I.P. Desai Memorial Lecture: 1

I.P. DESAL AND THE SOCIOLOGY OF INDIA

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CENTRE FOR SOCIAL STUDIES

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## **PREFACE**

Professor I.P. Desai, the doyen of Indian Sociology, was the founder and former director of the Centre for Social Studies, Surat. He breathed his last on 26 January 1985. The CSS has decided to create an endowment fund with generous financial contributions from his friends, colleagues and admirers to carry out certain academic activities which were dear to Professor Desai. As part of the programme, we have instituted the I.P. Desai Memorial Lecture Series. The eminent sociologist Professor Ramkrishna Mukherjee inaugurated the Lecture Series by speaking on "I.P. Desai and Sociology of India", on 3 January 1986 at the Centre. It gives us pleasure to publish this lecture for a wider academic audience.

I express my gratitude to Professor Mukherjee for delivering the first lecture; to the Economic and Political Weekly for publishing the lecture in Volume XXI, No. IV, dated January 25, 1986; and to my colleagues Sudhir Chandra and Shanti George for editing the text and looking after its publication in present form. We owe special thanks to Bhupen Khakhar for preparing the cover page and to Mahendra Desai for taking personal interest in the design of the booklet.

Centre for Social Studies, Surat 395 007. Ghanshyam Shah

## I.P. DESAI AND THE SOCIOLOGY OF INDIA Ramkrishna Mukherjee

In four decades of pursuing the profession of sociology until his death in 1985, I.P. Desai wrote several monographs and many articles dealing with a variety of issues concerning the present and the prospect of Indian society. The range of subjects treated by him is not unusual for several other distinguished sociologists in India. The subjects, also, are within the conventional limits set for Indian sociology from the 1950s; such as sociology in Indian society, sociology of education, the elites and the masses, migration and occupation, family and kinship, castes and tribes, untouchability and social movements, modernization and social change in India, etc. But there is a distinction between I.P. and other notable Indian sociologists in the matter of treatment of the subjects examined. The distinction is not of just being more critical than many others: it is of pursuing the principle of induction, which B. Russel characterized as the scientific outlook (1), in place of deduction.

Whichever subject he dealt with, I.P. considered alternate valuations whether or not there was a conventional and popular one. This was noticeable in all his writings and clearly manifest, perhaps for the first time, in his studies on the Indian family which culminated in the publication of a small monograph (2). He accepted the conventional valuation of family as forming a coresident and commensal kingroup, but not as the only one. He considered, also, the valuation of family in the wider context of kinship integration. One may argue that he did not pursue the logic of alternate valuations in its theoretical aspect, namely, the point at which family integration is replaced by kinship integration. Those with hindsight may also argue that I.P. did not pursue the practical implications of the valuation he arrived at from the alternate valuations, namely, how the paradox one found (and still finds) in Indian society of substantive incidence of extended families in urban areas can be better explained.

The paradox is noticeable in many Third World societies and, as in India, is usually explained by the persistence of extended family organization in the ideology of so-called 'traditional' people, i.e., as a culture product. The explanation is embellished with the apparent manifestation of a culture process dominating over the social process of urbanization and industrialization which were to beget nuclear families. The failure to realize this valuation of urbanization and

industrialization led eminent sociologists of the family into a state of perplexity. W. Goode admitted (3): 'Just how industrialization or urbanization affects the family system or how the family system facilitates or hinders these processes is not clear.'

In this context, empirical studies in several Third World societies (as also of undeveloped regions in Italy such as Calabria) have pointed out that the quandary may be resolved by the social process of development of underdevelopment in the Third World in particular. The process pulls the villagers into towns and cities by leaving their 'families' at home but also compels them to live in urban areas with their kins and affines (i.e., in extended family organization) in order to reduce living expenses and remit savings to their 'families' in the village. Reality has persuaded some sociologists in India, irrespective of their theoretical motivation, to test and verify the efficiency of this valuation or attest to a better one. (4)

