

Sociology in the Context of Globalisation

Issues and Challenges in India

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Any exercise in mapping the current status of any social science discipline is a mammoth task, as it involves the normative concerns as well as the personal perceptions of the sociologist who treads this path. The focus of this paper is on certain challenges that have been posed by the present circumstances that include globalisation as well as changes that have come about in the Indian polity and society due to other factors. explore and examine the state of sociology and its future in the country.[Address at the Social Scientists' Meet on Emerging Problems of Social Sciences in the Context of Globalisation. ICSSR (NW Regional Centre), Chandigarh, July 26, 2005.]

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One of the most frequently used concepts to explain the changing character of contemporary societies is that of globalisation. Most of us who are familiar with the works of social scientists like Bruadel and Wallerstein are aware of the world system theory and are not surprised at the arrival of this concept. Some of the seminal works in history attribute the idea of globalisation to the 19th century, which was the age of capital and imperialism. We also find ideas like “unification of globe by disease’ in which epidemics like plague and influenza have been dealt with as the major indicators of how the medieval maritime trade also combined the world through the spread of these epidemics. Then what is new about the present globalisation? The experts opine that there is something distinct about the present phase of globalisation. Since the objective of this paper is to situate the discipline of sociology in the age of globalisation, it is relevant to understand the meaning and significance of globalisation.

Globalisation is generally regarded as the movement of people and goods across regions and nations without hindrance. It may be understood as a process through which the people across state boundaries simultaneously experience certain forms of information, entertainment and market. This simultaneity of the experience continues to expand and seems like threatening to become total. Information and entertainment are combined in a number of ways. For example, the satellite media is a source of both entertainment and information. The Internet performs the same function. It is the market or the capital, which has the dominating influence. As it happened at the time of the

collapse of the feudal world that the spatial and temporal boundaries of the estates were destroyed by the emerging capitalism, the globalisation is undermining the state boundaries to create a uniform world system. Whether there are chances of its success or not is a matter of discussion. This simultaneity of experience, however, has opened numerous possibilities for the individuals to transcend certain limitations imposed by their systems. At the same time, the simultaneity of experience is not universal. It has included as well as excluded certain groups and classes from it. In fact the process of globalisation assumes that two classes come to exist, one that interacts by overcoming the limitations imposed by the nation-state boundaries, and the other that is excluded from this interaction [Judge 2003].

Indian society is passing through rapid social change. These changes have been induced by many international and national factors. The liberalisation of the Indian economy and rapid technological changes have together ushered in a revolution of a sort in the lives of the people. Information technology has changed the meaning of trade and commerce and new notions, like e-commerce, have begun to capture people's minds. The rise of media and communication system has completely altered the people's way of looking at the external world. The domination of market economy has initiated the process of globalisation, which is cutting across the national boundaries. All these processes are going to have both desirable and undesirable social consequences. In this context the role of social sciences becomes very crucial so as to examine and work out the measures to integrate society with the rapid economic and technological changes. Lyotard (1999) is of the view that postmodern thinking is a consequence of post-industrial society in which the nature and content of the pursuit of knowledge have radically changed. The pursuit of knowledge is no more an end in itself; rather it is asked 'what is the use of getting the knowledge?' The policy of Indian state has made a definite shift in favour of privatisation, liberalisation and globalisation. It is beginning to affect the university system as an activity of public sector sphere. The privatisation of education and the challenge posed by the foreign universities have created the environment in which there is a need to have a fresh look at the state of affairs of sociology and other social sciences in the country.

Any exercise in mapping the current status of any social science discipline is a mammoth task, as it involves the normative concerns as well as the personal perceptions of the sociologist who treads this path. In this paper, I am not going into the history of emergence of this discipline, but rather focus on certain challenges that have been posed by the present circumstances. I have used the expression 'present circumstances', because whatever is happening to the discipline of sociology is not entirely due to the process of globalisation. It is my submission that the state of affairs of Indian society, polity and economy has a lot to do with what is happening. Let us begin by pointing out certain important facts with regard to social sciences in general and sociology in particular.

