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Globalization in Indian sociology: The invisible and the hypervisible

Maitrayee Chaudhuri (ID)

Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India
Email: maitrayeec@gmail.com

Abstract

This paper seeks to examine the new empirical realities in India that globalization has ushered in and to explore the reasons for the hypervisibility of some of these realities and the neglect of others. The two interrelated questions that this paper asks of Indian sociology are: Why did a globalization propelled by the rise of new urban spaces, an expanding middle class, and a culture of consumption draw so much attention from Indian sociology? And why was the simultaneous crisis of rural society, the precarious nature of labor, and the rise of cultural nationalism and its parochial bigotry so little taken into account? I suggest that the answers to these questions may be found in (i) the dominant intellectual traditions of Indian sociology; and (ii) its everyday local practices. This twofold approach stems from an understanding that Indian sociology's tryst with globalization cannot be understood by a restricted focus on intellectual ideas alone but through the convoluted ways that the concept of globalization travelled into our classrooms, our syllabi and our common sense.

Keywords: Globalization; India; Sociology; Hypervisibility

Introduction

There are many ways of telling a story. Many beginnings, ends, and in-betweens. Not to mention how some objects of inquiry acquire central focus, grab attention, and others just drop off the radar. The story of Indian sociology's tryst with globalization is no different. And like all stories, this too is linked to complex histories of Indian sociology stretching back to India's colonially mediated modernity and institutionalization in (what I grew up calling) independent India, until the term post-colonial became the preferred description. Globally the 1990s marked the collapse of the existing socialist system, the end of the cold war, the unification of Germany, and celebration of the 'end of history'. For India the 1990s was however not just about globalization

(significant as it was) but also about the rise of Hindutva[1] and the beginnings of a post Mandal era.[2]

There are four points that I draw from my introductory paragraph, each important in the telling of my tale. *One* is the long shadow of British colonialism on Indian sociology; *two* the Indian state's ideological and developmental model after colonial rule, within which the institutionalization of sociology took place; *three* the intertwining of three distinct processes: neoliberal globalization, Mandal politics, and Hindu cultural nationalism from the late 1980s that made any solo discussion of globalization impossible; and *four* the matter of naming (e.g., independent, or post-colonial) which is a story about changing contexts and concepts: their production, circulation, and reception. This paper seeks to grapple with both the visible empirical changes that 'globalization' ushered in our parts and the concepts that were widely deployed to make sense of them.[3] What I attempt here is a concurrent talking about the new empirical realities of globalization in 'Indian society' and an exploration of the institutional and intellectual reasons for the hypervisibility of some of these empirics and neglect of other.

The latter is in some sense a theoretical exercise, but not quite. For I argue that the significance of the uneven contours of Indian society and academia through which the 'ideas' travelled and acquired new meanings, just like the many accents of Indian English, cannot be overemphasised. The disciplinary history of 'anthropology' in India 'needs to be framed within a broader history of ideas that is itself embedded in the story of the subcontinent's successive encounters with colonialism, nationalism, the developmental state, the neoliberal market, and globalization' (Deshpande 2018: 1).

I too frame my paper with the same set of successive encounters with a slight departure in my emphasis and approach. I self-consciously highlight this matter of nomenclatures – e.g. what we term sociology here is known as anthropology in the global North. Deshpande's article is titled 'Anthropology' in India.[4] This 'naming'

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[1] India's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), once on the political margins because of its hardline nationalist views establishing Hindutva (Hindu majority rule) has held a majority in parliament since 2014. These developments include the passage of amendments to the national citizenship law that are seen to discriminate against Muslims; the removal of autonomy provisions granted in the 1950s to Jammu and Kashmir, India's only Muslim-majority state (aside from the tiny Lakshadweep islands where changes are also being forced); vigilante attacks on Muslims selling or consuming beef, and the enforcement of regulations that make marriages between Hindus and Muslims difficult. See https://www.iiss.org/publications/strategic-comments/2020/hindutva-politics-india; also see Chaudhuri 2017.

[2] In 1990, on August 7, Indian politics and society changed. The VP Singh government decided to implement the recommendations of the Mandal Commission, and open up reservations for Other Backward Classes (OBCs) in government jobs. This came in the wake of the gradual political rise of the backward communities. The immediate political trigger for Mr Singh's decision was an effort to counter the Mandir politics of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which sought to prioritise religion over caste, but its impact went far beyond that. See https://www.hindustantimes.com/editorials/the-mandal-moment/story-O52OimsoY0VVzYtJxLtz9K.html.

[3] I have discussed elsewhere how 'local' issues were impinged upon by global agendas. For example dalit sociology acquires a global presence, linking up with global discourses on race, discrimination, and exclusion while tribal sociology engaged with global debates on indigenous people. If this marked challenges from the bottom to the nation state, the imperatives of neo-liberal globalization sought to redefine the state from the top. See Chaudhuri 2010. This however is not my focus here.

[4] The volume on founders of Indian sociology and anthropology is likewise titled *Anthropology in the East* (Uberoi et al. 2010).

congeals institutional and intellectual histories. Further, when I argue that ideas are embedded in the subcontinent's histories I seek to grapple with these histories from the vantage point of everyday practice of sociology in our parts of the world. By the institutional therefore I do not begin from the macro categories of global capitalism, 'nation' state, and the academia. I plod along the everyday messy unevenness of our classrooms – the micro details that set apart the varied composition of students and faculty across public institutions and increasingly private institutions[5] (themselves a variegated set) and seek to capture how the macro encounters play out in the everyday. The focus is the minutiae of everyday practice of sociology – both teaching and research. Teaching entails syllabi making, choice of textbooks, and classroom transactions through which sociology is produced and reproduced in this part of the global South. Research entails both the preferred choice of objects of inquiry and the approaches to their study.

The central questions that this paper thus addresses are how did 'globalization' as a term arrive in Indian sociology and what was its reigning but unstated assumptions? How did some theoretical frameworks become popular as they travelled from the global North and some others just withered away? How do we account for the more ready acceptance of some theories and dismissal of others? Can we seek answers in the histories of Indian sociology? Or do we seek them in the manner that common sense ideas permeate academic sociology? What did the dominant theoretical approaches focus upon and what did they render invisible? How did these play out as the Covid-19 Pandemic 2020 swept across India?

This paper does not attempt an exhaustive review of sociological writings on globalization. What it does seek to examine is whether there is a pattern in the kind of issues that are addressed and concepts used. I entered the world of Indian sociology in 1977 as a student when 'modernization' was the reigning concept. (Bendix 1967) In the late 1980s when I began teaching, the weight of modernization still hung heavily upon us though at some point the term 'modernity' took over. A common title for conferences in the 1990s were 'From Modernization to Globalization'[6] and sometimes 'From Modernization to Postmodernity' suggesting often an evolutionary progress from one to the other, rather than a conceptual rethinking.

