THE QUEST FOR INDIAN SOCIOLOGY
Radhakamal Mukerjee and Our Times

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Indian Institute of Advanced Study
Rashtrapati Nivas, Shimla

First published 2014

ISBN: 978-93-82396-14-7

Published by
The Secretary
Indian Institute of Advanced Study
Rashtrapati Nivas, Shimla

Typeset by
3A Graphics
New Delhi 110 005

Printed at
Pearl Offset Press Pvt. Ltd.
5/33, Kirti Nagar
New Delhi

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Acknowledgements

I take this opportunity to thank the Indian Institute of Advanced Study (IIAS), Shimla, for having awarded me the fellowship to undertake this work in the company of some of the more illustrious colleagues in the field of sociology. IIAS is a unique institution in its own right. Its convening power of some of the most productive minds in the humanities and social sciences in the country is unparalleled. I consider myself fortunate for having spent two delightful years there. Prof. Peter Ronald deSouza's inspiring presence as the Director of the Institute was an additional benefit. I express my gratitude to Professor deSouza for his personal warmth, unbounded generosity, and constant encouragement.

Prem Chandji has been the most helpful librarian I have come across so far. I have found him to be quite accessible and amiable. Other members of the staff of the IIAS Library—Pushpalata, Prachi, Neeraja, Bhardwajji—have been equally helpful and courteous. It is their cheerfulness that adds to the value of the collection of the IIAS library. During my stay at the Institute, I have had occasion to convene one or two academic seminars that led to my close interaction with the 'academic section' of the Institute. I have always received their fullest support and co-operation. Dr Debarshi Sen, the Academic Resource Officer, has been extraordinarily courteous,and has gone beyond the call of his duty to extend help whenever I needed it. Sanjeev and Sangeeta have always smilingly offered whatever assistance I sought from them. I know of very few institutions in the country where the staff are so full of gentility and goodwill towards the Fellows of the Institute. I wish I could thank them individually. It is my pleasure to put on record my

deep appreciation for the support staff that the Institute can justifiably be proud of.

The Institute's Thursday Seminars have been an intellectually elevating experience and a source of much-sought academic peerage and professional camaraderie. I have benefited from the discussions in these seminars. In particular, I would like to thank Piyush Mathur, Malavika Kasturi, Amit Basu, Sunita Raina, Gitika De, Vibha Arora, Manisha Gangahar, and Varsha Ganguly for their valuable inputs during my presentations at the Thursday Seminar. More importantly, the Institute offers an opportunity to interact with people from different academic disciplines, knowledge domains and fields. It was a pleasure knowing Dr Maria Aurora Couto, Prof Chetan Singh, Prof Ghanshyam Shah, Prof Tridip Suhrud, Prof Sharad Deshpande, Prof Kunal Chakrabarti, Prof K.G. Poulose, Jasvirji and Prasannaji.

In the course of this research, I have depended on the resources of other libraries besides the IIAS Library. In particular, I would like to thank the librarians and staff of the following: Goa University Library, IIM Calcutta Library, Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) Library, New Delhi; the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi.

During the period of my Fellowship at the IIAS, I was on leave from the Indian Institute of Management Calcutta (IIMC). I thank the authorities of the IIMC for granting me leave, which allowed me to focus on my research, away from the routine teaching. Even during the period when I was on leave I could always count on the support and goodwill of my colleagues and friends at the IIMC: Annapurna di, Kalyan da, Raghab da, Biju, Bhaskar, Priya, Rajesh, Unni, Runa and Vidyanandji.

The fellowship at Shimla turned out to be a personally enriching experience when Prof N. Jayaram joined us for a year.I have, over the years, benefitted immensely from his scholarly inputs, and have always counted on his support in my academic endeavours. A mere expression of gratitude is

surely not enough to pay back all the personal and intellectual debts that I owe him. Prof D.N. Dhanagare was a source of strength and affection. I have never felt constrained in making undue demands on his time and generosity. Besides intellectual camaraderie, Prof Satish Sharma has been a wonderful company in Shimla. His hospitality has been legendary, and I have unhesitatingly banked on his good qualities in multiple ways.

Professor Sasheej Hegde read the first three chapters of this work and gave valuable feedback. I have also benefitted from the comments of Profs Imtiaz Ahmad, Gopal Guru, Tiplut Nongbri, and Surendra Munshi at presentations of parts of this project at the Institute. I owe a huge debt to Prof Maitrayee Chaudhuri for having offered me detailed written comments on the draft manuscript. But for her gentle prodding, the completion of this work would have been further delayed. My debt to Prof. T.N. Madan can be seen throughout the pages of this work. He was kind enough to give me sound advice and sage counsel about the work when I met him at Lucknow during a conference in 2011. I would like to thank Prof. Sujata Patel for having shared with me some of her papers both published and yet-to-be-published. She was also kind enough to draw my attention to some of the relevant references.

Nabanipa has been an affectionate friend and interlocutor for more than a decade now. I have gained substantially from her valuable suggestions at every stage of this work and elsewhere. She has been generous with her time and hospitality during my frequent visits to Delhi. She has also helped me procure several publications that were crucial for this work.

Anita and Prasun, Manoj and Ronita, Rizwan, Irfan, Mohit, and Anindya have been friends of long standing. They have supported me in each and every endeavour that I have undertaken. My former colleagues at Goa—Alito, Ganesha, Sujatha, Koshy and Ujjayan—have been generous with their time and encouragement.

Lastly, a word of gratitude to my family: Mai, Aparajita, Kanishka, Kumud, Kalpana, Kautuk and Kaushik. They have ungrudgingly relieved me of many household responsibilities that ideally should have been mine.

It is possible that I might have missed some names by oversight. I take this opportunity to acknowledge my debt to all those who have supported me in the preparation of this work.

MANISH THAKUR

Chapter I

Towards Disciplinary Histories: A Prolegomenon

> The sociological traditions in India have yet to find their historian.
> T.N. MADAN 2011b: xiii

Context and contemporaneity have been the defining characteristics of sociology as an academic discipline. The varied interplay of the two has led to the contested constitution of the disciplinary frameworks of sociological knowledge in different national settings. One may even argue that our preoccupation with them has very often discouraged us from looking at sociology as a problem in the history of ideas.[1] The excessive reliance on contemporaneity in the making of our disciplinary agendas has surely kept us away from developing a critical language to do disciplinary history. Likewise, we seem to have largely been indifferent to the limits of contextualist procedures. An overdose of sociology of knowledge has offered us the slippery understanding wherein we always look for unmediated effects of broader economic and social changes in a scientific field. In fact, Pierre Bourdieu (1991: 379) cautions us against what he calls *short-circuit fallacy,* that is, explanations that put in direct relationship changes that occur in specialized fields such as sociological field and broader socio-political trends. Most of the accounts of the growth and development of sociology in India certainly reveal dimensions of this *short-circuit fallacy*.

On another plane, to stay with Bourdieu a little longer, there is no scientific field of world sociology as yet, calls and exhortations of internationalisation of the discipline

notwithstanding. The desirability of such a field is itself a moot point given the fact that there are forms of scientific authority that are disguised, euphemized forms of political authority. We are increasingly aware of the epistemological effects of this domination and the mechanisms that produce them. As practitioners of the discipline in a non-Western setting, we cannot eschew sociology of sociology as a fundamental dimension of sociological epistemology. Treating it as a mere speciality is something we can ill-afford.

Geopolitics of Knowledge Production

As practitioners of social sciences in a peripheral location, whenever we hear of the entire project of a comparative sociology or global sociology, we are reminded of the historical domination of the West over the non-West. As Sasheej Hegde rightly notes, (1989: 100), 'the ideology of internationalism underlying calls for comparative studies concretises the internationalist aspirations of the European man which received their supreme foundation in the Enlightenment'. By implication, there is automatic closure of a sociology steeped into other value systems and knowledge traditions. Veena Das (2006: 194) articulates this epistemological angst most pithily:

> The future of a sociology that may be rooted in the values of a culture different from that of the west is foreclosed, for it is known beforehand that such a sociology would be a fascist sociology —neo-Hindu, provincial, and backward. Thus the fate of Indian systems of knowledge is sealed. They can have a place in the history of ideas; they can be intellectually apprehended to provide means by which "we" of the West can transcend the limits of our ideology. But they are not present as resources for the construction of knowledge systems inhabited by the modern Indian. Other cultures acquire legitimacy only as objects of thought, never as instruments for thought. ...The condition for participation in the making of the sociological discourse for the non-Western anthropologist is an active renunciation of contemporary possibilities in her own culture.

It would be naïve to assume that contemporary structures of power in which knowledge is produced have changed in a way

where such charges appear things of the yore. Eurocentric ideological hegemony is as alive today as ever. The need for self-conscious retrieval of the perspectives of the South is felt across social science disciplines — from history to political theory to sociology.[2] At the same time, it would be foolhardy to suggest that nothing has changed so far as global production of social scientific knowledge is concerned. If nationalism and colonialism were the defining contexts for the manner in which social sciences in India emerged, a twenty-first century globalised world is a qualitatively different context to appraise contemporary co-ordinates of relationship between the West and the non-West. Today, we come across a West which is challenged by diverse cultural and ethnic assertions from within, and is yet to perfect its self-claimed blueprint of multicultural existence. In the particular case of the academe, the ascendance of subaltern historiography and postcolonial theory have not only facilitated non-western intellectual assertions but have also given rise to an influential group of diasporic academics throughout North America. It is this conjuncture that has centre-staged the debate on *provincializing Europe* in ways that have important intellectual pay-offs for the social science scholarship across the globe.

This new intellectual context is certainly enabling as it facilitates the re-statement of a set of questions that have frequently been posed by the practitioners of social sciences in India. It affords us an opportunity to critically look at our disciplinary past in a way that aspects of this past can be fruitfully invoked as crucial intellectual resources to further a debate of contemporary relevance. And, this endeavour can hardly be termed antiquarian as it enables us to ask questions that have persisted since the very beginning of the emergence of social sciences in India. In a limited sense, the debate pertains to the idea of identity of sociology in India and the manner in which this concern has been articulated over a period of time. But, it goes beyond the narrow disciplinary boundaries of

academic sociology in India. Rather, it touches upon the entire field of production and dissemination of knowledge in our times. Social science scholarship today exemplifies Marx's proclamation in *The German Ideology* of the dominant being the universal. Western theory and scholarship are considered to be universal owing to their unchallenged dominance. Practitioners of social sciences in non-western settings continue to be relegated to a peripheral position. Non-western contexts very often serve as a case study and, at most, are illustrative of a particular element that can be used for a broader theoretical claim by the Western scholars. While this general frame of hierarchical relationship persists, we cannot lose sight of the fact that the West today is not what it used to be, and the geopolitics of Indian scholarship within Western academe has definitely changed.

Amidst this changed context, the present work opens up the perennial question of cognitive, social and historical identity of sociology in India through a critical, though selective, engagement with Radhakamal Mukerjee's oeuvre. However, for us, this endeavour is not an exegetical exercise documenting the key ideas and contributions of one of the pioneers in the field. Rather, it helps us grasp 'the thraldom of a schizophrenic existence combining calls to indigenization with dreams of a universal science of society' (Hegde 1989: 101) that has become a short term for sociology in India. It may help us retrieve previous silences and erasures that the homogenizing urge within Indian sociology has cumulatively spawned. Our collective complicity in this homogenising undertaking possibly explains Hegde's lament about the absence of any concerted attempt at posing the central issue of the ontological status of sociology in India as the framing question. In particular, his plea has been to formulate sociology as a problem in the history of ideas. For him, calling sociology a colonial transplant is certainly not enough. He brings to our attention the serious lack of engagement with the 'generative sources and principles

of the transplant' (1989: 102). Justifiably, his approach underlines the imperative to study the entire western tradition as sociology gets introduced in India as an already constituted field. He has continued to pursue this line of enquiry in his attempt 'to narrativise the development of sociological thought in India', and to the extent that this has been 'co-temporaneous with her contact with the west and the conquest' (*ibid.* 103). His approach promises to offer a parallel narrative about the West as much as a focus for a sociology in/of India.

Of course, we are not the first ones to raise the issue of Eurocentrism. It is commonplace to contextualise the growth and development of social sciences in India in relation to the historical trajectory of colonial modernity. We are never tired of reiterating ideological, political, academic and intellectual challenges that the project of decolonisation of mind entails. The available literature does interrogate the implications for the production of sociological knowledge of our capitulation to the idea of the centrality of Europe as the home of modernity, science, reason and progress. It does provide us with a sense of the complexities involved in the task of dislodging West/Europe as our epistemological anchors. We are only too aware to ignore the persistent all-pervasiveness of the Western knowledge and epistemological assumptions in the everyday practices of sociology in contemporary India.

While acknowledging the existing body of literature on the history of sociology in India wherein contextualism abounds, the present work also draws on the perspective of intellectual history. Quentin Skinner (1969) has forcefully argued that the relevant context in which to situate texts could very well be intellectual and discursive as opposed to merely socioeconomic. We consider this insight valuable as much of the literature concerning sociology in India privileges the socioeconomic. Further, for an intellectual historian, even when texts do not share our questions, let alone answers to those questions, they deserve to be studied. In our case, we find a certain continuity

of questions across generations of sociologists in India. Even if some of our pioneers were involved in a different way of doing sociology than what we do today, the questions they raised about the disciplinary self-identity remain worth studying today as ever.

At the same time, we attempt to move beyond the narrow and shallow conception of the history of ideas which foregrounds presentism as the sole guiding principle for intellectual history. The effort to understand the past in terms of the present is not something that we argue for. We are not here to judge our predecessors and their work with the present-day canons. We attempt to historicise their work with the purpose of understanding the past, insofar as possible, in its own terms. True, our pioneers' ways of doing sociology were different from those prevalent today. Yet, our understanding of historicism ensures that we do not end up imposing our framework on their questions. While a typical intellectual historian would urge us to look at the past texts as a set of propositions 'together with the questions they were meant to answer, to understand the reasonableness of points of view now superseded ...to understand in its own terms', the pre-paradigmatic status of the social sciences renders their historiography more vulnerable to presentism than that of science generally. In fact, the illustrious historian of anthropology George W. Stocking, Jr. talks of 'enlightened presentism' as a framework. According to him, precisely because the social sciences are pre-paradigmatic, their competing schools of past and present coexist. Put it differently, our predecessors were asking questions and attempting to answer them that are by no means closed. Viewed thus, a social science discipline itself is a historical growth conditioned in a variety of subtle ways by an intricate complexity of contextual influences (Jones 1983: 450).

As a matter of fact, we are wary of what Quentin Skinner calls textualism, that is, reading the text over and over again

with a view to expound certain themes, unit ideas, or timeless truths of ongoing relevance to the present. Such an exercise involves the dangers of presentism. We attempt to understand the unfamiliar in terms of the familiar. We follow the text in a way that ultimately leads to the emergence of a coherent framework of ideas. In the process, we end up writing our own preoccupations over our descriptions of what a past writer said. This entails an ascription on our part to what a thinker must have been saying. Skinner cautions us against such mythologies. For example, there is the *mythology of doctrines* where a thinker is said to have contributed to some theme or unit idea whose terms would have been meaningless to her/him, or where s/he is said not to have contributed, is criticised for failing to do that. Then, there is the *mythology of coherence* in which the text is examined in order to find (or, if necessary, supply) a degree of order or precision that the author never attained or perhaps even intended to attain, thus producing a history of thoughts that no one ever thought. Likewise, there is the *mythology of prolepsis* where the necessary distinction between the historical significance of a past action for the present, and the meaning of the action for the agent (thinker) who performed it, is ignored (*Art of Theory* nd).

While conscious of these multiple mythologies, in the following section, we outline the rationale for the selective reading of Radhakamal Mukerjee (1889-1968) — usually proclaimed as one of the pioneers of sociology in India. Evidently, this book does not offer a comprehensive assessment of his voluminous contributions to sociology. Nor is the present work concerned with the meticulous details of his biography and career trajectory as an influential sociologist in the beginning of the last century. Our interest in Mukerjee's work and life is guided by our intention to understand some aspects of disciplinary history of sociology in India. Mukerjee's concerns, and an examination of his corpus, and his place in the history of the discipline, enable us to foreground such questions as:

what goes into the making of a disciplinary history? What set of attributes qualifies some of the practitioners as 'founders' or 'pioneers' of the discipline? How do we make sense of distinctive 'national' sociological traditions? How do these traditions relate to the self-identity of a discipline in historical terms? Moreover, how does sociology in India negotiate the perpetual tussle between its universalist aspirations as a science of society and its particularism in terms of contextual embeddedness? What have been the promises and pitfalls of indigeneity as an epistemological resource? And ultimately, how do some of these questions fit in with the larger debate on the Western hegemony and the attendant geopolitics of social scientific knowledge?

Sociology in India: Between Celebration and Lament

Given the high degree of reflexivity concerning the nature and character of their craft among Indian sociologists, the recent decades have witnessed an increasing concern with the task of retrieving and reconstructing disciplinary genealogies, traditions, practices, histories, institutions and biographies (Chaudhuri 2010; Madan 2011a, 2011b, 2013; Patel 2011; Uberoi *et al* 2007). Of necessity, this collective endeavour to foreground multifaceted dimensions of the history of the discipline of sociology in India brings to the fore, all over again, the perpetual debate centring on the identity of an *Indian* sociology. The latter concern had, in fact, been built in the very founding of the discipline as an academic and institutional enterprise. Expectedly, it exercised the imagination of the first generation of sociologists as well. And, these pioneers of the discipline (most, if not all) have confronted this challenge frontally with varying emphases. Their voluminous writings on the theme testify to their deep engagement with the essential nature of the discipline—sociology as a universal science of society or a particularistic endeavour rooted in history and tradition.

Indeed, this universal-particular binary is too simplistic and most of the pioneers would have objected to such a framing of the problematique. They would have recast it differently depending on their overall orientation and approach towards India's encounter with the West. However, the present work confines itself to the selected writings of Radhakamal Mukerjee with a view to delineate the contours of his quest for an Indian sociology. It does not claim any contribution to the historical sociology of academic (scientific?) disciplines in India. Nor does it attempt to map out the complex terrain of the culture of intellectual life in the decades preceding Independence. A comprehensive cultural history of intellectual life and scholarly practices in late colonial India, though a worthy academic endeavour, falls outside the scope of the present work (and also the competence of the present author).While reflecting on the place Radhakamal Mukerjee occupies in contemporary disciplinary history, this work presents a particular reading of his oeuvre in relation to the promise and predicament of envisioning sociology as an indigenous social science. Viewed thus, the present work is, rather, intended as a modest contribution to a minuscule aspect of the disciplinary history of sociology in India to the extent that it discusses in some detail the life and work of an individual sociologist.

One way of reading the contemporary accounts of the growth and development of Indian sociology is to discern a deep and urgent sense of 'if only' motif in them: If only M.N. Srinivas and his brand of Indian sociology would not, as Satish Deshpande (2007) notes, have been dominant; if only A.R. Desai would have been in the commanding position in the University of Bombay the way G.S. Ghurye was (Patel 2007); if only the 'Lucknow School' had succeeded in creating a wider and larger constituency for its type of sociology (Patel 2010); if only the raw empiricism could have given way to an ambitious set of theoretical aspirations (Vasavi 2011; Welz 2009);[3] if only we could have been a little less obsessed with

the micro-setting of the village; if only we could have taken to large-scale survey data and had been more macro-structural in our orientation; if only we could have cared a trifle less for the studies of caste or kinship; if only we could have produced our own Charles Tilly (1984) to talk of *Big Structures, Large Processes, Huge Comparisons*, if only indigeneity could have been our singular distinction (Hegde 2011), and finally, if only we could have done sociology proper and not deluded ourselves about doing sociology while having practised social/cultural anthropology all along (Oommen 2007).

Evidently, contemporary chroniclers and practitioners of the discipline would wish Indian sociology to have a different set of birthmarks than it has or had so far. They would fancy writing our present theoretical-methodological predilections in its history so as to imbue it with flamboyant meta-theoretical paradigms and buoyant methodological ingenuity. Put differently, they would not like to have reasons for regret for any particular aspect of its history which makes them complicit in its sense of 'lack' or 'inadequacy' be that regarding its narrowly circumscribed theoretical ambition, its legacy of methodological pot-pourri, its imitative character, its neglect of non-Indic religious and other minority community traditions. They would like to envision a new history for the discipline and, if found wanting as it happens so often, they will try to construct one. And this very exercise of constructing an inspirational history of the discipline propels them to look for missed moments and could-have-been trajectories.

Notwithstanding this all-pervasive sense of 'if only', the present day practitioners of the discipline have hardly been deterred from engaging with some of the recurring concerns of Indian sociology. Of all such concerns, the quest for an Indian sociology, that is, *Indianness* of Indian sociology, has been one of the most durable ones, and most sociologists, if not all, have participated in this debate of 'for a sociology of India' carried in the pages of the reputed journal *Contributions to*

Indian Sociology and elsewhere (Madan 2008).

The sheer longevity of this debate creates a sense of *déjà vu*, if not outright *ennui*, among the current generation of students. The very allusion to this debate brings forth a set of contentious issues at the core of which lies the relationship of Indian sociology with the received Western epistemology and its attendant co-ordinates. It has been suffused with calls for swaraj of ideas and decolonisation of the Indian mind. The need for the freedom of Indian scientific thought from colonial influence and the assertion of independent Indian viewpoints have been emphatically articulated (Uberoi 1968). Scholars have also been equally concerned with the dangers of academic colonialism and the intellectual and political implications of the apparently neutral category of International social science (Saberwal 1970). Some have even negated the very need and possibility of an Indian sociology (Saran 1958).

At times, one comes across a caricature of this important debate in terms of warring camps of those championing the desirability of a universal science of society and the nativists supposedly aspiring for a particularistic *Indian* sociology as an exclusive academic enterprise. Of course, a large number of sociologists occupy the coveted middle ground in this debate. Some see no apparent contradiction between the search for a sociology of India based on concepts derived from the study of Indian society and the general advancement of a scientific sociology (Singh 1970).

Still, for others, attempts to Indianise the discipline are proxy for anchoring it in Brahmanical, Hindu, Sanskrit and classical sources, thereby camouflaging an invidious political agenda in theoretical-methodological terms. They would rather expend their intellectual energy in professionalising the discipline (Oommen 2007). Viewed thus, the debate no longer remains confined to the value of contextual embeddedness for a discipline like sociology but partakes of the larger politics of production of social scientific knowledge in a plural society. It

is possible that these pressures of political correctness, or the fear of being branded as apologists for an exclusive scholarly agenda, explain the near absence of any serious and sustained intellectual engagement with the issue of indigeneity as an epistemological resource in Indian context. Not surprisingly, till recently, the discussions of 'Lucknow School' and its sociology never moved beyond few mandatory paragraphs about its philosophical orientations in historical narratives of Indian sociology.

In a way, as Sasheej Hegde (2011: 49) argues, part of the reason for this obscurity of the 'Lucknow School' is because of the fact that 'different ways of conceptualising social science and its object became dominant in our times'. To put it simplistically, and rather provocatively, Srinivasian blueprint of Indian sociology would entertain no dissenting/alternative voices lest the architecture of the discipline that M.N. Srinivas and his followers had so assiduously constructed developed internal cracks and eventual collapse (Patel 2010). This blueprint would have no place for the Lucknow sociologists' 'ambition to move away from the categories and theories that structured colonial anthropology' (as was framed in Ghurye's sociology in Bombay). Nor would it acknowledge and appreciate the Lucknow sociologists' attempt 'to perceive modern India in a sociological language that was simultaneously, both universal and particular, and both western and Indian' (Patel 2001: xx-xxi).

Given the subsequent trajectory of Indian sociology, it was but natural to retrospectively characterise the type of sociology done at Lucknow as being abstruse, being pre-disposed towards ethics and philosophy. There have been few takers for its more 'encompassing ethic of indigeneity for social and historical research and theorising in the context both of distinct national traditions and transversely across the space of these particular characteristics', its provision of a more comprehensive framework of sociological inquiry in India while responding

to the challenge of the west, and its non-advocacy of relativism in terms of sociological and historical appraisal (Hegde 2011: 51).[4]

Also, it is customary for the historians of the discipline in the Indian context to mandatorily refer to 'the colonial experience, the memory of the past glory and the project for future political and cultural emancipation [that] constituted the major cognitive and moral concerns of Indian sociology (Singh 1986: 1).[5] The first generation of Indian sociologists/social anthropologists is seen to be the inheritors of the legacy of Indian social reform and the subsequent national awakening: 'the issues that concerned them most were those pertinent to the viability of the prospective or emergent nation-state: the challenges of nation-building in a fractured society, and the challenges of economic development, civilizational unity of India as a plural society' (Uberoi *et al.* 2007: 38).