I.P. did not pursue this course of ascertaining the dynamics of family organization from a systematic examination of relative efficiency of available and possible valuations of what is grossly regarded as a primordial unity. Also, those presently concerned with alternate valuations of family dynamics may not yet be as systematic as desired. Nevertheless, he drew our attention to the kinship network of family-units in place of considering only their insular attributes of coresidence and commensality, which is the valuation prevalent in the West. I.P. thus laid in 1955 the foundation for the kind of investigation presently pursued. (5)

As one expects from a devoted scholar in his formative years, I.P. was then searching for concepts and methods for an unbiased appraisal of reality. In his words, he followed 'the general rules of reasoning', and to him theory was 'some wider application to human society and to show how society changes from one stage to another' (6) Therefore, he took note of more than one theory and pursued the course of valuating valuations of the issues he examined. However, his worries during this developmental stage are noticeable in his writings. He worried on one side, about reducing sociology to an esoteric venture and, on the other, deflecting sociology from the path of a universal science. Therefore, he adversely commented on the scope of sociology posited in the late 1940s and early 1950s by M.N. Srinivas in tune with his mentors, Redcliffe-Brown and Evans-Pritchard. (7) He also reacted against D.P. Mukherji's presidential address to the First All India Sociological Conference in 1955 on 'Indian tradition and social change', reviewing the address caustica-Ily as a wish to develop the 'Indian science of sociology'. (8)

I.P. was possibly correct in assessing the viewpoint of Srinivas at that time, but erred in assessing D.P.'s viewpoint which, in essence, conformed to his own. D.P. was worried about uncritical adoption of the valuation of reality which was either projected from the West or propagated by the chauvinist Hindu orthodoxy in newly independent India. Therefore, he recommended the study of Indian tradition in the context of ascertaining the relative efficiency of different valuations of contemporaneous changes in Indian society. (9) However, I.P.'s misgivings regarding Srinivas and D.P. attest to his vocation as a true scientist who passes through doubts but clarifies them in the course of rigorously appraising reality.

In sum, I.P. was not a dogmatist or doctrinaire, nor did he shine in the reflected light of a lunar world where reality is designed by the enforced source of enlightenment, as he clarifies in an autobiographical essay. (10) Therefore, in his mature years I.P. could attempt to appraise reality unequivocally and comprehensively, as in the seminal essays he wrote in the last 15 years before his death, particularly with reference to the Indian elites in the context of social change and the relevance of caste for understanding contemporary Indian social reality.

A few months before his death in January 1985, and after a systematic course of research rigorously carried out for a number of years, I.P. published his essay entitled 'Should "caste" be the basis for recognising backwardness?'. (11) The question was pertinent and timely, because caste has been of primordial concern to Indian sociology and is commonly regarded as germane to chronic disturbances and perennial riots in India. Hence, the manner in which I.P. treated the question of caste denoting backwardness in Gujarat, in particular, and India, in general, is of profound significance to the development of the sociology of India.

I.P. took note of three valuations by experts for recognizing caste as the basis for social and educational backwardness in India: (12)

1 'In the Indian context such collectivities (of backwardness) can be castes or other hereditary groups traditionally associated with specific occupations which are considered to be low and impure and with which educational backwardness and low income are found to be associated.'

2 'As a corollary to the foregoing it implies that, that type of social backwardness which is more relevant to the present inquiry pertains to ascriptive status and not achieved status.

- 3 'While it is recognised that a large number of people belonging to different castes do not adhere to their traditional occupation or occupations, it is assumed that in most cases the bulk of the population engaged in traditional occupations embodied in the preindustrial technological nexus still belongs to the caste or the ethnic groups which have been associated with such occupations for generations.'
- I.P.'s findings from large-scale household surveys and personal interviews throughout Gujarat, as also from documentary evidence and studies in what is labelled the movement of Backward Classes in India (13), are against these valuations. He did not find (1) any contemporary 'relevance of the concept of "impure" occupations'; (2) any necessity to attribute an ascribed status to a person because 'the new person is a person who has not merely duties but also rights'; and (3) any efficiency in noting association between caste and occupation because 'even when the relationship between caste and occupation is not broken, the relationship between the performer of an occupational activity and the man for whom he performs the activity is not the same in India today as in the past, say, 50 years ago. Today it is a contractual relationship.' (14) Finally, he rejected the three expert valuations because 'the instructive part of the evidence is that the low secular status cuts across ritual status'. (15)
- I.P. further examined two prevailing valuations on the role of caste in contemporary India: (16)
- 1 'Caste and ethnic identities are getting stronger and stronger in modern India cutting across class lines.'
- 2 'Even granting that the process of modernization and mobility and industrial expansion has created a serious hiatus between caste status and social status in some parts of the country, and in some pockets in all parts of the country, the entrenchment of people's identity in caste and community remains intact not only endogamously but also politically and culturally.'