I argue that what was common in the Indological inspired sociology of the 1950s, modernization studies in the late 1970s, and the studies that globalization spawned from the 1990s was a persistent focus on culture, even if differently defined or not defined at all. That the great twin forces of capitalsim and democracy are pitched against each other in contemporary India (Hansen 2015) are issues rendered invisible. This is a theme that runs through this paper even as I approach it from different directions.

This unwavering engagement with culture, and India's uniqueness in this regard, is an idea that is an essential part of India's encounter with colonial modernity. This informed modern Indian social and political thought, as much as it defined common

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[5]Between 1990 and 2008, the number of deemed universities in India increased from 33 to 116. Many were set up with private capital. Between 2006 and 2018, the number of private universities rose from 19 to 290, of which 223 were established after 2009 (UGC 2018). See https://www.epw.in/journal/2020/22/special-articles/rapid-growth-private-universities.html.

[6]This is of course not specific to India. See Tiryakian 1992.

sense assumptions that impinged upon academic Indian sociology. I have argued elsewhere that academic/expert discourse and popular discourse intertwine and refashion themselves, often in unintended forms (Chaudhuri 2000). This process has accelerated in times of social media, and in 2021, with the Pandemic accelerating online learning, we find writings on ResearchGate, Facebook, and Twitter that may have not in earlier times breached the gatekeepers of academic sociology.

The tenor of the above statements may not be expressed with any academic finesse but it would not be wrong to claim that such views are present in higher echelons in Indian sociology. This paper flags of a few widely held and interconnected 'national' common-sense beliefs that is evident in Indian sociology generally and not surprisingly in the sociology of globalization: *one*, 'Indian culture' is in danger; *two*, paradoxically Indian culture is adaptive and resilient; and *three*, authentic Indian culture resides in the institutions of family, religion, caste, village. This persistent concern with an idea of a homogenous and endangered culture that began with colonial rule never quite went away. The numerous sociological studies on India's diverse cultures[7] did not dislodge this idea. Nor was the body of scholarship that delineates the complex processes by which 'modern Indian culture'[8] was constituted in colonial rule able to displace the belief that 'Indian culture' is a fixed given. For instance, the trope that India's norm of joint family is breaking apart refuses to go despite A. M. Shah's sustained scholarly attempts to challenge this.[9] In today's majoritarian and populist India, many of these widely circulating common sense ideas constitute legitimate knowledge (Agha 2021).

The focus on 'tradition' and 'culture' is a constant in Indian sociology, yet there is little clarity or consensus on how the term 'culture' is being used. India's colonial past, the subsequent disciplinary histories and protocols appeared to have shaped both the focus on culture and its ambiguous use. Less has been said about Indian sociology's distance from Marxist theory (Patel 2021). Could this theoretical orientation towards a cultural determinist position in post-colonial India be linked to a conscious move away from what was seen as an economic determinist position of Marxism, which had considerable influence on the other Indian social sciences such as economics, history, and political science? And can this conscious distancing from Marxism be the reason why some issues were rendered invisible (e.g. inequalities, agrarian life, labor studies) and some made more visible in Indian sociology's engagement with globalization (e.g. the enthusiastic adoption of concepts such as cultural flows, hybridity, fluidity, and then rhizomes in some quarters) even as the trope of the 'modern' and 'traditional' remain? I seek to answer the above questions but choose to begin with the everyday world and elaborate below the rationale for my choice of vantage point.

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[7]See, for example, Singh 1995.

[8]Colonial rule and its accompanying ideology often pushed laws that criminalized customs that offended British Victorian morality and ideas of decency. Dancing girls were banned from performing, homosexuality criminalized. For details see Sangari and Vaid 1989; Chaudhuri 1993.

[9]A.M. Shah argues that census and other data since about 1820 indicate that there has been no unilinear change in household organization in India. This suggests that the general belief that the joint household is disintegrating in modern India has its origins in a particular small but vocal class (Shah 1996).

The vantage point of the everyday: The approach

I have long been interested in the everyday minutiae of teaching and research in Indian sociology (Chaudhuri 2002, 2003, 2010, 2018). In the early years when I first began to write about my pedagogic experience, I still had no worked out conceptual framework to explain why I began with the 'classroom' and 'myself'. Many decades later I discovered Dorothy Smith's work on the everyday as problematic, extra local relations of ruling, and institutional ethnography. I found words to express myself. Her arguments originate in the women's movement's discovery that as women we had been living in an intellectual, cultural, and political world, from whose making we had been almost entirely excluded. Her contention was that the 'established' sociology gives us a consciousness that looks at society, social relations, and people's lives as if we could stand outside them, ignoring the local places in the everyday in which we live our lives (Smith 1987). If Dorothy Smith, trained in the best global institutions, found herself alienated from the established practices of sociology, it would be easy to sense how much more and in how many complex ways this deep sense of alienation would be felt in our parts.

The global north was omnipresent in our curriculum. Writing about teaching a course on women and society in the 1990s, I mention that I felt uncomfortable to begin with the mandatory reference to liberal, socialist, and radical feminism. It made more sense to me to begin with history (Chaudhuri 2002). The buzz about multiple modernity had still not reached our shores nor was provincializing Europe a heard of phrase. Nor had third world feminism become an essential add on to internationalize curriculum in the Global North. We were still struggling to argue that our global histories have played out differently. Our feminist histories were different (Chaudhuri 2016). I still recall my sense of shock upon hearing Americans talk about British colonialism much like we did (Chaudhuri 1998). Their 'British colonialism' and ours were not the same. So could we be postcolonial in the same way? Or could their globality be ours? My point is not that Western feminist ideas had not arrived here. But that the big and small ways that they travelled and settled here were different. The story of globalization has been no different.

I have long been interested in exploring how concepts and theories acquire ascendancy within the social science academia, how they arise, journey, nestle into curricula and enter the classroom, how students deploy them, and how the infamous but influential 'guidebooks' incorporate and appropriate them (Chaudhuri 2018). A guidebook, the Cambridge Dictionary tells us, is that which gives information to visitors about a place, such as a city or country.[10] In India it refers to shabbily produced books, sold as fail-proof preparation for examinations, locally known in most parts as *kunjis.* The usual format is a series of questions, which could be expected in the examinations, along with shallow easy-to-memorize answers (Behar 2016). As mentioned earlier one would have to repeatedly explain oneself in this exposition to convey the particularity of the 'local'. While our stories are better recognized in the global north than it was earlier, explaining Indian sociology's tryst with globalization demands copious footnotes.

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[10]See https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/guidebook.

