

RAMKRISHNA MUKHERJEE

## **Empirical social research on contemporary India**

### **1.**

While being based upon theories and methodologies from abroad, social science research in India has always tried to answer the "Indian question". The question has been posed differently in altered situations; it has also called for differential emphasis on the respective social science disciplines. "Confronted by the disquieting spectacle of what seemed superior social organization as well as superior material culture, Indian thinkers began to look at the family, law, education, and religion in ways different from those honoured by century-old traditions" (Becker and Barnes, 1952, II, pp. 1135-1136). This outlook, pioneered by persons like Raja Rammohan Roy (1772-1833) and Swami Dayanand Saraswati (1824-1883), provided specificity and objectivity to social research in India in the colonial phase. There were stumbling-blocks of course. Attempts were made to rationalize the present and eulogize the past, which were particularly provoked by equally irrational and biased vilification of India (e. g., Mayo, 1927). The central tendency, however, was to strive for an objective understanding of Indian society and to explain the "Indian question" in the colonial perspective (\*\*\*anonymous, 1955). Economics was in the forefront of social science research in those days, since the effects of colonialism were most vividly felt in the economic life of the people (Ramkrishna Mukherjee, 1965, pp. 169-173).

After India had emerged as an independent nation in 1947, the "Indian question" was posed in the light of the following priority-rating: "Our principal problem is after all not the Hindu-Moslem problem, but the planned growth of industry, greater production, more just distribution, higher standards of living, and thus the elimination of the appalling poverty that crushes our people" (Nehru, 1942, p. 11). Economics, therefore, retained its leadership in social science research. However, although the Indian economists are aware of their role in society, Myrdal's comment on the underdeveloped countries is nonetheless valid for India during the first flush of her planned

course of development: "Following their old theoretical tradition of ignoring the non-economic facts, on grounds that they fall outside economic analysis, economists have often simply assumed that the national communities would become adjusted psychologically, socially, culturally, and politically to the economic changes as they occurred" (Myrdal, 1956, p. 171).

Social research at this stage assumed the function of substantiating the achievement or failure of economic planning (Ramkrishna Mukherjee, 1965). Occasionally it highlighted problems auxiliary to economic planning (e.g., S.C. Dube, 1958; Srinivas, 1962) or suggested the cause for its relative failure (Mukerji, 1961, pp. 20-31). On the whole, however, it played second fiddle to the current economic, political and administrative theses. Its positive advocacy for "institutional planning" took the form of vague generalizations in so far as the non-economic life of the people was concerned (e.g., Radhakamal Mukherjee, 1964, pp. 42-43; B. Singh, 1955, pp. 358-369).

Meanwhile, the expectations of the economists were not realized. They had rightly anticipated that the planned programme of economic development would begin a chain reaction which would go beyond changes in those behaviour patterns of the people which are *sui generis* and have an effect upon the economic situation and the consequent living pattern. It was wrongly assumed, however, that this chain reaction, coupled with the anticipated changes in values due to the spread of education, would induce people to take up developmental measures themselves, instead of these measures being fed continually from above (see, for details, Myrdal, 1968, III, pp. 1844-1910). The result led to the comment: "The postponement of the promised social and economic revolution, which was to follow India's political revolution, is thus in danger of becoming permanent" (Myrdal, *op. cit.*, I, p. 278).

Such a drastic conclusion is not accepted by all social scientists — Indian or foreign. But the reviewer of the book containing the above comment, who was specially commissioned by the Planning Commission, Government of India, for the task, had to note: "If planning from below has not developed, it is because a whole group of economists drawn from various persuasions and associated with India's Planning Commission seldom moved beyond the mechanical application of Western experience. They were unable to link creatively the traditional rural-based industry of our land to the national market or were reluctant to espouse concepts which would be considered primitive" (Thapar, 1968, p. 5).