From inquiries into the perception-action-perception syndrome of individuals during his extensive tour of Gujarat, I.P. found that 'the ritual hierarchy did not seem to dominate their consciousness;' rather 'they wanted to use their traditional status for secular gains by being considered backward'. (17) His total findings pointed out further that: (18)

1 'The old basis of unity, namely caste consciousness, is weakening in the face of interest conscious unities. ... The processes of division on the new basis work within each type of group such as caste or religious or linguistic group, and they weaken the solidarity of each group.

2 'The positive sanctions (of statewide and nationwide caste, religious, linguistic associations) are in terms of baits which are called promotion of welfare, education, etc. These are completely secular and they are taken in that spirit by the beneficiaries.'

3 'The upper strata of all these primordial groups who indulge in these political and economic gains use the primordial unities and invest in them to strengthen their wider political and economic interests. They have been quite successful until now. They have been supported by a section of the intelligentsia by spreading the illusion about the everlasting and unchanging nature of primordial unities and thus spreading pessimism among the people.'

Thus, by exposing through rigorous research the false appraisal of reality, which views caste as a unique or an intrinsic or a persistent phenomenon in Indian society, I.P. suggested the context to recognize backwardness in India as 'the people whose life chances are bleak, irrespective of their caste and religion'. (19) Accordingly, he identified the socially and educationally backward class in rural India as 'the class of small and marginal farmers, and agricultural labourers with negligible quantity of land or without it, and other unskilled manual labourers', and in urban areas 'all those unprotected workers in the informal sector' of the national economy. (20)

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These glimpses of I.P.'s activities show that his valuation of valuations of social reality followed the principle of induction and inference, and not that of deduction and positivistic assertion. As he had clearly stated from the beginning of his academic activities, he did not pursue any preconceived valuation. (21) On the contrary, the methodology he adopted to examine whether caste should be the basis for recognizing backwardness in India highlights five systematically ordered premises. First, he accommodated all available valuations on the subject. Second, he arranged them with reference to the particular context of backwardness and the general context of the role of caste in society. Third, he tested the efficiency of these valuations to explain empirical reality in the particular and the general contexts. Fourth, he examined other valuations of backwardness which emerged during the course of investigation. Lastly, he inferred on this inductive base whether caste or any other group formation of individuals provides the most efficient identification of backwardness in contemporary India.

One notices in this context that I.P.'s rejection of inefficient valuations through a course of inductive investigation did not follow Yagnavalkya's assessment of neti, with iti decided beforehand by the cardinal valuation of the supreme being. (22) On the other hand, his search for efficient valuation did not conform to the critical but deductive assessments of Indian social reality under labels like relevant sociology, academic colonialism, and contextualization of sociology, which the trend setters adopted in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. These attempts towards a comprehensive appraisal of reality are seen to fall short of efficiency because they usually amount to generating polemics on the prevailing valuations in order to place one's own value-judgement in relief. (23) The problematic of valuating valuations is missing; therefore, as in the case of Yagnavalkya's induction, for these deductive attempts, too, subjectivism rules over 'the object, reality, (because) what we apprehend through our senses is understood only in the form of object or contemplation, but not as sensuous human activity, as practice. (24) 1.P. underlines this point in his essay on 'Western educated elites and social change in India': (25)

My perception of Indian intellectuals and academicians is that they are indulging in contemplative type of thinking. I include in this category (a) all those who call themselves empirical or dialectical materialists, (b) those influenced by the different varieties of Marxism and leftism, and (c) a variety of sociologists who are opposed to Marxism and whose ideology I consider as that type of materialism which believes in the idea of 'my country, right or wrong'.