1. Social sciences have western European origin. It is due to this historical fact that theory and method have remained predominantly western. Sociology emerged as a conservative reaction to the Enlightenment.
2. With the revolution in biological sciences in the 19th century, the social sciences progressively got connected with positivist tradition. In this regard, claims of sociologists that sociology is a science began right from its emergence. As a result, sociology as a discipline developed peculiarities of its own in the sense that there has been a continuous attempt to claim the status of science as well as endeavour to devise methods of sociological research. Externality, constraint, social facts as things, causation, independent variable – all these expressions and concepts became popular in the struggle of sociologists to elevate sociology equal to the status of natural sciences.
3. Significant growth of social sciences took place after the end of Second World War. The post-1945 period has been characterised by the domination of the USA, which funded huge projects, particularly in the field of area studies [Wallerstein 1997].
4. Within the social sciences the development was not uniform. As pointed out by Braudel (1981), economics felt less constrained because it had leaned to side with the state.
5. In India the development of social sciences was linked to colonial education.
6. India experienced tremendous expansion of universities and research institutes. This expansion was massive and reached its saturation point in the 1980s. Its saturation was

not linked with the academic and research requirements, but with the financial capability and change in the perspective of the Indian state.

7. It is wrong to assume that in spite of the western origin of theory and method the growth of social sciences in India lacked autonomy. In this regard, I would like to mention the mode of production debate, which began in the late-sixties and continued in the following decade. It is important to remember that at the time of this debate the 'development of underdevelopment' was the dominant thesis of discourse, which was not the major issue in India. What is notable about the mode of production debate in Indian agriculture is the participation of not only the economists (who in fact started it) but also of political scientists, historians, anthropologists and sociologists. The second instance of the autonomy of the Indian social scientists is the emergence of 'subaltern history', that may be stated as coming from historians predominantly educated from the western universities. But what is remarkable about them is their commitment to the understanding of Indian history by using empirical techniques, which are not as systematic as these are in sociology and it is always possible to doubt the validity of such findings on the basis of established and standardised techniques. It may be pointed out that the influence of Annales School of French historians and some postmodernist ideas is obvious, but the contribution of subaltern history cannot be ignored.

In the backdrop of the above observations, it is worthwhile to explore and examine the state of sociology and its future in the country. It may be stated at the outset that though most of the issues raised in the discussion can be observed and substantiated, in terms of looking at the future, certain arguments offered here are conjectural.

I

Sociology and Social Sciences

It may be argued that that the past, present and future of sociology cannot be separated from those of other social sciences. However, all the social sciences cannot be put at the same pedestal, because the growth and development of all social science disciplines implicate different historical trajectories despite the fact that they have common origin in terms of space. Certain social science disciplines, such as economics, have shown great

expansion, and going by the arguments of Braudel, largely due to its intimate interaction with the state. Conversely, history has remained one of the most contentious disciplines in terms of the construction of national past. In recent years, history remains in the forefront of controversies in India. We can thus situate sociology and its growth in this unequal development of social science disciplines. The crucial importance of sociology has been a result of its fieldwork tradition, which is linked with positivist orientation.

In the light of the above observation, it may be pointed out that the new avatar of globalisation, namely the market, is emerging as the decisive element in the newly formed industry of higher education (ironically it already existed at the level of primary education). Two things are coming out as a result of this. First, new education entrepreneurs that are emerging are trying to make a quick buck. Secondly, certain courses are more market friendly due to which the educational entrepreneurs are entering into specific disciplines. Placed in these two contexts are social sciences that are being ignored because of their low value in the market. This situation has its own dialectical consequence. On the one hand, the social sciences, particularly sociology, are not drawing the attention of educational entrepreneurs and on the other, this low value may threaten their existence. So long as institutions are sustaining certain social science courses and research, the future may seem secure. Over a period of time, the logic of market forces is going to eliminate those courses that are not useful in the sense that management courses are. In other words, sociology is faced with the threat of extinction if it does not prove to be marketable, but owing to its institutional context in India it has better life chances.