In this situation, social research on India can no longer have an ameliorative function, unless it assumes the responsibility "to identify definitely the *soft spots* in the social organism we are dealing with, namely those vulnerable regions of the social structure through which we may be able to break through and effect the desired course of change in society" (Ramkrishna Mukherjee, 1965, p. 4). I shall discuss in this paper the feasibility of undertaking this responsibility, and how best it can be carried out.

## 2.

Previous failures point to the fact that the identification of soft spots in the social organism cannot be the exclusive responsibility of any one social science discipline. Instead, all the social science disciplines must contribute their share to social research so that they may evolve a "social technology, which would have meant utilizing their assembled stock of knowledge about the social facts to prescribe how social change could be induced and controlled in a rational and wholesome way" (Myrdal, 1956, p. 173). One limitation of social research in this respect is immediately apparent. It does not fully utilize all available information although India is one of the few countries in Asia (or, for that matter, in the world at large, if one does not concentrate merely on some states of Europe, USA and Canada) which possesses a large stock of information that can be employed directly or indirectly for the constitution of social facts.

The stock is also accumulating rapidly. The population census authority, which has been collecting relevant information for the last hundred years, has vastly enlarged (and is further enlarging) the information coverage since 1960. The multi-purpose national sample survey organization of the Government of India, which under the technical supervision and direct participation of the Indian Statistical Institute has been conducting all-India random sample surveys since 1950, has collected an enormous amount of information on various aspects of the society and has also organized surveys for some years in order to collect all-India data on specific issues, like the occupational profile of the people, their reproductive characteristics, consumption patterns, migration, etc. There is also a continual flow of information from the studies made on different spheres of Indian society by the Planning Commission, Community Development organization, the State and Central Government departments, international organizations, etc. Lastly, there is the ever-increasing number of research projects completed by the social science research organizations of the government, universities — Indian or foreign, public bodies, etc. (Planning Commission, 1968, tables I.4-I.16.)

The economists, and to a certain extent the demographers, are making use of the available information and are trying to improve its nature, quality and coverage. They are the most articulate, regarding the scope and prospect of national sample surveys, the kind of data which the census authorities should collect in future, and so on. The sociologists, on the other hand, who are preoccupied with the caste organization of society, do not raise the question why the information on individual castes has been discontinued from national sample surveys since 1961. Neither they nor the political scientists, social psychologists, etc., demand that surveys be carried out by the national sample survey organization on specific "social issues" or that the available information be collated on an all-India basis in order to develop a picture of the caste or family structure of society, group-formation of the people

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according to their educational, occupational, and other societal characteristics.

This limitation is possibly due to the strong bias of "social anthropology" in social research on India, which prompts the researchers to ascertain "social facts" from an intensive first-hand examination of the "field" which cannot be too large in the space or time perspective (Planning Commission, 1968, pp. 14-15). To be sure, the preliminary formulation of social facts by such a method has much to recommend it, but if this method is utilized beyond the preliminary stages, social research will not advance very far. On the contrary, depending on the aptitude and personal convenience of the individual researchers, information regarding some sectors of the society, particular social groups, and certain regions of India will be unnecessarily replicated while that regarding the remaining constituents of the society will be chronically left out. Thus the formulation of social facts becomes partial in the end and leads to sterile polemics or to confusion rather than to the accumulation of knowledge (B. Singh, 1961; Myrdal, 1956, p. 171; Ramkrishna Mukherjee, 1965, pp. 173-184).

This confusion causes social research to be permeated with generalizations drawn from fragmentary appreciation of social phenomena. Yet, as previously, generalizations are made for India *en bloc* on the basis of very partial and inadequate coverage of information. An analysis of 2605 papers and 693 books on India, available in four important libraries in Calcutta, showed that empirical observations on the country as a whole are virtually absent; they have been made only infrequently for South India, and the most frequently for Eastern India (Sociological Research Unit, 1967). The content analysis of 82 publications of 42 reputable Indian and foreign scholars showed that out of the 210 instances of social change in India since 1757, mentioned by these authors, in 39 percent of the cases no empirical observations were made. Only in 6 percent of the cases did they include South India, only in 4 percent of the cases were they extended to more than one state, and in 51 percent of the cases they were restricted to one state; in no cases at all were observations made which referred to India as a whole (Das Gupta, unpublished).