However, I.P.'s inductive and inferential orientation to research is usually considered unnecessary, even irrelevant, according to the assumption that sociology is concerned with only the observable and deducible actions, behaviour, relationships, and institutions with which human beings are involved for their existence and because of which they form different collectivities. This assumption leads to appraising social reality on the basis of observing what are regarded as the crucial characteristics of groupwise human endeavours to maintain society as a viable entity and change it (as and when necessary) for the better. Therefore, an efficient appraisal of reality is regarded as dependent on a sociologist's acumen in observing and deducing the crucial characteristics of society in being and becoming.

I.P. noted in his essay on 'Western educated elites and social change in India' that this manner of appraising reality can be mis-

leading as it is exclusively or virtually limited to answering the 'what?' question in describing a phenomenon and explaining its instrumentality by answering the 'how?' question. The causality of the phenomenon, as indicated by the 'why?' question, and, more importantly, its future probabilities in form and content and in relation to other phenomena, as indicated by the question 'what will it be?', are treated as mere extensions of the instrumental explanation. Moreover, he pointed out the failure of experts even in formally evaluating reality on the basis of the 'how' question and the illusion it creates.

In this context I.P. referred to Srinivas's concepts of sanskritization and westernization and quoted him to depict two species of Indian elites with reference to the prospect of social change in contemporary India: the westernized elites as 'energizer' and the sanskritzed elites as 'opiate'. I.P. found, on the contrary, that the 'New Elite' forms an amalgam of sanskritization and westernization which is true for all societies in the Third World, in particular, because their elites also combine the so-called 'traditional' and 'modern' actions, behaviour, relationships and institutions as suited to 'their social nature and nurture'. Thus an incisive appraisal of immanent reality reduces (if not nullifies) the analytic usefulness of the two concepts of sanskritization and westernization while the illusion they create stands in the way of appraising reality unequivocally and comprehensively because: (26)

The new elite is politically more dangerous than the revivalist section of our intellectuals because it is nearer the seat of political power. Because of the very character of their intellectualism their policy will be devoid of the understanding of the problems and state of mind of their people; and they are blind to the capacities of their people. The only way open to them to make their policies succeed is to get the people to submit to them. The form of the force will be 'democratic', through the bureaucracy in a parliamentary democracy eminently suited to their social origin and social heritage. Their idea of democracy is as fake as that of westernization and cosmopolitanism. They have democratic slogans but their actions are undemocratic. Democracy as a way of life is foreign to their social nature and nurture.

However, the central issue is that the deductive and positivistic orientation to research leads logically to mere formulation of alternatives, which has become the order of the day with the immense accumulation of information on any society. The alternatives denote different structures of valuation from the same field of valuation and

result in one sociologist vying with another in claiming the true portrayal of reality. But the immanent reality demands an objective valuation of these subjective valuations, however valid, relevant and even necessary some of them may appear to be. I.P. had realised this point as of perennial importance to sciencing and had referred to the state of sociology in India long before the 'alternatives' were in sway. He stated: (27)

Srinivas's main target of attack was all such understanding that smacked of evolutionary change and Marxism. He and the American and British scholars who came to India in the 1950s accused Marxists as being dogmatic. Indeed, they were no less dogmatic in their anti-Marxism. ... it would be incorrect to say that I belong to this or that school of thought.

Nevertheless, the schools of thought and the value preferences of distinctive groups of scientists have a place in all sciences. The point is to specify the scope of these endeavours and define the scope of induction and inference with reference to that context, bearing in mind the specificity of social science. In the physical or biological sciences one cannot conceive of a place-specific branch of knowledge such as a physics of India, but social science can be particularized for a configuration of human society and, therefore, the sociology of India is a valid subject for discussion. On the other hand, the valuation of any branch of knowledge can be people and time-specific, so that one may examine Hindu chemistry as the valuation of the universal science of chemistry by the Hindus at a particular time. The formulation 'Indian sociology' is correspondingly valid for the appraisal of social reality by distinctive groups of scholars at one or different time periods.

