Political Sociology in India

CONTEMPORARY TRENDS

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1

What is Political Sociology?

To understand the scope and specifics of political sociology it is necessary to position this sub-discipline within the broader framework of the discipline of sociology. Political sociology is not simply a little political science that sociologists do on the side, but is an integral component of sociology. Without grounding itself firmly in this base, political sociology would lack a disciplined focus. It is sociology in the first place that provides the ground level orientation to scholars who proceed to specialize in political sociology. For this reason it is best to be aware of the basic charter of sociology, for only then one can fully appreciate what sociologists do when they specialize in "political sociology".

DISCIPLINARY SPECIFICS OF SOCIOLOGY

The answer to the question: what is political sociology? cannot therefore be a brief one, but demands an excursion, however quick, over the field of sociology. It will soon be noticed that all disciplines (and sociology is no exception) are grouped retrospectively, and do not emerge a priori from any hidden essence. What this means is that disciplines do not emerge fully fleshed with the original founder: most often the founder is unaware of being one, or having performed what later generations believe was the foundational act. When we reflect on the origins of physics, chemistry, philosophy, linguistics and even sociology, we come to realize that most of these terms are modern, and when they are not, (such as philosophy and linguistics) they are constituted very differently today from the way there were in the past. For instance, Herodotus, or later Guicciardina are now considered by modern scholars to be the founders of the discipline

of history, but they certainly did not see themselves as such. Physics, chemistry, history, etc., are taught and practiced today quite at variance from the way they were in the eighteenth century or even later in the nineteenth century. Therefore, when we set out to understand disciplines it is not as if each designated discipline grew out of an original act, but that a set of scholarly practices are grouped and regrouped retrospectively under particular disciplinary labels. The contents of disciplines keep changing over time, often dramatically, as with medicine after germ theory; on other occasions the changes are so subtle and gradual that they often go unnoticed. In the west, for instance, medical training now includes surgery, which it did not do in the eighteenth century, but it does not include philosophy, as it once did in the late Middle Ages.

Sociology had a founder in the person of August Comte who publicly declared the term and his role as progenitor of the discipline. But in fact sociology as it is practiced today is a far cry from Comte's idea of it; nearly as far as Hippocratic medicine is from germ theory. Sociology did not really begin with Comte, but grew out of certain scholarly practices that gave salience to particular themes, around which conceptual and theoretical schemes evolved. The term sociology usefully labelled these practices. Because Comte first coined the term, he gets more prominence than is properly his share.

Robert Nisbet was quite right when he argued that sociology came into its own in the latter decades of the nineteenth century when European intellectuals realized the importance of community and group ties in moulding individual action (Nisbet, 1966: 740). To see individuals as free agents, facing no resistance from collective social relations was either a species of utilitarianism, or of radical positivism. Talcott Parsons drew sociological attention to the fact that both utilitarians and radical positivists are unable to factor the normative world in understanding human action. For utilitarians, individuals were in sovereign independence, buying and selling in the market place; and as for the positivists, it was scientific knowledge and not social relations, primordial ties, or the multiple choices of value orientations that were important (Parsons, 1974). It is because sociology places greater emphasis on these latter features that the collective (group or category) has a central position within the discipline.

This collective has sui generic properties, which, while open to scientific examination, is neither an aggregate of individuals (as in utilitarianism) nor a carrier of perfectly distributed scientific knowledge (as in radical positivism). For this reason sociologists are no longer motivated today, as Comte was in his time, by the desire to replace religion with science, nor have they the ambition of setting up new moral standards for society. The Comtean vision where social engineering was paramount and where professors of science could legislate is definitely out. What, then, is in?

As sociology is the child of the Enlightenment, not in its youth but in its bruised and mature stage, it is predisposed towards themes that have the collective at the centre. This is why sociology examines issues like roles, statuses, social structure, family, religion, etc. Each of these themes is meaningless without the collective aspect being implicit in them. Or again when sociologists discuss ideology, it is not as if the issue is examined in terms of the pure idea, or in terms of its internal coherences and structure, but rather to understand how social factors either influence or undermine certain thought streams. If the issue is religion then again it is not a question of furnishing a theological discourse but rather to scrutinize the manner in which certain religious beliefs and practices grow, how they are observed, and who observes them, meeting what kind of social exigency, and so forth.