This collective acknowledgement of nationalism being of crucial influence in shaping Indian sociology and social anthropology in general, and particularly of the zeitgeist of the first generation of its practitioners, needs to be accorded a detailed and nuanced reading in the life and work of particular individual sociologists/social anthropologists. Even as all, or almost all, were under the sway of the same set of forces and influences, they were bound to address the pertinent issues of their times differently. Their stresses and silences in terms of what they considered to be most important to the viability of the prospective or emergent nation-state, or the issues that concerned them the most, could be anything but revealing for making sense of the inherently conflictual idea of India that we have come to inhabit and inherit in our scholarly practices and beyond.

In this sense, the concerted focus on the life and work of a particular sociologist of the pioneering generation helps us flesh out some of the general assertions pertaining to the impact of 'the colonial experience, the memory of the past glory and the

project for future political and cultural emancipation' (Singh 1986: 1) on modern traditions of scholarship. Some of the 'major cognitive and moral concerns' which are so frequently talked about, and are generally taken to be granted, in the context of sociology in India come to acquire a particular resonance if we chart out the scholarly career of an individual sociologist.

Why Read Radhakamal Mukerjee Today?

As mentioned earlier, the present work dwells on the professional and scholarly career of Radhakamal Mukerjee (1889-1968). As a matter of fact, a detailed attention to any one of the pioneers could enable us address some of the issues raised in the foregoing. It could definitely provide us with a peep into social science disciplinary milieu as it was shaping up in the first half of the twentieth century. However, our choice of the protagonist is guided by a set of interrelated considerations.

First, the sheer absence of any serious work on Mukerjee's contributions was the reason enough. The present work was initially conceived (c 2011) as an attempt to rescue him from this disciplinary amnesia. Since then some work has appeared assessing Mukerjee's contributions in relation to history of sociology in India (See Madan 2011a, 2011b, 2013; Thakur 2012, 2013). Now, the question is as to why Mukerjee needs to be retrieved as part of the disciplinary legacy of Indian sociology. The simplest answer is that Radhakamal Mukerjee was the only other sociologist (apart from G.S.Ghurye) who was the presiding deity at the only other centre of academic sociology (Lucknow) in India in the first quarter of the last century. His sociology was as distinctive in its originality, breadth and vision as Ghurye's. And, a balanced understanding of the history of the discipline necessitates as much engagement with Mukerjee and Lucknow as with Ghurye and Bombay.[6] Moreover, it simultaneously calls for an exploration of the

relative neglect of the former compared to the latter.

Noticeably, Lucknow was the only other distinctive school of sociology besides Bombay in pre-independence India. The competing conceptualisations of what a 'school' means in relation to the history of the discipline notwithstanding, one has to concede that this attainment of the status of a school (even if only in popular imagination and not in scholarly sense) has to do largely with the founding vision of Mukerjee. Even here, Mukerjee offers an interesting case study to examine the shifting trajectory of the 'legacy and rigour' of a particular style of doing sociology — its emergence, consolidation and dissipation and demise.[7]

Not only was Mukerjee as prolific, if not more, as Ghurye but was also one of the few who articulated, and worked for it throughout his life, the grand aspiration of propounding a universal theory of society from within the resources of Indian civilization. His was the most sustained and fundamental challenge to the western epistemological dominance and western modernity. He was the rare pioneer whose ambition was to offer an alternative framework, and not merely a corrective, to modern social sciences. Indeed, at a time when the general intellectual tendency in India was to foreground the binary of the East and the West, Mukerjee envisaged a synthetic integrated model of social sciences which could retain the best of both the traditions. In fact, his voluminous work offers us an opportunity to grapple with a colonised intelligentsia's characteristically ambivalent, at times self-contradictory, attitude towards the West.

Even otherwise, a critical understanding of Radhakamal Mukerjee as one of the 'founding' fathers of sociology in India foregrounds central issues about theory and praxis in Indian social science. It offers us an opportunity to understand 'the critical interplay between the shaping of social sciences and the making of national consciousness in India in the late 19th and early 20th centuries' (Madan 2011a: 38) besides contributing

to an appraisal of the relationship between colonial educational and intellectual contexts and the present state of Indian scholarship. To the extent that the works of the 'founding' fathers at Lucknow were 'not unsystematic and abstract generalisations about Man and Society' (Mukherjee 1979: 39), they provide us with the possibility of an aperture into 'an empirical intellectual history of scholarly practices in modern India' (Hegde: 2011: 37).

However, the present work has limited scope. It does not purport to look at Mukerjee's contributions in their entirety, which, even otherwise, is a daunting task to undertake within the space of a single monograph. Nor is it intended to comprehensively assess his role as a 'pioneer' in the context of the history of the growth and development of sociology in India. Its aim is to selectively present Mukerjee's axial concerns and analytical thematics from his enormous body of writings to demonstrate the distinctiveness of his approach towards western social sciences. While examining Mukerjee's critique of western modernity, it endeavours to delineate the nature and premises of Mukerjee's exposition of Indianness or the broad contours of his quest for an Indian sociology. It also hints at ambivalences that characterise Mukerjee's grandiloquent quest to conceptualise the relations between individual, society and culture in the context of indigenous conceptual resources and Eastern categories of knowledge.

Viewed thus, the present work is a small contribution towards contemporary endeavours to historicise the growth and development of sociology in India. Its focus on Radhakamal Mukerjee is not meant to present a comprehensive assessment of his enormous scholarly contributions in an exegetical fashion. Instead, its aim is more modest: to situate Mukerjee in the contemporary history of the discipline. The latter opens up avenues for exploring a larger set of questions that go beyond the biography and career trajectory of a given 'founder' of the discipline. Parenthetically, we attempt to problematize the very

exercise of canon-making in the history of the discipline and look at the processes through which certain individuals and texts become foundational to our collective disciplinary memory whereas others tend to fall prey to disciplinary amnesia, if not outright erasure. This exercise, in an oblique fashion, may indicate differential constitution of national traditions in sociology, its inherent plurality, contestation and dynamism, and its negotiation with the resources of indigenous thought, of national cultural traditions, and trends of scholarship.

Indeed, this work is as much about disciplinary history as it is about contemporary practices of the discipline given the continuity in terms of certain key questions that have been central to the fashioning of the self-identity of the discipline. Without necessarily refracting through the prism of the contemporary, we engage with the historical 'fault lines' in our exercise to construct a particular disciplinary biography. In doing so, we find the founders of the discipline speaking to us as important interlocutors in the perpetually unsettled debate concerning the philosophical questions of man and methods that confront us in our times. We come to appreciate their work in new ways. The pioneers of the discipline do not appear to us as fossilised reminders of an underdeveloped stage of the growth of the discipline. Sociology of science reminds us that no scientific discipline necessarily grows in a cumulative fashion. Expectedly, we are less inclined to think of our pioneers as representatives of the historical infancy of our discipline. Their concerns are evidence enough of the centrality of the vibrant quest of self-identity that inform our disciplinary practices to this day. We intend to historicise the reading of their work. This involves placing their aspirations, hopes, promises, anxieties and concerns in the larger context of the times they lived in. We are well aware that their work contributed to the historical self-confidence of an emergent nation and helped understand multiple challenges to its civilizational design and legacy.

Doing Disciplinary History: Reading a Pioneer and Beyond

To be sure, conceptual and historical treatment of such scholarly practices poses enormous methodological challenges. In the particular case of pioneers of the 'Lucknow School', Hegde (2011: 51) has undertaken this task by delineating 'a set of principles and fundamental convictions' and by not being bogged down by the 'the expository side of their ideas and arguments'. Following the same methodological logic, we too do not claim a historically accurate interpretation so as to re-experience Radhakamal Mukerjee's text as it would have been experienced by its original reader or the author (that being the task of the historian of ideas).[8] Without delving into the larger, and as yet unsettled, debate of what is the meaning of the text or how to rationally reconstruct its meaning (that being the concern of the history of philosophy), we would consider the meaning that the text presently has in terms of the history of the discipline to which it is supposedly a contribution to. Thus, questions like its truth conditions or its truth value appear unhistorical and anachronistic (Rosen 2011: 694-95). We would endeavour to connect the text to the agent, and through that, to its wider social context. We have no clear answers as to what governs or what sets limits on what we may ascribe to the authors we interpret (see Skinner 1969: 3-53). Yet, we hope to illumine the underlying problems and the distinctive aspects of the discourse of the author who predates us. Rather than asserting that our interpretation involves a plausible account of what these meant to achieve or intended to mean (*ibid*. 28-29), we will describe what they in fact achieved or meant. As Bernard Susser (1989) rightly notes that the sociology of knowledge need not be the unnecessary battleground for meta-theoretical disputes that are irrelevant to its practice.

Theodore Porter and Dorothy Ross (2003: 7) remind us that 'writing history is generally an exercise in disciplinary self-definitions linking the modern discipline to selected forebears and legitimating a certain kind of disciplinary practice'. In the

Indian case, it means developing an understanding of the inner dialogue of a particular social science discipline in the larger context of self-examination on the part of the newly emerged practitioners of social sciences who historically also happened to be the part of the larger middle class intelligentsia in a colonial situation. This consideration of the wider intellectual currents has the potential to compel one to revisit the most basic narratives and the most taken-for-granted ways in which knowledge has been configured in a colonised context.

However, the reflexive interest of sociologists in their history is part of the larger intellectual movement highlighting the historical character of their own domain of knowledge and its practices. Global academy is full of voices clamouring for epistemological diversity, and the epistemological privilege historically accorded to the West is at the centre of severe contestation. There have been conscious attempts to displace and de-centre the West as a self-defined site of universality for, 'many non-Western (indigenous, rural, etc.) populations of the world conceive of the community and the relationship with nature, knowledge, historical experiences, memory, time, and space as configuring ways of life that cannot be reduced to Eurocentric conceptions and cultures' (Santos 2007: xx). It is now part of the received wisdom that beyond its economic and political dimensions, colonialism has had a strong epistemological dimension (Cohn 1997; Cooper 2002; Dirks 1992).

This realisation animates calls to mobilise and prioritise alternative concepts or forms of knowledge in the social sciences. The increasing recognition that social sciences were originally elaborated in a Eurocentric context has come to underline their particularity and incompleteness. The quest for 'southern theory' (Connell 2007) and the pronouncement of 'another knowledge is possible' (Santos 2007) are acts of scholarly resistance to the regnant attempt at reducing the understandings of the world to the logic of Western

epistemology. Scholars in post-colonial societies have been alive to the geopolitics of knowledge (Alatas 1977; Alatas 2006). They have been frontrunners in placing the ethnocentrism of the social sciences —its context, audiences and publics — at the centre of scholarly attention. There is a wider constituency today to lend plausibility to the assertion that the theoretical and analytical currents in the social sciences 'privilege, at the theoretical and political level, the unequal relations between the North and the South. Such relations were historically conditioned by colonialism, and the end of colonialism as a political relation did not carry with itself the end of colonialism as a social relation, that is to say, as an authoritarian and discriminatory mentality and form of sociability' (Santos 2007: xxxiv).

Indeed, the centrality of European thought in the making of modern social science categories can hardly be denied: 'today the so-called European intellectual tradition is the only one alive in the social science departments of most, if not all, modern universities' (Chakrabarty 2000: 5). Undeniably, the Western epistemological framework remains an inalienable part of contemporary academic practices. Its hegemony is too palpable to lend credence to series of academic conferences proclaiming 'After Western Hegemony'[9]. Dipesh Chakrabarty puts it succinctly:

> Faced with the task of analysing developments or social practices in modern India, few if any Indian social scientists or social scientists of India would argue seriously with, say, the thirteenth-century logician Gangesa or with the grammarian and linguistic philosopher Bartrihari (fifth to sixth centuries), or with the tenth-or-eleventh-century aesthetician Abhinavagupta. Sad though it is, one result of European colonial rule in South Asia is that the intellectual traditions once unbroken or alive in Sanskrit or Persian or Arabic are now only matters of historical research for most — perhaps all —modern social scientists in the region.

True, the global visibility of diasporic scholars and the increasing academic influence of some of the scholars from the so-called Third World have brought in certain openness to

the Western protocols of canon-making. Thus, we have Sudipta Kaviraj (1995b) trying to make Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay globally accessible and intelligible to students of modern nationalism, Ashis Nandy (1994) projecting Gandhi and Tagore[10] as the emblematic critics of nationalism and Western modernity, Tapan Raychaudhuri (1988) expounding Bhudev Mukhopahyay's ideology of traditionalism in the face of colonial modernity, and other like-minded scholars attempting to unravel the anticipated conceptual vocabularies of a Sigmund Freud, a Michel Foucault, a Giorgio Agamben among the intelligentsia of the Bengal Renaissance (Dutta-Gupta 2007). The point is that such praiseworthy attempts remain at the level of gestures howsoever grand. Otherwise, the need for 'indigenising' social sciences in the face of uncritical acceptance and application of concepts and theories derived from the West would not have been a recurrent concern with such disconcerting regularity. The concern with 'eurocentricism' and the attendant plea for indigenisation (Mukherji and Sengupta 2004) has consistently underlined the need for 'the project of indigenist social theory' (Kaviraj 1995a).

Structure of the Book

The introductory chapter presents a brief outline of some of the key features of contemporary debate pertaining to the history and identity of the discipline of sociology in India in the altered global context of knowledge production. It attempts to capture the prevailing mood and temper of the debate that generally oscillates between a sense of celebration and a sense of lament. The focus is primarily on the latter which we have called to be suffused with an 'if only' motif. This chapter also offers our reasons for selecting the protagonist of the present work and puts forth a set of possible issues that a reading of Radhakamal Mukerjee's work enables one to address. The chapter briefly discusses the emerging contours of the field of disciplinary

history besides outlining the organisation of the work in terms of chapters and their respective foci.

While it is true that the name of Radhakamal Mukerjee (1889-1968) sounds familiar enough to the students of history of social sciences in India, the sociology profession has been slow in acknowledging his foundational role in the shaping of Indian sociology. More often than not, he is invoked as one of the eminent members of the much talked about Lucknow 'triumvirate'. Chapter 2 entitled 'Biography and History: The Making of an Intellectual Sensibility' contains a short biographic sketch of Radhakamal Mukerjee. The purpose is to introduce Mukerjee's life and work to the readers who may not have been familiar with them. However, the primary task of the chapter is to give the reader a sense of Mukerjee's intellectual sensibility at the interface of biography and history. Through his biography, the chapter attempts to bring out the general characterises of a colonised intelligentsia— its ambivalences, antinomies and contradictions. It also runs through Mukerjee's huge corpus of published work for it has been quite difficult to find a reliable and complete bibliography of Mukerjee's works for quite some time. Some of the books have run out of print whereas in some cases publishers have changed with the new editions. The publication of posthumous anthologies and edited volumes has added to this confusion. Even, the library of the University of Lucknow does not contain all his published works.

Chapter 3, entitled 'The Politics of Disciplinary Amnesia', presents the argument that Radhakamal Mukerjee's contributions have failed to receive critical attention from the sociology fraternity. At times, it appears as if the past glory and seminal legacy of the Lucknow School had much to do with D.P. Mukerji and D.N. Majumdar than Radhakamal Mukerjee. Through an analysis of the differential treatment accorded to Mukerjee by the future historians and chroniclers of Indian sociology, this chapter attempts to look into factors and processes that go into the making of selective retention

and perpetuation of disciplinary memory. The chapter ends with a plea for the retrieval, and a comprehensive assessment, of Radhakamal Mukerjee's enviable corpus of scholarly work. In other words, this chapter puts forward a substantive reading of Radhakamal Mukerjee — the man and his work —in the context of what is generally taken to be the 'mainstream' history of the discipline in India.

Chapter 4, entitled 'Sociologising Economics: The Idea of an Indian Sociology', traces the evolution of Mukerjee's 'economic' thinking with a view to delineate Mukerjee's idea of an Indian Sociology. It primarily deals with his writings in the field of economics which paved the way for his subsequent exposition of the need for an interdisciplinary and integrated social science by way of sociology.

Chapter 5, entitled 'The East and The West: Comparative Framings', situates Mukerjee's notion of Indianness in terms of civilizational contrast of the East and the West that informs Mukerjee's conceptualisation of the relations between individual, society and culture. It also discusses Mukerjee's attempts at synthesis, and explores the promises and limitations of Mukerjee's advocacy for Eastern values, knowledge traditions and ideals for the construction of a universal science of society. This assumes added significance in Mukerjee's case as his writings encompass art, music, literature, economics, philosophy and sociology. However, the chapter does not look at Mukerjee's contributions in their entirety. It selectively presents Mukerjee's axial concerns and analytical thematics drawn from his enormous body of writings with a view to examine his critique of western modernity. The focus is on an appraisal of Mukerjee's critique of Western epistemology that he found to be at the centre of modern social sciences.

Chapter 6, entitled 'Western Modernity and the Ambivalence of the Indian Mind', extends the debate to the larger field of academic knowledge production. It factors in the differential reception to the West both as a metaphor and as a historical

category by different segments of the colonised Indian intelligentsia, and unravels its implications for the shaping of modern social sciences in India. This chapter explicitly draws upon the work of intellectual and cultural historians of modern India to integrate the concerns of disciplinary history of sociology in India and those of intellectual history.

The concluding chapter distils general reflections on the promises and predicaments of indigeneity as an epistemological resource. Moving beyond the particular context of Mukerjee's work, it brings in the wider debate concerning the possibility and feasibility of 'an epistemology of the South'? It integrates the particular, that is, a critical assessment of the work of one of the pioneers of Indian sociology with an aspiration to construct an alternative epistemology, with the general and the globally circulating debate on the politics of social scientific knowledge. It addresses questions as to the possibility of disrupting the assumptions of Western modernity in refashioning social sciences for our times, the type of decolonisation that will facilitate global or international social sciences, and the ultimate and elusive promise of the end of the imperialism of Western social scientific categories. It considers issues of autonomy and reciprocity criss-crossing national social scientific traditions vis-à-vis the global architecture of social sciences. It alludes to what Syed Farid Alatas (2003), much more restrictively, calls 'Academic Dependency and the Global Division of Labour in the Social Sciences'.

NOTES

1. Sasheej Hegde's writings over the past two decades have been exceptional in this regard. See Hegde 1989, 2011a, 2011b. His "Recontextualizing Disciplines: Three Lectures on Method" delivered at the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla during June-July 2012 have elements of a programmatic outline for doing disciplinary history.
2. In a recent essay, the historian Aditya Mukherjee (2013) demonstrates the persistence of Eurocentric worldview in historiography. Likewise,

Gopal Guru and Sundar Saukkai (2012) have reflected on the historically subordinated position of Indian contributions in the realm of social and political theory.

3. For instance, Vasvai opines, 'Sociology's poverty of concepts and theory is all the more conspicuous when compared to the literature generated by the "subaltern school" of historians and political theorists and "post-colonial" studies from India that have synergised political science, history, and cultural studies. These schools of thought have inspired significant shifts in the choice of subjects and issues to be studied, in the theoretical and methodological approaches used, and have generated new definitions of and orientations to politics, culture and society'. In contrast to these disciplines, she finds the SOI 'fragmented and diluted, unable to forge an identity of its own, respond to changing times, and generate new schools of theory, methods and perspectives (Vasavi 2011: 401-02).

   Likewise, Welz (2009: 649) avers:

   Keeping sociology mingled with an empiricist anthropology had excluded many Indian sociologists from the global field of intellectual reputation since in sociology the latter is organized around paradigms and methods and less around times or places as in the case of the historical disciplines (Abbott 2001: 119) or specific areas as in the case of anthropology. No wonder that the lack of 'original metatheoretical ortheoretical analysis emerging from the Third World is often bewailed compared to those stemming from the "contemporary social science powers", which are —in the view of Syed FaridAlatas — the US, Great Britain and France, "while their counterparts in the Third World domainly empirical research" (Alatas, 2003: 602–7).

4. He puts it brilliantly:

   In fact, once we lay aside the 'universalism' that protagonists of indigeneity in social science rightly attack as a disguised particularism, we can understand how an indigenist particularism is itself covertly universalist. That is to say, an indigenist particularism often organizes its vaunted particularities into a cultural-institutional determination that is an artefact of Western modernity. Doubtless, while Western criteria of evaluation are challenged, the way in which the contest is framed is not. The 'captive' - or, in other words, the 'Eurocentric' - bias of theory and concept is probed' but not the way in which its defining subject is scrutinized (2011: 68; note 4).

5. In 1967, Robert Merton both reaffirmed his distinction between the "history" and "systematics" of sociological theory and lamented the failure of his colleagues to observe it. Since then, however, the influence of what Merton called the "new history of science" (e.g. Thomas Kuhn)

has been felt in the historiography of anthropology (e. g. George W. Stocking, Jr.), political theory (e.g. Quentin Skinner), and, more recently, in sociology. It is thus possible to speak optimistically of a "new history of sociology" that is, in Merton's phrase, "authentically historical" (Jones 1983).To what extent sociology in India can boast of an 'authentically historical' 'new history of sociology' in Mertonian sense is a moot point.

6. Calling Mukerjee a pioneer of a transdisciplinary approach in social science, Dhanagare writes (1985: 323):
   What is interesting is that his [Mukerjee's] involvement in micro-empirical sociology coexisted with his predilection towards a metaphysical and multidimensional philosophical view of human sciences and social institutions. He thought that sociology and social anthropology were bogged down by lower order empirical realities and were forgetting the higher order ones whose laws and processes govern them. In an almost meta-theoretical perspective, he tended to view individual, society and values as an apparent trinity, but quintessentially an indivisible reality.
7. For a synoptic discussion of the different inflections of the term 'school' in sociology, see Dhanagare 2011: 127-57. In the essay, he examines 'the legacy and rigour' of Bombay school in the context of universities in Maharashtra. Also, he regards Lucknow to be a school in certain senses of the term along with P.C. Joshi. Interestingly, their view differs from that of T.N.Madan.
8. Quentin Skinner calls it the mythology of prolepsis underlining the interpretive anxiety if the retrospective meanings attributed to a text under interpretation are claimed to be the same as what the author of the said text meant or intended originally. See for a discussion of related issues, particularly between Umberto Eco and Richard Rorty, Stephan Collini (ed.) *Interpretation and Over Interpretation* (Cambridge University Press, 1992).
9. For instance, the theme of the 40th World Congress of International Institute of Sociology, which was held in New Delhi during 16-19 February 2012, was *After Western Hegemony: Social Science and Its Publics.*
10. Incidentally, Gandhi had presided over Radhakamal Mukerjee's lecture on 'agriculture and industrialism' at St. Stephens College, New Delhi in 1917. It is interesting to note that Mahatma Gandhi, in his presidential address, lauded Mukerjee's approach to economics. Gandhi observed 'the principles of Western economics could not be applied to Indian conditions in the same way as the rules of grammar and syntax of one language wou1d not be applicable to another 1anguage' (Singh 1955: 436-37). Mukerjee had also met Tagore in 1936 in Shillong, and was later invited to Shantiniketan in 1937 to deliver a course of lectures in economics and sociology (Mukerjee 1997: 89).

Chapter 2

Biography and History: The Making of an Intellectual Sensibility

Students of sociology in India may not be totally unfamiliar with Radhakamal Mukerjee (1889-1968) and his work. It is likely that they would have heard his name in relation to the history of sociology as an academic discipline in the country. They would have definitely encountered the synoptic accounts of 'the Lucknow School' in courses relating to sociology of India in general and the institutionalisation of Indian sociology in particular. It is equally true that Mukerjee's name would have figured along with D.P. Mukerji and D.N. Majumdar—the other two eminent members of the much talked about Lucknow 'triumvirate' or the 'trinity' or the 'three Ms' as T.N. Madan (2013: 3) calls them in his recent edited volume on *Sociology at the University of Lucknow*.[1] Some of them may also have some ideas about Radhakamal Mukerjee's work in the field of social ecology.[2] Yet, it is unlikely that most of them would be aware of Mukerjee's pioneering role in the shaping of social sciences in general and sociology in particular.[3] Nor is it to be expected that they would have preliminary knowledge of his substantive research contributions in a variety of fields, all not necessarily part of the subject matter of academic sociology as it developed and got institutionalised in university departments and undergraduate colleges.[4]

Even outside the rigid boundaries of academic sociology, there does not appear to be much familiarity with his work either. For example, in a recent work on the facets of *the Idea of Civilization in the Indian Nationalist Discourse*, the historian

Sabyasachi Bhattacharya (2011) does not find it appropriate to mention Radhakamal Mukerjee among the academic intellectuals who made Indian civilization a central theme in his works. While underlining the absence of civilization as a category among professional historians, he, indeed, appreciates the engagement with this theme in the academia in the second half of twentieth century: 'in anthropology and sociology G.S. Ghurye (1893-1983) and N. K. Bose (1901-72) opened up the study of civilization on synchronic lines'(*ibid.*10). It could be that Mukerjee's recognition primarily as an economist may have overshadowed his identity as a sociologist and a student of comparative civilizations. However, this argument is too thin and is not borne by facts. He hardly turns out to be a major figure in economics either. Quite belated though, there is an increasing acknowledgement of his contributions in the field of economics (Datta 1978; Krishnamurty 2011).