Thus one finds that in direct reference to its value preference, Indian sociology of one brand describes what Indian society is, how and why it operates in a particular manner, and therefore what Indian society is likely to be in the near future. Another brand of Indian sociology describes the Indian social organism somewhat differently in case the value preferences of the two brands are not wide apart, while a third brand may describe the organism contradictorily in accordance with a sharp difference in the value preference of the third from the first two brands.

Obviously, then, these variable valuations of Indian social reality are like histological specimens, just as, say, Hindu chemistry and Arab chemistry are. The specimens are useful in so far as they are utilized to augment knowledge in the subject as a whole; in the

present context of sociology in general and sociology of India in particular. Therefore, Indian sociology of different brands can be employed to study trends in Indian sociology or to examine the sociology of Indian sociology; but, by themselves, the trends cannot yield a precise, unequivocal, and comprehensive appraisal of Indian social reality. For this purpose it is necessary to move beyond value-specific appraisals but on the foundation of the science of society. The sociology of India develops on this inductive and inferential base, and in the course of testing the relative efficiency of different valuations of social reality.

It is in this context of distinction and interrelation between the two formulations 'Indian sociology' and 'sociology of India', that one finds I.P.'s specific contribution to sociology as a universal science particularized for India. As different from most of his colleagues, I.P. gave his labour and time for the development of a sociology of India and stated: (28)

In a country where science is still in the process of development, it would be harmful to entertain the belief that the ultimate nature of sociology as science will be realized by only one particular view of science.

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In his attempts to develop the sociology of India while dealing with a variety of issues concerning the present and the prospect of Indian society, I.P.'s logical mind was confronted with two basic questions:

- 1 As valuating valuations of reality means ascertaining the most efficient of all ordinal valuations made by the elites and the masses, should there not be a cardinal valuation to justify the ordinal valuations?
- 2 As valuations are made because the immanent reality is changing continually and the 'old' and the 'new' interact in this course of change, how can these interactions be examined satisfactorily?

In an article published in 1952 under the title 'Sociology comes of age in India', I.P. had warned against treating sociology as an esoteric venture, and in his presidential address to the 14th All India Sociological Conference in 1978 he urged Indian sociologists to conceive a 'desired type of society' because 'our researches are not to be blind, fruitless and frustrating'. (29) But by restricting oneself to his Address, one may form the impression that I.P. was

not clear about a 'desired type of society' and that his cardinal valuation was esoteric because he had stated that 'the concept of desirable society is a normative one' and is 'not useful for analytical purposes'. (30) However, while stating the above, I.P. had obviously in view the gross empiricists who ascribe unsequential independence to analysis and disregard the primary comprehension of reality which they avoid specifying but which analysis follows. Therefore, in his address I.P. exhorted the elites 'to go beyond narrow empiricism' and consider the awareness among the masses 'of what is happening'. (31)

Moreover, while he made the general statement in his Address that the formulation of a desirable society 'in holistic or configurational and abstract terms...will serve us as the polar star in the direction of which our researchers will be moving', (32) he particularized his viewpoint in 1984 and specified it for the Indian context. He wrote: (33)

In the history of socialist thought, Marx and Engels distinguished their socialism from utopian socialism. Irrespective of their aims, they were demolishing not so much the utopian picture of future human society as the illusionary type of thinking. In fact, their thinking had an element of 'what is the future, desirable type of society'. Even an idealist would say that what is good must also be socially possible. But Marx and Engels were concerned not merely with the desirable type of society but also with bringing it about, as also were probably others who believed in unity of thought and action. Their emphasis was on activity. Thought unrelated to activity they called contemplative thought...