THE CENTRALITY OF THE COLLECTIVE IN SOCIOLOGY

In sociological practices of this kind, whether they be of Emile Durkheim, or Max Weber, or Karl Max, the common assumption is that neither Robinson Crusoe, nor a purely autonomous construction of the individual, is a useful template for understanding human action. And yet, because sociologists study action at the level of the collective this should not be taken to mean that the individual is analytically unimportant to them. In sociology collectives are not understood as eternal entities, but rather as dynamic phenomena that change, grow and arise because individual actions pressure collectivities. It is not as if collective phenomena bend immediately to each such individual

pressure, but the totality of these particularistic contributions attain a life of their own, sui generis as held by Durkheim (1938), which is not directly reducible to individual needs or exhortations. This is how the individual is analytically important for sociological theory. Without giving the individual this conceptual space, sociology would be unable to come to terms with issues of social transformation with any degree of authenticity.

This would mean that while the need for change, or revolution, can be felt by individuals qua individuals, the ultimate mobilization has a certain autonomy which can be understood only at the collective level. Even when individuals observe customs and traditions there are always minute differences in these observances, both synchronically and dyachronically (over time). Through these small variations, large bodies of tradition are constantly evolving. The fact that certain kinds of human ingenuity get more or less purchase than others is important to sociologists for they draw attention to the social forces that condition these outcomes. In addition, historical factors, such as wars, famines, or inventions, privilege certain kinds of customary observances over others leading to disputes regarding what is traditional. Traditions thus change without one's full awareness of it. Today cassette culture has transformed the ways people perform community festivals, but it is not as if there was ever any conscious effort to break away from tradition, nor is it that individuals have singly made this difference (see Manuel, 1993). It is true that certain individuals started the process, but what is important for sociology is the examination of why certain initiatives make greater headway than others and become institutionalized practice. Once institutionalized, these practices both *constrain* and *inform* subsequent individual performances.

SOCIOLOGY AND PSYCHOLOGY

In this sense, a lone idiosyncracy is outside the scope of sociology, but group or category wide idiosyncracies, even deviance, are not. For instance, sociology helps us to understand criminal behaviour and tries to demonstrate why criminality exists in all societies, and why certain kinds of crimes dominate certain societies. This is not the same as looking at a criminal from a

psychological point of view. Psychologists try to understand how an individual's background and somatic make up, have contributed to the committing of a particular action. This is what separates the two disciplines quite profoundly. While in sociology an individual action is an *instance* of the collective (category or group), in psychology, an individual action is an *outcome* of the peculiar mix that social, somatic and biographical variables have arrived at in the person concerned. It is not uniqueness, or lack of it, that separates individuals and collectives, for the latter can be unique too. The difference is that in sociology the collective not only exists independent of individual manifestation, but constrains individual behaviour—without necessarily determining it. In sociology it is this constraint, and not pure determination, that is emphasized, which is why there is always room for change. But social change too, as we had pointed out a little while back, is not simply reducible to the individual or to the individual's drive and persistence. In fact social change is a prime example of collective effort, for individual pressures when quantitatively added undergo a qualitative transformation. This is why it would be incorrect to reduce the collective to the individual. It would be equally wrong to assume that individuals are unthinking bearers of the collective.

While human action is a common concern for both sociology and psychology, it is the way in which it is apprehended that marks the divide. In sociology human behaviour is an *instance* of, and is *constrained* by, the collective, and in psychology human behaviour is an *outcome* of internal drives and biographical specifics. In psychology individual behaviour is not an instance of the collective, or of anything else. To say that it could be an instance of the Oedipus complex, or of the collective unconsciousness, or of sibling rivalry, is not the same as saying that it is an instance of the collective. This is so because there is no collective out there with these complexes that when aggregated qualitatively transforms the complexes, or unconscious states. If such a qualitative transformation were to take place in any unconscious component of human behaviour because of collective bonding, then sociology would move in and take over. Psychological phenomena are therefore general, but they are not in any way collective. The crucial distinction is that if they were collective then serial additions would transform the aggregate. The

whole, as Durkheim said, is greater than the sum total of its parts. The fact that the libido, or the Oedipus and Electra complexes, exist in some of us, or in all of us, does not change the character of these psychological variables. They exist as general phenomena such that if all the ids and unconscious states were added up, no qualitative transformations would result in the constitution of these psychological factors.