This chapter has a limited purpose however. It does not present Radhakamal Mukerjee's detailed biography encompassing both his work in the academy and beyond. While taking note of major landmarks in his professional career as well as his active involvement in public affairs and policy making, it focuses primarily on the making of his intellectual sensibility with a view to understand his articulations of *Indianness* in his later writings. Since the present work is primarily concerned with Mukerjee's quest for an *Indian* sociology, the chapter attempts to tie up his individual biographical trajectory to the larger historical context where colonialism, Bengal Renaissance and the general nationalist efflorescence came to shape his 'faith and influences' (Mukerjee 1955).[5]

Mukerjee's brief biographical sketches are available in published form in other places as well.[6] Yet, we find it appropriate to present this chapter as a prelude to the task of situating his works in the larger socio-historical context. This may involve some amount of factual overlap. Though, it does

not belittle our intention to bring out the peculiarities of the context wherein Mukerjee's work becomes meaningful. Given the concerns of the present work, the reference, obviously, is to the processes of cultural-intellectual production in a colonised society and the ambivalences, inner tensions and contradictions therein that necessarily accompany the asymmetry of political relations between the coloniser and the colonised. Our endeavour is to explore the ways in which the larger context weighed on, or acted as a counterfoil to, the contents and direction of Mukerjee's work. For this purpose, rather than following Mukerjee's growth and development as social scientist in a chronological fashion, we attempt to relate his work to the 'faiths and influences' emanating from the wider universe.

The Formative Influences

Originally hailing from a small town — Behrampur (Murshidabad) — in Bengal, Mukerjee followed the well-established path of a middle class Bengali youth by joining Presidency College, Calcutta (now Kolkata), for his higher education. After having secured a first class first in Economics and Sociology from Calcutta University he returned to Behrampur to teach Economics in the local Kashinath College (1910-1915).[7] In the aftermath of the 'Bangha-Bhanga' movement, he left his native place to join as principal of a college in Lahore. Through a brief stint at Lahore, and thereafter almost four years (1917-1921) of lectureship in Economics at Calcutta University, he joined Lucknow University in 1921 as the founder-Head of the Department of Economics and Sociology.[8]

This brief outline of the career of a young academic who spent the first three decades of his life (save a brief interlude at Lahore) in Bengal (and his years of adulthood in Calcutta), and the remaining years of his life at Lucknow, makes one

curious about this protagonist's encounter with the two grand, though interrelated, phenomena of renaissance and nationalism that characterised the times he lived through. In fact, much of his autobiography can be read as his attempt to make sense of these historical processes during his formative years.

Bengal renaissance has been at the centre of scholarly debates for a long time. It is outside the purview of this work to detail the contours of this debate. What is important for us is to acknowledge it as a major cognitive revolution in Indian cultural history. Dasgupta (2007) has recently argued that Bengal renaissance was essentially the harbinger of a collective cognitive identity which had its roots in British orientalism. Whatever be its cultural origins and sociological co-ordinates, there is no denying that it flowered within a remarkable community of creative individuals in the nineteenth century and promoted cross cultural mentality and universalism. Certainly though, it was not all about universalism, cosmopolitan belief, and an innocuous love for humanity's finest achievements.

By its very nature, it facilitated the privileging of the orientalist-reconstructed view of Hinduism among the overwhelming majority of the new intelligentsia in the nineteenth-century Bengal. The latter, as Kopf's classic study (1969) has demonstrated, sought to 'reinterpret some phase of their past history as a guide to an uncertain future' (*ibid.* 253). The self-image of the Bengali intelligentsia (see also Ludden 1993) was that of apologists of a reconstituted cultural tradition which they romanticized *ad infinitum*. It did not matter that 'the rediscovery and revitalization of a Hindu golden age, was probably the orientalist's most enduring ideological contribution to modern India's cultural self-image'(*ibid.* 284). What mattered was that the reconstructed golden age would offer them a cohesive ideology underlying a new sense of community. Kopf is emphatic in his assertion: 'it is doubtful that the rise of nationalism would have been possible without the sense of

community, the sense of community without a collective feeling of self-respect, and self-respect without the stimulus of a rediscovered golden age'(*ibid.*).

In course of time, the later generations of Bengali intelligentsia felt compelled to appropriate the scholarly models of the orientalists and infuse them with heightened feelings of national pride. Only a handful of Indian intellectuals abandoned their own heritage and identity wholly in order to live with the traditions and cultures of Western civilization (*ibid.* 288).The growing experience of racism and cultural imperialism would have probably accelerated the process of appropriation of the increasingly nostalgic vision of the age of the Orientalists. Macaulayism(*ibid.* 290), and the cultural polarity that it generated, intensified their search for inspirational models within their own heritage.

Like his contemporaries and compatriots, Mukerjee partook of the spirit of his times. The fact that he went to the then two prestigious institutions— Presidency College and Calcutta University — the institutional habitat of most Renaissance men (and few women) offered him an added opportunity to imbibe some of the elements of the vision associated with Bengal renaissance. This probably explains his consistent invocation of the two key academic figures associated with Calcutta University — Brajendra Nath Seal (1864-1938) and Benoy Kumar Sarkar— in his autobiography.[9]

Indeed, Radhakamal Mukerjee considers 'the Bengal Renaissance [to be], directly the outcome of the growing, embittered and heroic struggle between the Bengali and the British nation, and indirectly of the deepening and expanding intellectual and cultural encounter between India and West' (1997: 74). Given such awareness, it is hardly surprising that Mukerjee's concerns and outlook, even during his student days, were deeply marked by a deep involvement in the social issues of his times. It was difficult for any educated Indian of that time to completely ignore the reverberations of the anti-colonial

struggle. It is to be noted that, for Mukerjee's generation, nationhood did not come as a finished product. It was more like an emotive phenomenon to be grasped in terms of 'defence of tradition as an unmitigated evil' and it certainly required 'an agenda of reflexivity — understanding their own history in the past, and the new, external, unwanted, but still unavoidable history in which colonialism has placed them' (Kaviraj 1995: 278). In this sense, Mukerjee's agenda of cultural reflection and active appropriation of tradition appears to lean towards 'traditionalists' like Bhudev Mukhopadhyay (see Bhattacharyya 2012). The stress is more on intellectual-cultural appropriation of nationalism as an ideology of self-assertion than any direct participation in a political programme.

Mukerjee's search for the essence of their nationhood is oriented towards this collective enterprise of cultural excavation, that is, towards delving deep into the rich heritage of India's glorious past to forge an assertive self for the present. Even otherwise, it is part of the received wisdom that the Indian national awakening expressed itself first in literary, artistic, intellectual and cultural terms and only subsequently in the political sphere. And, what has generally been called the Bengal renaissance was the fountainhead of this type of cultural effervescence. By the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, Bengal had already become the symbol of the intellectual stirring and political resurgence. The *Bangha-Bhanga* movement had released social and intellectual forces, which paved the way for the ideas of swadeshi and swaraj. Mukerjee could not be left untouched by these forces. Mukerjee's subsequent work on Indian history, culture, art and aesthetics exemplifies his conviction that the earliest and purest expressions of the yet-to-be-born nation's spirit lay buried in the inner recesses of its history which had to be reconstructed and made available to the common masses. This shows Mukerjee's deep absorption of the cardinal values of Renaissance along with his encounters with the ideas of

swadeshi and swaraj. In his autobiography, Mukerjee writes:

> 1905 saw a big intellectual and political ferment in every city in Bengal that was partitioned by Lord Curzon. Public meetings, street processions and singing parties, boycott of British goods, Swadeshi and prohibition first acquainted me, with a mass upheaval. The contact with the common man in the course of picketing in cloth and liquor shops as both new and invigorating. Next year found me with an academic scholarship in the leading educational institution in India, the Presidency College in Calcutta. But the influences outside the college were more significant, even over-powering. The country was passing through a political and cultural upheaval that completely changed the scale of values. The revaluation took the form of a literacy and artistic renaissance that gradually expanded into a mass movement. In the slums of Mechuabazar in Calcutta an adult school was started by me in 1906. Our programme for the country at that time was entirely educational, for we understood from the experience of political repression and persecution that were going on that only educational and social work among the masses could be silently and unostentatiously pursued without being nipped in the bud by political oppression. In fact, the surrounding atmosphere of suspicion and surveillance drove some of us to an extreme step (Mukerjee 1955: 4-5).

Though politically aware and active in the wider social arena—co-operative organisation and adult education in particular—Mukerjee, expectedly, refrained from plunging directly into the then nationalist politics. This was also the time when the nationalist movement had not yet become a mass phenomenon. While Bipin Chandra Pal (1858-1932) and Aurobindo Ghose (1872-1950) were the acknowledged political leaders in Bengal, the movement attempted a pan-Indian presence only later under the joint leadership of Lal, Bal and Pal.[10] Except his detention for a day in 1915 on the suspicion of his aiding and abetting revolutionary terrorists, he was fortunate enough not to bear the direct brunt of colonial repression. He narrates the incident '...but I was freed. Within a week I obtained the offer of Principalship of a Lahore college and went to the Punjab. It was just an accident that I did not find myself in politics after a detention or internment and found my life's work in the academy' (Mukerjee 1955: 8).

Again, Mukerjee's Renaissance ideals found ample

expression in the field of literary activities.[11] Mukerjee was equally active in the literary field. Besides being the secretary of the District Sahitya Parishad, Murshidabad, he was also the Editor of a well-known Bengali monthly journal —*Upasana*.[12] He also authored a Bengali novel *Sasvata Bhikhari* [*Eternal Beggar*], and a short Bengali play *Nidrita Narayan* [*God Asleep*]. *Manimekhala* [*The Temple Girl ofKanyaKumari*], a Bengali restoration of a South Indian legend about the goddess Parvati personating a temple girl and accepting her misery, agony and disease, was Mukerjee's another literary accomplishment. As a literary critic, he participated in many literary debates of his time joining issue with literary stalwarts such as Rabindranath Tagore, Dwijendralal Roy, Pramatha Nath Chaudhury. His essays in literary criticism came out in the form of a book in Bengali *Vartman Bangla Sahitya* (1920). He also published two volumes of his collection of essays in Bengali under the title *Visva Bharata* (*Universal India*) in 1922.

Through these exchanges Mukerjee pleaded for a new mass consciousness in Bengali literature. In the preface to his Bengali book *Modern Bengali Literature*, Mukerjee writes, 'literature will have to solve the social and ethical problems and conflicts of the age...the sturdy peasant who tills the field under scorching sun ..., who toils and moils from morn till eve, day after day and year after year is he alone in his stupendous back-breaking labour on the earth? ... Literature must reveal the joys and sorrows of the eternal man on the perennial earth' (Mukerjee 1955: 8).

Mukerjee's Nationalism

The foregoing section gives us a peep into Mukerjee's vision of nationalism which animates his scholarly writings. One does see an explicit focus on Hindu culture, and pride in Hindu glory. But then, as Swarupa Gupta (2009) argues, there is nothing unusual in the focus of the literati's notions about a redefined

Hindu identity. The stage was already set 'for the burgeoning of cultural nationalism rooted in Hindu identity, and integrated to a programme of self-help' (*ibid.* 22). Moreover, 'the framing and articulation of a Hindu rhetoric was not an exclusionary, homogeneous and hegemonic meta-narrative arraigning non-Hindu against Hindu in all contexts'. Contra Sudipta Kaviraj, she does not see this phenomenon as monolithic or unilinear. In her view, 'the process of reinventing the indigenous was multi-stranded, implicating many possibilities and trajectories' (*ibid.* 29).

She agrees with Kaviraj that history became a site for rethinking *jati* and bringing the collective self into existence and that there are deep and direct links between history and identity —conscious articulation by the literati to re-imagine the national self (Kaviraj 1995). She reiterates, 'to the literati, identity was a matter of rewriting history in a way that studied not only what had been, but also what could have been, and (as an extension of this idea) what could be'(*ibid.* 356):'the colonial predicament (sociological exercises and enumerations and more generally, the fact and experience of subjugation) speeded a process of self-discovery that found conscious and eloquent articulation from an internally-united social and intellectual group, the western-educated, professional, mainly high-caste literati'(*ibid.* 138). The latter could discover a living link between identity and history, and re-configurate pre-modern notion of *jati* in an empowered discourse on nation-hood. What it meant to be a 'Bengali' was, therefore, intimately bound up with what it meant to be an "Indian"' (*ibid.* 312). What is noteworthy in Gupta's analysis is her assiduous demonstration of the possibility of apprehending the idea of India in an emotive framework and the contextual variation in the processes of othering by which the literati defined its relation to not only the big Muslim other but also the internal 'others' such as contiguous ethnicities and lower orders in Bengal.

Gupta's deployment of a social history perspective to

understand the social world of the literati and to glimpse and glean the dynamics of their mentality offers us clues to understand Mukerjee's writings concerning the Muslim other. While invoking Moharram festival of his native Murshidabad as an embodiment of 'complete amity, good will, and equal participation' (1997: 47), Mukerjee does not fight shy of demonstrating 'the logic of economic and social forces bringing about continuous Hindu decline and Muslim predominance'. His open acknowledgement of the concerns of the Hindu public intellectuals like Kishorilal Sarkar and Upendranath Mukerjee on this issue in his autobiography makes him vulnerable to the charge of articulating a narrowly Hindu high-caste vision.

Yet, he writes about the 'sociological paradox' of the continuous and rapid increase in the deficiency of females among high-caste Hindus. He calls upon the Hindu orthodoxy to reframe marriage groups 'with the same courage and social foresight as were exhibited by the older Brahmin social builders and law-givers (smartakars)'. According to him, 'intermarriage and widow remarriage among the upper caste Hindus who all show a relative scarcity of females as well as danger of inbreeding are as urgent as the abolition of untouchability and demolition of endogamic barriers among the low Hindu castes' (1997: 110). Likewise, he sounds uncritical and patronising when he writes:

> The middle class has left the village for livelihood and there are none to teach the values of self-help and co-operation and to fight against mutual distrust and apathy. Those who keenly looked after the welfare of every villager, shared their joy with him on a merry occasion and consoled him in his sorrow, whom every villager regarded with a feeling both of awe and reverence, are now gone forever (Mukerjee: 1997: 109).

However, it would be limiting our perspective to consider Radhakamal Mukerjee just as an ardent Hindu revivalist.[13] He can be very much seen as part of the fashioning of collective spirituality as a national creed. He belonged to that generation of men of letters for whom the realm of the religious-ethical

effortlessly fed into the political and public sphere. In fact, he would prefer the subordination of the political to the moral-ethical-mystical, much like Gandhi. In the process, he amplifies and extends the task of creating a new vocabulary of political Hinduism through his work. No wonder, he hails Aurobindo Ghosh as the Vedantic interpreter of the new political spirit and tries to live by the latter's motto — 'the pride in our past, the pain of our present, the passion for the future'. The impact of the writings of Pramatha Nath Bose — *Swaraj Cultural or Political* (1929) and *Hindu Civilisation during British Rule* (1894) can be clearly seen on Mukerjee's writings about Indian history, culture and civilization. From these influences does Mukerjee not merely acquire his sense of the 'super-sensuous and the transcendent' but also the conviction that to 'the composite texture of world civilization to which India contributes a single but most significant thread' (Mukerjee 1997: 74). In political terms, Bipin Chandra Pal has been the major source for Mukerjee's first lessons in swadeshi and nationalism (*ibid.* 52-62) whose new love of India galvanised the young intellectuals of his generation. Mukerjee quotes Pal as the new messiah of new patriotism who so eloquently pronounced:

> Love of India now means a loving regard for the very configurations of this continent — a love for its rivers and mountains, for its paddy fields and its arid sandy plains, its town and villages, however uncouth or insanitary these might be, a love for the flora and fauna of India, an affectionate regard for its natural beauties, and even for its wild and ugly exuberance of vegetation, a love for its sweating, swarthy populations, unshod and unclad; a love for the dirt-clothed village urchins, unwashed and unkempt, for the village wives and maidens, innocent of culture and civilisation, as culture and civilisation are generally understood, a love for the muddy, weed-entangled village lanes, the moss-covered stinky village ponds, and for the poor, the starved, the malaria stricken peasant population of the country, love for its languages, its literatures, its philosophies, its religions, a love for its culture and civilisation; this is the characteristic of this new patriotism (cited in *ibid.* 61-62).[14]

In his later writings, Mukerjee's nationalism gets tempered with his ideals of universal humanism and the unified destiny of

human civilization. Gradually, Mukerjee moved towards the comparative study of civilisations and, increasingly, towards the quest for universal set of values and cultural traditions for the benefit of the entire humanity. Yet, it would be facile to argue, as Madan does that, 'Mukerjee stands alone, however, in his ability to look beyond the "nation-in-making" to inter-civilizational concerns' (2013: 15). This is not to deny the power of nationalism and its unbounded influence on the first generation of Indian sociologists, who were all affected by it one way or the other, and who brought to bear that influence in shaping Indian sociology and social anthropology (Uberoi *et al.*: 2007: 38).This is simply to indicate the complicated ways of appropriation of the idea of the nation by the colonial intelligentsia. For someone like Mukerjee, a reinvented Hinduism was crucial part of the intellectual context in which his works took shape and unfolded. At the same time, it is worthwhile to acknowledge that despite his passionate belief in the emotive power of nationalism, Mukerjee's work does not lend itself to an uncritical resuscitation of Brahmanical scriptures as sociological treatises, something that one discerns in the writings ranging from Benoy Kumar Sarkar through Kewal Motwani to Krishan Chandra Gupta. Radhakamal Mukerjee does not talk in terms of a Hindu sociology. Rather, his discursive language projects the idea of civilization as the anchor-sheet for the distinctiveness of Indian sociability. And, talking the language of civilization does not mean the simple transcendence of the nationalist framework. Instead, it could be very foundation of nationalism.

To understand Mukerjee's nationalism, we need to probe the transformations in the discourse of civilization in the twentieth century, and its complex relationship with nationalism. Prasenjit Duara's essay (2003) underlines the twentieth-century attempt to incorporate the older spiritual and religious ideals in a new conception of civilization. The ostensible purpose was to deploy the discourse of civilization

as a supplement to nationalism. It was not meant to put the civilizational ideal on a higher pedestal, or to frame it as the higher authoritative principle from which the nation-state itself could be judged. Radhakamal Mukerjee's work exemplifies the new discourse of civilization.

In the new discourse of civilization, as Duara (2003) convincingly argues, religion turned out to be a kind of aid to civilization, 'as a chrysalis which preserved the germs of an older civilization. The historical function of civilization was to seek ever-deeper spiritual insight drawn to ideas of a common global civilization originating in the technological achievements of the West, but spiritually regenerated by the major world civilizations' (*ibid.* 104). Such an understanding of civilization was helpful in linking nationalism to a universalism. Depending on the context, the intelligentsia could play with the idea of civilization: between civilization as equal to the nation and civilization as transnational. As Duara rightly observes, 'nations require this duality because they often need to move between the two positions. New nations seek the transnational conception of civilization because it is only as a trans-territorial, universal ideal.... that this (civilizational) self can achieve recognition from the Other' (*ibid.* 106). In other words, much like Islam or Confucianism, the idea of Hindu/Indian civilization gets endowed with the promise of innate capacity to reveal the truth of the human condition. In its potential, such an idea of civilization can very well embrace all of humanity. Thus, *contra* T. N. Madan, Radhakamal Mukerjee's ideals of universal humanism and the unified destiny of human civilization are of a piece with his ardent nationalism.

As Pankaj Mishra (2013) rightly avers concepts like East and Asia came into the world conjoined with their domineering twin, the idea of Europe. Earlier these terms denoted West's barbaric or inferior other calling out for the Western civilising mission, or so it was supposed by the colonisers. In the late nineteenth century, however, a range of Chinese, Japanese and

Indian thinkers started retrieving categories like East and Asia and infusing them with particular values and traits such as respect for nature, communitarianisn, simple contentment and spiritual transcendence. This glorified Asian tradition of anti-materialism was then counter-posed to modern western ideologies of individualism, conquest, and economic growth. The idea of Asia became an expression of cultural defensiveness and assertion against conceited Westerners who claimed a monopoly on civilization and regarded people without its manifest signs the nation-state, industrial capitalism and mechanistic science as inferior. In this sense, cultural unity of Asia was purposively infused with geopolitical edge during early post colonial struggles. The conscious resuscitation of a civilisational past helps the intelligentsia cope with the experience of domination and racial humiliation and make claims of freedom and dignity.

One can discern clear traces of this new discourse of civilization in Mukerjee's writings. Much like Spengler and Toynbee, Mukerjee is inclined to view civilization as a fundamentally spiritual or ideal phenomenon. Spengler's view of hermetically closed organic civilizations was already in the air. So was the idea that the ideational or spiritual quality of a given civilization authoritatively distinguished it from other civilizations. Expectedly, Mukerjee is interested in the history of Indian civilization to grasp its distinctive character and its principle of becoming. Some of Mukerjee's titles contain the term civilization— for example, his two-volume magnum opus *A History of Indian Civilization: Ancient and Classical Traditions* (Bombay: Hind Kitabs, 1956). Some of his other titles are *The Destiny of Civilization* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House) and *The Sickness of Civilization* (Bombay: Allied Publishers), both published in the year 1964. His contribution to the festschrift for D.P. Mukerji is titled 'A Philosophical View of Civilization'.[15]

Concomitant with the new conception of civilization, ideas of Eastern versus Western civilizations took shape. However,

this ideal of civilizational spirituality and the idea of a civilization furnishing nations with the spiritual, moral, and universal core were themselves products of a set of transformations in Western history. We cannot dissociate the emergence of nationalism as an ideology in the West from the associated idea of a civilization as the classical supplier of authenticity, legitimacy and authority to the modern nations.

This was the context in which the blending of Eastern and Western civilizations got projected as the future course of humanity. The acquiescence to the linear conception of a progressive history provided the backdrop against which the emergent national subjects started parading their deep links to classical civilizations. In the process, the discourse of civilization did become 'the highly self-conscious ideology of the nation'. Countries as divergent as China or India, or France, or England, started stretching the nation to fit the civilization. Smaller nations equally relied on several narrative strategies within the historiography of nations to project themselves as the legitimate embodiment of a certain civilizational tradition. For instance, the Japanese claim of inheriting the leadership of Asian civilization was one such attempt. In a related vein, Sri Lankan intellectuals went about constructing a Buddhist civilization in a way that made it the leader of such a project. Latin American nations got engaged in the promotion of pre-Columbian civilizations to add historical depth to their nationalist projects. All these attempts reveal the duality of the idea of civilization in the era of nation-states. On the one hand, it needs to transcend the nation-state, and on the other, it has got to serve the territorial nation. Thus, as Duara (2003: 107) notes, 'the gap between the territorial nation and civilization is not only territorial, but principled. Because the spiritual impulse of a civilization tends to be universalizing, national boundaries are ultimately artificial and limiting. At the same time, there is no doubt that the territorial nation seeks to equate itself with a civilization'.

Little wonder then that the idea of a distinctive Eastern civilization was affirmed in the West before it was confirmed in Asia. Once affirmed, it came handy to the anti-colonial nationalists as a conceptual tool to oppose the imperialism of the Western Civilization. The point to be noted is that this discourse of civilization both opposed the Civilization of imperialism but also depended on it for its own legitimacy and persuasive and mobilising powers. This is most evident in the selection of those elements and themes from the history that would feed into a certain timelessness of the nation-states or to found their sovereignty in the eternal or unchanging subject of the linear, changing history of the nation. There were multiple strategies at work. The basic approach involved combining elements that are either identical to and/or the binary opposite of the imperialist civilization. One strategy was to rediscover elements that were identical to the coloniser within the suppressed traditions of civilization — Confucian rationality, Buddhist humanism, Hindu logic, and so on.[16] Another strategy identified the opposite of the West in Asian civilizations: '"peaceful" as opposed to "warlike," "spiritual" as opposed to "material," "ethical" as opposed to "decadent," "natural" as opposed to "rational," "timeless" as opposed to "temporal," and more' (*ibid.* 108).