Potentially, however, the situation is not so grim. It is possible to have a fairly comprehensive appreciation of the society from the information available: for example, in respect of urbanization (Bulsara, 1964), family structure (Kolenda, 1968, pp. 339-396), etc. Also, it has been possible to make some pertinent generalizations concerning the future perspective of family organization in India from the census and national sample survey data and the information available from the studies of individual researchers on 44 657 family-units in different parts of India (Ramkrishna Mukherjee, 1969a). Moreover, attempts like these point to the lacunae of information needed for an unambiguous and comprehensive constitution of social facts which will permit us to make precise generalizations.

The lacunae are noticed not merely in respect of the total configuration of the society, as noted above, but in respect of its different facets. The non-

economic bias of sociology and social anthropology, and the adherence of economists exclusively to "economic characteristics", have severally affected the constitution of social facts. This is particularly noticed in respect of rural India which has been the field for analytical study by the economists since the 1920's and by the social anthropologists since the 1940's (Ramkrishna Mukherjee, 1957; 1965, pp. 173-184). This bias, however, is now being eliminated and symbiotic data on the economic and social life of the people are increasingly available. The sociologists and social anthropologists are also giving up their anti-historical attitude despite the fact that social history in India is still in its infancy, unlike economic history which has perhaps reached the stage of adolescence (Raychaudhuri, 1965, pp. 635-643). A fuller constitution of social facts is, thus, made increasingly possible.

In order to achieve this, the mundane task of inventoring the available empirical data on Indian society must be undertaken. This information must then be classified in terms of the object, the place, and the time of the data referred to. The task will involve a continuous inventory of social science data on India, establishment of data banks, and sustained bibliographical and documentary research to elicit the information already processed fully or partially. This is a feasible proposition, as discussed elsewhere (Ramkrishna Mukherjee, 1969b).

The formation of social facts, however, does not depend on the collection of data *ad nauseum*. While the data represent the elements of information which will go into the constitution of facts, the facts are predicated by the reality to be appreciated through a course of investigation. Therefore, the formation of facts depends primarily upon *why* a course of research has been undertaken, *how* it has been designed, and *what* are its ascertainable objects or points of reference. On the question "why" there is hardly any difference of opinion. The need for a diagnostic appraisal of society is now felt by virtually all social scientists who are interested in India's progress and prosperity. The question "why", therefore, is answered by the objective of identifying the soft spots in the social organism through which social change can be induced for purposes of development. But the question "how", and following therefrom the question "what", are not so easily answered.

Some sociologists and their colleagues in allied disciplines are now presenting social facts, or trying to formulate them, with the aid of different models which give priority to one or another type of data or data-collecting method. Thus there are the models and countermodels of "tradition to modernity" versus "modernity of tradition" (Shils, 1961; Shah and Rao, 1965; Rudolph and Rudolph, 1967), "dominant caste" in the context of "sanskritization and westernization" versus "progressive family" (Srinivas, 1966; Srivastava, 1969), "an analytical scheme for the study of social change in India" and its appraisal (Beteille, 1966; L. Dube, 1967), "jati model" and its criticism (Gould, 1969; H. Singh, 1969), "a conflict model to understand the dynamics of the country's political system" (Dhanagare, 1968), and so on.

Some of these models are based on a fairly large coverage of data (e. g., Rudolph and Rudolph, 1967), some others are proposed on the basis of an impressionistic appreciation of a particular aspect of life in one village (e. g., Beteille, 1966), and between these extremes there are the others. Almost all of them, however, are potentially useful since they highlight particular areas and methods of investigation: political (Rudolph and Rudolph, 1967), basically cultural (Srinivas, 1966), essentially structural (Gould, 1969), and so on. But unilateral emphasis on one or another aspect of society, which these models involve, does not lead to an assemblage of the "stock of knowledge about the social facts to prescribe how social change could be induced and controlled in a rational and wholesome way" (see above, Myrdal, 1956).