As the general phenomena that psychologists study are not collective in character they are always uniquely balanced in the individual. If the collective element enters psychological analysis then it does so only as a boundary condition that affects individuals randomly. For sociology, on the other hand, psychological factors such as the death wish, sibling rivalries, libidinous drives, the collective unconscious, are seen as boundary conditions that affect members of the collective randomly. Those psychologists who have taken the collective seriously have often been popular intellectual figures but fared rather poorly in keeping up their practice as professional psychologists.

To sum up, when in sociology individual action is seen as an *instance* of the collective then it has the following implications: First, as Durkheim said, social facts are general because they are collective, and not the other way around (Durkheim, 1938: 9). This is unlike psychological facts which are general but not collective. Secondly, when individual acts are instances of the collective then the aggregation of these acts brings about a qualitative change which is greater than their sum total. Thirdly, the collective constrains individual action whose obverse side is that it provides a format for individuals to act upon. Individuals, therefore, are not mute bearers of the collective.

Now these specifics of the sociological orientation, as it has emerged through scholarly practices, are not of the kind that can easily be subsumed by other disciplines in the social sciences. This is why the issues sociologists study are different from those that are pursued in other specializations. The recurrent themes in sociology are those of roles, status, stratification, family and kinship, political authority, and classes, because in each of these the collective is at the centre. A sociologist is not simply concerned with what an individual does, but rather the way in which roles are being performed, statuses are being occupied, keeping in mind all the while the constraints that the collective

imposes on the individuals through duties, obligations and sanctions.

MARX, WEBER, DURKHEIM: FOUNDERS OF CONTEMPORARY SOCIOLOGY

Marx never saw himself as a sociologist—as a political economist perhaps—yet there are established academics today who believe Marx to be a foremost sociologist. Indeed Marx is taught in all mainstream departments of sociology all over the world. This is because in Marx's treatment of the mode of production, of money, of labour, or of commodities, there is an insistent recurrence of the theme that none of these can be understood other than as social relations. A capitalist is therefore not just Mr. Moneybags, but is part of the capitalist system which both offers certain opportunities as well as imposes constraints. In capitalism, for instance,contractual relationships are the dominant order of the day which weaken earlier loyalties and solidarities. Likewise, labour is not just toil, but a specific relationship that workers enter into within the capitalist system. A proletariat's labour is different from slave labour because of the nature of the system (the collective aspect) in which this work takes place (Marx, 1969: 142-50).

For Marx, individual behaviour can be grasped only within the context of the social relations that characterize each epoch. This is why Marx continues to be regarded reverentially in sociological theory, no matter what the fate has been of one time socialist societies. Durkheim, who was a more self conscious sociologist, approached the concept of the society, or the collective, much more directly. He drove home the point that society is more than the sum total of its parts, and that the collective is a phenomenon sui generis. These irrefutable sociological axioms owe their longevity to Durkheim's dogged and skillful presentation of the special place that sociology has in the social sciences. Like Marx before him, Durkheim too was a little too insistent with his case which earned him the reputation, of being dogmatic and too sociologistic. This is because Durkheim primarily saw the collective as constraining, and not as providing opportunities for, or exhibiting hiatuses and gaps which are amenable

to, human manipulation (Durkheim, 1938: 13). Marx too is blamed for stressing the materialistic dimension too deterministically without making room for individual agency. As with Marx, in the case of Durkheim too, a careful reading of their works demonstrate a greater level of subtlety which is often concealed in their zeal to press on with their significant conclusions.