To return to my choice to begin with our history and not the mandatory deference to liberal, socialist, and radical feminist, I write that I had perhaps anticipated the predictable calling out on the 'Westernness of feminist theory' and the invocation of 'the glorious state of women in ancient Indian culture' that purportedly renders feminism irrelevant in our contexts (Chaudhuri 2002: 249-250). Growing up middle class in India in the 1960s meant growing up with ideas of India's distinct culture and womanhood. That it was from the modern West that we had learnt about 'national culture' were historical details that common sense could dispense with. The historian Sumit Sarkar argues that while modern Western history writing has generally been state oriented, the historical consciousness of the Indian intelligentsia, in the late 19th and the 20th centuries, was oriented to the valorisation of culture located in the *samaj* (community- peculiar to the genius, culture and religion of the Indian people) against the state (Sarkar 1997: 21). Importantly, *samaj* was simultaneously all too often conceptualised in Hindu, high caste, and patriarchal terms (ibid.: 23). Partha Chatterjee makes a similar argument that the Indian intelligentsia's desire to be creative and search for a new modernity is transposed to the past of India, a past ironically constructed by orientalist colonial modernity (Chatterjee 1997).

Indian sociologist Y. B. Damle makes the same point that 'after the advent of British Power' a great deal of thought was given to 'India's past history, glory' etc. There developed what are known as 'the Indological studies emphasizing the continuous, unbroken tradition of India (Damle 1966: 149). Unbroken continuity meant a focus on the purported unchanging institutions like caste, kin, family. Sources were traditional texts (Damle 1966: 150). This was informed by a structural analysis trying the unity of India in terms of its major institutions such as caste and religion as ideal types rather than as entities in day-to-day life. That Damle's ideas did not circulate globally like Chatterjees's did is part of the story of the changing ways of global academia and our differential relationship with it today. Globalization has had far reaching consequences on the academia, a point I come back to in my concluding section.

I now go back to my vantage point of the everyday and explore the curious ways that some common-sense ideas and some theoretical approaches found selective appropriation in academic syllabi, popular textbooks and guidebooks that form the bedrock of our classroom teaching (Chaudhuri 2016: 254). More recently we have a new actor in the ubiquitous presence of social media (Chaudhuri 2020b). Chasing from the ground upwards, I try to unravel how some theories were preferred and therefore how some issues were neglected and some highlighted.

This personalized entry point in serious academia would be seen as almost blasphemous in 1977 when I entered sociology as a student. Our professors never used first person in their writings. The third person narrative was an essential element of what constituted objective knowledge. My first sense as a sociology student was utter bewilderment and a deep sense of inadequacy. Strange names, strange terms, obscure arguments and my inability to connect. This sense of not quite getting it remained for years. The reigning structural functionalist approach of Indian sociology of those times did not help matter though I was trained in English. As the decades moved on and as I began my teaching career, I realized that there was a deeper reason for that unfailing sense of disconnect between my everyday experiential reality (which sociology purportedly sought to study) and the manner in which academic world of sociology was organized. Not surprisingly, for many of my classmates who had already

been trained in sociology in their undergraduate days in various parts of India swore by Robert Biersted who has celebrated the educational value of sociology for its ability to liberate the mind from time and space themselves and remove it to a new and transcendental realm (Bierstedt 1966). The textbook section of our library had multiple copies of Bierstedt.

Transcending contexts is no easy task. The weight of everyday life, the alienness of what was being taught, and the burden of inadequacy that hung heavily on students (almost as uncomfortable as the English school uniform including neckties were for students in the hot and humid everyday India) could only be understood were we to bring in sociological categories such as class, caste, gender, race, ethnicity that constituted our selfhoods. The idea that the sociological or social scientific perspective must be separated from particular and subjective accounts had travelled well into our context (Rege 2003). It was received even better for ours was a society where the culture of received knowledge and rote learning had a long history and great legitimacy (Chaudhuri 2003). Our deeply unequal relationship with the Global North and our domestic inequalities compounded the already complex world of our sociology classroom.

The dominant sociological tradition saw caste, village, and the extended family as the key pillars of Indian culture (a deeply gendered construct) and also the conceptual window to understand Indian society. The village has often been seen as an ultimate signifier of 'authentic native life'; reflecting the 'basic values of Indian civilisation'. The institutional patterns of the village society and its cultural values were supposed to be an example of what Western social theory described as 'traditional society'. Specializing in India meant studying 'village' or 'caste' to be understood by referring to the structure and ideology of caste hierarchy (Jodhka 1998). Agrarian distress for the most part fell outside this framework.

This intellectual legacy was intricately tied up with colonial rule, Orientalism, and Indology with a steadfast fast focus with India's unique culture. In many centres of sociology in the country, this intellectual tradition wielded great influence.[11] So, while we did have students trained in the Bierstedt mode, we also had students steeped in the debates for an Indian sociology in the pages of *Contribution to Indian Sociology* (CIS) that was launched in 1957 by Louis Dumont from Paris and David Pocock from Oxford (Madan 2008). While Parsons may have been a pervasively present in many sociology syllabi, at other influential centres such as Delhi School of Economics, the story played out differently, revealing the close intertwining of social anthropology and sociology on one hand, and British structural functionalism and some French structuralism on the other.[12] The global was always present in our local/national, albeit in different

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[11]Carol Upadhya reflects on the framing of a sociological discourse about Indian society by the first post-colonial generation of Indian academic sociologists, G.S. Ghurye, who incorporated the Orientalist rendering of Indian history and society in his work to develop a cultural nationalist sociology that built a particular understanding of Indian civilisation and 'Indian culture', emerges finally as an elaboration on a narrow Hindu/Brahmanical nationalist ideology that advocates cultural unity and nation-building rather than political and economic emancipation. See Upadhya 2002.

[12]Andre Béteille writes that 'It was in the MA syllabus ... that the unity of sociology and social anthropology was given its fullest expression'. In political sociology 'the readings sought to give equal attention to the approach of Max Weber and the analysis of tribal political systems by Fortes & Evans-Pritchard (Béteille 2013: 5). The nature of India's 'independent' or 'postcolonial state' appears as an absent.

ways. British social anthropology may have had greater influence in some institutions, American sociology in others. What was constant was the dominance of some variant of structural functionalism and a conscious distancing from Marxism. And the idea of Indian culture stemming from the long humiliation of a colonial subjectivity.

I attempt to develop these ideas below. Though Sections break up my exposition, considerable overlapping exists. Section I and II have delineated the core argument and approach respectively. In Section III, I begin with the early days of globalization in India in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Sociology appeared to retain its old concern with 'culture'. I explore whether answers could be found in: (i) disciplinary legacies, (ii) theoretical orientations, (iii) disciplinary boundaries, (iv) social composition, or (v) the political choices of leading Indian sociologists. Section IV delineates certain key continuities in the modernization and globalization studies in sociology/social anthropology that eclipsed studies on labor and the agrarian. Section V seeks to tie up the strands of this paper as one looks back from the Pandemic times – a world where inequalities rather than convergences stare at our face. I wonder whether internationalization of the curricula and decolonization are talking about the same phenomena. I then ask if neoliberalism and cultural nationalism are also about culture, and whether they should be brought back to the centre of our discussion on globalization in Indian sociology?