Here the argument begins as to whether the idea of pot was first or the actual material pot was first. This question may be good enough for a question paper in an examination. But it is irrelevant at the present stage of development of human society inasmuch as it is divided into two desirable types of future society with their variations and aberrations. One is based on private ownership of means of production and the other on societal ownership of means of production. The question for sociologists is: which of the two types or a third one, if in view, should they strive for?...

My point is: how we arrive at it can be controversial and there can be more than one view of the desired type of society, but if we go on observing 'what is' and 'how' wihtout reference to

the future type we shall be saying that this is happening. But our quest is : does what is happening lead us to the type of society desired by us?...

My view is that the society envisaged by the directive principles given in the Constitution of 1950 should be the society desired by us.

I.P.'s adherence to the directive principles of the Indian Constitution may be interpreted as forsaking the quest for cardinal valuation and replacing it by a place-, time-, and people-specific ordinal valuation. But one should not fail to notice from the above extract his accommodating 'more than one view of the desired type of society' and evaluating the relative efficiency of these views and their modalities by asking the question: 'does what is happening lead us to the type of society desired by us?'. Related to this question are the scope and the limitation of the directive principles of the Indian Constitution, which I.P. was aware of and elicited by quoting 'a friend: (34)

The Constitution mirrors contradictions in the ideologies of the ruling bourgeoisie. Maybe what you suggest amounts to a call for sharpening and reinforcing these contradictions.

In sum, I.P. sought the cardinal valuation through praxis and, in that context, by referring to valuation of ordinal valuations on an inductive and inferential base. In this respect he reflected the thesis of Marx that: 'The coincidence of the changing circumstances and of human activity or self-changing can only be comprehended and rationally understood as revolutionary practice'. (35) He is also seen to endorse Lenin's exhortation of scientific understanding of society: (36)

By examining the whole complex of opposing tendencies, by reducing them to precisely definable conditions of life and productions of the various classes of society, by discarding subjectivism and arbitrariness in the choice of various 'leading' ideas or in their interpretations, and by disclosing that all ideas and all the various tendencies, without exception, have their roots in the condition of the material forces of production, Marxism pointed the way to an all-embracing and comprehensive study of the process of rise, development, and decline of socio-economic formations.

Time stopped I.P.'s search for cardinal valuation. However, throughout his life he pursued the task of valuation of valuations on the basis of induction and inference and, in that context, characterized the 'old' and the 'new' in immanent reality by means of interaction between culture and society. E.B. Tylor's definition of culture is well known to sociologists and is efficient to date; namely, 'the complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society'. (37) Yet in his sarcastic style, I.P. stated in 1952 that 'it is necessary to emphasize the distinction between culture and society, because, the adjectives 'cultural' and 'social' are used as loosely by social scientists as by society ladies at teatables'. (38)

The distinction that I.P. drew rested on the fact that culture, being historically determined, identifies those products and processes in society which were formed in the past and are present today, i.e., the 'old' ones. Complementarily, the dynamics of society is involved with those products and processes in society as have newly emerged or are emergent. These 'new' ones are aptly labelled social because they are created in the contemporaneous cauldron of society. This distinction and interrelation between the 'old' and the 'new', viz. culture and society, came out clearly in I.P.'s article entitled 'Understanding occupational change in India' in 1971: (39)

...it is argued by some with the force of evidence behind the argument that the old order is still existing and it is not so weak as it is presumed to be. One comes across from responsible persons such expressions as that 'India is in the age of both the jets and bullock carts'. This is a very expressive way of describing the situation. But we must guard against slipping into the belief that this is something peculiar to India. Somehow or the other we have avoided the question arising from the situation. ...The next question is: what is it that emerges out of that interaction?

I.P. did not specifically state the nature of interaction between culture and society, but he hinted at it through examples. Thus he pointed out the fallacy of considering that the cultural and the social play an equal role in society, and more so that culture plays the prime lever in social change. Following this negative assessment of culture, he ascribed an intervening role to the culture products and processes, in the course of changes in society which are primarily effected by the social products and processes. Referring to westerni-

zation as effecting social change in India through the process of culture-contact, I.P. noted in 1954: (40)

The source of defect in observation and inference is in the theory that contact initiates change. Contact may push forth the change if it is compatible with the change. But it does not initiate change. Change arises out of the internal developments in a given society.