Sporadic fact-finding research, without reference to a model, has the same effect. As a result, while social research has made considerable progress in the last few decades, its impact on society has not been substantive. A clear picture has not yet emerged of the mechanics of the Indian social organism, the course of social change taking place in society, and whether this process of change leads to a course of social development, a particular manner of social change, which is a value-loaded concept but which can be formulated empirically in correspondence with the Indian situation (de Jong, 1967, pp. 117-120; Drownowski, 1967, pp. 120-134; Myrdal, 1968, III, pp. 1859-1864; Council for Social Development, 1967, pp. 1-24). Instead, diametrically opposite views are expressed on the current situation and data are presented in support of the contending viewpoints (Ramkrishna Mukherjee, 1965, pp. 3-105).

A comprehensive design to search for the soft spots in the social organism has to be prepared therefore, which can make the best use of the available data, facts and models and which will also promote the production of new data, reformulation of facts and of models. For a model is like the scaffolding necessary to build a house. Its utility, accordingly, depends upon the design of the house. In the following pages I shall discuss how an unambiguous design — free from the subjective limitations of the researchers — can be drawn up to attain the objective in view, what its ascertainable objects will be, and in which manner the course of research pursuant to this design can be effectively programmed.

### 3.

The identification of soft spots in the social organism cannot be a matter of esoteric judgment whereby certain societal segments may be intuitively considered by one researcher as representing the soft spots and certain other societal segments may be so judged by another researcher. In order to be objectively valid and operationally useful, the concept of soft spot requires a precise formulation. So that, while individual judgment will be no less applicable to the

identification of soft spots than if the concept was esoteric, the relative efficiency of the individual judgments can be duly attested.

Thus the soft spots must refer to the vulnerable regions of the given social structure because the aim is to induce the people to take to the path of social development of their own volition. The agents of change will, no doubt, operate as exceptions from the pervading "norm" of the society in the probability sense (Staley, 1954, p. 211) but they can be effective only through group-formation, however incipient or rudimentary the emergent groups may be. Otherwise, their meteoric existence will be of little use to any sustained course of development. It is also seen from history that some exceptional personalities had an effective role in bringing about social change but none could be effective without group-formation, whether they themselves formed the groups or the groups were formed around them. The first localization of soft spots in the social organism will, therefore, be possible from an objective appreciation of the form and function of those social groups in society which have deviated from the prevailing "norm". The form of the "deviant" groups may be ascertained from the following sequential premises:

1) Since the soft spots are to be identified empirically and not by conjecture, they will be elicited with reference to "alterations" in the societal arrangements which may be economic, technological, demographic, political, cultural, psychological, and so on, in character (for illustrations from the contemporary Indian situation, see Ramkrishna Mukherjee 1968a, p. 43, n.1).

2) Since an alteration in a societal arrangement is likely to alter that behaviour pattern of the people which is *sui generis*, the latter will be expressed by the emergence of a new social category or by the structural and (or) functional revision of the formerly existing category (*ibid.*, pp. 43-44). The changed or the newly emerged social categories, then, will operate as *vehicles* to locate soft spots in the social organism, for a) they themselves cannot denote the soft spots since their appearance on the social scene has not led *ipso facto* to the unfolding of a dynamic process of social change, and b) they may not represent the "deviant" social groups.

3) Since an altered behaviour pattern is likely to have repercussions on other behaviour patterns, the people concerned may be placed simultaneously in several new or revised social categories which are mutually distinct but analogous. These categories, therefore, will reflect different facets of some people who, as repositories of a common set of altered behaviour patterns, will constitute a "deviant" social group (*ibid.*, p. 44, n.3).