'Culture': Deployment, focus, and exclusions

I begin with my early days teaching undergraduate women in an upmarket Delhi University (DU) college in 1988. The first signs of India's new 'liberalization' policy were in evidence. For long 'liberalization' was the term in vogue. The term 'globalization' arrived later. A culture of consumption that was soon to grip India's middle class saw its early beginnings in Delhi. New cars were on the roads. Indians were learning that austerity is not necessarily a virtue, and shopping could be therapeutic (Chaudhuri 2017). 'Austerity' acquired new meanings and meant reductions in government spending in order to increase the role of the private sector in the economy and society – the defining features of neoliberalism.

My students thought it odd that I as a young person chose to teach (seen as a dull job) when there were new exciting opportunities in the advertisement industry.[13] I guess this response was partly the glamour of a new globalizing urban, India; partly that disconnect between our lived world and established sociology; and partly the excitement of India's middle class so long 'deprived' of consumer goods in an India that had followed an import substitution model (Chaudhuri 2017). The sociology syllabus of the BA programme at DU showed the same focus on consumer culture.[14] A cursory look at sociology syllabi in different parts of the country suggest the same.

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[13]A lot of people were buying televisions in the 1980s, so long considered a luxury good. Many middle-class Indians were buying televisions. Indian companies by now had seen the power of advertising and a large number of advertising agencies were set up. See *Creative Thinks Media* 2019.

[14]The sociology undergraduate syllabus includes Ritzer G (2004) *The McDonaldization of Society*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge (Introduction, chapters 1, 2); Howes D, ed (1996) *Cross-Cultural Consumption: Global Markets and Local Realities*. New York, NY: Routledge (p. 1-16). The updated syllabus has one more, Tonkiss F (2006) *Contemporary Economic Sociology*. New York, NY: Routledge (Chapter 1). See https://www.du.ac.in/du/uploads/Syllabus_2015/B.A.%20Prog.%20Sociology.pdf.

The far-reaching impact of globalization on labor and questions of agrarian distress are given amiss. Perhaps this invisibility of the poor, in both popular and sociological discourse, accounts for middle class India's surprise at the sight of thousands of desperate migrants walking back to their villages during the lockdown of the Covid-19 Pandemic in the summer of 2020 (Chaudhuri 2021).

I had mentioned in the introduction that two other momentous developments were also taking place at around the same time that globalization arrived on our shores. The Mandal Commission with a mandate to identify socially and educationally backward classes had announced 27 percent reservation for Other Backward Classes (OBC). There was fierce upper caste opposition (Ahirwal 2021). This was in 1990s, which also happened to be when I began teaching at Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), a university with an extraordinarily diverse student composition. The classroom was split down the middle on Mandal. For a brief while globalization and consumer culture seemed faraway. But not for long. Looking back, flaunting of caste and religious identities and hate filled othering appear to have sat well with a culture of consumption and publicity. On 6th December 1992, the Babri Masjid was demolished by the Hindu right wing, led by the BJP (*The Wire* 2020). Public discourse was divided between those who swore by India's composite and secular culture and the new aggressive Hindutva rhetoric about Hindu cultural nationalism. Within a traditionally strong left student's movement in JNU, we saw the rise of the right-wing Hindu students group Akhil Bharatiya Vishwa Parishad (ABVP) (*Economic and Political Weekly* n.d.).

Street protests and intense discussions in the public sphere contrasted with the quietness of Indian sociology. This quietness on Mandal and Hindutva was even more curious as 'the most intensively-studied areas' in Indian sociology have been 'caste, kinship, religion, village and tribe rather than the class structure, cities, markets, industrial relations, or the media' (Deshpande 2003: 12-13). Perhaps this focus was the effect of a lingering presence of the Indological book view of caste and religion; perhaps the field view missed the wood for the trees. Or could it be 'the dictum to go where your data takes you, and not bother too much with theory'[15] that led to empiricism? Gender inequalities for instance never surfaced in the most detailed monographs.

It has been argued that the dominance of anthropological traditions could be a possible explanation for the neglect of the industrial. 'The composite discipline of Indian 'sociology' is heavily tilted towards anthropology, and would be known by that name elsewhere (Deshpande 2003). Even 'in terms of methods' participant observation and informant-based field work have been very prominent, while survey research and quantitative analysis have not (Ibid.). This long shadow of anthropology in a way accounted for the paucity of industrial sociology for 'anthropology' was to study 'the old, the static, the local', while 'sociology' was to look into 'the new, the transformed, the national' (Surendran 2018).

Globalization had important bearings on labor in India. The New Industrial Policy in 1991 virtually freed domestic investors from all licensing requirements. Government expedited the process of reducing public sector investments, closed down loss making PSUs' and sold the share of high-profile PSUs. Voluntary Retirement Scheme (VRS) and the Exit Policy were indiscriminately adopted to retrench the organised workforce

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[15]Sociologist A. M. Shah invokes Sriniva's advice. See Chaudhuri (2018: 361).

and to close down most of the sick industrial units in both public and private sectors. The Industrial Relations Act was sought to be amended to break down the strength of organised labor further (Ghosh and Choudhuri 2020: 9). There was a numerical decline of the organized workforce; weakened trade unions; and, frequently, a politically rightward turn of social democratic parties to neo-liberal policies (RoyChowdhury 2004). Public discourse was about privatization, job loss, threat to India's sovereignty. In sociology the storyline shifted from the tradition modernization continuum to global cultural flows.

Mark Holmstrom had remarked in 1976 that 'the anthropology of urban work – in the sense of a careful description of workers' lives, which relates their action and thinking to their situation – has hardly begun in India' (in Parry 1999). Twenty years later, Jonathan Parry concludes that the situation was not much better. In sociology, notwithstanding a handful of heroic exceptions (like Breman 2004, 2012 and Heuzé 1996), progress has been less impressive. There is a striking absence of studies on sociology of industries. Despite the talk on India's emergence as a leading industrial power in the 1980s and the 1990s, India's foremost sociological journal *CIS* had published but one paper on the theme in 1985 (Parry 1999).

The other point that Jonnathan Parry highlights helps us to understand the way in which the concept 'culture' was being used, reproducing the trope of 'traditional' and 'modern' that had Indian sociology in its grip. In the sociology of industrialisation, the thrust is either on treating the industrial worker as a model of advanced capital's rationality, *or in treating him as synonymous with his culture, which of course is a black box*, a term that does not need explanation, breaking down or specification, a typical 'divine intervention'. The result of such a *use of 'culture' is the characteristic vagueness in the discipline on the actual workings of modernity and tradition and their innovative and interesting interpla*y (Parry 1999: vii, emphases mine).