In recent years the environmental movements have made the states aware of their responsibility of safeguarding the environment of their territories. Now industrial project can only be cleared by the government if the environment is not adversely affected as well as the social survey of the population affected by the project for the purpose of proper rehabilitation is not carried out. This situation has made sociology useful. There are many other areas in which sociologists are finding themselves in competition with other social science disciplines to prove their worth. However, there are certain areas that should have been legitimately monopolised by sociologists, but it has not happened like this. The first is communalism largely dominated by historians and political scientists,

whereas the other is farmers' suicide on which the economists are offering plausible but historically refutable arguments. Though such issues substantiate Wallerstein's argument in favour of interdisciplinary approach in teaching and research, yet sociological research tends to lag behind other disciplines in taking up new challenges.

II

Institutional Context

No social science discipline can grow without an institutional context. Institutions are indispensable for achieving excellence in any area of research. Gone are the days when motivated individuals could pursue their research with passion. At present this passion requires institutional base. Sometimes a scholar's institutional affiliation becomes an index of his being good/not so good/bad. To know the future trends of social science research, we must examine the nature and health of the institutions. There are two broad streams in the institutional context. First, there are universities and colleges that are engaged in teaching and research and secondly, there are institutions, which are involved in research only. The University Grants Commission (UGC) and the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) are the two main apex bodies that fund research in the social sciences. Whereas the former is also the policy maker of the university system and in the process aims at ensuring the high standards of teaching and research, the latter is exclusively involved in funding the research in the universities and the research institutes. In some of the ICSSR-funded institutes we also find M. Phil and PhD programmes being run quite successfully.

With few exceptions colleges are predominantly involved in teaching at the undergraduate level and the research orientation and practice remains poor. There are colleges that offer postgraduate courses and are expected to involve in research activities. At the college levels we have government as well as private colleges. Till recently, universities were autonomous bodies funded by the union or state government. The privatisation and liberalisation has opened the doors to the private universities on the line of the US. We now also expect the entry of foreign universities either independently or in

collaboration with certain local institutions. Globalisation process has transformed the education into a kind of industry.

What kinds of institutions are required to meet the challenge of globalisation? What is the present state of affairs in India? In other words, are the Indian universities sufficiently equipped to meet this challenge? One of the most important features of an institution is its response to changing environment or its ability to adapt according to the situation with the sole purpose of achieving excellence so as to draw more and more 'consumers'. Indian universities, to begin with, are poorly equipped to meet any challenge (with few exceptions). One major reason is the bureaucratisation of universities. If we divide the entire university staff between teachers and administrative staff, then we shall find that the proportion of teachers is far less than even half of the total. Most of the energy of the universities is expended in conducting examinations, evaluation and declaring results. Rajivlochan (2003) has identified the examination system as the major reason for the decline in the educational institutions in the country. He is quite right, but that does not sufficiently explain the downward slide of universities.

It may be remembered that a university is an organisation that is headed by its chief executive called the vice-chancellor. The appointment of the vice-chancellor is the function of the government - centre or state does not matter here. The governments have not worked out a transparent system of appointing a vice-chancellor so far. Political affiliations and influence work in the appointment – something that is quite prevalent in the Indian society at the higher levels. It is however possible to work out a system of transparency. In other words, universities, as is expected from educational institutions, do not present a picture of institutions of distinction. The vice-chancellors generally run the universities as organisations the running of whom is an end in itself. Instead of promoting academic excellence, most of the vice-chancellors trapped in expending their energies in smoothly managing the universities. The consequences from such a scenario can be anticipated.