The constitution of a "deviant" social group, formed in the above manner, will vary according to the social categories taken into account. The efficiency of the way in which these groups are formed therefore, will be indicated by their role vis-à-vis the envisaged course of change and development in the society. Hence, corresponding to the characterization of each "deviant"

social group, the function of such a group will be ascertained from the following considerations:

- a) Is it promoting a developmental measure or is it merely participating in it?
- b) When participating in or promoting a developmental measure, is it attempting to remove any social or ideological obstacle lying in the path of development or is it remaining neutral in this respect or reacting against any such attempt?
- c) What are the developmental measures it is participating in, and what are the developmental measures it is promoting?

Thus, those "deviant" social groups which are found to be actively associated with the course of economic and social development will point directly towards the soft spots in the social organism. Those which are merely passive in this respect will point indirectly to those parts of the social structure: into which explorations for soft spots must proceed further. And those which are antagonistic to changes in the social organism will call for a depth analysis going beyond the immediate frame of reference (which is that of the social structure) and bringing in those other aspects of society which require examination for the identification of soft spots in the organism. Starting from a limited but appropriate basis, therefore, it is possible to proceed objectively towards an ever more precise and extensive appreciation of the soft spots while allowing for the maximum extension of the field of observation and taking into account the optimum expression of the individual researchers' ingenuity.

Several fallacies, however, may occur in the course of this diagnostic investigation. With reference to the formation of "deviant" social groups, they may be enumerated as follows:

1) While it is true that an "alteration" in a society will refer to a societal arrangement, a) the alteration observed may not refer to the societal arrangement to which it is imputed to refer, and b) to impute any alteration at all from the given fact may be wrong (*ibid.*, pp. 32-34).

2) The observed alteration may have a bearing upon a societal arrangement but it does not necessarily alter the corresponding behaviour pattern of people and this for one of two reasons: a) the alteration observed is casual or transitory, and b) although the alteration in the given societal arrangement is lasting it either does not alter peoples' behaviour pattern or the results are inconsequential (*ibid.*, pp. 34-36).

3) Even though alteration in one behaviour pattern will begin a chain reaction, it is not justifiable to assume that alterations in certain other *specified* behaviour patterns will inevitably follow (*ibid.*, pp. 36-39).

These possibilities point out how fallacious it is to identify "deviant" social groups by means of a *deductive* approach which is usually employed to prepare the models mentioned earlier. The weakness of the approach is further indicated by the crucial fallacy involved in ascertaining the function of "deviant"



social groups, viz. an altered behaviour pattern or a set of altered behaviour patterns is not necessarily a replacement of the previous behaviour pattern or patterns in the society. As a result, the "deviant" social groups may exist side by side with the previous social groupings and their role in bringing about economic and social development may be increasingly thwarted and ultimately brought to nought through compromise and adjustment of the social forces. It follows from this that however positive may be the initial role of some "deviant" social groups in promoting change, in the final analysis the emergence of these groups will not necessarily result in the replacement of the formerly existing social groups by sequential social formations. Instead, the process may lead to *social accumulation* and not to social change or development (*ibid.*, pp. 39-42).

This possibility is not of merely theoretical interest. The social history of India is characterized by an assortment of differential behaviour patterns, by their accumulation, adjustment and compromise, and not by their successive replacement (Kapp, 1963, pp. 30-40; Ramkrishna Mukherjee, 1957, p. 59 *sqq.*; 1958, p. 140 *sqq.*; 1961, pp. 157-167; 1965, pp. 15-58, 185-213). Possibly, it is in this manner that the much quoted expression "unity in diversity" can be properly explained in terms of the Indian society. This calls for a distinctive orientation to empirical social research on contemporary India. Because the discovery of new behaviour patterns is necessary, but the identification of soft spots cannot be restricted to the description and analysis of alterations which have taken place in society. Similarly, while it is necessary to identify the social groups which represent these new behaviour patterns, this also will not be sufficient. Social research, therefore, must proceed beyond fact-finding investigations and attempt to answer the following questions:

1) Given the objectively ascertained fact that "deviant" social groups have emerged in Indian society with reference to certain social parameters, are they *invariably* found to emerge under the same set of conditions?