It would however be wrong to suggest that labor has not been studied. Studies on low-caste and tribal people who seasonally migrate within India for low-wage precarious work have emerged, showing the intimate relationship between production and reproduction, the mobilisation of regional differences created by internal colonialism (alongside caste/tribe) in accumulation, and the significance of kinship over generations (alongside gender) (Shah and Lerche 2020). Theoretically these studies have drawn on feminist political economy and scholars of race and ethnicity to show how capitalism articulates with and reinforces gendered, racialised, and classed oppression as it is through labor migrants that 'difference is mobilised for accumulation' (Shah and Lerche 2020). Others have examined how the relations between Dalit migration brokerage and Dalit politics both support and constrain the social mobility of Dalit migration brokers and the Dalit fabric of labor circulation at the bottom of the economic and political ladder (Pichert 2018: 3). Yet others look at the reproduction of bonded labor such as in the Tiruppur region of Tamil Nadu, where a sizeable textile industry served not only a booming domestic market but also a global demand for textiles. In evidence is not just a highly visible urban cluster but an equally substantial rural power-loom industry (Carswell and De Neve 2013). This rural industry embodies some of the most striking contradictions of rapid economic growth, and reveals some of the most poignant ways in which a rural labor force has been absorbed into what Corbridge and Shah call the 'underbelly of the Indian boom' (Carswell and De Neve 2013: 431).

Most of these theoretically grounded and empirically rich studies have been done by scholars located in the global North – a trend not disconnected with neoliberal globalization, a point I return to in the conclusion. However, to go back to the matter of nomenclatures, 'neoliberalism' is a term that is not very visible in Indian sociology, except in some quarters, bringing to light again the uneven travel of concepts within the local.

Globalization shrunk India's village economy, providing an overarching perspective of the problems of what Gupta calls 'the vanishing village' in India. Landowners no longer possess large tracts of land that ensured job security and pride for farmers. The diminishing size of landholders' plots in rural India makes farmable land scarce, cutting down prospects or long-term jobs for farmers. Landless laborers are thus pitted against landowners, while both sides compete from positions of poverty (Gupta 2005). Lower and middle caste peasant smallholders find themselves trapped between enhanced aspirations generated by land reform and other post-1947[16] measures, and the reality of neoliberalism (rising debt, declining income). Suicides among large and medium farmers belonging to the higher castes in Maharashtra were occasioned by failures in business, trade, and politics (Mohanty 2005). Indian farmers have been protesting since 2020 against the Central Government's new Farm laws that would change the way farmers sell their farm produce. They open up the agricultural sector of India to active commercial engagement by the big corporates, enabling them to purchase and hoard produce and sell it later at a much higher price than what they pay to the farmers for their crops. It also means these large corporates could decide what crops a farmer must produce (Jodhka 2021).

If the anthropological legacy divide between the modern and the traditional had a role to play in what gets studied and how, my hunch is there is yet another everyday practice in Indian sociology that may have also had a role. The identity of sociology is understood widely (i) by the object of inquiry: sociological topics are often understood as the study of the village, community, religion, caste, family – often 'residual' topics, those deemed left out from the ambit of other social sciences; (ii) by the method of investigation and deployment of techniques; and (iii) by its close link to social work and policy deemed appropriate to solve social problems (Chaudhuri 2016: 254). One wonders whether the fact that whatever is available both on migration and labor appear to have been done by economists is related to this self-imposed boundary making. This may be the same in the Global North, as Obadia observes that 'what matters to anthropology, even in its modern incarnation, is what pertains to social, cultural, symbolic, or ideological circulation' (Obadia 2018: 104). This pattern holds good both in modernization and globalization studies in India.

There is also the matter of the social composition of most Indian sociologists. They have been drawn from the upper caste middle class and have been predominantly male. I am however wary of any argument that suggests a direct causal relationship between ascribed identity and theoretical or political preferences. But that the social base of Indian sociologists had a bearing on the practice of sociology is undeniable; particularly in climes where common-sense ideas weave effortlessly as sociological knowledge. The Dalit critique of Indian sociology is illuminating (Guru 1993). Many have

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[16]India became independent in 1947 and pursued a model of development where the state occupied a commanding position to ensure birth growth but along with equity and social justice.

written about its discomfort with gender (Rege 2003; Uberoi 1994; Chaudhuri 2002). A small example may help show how domain assumptions get inscribed institutionally. The theme 'gender', for instance, was dealt along with family, marriage, and kinship. In 1994 there was a suggestion to transform Women's Studies Centres to Family Studies Centres (Uberoi 1994).

Themes such as working-class women and globalization therefore had little option but to be banished to cognitive invisibility. With globalization, the gaze shifted to women entrepreneurs[17] and the visible consuming middle class, the harbingers of change. One discerns important continuities between theoretical assumptions of modernization and globalization. Both models of development assumed a top-down approach. Not unrelated is Indian sociology's discomfort with Marxist theory that left its own mark on how globalization was addressed in Indian sociology. Here I am tempted to return to the everyday of the late 1970s when I entered JNU as a student of Sociology.

Modernization, globalization, and some theoretical continuities

It was the summer of 1977. The university was abuzz with discussions on the Emergency[18] and how perpetuators of the regime could be brought to justice. Some students from the university had been imprisoned during the period. In the sociology classroom, however, the atmosphere was sanitized. Modernization was the buzz word. But what we learnt in the classroom had little to do with broader discussions outside. Inside the classroom we did not dwell on the contexts within which Modernization Studies were launched in the early 1950s as 'part of a vast, largely US-sponsored multi-disciplinary academic project with the overall objective of winning the Cold War – both negatively (by preventing the 'slide into communism' of poor Asian, African and Latin American nations), and positively (by providing socially, economically and politically viable routes to stable non-communist growth and development)' (Deshpande 2003: 31).

In JNU capitalism was being debated not just by students but within classrooms in Political Science, History, and Economics. In Sociology it was barely named. It was just modernization. Both proponents of modernization and globalization rest their cases on the transformative certainties of capitalism. Yet Indian sociology showed great coyness with regard to the term. It was as though it was a Marxist term. In my class we always talked about industrialization, not capitalism. I recall a talk where a sociology professor mentioned that it is better to use the term Marxologist than Marxist, with its sullied associations. That these everyday practices were connected to larger stories of

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[17]Many of the studies emerging from Management Institutes focus on women entrepreneurs. They appear in the form of reports usually published in business or management journals highlighting mostly women's motivation to work, or the constraints they face in their work life. See, for example, Field et al. 2010. The title invokes the familiar trope of tradition as constraint or enabler of modernization: 'Do Traditional Institutions Constrain Female Entrepreneurship? A Field Experiment on Business Training in India'.

[18]'The Emergency' in India was a 21-month period from 1975 to 1977 when Prime Minister Indira Gandhi had a state of emergency declared across the country. The order bestowed upon the Prime Minister the authority to rule by decree, allowing elections to be cancelled and civil liberties to be suspended.

extra local relations of ruling that were being played out in the discipline, one learnt later.

Ramkrishna Mukherjee writes in the 1960s that 'modernizers' who were influenced by neo-Weberian and anti-Marxian approach were the dominant group in Indian sociology. They professed 'neutrality in relation to ideas', and Mukherjee, quoting D. L. Sheth, argued that 'sociology is a means of livelihood interests' for academic sociologist, notwithstanding 'their claim to scientific objectivity' (Mukherjee 1979: 109). He continues that they appeared as non-conformists, but 'they assumed a virulent anti-Marxist position' and were responsible for either ignoring or suppressing Marxist sociologists' work; moreover, Marxists were ridiculed without a serious argument being opened by them (in Ghosh 2019: 7).