There has been a general opinion that shows the typical peasant consciousness (may be it is a part of our collective unconscious) that there is a decline in our standards in teaching and research. The issue would be discussed later on, but here its institutional context may be pointed out. The way the notion of decline is generally expressed is

symptomatic of a tendency to glorify past. The view that emerges is that the British at the time of creating the universities, which at that time were nothing but instruments of conducting examinations, created the best. Such a notion is misplaced. However, whatever might have been the rate of decline these universities are still performing a crucial role. The crisis has emerged from the bureaucratisation and bureaucratic control over the universities. This bureaucratisation has made the universities non-responsive to the changing conditions and emerging challenges of globalisation.

When we talk about research in the institutional context, it may not be assumed that the low quality of research is solely confined to the Indian universities. Let me inform you that even the research institutions created by the ICSSR do not score better than universities in this context. The only way they are better is that they are more efficient in churning out the reports after reports. These reports do not have much intellectual content. The case of the ICSSR, created in 1969, is quite interesting how the apex body of social science research undergoes a change. Chatterjee (ibid. 3607) informs:

There is no doubt that the permanent staff of the ICSSR increased significantly through the 1980s and the expenditure on its own administration ate up a large part of the grants received from the government. In 1996-97, for instance, the ICSSR received a total grant of Rs.9.69 crore from the government of India. Of this, Rs.4.64 crore, i.e., 47.9 per cent, went as grants to the ICSSR research institutes. Only Rs. 40 lakh, i.e., just over 4 per cent, was given as research grants to scholars, while a whopping Rs. 2.25 crore, i.e., 23 per cent, was spent under various heads on the ICSSR's own administration.

The fund disbursing institutions, such as the UGC and the ICSSR, which fund major research project, do it so through the universities. Most of these universities have their own rules of conducting the projects. The researcher, who is the project director (principal investigator), ceases to be a researcher, but turns into an administrator acting through the maze of complex and tedious rules along with handling the university bureaucracy. Why do these organisations not fund the project directly by making the researcher accountable for carrying it out? The answer to this question is to be located in the way the Indian state has formulated the rules regarding accountability. Bureaucratisation is the major crisis point in the ability of the Indian universities to meet the challenge of globalisation through the entry of foreign universities. The process of globalisation in which the emergence of the private universities and the entry of the

foreign universities through collaboration is not going to uniformly affect the existing system of teaching. It would largely depend upon the regional disparities in the academic institutions. The central universities have better chances of responding to the challenge in comparison to the state funded institutions.

III

Regional Disparities

The issue of regional disparities signifies the uneven development of the Indian society and it has much to do with the evolution of Indian state and its changing character from welfare approach to free market economy in which the educational institutions have also been covered. The discussion in this section, however, is confined to the teaching and research in sociology though it equally applies to other social sciences. The process of globalisation is contributing to the accentuation of these disparities. What we are witnessing is the classical phenomenon of the formation of centre and periphery. Till the end of 1970s the teaching and research in sociology did not show much of polarisation. There were a large number of universities around the country, which could be regarded as centres of excellence. Let us quote Deshpande (205:15) on this issue:

Despite the 'spirit of the age' leaning in the direction of democratisation and inclusionism, there is also an undeniable increase in all kinds of inequalities in the academy. The more obvious of these relate to the funding disparities mentioned above [we shall take up this issue in the next section], but a significant portion is due to other non-resource-related reasons that we need to study more closely. In other words, the overall gap between the handful of 'elite' institutions and the rest is much wider than the strictly resource-related gap, and has increased in recent times.... The net effect of this is to increase the already wide gap between a few elite institutions, specially those in Delhi, and the higher education set up in the rest of the country.

Deshpande's observations on the state of affairs of the academic institutions are based on a wrong premise. In the age of globalisation, it is not inclusionism but exclusionism, which is the guiding spirit. Thus disparities are a natural corollary to the privatisation and liberalisation. He has, however, presented the true picture of the state of affairs of academy. The reasons for few institutions in Delhi dominating are well known and there is no need to dwell upon the same. We may rather comment upon the way these institutions have been evolved and made to function.