2) If the answer to the first question is "no", what are the possible parameters and (or) variates not taken into account for that purpose?

3) Do the objectively ascertained "deviant" social groups function in terms of social accumulation, and have they, therefore, become additional components of the social organism? If that be so, how has the adjustment between them and the previous social groups been effected, and how could they break through the impasse?

4) Are the "deviant" social groups functioning in society in terms of social change? If that be so, how are they replacing those social groups which are outmoded in terms of the adopted schema of social development?

The first two questions refer to the formation of "deviant" social groups relevant to social development, the last two to their function. These questions, therefore, are a further elaboration of the premises laid down earlier for the first localization of soft spots in the society. They, however, imply something more than a clarification of the procedure whereby soft spots ay

be located. They also point to the need for a distinct orientation towards diagnostic research, implicit in the fourth question.

The fourth question above may be answered through a process of deduction applied to an accomplished fact, but social change in India is not an accomplished fact. Moreover, it is not known how it can be accomplished and this is why it has been necessary to search for soft spots in the social organism. A deductive orientation in research, therefore, will not meet the requirement. However, this is the orientation which is frequently found in empirical social research in India today.

On the other hand, the first three questions noted above are the *sine qua non* of the identification of soft spots in society but the answer to any one of them cannot be obtained from a mere description of the social situation or its analysis on an *ad hoc* basis. What is required is the organization of research in such a way as to test serially the relevant set of hypotheses. It is also important that the examination of the relevance of hypotheses and their order of priority should not be determined by the subjective judgment of individual researchers, for that may lead to unwarranted speculations and the course of research may thus easily move out of its objective and empirical frame. The procedure would be to begin with *a priori* knowledge in the present context, and construct hypotheses successively on the basis of the objective and unambiguous inferences drawn from the preceding course of research. The orientation of social research on contemporary India, therefore, will have to be *inductive and inferential*, and not deductive and positivistic.

#### 4.

The inductive orientation calls for the characterization of the field of operation in such a manner that, theoretically, it provides for the consideration of all possible variations in the context of evaluation and measurement of change and development. The most suitable *null hypothesis*, therefore, is that the social organism denotes only *casual fluctuations* around a consistently continuous central tendency. *Alternate hypotheses*, subscribing to the procedure described above, may, then, be proposed to ascertain the nature and extent of any consistent trend of deviation from the zero point in the scale of change and development. Consequently, on the basis of unbiased inferences drawn from these hypotheses, it will become possible to appreciate the characteristics of the field of variation more and more precisely, unambiguously, and comprehensively.

The alternate hypotheses will be tested by means of indicators representing promotion, resistance, or neutrality concerning change and development (de Jong, 1967, pp. 117-120). Initially conceived on an *a priori* basis, the indicators will become increasingly precise and efficient in the course of the successive testing of the hypotheses. They should be evolved, therefore,

in terms of nation-specific characteristics of the people, and not in terms of general ones as is the common practice (e. g., Russett *et al.*, 1964). The indicators should also provide for intra-societal variations and, thus, refer directly to the previously discussed data for social research. However, they cannot be built only with reference to the contemporary situation and on the basis of a limited interpretation of the "structure-function" approach as is often found to be the practice (Smelser, 1964, p. 60), even if they are made to refer to data on different facets (economic, political, ideological, etc.) of the life process. For the soft spots in Indian society will eventually be identified by means of more and more efficient inferences concerning: a) the nature and potentiality of the causal phenomena in the sequential alteration of behaviour patterns, b) the concomitant phenomena which support and stimulate the course of sequential alterations, and c) the contingent phenomena — the role of which in the process of change cannot be ascertained at the current state of knowledge. The social facts, therefore, should not only express all facets of the life process but also each one of them should be represented in terms of its growth process, like the root, stem, and petals of a flower. Correspondingly, a set of analogous indicators, which will represent a social fact, cannot refer conclusively to the contemporary situation which can take note of only the petals of flowers and not of their stems and roots.