The very act of opposition to the imperialist civilization became an exercise in synthesising or harmonising the binaries between the East and the West after the equivalence has been established. Thus, Western materialism would be counter-posed to Eastern spirituality. Interestingly, most of these uses have a shared understanding of civilization as a way of identifying and ordering value in the world. The identification of value, however, sometimes implies the identification of a *community* of value, and civilization can also become the means of marking the Self from the Other. In this respect, civilization may resemble other identity forms like nationalism, with which it often becomes conflated. However, as Duara observes, what

distinguishes the civilizational idea from nationalism is its appeal to a higher, transcendent source of value and authority, capable of encompassing the Other. In the process of decolonisation, thus, the concept of civilization also underwent some fundamental transformations; it resulted in becoming what Lucien Febvre has called an "ethnographic concept." And, intellectuals in both the East and the West sought to find the distinctive civilizational traditions among the people. The impetus for this ethnographic deepening of the idea of civilization was definitely provided by the nationalist urge to locate sources of popular sovereignty in the deep recesses of history. Over and above, the holistic conception of culture that was gaining ground globally reinforced the nationalist uses of the discourse of civilization.[17] As mentioned in the foregoing, Mukerjee's nationalism gets articulated through his frequent recourse to the idea of Eastern/Oriental/Asian/Indian civilization which he employs interchangeably. This understanding should help us understand not only Mukerjee's philosophy of social science (its one-sidedness, its inadequacy, its metaphysical overtones) but also the character of his intervention in the early decades of the shaping of social sciences in India.

The University and the Profession

Apart from these political and cultural influences, as noted earlier, Mukerjee singles out two of his fellow social scientists for having left an indelible imprint on his life and work — Benoy Kumar Sarkar[18] and Brajendranath Seal[19]. The latter two were eminent in their own fields and were active in Calcutta and Mysore respectively. Among the fellow sociologists, he mentions Patrick Geddes[20] (1854-1932) and acknowledges Geddes' influence in the shaping of his bio-ecological outlook: 'the encyclopaedic mind and the generous heart of Patrick Geddes greatly stimulated my intellectual outlook and imagination. In fact, it was a major formative influence' (1997:

95). One can clearly discern this intellectual debt in Mukerjee's studies in what came to be known as the field of social ecology.[21] Mukerjee's distinctive take on region and regionalism stressing that 'the mental and social habits, feelings and values belong to the region as much as the geographical and ecological factors' (*ibid.* 97) emanates out of his deep commitment to sociological methods employed by Geddes. Mukerjee borrows his emphasis on social-psychological factors from Geddes' urban studies.[22]

It is well-known that Mukerjee spent his almost entire professional career, and the most productive years of his life (1921-1968), at Lucknow. While discharging his duties first as the Professor of Economics and Sociology, and then as the Vice-Chancellor of the Lucknow University, and subsequently as the lifelong Director of the J.K. Institute of Sociology and Human Relations at the same University, he produced an enviable corpus of scholarly work on a wide range of issues and themes.

Besides, Mukerjee served on a large number of Committees and Commissions, including *The National Planning Committee* under the Chairmanship of Jawaharlal Nehru. He served as Economic advisor to Gwalior state (1945-47), as chairman of the All-India Literature Board (1955-56), as Chairman, Regional Committee of the Research Programme Committee of the Planning Commission. In addition to being a member of the National Planning Committee, he was the chairman of its subcommittees on population and land system, and a member of the Provincial Banking Inquiry Committee, Uttar Pradesh, The Bihar Labour Enquiry Committee, and the Government of India Committees on the Cost of Living for Industrial Workers, on Profit Sharing and on the Textile Industry. In 1946, he was chairman of the Economics and Statistics Commission of the Food and Agriculture Organisation and in 1947, he went to Washington as a member of the Government of India delegation for the World Food Council (Gottlieb 1971: 50). He was president of the Indian Economic Conference in 1933; he

headed the first Indian Population Conference in 1936, he presided over the all-India Labour Conference in 1963, and the Indian Conference of Social Work in 1964. In 1964, he was awarded *Padma Bhushan* in recognition of his contributions to the field of education. However, in the new emerging world of social science scholarship in post-Independence India his identity remained primarily as an economist notwithstanding the width and breadth of his scholarship.

In terms of professional visibility as well, he turns out to be an internationally acknowledged social scientist. In fact, in his autobiography, there is an entire chapter 'The Western Universities and International Bodies' (1997: 166-79) discussing his lectures over a period of six months at universities abroad, including Cambridge, Institute of Sociology, London, Oxford, Liverpool, Amsterdam, Heidelberg, Cologne, Vienna, Prague, Columbia, Michigan, Chicago, Minnesota, Harvard, London School of Economics and Javistock Institute of Human Relations London. He also mentions having interacted with a number of his contemporaries based in these universities, namely, Jaspers, Max Sering, Othmar Spann, Robert Mackenzie, Edward Allsworth Roth, John Commons, Pitirim A. Sorokin, Burgess, Faris and Ogburn. He had also been the Vice-president of the International Institute of Sociology. He writes, 'My selection of the Universities I visited in the west was largely governed by the facilities of discussion I would obtain from distinguished thinkers and writers in the areas of my own research' and claims to have enormously profited from these exchanges (*ibid.*175). His international standing is also corroborated by his publications in some of the reputed professional journals of his times such as *American Journal of Sociology*, *Social Forces*, *Sociology and Social Research*, *Ethics*, *Journal of Philosophy* and *Asia*.

P.C. Joshi (1988a and 1988b) credits him with equal felicity with both philosophical and theoretical reflections and empirical problem-solving type of research. He finds Mukerjee's

contributions valuable both in the fields of policy-oriented research and meta-theoretic reflections. In fact, some of Mukerjee's policy recommendations have not only stood the test of time but have also been quite far-sighted and robust. Mention may be made of the following: his idea of imposing ceiling on land holdings; the conception of family planning and for linking action programmes to influence fertility behaviour with social development and welfare programme to improve food, nutrition, health and literacy for mortality reduction and for improving quality of life; an integrated approach to land reform and land development, water resource conservation and provision of production as well as consumption credit for working peasant-oriented development; integrated rural and urban planning as embodied in the concept of 'rurbanisation' and a forest policy oriented to mass consumption needs and to preserve the eco-environmental balance (see also Singh 1955: 435-62; Loomba 1985: 1-25).

It is difficult to classify Mukerjee's works in terms of key themes and his intellectual evolution.[23] Even a cursory glance at the titles of more than fifty works authored by him reveals his extraordinary scholarship and sharp intellect.[24] Through his journey from 'economics to social science, and eventually to metaphysics' (Mukherjee 1989: 264), Mukerjee's intellectual concerns found meticulous expression in his voluminous writings on issues and themes as divergent as the land problem, the working class, the town and the village life, ecology, food planning, institutional planning, population control, economic history, migration, social psychology, marriage, family and sex, democracy and civics, morals, culture and art, value, civilization, humanism, mysticism and spiritualism. Clearly, not only his works straddled many academic disciplines and frontiers but are also distinguished by its evolution in terms of methodological approaches and theoretic orientations.

Suffice it to note that Mukerjee's approach towards social ecology received applause from American sociologists like

E.A. Ross, Robert Park, Burgess and others. Also, it is believed that Odum's work in the field of regional sociology was influenced by Mukerjee (Venugopal 1980: 171). Another noteworthy feature of Mukerjee's work is his leap into the supra-national synecology towards the last phase of his intellectual life. Mukerjee wrote these books with the explicit aim of making an intellectual case for reconstructing the whole world on the basis of an ecological, ethical and spiritual renewal. In today's parlance, we can say that all these books were written from a global perspective. Mention may be made of *The Dimensions of Human Evolution: A Bio-philosophical Interpretation*, *The Destiny of Civilization*, *The Sickness of Civilization*, *The Oneness of Mankind*, *The Community of Communities*.[25]

However, we foreground two central aspects of what we consider to be Mukerjee's distinctive exposition of philosophy of social sciences. First, 'the contrast between intellectual ideas and norms in India and the West'(Mukerjee 1997: 107) is at the core of his thinking finding articulations in different forms in a variety of contexts right from the publication of his very first book *The Foundations of Indian Economics*. Chapter 5 discusses this aspect of Mukerjee's work in greater detail. Moreover, his theoretical system or his conception of the unity of social sciences is anchored in his almost dogmatic belief in 'the inter-relationship between economic and non-economic facts, values and institutions' (*ibid.* 131).

This probably explains Mukerjee's vehement rejection of Marxism at a time when countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America were considered to be the hospitable terrain for the Marxist ideology. He castigates Marxism for its neurotic dread for any metaphysics. He is categorical in his assertion:

> World civilization should discard the Marxist doctrine of the universality and inevitability of the pattern and mechanism of human progress through class struggle in Dialectical Materialism as mechanistic and Laplacean. It should also reject the Marxist philosophy that destroys human freedom by affirming economic determinism as the law of the social universe, mutilates social relationships by viewing them as class relationships, uproots the

foundations of religion, morality, law and culture by identifying them with class prejudices and interests, and finally, makes of all intrinsic and ultimate values of man merchandize to be exchanged for the instrumental and proximate economic values of wealth, economic security and power. All this is opportunistic and unethical (Mukerjee 1964c: 65).

Understandably, Mukerjee clubs Marxism with such theories as Social Darwinism, Behaviourism and Psychoanalysis, and such dogmas as *Laissez Faire*, Nationalism and Racism. He rubbishes these theories and dogmas for their role in encumbering sociology with 'lopsided and fallacious theories of man and society'. He finds them completely disregarding 'man's freedom, creativity and self-transcendence and his persistent endeavour in all ages and climes towards achievement of harmonious and wholesome relations with fellow-man, with mankind and with cosmos'. He is convinced that these doctrines and dogmas give 'an incomplete and distorted rather than a full and integrated picture of man and values, [and] are diametrically opposed to true humanism' (Mukerjee 1965a: 124-25).

In any case, it is commonly believed that Mukerjee's visionary leadership transformed 'Lucknow school' into a major centre of teaching and research in sociology. Whether or not the 'Lucknow School' represented a highly creative phase in the evolution of social sciences in modern India is a moot point. For some at least, this School constituted an innovative intellectual response to India's colonial subjection and cultural subjugation (Joshi 1986a, 1986b, Hegde 2011). In course of its evolution, its sensitivity to the richness of Indian tradition, its flair for 'philosophical theoretic orientation', the rigour of analytical approach and methodological tools, its distinguished style of cultural critique, its understanding of the problems and processes of social transformation based on grassroots insights and empirical fieldwork, and its anchorage in the value-oriented and non-compartmentalised social science vision made the 'Lucknow School' an intellectual force to reckon with (see Singh 1984, 1986, 2004). However, it is equally true that it failed to

leave any lasting imprimatur on the subsequent practices of the discipline. Other visions of the discipline and other ways of practising sociology not only overshadowed the legacy of the 'Lucknow School' but also ensured that Radhakamal Mukerjee's work remained steeped in disciplinary amnesia if not subjected to an outright erasure from the history and memory of the discipline.

The brief biographical sketch,offered in the foregoing, provides us the backdrop against which the next chapter explores the minutiae of the politics of disciplinary amnesia in relation to Mukerjee's life and work. It explores the plausible reasons responsible for the general neglect of the scholarly output of such a productive and prolific mind. Mukerjee was active both in the field of literature and social sciences, 'imparting social vision and sense of social reality to literature and imparting literary sensibility and imagination to social science enquiry' (Joshi 1986a: 7). This versatility and the range of intellectual interests and concerns apart, Mukerjee metaphorically continues to occupy the footnotes to the history of the discipline. This brings into picture a whole set of issues that determine the place of a practitioner in the history of the discipline in relation to his contemporaries, predecessors and successors.

NOTES

1. T.N. Madan looks at the first half-century of sociology at the University of Lucknow and has anthologised essays of Radhakamal Mukerjee, D.P. Mukerji, D.N. Majumdar and A.K. Saran in order to 'introduce the work of these scholars to today's sociologists: the emphasis is on exposition rather than in-depth evaluation' (2013: xii).
2. Thanks to Ramchandra Guha's edited collection of essays entitled *Social Ecology* (Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1993) which opens with Mukerjee's essay. The general resurgence of interest in environmental sociology can be seen as an important factor in this partial retrieval of Radhakamal Mukerjee from within the recesses of the history of the discipline.
3. Interestingly, one of the early biographical essays on Mukerjee is entitled

'Dr. Radhakamal Mukerjee: The Father of Modern Indian Sociology' (Agarwal 1971: 1-13). We find the subtitle of the essay ironic as will be clear from the arguments presented in Chapter 3.

4. Academic sociology in India, for a variety of reasons which we need not go into here, has had more to offer by way of G.S. Ghurye's contributions on caste and race, or on the Scheduled Tribes. Though his contemporary, Mukerjee's work hardly occupies the same place in postgraduate and undergraduate syllabi and curricula. See Chapter 3 for a detailed discussion of some of these issues.
5. This is the title of Mukerjee's first autobiographical piece that appeared in a volume edited in his honour by Baljit Singh (see Singh 1955). In 1997, Mukerjee's autobiography was posthumously published by Radha Publishers, Delhi under the title *India, The Dawn of a New Era: An Autobiography*.
6. Synoptic biographical accounts of his professional career and preliminary (generally eulogistic) assessments of his contributions are available in Singh 1955; Agarwal 1971, Loomba and Madan 1987; Joshi 1986a, 1986b; Madan and Gupta 2000a: 1-41. For a relatively comprehensive and comparative assessment of his professional life and work see Madan 2007, 2011a, 2011b, and 2013: 4-15. Some of the chapters in Loomba and Madan (1987) — S.N. Kanungo's 'History and Beyond History' (274-80), Sarla Dube's 'Dimensions of Values' (62-82), R.N. Mukherjee's 'Society: A Multi-dimensional Approach' (26-61), M.D. Joshi's 'Radhakamal Mukerjee, A Demographer – A Personal Tribute' (312-14) directly deal with varied dimensions of Radhakamal Mukerjee's voluminous work.
7. The historian Tapan Raychaudhuri (1988: ix) has characterised the Bengali middle class as 'the first Asian social group of any size whose mental world was transformed through its interactions with the West'.
8. In the same year, he had been offered a professorship in Economics at the Bombay University. Clearly, Mukerjee chose Lucknow over Bombay. It is anybody's guess that the history of sociology in India would have been markedly different had he joined Bombay instead of Lucknow University.
9. Compared to Benoy Kumar Sarkar, less has been written about the scholarly contributions of Brajendra Nath Seal (at least in the English language). Indeed, Seal figures as one of the nine pioneers in Ramkrishna Mukherjee's (1979) first comprehensive survey of the history of the discipline (curiously, Sarkar's name does not appear in the list). Also, Seal's role as the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Mysore in introducing sociology at the undergraduate level (along with A. R. Wadia) is frequently mentioned. M.N. Srinivas's association with the University of Mysore during his undergraduate days, his celebrity status,

and his later autobiographical essays could be a factor in foregrounding Seal in the history of the discipline.

10. The reference is to the three nationalist leaders Lala Lajpat Rai, Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Bipin Chandra Pal, respectively.
11. Again, while it is commonplace to talk of D.P. Mukerji's refined literary, cultural and aesthetic taste with reference to his writings in Bengali, one does not come across the same level of acknowledgement of Mukerjee's literary accomplishments. Mukerjee's Bengali writings await its translator, editor and anthologist, something that has happened in the case of D.P. Mukerji (see Srobona Munshi's (2012), *Redefining Humanism: Selected Essays of D P Mukerji*, Tulika, New Delhi).
12. Mukerjee assumed the editorship of the literary journal *Upasana* in 1912 which was 'the organ of a resurgent nationalism upholding the cause of Indian culture and of universal peace and freedom against the individualistic cult of wealth and power of Western civilization' (Mukerjee 1997: 105).
13. In his autobiography, Mukerjee's articulates his position in the following words:

    The conflict between reason and intuition and between subjectivism and universalism is marked in Western philosophical speculation. In Western social organisations this has its counterparts in the struggle between individual and community, freedom and organizations, rights and duties. In India, there is a synthesis between these two conflicting principles in thought, worship and social action. The neo-Hinduism I championed stands for the realization of the Infinite or eternal God or Narayana, the end and goal of collective humanity (nara) in the nation or State as well as in all social groupings. It transcends nationalism, leading the individual to universal humanism and at the same time underlies the vitality of all small groups and associations and brotherhood between man and the State that are obliterated by the modern centripetal forces of administration and industrialization. The local and the functional group is the major lever of social integration and progress in Indian civilization. Neo-Hinduism acknowledges and harnesses this principle for the recovery of Indian society through the apotheosis of all associations from the primary group to nation and universal humanity as embodiments of Shakti or the Energy Divine (Mukerjee 1997: 106).
14. Pal's influence can be gauged in Mukerjee's following assertion:

    India is the land where the village and not the city had been the centre of civilization in the past. In India more than any other country the great intellectual, religious and social movements originated in villages, and nurtured by their thoughts and aspirations at last reached the cities and metropolises. The soul of India is to be found in the village,

and not in the city (Mukerjee 1997: 108).

15. In Unnithan, T. K. N., Indra Deva and Yogendra Singh (eds.) 1965. *Towards a Sociology of Culture: Essays in Honour of Professor D.P. Mukerji.* New Delhi: Prentice Hall of India, pp. 94-104. Indeed, 'Mukerjee was professedly influenced by the idealist variety of Hindu philosophy; so that, his ordinal valuation of social reality became more and more synoptic (and not analytic) of a particular brand' (Mukherjee 1989: 263)
16. Thus, Benoy Kumar Sarkar would find positivism in *Shukraniti*. Others would rummage through different schools of Indian philosophy to assert the fact that rationality has not been as alien to Indian civilization as it is made out to be by Western scholars.
17. The arguments presented here draw heavily on Duara (2003).
18. Mukerjee characterises Benoy Kumar Sarkar as 'the embodiment of the spirit of Resurgent Bengal during the period of the Swadeshi Revolution (1905-14). He (1997: 92) writes, 'it was from Sarkar that I learnt in the revolutionary years that Indian recovery and reconstruction must proceed as much on educational and social as on political lines'. However, he was disappointed to find that Sarkar had no interest in spirituality and mysticism (for a comprehensive essay on Sarkar see Roma Chatterji. 2007,'The Nationalist Sociology of Benoy Kumar Sarkar' (106-131) in Uberoi *et al.*).
19. Mukerjee adores Brajendranath Seal for having blended the universal with the nationalistic outlook and considers him to be one of the undisputed leaders of the intellectual revolution. He is a great votary of Seal's comparative method in the study of civilization which stressed the multilinear character of human social evolution in different regions and cultures. For him, Seal's method 'challenged the Hegelian unilinear view of the evolution of mankind and its institutions. It was this synthetic and comparative view which governs my comparative study of economic and political institutions' (Mukerjee 1997: 88). He claims to have enriched and extended Seal's comparative methodology in the light of new branches of human discipline such as human ecology, social psychology, cultural anthropology, human geography and biology.
20. For Geddes see Indra Munshi's essay 'Patrick Geddes: Sociologist, Environmentalist and Town Planner' in Uberoi *et al* 2007.
21. Birbal Sahni, the renowned paleobotanist and the only other professor at the University at the time of Mukerjee's joining the University of Lucknow, writes in his 'foreword' to Mukerjee's book on *Man and His Habitation: A Study in Social Ecology*: 'Through the application of biological principles and techniques to the study of the balance and inter-relations of the human species and communities has grown the new discipline of human ecology, *of which Professor Mukerjee is a pioneer*' (emphasis added;

Mukerjee 1940a: vi). In fact, the book grew out of Mukerjee's lectures at the Faculty of the Sciences of the University at the invitation of the then Dean, Professor Birbal Sahni. The fact of the invitation itself is a testimony to Mukerjee's acknowledged interdisciplinarity. Not many deans of the faculties of sciences in Indian universities are known to be offering such invitations to their sociologist colleagues!

22. Noticeably, Patrick Geddes wrote Introduction to Mukerjee's first book *Foundations of Indian Economics* (1916). Geddes's influence is most pronounced in Mukerjee's *Man and His Habitation: A Study in Social Ecology*(1940a: x):

    But the ecological standpoint is the total-situation standpoint in which man's conscious strivings, aspirations and ideals mingle silently with the ecological forces and processes. Social ecology stresses the ever complex give-and-take between man and the region, and attributes the present social disorganisation as much to the ecological unbalance of the region and between different types of habitations as to the sophisticated habits and artificial patterns of living of the population.

    At the same time, Mukerjee was also in close touch with the work of Chicago sociologists. He hints at that in his preface to the same book: 'Curiously enough, the subject [that of human ecology] suggested itself to the writer [Mukerjee] not in the crowded plain of the Ganges valley where he lives, but during a brief sojourn in the Middle West and the prairie country of the United States' (xi). He continually refers to the work of E. W.Burgess, Clifford R. Shaw, R. D. McKenzie, H. W. Odumand, J. H. Kolb. Also, his thinking on the issue is not as clear as some of the commentators make it out be (for example, see Madan 2013: 10-12). In fact, Mukerjee's plea for making human ecology the basis of a functional and quantitative sociology does not go well with the general grain of his enunciation of the philosophy of social sciences (see also Mukerjee 1942c).

23. As this chapter was being written, the author came across Madan's (2013: 8-14) classification of Mukerjee's entire oeuvre under three headings – institutional economics, social ecology, and the sociology of values. In order to avoid repetition, this chapter does not attempt any such categorisation. However, it should be noted that we present substantive discussions of Mukerjee's work in chapters 4 and 5. We have deliberately left out Mukerjee's work in the field of social ecology as this does not fit in with the scope and thrust of present work (see Chapter 1). Besides, this aspect of Mukerjee's work is relatively better-known. For understandable reasons, one does not come across discussion of Mukerjee's writings such as *The Theory and Art of Mysticism*, *The Song of the Self-Supreme: Astavakragita*, *The Lord of the Autumn Moons*, *Bhagavad Gita: the Dialogue with the Self-Divine*. However, C N Venugopal's

unpublished doctoral dissertation (1980), apart from offering a sense of Mukerjee's intellectual evolution, also discusses some of his writings explicitly concerned with mysticism and asceticism.

24. The present work claims to provide the most authoritative list of Mukerjee's books with credible publication details. Posthumous re-publications and the availability of Indian editions of some titles further complicate the issue. The sad part is that no single library in the country has the entire collection of Mukerjee's work, including the library at the University of Lucknow. G. R. Madan and V. P. Gupta (2000: 39) note, 'Many of his works are not available even in metropolitan libraries'. The best collection (around twenty five books) is to be found at the library at the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla. I have depended on the resources available at the libraries at the Indian Institute of Management, Calcutta, National Library, Kolkata, Goa University and the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi.
25. Full bibliographic details of these works are in *References and Select Bibliography* appended at the end of the present work. Given the focus of the present work, we do not engage with this aspect of Mukerjee's work.

Chapter 3

The Politics of Disciplinary Amnesia

As an institutional economist and a sociologist, Mukerjee remains a solitary figure.
T.N. Madan 2013: 13

Good historical practice should be sensitive to the disjunctures between the frameworks of past actors and present interpreters.
Frederick Cooper 2005: 19

The general neglect of the work of the founding fathers of sociology in India is seen to be a regrettable characteristic of the disciplinary history in India. Indeed, the overall inattention to the work of predecessors has given rise to the absence of any serious appreciation of 'indigenous' sociological traditions in Indian sociology (Madan 2011b; 2013). More often than not, contemporary practitioners of the discipline tend to look outward in their quest for 'newness in sociological enquiry'. Even when they look inward they appear to be reinventing the wheels all over again without sufficient acknowledgement of the work of their predecessors in their fields of substantive research (Beteille 1997).[1] This chapter, though, is not concerned with the general amnesia as a marker of practising sociology in India. It particularly explores the place of Radhakamal Mukerjee in the history of the discipline with a view to adduce a set of plausible factors for the undeserved forgetfulness that has been accorded to his work.[2]

Radhakamal Mukerjee: Sporadic Tributes and the Long Neglect

In the first ever trend report on research methodology in sociology and social anthropology, T.N. Madan (1974) places

Radhakamal Mukerjee among the very few Indian sociologists who engaged with serious theoretical discussions of the nature of social science and the consequent implications for the conduct of social research. He is hailed as a methodologist in the wider sense of the term who attempted to transcend 'the old division between natural sciences and humanities by working out a new synthesis in terms of a triangular interaction between the physical sciences, philosophy and the social sciences'. There is also an appreciation for his view that the so-called dualism between the objectivity of the natural sciences and the subjective nature of social sciences, between existence and validity, between fact and value no longer obtained. He has been showered fulsome praise for the reach of his sociological and economic concerns and for his unique treatment of these problems among the Indian social scientists (Singh 1986).While recognising his contributions to the 'transition from pre-sociology to sociology' (Singh 2007: 175, 179), Yogendra Singh finds in Mukerjee an 'acute self-consciousness about the western misinterpretation of the Indian civilization and society, and [also] an attempt to put it in the correct perspective'. Still, almost after a gap of four decades, Madan (2011b: 180) reiterates:

> Among the Indian sociologists, he alone has contributed monumentally to the philosophical critique of human condition and contemporary civilization from a holistic perspective. In this, he makes extensive use of the Indian philosophical categories and its meta-theories. Yet, his approach remains universalistic as he consistently attempts to integrate the Indian philosophical-epistemological approach with that of the West and other traditions to evolve a general and integral theory of sociology. This universalism permeates his entire approach to the theoretical construction of the Indian sociology.[3]

These occasional acknowledgements of the significance of Radhakamal Mukerjee's work by commentators and expositors of the 'Lucknow School' could be misleading as an indicator of the place of Mukerjee's work in the context of disciplinary insularity to its own pioneers that permeates sociology in India.[4] At the least, they underline the urgent need to appreciate, assess

and rescue Mukerjee's work from the long years of neglect.[5] Ramkrishna Mukherjee regards Radhakamal Mukerjee a *bratya*, that is, a marginal man in the realm of social sciences. According to him, Mukerjee's marginality was a consequence of his unconventional views on the nature of social sciences which was annoying to both economists and sociologists (Mukherjee 1989: 261).

