



Sociological theory in India: a crisis

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Abstract

Through the use of existing theoretical and methodological skills, sociology should be converted into a "policy science," contributing to policy creation and implementation. Classic sociological theories' epistemic and cultural bases are informative in understanding what goes into the construction of social ideas. Theorists were able to establish approaches/methods for comprehending their modern society, which was crystallising and giving normative direction. Indian sociology has kept its linkages to European sociological traditions intact. A history philosophy and a history theory must be the foundations of any social theory that tries to explain social phenomena. Without some explicit or implicit political/moral commitments, social theory is worthless. The idea here is that the Indian sociological community should try to build theoretical frameworks by studying the history of Indian culture. This is a long-term project that will require sociologists to work together.

Keywords: Indian sociology, modern society, history theory, social theory and phenomena

Introduction

Since the birth of sociology as an academic subject in India about seven decades ago, the question of how well western sociological ideas can explain Indian society has occupied the minds of a few sociologists. A growing number of sociologists are asking this question nowadays. It indicates a crisis in the sociological community, which is a theoretical crisis. Some sociologists have begun to advocate for a new sociology of India in reaction to the crisis. Unnithan (1982, 61-92) ^[7] argues for transcendental sociology. This is a spontaneous response, yet it is well-intentioned. Sociology founded on transcendental ideas will no longer be considered empirical.

Furthermore, sociologists are unnecessary in a society founded on transcendental relationships. Another criticism derives from the fact that, unlike economics, sociology has proven to be ineffective in dealing with society's practical problems. To make sociology more relevant to everyday concerns, Nair (1982: 115-132) ^[5] thinks that sociology should be transformed into a "policy science," contributing to policy formation and implementation through the use of existing theoretical and methodological expertise. In attempting to transform sociology into a "policy science," it is important to keep in mind that sociologists may support rather than challenge political actions more often than not. Furthermore, a 'policy science' cannot pretend to be value-neutral.

This is only a small selection of the responses. There is a theory crisis, and that 'theoretical praxis' is required. So, what are the theories-building strategies? Is there a method for arriving at a theory that can be followed? Is it possible that theory construction is a creative activity? To capture the institutional processes of society and the goals and behaviours of

individuals and groups in society, it appears that theory creation requires creative imagination and variety rather than rigid specialization.

To understand what goes into constructing social ideas, it is instructive to look at classical sociological theories' epistemic and cultural underpinnings.

Emergence of Sociology

In 19th-century Western Europe, which was undergoing scientific, economic, and political revolutions, sociology originated as an empirical science. In other words, the field arose in the context of a modern science-based worldview founded on empiricist and rationalist epistemologies and political-philosophical beliefs of equality, liberty, and individualism. Classical sociologists (Comte, Marx, Weber, and Spencer) assigned themselves the job of comprehending Europe's fundamental economic, political, and social transformations. The topic of how society became what it is was raised as part of their endeavour. To find answers to this issue, researchers looked for possible meanings and directions in the history of humanity as a whole and Europe in particular. In other words, their beliefs were intertwined with historical philosophies. This is evident in Comte's mostly impressionistic evolutionary theory and Marx's analytical historical materialism. History and idealist philosophy influenced much of Weber's work.

Theorists were able to develop approaches/methods to comprehend their modern society, whose contours were crystallizing and giving normative direction to such a society, thanks to the numerous philosophies of history. Comte advocated for a positivistic science of society and spoke of a

"humanistic religion" to govern people's behaviour. There is a relationship between positivist epistemology and conservative social theory in Comte's sociology (Benton, 1977: 45) ^[1]. The goal of social science, according to Marx, was not just to comprehend society but also to alter it. He did bring out the bourgeois society's direction. The scientific and ideological components of classical sociological theories were present. However, in the early twentieth century, the logical positivist doctrine that one cannot infer what ought to be from a description of what is led to an increase in the use of statistical-positivistic methods in sociological activity as a "humanistic ethical" activity (Fletcher, 1971: 80) ^[2], and sociology as a "critical philosophy" (Marcuse). Any good study of society, according to Winch (1958:3) ^[8], must be philosophical, and any worthwhile philosophy must be concerned with the nature of human society. In essence, no social theory can exist without political or moral commitments.

Tasks ahead

Though Indian sociology has maintained ties to European sociological traditions, post-colonial India's sociological activity has been dominated by 'Academic sociology' (Gouldner, 1970: 20) ^[3], as it developed in the United States. As a result, there is a growing historical positivist trend in Indian sociology. Attempts to construct alternative theories, in my opinion, necessitate a severe understanding of Indian history to arrive at possible meanings and directions of institutional processes, desires, and actions of individuals and groups in Indian society. It's essential to keep in mind that there is no single objective history of Indian society. We have various histories (Thapar, 1966:16-22) ^[6]: (a) Macaulay's history of India, which despises everything Indian; (b) the German romanticists' history of India, which viewed Indian society as emphasizing spiritual rather than material aspects, which helped to build the image that Indian society is spiritualistic and western society is materialistic. This image bolsters the west's technological superiority in the modern technological era; (c) the Jesuits' history of India, with its emphasis on ethnography and Indology; and (d) The history of India written by British administrators, which highlighted India's dynastic history and provided a specific interpretation of the emergence of institutions such as caste. Marxist historical and social theory has remained on the periphery of the sociological community's concerns. As previously said, this could be attributable in part to the dominance of 'Academic Sociology.'

Conclusion

To sum up, a social theory that aims to explain social phenomena must be founded on a history philosophy and a history theory. It should be acknowledged that social theory is meaningless without some stated or tacit political/moral commitments. What is being claimed here is that the Indian sociological community must seek to construct theoretical frameworks by reading Indian civilization's past. This is a long-term undertaking that necessitates collaboration among sociologists.

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