Max Weber, the other leading influence in the making of contemporary sociological thought, came to the notion of the collective rather differently. Unlike Marx and Durkheim who did not problematize the subjective component of social action, Weber believed that the value dimension was central to sociological analysis. This is because individuals don't just act but find and give meaning to their action. Giving meaning to action is however not to be seen as a solipsistic enterprise, grounded deep within the interiority of the individual, but rather in terms of socially accepted genres of thinking, emoting and evaluating. Therefore individuals make their choices in life, pursue career goals, relate to other people, and contemplate on the meaning of existence, through these accepted genres of thinking prevalent within their society (see Weber, 1958: 155-80). It is true that Weber too was somewhat of an extremist, like Durkheim and Marx, much as he abhorred extremism in political life. This is because Weber often postulated cultural types and cultural predispositions rather inflexibly, leaving little room for commensurability between cultures, and for factors outside the realm of culture which may affect social life. Weber's great contribution, however, was to draw attention to the fact that individuals are not just powered by forces outside them, or act reflexively, but are thinking and even sentimental creatures. While neither Marx nor Durkheim would deny this truth, their sociologies were not sensitized in the same measure, as Weber's was, to the richness and density of the cultural sphere. Without this element, human behaviour would lose its sociological resonance and vivacity to a very significant extent.

To be able to give meaning to action would be inconceivable for Weber if individuals were to live in their own private and incommunicable worlds. After all the factor of meaning arises because one is sharing a world and cohabiting with others in a symbolic zone. The significant terms through which individuals consciously strive to give meaning to action are already there in

the collective prior to the individual, even if the individual is not always aware of this, and believes that his values and attitudes are entirely self wrought (see Parsons on this subject, 1974: 661).

The fact that the works of Marx, Durkheim and Weber are significant influences in contemporary sociological practices and not Comte or Saint-Simon, though they are routinely recalled in textbook histories of sociology, is because the discipline today visualizes the collective as being qualitatively different from aggregates, and that the whole is greater than the sum total of its parts. Individual action is thereby both constrained by, and is an instance of the collective. Interestingly, there are also some scholars who, in their lifetime, were hostile to sociology, but are now retrospectively considered to be important figures in the discipline. George Sorel (1950) is an outstanding example of this. Though he castigated sociology for what he believed was its partiality towards order and rationality, he is recommended today in most sociology courses for the following good reason. It was Sorel who forcefully, if also tendentiously, brought to our notice how powerful myths can be for bringing about social transformation once they grip the imagination of the masses. When myths are collectively appropriated they are infinitely more powerful than when they are lodged in disaggregated individual consciousnesses. Through Sorel sociologists realized that myths become potent and display strengths that may never have been suspected in them if they were to remain discretely within the individual. It is because sociology has now retrospectively regrouped and included Sorel (and here we may also add Pareto) within its fold, that its ability to understand the impact of so-called non-rational behaviour on collective life is so much richer.

POWER AND AUTHORITY — THE BASIC FEATURES OF POLITICAL SOCIOLOGY

Political sociology operates within these sociological concerns and, like any true sub-discipline, its contributions strengthen the main frame of the discipline itself. As the term quite explicitly suggests, political sociology is about politics, but only of a certain kind. While politics concerns itself with power in the broadest sense of the term, political sociology is really interested in

authority, i.e., in legitimate power. When power is legitimated it has the approbation of those who are dominated, whereas power per se has only to do with domination. It is true there are dictators and potentates who "wade through slaughter to a throne," but once there they, nevertheless, seek to legitimate their power. The extent to which they succeed or fail in this enterprise is a relevant subject for examination for political sociologists. The distinction between power and authority, therefore, explicitly or implicitly, frames all scholarship in this sub-discipline. Indeed, issues of this kind had little analytical focus before Weber's intervention. It can then be said without any hint of exaggeration, that Weber's distinction between power and authority, at one stroke, provided the key concepts for political sociology, as well as cleared the field for the growth of this specialization.

Moreover, as the above clearly implies, legitimate authority can be properly explicated only at the level of the state. Political sociology, therefore, has to do with the struggle to influence or capture state power, either directly or indirectly. This hangs together with Weber's definition of the state as the institution that legitimately *monopolizes* the means of physical coercion. If power is all about how others can be made to succumb to one's wishes, authority is about how acquiescence to this power can come from below. Accordingly, Weber distinguished between three main types of authority—traditional, rational-legal (the modern kind), and charismatic (Gerth and Mills, 1970: 295-99). The last form however is not a permanent feature, but comes up when the other two forms of governance have lost their authority and the search is on for something new. Eventually it is one or the other, either traditional or rational-legal, but charisma brings about the transition. It should however be remembered that charismatic authority is only such when it is recognized by the collective, for without this recognition it would not authority at all. More of this in a while.