A well-regarded pioneer of Indian sociology, it is hard to believe that Mukerjee never contributed a single piece to either *Sociological Bulletin* (Jayaram and Chakrabarty 2011: 231) or *Contributions to Indian Sociology*- the two prestigious journals of the discipline. Whatever little appreciation is there for him has mostly come from economists. Thus, he makes it as one of the thirteen short biographies put together by J. Krishnamurty (2009: 155-56) in his *Toward Development Economics: Indian Contributions 1900-1945*. In the same volume, as a representative contribution, Mukerjee's 'The Broken Balance of Population, Land and Water' (originally published in *Indian Journal of Economics*, vol. 14, issue 54, 1934, pp. 255-66) is collected besides the editor's pronouncement, 'Today, Mukerjee is widely regarded as a pioneer of environmental economics, as indeed of several other topics. In his work, he developed interdisciplinary approaches, focussed on institutional factors, and extended the boundaries of whatever subject he took up' (*ibid.* 155). Manuel Gottlieb (1971: 47-51) offers a thumbnail biographical sketch in the *Journal of Economic Issues* and also presents the most detailed (and reliable) bibliography till date (1971: 51-53).[6] A few factual errors apart (like Berhampur being in East Pakistan), Gottlieb's is a synoptic overview of Mukerjee's contributions to economics as a moral science and his thorough-going forays into other sciences to understand economic problems in their totality. He is unusually appreciative of Mukerjee's attempts at broadening the concerns of economics as a discipline and he is all praises for the latter's 'active involvement in public affairs and policy making without

institutional identification or renunciation of the critical posture and detachment so essential to social science' (*ibid.* 47). In the same journal, Dipendra Sinha (1992: 485-92) offers an assessment of Mukerjee's institutional theory of economics. Sadly though, a similar appreciation of Mukerjee's work by a sociologist (let alone a book-length assessment) has not appeared so far except Madan's two essays (2011a and 2013: 4-15).[7]

Mukerjee and the Lucknow School

It is commonplace to find references to Radhakamal Mukerjee and 'the Lucknow School' in the historical accounts of Indian sociology (Mukherjee 1979, Singh 1986, Uberoi *et al* 2007). Even when scholars differ in their assessment of the school's contributions to the growth and development of the discipline, and some even dispute the very idea of a 'school',[8] generations of students have come to learn about certain specific characteristics of this school: its vision of sociology and social science having a historical civilizational anchorage, its sense of unease with positivistic, utilitarian and the general evolutionary constructions and premises of the western sociology, its openness towards historicity, culture and values in the formulation of sociological concepts and their theoretical underpinnings, and its methodological eclecticism (Singh 2004: 145).

To some, the Lucknow School represented a highly creative phase in the evolution of social sciences in modern India given its intellectual response to India's colonial subjection and cultural subjugation (Joshi 1986a, 1986b). In course of its evolution, its sensitivity to the richness of Indian tradition, its flair for 'philosophical theoretic orientation', its distinguished style of cultural critique, its understanding of the problems and processes of social transformation based on grassroots insights and empirical fieldwork, and its anchorage in the value-oriented

and non-compartmentalised social science vision made the Lucknow School an intellectual force to reckon with (Singh 1984). On account of its multi-disciplinary orientation, Joshi (1986a and 1986b) finds it more appropriate to call it the *Lucknow School of Economics, Sociology and Culture*.

P.C. Joshi considers the Lucknow School as the pathfinder in orienting the concept of social science to the needs and requirements of the country struggling under the colonial yoke. Evidently, in a colonial setting when the very *zeitgeist* of a nation was at stake, the role of a social scientist could hardly be conceived as just a narrow professional. S/he had to organically connect with her/his people and partake of the latter's agony and suffering. S/he had to involve herself/himself not only in 'identifying and interpreting their problems and predicaments but also in formulating categories of understanding and in shaping the content and forms of their national consciousness in relation to their historical traditions and their sub-continental size and economic and cultural diversity' (Joshi 1986a: 26). In this sense, the Lucknow School embodied the existential angst of an entire nation.

However, one does not find homologous theoretic tensions in the writings of the 'pioneers' (Mukherjee 1979) at Lucknow. Not surprisingly, Yogendra Singh, one of the most influential chroniclers of sociology, offers a rather modest assessment of the contributions of the so-called Lucknow School of Sociology: 'it does not seem to have made a major impact on the theoretical nature of Indian sociology. The reason probably lies in the lack of an integrated or unified perspective in the philosophical theoretical contributions of these sociologists' (Singh 2004: 99).[9]

On the other hand, Sujata Patel (2010: 283) characterises the sociology at Lucknow as 'visionary, analytical, empirical and interdisciplinary'. While acknowledging the major differences among members of the School, she sees there 'a growth of a new sociology confident of being Indian, modern and simultaneously indigenous'. More importantly, the

Lucknow sociologists 'did not define the identity of sociology as anthropology and did not use the methods and methodologies of anthropology crafted within colonial modernity'.[10]

Be that as it may, the varying assessments of the contributions of Lucknow sociologists have triggered and suffused the long-raging debate on the quest for an Indian sociology. In different ways, these assessments inform the three heuristic moments through which this debate has evolved: (a) the idea that Indian sociology should reflect the philosophical, historical and cultural specificities of Indian society and work towards indigenisation of concepts and theories (b) that Indian sociology should accordingly improvise and innovate upon the existing sociological concepts and categories largely drawn from the western sociology, and work towards the contextualisation of the existing 'universal' concepts and categories (c) that it should propound an alternative paradigm to western sociology, which leads to total negation of the idea of sociology altogether as an academic discipline in the case of A.K. Saran.[11]

The foregoing synoptic presentation of the broad philosophy of the Lucknow School, and the theoretical and pedagogic approaches pursued there, provides us a setting to assess Radhakamal Mukerjee's contributions, and his place in the disciplinary history of Indian sociology relative to other exemplars of the Lucknow school.[12] Indeed, by the time Radhakamal Mukerjee joined the Lucknow University as the founder-head of the Department of Economics and Sociology in 1921, a new orientation for *an Indian School of Economics and Sociology* had already crystallised in his mind.[13] Lucknow merely presented itself as an institutional *tabula rasa* where he could inscribe his philosophy and value commitments in a larger arena (Mukerjee 1997). At Lucknow, he consolidated his conception of 'bridge-building between natural sciences like biology and social sciences; between economics, sociology and other human sciences; between theory-building and fact-finding; between social thought and social work' (Joshi 1986a:

12). In particular, as Guha (2003: 1122) writes, 'Radhakamal Mukerjee anticipated, by decades, the methodological alliance recently forged in American university departments between ecology and social sciences'. It would be no exaggeration to say that the questions raised by this School in its initial years, and the perspectives and insights generated on the problems facing the country, largely emanated from Mukerjee's lifelong mission of constructing an integrated and unified social science.

Mukerjee and the Sociology Profession in India

It is intriguing that the sociology profession in India has been slow, rather indifferent, in acknowledging Radhakamal Mukerjee's foundational role in the shaping of Indian sociology despite his stupendous contributions to the discipline. There is no denying that his name echoes a ring of familiarity to the students of the history of social sciences in India. However, more often than not, he appears to have been overshadowed by the other two eminent members of the Lucknow school that he helped found in the first place. At times, it appears as if the past glory and seminal legacy of the Lucknow School had much to do with the contributions of D.P. Mukerji and D.N. Majumdar than that of Radhakamal Mukerjee.[14] There is a need to look into reasons behind the differential treatment accorded to Mukerjee by the future historians and chroniclers of Indian sociology. Such an exploration also gives us a peep into the factors and processes that go into the making of selective retention and perpetuation of the disciplinary memory. It is not enough to underline the need, or present a plea, for a comprehensive critical assessment of Radhakamal Mukerjee's enviable corpus of scholarly work. Rather, the endeavour is to detail the various aspects of Mukerjee's neglect by the profession. In a related vein, one needs to pose the larger question as to what makes certain practitioners appear as the exemplars of distinctive traditions of doing sociology while

others get pushed into the disciplinary oblivion.

Expectedly, Radhakamal Mukerjee does not figure in the list of the select twelve who are 'widely recognized as among the "founders" of sociology and anthropology in south Asia' though he gets mentioned as one among 'numerous others who were also important in shaping the contours of the two discipline in India' (Uberoi *et al.* 2007: 48).[15] Likewise, another collection of nine essays delineating 'impact of society and polity in producing and disseminating knowledge in the two cognate disciplines of sociology and social anthropology' (Oommen 2007: ix) does not contain a single reference to Mukerjee even as it offers a critique of D.P. Mukerji's presidential address for the latter's privileging of Sanskrit as the fountainhead of the knowledge of Indian tradition (*ibid.*102-03). Even T.N. Madan, having consistently advocated 'better informed and critically nuanced appreciation of what the founders strove for and achieved' (2007: 287), in his book-length delineation of the *pathways* in terms of various *approaches to the study of society in India* could not find space to study Mukerjee's contributions.[16] This absence is equally marked in another recent publication devoted to the search for 'alternative discourses in Asian social science' (Alatas 2006) which does not have a single entry under Mukerjee in its list of plentiful references of Indian sociologists and social anthropologists.[17] This appears intriguing as Mukerjee turns out to be 'one of the earliest sociologist-economists in India... who clearly lays down the foundation of a distinctive Indian sociological paradigm and theoretic structure' (Singh 2004: 141).[18] These subsequent publications apart, it is noteworthy that Radhakamal Mukerjee's presidential address to the third All India Sociological Conference in December 1958 at Agra follows that of D.P. Mukerji's in April 1955 at Dehra Dun and that of D.N. Majumdar's in February 1957 at Patna.[19]

There are well-established parameters to gauge the academic-professional influence of an academic/social science

professional: publication of festschrifts, citation of the works of the scholar concerned, institution of memorial lectures and awards, inauguration of a distinctive perspective and approach towards the study of social reality, impact on the selection of themes for investigation by the subsequent generation of scholars and critical appreciation of the scholar's oeuvre by colleagues and disciples. In fact, Meenakshi Thapan (1991) looks at (*a la* Pierre Bourdieu) some of these aspects as constituting the 'field' of sociology in India. She specifically underlines an understanding of the constitution of power in the field (based on the differential acquisition of different forms of capital by individual sociologists) or its bestowal on individual sociologist or on a particular institution. A close scrutiny of these parameters substantiates the assertion that Mukerjee has fared poorly compared to his contemporaries in the field.

We come across the first published festschrift in 1955.[20] Subsequently, there are two festschrifts published in 1971 and 1972, respectively.[21] In 1987, there appears another festschrift.[22] The same year also saw the founding of 'Dr. Radhakamal Mukerjee Memorial Society' in Delhi by some of his students. G.R. Madan (1997: 13-20) in his 'Preface' to Mukerjee's autobiography mentions a series of events to commemorate Radhakamal Mukerjee's birth centenary in 1989.[23] One also finds two exegetical essays on Mukerjee — 'Theory of Personality in Sorokin and Mukerjee' (92-106) and 'Radhakamal Mukerjee's Inter-Disciplinary Method and Frame of Reference in Social Science' (107-113).[24] Thereafter, in 2000, a multi-volume anthology of Mukerjee's writings gets published.[25] The crowning, though quite belated, professional glory to Mukerjee comes by way of the institution of Professor Radhakamal Mukerjee Endowment Fund in 2010 under the auspices of the Indian Sociological Society.[26]

The foregoing testifies to an increasing, though grudgingly slow, recognition by the practitioners of Indian sociology of Mukerjee's contributions to the discipline.[27] One may argue

that given the 'socio-philosophical and architectonic style' (Singh 1986:11) of the Lucknow School, it is hardly surprising that these pioneers gravitated towards disciplinary oblivion. After all, the lasting value of a scholar's contribution is ultimately the function of its quality and rigour. And since Mukerjee's approach was 'too loosely eclectic and evasive to be effective in working out the terms of synthesis among the social sciences' (Madan 2007: 260), it faded with the passage of time. Moreover, 'for Mukerjee, the human was ultimately the divine and the social was inseparable from the cosmic. Consequently, his empiricism was tempered with intuitive understandings' (*ibid.* 261). For instance, Mukerjee (1961: 48) asserts, 'beyond the existential society, there is the invisible society that extends into the past and the future and becomes timeless, and also enlarges itself beyond known species and space into the cosmical community'. He sees human society as 'perennially throbbing, humming cosmical beehive' comprising 'all beings, plants, animals and humans, and even the stars and the galaxies, knit together in a common life give meaning to the social destiny of man' (*ibid.* 48). Mukerjee's attempt 'to bridge the gulf between the finite and the infinite, the fleeting and the eternal' and his endeavour to look for 'the affinity and continuity between the human order and the supra-human and supra-temporal order' (*ibid.* 52) makes his philosophy of social science pronouncedly mystical.[28] Probably, this overdose of mysticism has precluded any serious attempts to undertake empirical studies on this model. Singh (2004: 101) puts it succinctly, 'as contribution to social theory, its place remains very much at the level of axiomatic mata-theory. It is based on a system of deductive reasoning which is exegetic and speculative, hence different kinds of operationalisations of this meta-theory are possible for sociological studies'.

In this reading, it was his 'fuzzy and problematic' (Madan 2007: 261) conceptualisation of the nature of social sciences that explains its ultimate demise.[29] But that has equally been

true for D.P. Mukerji and A.K. Saran even though they are appreciably discussed, and are cited much more frequently than Mukerjee.[30] In fact, 'Radhakamal Mukerjee's vision of sociology, though rooted in the Indian tradition, was still universalistic' and 'he saw the possibility of developing a general theory of sociology based on a social action theory' (Singh 1986: 12). Plausibly, this universalism was not politically useful enough for the partisans to the sociology *for* India debate who could meaningfully relate to D.P. Mukerji's more particularistic philosophic theoretic orientation. In a way, the spirit of the times was against Mukerjee's search for a general theoretical paradigm of sociology.

The extensive spread of his writings could be another possible reason for Mukerjee's declining academic influence in course of time. While writing on a wide variety of themes and topics, he spread himself too thin: slums and industrial labour, regional economic structures, peasants and agrarian economy, values, social ecology, comparative philosophical treatment of civilisations, art and aesthetics, population control, economic history, migration, social psychology, marriage, family and sex, democracy and civics, morals, culture, mysticism and spiritualism. On the one hand, these multidimensional contributions constituted a huge corpus of writings in divergent fields, on the other, they made his philosophical, theoretical and methodological orientations scattered and less forceful. It does not matter that Mukerjee's writings (unlike Ghurye's) reveal greater sensitivity to issues of sociological theory and methodology. Also, unlike G.S.Ghurye, his epistemological discourse does not remain grounded in the western methodological tradition (Madan 2011b: 180) and is characterised by the singular quest to transcend Western epistemological framework.

According to Singh (2004: 141-42), he not only integrated the western theoretical and methodological paradigms in the studies of social and economic problems and issues in India

but also undertook a critical and philosophical diagnosis of the emerging crises of human condition in the industrial societies and its civilisation. Mukerjee's continual response to contemporary trends in the western social sciences and sociology is a testimony to his praiseworthy exposure to the other traditions of social scientific knowledge. This is also reflected in his selection of the substantive domains of enquiry such as social ecology, regional and institutional economics.

Interestingly, Mukerjee has failed to acquire eminence as the spokesperson of an Indian variant of sociology notwithstanding his central focus on evolving a thorough-going critique of the positivistic and utilitarian character of the western social sciences. In a sense, 'Mukerjee is perhaps the only sociologist of his times in India who attempted this ambitious alternative philosophical paradigm for generating a universal theory of sociology and social science both as a corrective and as an alternative to the western traditions of social science theory' (Singh 2004: 142).[31] Indeed, Mukerjee is tireless in articulating his concern for the one-dimensional focus of western social science: its preoccupation with *home faber* rather than *homo symbolicus*. His postulation of an integral and interdisciplinary social sciences is meant to address such a logic of reductionism implicit in the western social science formulations of the human actor and social institutions: 'modern evolutionary naturalism, Spencerian, Marxian or Bergsonian, reduces man's mind and values as passive entities manipulated mechanically by a vast process that he cannot intelligently direct or control' (Mukerjee 1960: 118 cited in Singh 2004: 143). By contrast, he draws upon philosophical traditions such as Vedanta, Buddhism and Taoism to develop a general theoretical paradigm of sociology as a counterpoint to the western theoretical approaches.[32] To this end, he recasts dialectical method privileging a view of the human actor as an eternal negotiator between the existential (deterministic) and the transcendent. Seen thus, his sociology is suffused with

endogenous consciousness and Indian/oriental civilizational anchorage as they embody values of universal humanism and ethical piety, and thereby, hold promise of a movement away from materialistic rationalism or positivism. (Singh 2004: 143-44).

Some of the appraisals of Mukerjee's oeuvre hint at the narrowness of his vision of Indian culture. In Madan's recent assessment, for Radhakamal Mukerjee, specificities of Indian culture meant 'upper caste Hindu culture' (2011: 31).[33] As a matter of fact, Mukerjee appeared to be concerned about what he calls 'race suicide of Bengali upper class' (1997: 165) owing to rigid rules of caste and marriage. He appeared equally concerned about the dominance of the lower castes due to the vast influx of refugees from East Pakistan. At the same time, he presents an ecological explanation (the silting up of the Bengal rivers and the spread of malaria in west and South Bengal combined with the eastward shift of the delta-building rivers) for the preponderance of the Muslims and lower caste Hindus in North and East Bengal.[34] In retrospect, he can be charged with having perpetuated common sense myths: 'In Bengal for more than three quarters of a century, the upper castes had been declining or stationary and the lower castes and Muslims multiplying fast' (Mukerjee 1997: 110). What is disconcerting is his equation of this trend with the decay of the Bengali nation. Yet, his lament about the decline of West Bengal, 'the home par excellence of the upper castes' is couched in terms of agricultural decadence in the moribund portion of the Bengal delta and attendant logic of economic and social forces bringing about 'continuous Hindu decline and Muslim predominance' (*ibid.*). Besides, he equates the population dominance of the Muslims with their political power, and, claims to have foreseen, rather forecasted, partition on the basis of 'his analysis of demographic and agricultural trends over three quarters of a century in Bengal' (*ibid.* 111).[35] He considers the hydrographical and economic gravitation towards

the east as the precursor of the imbalances between Hindu and Muslim communities in Bengal. What is questionable is his assertion that these changes in the social composition of the population had been working against Bengal's traditional social and cultural life. His preoccupation with the striking disparity between the advanced and backward castes or communities (the latter multiplying at phenomenally quick rates) precludes him from subjecting his assumptions to any searching investigation.[36] The question is if Mukerjee's uncritical understanding of the Muslim question made his legacy suspect for the subsequent generation of Indian sociologists.[37]

However, in his *History of Civilization Vol. II* (1956a), Mukerjee refers to the Hindu-Muslim rapprochements extensively. According to him, the period from 13th to 17th centuries AD in India witnessed the efflorescence of a national culture based on literary, religious and cultural interactions. He points out that Sufism was specifically a product of the Hindu-Muslim communion on the Indian soil, although its origins lay in Persia and Central Asia. While noting the persecution of Sufis by some Muslim kings, he notes the concord between the Hindu and Islamic traditions in the field of literature that led to the translation of a large number of Indian scriptures and poetical works into Persian. The point is that there is a need to take a balanced approach towards Mukerjee's entire corpus of work before assigning him any label in a hurry.[38] Unfortunately, the question is yet to be posed categorically, and there is diffidence to look into the underbelly of our disciplinary histories.

Mukerjee: The Need for Retrieval and Appraisal

The foregoing has tentatively identified a set of plausible factors that explain Radhakamal Mukerjee's near absence from disciplinary memory[39]: his metaphysical and mystical weight

onto a this-worldly discipline and the consequent ambiguities surrounding his philosophy of social science[40], methodological naivetè and the extensive scope of his writings rendering it thin across different substantive fields, lack of clarity regarding Indian/oriental corrective/alternative to western social science and finally, his non-inclusive vision of Indian history and culture. However, they need to be demonstrated based on a comprehensive critical assessment of his large oeuvre. Admittedly, the identification of these factors is based on the premise that the academic influence of a scholar emanates out of the value of one's published output. Recent works of disciplinary history, though, foreground other issues such as the informal membership of the contemporary networks of influence, access to and control over prestigious publishing houses, a critical mass of illustrious students to perpetuate the memory, and one's location in the prestige hierarchies of academic institutions.[41] One may also ask if the decline of a given centre of learning (Lucknow in the instant case) precedes the declining influence of some of its masters (alternatively, if the declining academic influence of its stalwarts leads to the depletion of institutional esteem).[42]

The next chapter presents a discussion of Mukerjee's quest for an Indian sociology in the context of his writings in the field of economics. Interestingly, Mukerjee's ideas of the distinctiveness of Indian knowledge traditions emerged out of his sustained endeavour to ground economics as a culturally-rooted comparative science. It was his discomfort with the key premise of a rational profit-maximising individual as the anchor sheet of economics that, in a way, propelled him not only towards sociology but also gave rise to his pioneering work in the field of social ecology. The chapter attempts to bring out the ambiguities inherent in Mukerjee's vision of an integrated and universal sociology and social science both as a corrective and as an alternative to the western social sciences.

NOTES

1. Andre Beteille (1997: 98) writes, 'The problem with us is not that the small amount of good work done by preceding generations is unjustly criticised by succeeding ones, but that it is ignored and then quickly forgotten. In India, each generation of sociologists seems eager to start its work on a clean slate with little or no attention to the work done before. This amnesia about the work of their predecessors is no less distinctive of Indian sociologists than their failure to innovate'.
2. One way of explaining this neglect is to relate this to the general characteristic of Indian sociology, something that Beteille (1997) refers to, and Madan reiterates in his recent writings (2011b; 2013). Another is to see it as a function of Radhakamal Mukerjee's 'repetitiveness and lack of scholarly rigour' — a style that despite a display of vast erudition 'does not actually invite emulation, but was characteristic of him — rather hurried, repetitive, verbose, and replete with cross-disciplinary citations' (Madan 2011b: 145). Madan regards, 'the continuously shifting thematic foci of Mukerjee's evolving corpus' as an obstacle to his influence in general: 'he moved base, as it were, faster than his students, and other scholars could keep pace with' (Madan 2013: 374). The larger understanding for the neglect, as the following discussion shows, needs to go beyond this binary of the general and the particular. The task acquires greater earnestness as so far no one has written at length about Mukerjee's work (2011b: xiii). Not even a full-length doctoral dissertation has been written on the work of Mukerjee at the University of Lucknow, or elsewhere (Madan 2013: 365). However, as this chapter is being written, Madan has anthologised five of Mukerjee's essays (2013: 67-141) with his editorial commentaries with a view to revive interest in what the sociologists were doing at Lucknow in the second quarter of last century. The impact of this 'exercise in restoration' (*ibid.* 365) remains to be seen and assessed with the passage of time.
3. In fact, even today T.N. Madan appears convinced about the presence of 'many ideas, insights, and cues for further and... better work' in the writings of Radhakamal Mukerjee (Madan 2013: 369). Yet he laments, 'It is his work as a social ecologist that has perhaps survived the best, and that is so because of the grave prospect of environmental degradation with which the whole of humankind is faced today, rather than *any general recognition of his intellectual innovativeness*' (emphasis added; *ibid.* 14).
4. Radhakamal Mukerjee figures as one of the nine pioneers identified by Ramkrishna Mukherjee (1979) in his first comprehensive trend report on sociology in India.
5. As late as 2000, G.R. Madan and V.P. Gupta (2000: 39) regret, 'contemporary India has not given adequate attention to the ideas and

contributions of Professor Mukerjee. There is need to develop many of his ideas and theories in a systematic way'.