Andre Béteille's observations reflect a similar wariness. He writes that 'Marxism had a considerable appeal among young people in academic institutions, particularly among economists and economic historians, when I began my professional career'. In the Delhi School of Economics (DSE), the two most influential persons, the economist K. N. Raj was 'sympathetic to Marxism' and the sociologist M. N. Srinivas felt that 'it was political propaganda presented in arcane language'. Béteille found the political program of Marxism to be 'pretentious and utopian', but was 'fascinated by its intellectual reach and subtlety' (Béteille 2013: 11). Unlike Dumont and Srinivas who 'avoided' discussing 'class', Béteille studied 'inequality' and 'social conflict' but felt it was futile to seek 'their ultimate roots in any one single phenomenon, whether caste or class' (Ibid.: 6). This could be a reference to 'influential Marxists' who wrote about rural India but were 'dismissive of caste' (Ibid). However, there appears to be a suggestion that 'class' denotes an observable empirical given defined by economic attributes rather than historically specific ensemble of social relations, which seems to suggest that Marxism remained an outsider to mainstream sociology. It did not even warrant any critical engagement. It was a cold war era, and the ready acceptance of Indian sociology to modernization theory provides a sense of where the theoretical and political preferences of mainstream Indian sociology lay.

In my sociology class we learnt about modernization from Eisenstadt. We learnt that 'historically, modernization is the process of change towards those types of social, economic, and political systems that have developed in Western Europe and North America and have then spread to other European countries and then to our parts' (Eisenstadt 1966: 1). We read Lenski (1966) and learnt that there is a cultural lag, but in time we too would develop institutions that paralleled those of the more economically advanced nations, which ultimately would lead to a global convergence of societies. Colonialism was given a miss. Given this context, the more recent enthusiastic reception to the term postcolonial as a category across board has always left me confused.

Looking back, the general drift of what we learnt were buzz phrases such as 'patterns of social differentiation', 'reintegration', 'functional compatibility', and 'maintenance of society'. What we understood of it I do not know. But what I do know is that this became the prototype of Indian sociology, inscribed in textbooks and guidebooks (Chaudhuri 2018). Thus, even when theories of underdevelopment and Gunder Frank were introduced, they were not considered 'proper' sociology; much like feminist and Marxist sociology. The key takeaway from modernization theory was the compatibility/ incompatibility between 'traditional structural and cultural features'

with 'development'. Jonathan Parry's observations made earlier in the paper stems from this domain assumption. Our intellectual gaze was turned to how our traditions adapted to modernization and globalization.

Milton Singer's compartmentalization (Singer 1972) was often discussed as Indian culture's adaptive ways. He speaks about India's unchanging 'Indianness' despite modernization because of its flexible structure (in Singh 1973: 14). Yogendra Singh critically observes that social change in India is too often concerned with 'culture' and 'values' (Singh 1973: 4). He, however, downplays the distinction between the system and conflict approach, arguing that both reflect 'system integrative' tendencies (Ibid.). His *Modernization of Indian Tradition: A Systematic Study of Social Change*[19] does veer towards an engagement with culture, tradition, and system rather than questions of inequalities. Market is the closest we get to the idea of capitalism.

Received ideas of disciplinary boundaries left its imprint. In modernization studies within sociology, the focus was on the 'syndrome of *attitudes, values*, and *ways of acting* – such as openness to new experience, independence from parental authority, and taking an active part in civic affairs'. For that 'defines the modern man' (Inkeles 1969: 208,[20] emphasis mine). Singh's Presidential Address to the Indian Sociological Society in 1994 on 'Cultural Dimensions of Social Change' provides a sense of mainstream sociology's approach to globalization. It highlights 'the massive entry of the mass-media, the universalization of communication through radio and television, the proliferation in … newspapers, journals, magazines and the technological availability of global information systems' through satellites 'bringing about a hitherto unknown degree of *information-entertainment* revolution' (Singh 1995: 7). Singh, however, fears that 'what we see is not *assimilation* or *integration*' (unlike his contention of modernization), for in globalization, 'marketing is an orientation which may usher culture into an unfamiliar domain'.

There are salient continuities between modernization and globalization. In modernization theory, some key theoretical assumptions and mechanisms explain the shift from traditional to modern societal types drawn from the dominant theoretical perspectives in the 1950s and 1960s, growing out of classical evolutionary, diffusion, and structural-functionalist theories. One can argue that theoretical assumptions of globalization are against any unilinear evolutionary model, shifting away as we are from the older trope of the traditional to the modern. Yet we see 'an evolutionary movement from a former mosaic of localized places to a world of intermixture' and 'transcendence of the homogeneous nation-state by the new global hybridity' as 'morally progressive' (Friedman 2016: 300).

One can see in globalization the presence of a 'diffusionist' approach which 'in anthropology nourished the same ambitions as the evolutionist school: to write the history of *all* cultures and societies, but by emphasizing contacts between societies and diffusions between cultures' (Obadia 2018: 101). It has been argued that classical anthropological perspectives on diffusion cannot be entirely 'associated with more recent efforts of the discipline to tackle modern circulations and their forms, circuits,

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[19]This text has been an essential inclusion in any syllabus of Indian sociology for fifty years now, and yet it barely travelled globally.

[20]We had multiple copies of Inkeles, Eisenstadt, and Singer in our library.

intentions and effects, i.e. an anthropology of mobility and of deterritorialized societies' (Ibid.). Cultures in globalization have become more 'nomadic' and 'travelling'. At one level this indeed is true, but perhaps not quite. I draw upon some personal reflections to elucidate.

The year was 1994. The place, Cambridge in Massachusetts. My first visit to the USA. Multiculturalism was the buzz everywhere. But as I learnt soon, the story of immigrants began here, for in America, 'the world is here' (Chaudhuri 1998: 199). In circulation too were words such as 'hybridity', 'bricolage', 'translated people', and 'blurred boundaries'. In the mid-1990s, the West, irrevocably changed with the presence of non-white enclaves, was intensely caught in debates about culture, hybridity, and purity. A colonized India had already been caught in this translated world (Chaudhuri 2003). Nehru, independent India's first Prime Minister writing more than seven decades ago, observed:

> I have become a queer mixture of the East and West, out of place everywhere, at home nowhere. … I am a stranger and an alien in the West. I cannot be of it. But in my own country also, sometimes, I have an exile's feeling. (in Panikkar 1995)

Or Rammohun, seen sometimes as the first modern Indian, who was born in Bengal in 1772 and died in Bristol in 1833. Often known as the crusader against *suttee*, he is lesser known for his work on constitutional liberalism. He who 'maintained two houses in Calcutta, one for entertaining his European friends and the other for his family to live in. And how it is said that in the first everything was European except Rammohun, and in the second everything except Rammohun was Indian' (Panikkar 1995: 1). This resonates with Clifford's observations: 'intervening in an interconnected world, one is always, to varying degrees, "inauthentic", caught between cultures, implicated in others' (in Chaudhuri 2003: 386).