Though, superficially, charisma is understood as an unique gift of the individual, yet it is only in certain settings that these special talents get full play and are commended by the collective. In a different context the same individual would perhaps not be appreciated at all, nor visualized as one with a historic mission. This again demonstrates that it is the collective that ultimately sanctions charisma.

Once the distinction between power and authority was spelt out, political sociology could look back and incorporate within its rubric earlier contributions on this subject by those who had not so self-consciously made this distinction. For example, Karl Marx's statement that the ruling ideas of an epoch are the ideas of the ruling class was interpreted earlier in an instrumentalist mould to suggest that rulers consciously forced their views on a recalcitrant population. But Weber's distinction between power and authority allowed sociologists to reinterpret the same statement of Marx to mean something quite startingly different. Though ruling class ideologies were still understood to quite clearly favour the ruling class in an objective sense, they are nevertheless subscribed to universally by both ruler and ruled. That a certain ideology gains predominance in a certain epoch is not because of elite or ruling class manipulation, but rather because social conditions favour such an outcome. Now one can fully appreciate why Marx argued that the ideology of freedom is such an important force in capitalist societies for both the bourgeoise and the proletariat. Capitalism demands that capital be free to search for the highest profit and not be tied down by guild restrictions. Concommitantly, labour too is free to look for remunerative wages without being held back by feudal and traditional obligations (see Marx and Engels, 1969). It is true that this ideology of freedom favours the capitalist more than the worker, but it is not as if the workers are reluctant believers in this matter. It is because the organization of capitalism gives the capitalists a clear edge over the working class, that the values most spontaneously and readily brought to the fore by capitalism can be called the ideas of the ruling class.

This theme has direct consequences for contemporary Marxian political sociology. It was in modern capitalist societies, after all, that democracy first developed and was subsequently consolidated. Democracy, all said and done, has to do with freedom and this idea once admitted, cannot by definition be limited to only a certain sector of the population. In other words the ideology of freedom applies to all, high and low, or else the notion itself becomes quite meaningless. This is the reason why the capitalist state, in Marxian scholarship, is structurally predisposed towards protecting and forwarding capitalism, as well as its cohort—the notion of the freedom of the individual. Capitalist

structural features and governing principles thus have a wider and much more broadly based popular appeal. Contemporary Marxists employ the term *hegemony* (borrowed from Antonioni Gramsci) to conceptualize this phenomenon, whereby the dominated accept the principles by which they are dominated, freely and of their own volition. Likewise, under feudalism, the ideology of chivalry and knight errantry, along with various kinds of patronages, were deemed legitimate by the collective, and were pursued and defended not just by the nobility and the aristocracy. If rebellions and uprisings take place, either in capitalist or in pre-capitalist societies, it is not as if they are always against the structural features of governance. Very often they are only against a particular regime which has lost its legitimacy. Revolutions on the contrary, occur when the existing principles of legitimacy have lost their authority and new ones are required to be erected in their place. It is not just a change of regime but a transformation of structure, as in France in 1792 and China in 1949.

THE NORMAL AND THE LEGITIMATE

Emile Durkheim's sociology also received some rearticulation in the light of Weber's power-authority distinction. In the *Rules of Sociological Method* (1938: 55), and elsewhere, Durkheim argued that sociologists should study the normal type, and that they should be able to differentiate the normal from the pathological type. Simply stated normal (sometimes even referred to as the average) phenomena were those that helped to sustain and reproduce a particular type of society. Pathological phenomena were disruptive for the maintenance and perpetuation of the whole. He did not attach moral judgments to normal and pathological, in the sense he did not posit that the former was good and that the latter was bad, but rather saw the two in terms of their contribution to the social whole. It is of course possible, Durkheim noticed, that what may be considered pathological in a particular society may be in fact the very feature that is urging the whole to transform itself, think differently, and set up new standards. Many scientists and great thinkers were considered to be subversives in their time but performed great historical tasks

in terms of social "progress" and transformation. Likewise, Durkheim maintained, certain forms of behaviour which are considered criminal are often not pathological at all. This is so because they do not disturb the foundations of the society, but may, in fact, help it to reproduce itself and re-emphasize its central values. If a society had no thieves and beggars then Durkheim contended, bad taste could well become a crime. Crime therefore is quite a normal feature of society, and indeed, an inescapable one, for it helps to draw attention to, and reaffirm, its core values (Durkheim, 1964).