6. Another detailed bibliography of Mukerjee's work is available in now defunct *Indian Journal of Social Research* (1965, No. 2). This journal used to be published from Meerut under the editorship of G.C. Hallens.
7. See also Madan 2011b: 134 (note 6) for a similar assertion.
8. While focusing on the differences among the exemplars of the Lucknow School, Madan disputes the idea that there was anything like a 'Lucknow School'. However, he regards Radhakamal Mukerjee, D.P. Mukerji and D.N. Majumdar as 'exemplars', with A.K. Saran as the critic within. According to him, all traditions grow around exemplars. However, this does not mean that the contributions of the exemplars unproblematically constitute a tradition or a school. The question of how one defines and locates a school or a tradition remains an important though unresolved issue (see Sundar *et al.* 2000: 1998). Madan (2007: 261) asserts, 'there really was no "school", formally proclaimed, nor did the faculty share a common approach to teaching and research'. For the differences and commonalities in certain basic assumptions and perspectives of these exemplars see also Madan 1994, 2011. Again, Madan (2013) critiques P.C. Joshi and Sasheej Hegde for their uncritical assumption of a Lucknow 'School' and its 'legacy'. He writes, 'it is rather far-fetched to speak of a "school" comprising only two scholars, who despite certain shared perspectives — most notably an interdisciplinary or integrated approach to social research — differed from each other in significant ways, including in their conception of Indian tradition. Even in their quest for methodological synthesis, they did not focus on the same disciplinary mix; psychology was more stressed by Mukerjee, history by Mukerji' (2013: 370). He finds Hegde's discovery of commonalities of 'ontology', 'methodology' and epistemology misplaced and his attribution of an encompassing ethic of 'indigeneity' wanting. For Madan, 'as for the nationalist commitment, and the resultant search for indigenous paradigms, this was more in the nature of the spirit of the times rather than a distinguishing feature of the Department of Economics and Sociology at the University of Lucknow' (*ibid.*). In fact, C.N. Venugopal (1980: 187), in his doctoral thesis entitled *G.S. Ghurye and Radhakamal Mukerjee: A Comparative Sociological Appraisal of their Selected Contributions*, asserts, 'Ghurye and Mukerjee do not have "schools" around them. The absence of such schools has in a way dispersed their influence in Indian academic circles. At the same time they have not exercised a stifling effect'. However, in the same year, one finds a letter by Satish Saberwal under the title 'For the Lucknow School' in the widely circulated *Economic and Political Weekly* 15 (36): 1493-94.

9. Another, not so laudatory assessment comes from Imtiaz Ahmad (1966: 244): 'They [sociologists at Lucknow] seem to involve in a reinstatement of the moral and religious principles which underlie social order rather than a reunion of the logic and method of sociology'. See also Bottomore 1962.
10. Patel (2010: 283) relates the loss of appeal of the Lucknow School to the growth of the 'nationalist' sociology of M.N. Srinivas.
11. See particularly the essays 'Indian Sociology: Retrospect and Prospect' (135-66) and 'Ideology, Theory and Method in Indian Sociology' (95-133) in Singh 2004.
12. While disputing the idea of a Lucknow School, Madan admits, 'he (Mukerjee) would have to be acknowledged as the founder of the Lucknow School if one were to concede that it existed' (Madan 2013: 372).
13. In the same year, he had been offered a professorship in Economics at the Bombay University. Mukerjee chose Lucknow over Bombay as he was excited about his foundational role in the shaping of a new department in a new university. It needs no reiteration that he was instrumental in bringing D.P. Mukerji and D.N. Majumdar (two other eminent members of the much talked about Lucknow 'triumvirate') to the department (Mukerjee 1997). It is anybody's guess how different the history of sociology in India would have been had he joined Bombay University instead of Lucknow.
14. Interestingly, a letter by A.K. Banerjee in *Economic and Political* Weekly [15(48): 1999] mentions just D.P. Mukerji while talking of Lucknow School.
15. His exclusion from the list has been explained as largely a matter of chance. The much celebrated 'retrieval and reassessment of our shared disciplinary history' (Uberoi *et al.* 2007: ix) had to do without him as T.N. Madan having agreed to write on D.P. Mukerji could not have been asked to also write on Radhakamal Mukerjee. But, more importantly, there is an attempt to justify the editorial decision on the ground that Mukerjee having receded from the mind of present generation of sociologists, his non-inclusion would hardly constitute a noticeable absence (Madan 2011 footnote no 5, p. 40).
16. The words in italics refer to the title and subtitle, respectively, of Madan's book (1994) which contains two individual chapters on D.P. Mukerji and D.N. Majumdar but none on Radhakamal Mukerjee. Even otherwise, Madan has written extensively on the former than the latter, which gets corroborated by looking at the references in Madan 2007, 2011a and 2011b. Indeed, Madan delivered the first Radhakamal Mukerjee Memorial Lecture under the auspices of the Indian Sociological Society at its *XXXVI All India Sociological Conference* held at

Ravenshaw University Cuttack during 27-29 December 2010. This lecture is subsequently published in the *Sociological Bulletin* (Madan 2011a), and also in another collection (Madan 2011b). The intention here is not to question a scholar's prerogative to work on individuals/themes of her/his choice. Since Madan has been one of the illustrious alumni of the Lucknow School, and has played a pivotal role in making its contributions visible in the academy through his scholarly assessments, it appears appropriate to highlight this otherwise trivial issue given the assertion of the present paper. In another instance, in one of the early assessments of sociology in India, Bottomore (1962: 101) writes, 'a group of sociologists at the University of Lucknow, influenced originally by the work of the late D.P. Mukerji, have interested themselves in logical and methodological problems'. He also mentions A.K.Saran in this context whereas he has just a piece of factual information to share with his readers: 'in 1921, in the University of Lucknow, Radhakamal Mukerjee became the head of the department of economics and sociology' (*ibid.* 98).

17. It appreciably discusses D.P. Mukerji's emphasis on Indian tradition and historical specificities (Alatas 2006: 43-44). Elsewhere, another influential chronicler of the history of Indian sociology, Ramkrishna Mukherjee (2004: 3527) avers, '...in India, the concept of unitary social science was, perhaps, first mooted by D.P. Mukerji in early 1950s, when he exhorted social scientists to not only break the walls between the specialisations in the mansion of social science but also to keep the ceiling of the mansion open to the sky'. He adds further, 'In late 1950s, Radhakamal Mukerjee clearly addresses the social scientists to gather under the rubric of trans-disciplinary approach in place of holding on to the disciplinary segregation'. One should note the sequence in which they have been mentioned.
18. In fact, Singh considers his most significant contribution to sociology as 'his formulation of a general theoretical paradigm of social science and sociology from the perspective of Indian philosophical traditions'. He adds, 'it is a paradigm which attempts to generate a universal general theory for the study of social and cultural phenomena as an alternative to the western theoretical approaches in sociology' (Singh 2004: 142).
19. The invitation for presidential address is seen here as a measure of the invitee's academic-intellectual eminence. In the hierarchical world of Indian academy, it may not have been merely incidental that Mukerjee was superseded for this prestigious role by two of his juniors in the Department.
20. Baljit Singh (ed.). 1955. *The Frontiers of Social Science: In Honour of Radhakamal Mukerjee.* London: Macmillan and Company Ltd. It contains a eulogistic chapter on him by the editor entitled 'Mukerjee as a Pioneer

in Indian Economics' (435-462), and also an autobiographical piece by Mukerjee entitled 'Faiths and Influences'.

21. Hasan, Zafar (ed.). 1971. *Research in Sociology and Social Work: Radhakamal Mukerjee Memorial Volume*. Lucknow: Department of Sociology and Social Work, University of Lucknow, and Husain, Ishrat Zafar (ed.). 1972. *Population Analysis and Studies: Radhakamal Mukerjee Commemoration Volume*. Bombay: Somaiya Publications.
22. Loomba, R.M. and G.R. Madan (eds.). 1987. *Society and Culture: In Honour of Late Dr Radhakamal Mukerjee*. Ahmedabad: Allied Publishers. This contains an essay by R.M. Loomba entitled 'Radhakamal Mukerjee: Life, Work and Philosophy'.
23. One such programme in Delhi was organised at Kamani Auditorium which was attended by the then vice-president Shankar Dayal Sharma. Other speakers too paid rich tributes to Radhakamal Mukerjee on the occasion some of which are included in Mukerjee (1997: 215-36). The Society also instituted Radhakamal Mukerjee Memorial Lecture: three such lectures (all by economists) had already been delivered by the time of the publication of Mukerjee's autobiography. The year also saw the publication of a memorial volume: Madan, G.R. 1989. *Economic Problems of Modern India: Problems of Development*. Delhi: Allied Publishers.
24. The reference is to Srivastava, Harish Chandra. 1968. *Studies in Indian Sociology* (Volume 1). Varanasi: Samajshastra Prakashan.
25. Madan, G.R. and V.P. Gupta (eds). 2000. *Integral Sociology: An Anthology of the Writings of Prof. Radhakamal Mukerjee* (4 volumes). New Delhi: Radha Publications.
26. Dr Radhakamal Mukerjee Memorial Society has played a key role in the institution of the Endowment. The Endowment facilitates the annual Professor Radhakamal Mukerjee Memorial Lecture to be held along with the All India Sociological Conference. As mentioned earlier, the first Lecture (2010) was delivered by Professor T.N. Madan at Ravenshaw University, Cuttack, and the second (2011) by Professor D.N. Dhanagare at Jawaharlal Nehru Unversity, New Delhi, and the third Lecture by Professor Yogendra Singh (2012) at the All India Sociological Conference, Udaipur. Lucknow University, and the Ethnographic and Folk Culture Society, Lucknow has already instituted lectures in the memory of D.P. Mukerji and D.N. Majumdar. However, there is no institutional commemoration of the memory of Radhakamal Mukerjee at Lucknow. It is to be noted that the seminar hall in the Department of Sociology at the University is named after D.P. Mukerji rather than Radhakamal Mukerjee.
27. For example, a textbook entitled *Indian Sociological Thought* by B.K. Nagla (Rawat Publications, Jaipur, 2008) has a short chapter on Radhakamal Mukerjee (71-92) under the heading of Indological and

textual approaches. Likewise, there is a biannual research journal of inter-disciplinary social sciences in Hindi, entitled *Radhakamal Mukerjee: Chintan Parampara*, (ISSN 09740074). This is published under the auspices of Samaj Vigyan Vikas Sansthan, Chandpur, Bijnor, Uttar Pradesh. Since 2007, after the retirement of its editor Dr J. S. Rathore, the journal is being published from 29, Garden City Colony, Post - Shyamganj, Bareilly, 243005. The journal is currently in its fifteenth year of publication. I have seen the last issue (July-December 2013) which is Volume No. 15, No. 2. Despite its title, it publishes an eclectic set of articles, not all connected with the life and work of Radhakamal Mukerjee. Noticeably, it has published the Hindi translation of T.N. Madan's (2011a) as 'Radhakamal Mukerjee Aur Unke Samkaleen', Volume 13, No. 2, pp. 1-16). See also, Manish Thakur's (2013) essay 'Radhakamal Mukerjee: Ek Bharatiya Samajshashtra Ki Talash' in *Radhakamal Mukerjee: Chimtan Parampara*, Vol. 15, No. 1, pp. 1-12.

28. Mukerjee writes (1961: 51-52):
Philosophy that cherishes alternative and complementary truths and values, and, ...rises beyond them to universal and immutable truths and values for mankind's common understanding and dedication and leads the social sciences to the universal insights, experiences and values of man, and moulds and shapes one community, one culture, one world... it extends unity and solidarity from the earth to the cosmos-community...It invests human relations and values with cosmic status and dignity, and brings the social to an ever-higher level of communion or an unlimited perennial society of the universe, which is the supreme value and meaning in itself, higher in significance than man himself or his ephemeral and parochial earthly society.
29. Despite its many shortcomings, Madan thinks that Mukerjee's work has left a deeper mark than D.P. Mukerji's. He writes, '[A]s a pioneer, Mukerjee was a man in a great hurry, who wrote a great deal on a wide variety of subjects, but did not go deeply into any one of them'. Madan, though, acknowledges Mukerjee's contribution to laying the foundations of a number of new fields of enquiry such as economic anthropology, institutional economics, social ecology, sociology of values, socio-economic studies of rural life, and the Indian working class (Madan 2007: 286). Elsewhere, Madan approvingly quotes A.K. Saran 'in his intellectual career Dr Mukerjee has tried to meet the challenges of the West almost in all forms in which it has come' without much success as he was not a 'deep thinker' (Saran 1958: 1018 cited in Madan 2011a: 38). Evidently, Mukerjee's 'deeper mark' is more because of his pioneering role in charting out new substantative domains of enquiry than his originality in terms of approaches and perspectives.
30. A.K. Saran's popularity is understandable for epistemological and

methodological extremism attracts attention. What calls for serious investigation is D.P. Mukerji's flamboyant presence in the history of Indian sociology compared to the relative neglect of Radhakamal Mukerjee. It is commonly agreed upon that D.P.Mukerji did not write much, did not undertake any empirical study, and wrote more like a cultural critic than a sociologist. By contrast, Radhakamal Mukerjee wrote/edited fifty books on a wide variety of themes. Mukerjee (1997: 5-6) contains a comprehensive list of publications.

31. A perusal of the writings on the history of Indian sociology creates an impression as if D.P. Mukerji were the main spokesperson behind the idea of the rootedness of the study of Indian society in its history and tradition. He has gained more critical attention on the issue compared to Radhakamal Mukerjee (see, for instance, Alatas 2006:113-14; Oommen 2007).
32. However, some of his substantive works reveal discernible parallels with the Western ones. Venugopal (1980: 163) reads it as 'lack of confidence in his own methodology'. He writes,

    It is interesting to note that Mukerjee has exhibited an unusual sensitivity to certain intellectual influences emanating from the West. For instance, his institutional economics bears the influence of Thorstein Veblen; his works on social ecology are influenced by the ecologists of the Chicago school (Quinn, Burgess and McKenzie); his theory of value is influenced by Talcott Parsons; and his theory of global reconstruction by Toynbee, Mannheim and others (*ibid.*).

    He adds, 'But too much inclusiveness, whether it has resulted from an interdisciplinary approach or an attempt to keep abreast of the latest models, has played havoc with his logicality and internal consistency' (*ibid.* 164).
33. D.P. Mukerji has also been critiqued for his predominantly Sanskritic-Brahminical conceptualisation of Indian culture (see Oommen 2007: 102-03). However, given Mukerji's progressive aura, and his accommodative stance towards Persian traditions, such a critique has been more subdued.
34. In his autobiography, he writes, 'in the thirties I recommended essential eugenic reforms for the Bengalee to check the decline of the Hindu population as against the Muslims, and of the cultural caste Hindus against the backward castes who had been developing fast in numbers' (1997: 163).
35. He writes, 'social history must follow geography. Politics cannot change the fortunes of land and waters, and the vicissitudes of agriculture going on for nearly six centuries. The areas towards the north, centre and west had been the seats of ancient learning, culture and prosperity in Bengal. Her future importance gravitates more and more to the east

with the Ganges swerving eastward from the sixteenth century' (Mukerjee 1997: 162).

36. Muslims had been living mainly in the healthier and more progressive regions of eastern Bengal; but their proportional strength had shown an uninterrupted increase everywhere for more than a century. Unlike the Hindu, the Muslim showed preference for new and distant settlements, which were decidedly healthier, and where there was less pressure both on the soil and the village site. In new settlements in North and East Bengal, where Muslims and lower caste Hindus dominate, the disparity engendered by customs regarding marriage and widowhood among Hindus and Muslims is one of the chief causes of the abduction of Hindu girls. Besides, the Hindus are placed at a disadvantage in newly reclaimed territories, because social customs definitely favour population increase among Muslims and definitely retard it in their case. The Muslim peasants can move out more easily to distant chars and marshes have another wife-cum-labourer besides the one left in the parent village, both being prolific (Mukerjee 1997: 163).
37. This need not be the case as M.N. Srinivas continues to occupy the pride of place in the history of the discipline despite T.K. Oommen's subsequent charge of his being the proponent of 'methodological Hinduism'. See Oommen, T.K. 2008. 'Disjunctions between Field, Method and Concept: An Appraisal of M.N. Srinivas', *Sociological Bulletin*, 57 (1): 60-81.
38. Labelling is an appropriate academic exercise to help situate a given writer's distinctive approach towards larger issues of the day. For instance, on the basis of his comparison of selected works of G.S.Ghurye and Radhakamal Mukerjee, Venugopal (1980: 150) asserts, 'Both these writers undoubtedly share the liberalism of middle class Western educated sections. Yet their liberalism is neither cosmopolitan nor fashionably vanguard, but is an overlay of their social conservatism'. Venugopal's understanding of liberalism is, however, metaphorical. For a critical understanding of liberalism, see Chatterjee, Partha. 2011, 'The Curious Career of Liberalism in India', *Modern Intellectual History*, 8 (3): 687-96.
39. It is intriguing that the history of village studies tradition in India, and the sub-discipline of agrarian sociology, has totally overlooked the work of Radhakamal Mukerjee on rural India done during the second quarter of the last century, which, besides being considerable in bulk, is theoretically original and empirically rich. For example, there is no mention of his work in Andre Beteille's *Studies in Agrarian Social Structure* (Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1974) and *Six Essays in Comparative Sociology* (Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1974). I have picked up these two volumes as they are taken to be trendsetters in the study of peasantry and agrarian social structure in India.

40. Dipesh Chakrabarty (2000: 25) finds hyper-rationalism as a marker of the intellect of the colonial modern which Radhakamal Mukerjee evidently lacked. He avers, 'Tradition/modernity, rational/non-rational, intellect/emotion—these untenable and problematic binaries have haunted our self-representations in social science language since the nineteenth century. The split between the analytic and the affective is something that is itself produced by the colonial discourse and that marks forever the speech of the colonised intellectual'. In this sense, 'the strong split between emotion and reason is part of the story of colonialism in India' for 'scientific rationalism, or the spirit of scientific inquiry, was introduced in colonial India from the very beginning as an antidote to (Indian) religion, particularly Hinduism'. This is the source of a certain kind of colonial hyper-rationalism among Indian intellectuals who self-consciously came to regard themselves as modern. It was predicated on a definite politics of knowledge production which generated this simultaneous coding of (Western) knowledge itself as rational and Hinduism as something that was both a religion and a bundle of superstitions. Arguably, someone like Mukerjee who self-consciously attempts to transgress this colonial dualism would remain vulnerable to the charges of not being adequately modern as a social scientist. Even otherwise, we have been intellectually less receptive to the attempted dialogue between science and religion and its influence on the nature of modern academic knowledge formations in India, which according to Chakrabarty, remains in its early stages.
41. It is to be noted that Radhakamal Mukerjee (unlike M.N. Srinivas) did not have the benefit of such 'disciples' who would be the torchbearers of his type of Sociology. An appendix in Zafar Hasan's volume (1971) gives us the information that Mukerjee successfully guided fourteen Ph.D. dissertations under the headings of sociology and social work. However, none could claim the status of an academic star on the firmament of Indian sociology to perpetuate Mukerjee's scholarly legacy, except probably P.C. Joshi and T.K.N. Unnithan. Venugopal (1980) also lists some of the names who did their doctoral work with Mukerjee. Mukerjee's failure to successfully launch and sustain *Indian Sociological Review* deprived him of the forum that his contemporary G.S. Ghurye had in *Sociological Bulletin*. Also, he appears to have remained aloof from the professional activities of *Indian Sociological Society* also evidenced in his having not published in its official journal. By contrast, D.P. Mukerji's publication appeared in the very first issue of *Bulletin*. Also, Mukerjee is intriguingly absent from the pages of *Economic Weekly*, and its subsequent avatar *Economic and Political Weekly*, which again carried D.P. Mukerji's articles as of those who have historically mattered in the discipline.
42. These are the types of questions that the proponents of the *new sociology*

of ideas are asking. More than macro-level accounts, they favour the explanation of schools of thought and emergence of new ideas/theories in terms of social-organizational factors. Using this approach, for example, Charles Camic sees some of Talcott Parsons' ideas as consequences of the institutional position that he occupied at the time at Harvard where sociology was a status-inferior to economics. See Charles Camic, 'The Making of a Method: A Historical Reinterpretation of the Early Parsons', *American Sociological Review*, vol. 52, 4, 1987, pp. 421-439. For a general programmatic statement of the field see Charles Camic and Neil Gross, 'The New Sociology of Ideas', in Judith R. Blau (ed.), *The Blackwell Companion to Sociology*, Oxford: Blackwell, 2004, pp. 236-49.

Chapter 4

Sociologising Economics: The Idea of an Indian Sociology

The western people's attitude towards the satisfaction of wants is different. They believe in the multiplication of wants. A higher social position in the West implies a higher grade of comfort, luxuries and conventional needs. To the Indian, on the other hand, there is only one plane of living, one standard of consumption in theory. In India, comfort, and not luxury, is sought for and the ideal of comfort is the same for all classes in society. The same ideal of plain living and high thinking dominates all. The respect for man as man, and for the ideal of self-denial as the means for the realisation of God in man, the two most striking characteristics of the Indian outlook of life, have their influence on the system of industry.

RADHAKAMAL MUKERJEE 1916: 324

India can never wholly lose her discipline of the limitation of wants and the concentration of activities for the development of the soul. To India, the mystery and grandeur of the limitless vistas of the development of the soul are far more inspiring and fascinating than the mastery over external physical nature.

RADHAKAMAL MUKERJEE 1916: 458

The basic Indian postulate is that no good society is possible without good men, and that for the good society it is more important to form good understandings, affections and morals than to frame good laws and rights. Communion, mutuality and solidarity are the key values and norms in both religion and society in India.

RADHAKAMAL MUKERJEE 1951: ii

These epigraphs, in a way, give us clue about Mukerjee's intellectual journey from an economist to a sociologist in search of a universal theory of social life based on Indian values, cultural traditions and philosophical-metaphysical resources. In fact, it would not be an exaggeration to claim that his vision of an Indian sociology got crystallised as part of his endeavour to render economics (a subject in which he was trained) a

regional, comparative and culturally rooted science. His dissatisfaction with the uncritical application of western economics to Indian situation found articulation in his very first book *The Foundations of Indian Economics* (1916).[1] He amplified, elaborated and enunciated the value premises of his dissatisfaction in other books, namely, *Principles of Comparative Economics* (two volumes, 1921a and 1921b), *Groundwork of Economics* (1925a), and *Borderland of Economics* (1925b). One can see the culmination of Mukerjee's thinking along these lines in his important contribution *The Institutional Theory of Economics* (1942b).[2]

In *The Principles of Indian Economics*, Mukerjee developed his notion of 'Rural Communalism' as different from capitalism or socialism. Mukerjee defined rural communalism as part of a world-wide movement for an economic order based on the organic relationship between state, intermediate bodies and primary groups. He held the view that the postulates of Western economics like the theory of prices and marginal utility were inapplicable to Indian rural economic life. Such atomistic postulates could not be used to analyse the institutions based on collective rural economy of India. Throughout, Mukerjee tried to link economy to caste, handicrafts, and the village community (the provenance of what is generally called institutional economics). He also mooted the idea of the necessity of using diverse disciplines for developing a coordinated view of Indian economy. *The Borderland of Economics* provides scope for his later theory of the integration of social sciences. Mukerjee was convinced that the Indian economy could be restored only on the basis of a reintegration of village into regional economy and the moral regeneration of vice-ridden towns and cities.[3]

In what follows we present a detailed discussion of Mukerjee's key 'economic' ideas along three interrelated axes: rural communalism, an Asian path of development, and lastly, a distinctive Indian polity and sociality. These key ideas reveal

Mukerjee's breadth of conceptualisation of economics. His attempt at anchoring economics in regional-cultural values and social institutions makes him foreground rural communalism as a crucial Indian/Eastern civilisational resource. Based on this understanding, he advocates a critically independent Asian path of development. And, in the process, he presents the suggestive traces of a distinctive Indian sociality based on his reading of the economic and political institutions of the East.