Let us start with the ICSSR-funded research institutions. It may be reminded that most of the ICSSR's institutes were created by eminent social scientists, mostly economists. There are two kinds of institutes that can be identified from the above perspective, namely, fully funded and partially funded. Most of the fully funded institutions are located in Delhi, whereas the partially funded institutions are situated in various states of India. In the case of the latter, the state governments do the rest of the funding. Such institutes face various kinds of problems in getting the funds as well as in faculty development. The net result is that the fully funded institutes do better than the others.

The university system also has the similar character, that is, we have central universities and the state universities. Whereas the former are fully funded by the Union Government of India, the latter get some grant from the UGC, but they survive on the state government funding. One may raise the question as to what is going to be the future of these academic institutions as a result of privatisation. It seems that this process least threatens the central universities. Since most of the central universities are located in the metropolitan centres, it is quite obvious that they are supported by elite and do not seem to have much problems in funding. However, the state universities have been experiencing the impact. Most of these universities have become market oriented by introducing applied courses and are charging very high fees. In the process, the admission and tuition fees of the social science courses have also been raised. Privatisation has turned the state universities into institutions that are catering to the needs of ambitious middle classes. The poor have been left out in this commodification of the higher education. Since subjects like sociology are thought to be not having much career options, the fee hike has led to the decline in the number of students seeking admission.

It is quite obvious that the process of globalisation is leading to the widening of regional disparities, but the issue does not end here. It can also be observed that through the UPSC and the UGC – NET examinations the dominant centres have been deciding the course contents of sociology to be taught everywhere in the country invariably at the cost of certain local preferences. Simultaneously, there is a tendency to move to the elite institutions among the faculty as if only at places like Delhi and Mumbai their intellectual abilities would be fully realised and recognised.

It has neither been acknowledged nor articulated that language has contributed most significantly to creating centre-periphery relations in this country. There is so much talk about teaching in one's mother tongue that it has become a kind of political issue. Sometimes, listening to the discourses of well-known social scientists in anglicised English about the need for using the mother tongue in higher education seems so farcical that one feels like treating it a tragedy. The visible decline in sociological research in certain regions of the country coincides with the introduction of the vernacular languages. Very limited attempts have been made by the universities in the country to write, prepare and translate the standard textbooks to be made available in the vernacular languages as a result of which the entire market was opened to the third rate help books. We thus have a centre speaking and writing in English with an international reach, whereas a majority is left with teaching in vernacular languages at the periphery and is competing for jobs within the state creating necessary conditions for the emergence or reinforcement of nativism.

Interestingly, it is at the centre (not the periphery) that lots of discourses are found regarding the declining standards of research and teaching. Who are responsible for it? At least at the level of the faculty most of the professors at the centre are responsible for it, because they are the most frequent members of the selection committees. If you ask them for their reason for making third-rate appointments, then you may hear them saying that local politics or the pressure of the vice-chancellors led to this or that appointment. Where does the buck stop?

IV

Role of the State

Understanding the role of the Indian state requires explorations in different dimensions of the institutions and academic practices. Let us first begin with the institutions. We all know that in the post-independence period there was a tremendous expansion of the higher education in the world. In the case of the West this fact has been well noticed by Hobsbaum (1996). Similar kind of phenomenon could be observed in India though its reasons were different from those of the West, as the independent India was struggling to improve the quality of its human resource. According to Chitnis (1997), the enrolment in the institutions of higher education in India rose by 81.48 per cent between 1951 and

1961 and 108 per cent between 1961 and 1971. Shah (2005) has given an updated picture of the enormous growth of academic institutions thus “During the 90 years, from 1857 to 1947, the number of universities increased from 3 to 19, it increased to about 320 in the 58 years between 1947 and 2005, i.e., roughly at the rate of five universities a year. Similarly, while the number of colleges increased from about 27 to 500 during 1857-1947, it increased to about 16,000 during 1947-2005, i.e., roughly at the rate of 268 colleges a year”. Though Shah has not provided details about the years and it is difficult to know at what point of time the major expansion took place, yet we are familiar with the enormous expansion of the academic institutions that has taken place after independence. Sociology is now taught in 100 universities [UGC 2001]. According to the UGC (ibid.), about 10,000 teachers of sociology are involved in teaching at graduate and postgraduate levels and half of the departments of sociology in the country are unable to fill the quota of seats.