Looking back at Durkheim's contribution from the vantage point of the Weberian formulation regarding power and authority, sociologists and anthropologists were able to separate judgments of what "should be" from "what is," with reference to particular political orders. If the "what is" in terms of the exercise of power has legitimacy in the society concerned, then it does not matter what the sociologists think should be the case. Political anthropology (a sister concern of political sociology) benefitted a great deal from this. Tribal chiefs were now understood as authority figures, and pre-modern forms of governance received a certain scholarly respectability in their own right. Max Gluckman, for example, argued very vividly that rivalry over kingship in Africa was normal for it demonstrated that the institution of kingship was held in great esteem by the people (Gluckman, 1971:111). Or when Evans-Pritchand (1969) found that the Nuer of East Africa have no political institutions like the ones we know, but nevertheless have institutions to resolve conflicts, then it opens our consciousness to the fact that all that is strange to our sensibilities need not be pathological, or unformed, but may have deep and legitimate bases in their respective societies. There is therefore no reason at all to be judgmental or dismissive of institutions and practices different from our own. Instead we should examine their functioning and efficacy in relation to the whole.

Coming to more modern systems of governance, the mere fact that somebody is in power and is manning seemingly legitimate institutions of rule, *but* by force and fear, would not make that power legitimate, nor normal. Durkheimian sociology would view such forms of domination as pathological regardless of how much silence such a regime has ruthlessly instilled. Underneath

the facade of tranquility such a society would be seething with contrary pressures and could hardly be deemed as stable, even though it may seem to be superficially so. Though the normal is not synonymous with legitimacy, it has helped to flesh out the definitive features of legitimate rule. If legitimate rule leads to higher than average rates of criminality and of normlessness, then it is quite likely that such a rule is pathological and will soon lose its authority and appeal. The Reign of Terror that followed the French Revolution is an example of such a situation. Eventually, in order to escape from Jacobin excesses, the people of France accepted the return of monarchical rule. Therefore, a legitimate authority when it is also normal, can expect a long duration; and, on the contrary, if it does not function within normal limits then no matter what the initial surge of popular enthusiasm for it, it would soon turn pathological and consequently lose its legitimacy. In this fashion, the distinction between the normal and the pathological, and that between authority and power complement each other.

THE LEGACY OF DURKHEIM, WEBER AND MARX

While noticing this affinity between Durkheim and Weber two other factors should be noted. The first is that Weber himself never thought of this affinity, though it is often puzzling as to why he did not do so. When Weber examined different kinds of authority, like traditional, legal and charismatic, he realized, as mentioned earlier, that the last was only a temporary phase and not a permanent solution. To restate the same in Durkheiman terms, charismatic authority is not a normal state of affairs, though there is no doubt that in the period of its duration it has the acquiescence of the people. Nevertheless, charismatic authority as Weber understood it, is structurally incapable of being durable over a long period of time. Contemporary political reality confirms this state of affairs quite abundantly. Even if we consider Lenin to be a charismatic leader, there is no doubt that once he came to power he was not interested as much in mobilization as in the consolidation of the Soviet regime on rational-legal lines. Mahatma Gandhi stayed charismatic to the end, and that is why he kept away from actual governance in independent

India. Mao Zedong on the other hand exercised charismatic, and anti-institutional, authority repeatedly after he came to power in 1949. First there was the Great Leap Forward campaign of 1958, and then came the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution of 1965 whose rallying call was: "Bombard the Headquarters"—the Headquarters being the Communist Party. It is because Mao successfully continued to exercise charismatic authority that Chinese society remained in convulsive throes of mass agitation for decades. Such a state of affairs cannot quite be called normal though Mao certainly possessed legitimate charismatic authority. Nearer home Mrs Gandhi's Emergency rule failed because its anti-institutional thrust needed strong boosts of charisma which, at that point in her career, Mrs Gandhi had forfeited with the mass of electorates. This should also remind us that charisma is not given once and for all to a person, but that it has to be earned and can be lost.