It is not that the new global cultural fusions and mixes did not occur or impinge on our everyday lives (Chaudhuri 1998, 2003). Both the words 'culture' and 'globalization' were terms that 'acquired great visibility' in India and in my 'classroom'. Culturally nothing was distant any longer, and middle-class homes finished domestic chores before Santa Barbara beamed into their living room; national boundaries were out of times. 'We drank Nescafe just as they did in New York and Amsterdam' (Chaudhuri 2003: 379). Nescafe coffee is only one of the many adverts that captured the simultaneity of time and space and experience across continents. It is the same time that we also witnessed a massive middle class (read national) euphoria over the Pokhran nuclear blast by the BJP government. A great deal of 'cultural' pride accompanied this but with no inherent contradiction with a realpolitik explanation of better bargaining chips with super powers (Ibid). A global, consuming Indian we experience every day is also often a majoritarian Indian, comfortable with populist authoritarianism.

Indian sociology perhaps did not appreciate enough that the 'roots' (capital) and 'routes' (marketing agencies) of words like 'global' and 'globalization' were connected. The new global images appeared rhizome like on our television screen. But what we failed to grasp was that these globalization in their most 'current sense' were first broadcast most aggressively by marketing agents and marketing schools (Masaki and Helsen 1998). These tropes silenced not only the histories of the world but also the changing story of capital, and veil our understanding of the present (Trouillot 2001).

In 1994 as I reached the USA, Francis Fukuyama had declared the 'End of History' with the celebration of the United States as the 'EndState'. This was not too different from the modernization framework. Only then it was a counter to the Cold War, and here it was a celebration of its end. Postmoderns declared the end of Enlightenment meta-narratives of Reason and Progress. In India it meant a thrashing of secularism, Nehruvianism, socialism, and nationalism. 'Nation' became a dirty word. And all nationalism – colonial, imperial, anti-imperial – were dismissed as echoes of Western meta-narratives. In my classroom back in India, 'it was an unhappy collision between a hard cultural nationalist position and a view that brinked close to the idea that a post-colonial, post-modern world were all culturally same – one partaking of a carnivalesque collapse and play of identities' (Chaudhuri 2003: 379). Classroom, discussions on Mandal and Dalit, women and tribals, fashion and beauty shows, and tirades of impassioned cultural nationalism, were entangled with developments in cultural studies in distant North America (Ibid).

For multicultural West, a destabilising of culture was critical to voice space for the marginals, the immigrants, and blacks. For us this was important to open up the fixity of essentialising cultures at a time when the country confronts ethnic, religious hate, and violence. This for India was however not a new moment of multicultural recognition. In a country as diverse and unequal as India, early nationalists strove for 'unity in diversity'. Recognition of many languages, religions, and ethnicities defined the idea of India, and is inscribed in the Indian Constitution. Globalization did not strengthen this idea. Even as we celebrated cultural convergences of the Nescafe kind, and marketed diversity, we witnessed the extraordinary rise of right-wing cultural nationalism promoting a majoritarian Hindu, Hindi Indian identity.

I returned back to India towards the end of 1995. Arjun Appadurai's *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* arrived in 1996, (Appadurai 1996) becoming a key text for globalization, cutting across the sociology/social anthropology divide in our parts. The many copies of Inkeles or Bierstedt, or even Parsons,[21] gathered dust. But the influence of system theory lingered on as did the unease with political economy. We had a plethora of buzzwords – 'porous borders', 'time-space compression', 'dis-embedding of social institutions', 'global interdependencies', 'diasporic communities', 'nomadic capital', 'hybridity'. The many features of globalization as scapes in Appadurai travelled far and wide. It was received well in India's educational system where easily reproduced points work well in examinations (Chaudhuri 2018). For India's middle class, new job opportunities opened (Upadhya 2016). There was tangible evidence of global convergence as Global Brands in shiny shopping malls flooded our urban spaces. Cultural flows were real as India witnessed an exponential growth of media and entertainment industry. Indian women won global beauty contests and India mattered in Davos meets (Chaudhuri 2017). Our cities, built by India's footloose labor, had enclaves of gated communities with names such as Malibu Town and Maple Crescent for the global India. The global Indian did not turn out like Inkeles' modern man. Nor did Fukuyama's prediction of unabashed victory of economic and political liberalism play out as per the script. A sizeable section of the global India cheered

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[21]The department of sociology where I have spent almost my entire life is called the Centre for the Study of Social Systems.

Modi and Trump in joint events organized by diasporic Indians. And some closer to home embraced majoritarian hate of minorities, and class/caste detestation of the marginalized.

Looking back, tying up

Looking back, a year and a half into the Covid-19 Pandemic, the buzz about global convergences and fluid boundaries appear remote and unreal. The Pandemic has not just intensified inequalities but forced their visibility in popular and academic discourse. Much like media images of migrant workers walking back to their villages in India, inequalities burst into our middle-class consciousness taking us by surprise. A crisis pierces taken-for-granted realities to reveal hidden worlds. Peter Berger's evocative analogy of bombarded houses revealing their interiors draws attention to our task as sociologists – to peer beneath the surface (in Chaudhuri 2020a). Sociology should not need wars or pandemics to look beyond the apparent. Its theoretical and methodological wherewithal ought to enable it to do so; to look behind and see through. We appear to have fallen short in this endeavour. Indeed, inequalities in India were evident even without a crisis, and yet we seemed to have missed them; just as we missed widespread prejudices and systematic violence; and the elephant in the room – cultural nationalism and authoritarian populism. What accounts for this cognitive invisibility is the central question that this paper sought to explore. Reasons are many and usually connected. I try to tie up the different strands that run through this paper.

First, sociology in India persisted with its old concern with 'culture', even as it effortlessly switched mode from Indology to modernization to globalization. Culture remained a constant, whether as 'holism' or 'compartmentalization' (Singer 1972) or 'hybridity'. Ideas of fixed, territorially grounded culture persisted and even strengthened, even as new questionings of 'essentialized' cultures in high academia dwelt on its contingent nature. The disconnect between high end academic and India's public discourse grew wider. While Indology based sociology has had its fair share of academic criticism, we did not witness similar discussions on either the premises or the centrality of culture in modernization and globalization theories. Though the idea of the unique 'Indian culture' was staple common sense in our parts, it was expressed more as a general reiteration of India's adaptive ways rather than one that stemmed from empirically grounded studies. Meanwhile, even as we repeated that India's plurality is its hallmark, we moved quickly to an everyday world of intense and violent cultural othering even as we celebrated global cultural flows.

Second, Indian sociology has been inclined to be governed by the ruling rhetoric of a period (whether of the market or the state or global academia). As a student, one had learnt about the death of the working class, and some studies today suggest that 'we are all middle class now (Livemint 2017). The buzzwords of a global advertising industry were effortlessly taken as givens in analysing new cultural forms.