Most of the expansion had taken place by the end of 1980s. It is worthwhile to note that the University Grants Commission has been controlling all these institutions of higher education. According to Deshpande (2005), we have reached the stage of “end of state expansion” and, “There are very wide disparities across states and disciplines, with many states having had to impose a ban on fresh recruitments and some having been unable even to pay salaries. So the ultimate impact on institutions varies enormously, especially by degree of dependence on central versus state government funding”. In the general context, the above observation is correct, but we have to seriously examine the underlying phenomenon. The Indian state is progressively withdrawing from its responsibility in education in general and higher education in particular that has been attributed to the LPG (Liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation). The economic interests of the political and economic elite are transforming education into industry. It is a kind of movement of education from social sector to the private market-oriented sector in which acquiring education is the responsibility of the individuals. The perspective of improving human capital through knowledge and skills so as to transform society in the direction of attainment of better quality of life and national progress has been pushed to the backseat.

Finally, the state, through the ICSSR, the UGC and other institutions, is the most significant in influencing the nature of research, particularly by funding that research which is in accordance with its priorities. For example, research in planning, land reforms, poverty eradication, futurology, etc. at different points of time since independence were because of the wishes of the Indian state. In the present state of affairs the role of social sciences with the possible exception of economics is being undermined by the state.

V

Transcending Local Limitations

We have so far talked about the negative dimensions and consequences of globalisation on social sciences in general and sociology in particular. However, globalisation has also changed the research and teaching of sociology in a big way. A considerable amount of literature is available in numerous websites that can be browsed through as and when a teacher/researcher/student finds difficulty in finding some books or journals in the university library. Let me elucidate this point through a personal experience. Recently, I came across a concept 'root metaphor' in a book by an Indian sociologist, but I could not find any illustration of the concept. This led to the belief that it could be a very popular concept that escaped my attention. However, I did not remain ignorant for long as there were many websites elucidating this concept put forward by a philosopher Stephen Pepper. The present pleasant scenario may not remain so far long, as there is every possibility that one has to pay for getting the requisite knowledge and information through Internet. Even then what to find and where to find would remain the privilege of Internet surfer.

Still more important for the academic institutions in India is that globalisation has begun to destroy the feudal informal structure marked by patronage. It has started destroying the informal structures that were facilitating and impeding the academic interactions. Earlier, a social scientist who was pursuing research and publishing articles might not have got noticed because he did not have any informal patron/godfather. Western scholars used to help themselves by talking only about their own work. Now the things have undergone a change. If a new scholar wants to work in a particular area, then what he has to do is to browse through the internet to find the relevant material. In the

process, he would come across all those who have done work in that area irrespective of whether they have godfathers or not. The globalisation is making it possible for academicians to become global on the basis of their own work.

The revolution in information technology has transcended national boundaries and we may now look forward to the formation of transnational identities. The process though has taken place through various academic bodies that are basically voluntary organisations, like International Sociological Association, even prior to the current changes, yet what is happening now is quite phenomenal. According to Deshpande (2005), intensification of international interactions has occurred due to globalisation, but it is more with the western countries. Obviously, any interaction that is mediated by technology would benefit those who are more advanced in technological development.