Secondly, though this happy confluence of Durkheim and Weber was all to the good, yet it needs to be noticed that it cast a somewhat conservative slant in the practice of political sociology. If the situation was stable on the surface it was often seen as normal for there was a marked distaste for charismatic authority among mainstream political sociologists. This was especially noticeable in the 1950s when under America's growing post World War II political influence, the American system was held up by many as the ultimate model. Studies in political development and nation building reflected this mood. Authority could best be legitimate and normal if the polity performed certain functions (as Durkheim would insist) for the maintenance of the whole. According to this line of reasoning the polity should be able to respond effectively to political inputs from the society as a whole in an institutional fashion, such that order and coherence of the entire social system can be preserved. Society was thus seen as a stable system, and the political structure was viewed as an important component of this larger system whose pre-eminent function was to meet goals deemed desirable by society (as in Talcott Parsons). But in order to perform all this the political structure must be differentiated to an appropriate degree. This would allow it to cope with the strains and pressures of society with specialized competence. This differentiation of the political structure ensures, above all else, that the politically relevant

strata are enlarged and that there is greater mass participation in politics. It was here that the American experience began to dominate the consciousness of western political sociologists. The institutions that were recommended by political sociologists of this genre were lifted straight out of the Western European, or more particularly the American world, and posited as logically necessary for the proper functioning of a modern political system. The recommended institutions were representative democracy, liberal values, and capitalism (see Huntington, 1971: 23 and passim; Deutsch, 1971: 390-91; Lipset, 1963: 211). Without these important supports, it was argued, polities would not be stable and would be prone to charismatic, Caeseristic and communist influence. In none of these cases, it was felt, would stable polities develop, so newly formed nation states had better beware in their nation building efforts.

As this conservative spirit was quite dominant it is not surprising that there were not too many studies on social mobilization and revolutionary transformations in mainstream political sociology. In addition, prominent scholars single mindedly devoted themselves to exposing the inadequacies of the Soviet or the communist model. In their view as communist societies, were premised at birth, on mobilization they continued to carry this strain in post revolutionary times as well. As communist regimes seek to realize hidden potentials in their respective societies, their people are constantly being exhorted by the state to perform exemplary action regardless of personal well being or interest. Communist societies are therefore mobilization societies inherently incapable of reproducing themselves without the state, and hence wanting in many respects when seen from the western capitalist viewpoint (Apter, 1967: 24).

Though such an approach was very useful for comprehending actually existing socialist/communist societies, it often obscured other issues. Western democracies, and America in particular, were portrayed as if they were well oiled political structures pumping out all the essential outputs, without any internal contradictions or dissensions. Though scholars like Lipset were alert to the fact that democracies can create apathy, bureaucratization and sentiments against representational governance, yet on the whole no serious problems were visualized (Lipset, 1963: 208). The fact that the turmoil of the 1960s and 1970s in the west was

unforeseen by these academics gave rise to a sense of disquiet amongst them, but it did little to alter their fundamental orientation. It is true that America is a mature democracy, but it is also true that America has grave problems which it has not yet overcome. For instance, less than half of its eligible voters actually go to the polls; it suffers from serious inner city strifes; and every now and again, different communities in the country clash against each other with such unbridled ferocity that even the law enforcing machinery is paralysed with fear. Indeed America herself has room for further development and can hardly be put out as a finished model whose every aspect is worthy of admiration. The fact that this seamier side of western politics was never fully recognized by many western scholars demonstrates how easily political opinions and prejudices can overwhelm one's intellectual agenda, openly determining the choice of topics and the outcomes of research.

Political sociology therefore became somewhat predictable in such renditions. But as will be easily admitted, this trend was not a logical outcome of the conceptual framework of political sociology, but was only characteristic of a certain kind of scholarship that came up primarily in the 1950s and 1960s.