Cumulatively, these key anchors of Mukerjee's economic thinking turn him into a foremost critic of Western modernity. His conceptual premises and analytical reasoning emanate out of his realisation of the essentialised fault lines distinguishing an enlightened West and a yet-to-be-civilised East. His awareness of this fundamental epistemological asymmetry between the West and the East permeates his most pertinent observations on a variety of topics. Indeed, it frames Mukerjee's broad philosophy of social sciences and his life-long quest for an Indian sociology. For Mukerjee, the structural cleavages between the coloniser and the colonised assume the form of basic incompatibility of Western and Eastern traditions of knowledge, conceptualisations of individuality and the nature of social universe (see Chapter 5). To be sure, his intellectual drive to transgress the limits of the Western knowledge systems makes him romanticise, idealise, and construct a useable past at the service of an incipient nation.[4]

Rural Communalism

Mukerjee's acknowledgement of the all-pervasive presence of rural communalism as the defining feature of socio-economic life in India is at the core of his economic thinking.[5] It is this assertion that makes him pronounce the inapplicability of western economics to Indian economic reality. For example, according to Mukerjee, agriculture in India is not an economic enterprise alone. Rather, it 'is a school of the virtues of sobriety,

forethought and mutual helpfulness'. Unlike India, success in agriculture in western sense implies only the exploitation of nature. Likewise, urban economic prosperity is based on the exploitation of man. By contrast, 'rural economy prevents the waste of friction due to the conflicts of interest among individuals and groups, and brings about social harmony in industry'. He adds, 'the land as the basal factor of economic life is the best insurance against class warfare and the consequent economic instability due to the irregular and inequitable distribution of income' (Mukerjee 1916: 465). Rural communalism ensures the permeation of economic activities with social values of sharing and co-operation and communitarian norms. Mukerjee's idealisation of rural communalism even makes him see the most vilified agrarian segment of money-lenders as benevolent patrons:

> The middleman, the trader or the money-lender in their dealings with the craftsman are always straightforward. They do not exploit the labourer but maintain him. The craftsman also looks towards them with due reverence. Indeed all the relationships which are entered into in the industrial world, for example between debtor and creditor, employer and employed, master artisan and apprentice, artisan and trader, landlord and tenant, and their respective duties and obligations, call for a perpetual exercise of the social virtues and humanities (Mukerjee 1916: 327).

Mukerjee's claim, indeed, is more comprehensive. He looks at the rural community as the strong bulwark of peasant proprietorship. Likewise, the organisation of guilds and cooperatives in industry encourage an integration of economic interests and an exuberant group formation devoted to a wide variety of cultural functions and services. For Mukerjee, it is a noteworthy feature of the agricultural communalism of the East (which has not come within the ambit of industrialism) that social groups whose origins are not rooted in economics easily take up control of both economic and social interests, activities and functions. Thus, he marvels at the way 'the functions of class, caste, guild, and cooperative blend as religion, culture, occupation, standard of living, and social manners are

implicated in one another' (Mukerjee 1942a: 202). Likewise, rural communalism makes it possible that status becomes the criterion decreeing a certain minimum of wages based on social judgement. He brings out these highly eulogised communitarian features of rural communalism by demonstrating the fundament reworking of some of the key economic concepts of classical economics:

> In India and China, rent is a matter of pure arrangement between the cultivator and the landlord or the chief; there is neither marginal land nor economic rent. The surplus produce of the land differs according to the facilities prevalent in the region relating to the quota of capital, stock and equipment as shared between the cultivator, the superior proprietor and the rural community. The functions of the landlord, cultivator, and agricultural labourer slip into one another, and the bulk of the surplus income from the land goes to the cultivating owner and there is no rent as substraction from wages (*ibid.* 204).

Mukerjee is not content with this demonstration of the fundamental recasting of agrarian relations (contra Western capitalism) that rural communalism makes possible. For him, the community in the East is the ultimate repository of economic wisdom of saving and insurance and other such economic instruments that modern economics talks about. He finds that, 'in the peasant economy of the East, 'the community often guides the apportionment between present and future consumption through the agency of village granaries, *dharmagolas* and *nidhis*, which store grains for seed or for consumption in the case of drought or famine'. Similarly, 'the joint family, clan, or caste form the chief support in cases of illness, disability, or unemployment, thus subserving in some measure the purposes of insurance, and also offer facilities of credit to meet unforeseen expenditure' (*ibid.* 205).

Again, he notes that unlike the West, 'India is much more busy with the problem of the distribution of wealth than with the problem of production. What wealth she produces, she attempts to distribute equitably amongst all classes of society, and this is the object which her socio-economic institutions

like the joint family and caste, her system of land tenure and law of inheritance, her social and ethical ideals, seek to achieve' (*ibid.* 333). In his judgement, the reigning dominance of the western individualism, 'resting primarily on the Benthamites, but buttressed by Smithian economics of *laissez-faire*, which was the accepted creed till 1880, especially warped their judgment as regards characteristic Indian institutions such as the village community and caste, the joint family and the guild'. Against this, he pitches the social ethos and ethical tradition in India, which are all the expression of *a communal rather than an individual conscience* (Mukerjee 1923: 296).

Mukerjee believes that economic institutions are ethnicity and culture specific in the sense that they are moulded by particular scheme of values characterising a given culture. It is this characteristic scheme of values that regulates, classifies and co-ordinates different combinations of universal instincts and impulses (part of the domain of psychology). Having made economic standards, behaviour and institutions part of the ethical traditions of different cultures, it is just a short step for him to assert that 'in the East a strong natural endowment of communal instincts and sympathies has manifested itself in certain economic standards which give a distinctive cast to its economic life and institutions' (Mukerjee 1921a: 72).

He, expectedly, illustrates his assertion with reference to India where he finds individual rights to be largely subordinated to the ends of communal well-being. The concept and institution of property emphasises joint ownership, be it family or the village community, be it land or wealth, be it inherited property or the acquired one. The idea of joint ownership encompasses such aspects as village common lands and irrigation channels, the services of village labourers and artisans, and all those who provide services of various sorts (social, religious, educational) to the community. He eulogises the system of communal distribution which ensures that 'the liabilities and obligations towards the maintenance and support of these ministers of

higher social wants, including the claims of charity and hospitality, are set apart as a first charge on the harvested crop' (*ibid.*). He argues that the same communal instinct has found expression in a wider field leading to institutions like *iswarbriti* and *mahimai* (rateable contributions of merchants and shopkeepers), or like *debottar* and *brahmottar* (customary endowments of property for maintenance of temples, priests, or for purposes of public charity).

Again, he finds that in India wages are fixed based on a different ethic. He writes, 'in India, this [wage] is not maintained by competition, but is customarily adjusted to the standards of subsistence; and these take into account the needs of the family and the conditions of craftsmanship of different classes of labour'. Moreover, 'this old system tended to secure fair and living wages on an ethical basis' (*ibid.*). He extends the logic of his argument to the agrarian economic organisation, as usual, demonstrating its unique features. In his words:

> In the systems of land-revenue and land-tenure, respectively, the whole basis of the Indian agrarian organisation proceeded on the basis of the association of the peasant with a homestead, so far as possible, a hereditary one, including a few acres of land. Accordingly, this strong instinct of the Indian for the fixed home with its appurtenance of land has prevented the rise and development of economic rent as a separate and separable share for a landlord; this being merged in the farmer's earnings, or in the communal share thereof. This has given to Indian rent the character of revenue or assessment for protective services, whether of the state, of the village as a whole, or of any constituted local functionary (*ibid.*).

If some of these characteristics have waned then the causes have to be found surely in modern legislation based on foreign models that has introduced landlordism with proprietary rights, and the free transfer and alienation of land. Likewise, the flourishing of exploitative money-lending on an individualistic basis is entirely foreign to the spirit of communalism that presides over the Indian agrarian organisation. Lest we conclude that co-operative ethos was confined to agricultural cultivation and production alone, Mukerjee is quick to add, 'cooperative

industrial credit in the shape of loans advanced by guilds of artisans to their members has been, however, a normal feature' (*ibid.* 73). In addition to social tradition or the social and communal instincts, Mukerjee takes note of other cultural factors such as the geographical or the climatic, the biological or the ethnic, the moral or the spiritual in having formative influences on the distinctive Indian economic organisation. He is categorical: 'the scale of consumption, for example, the range and the valuation of wants, and the relative estimate of individual versus socialized enjoyments depend upon the Indian psychology and outlook of life, which in the last resort may be traced to dominant or typical instincts and impulses and the scheme of life values and ideals' (*ibid.*).

Put it differently, it is an ensemble of instincts and impulses that differentiate the typical economic organisation of the West from that of the East. He proclaims:

> Also, even when instincts are the same, the valuation of the satisfactions they seek is different, being the outcome of a different scheme of life values. The mode of articulation is also different. For example, social instincts in the West are sought to be realized through the superimposition of the State as the expression of the general will on the individual as the economic unit, while *in the East the community or group is already an integral part of the individual personality, and the economic unit is not the individual as individual, but individual in the community or, if you please, the community in the individual* (*ibid.* 74).

Mukerjee's premise is that each economic system is related to a given set of intuitions, to a peculiar configuration of culture, and an ethos of the people. He elaborates this premise in considerable detail in his masterly *The Institutional Theory of Economics* (1942b). He considers institutional approach as necessary to any economic theory: 'without a theory of institutions, economists are prone to assume a single framework of laws and customs within which individuals and groups "rationally" carry on their economic activity (*ibid.* 193). There is nothing definitive, however, about a theory of institutions. For him, institutions are not static entities; they evolve in response to the larger needs and values of a given social system.

One can find the echo of Talcott Parsons and his variant of structural-functionalism in Mukerjee's articulation of the inherent adaptive mechanisms of a community which 'in its adjustment to scare resources builds up changing institutional norms and scheme of personal and property rights, regulating its wealth and power relations *in the interest of order and progress*'. Moreover, the process of refashioning institutions is never disruptive to the social system. Mukerjee adds, 'it [community] sees to it that the legal, economic and political institutions fit one another into *a harmonious whole*. The theory of institutions is an indispensable general notion enabling the economist to distinguish and describe the concrete *gestalt* of an economy in a given social-historical situation' (*ibid.* 194).[6]

Mukerjee avers that causal laws propounded by classical economics are neither 'natural' nor 'inexorable'. According to him, the working of economic forces, as a rule, is conditioned by the human social arrangements and forces as embodied in the particular texture of institutions, customs and traditions: 'Not merely wants and satisfactions, but also mobility, enterprise, and thrift do not follow "natural" economic laws'. These are, in essence, the outcome of accumulated culture, and extensive and enduring institutions, customs and habits of life. He is scathing in his critique of classical economics for its indifference to the actual working out of the economic processes.

Taking issue with Pareto, who looks at economic activity as typical of logical behaviour, Mukerjee proclaims that the individual's choice of the norm itself depends upon his instinctive dispositions, habits and social conditioning. In that sense, every economic process changes the configuration of meanings and values, and its complete description must, therefore, include social purpose and institutional control and guidance. After all, 'the economic process is not a "natural" occurrence or condition in vacuo' (*ibid.* 195), but has reference to meanings and values outside that system. There could be a

considerable number of possible maxima of utility depending upon competing norms that an individual encounters in the social domain. Seen thus, individual freedom, competition, property, contract and connected legal relations all are social in origin and content, and have a social value.

We can see the way his work rebels against the individualistic slant in western economics and contest 'the rigidly demarcated, narrow and isolationist man-and-culture approach of modern social science'. To him, the latter 'is a most unfortunate product of the Industrial, Agricultural and Commercial Revolutions of nineteenth century North-Western Europe, characterised by the dominance and variety of impersonal economic relations and behaviour'. It has been rare for an economist to acknowledge the insularity of his/her own discipline. By contrast, in Mukerjee's case, it is this insularity that propels him to not only expose the distance of the theories and concepts of economic science from concrete social and cultural reality but also to challenge 'the physicalist and mechanical assumptions and procedures of natural science-oriented' social science disciplines (Mukerjee 1965a: 83).

Since Mukerjee places economic system within a larger universe of meanings and values, it was but natural for him to move away from economics (the way he understood it) and gravitate towards sociology (the way he conceptualised it). For him, the end of economic behaviour is always located in social judgement as expressed in traditions and institutions. At best, economic behaviour is a means to some larger set of values and ideals. He articulates his vision in the following words:

> Against the dogmas of 'natural economy' in which the individual in his isolation is endowed with full-fledged wants and applies himself to the task of want satisfaction with the help of his ready-made choice and prudent calculation, and of the 'state of nature' in which the individual possesses full political rights, antecedent to the evolution of society, sociology stresses the conditioning, modifying and governing influence of accumulated institutions, culture, and *Geist* of society (Mukerjee 1942b: 195).

An Asian Path of Development

Quite early in his life, as a student of economics, Mukerjee realised the danger of 'blind adoption of Western industrial methods' as a solution to India's basic problems. Later in his preface to *Fields and Farmers of Oudh* (1929), a collection edited by him compiling empirical studies by his students and colleagues on Indian villages, he brought to our notice the divorce between the academy and the real life and underlined the importance of correcting this divorce by promoting an *Indian School of Economics and Sociology*. Mukerjee is emphatic in noting:

> Nowhere has there been a greater neglect of the realities of the economic life than in the curriculum of economics in Indian Universities. The Indian student can hardly find in the Textbook a description of the economic environment in which he lives. The systems which .are built up for him are "castles in the air". When he comes out of the University, his theories instead of helping him towards interpretation and concrete achievement are a handicap to him. I believe that this to a large extent is responsible for the fact that we have many social visions and utopias in India and few constructive programmes which the masses can understand and work out for immediate benefit.
>
> We look upon an Indian School of Economics and Sociology to correct this divorce between the academy and the market place *to relate the social sciences to the needs and ideals of Indian life and labour.* We have also to train our students in the technique and method of economic and social investigation of problems which press us from day-to-day and the country expects the departments of economics at different Universities to give a lead in this matter (Mukerjee 1929: V; emphasis added).

Earlier, in November 1917, while delivering a series of ten lectures at the University of Punjab as a special lecturer in Indian Economics, he had brought home the point of incommensurability of the western economic models with the Indian reality. For him, 'the postulates of Western economics were entirely different from those that could be deduced from a realistic study of the Indian economic pattern'. His lectures also pointed out 'the misapplication of English ideas to the

landed property and village community in India and its effect upon the rural unsettlement and decline of agriculture' (Mukerjee 1955: 9).[7]

The same year, Mukerjee shared the platform with Mahatma Gandhi at one of his lectures on 'Agriculture and Industrialism' delivered at the St Stephen's College, Delhi. It is interesting to note that Mahatma Gandhi, in his presidential address, lauded Mukerjee's contribution to economics. Gandhi observed 'the principles of Western economics could not be applied to Indian conditions in the same way as the rules of grammar and syntax of one language would not be applicable to another language' (Mukerjee 1997: 61).

Mukerjee's views on the unsuitability of western economic approaches to Indian conditions have consistently found their expressions in his lectures and writings right from the beginning of his scholarly career. In 1919, at one of his lectures at Madurai (Tamil Nadu), Mukerjee reiterates his approach to Indian problems:

> The twin products of Western industrialism in India are the disintegrated village and sordid and overcrowded city. The unsettlement of our villages, and the congestion, intemperance and of many of our towns demand a line of economic reform which will build the future economic superstructure on the bedrock of our characteristic economic habits and institutions, our village system and our agrarian economy and the means and methods of our traditional city planning and organisation (Mukerjee 1955: 9).

By virtue of his professional training as an economist and his early exposure to the all-pervasive poverty, wretchedness and misery through his social service work in the villages of Murshidabad district and Calcutta slums, he possessed an abiding interest in the challenges of development and problems of mass poverty. In fact, he thought that only economics could provide the scientific and adequate answers to the grave national issues of Indian misery, exploitation and subjection.

Given his reasons for attraction towards economics, it is not surprising that his economic writings are replete with his vision

of an Indian (Asian) alternative to the Western models of economic growth and industrial progress. His main contribution lay in questioning the wholesale import of Western institutions and values through colonialism as well as in the name of modern progress. He asks if the path of modernisation necessarily entails substitution of Eastern value systems and institutions by the Western ones. He looks for a way out of this blind imitation of the Western model of development by Asian countries. His quest is for a model which would enable countries like India to - fruitfully preserve and tap the potential of their 'communalistic' institutions for evolving an indigenous path of progress and development more suited to their conditions. In this sense, Mukerjee was, perhaps, the first among the social scientists to question the *Eurocentric* approach to development and to pose the question of an alternative to the European path that corresponds to Asian conditions as well as traditions.

In his search for an Indian alternative, Mukerjee frequently refers to the institutional framework of the Indian villages relating to property structure in land and other village commons such as the irrigation channels, pastures and cremation grounds, a culture of mutual aid and reciprocity and the attendant communitarian forms of labour organisation. These peculiarities of the Indian village community emphasising community maintenance of natural resources and assets and the incorporation of peasants, artisans, labourers and servicing castes in a holistic framework, according to him, arose as a response to economic necessity under specific Asian geographical and ecological conditions. These contingent necessities were further strengthened by the moral and ethical climate of these societies.

In his writings, Mukerjee displays a high degree of appreciation for the organic ethos of the Indian village community. He is emphatic in asserting that the pursuit of development goals should not be at the cost of disruption of the village community. He blames the tendency to understand

Indian institutions through Western concepts for the disruption of the comprehensive framework of rural communalism. He is unsparing in his condemnation of the thoughtless attempts to alter and replace Indian institutions in accordance with Western notions of progress and development. He advocates the need to accord a fresh look on the entire institutional framework inherited from tradition in relation to both the needs of Asian Societies as wel1 as the lessons of the West (Mukerjee 1922a and 1922b). He favours the conscious control of the evolutionary processes in the society according to its exclusive deal (Mukerjee 1925a: 252).

In his reading, the basic issue, therefore, is not only operational, that is, of formulating plans and programmes in tune with the existing model of progress and development but also cognitive, philosophical and conceptual. Conceptual categories should be so formulated that they are consistent with the distinctive reality of a society on the one hand and are in harmony with the prevailing values and ideals on the other. According to Mukerjee, concepts have so far determined the selection of facts and not that the facts re-formulate the concepts. In his words, 'economic laws are to fit themselves to facts, not facts to fit the values to theories. We can no more alter economic institution of a country than language and thoughts (1922a: 271).

Mukerjee finds the socialistic programme in the West to be heavily dependent on state machinery for its accomplishment and realisation. He puts forward the deployment of the voluntary or ethical cooperation of groups or communities crystallised into social categories and customs (a general characteristic of the East) as the potent method of realising social progress in countries like ours. Mukerjee's plea for a distinctive developmental path emanates from his larger understanding that different types of economic organisations correlate with different forms of polity. His rhetorical flourish and the way he weaves some of the larger values of humanity in his

understanding of the economic processes reminds one of Karl Marx's *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*. It is better to cite Mukerjee:

> Eastern communalism would lead to the formation of a decentralised polity, and administration; a federation of communal groups, guilds, and village unions; an industrial organization in which every producer participates in ownership and mastery instead of being a mere tool, and finds the joy of self-expression in workmanship; a coordination, on something like the syndicalist plan, of the small industries and cottage workshops in the villages under a common federal and democratic industrial control; an ethical competition and a due regulation of the rights of individual proprietorship; an equable distribution of wealth and of population; a social economy centred round the family altar and village temple; and lastly, a humanized and socialized religion of local festivals and symbols which duly recognise the pluralistic elements in man and nature (Mukerjee 1921a: 76).

He is convinced that the attempts to model Asian social reality and the problem of Asian development through Eurocentric concepts have produced disastrous results. Given the fact that Mukerjee's concerns included both an adequate conceptual framework and an appropriate operational strategy for culture-specific development, we can hear the echoes of his pioneering effort to evolve, or at least to show the theoretical possibility, of an Asian alternative to Eurocentric approaches and models. True, he himself could not resolve the apparent contradiction between his pull towards a perspective of 'Asian Exceptionalism' and the other which leads towards a perspective of socialist transformation oriented to Asian conditions (see Joshi 1986a and 1986b).

Evidently, Mukerjee's advocacy for an Asian path is not merely a function of his assertion of the historically available distinctive economic architecture in the countries under that rubric, particularly India. For him, the distinction is a function of a set of fundamental values present there that naturally frames the economic complex as well. He argues, 'it is a profound sense of solidarity with the entire universe or cosmic symbiosis that underlies the Indian code of morality. Religion, metaphysics

and morals alike proclaim communion, sharing or solidarity as the leitmotif of individual and social culture' (Mukerjee 1951: iv). This Indian code of morality effortlessly slides into the Hindu scheme of life:

> Such is the sequence of obligations and virtues (*yajna-parampara*) that enables the individual in the Hindu scheme of life to seek and fulfil the manifold interests of life, integrated and graded in the light of eternal verities and ultimate values without that imbalance, excessive specialisation and hypertrophy in the pursuit of limited, fragmentary and proximate goals of life that dwarf and mutilate personalities in many social cultures (*ibid.* 27).

A Distinctive Indian Polity and Sociality

Mukerjee's most powerful critique of Western modernity lay in his outright damning of the Western notion of democracy. The latter, though based on an ethnocentric rationalism, has had universalist aspirations in terms of scope, reach and applicability. Mukerjee takes pains to show the existence of democratic institutions and values, albeit of a different character, in the lived experience of India's past. His stress on 'the need for an unbiased study of the basic factors in Eastern rural communalism as greater now than ever' (1925a: 88) remains to date his most important contribution towards the critique of Western modernity. As early as 1925, he observed as follows:

> In India the shibboleth that individualism is efficiency and communalism is stagnation is to be discarded forever. The new school of Indian economics seeks, from the historical standpoint, to point out the contribution of Indian civilisation and its characteristic organisation of voluntary cooperation of communal groups, as the lever of social groups to the history of universal culture. This work, if successfully done, will forever render impossible the narrow sectional view of human history which ignores the lives and life-values, the experience of more than half of the human race, the Asiatic peoples and their social constructions and organisations which are in essence not less real and significant than the Graeco-Roman-Gothic consciousness with its works and experiences. This new school will point out the genius for social constructions based on communal and synthetic instinct of the Indo-Sino-Japanese civilisations, and will thus make it possible to utilise in the

coming era the rich and complex data for human and social experiments which these Eastern forms and creations have furnished, and will continue to furnish in the history of man and his making (1925a: 87-88).

He presented Asian communalism as a blending of 'value' and 'fact', as both normative and empirical phenomena. In his view, Western economists and sociologists have been too much under the influence of Darwinian biology. That is why, they have insisted too much 'on the importance of the struggle for existence' (1921a: 39). He writes, 'the classical hypothesis of individuals working out the progress of species by mutual struggle at the margin of subsistence yields place to the concept of mutual cooperation of large groups in the creation of bioeconomic utilities (1925a: 231). This New Biology, he maintains, has been alien to Indian tradition and culture. It is in this background of rediscovery of the principle of cooperation and interdependence against the postulates of Western Darwinian biology that he affirmed that 'the great task of social reconstruction in the East is to renew and adapt the old and essential impulses and habits to the complex and enlarged needs of today' (1925a: 85).

For him, the essential contrast between western democracy and eastern rural communalism becomes the sheet-anchor for his larger advocacy of a distinctive Indian sociology: 'In the East the group-spirit has always been our master. It is the pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night — it is the spirit of Eastern communal democracy' (Mukerjee 1923: 346). In his voluminous treatise *Democracies in the East*, he presents in detail as to how the origin of the Indian village and functional bodies has been different from that of corresponding institutions in Western polity.[8] He considers the latter to be the outcome of the delegation and delimitation of the central authority of the State, whereas the former have had an independent origin and development. More interestingly, he claims that the State had often treated village bodies on terms of equality and recognised their pre-existing rights of conventions and agreements which

operated as charters regulating their mutual relations. He is unapologetic in his eulogies to the traditional Indian polity which 'is as much less simple than that of the West as the organic and functional solidarity of our society is greater' (*ibid.* 350). He showers fulsome praise on Indian village institutions as exemplifying 'the blending of Indian tradition of territorial and functional representation' (*ibid.* 366). He adds:

> In the East, different in origin and in development from the democracy of Parliament is the democracy of the village community, the communal council, or the guild system... the village assemblies, the caste and sub-caste *panchayats*, the city councils, the occupational or professional guilds, or communal federations and assemblies of the folk, the assemblies of a group of villages, tribes and castes, which India has known through ages, have survived many vicissitudes, but none more perilous than the encroachments of the strong and centralised British imperial government, and the economic legislation and administration based on individualistic concepts of right and property (*ibid.* 164).