VI

Research: Current Status and Issue of Indigeneity

To what extent are the paradigms of social science knowledge shifting and expanding? Indian sociologists have started debating the issue of indigeneity of sociology. Is it a case of glocalisation under the impact of globalisation? The issue requires examination at different level of sociological practice, the foremost being theory and method. The western practice is based on certain universal principles of rationality that are being continuously questioned and re-examined in both natural sciences and social sciences. However, the issue of indigeneity may be understood in terms of the object of analysis, which is Indian society. Do theories and methods of western origin prove to be adequate, effective and useful in understanding the Indian society? In other words, we have begun to raise doubts about the globalisation of theory and method that took place during the colonial period. Sociology as a discipline was introduced in India during the colonial period and, in the beginning, ethnography was the method with considerable theories about two issues, namely, caste and the village communities. Sociology and social anthropology intertwined in a way that not much difference could be discerned in the initial stages. In the post-independence period, social anthropologist moved to sociology and it still took a long time to introduce the empirical techniques developed and refined

by American sociologists. Even now strict boundaries do not exist between the two; nor are they desirable.

How should we go about the evaluation of the sociological research hitherto done in India? Despite the increase in the number of PhDs the quality has declined considerably [Deshpande 2005]. Anybody involved in the evaluation of PhD dissertations would know it better than others. It is not simply the quality of the research done at the level of Ph Ds that requires serious pondering, but also the way such a research is accepted and positively evaluated. The first culprit is the compromise of the honourable professors who appointed non-deserving people on faculty positions. The second reason is the development of networking among the mediocrity. There are cliques that help each other out and the consequence is the transformation of various departments into PhD manufacturing units and some teachers becoming expert in guiding students in an efficient manner. Most of such individuals could have done well in business. It has also come to the notice that one can buy PhD from the market, as one buys a toothbrush. Obviously the price is quite high, but it is not as high as the value of a scooter. In other words, we also have got PhDs valued in the market situation. Such dissertations, written by ghostwriters, can only go through if the networking helps in *via-voce* examinations. One can imagine the fate of the institutions that would employ such PhD degree holders. If you reject a thesis in the *viva voce* examination or a local candidate in the selection committee, you will become unpopular and may not be invited in future for such assignment. Or if you are regarded as strict, you will be avoided. Globalisation can do nothing wrong to such institutions.

Despite all these limitations, sociology has grown as one of the major social science disciplines in the country. The number of books and articles giving evidence of high standard research has increased. Many regional associations are publishing their own research journals. A considerable proportion of the articles published in the journals show an evidence of research of high quality. On top of this many universities are bringing out the social science journals. Similarly, the research institutes and some departments of are also bringing out their own journals. The kind of analysis Chatterjee (2002) has made on the basis of two journals is indicative of an elite perspective. We should also not ignore the journals published in the regional languages though the

mainstream sociologists ignore such efforts and fail to make an assessment of the value and quality of such research.

Concluding Remarks

The market orientation in the age of globalisation will be progressively premised on the question of the usefulness of sociology. Students have already started asking how doing sociology would help in their career orientations. However, a lot depends upon the level of research and the issue taken up by the discipline that addresses the practical problems of our society without ignoring the production of basic knowledge. To what extent privatisation will be of help is the moot question that requires serious thinking. Chatterjee (ibid.: 3612) is of the view that “privatisation cannot be the answer to the problems that social science research faces in South Asia today. The type of research that private sponsors, consisting mostly of international development agencies, need from developing countries has no intellectual content. These sponsors have no interest in funding institutions that can only promise to produce new knowledge and a new generation of trained social scientists in 10 or 20 years.” However, providing a solution to the declining standards of research and teaching in various universities may be a quixotic exercise, as most of the steps required to reform the system are known to everybody. One may go along with Deshpande (2002) that the declining interest in social sciences is due to the withdrawal of the middle class elite from the social sciences, but it does not provide any solution, because the middle classes cannot be dissuaded from its present orientation. In his recent article Shah (2005) has already shown how various strategies of the UGC have miserably failed. I would like to end the discussion with a note of caution. In the process of criticising the discipline we should keep in mind that that in fact at certain levels sociology has grown well and there is much more number of good researchers now than in the past.

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