the desired impact of these programmes are as follows:

- 1) Implementation of the programmes was not effective.
- 2) Lack of area specific and integrated planning which was essential to sustain the benefits of the poverty alleviation programmes.
- 3) Most of the income generating schemes provided to the poor families did not match with their capability and hence the beneficiaries were not able to sustain them.
- 4) Lack of supporting infrastructure including marketing facilities.
- 5) Inadequate investment on the beneficiary projects.
- 6) At some places there was poor participation of the people in these programmes.
- 7) Corrupt practices in identifying, selecting and funding the beneficiaries have also had adverse effect on the programmes.

Conclusion

The present paper focused attention on the following four issues:

The first issue related to the question of identifying Female Headed Households. Having identified how effective the data system could be in bringing out the poverty situation of such households was analysed. Can the data system throw light on the structure and degree of poverty suffered by this group? What are the definitional, conceptual and methodological difficulties involved in designing such a data system?

The second issue revolved round the concept of gender specific approach so that poverty suffered by women is brought to limelight. The new technique to be evolved in the collection of data on poverty should take into consideration the existing reality that women suffer more due to poverty than men. Because of the asymmetry in the consumption of food the relative deprivation suffered by female children is a matter for concern since at the growing age their needs are more and varied. Even in the case of working women, it is found that women have no control over their hard earned earnings. Social evils like gambling and male alcoholism have often led to grabbing of women's earnings by male members in the family. Is our data system attuned to capture this inter-personal poverty within the family?

The third issue pertained to 'couping up mechanisms' or 'survival strategies' adopted by women in poorer household. Two studies conducted by the author reveal that survival strategies adopted by women of poverty are varied and differ from occupation to occupation and region to region.

Finally attention was paid to the problem of suggesting specific and special data components to be incorporated to make the data collection system more focused on women. Thus the main thrust of the paper is to highlight the need for studies involving collection and tabulation of fresh data to analyse certain specific aspect such as female poverty. It is also emphasized that suitable modifications are required in the concepts and definitions adopted by national level data gathering agencies. An attempt should be made to pool the experiences of large and small surveys designed to capture women's activity and draw lessons from their experiences. The basic aim of data collection is to have proper understanding of the existing phenomenon so that suitable policy measures could be suggested to improve the situation. So unless the data on poverty throw light on the various dimensions of poverty with precision of tools and accuracy suitable alleviation strategies are difficult to be designed.

NOTES

Batliwala works out the relative food intake per man, woman and child as 3270 calories, 2410 calories and 1649 calories per day respectively. She comes to the conclusion that women show an intake deficit of 100 calories per day while men show an intake surplus of nearly 800 calories. In spite of these programmes maternal mortality and child mortality are very high in India. The Registrar General's data show that it is still the case that except four states of the Indian union viz. Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Assam and Andhra Pradesh death rates in female children under four years of age is distinctly higher than in male children.

For the country as a whole child mortality was as high as 125 per 1000 births in 1988. It is 7 in Japan, and Sweden, 10 in France and Canada and 12 in New Zealand. Belgium and U.S.A. A recent study in Madras reveals that in IMR was 124 per 1000 in the slum areas compared to 73 per 1000 in the non-slum areas. It is as high as 246 for mothers who were working in the informal sector. (The Hindu dt. 4.12.87)

According to a UNICEF report on the state of the world's children lives of two million infants can be saved each year if their mothers have extra food during pregnancy. (The Statesman dated 16.11.87). The maternal mortality rate is between 500 to 800 per 100,000 births in India compared with 15 or 20 in the neighbouring developing countries such as Singapore, Sri Lanka etc. (Karkal Malini and Pandey Divya – Studies on Women and Population – A Critique; Himalaya Publishers 1989).

As per UNICEF finding (analysis of the situation of Children in India UNICEF p.40 1984) maternal mortality in the country ranged between 376 to 418 per 1000,000 live births in 70-72. Corresponding figures for Sweden (1979) U.S.A. (1978) and U.K. (1980) were reported to be 1, 10, 11 respectively. (Population Report Series 1, 27, 1984).

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1. The Gini-coefficient figures for at the years are taken from Jayasuriya (2002). But the poverty figures for 1991-92 and 2000 are taken from the Bangladesh Government document (2003). Data for 2000 (a) * is taken from the World Development Indicators, 2004 (produced by the World Bank) and are based on expenditure and not income. The corresponding figures show the percentage of people living below the poverty line of \$1 per day, at the national level;

2. The data taken from Royal Government of Bhutan document (2004). m means the food poverty line. n means the income poverty line. (e) Nleans Gini coefficient based on expenditure;

3. Gini coefficients data for all the years have been taken from Jayasuriya (2002). Poverty data for 1993-94 and 1999-2000 has been taken from Deaton and Dreze (2002). Data for 1999-2000 (a) * is taken from the World Development Indicators, 2004 (produced by the World Bank) and are based on expenditure and not income. The corresponding figures show the percentage of people living below the poverty line of \$1 per day, at the national level;

4. Data taken from Jayasuriya (2002) except for j and j'. means the data is taken from Government of Nepal (2003). j' means the data is taken from the background paper on "Poverty Over Time" in Prensushi (1999). Data for 1995-96 (a) * is taken from the World Development

Indicators, 2004 (produced by the World Bank) and are based on expenditure and not income. The corresponding figures show the percentage of people living below the poverty line of \$1 per day, at the national level;

5.. All the data pertaining to the year 1995-96 is taken from iayasuriya (2002). In Sri Lanka, the Ginis are for Locom consumption Gini for 1995/96 was 0.33. 1995/96 was affected by a severe drought and that is likely to have resulted in a higher than normal level of income poverty; data from a survey that was conducted by the Central Bank in the following year estimated national poverty to be almost the same as that in 1990/91, though the surveys are not strictly comparable. 1995-96 (a)* means the data is taken from the World Development Indicators, 2004 (produced by the World Bank) and are based on expenditure and not income. The corresponding figures show the percentage of people living below the poverty line of \$1 per day at the national level. o means the data is taken from: Regaining Sri Lanka: Vision and Strategy for Accelerated Development, Govt. of Sri Lanka, December, 2002. pp 132.

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