Yet this is how the indicators of economic and social development are usually derived. This results from an engrossing interest in the question "what is it?" with respect to a phenomenon, where the question "how is it?" acquires only subsidiary importance and the question "why is it?" is seldom accounted for. Thus, in respect of social change in India, the general tendency is to find an answer to "what is happening?" whereas the fundamental question should be "why is it happening?" or, more appropriately, "why is it *not* happening?". Historical assessment of facts, therefore, is no less important than their contemporary assessment and history should be regarded as a relevant discipline to evolve indicators for empirical social research on contemporary India, as Clark has pleaded with reference to the USA and Canada, and as Laslett and his colleagues have demonstrated for Great Britain (Clark, 1964, pp. 31-40; Laslett, 1965, pp. 582-593).

However, history will not always be able to account for the roots of the social facts relevant to the appreciation of change and development in Indian society. Since the most suitable null-hypothesis for the course of research is that "social change is not taking place", the attention of the researchers should be focussed on those features which are resisting change and they should proceed to ascertain those other features which may facilitate change and promote development. The former set of social characteristics, however, refer also to that aspect of facts which is not regarded as contemporary or historical. It lies submerged in the social organism and is handed down from generation to generation in order to prevent the status quo from changing,

to act as a shock-absorber in the event of any violently induced situation, to function as a brake against any attempt towards social transformation, and to convert a course of social mobilization into compromise, adjustment, and co-existence with other behaviour patterns.

This aspect of social phenomena embodies a part of the societal heritage of the people, which in societies of "great tradition", such as India, has an intricate bearing upon all social action. But, although its role in society has now come to be accepted in the form of the concept of "tradition to modernity", empirical social research on contemporary India has virtually left this aspect of formulation of facts untouched because a methodology has not yet been evolved to study analytically what is loosely labelled "the Indian tradition". A suitable framework can be prepared, however, to study "Indian tradition" on the basis of objectively defined attributes (Ramkrishna Mukherjee, 1965, p. 189 *sqq.*; Singer, 1959, p. ix *sqq.*), and it is possible to demonstrate that "Indian tradition" can be studied empirically for the formulation of facts relating to economic and social development (Ramkrishna Mukherjee, 1968b, p. 422). Such a study deserves the immediate attention of researchers because "the real reason why we have not done more than what we have done through planning — and we have done none too badly — is the yet unresolved conflict between traditions which are the principles of *dhriti*, that is, *dharma*, that which holds, maintains and continues, and the new traditions which the urban middle classes have been trying to build up in the last hundred years or so" (Mukerji, 1961, p. 25).

Indicators to assess change and development in Indian society should, therefore, refer to the contemporary and the historical, and to the "forgotten fact" of tradition. Thus all those who are concerned with these phenomena — the economists, sociologists, anthropologists, psychologists, demographers, geographers, historians, and indologists — can contribute their individual skill and learning in order to : a) formulate relevant indicators of change and development, b) ascertain social facts in terms of these indicators and, by following the course of research outlined above, c) eventually identify those soft spots in the social organism through which the desired course of development in Indian society can be efficiently programmed and duly stabilized. In this endeavour, sociology can serve as the catalyst to all social science disciplines, for:

"Sociology has a floor and a ceiling, like any other science, but its speciality consists in its floor being the ground floor of all types of social disciplines, and its ceiling remaining open to the sky. Neglect of the social base often leads to arid abstractions, as in recent economics. On the other hand, most of empirical research in anthropology and in psychology has been rendered futile because its fields have so far been kept covered. Yet, within this mansion of sociology the different social disciplines live. In so far as they live on the same floor, they are bound to come into conflict with each other in the name of autonomy. To pursue the analogy, they seek to divide the house

flats and close the door against each other. But a stage comes when exclusiveness ceases to pay for the living. Such a stage seems to have been reached by nearly all the social sciences." (Mukerji, 1961, p. 20.)

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