Third, the predominantly empiricist approach that took the empirically observable as the object of inquiry also saw in the 'observation' validation of the concept. Thus, just as loosening of parental authority would be an indicator of individualism characteristic of the modern person; fusion food eateries would be indicating cultural flows of globalization. These were often illustrative evidence rather than finding of systematic study. This empiricism meant a moving away from engaging with social structure,

broadly understood as a durable and constraining arrangement of society, which may not be visible to the naked eye.

Fourth, this practice of looking at the observable empirical is linked to the manner that theory is often deployed in everyday Indian sociology. For decades we operated with buzz phrases such as 'patterns of social differentiation', 'reintegration', 'functional compatibility', and 'maintenance of society'. With globalization, another set of terms arrived such as 'world of flows', 'nomadic', 'translated', 'hybrid', and 'fusion' – used simultaneously as concepts and descriptions of empirical observables.

Fifth, this approach to theory – a set of terms – fitted in well with a reluctance to engage with any foundational role (usually associated with Marxism) of capitalism and its imperatives for accumulation, profit, and global expansion. Thus, instead of studies seeking causal relationships between the precarity of contract labor and a booming textile industry, we would have narratives of workers or entrepreneurs. The theoretical argument in defense would be that this method would capture subjective 'agency' as against 'structure'. Both structure and agency have circulated well in everyday sociology. Unfortunately, they are understood widely ahistorically and as dichotomous entities. Often the agency appears to be more in the hands of the scholar, determined to capture agency of the subject studied. That this approach falls easily into the dangerous pitfalls of methodological individualism does not appear to be an issue of concern.

Sixth, since mainstream sociology was wary of any foundational explanation, the postmodern turn and critique of meta narratives of progress was received well. In my classroom, 'flows' rather than 'foundations' made better sense. The celebration of multiple, fluid identities seemed more liberating for India's middle class in times when 'choice' and 'freedom' were circulating as buzzwords in India's growing mediatized world (Chaudhuri 2017). A foundational role to class appeared constraining. Thus, capitalism even as it defined our everyday lives remained outside the scope of engagement in mainstream sociology/anthropology.

Meanwhile Foucault established his presence in most sociology syllabi, travelling unevenly across institutions, but travelling. Unevenly, because in departments and institutions where the global circulation of academic ideas was more intense, the impact was stronger. Elsewhere Parsons, in some creole form, still reigned. That Foucault never sought to build a grand social theory resonated with the new sensibilities. Theories and concepts were seen as 'toolboxes' that could be mobilized as one liked. Concepts such as 'governmentality' and 'surveillance' peppered classroom presentation. A concept is however never completely independent of the context or the purposes that surrounded its birth. It always remains partially a prisoner of its own architecture, but the death of the author had been declared, and sociology of knowledge, always an arcane subject, was grossly out of fashion.

These new terms, as I mention earlier, circulated better in some institutions than others. This had to do with far reaching developments in higher educational institutions globally. Ideas are both embedded in and travel through institutions. Private universities had expanded. State funding of public universities shrank. Many more scholars now joined teaching in the more well-funded private universities equipped with a degree from the West. They arrived carrying with them a global, postcolonial curriculum with often visible presence of South Asian scholars located in the Global North. Fees in these institutions are very high. This restricts the social composition of

students and further fragments the different worlds Indians inhabited. Public institutions like JNU, where I spent most of my life, had been enabling sites of critical learning and camaraderie as well as spaces that furthered social mobility and democratic engagement. For here, students from diverse and unequal backgrounds lived together. A deadly combination of neoliberal policies compounded by the ruthless authoritarian populist regime have been systematically destroying such institutions (Chaudhuri et al. 2022).

Thus, when we talk internationalization or decolonization, the banal ordinary everyday world of our institutions needs to be taken into account. The global south is not just a discursive entity. Hence my vantage point of the everyday. Sometime in the mid-1990s, I was invited in Delhi to address a group of American professors that came to talk about India. This was part of the efforts of the American academia to internationalize their curriculum in response to globalization. Soon there were many more invites, sometimes for schools, sometimes universities. I learnt later that the concept of *internationalization of the curriculum* had become a topic of some discussion and debate when the OECD defined it as 'a curriculum with an international orientation in content and/or form, aimed at preparing students for performing (professionally/socially) in an international and multicultural context and designed for domestic and/or foreign students (OECD/CERI 1995: 9). In my everyday world, this was an opportunity I would not normally have. Educated entirely in India, I had no 'global' networks. In this global academia, my identity as an authentic Indian acquired a new significance.

The story about authenticities and identities is however never simple. In a survey of Indian sociology that was sponsored by the Indian Council for Social Science Research (ICSSR) in 2009, we write, 'In more recent decades there is an increasing presence of sociologists/social anthropologists located and more often than not trained in the west, mostly in North American universities'. These body of work are usually 'marked by a certain professional gloss and neatness of theory and methods (usually a certain kind of theory and methods), a well-honed use of language that is recognizable in Western dominated global academia'. Even as they speak the language of post colonialism and self-reflexivity, they are more a product of the universities that they are trained in rather than of the societies where they draw their origin from. 'This is in sharp contrast to the early sociologists/ social anthropologists who were an inalienable part of the struggles and ambiguities of a colonized society and 'nation building' – processes not so easily swept under the broad sweep of the term postcolonial' (Chaudhuri and Jayachandran 2014: 90-91). The many Indian sociologists that this paper cites are unknown in the global circuit.

That we missed the relationship between globalization and populism can be traced to these practices of Indian sociology. The Presidential Address to the Indian Sociological Society by Dhanagare did underline the fact that 'it is not just an accident' that the term 'globalization' came speedily into academic parlance following almost on the heels of the 'Dunkel Agreement that finally led to the formation of the World Trade Organization'. The situation, he felt, called for 'a debate on the possibility of an alternative vision of globalization' and he argued that 'religious fanaticism and market fanaticism are not only flourishing simultaneously but are also competing with each other in the current phase of globalization' (Dhanagare 2003: 26–28).

Almost two decades later as one writes, what strikes me most is his conjoining of religious and market fanaticism. I had begun this exposition stating that globalization in India cannot be dealt with as a solo story. The post Mandal, Hindutva driven country has to be analyzed in conjunction with neo liberal globalization (Heller 2020). John Harris observes: 'Market fundamentalism has encouraged and given legitimacy to a consumer culture with an ethos of competitive individualism, pushing out the adherence to values of social solidarity' while also – in apparent contradiction – 'giving rise to the reassertion by political leaders of the "basics" of family and religion, in the interests of social stability'. This is exactly the contradiction that fuels 'the desire for stable values' and the authority of basic institutions – 'the family, religion, and the state' characteristic of the authoritarian populism of the 21st century (Harriss 2021). As India slides into authoritarian populism, these connections need careful consideration.

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