During this period and later there were other tendencies too. C. Wright Mills' examination of the power elite in America demonstrated how authority was won and maintained by the skillful management of credulous and inherently powerless masses (Mills, 1956). But Mill's critics argued that though there was a kernel of truth in what Mills had to say, it was nevertheless articulated in too instrumentalist a fashion. Mill's contentions were however not so easily dismissed for he cogently demonstrated the political advantages certain privileged classes had over the others even in a democratic society. This brought many Marxists close to Mills but a fundamental divide remained between the two. The ruling class in Marx stems from the ownership of control over the means of production, but for Mills, the power elite could be drawn from diverse quarters, military, industrial, and corporate.

Thus while there was a strong conservative trend on the one hand, the radical and critical stream also made impressive strides. From the 1970s onwards there was a significant increase in the number of scholarly works which asked questions

reminiscient of Marx and Mills. Legitimate authority which was hitherto not seen in problematic terms began to viewed as such. Very simply the question was how domination could be authoritatively achieved even though the majority neither wield power nor actually enjoy its benefits. Yet, whether it was openly acknowledged as such or not, even in these radical studies, domination was never simply pure power but the striving for legitimate authority. Weber's influence thus kept showing up even in avowedly non-Weberian exercises.

It was in the 1970s again, and in pursuance of the anti-conservative, and at times radical research concerns that closer attention came to be paid to social movements. Peasant movements and ethnic/communal movements were the ones that attracted the most attention. Though studies on peasant movements were inspired largely by historians, sociologists too made significant strides in this field. They contributed substantially to the understanding of peasant ideology, the class bases of peasant movements, and the potentials that peasant movements possess for revolutionary transformation (see Dhanagare, 1983: Shanin, ed., 1971). Ethnic/communal movements were also a major area of study that emerged in political sociology in the 1970s. After the rise of Hitler and fascism, this was the first time that interest focussed around how cultural differences can become potent weapons for social mobilization (see Rex and Mason, eds, 1986; Esman, ed., (1979). Both peasant movements and ethnic/communal movements, as we shall soon see, have been studied in great detail and depth in India. India provides the ideal field for such investigations as it is primarily rural and also has rich social and cultural diversities within it.

POLITICAL SOCIOLOGY OF INDIA/POLITICAL SOCIOLOGY IN INDIA

Independence in 1947 changed the political and social climate of this country. There was a spurt of optimism in the future and energetic enthusiasm for the present. India set out to modernize itself but without the phillipics and upheavals that China or Russia went through. In the Indian case, neither tradition nor traditional authority was extirpated by force, and yet, political sociologists argued, this did not hold up the development of

democratic institutions in the country. In their view this was possible because tradition was moulded and transformed in a uniquely symbiotic way to aid the cause of political and social modernization of India.

In spite of scepticism from several quarters, internal and external, India was able to politically steady herself, give herself a modern secular constitution, and, most remarkably, adopt a democratic pattern of governance. Sociologists such as Lloyd and Susanne Rudolph (1967) found that India had irrefutably taken the road to modernization, and many of its traditional institutions, like caste and kinship, were undergoing substantial modifications as a consequence. Political sociologists were particularly interested in studying how caste loyalties interact with democratic politics, for the two have such disparate logics. Yet, in the 1960s itself, it was argued by a number of sociologists, notably the Rudolphs, that the caste system, far from being a hindrance to democratic polity, was in fact providing peasants with a ready-made grouping from which they could put forward their interests within a competitive political structure. Neither did it seem that the myriad differences in caste, language and religion that characterize India, were posing a threat to its unitary coherence as a nation state. In India regional loyalties co-exist with nation-state sentiments in a manner that most western commentators thought would be well near impossible.

India therefore presents many features that have substantially altered received theories and conceptualizations in political sociology. It is for reasons such as these that it is argued here that the phrase political sociology *in* India is more appropriate than political sociology *of* India. It is true that the general concerns of political sociology, such as authority, and social bases of power, still hold good for India, as indeed they do elsewhere. Nevertheless, experience has shown that it would be unwise to transplant western theories, particularly those of the nation state, or the relationship between tradition and modernity, wholesale to India without doing injustice to the realities of the situation.