The intervening role of culture in social change has been demonstrated by I.P. while answering the question of recognizing caste as the basis of backwardness in Indian society. In that context he had also shown the role of culture in appraising reality at the primary level of comprehension but not at the ultimate level, with the analytical level placed in between the two levels of comprehension in order to elicit the relative roles of the culture products and processes and the social products and processes. This points to a lasting contribution of I.P. toward developing the sociology of India, because the appraisal of Indian social reality is falsified more by identifying a culture product as a social product or a culture process as a social process than by disregarding the relative importance of different social products and processes; such as whether the sharecroppers or the agricultural labourers represent the dominant trend in the dynamics of contemporary rural India and, thus, whether the process of capitalism is constrained or not by semifeudal processes.

Sociology identifies human groups as collectivities at both the primary and the ultimate levels of comprehension of social reality. Unlike in some other social science specializations, the statistical and conceptual constructs are treated as collectivities only at the analytical level between these two levels of comprehension. But there is a tendency in sociology, particularly noticed with reference to the Third World societies, which equates the primary and the ultimate levels of comprehension of social reality. This is made possible by referring exclusively, or predominantly, to the spontaneously observable products and processes in society, which are culture products and processes.

A spontaneous identification of the products and processes in society is inevitable at the primary level of comprehension, and that is possible with direct reference to culture because a culture product or process is observable while a social product or process is deducible when it has emerged and inferable if it is emergent. The deductions are made and the inferences are drawn at the analytic level, and thus human groupings of various textures can be discerned for an ongoing society.

Some culture groups are seen to operate as social groups, too, because they are in tune with the contemporary social processes. It is also seen that there are social products at the nascent state of formation which therefore have not yet acquired the stability of culture; such as a group identified as nouveau riches: Then there are those culture groups which are not in tune with the social processes but are unstably upheld by what is labelled decadent culture processes.

Correspondingly, there may be groups regarded as culture groups because they have been revived from an attenuated state, but because reversal cannot register the status quo ante, these groups operate as social products by receiving new stimulation from some of the contemporary social processes. Lastly, there are those emerged or emergent groups which are not spontaneously observable but are deducible in the immediate context of the social processes or inferable in the context of what the society may be in the near future.

These probable distinctions and interrelations between the culture products and the social products can be ascertained at the leve! of analysis. Therefore, if the analytic level is so designed as to accommodate these probabilities then the comprehension of social reality at the ultimate level will not be the same as at the primary level. But if the level of analysis is exclusively or predominantly concerned with how the culture processes operate and how the culture products behave, then the crucial distinction between the primary and the ultimate levels of comprehension is lost or undermined. In consequence, the appraisal of reality is distorted or obscured.

Thus what has been demonstrated by I.P., at the ultimate level of comprehension of 'backwardness' in Indian society, is that in the first place caste is contemporarily a culture product and not a social product. Second, caste relations and behaviour represent a culture process contemporarily, and not a social process. Third, the contemporarily emerged and emergent social products are not identified precisely because of neglecting the independent role of the secular social processes, as exemplified in one instance by the dissociation of caste activities from caste relationships. Fourth, the appraisal of contextual reality is obscured by considering 'caste' as playing an independent role in the course of social change, in place of its intervening role through statewide and nationwide caste associations.

I.P.'s viewpoint will not be acceptable to those who claim from empirical investigations that the contempor ary social processes in India have turned caste from a culture to a social product, and that the political implications of this change are now clearly manifest in 'caste for itself' operating as an analogous variable to 'class for itself'. However, this viewpoint can either be asserted as a particular brand of Indian sociology, or rigorously examined as one of the valuations to be tested for its relative efficiency along with others considered by I.P. under the rubric of the sociology of India.

I.P. Desai will thus continue to live so long as sociology is treated as a science of society and not as an esoteric venture or a dogma uncritically imposed from the East or the West, the North or the South, or the Centre of any nation-state such as India.

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