His stress on the preservation of rural communalism as a desirable goal for the Indian social transformation is of an order that Becker and Barnes (1961: 1143) regards him as offering 'a coherent system of apologetics for the native economic order'. In fact, Mukerjee's concern is less with the 'efficiency' of these institutions. Rather, he finds them emblematic for the expression of a type of sociality that is uniquely Indian: 'that individuality grows with sociality is the most precious of Eastern experiences, and it has found institutional expression throughout the East, being incorporated into her characteristic types of communalistic law and polity' (Mukerjee 1923: 351). According to him, the sociality that is so characteristic of the East, involves 'integration rather than accommodation, interpenetration rather than interdependence, equality and solidarity rather than equity and justice, and appreciation of common meanings and values and of commonness or commonality as a value in itself rather than a rational weighing interests and values' (Mukerjee 1949: 4). Evidently, in Mukerjee's reading, this higher form of sociality, privileges

moral transformation based on the recognition of spheres of values 'which are outside both the individual and the state, and from which are derived both the unassailable liberties of the individual, on the one hand, and the destiny of society and the state, on the other' (*ibid.* 5).

His appreciation of communalism emanates from this recognition which, to him, embodies 'the unanimity of minds and wills of groups' and 'would develop norms of social co-operation which protect society against absolutism in the State on the one hand, and the clash of group interests on the other'. This eastern communalism represents 'a principle of social grouping in which the including group stands not for partial, hypostasised interests of the segmented man, but for the concrete interest and representing the whole personality'. In his reading, the myriad local bodies and village communes turn out to be the original and essential foundations of Eastern polity, of an active, responsible and creative sociality.[9] Further, such a political arrangement facilitates the restraining force of custom and the realisation of a true community life (*ibid.* 352). To quote Mukerjee:

> In the East, communalism stands neither for the natural rights of individuals nor for inviolable State rights; neither for inherent rights of groups nor the legislatures balancing conflicting interests, but for a genuine integration of the interests of all the parts in the unity of the State, which should have authority not as a separate group, but only in so far as it gathers up into itself the whole meaning of the constituent groups. Communalism rests not on 'social contract', 'rights' and 'balance', but on co-ordination, duties and compounding, through the only genuine and vital democratic process, that of trying to integrate myriad group ideas and interests earlier than parliaments or councils and further back in social and economic life (Mukerjee 1923:168).

For Mukerjee, eastern communalism has been historically made possible because of the fact that groups in the East are based more on natural instincts and feelings than on partial interests such as economic classes or political associations. In this sense, communalism is an old and established tradition in political

pluralism. Such an arrangement not only resolves the unfortunate dualism between the state and the individual but also 'carries the State, as it were, on the wings of Individual's desires and feelings to those humanistic ideals which the world associates with the East' (*ibid.* 5). Thus, true path to realisation of democracy in India passes through the present materials of local and communal democracy and ultimately culminating in a communalistic state. In other words, all political experiments need to be oriented towards an adaption of institutions towards our old habits of communalistic living.

Mukerjee laments the wholesale substitution of Indian institutions and traditions as a result of the 'British occupation and impact of Western intellectual and social movements — secularism, democracy and socialism'. For him, the recent period of social Europeanisation means a definitive lapse of the higher values of life historically expressed through its institutions and social forms. The need clearly is to bolster 'India's ancient group and co-operative spirit, historic regionalism and decentralisation in her traditional multi-group polity and the cultured pattern of shared living and service' (Mukerjee 1956a: 26).[10]

Moreover, an adequate fulfilment of the social and higher personal values, be it in the political domain or the economic one, can rest only on the social milieu. That is where Mukerjee's idea of sociology comes in. According to him, it is the task of sociology to introduce 'the principle of unity and right order in the realm of values' for 'man and his patterns of institutions, behaviour and value judgements can be understood only in the context of a changing, integrated whole'. He expects sociology to offer the required broad sweep of vision helping one comprehend 'the total situation as a whole, embracing man, his groups, his loyalties and his ideologies in ceaseless interaction'. He envisions a sociology that 'seeks to abolish the dualism between factual and normative positions and methods, and between mechanical evolution in the naturalistic

sense and ethical evolution, which is still prevalent in economics' (Mukerjee 1942b: 38-39). Since economics bears little relation to man's social impulses or moral aspirations, it is for sociology to recover for economics the true clue to the economic processes to be found less 'in the rationality and responsibility of the economic man and more in the person's moral contracts, institutions and values that constantly modify and are modified by the economic processes'. Mukerjee is categorical in asserting that economic values are symbolic rather than causal of the social relations (Mukerjee 1949: 16).

Indeed, Mukerjee discovers sociology as a means to transgress the limitations of economics. The notion of 'rational economic action' (and the autonomy it has been granted in economics) abstracts man's economic efforts and relationships from the web of group and institutional relations. That is where Mukerjee prefers sociology which, in his view, furnishes the 'whole' view of social life (*ibid.* 36). He writes:

> Human motives and relations, traditions and means of social persuasion and control make up the framework of institutions which give a durable form to man's manifold desires, values, and efforts, and which harmonise between individual and social interests and ends, and between one field of social relations and another regulating the dynamics of economic equilibrium which is a social, composite and normative rather than an individualistic, single and analytical equilibrium. It is only from sociology that economics can import a real understanding of the essentially social character of the whole movement, shaped as it is by the prescriptive force of institutions rather than by the individual's atomic urges, by the entire system of social ends rather than by the mere economic norm of efficiency (*ibid.* viii-ix).

Here again, he is for a wide-minded sociology, not merely confined to the understanding of social institutions in the West, but geared towards an appraisal of other milieus. This sociology would study man and his attitudes and behaviour in their actual social setting rather than generating knowledge on the basis of 'abstract concepts and symmetrical and balanced systems in economics, law, politics and anthropology which could not

stand the test of empirical observation and historical generalisation'. It would not be based on the idea of a 'generalised and an abstract man' (*ibid.* 20). In fact, Mukerjee holds 'philosophical and ethical atomism and the constricting biological naturalism of the nineteenth century' singularly responsible for not only a faulty methodology in the social sciences but also for cultural crisis in the modern age (Mukerjee 1949: 5). Mukerjee calls his sociology 'normative sociology' or 'social axiology'. He also uses the term 'philosophical sociology' which, in his view, supersedes the concept of the abstract individual (prevalent in the various social sciences) by that of the social self or person. This sociology also envisages an ordered and integrated structure of group and institutional relations and values, 'which indeed is the ground of all meaning and value experience' (*ibid.* 17).

Viewed thus, the idea of Eastern communalism turns out to be the cornerstone of Mukerjee's thinking in economic, social and political fields. He takes it to be almost axiomatic. In the first half a century of his writings, it is this idea which gets articulated in a variety of ways. Noticeably, Mukerjee is not consistent with the use of terms such as 'Eastern', 'Asian', 'Indian', 'Oriental'. At times, he uses headings like 'India, China and the West'. What remains constant, though, is his characterisation of the West in terms of values which fundamentally differ from the East, whatever it means. Interestingly, in his writings he consistently and frequently draws upon the Western sources of scholarship in a variety of fields.[11] On the positive side, one can see the first intimations of an engagement with the 'other West' that Oberoi (1968) later talks of.[12]

The next chapter delineates, in detail, Mukerjee's comparative, rather contrastive, conceptualisations of the West and the East. It relates Mukerjee's critique of the reigning presence of a 'generalised and an abstract man' as the foundational premise of modern social sciences to his

understanding of the Western knowledge traditions, philosophy of science and the post-Enlightenment notions of individuality and social action.

NOTES

1. One does not fail to notice the word *Indian* in the very title of his work. Mukerjee writes:
   The attempt to force systems and methods of industrial organization, economic arrangement, and institutions which have admirably suited a different geographical environment will always be futile. In the first place, the people will not be able to work them successfully. Thus, the struggle and pain during the period of transition will be severe. Secondly, the institutions cannot be adapted to the geographical and historical conditions. Thus, economic progress will be retarded, and in many cases economic activities will be paralyzed. Lastly, the particular physical and social environment which requires its characteristic type of economic organization for perfect adaptation will re-evolve the type after a period of forced interference and substitution, and consequent stagnation and degeneration (Mukerjee 1916: 328).
   It is not that Mukerjee's views did not get challenged. His contemporary Brij Narain from Lahore was a staunch critic. See Brij Narain's essay 'Indian versus Western Industrialism' in Krishnamurty (2009: 55-62).
2. We exclude from the purview of our discussion Mukerjee's numerous writings on a number of issues of practical import to the economic development of the country. One can mention such books as *The Rural Economy of India* (1926b), *Land Problems of India* (1933b), *Migrant Asia* (1936), *Food Planning for Four Hundred Millions* (1938a), *Economic Problems of Modern India* (2 volumes; 1939), *The Food Supply* (1942a), *The Political Economy of Population* (1944a), *An Economist Looks at Pakistan* (1944b), *Population Problem in South-east Asia* (1944c), *The Indian Working Class* (1945c), *Planning the Countryside: First Report* (1946b), *Races, Land and Food: A Program for World Subsistence* (1946c), *Labour and Planning* (1964a) and *Social Sciences and Planning in India* (1970).
3. For a brief discussion of some of the key elements of Mukerjee's philosophy of social sciences see Venugopal (1980: 114-121).
4. Sample this:
   Brahmanical myth, legend and art have similarly filled the entire continent of India, her scared mountains, lakes, rivers and cities with cosmic sculptures of Being and Becoming in eternal silence and movement, and of cosmic creation, preservation and destruction. Man's state of meditation, his polarities of sex and ecstasy, penance

and enlightenment are all sculpted with a zest and abandon that only India has experienced. Such cosmic figurations of deities, men and angels enable the common men of the land to move skilfully and harmoniously to and fro between spiritual imagination and aesthetic appreciation and ordinary life and experience (Mukerjee 1964c: 132). In fact, Venugopal (1980: 166-67) writes, 'he tends to idealise the past excessively. The "rural communalism" did not necessarily exist in all parts at all times. He has reified the ideal past into a concrete past'.

5. Mukerjee pronounces, 'India can never wholly lose her discipline of the limitation of wants and the concentration of activities for the development of the soul. To India, the mystery and grandeur of the limitless vistas of the development of the soul are far more inspiring and fascinating than the mastery over external physical nature' (Mukerjee 1916: 458).
6. One way of looking at Mukerjee's eulogisation of such communalistic Indian values could be, as Venugopal (1980: 183) opines, his approach of an Indologist whose personal predilection is to look for Indian metaphysical values. He adds, 'Mukerjee's attempt to find transcendental virtues in all nooks and corners of Indian society smacks of a pseudo-mysticism'.
7. In a way, Mukerjee could very well be regarded as the founder of economic sociology (and not merely of social ecology) in India, if we go by the current specialisations in the discipline. Economic sociology in the US has been in productive dialogue with institutional economics for quite some time: see Richard Swedberg and Neil Smelser (eds), *The Handbook of Economic Sociology,* (second revised edition, Princeton: Princeton University Press 2005). One wishes if some scholar writes a book on Mukerjee on the lines of Richard Swedberg's *Max Weber and the Idea of Economic Sociology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998). There are hints to this effect in Dhanagare (1985: 323) following observation:

   Having received initial training in economics, Radhakamal began with a series of micro-level analysis of problems in economic sociology such as rural economy and land problems, population problems and problems of Indian working class. In the late 1920s when the Great Depression had set in, Radhakamal initiated a number of micro-level enquiries into the deteriorating agrarian relations and conditions of the peasantry in Oudh. This study should have been a pacesetter in agrarian studies in India but...this aspect of Indian rural society remained neglected till the 1960s.
8. In this work, Mukerjee discusses the role of political institutions in India, China, (and elsewhere) in balancing nation and region, town and village. He traces the evolution of village panchayats and republican

states in India and that of the clan and kinship networks in China. He contends that, in India, the Aryan, Dravidian and folk elements contributed to the village republics and other corporate bodies. According to him, the most important contribution of Eastern institutions to the theory of polity has been that the integration of individuals into wider groupings has not led to totalitarianism, which is common among some western democracies. It is because the individual in the East is integrated into the clan, the caste, the guild, and the panchayats. All these institutions act as intermediary bodies cushioning the individual against the massive authority of the modern state. He credits India for not having developed the centralised organs of state authority, or a communistic democracy, but, instead, intermediate social groups of various sorts, like the joint family, caste groups, trade guilds, *varnas*, *ashrams*, the village communities and the panchayats.

9. For Mukerjee, the Western democracy, notwithstanding its principle of federalism, is 'monistic', that is, it relentlessly subordinates the individuals to the General Will; the Eastern Democracies are pluralistic owing to the intercession of intermediate corporate bodies. If in the monistic state-type rights are won by the people from their governments through revolution and struggle, and are safeguarded by constant vigilance, rights in the pluralistic polity are guaranteed to local and communal groups. The political process is, thus, not one unending series of political struggles and revolutions for wresting political authority. Venugopal (1980: 168) finds remarkable parallels between Mukerjee's political thoughts and that of Alexis de Tocqueville's. However, he adds, 'Mukerjee's somewhat mystical treatment of the process adds an enigmatic element to his approach. For, it is indeed difficult to ever know that harmony and balance prevailed in the relationship between polity and society even in historical times. We may have to rest content with the plausibility'.
10. It should be noted that Mukerjee's understanding of traditional Indian polity is heavily influenced by Benoy Kumar Sarkar's (1922) *Political Institutions and Theories of the Hindus: A Study in Comparative Politics* (Leipzig: Markert and Petters) and his elder brother's, the historian Radha Kumud Mookerji, (1919) *Local Government in Ancient India* (Oxford: Clarendon Press).
11. Characterising Mukerjee as a social philosopher of a very keen perception, Venugopal (1980: 24-25) writes,

    Mukerjee had a proclivity to respond to intellectual stimuli of varied sorts. He freely ranged from one end of the social spectrum to the other. His variables often became circular, so one gets the impression that each one of them is the cause and effect of all social phenomena. Myth, symbol, ritual, ethical precept, region became such tautological

notions. This was a serious deficiency in his research works. He was too idealistic in his action as well as approach. Human susceptibilities cannot be cured by prescriptive remedies. At the most we may be able to attain the goal in a limited measure. Whether we speak of integrated social science or reconstruction of village community, our idealism must confront the stubborn reality. His effort to bring mysticism into the mundane affairs was untenable because action and mysticism were not easily reconciled. His prescription for global reconstruction was heavily weighted in favour of a Hindu universal state and as such was unacceptable to those who did not share his faith.

12. Even when Mukerjee pleads for a breakaway from the 'prevalent methods and cherished postulates' of modern social sciences, he talks of restoring and amplifying 'the heritage left by the great founders of science — Compte, Herbert Spencer, Lester F. Ward, Wundt, Scheler and Hobhouse' (Mukerjee 1949: 6).

Chapter 5

The East and the West: Comparative Framings

The thought pattern of the West since the European Renaissance, its strange spiritual arrogance and intellectual shallowness, and its denial of human freedom, dignity and worth for the considerable masses of population in spite of the conquests of poverty, ignorance and disease have all contributed towards the diffusion of the notion that absolutes and universals neither exist for man and culture, nor can be striven after by them.

RADHAKAMAL MUKERJEE 1968: 83

It is a profound sense of solidarity with the entire universe or cosmic symbiosis that underlies the Indian code of morality. Religion, metaphysics and morals alike proclaim communion, sharing or solidarity as the leitmotif of individual and social culture.

RADHAKAMAL MUKERJEE 1951: iv

The key to Western Civilization is offered by its perennial quest of the dignity and majesty of the human individual regarded as the ultimate goal and supreme reality. In Indian civilization the key is the quest of the order, beauty, transcendence and mystery of the cosmos-process as the central Reality-the focus of absolute or transcendent values.

RADHAKAMAL MUKERJEE 1964C: 92

As noted in Chapter 2, Radhakamal Mukerjee's latter writings revolve around certain key themes such as ethical and cultural climate, values and metaphysics, comparative study of civilizations and inter-civilizational dialogue, and ultimately, what he calls the 'oneness of mankind'. A score of books are devoted to the elaboration of these themes. Largely repetitive, they help us place his oeuvre and his intellectual concerns in the larger comparative canvass of the East and the West. In many ways, the East-West comparison and contrast is the pivot around which one can make sense of his analytical apertures and epistemological aspirations. His methodological ambitions

and his advocacy of an integrated social science are deeply rooted, rather emanate from, his comparative conceptualisations of the East and the West. This chapter details his enunciation of such comparative framings to foreground his distinctive take on the nature, the character and the mandate of modern social sciences as a systemic body of knowledge. In fact, Mukerjee charges modern social science as being 'unable to cope with the most acute, emergent social problems of the modern age, the reconciliation of the great opposites or complementarities of Freedom and Organization, Equality and Order, Community and Individualism, Competition and Collectivism, Democracy and Totalitarianism' (Mukerjee 1965a: 148).

Given the task he had set for himself, his analytical scope is as wide and historically deep as one associates with the founding fathers of the modern discipline of sociology. His self-image is that of an intellectual protagonist straddling the world-stage, the one who does not hesitate a bit to critique Western humanism, history, epistemology and the crises in Western values and culture. While acknowledging the metaphysical grounding of Western humanism in the Greek discovery of man as the measure of things (the absolute value of the individual self or ego), he unravels its limiting implications for the constitution of social scientific knowledge. The primacy of 'man's perennial quest of the dignity and majesty of the individual as the ultimate goal and supreme reality' (1965a:178) in Western humanism has led to a blinkered vision on the part of the founders of sociology: Comte, Spencer, Durkheim, Hobhouse, Max Scheler, Bougle, Giddings and Ross. True, they were great humanists and had faith in the supreme values of the worth and the dignity of the human individual and of the unity and solidarity of mankind. However, according to Mukerjee, none of them except Bougle, Hobhouse and Max Scheler, believed 'in the basic unity of human nature and its essential moral and spiritual values and norms that shape the unity and ordered progress of mankind'.

In a way, Mukerjee's work appears to evolve a critique of modern secular culture as such rather than merely concerned with the inherent inadequacies of modern social sciences. For him, the West lacks the requisite civilizational vitality to forge a value-based, harmonious and integrated understanding of cosmic-transcendental reality given its history. Logically, during the latter half of the nineteenth century and the twentieth century, sociology, under the spell of Social Darwinism and Psychologism, strove to become value free. It abandoned the permanent and universal intellectual, moral and humanist ingredients of earlier social thinking and paid little attention to man's authentic world of values and norms and his fundamental enlarging social processes of love, altruism and solidarity that lift him from the levels of folk tribes and nation to mankind as a whole.

Scientism and Humanism: Contending Legacies

To Mukerjee, scientism and humanism embody contradictory and irreconcilable values. On the one hand, scientism seeks to establish man's mastery over the physical environment and over man himself, over men for the use of other men. On the other hand, it completely abolishes the universal and transcendent dimension of man's self or being, values and experiences. It treats him as a biological species alone. He is forthright in his outright condemnation of Western indifference to values and ethics:

> For more than three centuries in Europe, ethical thought and practice have been warped by a profound distrust of any moral principles and values not derived from the interests, exigencies and crises of social life, or from the framework folkways, customs and institutions that reflect prior social judgments...a firmly established ethical relativism has been reinforced in the West by the logic of subjectivism in philosophy and of evolutionary naturalism in the social sciences, and by the Kantian tradition of cleavage between the realm of reason and the realm of ends and values (Mukerjee 1964c: 137).

The non-congruence of reason and ethics is at the root of

Western epistemology that privileges not only natural-science oriented psychology and sociology but also a jaundiced philosophy and ontology incapable of grasping cosmic humanism 'with absolute and inexhaustible love, compassion and transcendence that belong to the essential structure of being, reality or cosmos' (Mukerjee 1968: 83). He finds contemporary scientific humanism in the West as confined to the mere bio-social dimension of human goals, values and experiences. It relies on a scientific picture of 'a segmented, disharmonious, qualityless and meaningless cosmos and cosmos-process and severs the relations of man to cosmos and Being or God that are real kindred' (Mukerjee 1968: 16-17). The empiricism of modern physical sciences originates from this dualism. This empiricism makes Nature qualityless, meaningless and purposeless. It not only injects a corroding sense of doubt and nihilism into human civilization, but also has a desiccating effect on sociological thinking and imagination by emptying them of all considerations of value and purpose in the name of "scientific objectivity".

Mukerjee sees in this empiricism the seeds of a process that castigates large swathe of meanings, appreciations and values that civilization actually experiences as metaphysical and religious. Humanity's orientation to cosmos and to existence as a whole are discounted and are rendered irrelevant for modern secular culture. The latter seeks a physicalist interpretation of all arts, functions and experiences of human living. This weakens or destroys 'historic myths, rituals and symbols by deleting them of their constructive cultural meanings and values, and thins out the aesthetic and spiritual resources of personality and civilization' (Mukerjee 1968: vii-viii). He concedes though that the older dichotomies of man and nature, mind and cosmos, self and non-self are not as sharp in philosophy today in the West as in the past. Yet, he does not fight shy of asserting that the Eastern philosophical tradition roots itself in the unity, wholeness and continuity of self,

fellowman and cosmos.

To him, an exaggerated faith in 'scientism' and stress of empirical methods of investigation and analysis in all fields of human relations, goals and behaviour is the bane of modern social sciences. It deflects sociological insight and imagination from 'fundamental enquiry into the dynamic reciprocities and interchanges of personality, values, and social system' (Mukerjee 1966: 103). He discerns the singular absence of the notion of a universal moral order in modern social sciences. And this absence is debilitating as 'in the modern age neither a juridical world order, nor world government nor, again, an interdependent co-operative world economic system and planning on a world basis can be created without a universal moral order' (Mukerjee 1966: 104).

Mukerjee is convinced that the acknowledgement of true community as an ontological notion by the social sciences is the only way forward. Such an acknowledgement alone can resolve the profound moral crisis of the age brought about by the 'universal polarity between individualism and totalitarianism, freedom and necessity, liberty and order, solitude and sharing, self-actualization and self-transcendence'. He adds, 'Communion or community is never made by law and force, nor stipulated by contract or agreement, but is born in the minds and hearts of men, correcting, interpenetrating, fusing and completing them'. As a matter of fact, Mukerjee goes against both psychologism of the current individualistic view of the self and the mechanical determinism of Dialectical Materialism. In his words, 'It is neither man's atomized, unrelated, subjective self nor his socially directed and regimented self, but his free, transcending, evaluating self-in-and-with community that defines and constitutes personality' (Mukerjee 1966: 7). In his book, *The Community of Communities,* he adumbrates his basic premise that man is most fully transformed into personality by the true community. Elsewhere, he writes, 'the common man is *Homo Communis* (the non-resisting, worshipful, real

Common man, who lives, works and suffers in all men) which truly refers to the Universal and Eternal Man in all men (*sarvabhutatman*), and not to the biological and economic man or workman, the fractionalised and mutilated, and hence baffled and aggressive person whose aim and purpose now seem to regulate the entire course of modern Western civilisation' (Mukerjee 1951: 72).

To be sure, Mukerjee posits an alternative epistemology against the individualistic slant in western humanist tradition. At the same time, he questions the strong split between emotion and reason as an inalienable part of the philosophy of social sciences. In a way, as Dipesh Chakrabarty (2000) argues, this split between reason and emotion is part of the story of colonialism in India. Scientific rationalism, or the spirit of scientific inquiry, was introduced in colonial India from the very beginning as an antidote to (Indian) religion, particularly Hinduism. It is this simultaneous coding of (Western) knowledge itself as rational and Hinduism as something that was both a religion and a bundle of superstitions that launched the career of a certain kind of colonial hyper-rationalism among Indian intellectuals who self-consciously came to regard themselves as modern. Though the attempted dialogue between science and religion and its influence on the nature of modern academic knowledge formations in India in its early stages (*ibid.* 25), it does reveal that the binaries, howsoever untenable and problematic, such as tradition/modernity, rational/non-rational, and intellect/emotion have haunted our self-representations in social science language since the nineteenth century. In Chakrabarty's reading, the split between the analytic and the affective is something that is itself produced by the colonial discourse and that marks forever the speech of the colonised intellectual. Put differently, hyper-rationalism turns out to be a marker of the intellect of the colonial modern. For our purpose, what is pertinent is that Mukerjee comes out as one of the first few social scientists of repute who offers a trenchant critique

of Western hyper-rationalism on both epistemological and ontological grounds.

Admittedly, Mukerjee castigates such theories as Social Darwinism, Behaviourism and Psychoanalysis, and such dogmas as *Laissez Faire*, Marxism, Nationalism and Racism. He considers them to be lopsided and fallacious theories of man and society and regrets that sociology as a discipline has assimilated them into its corpus of theories. In his reading, they completely disregard man's freedom, creativity and self-transcendence. Equally are they impervious to man's persistent endeavour in all ages and climes towards achievement of harmonious and wholesome relations with fellow-man, with mankind and with cosmos. He writes, 'In so far as these doctrines and dogmas give an incomplete and distorted rather than a full and integrated picture of man and values, these are diametrically opposed to true humanism' (Mukerjee 1966: 124-25). Precisely for these constitutive inadequacies, modern social science is unable to cope with the most acute, emergent social problems of the modern age: 'the reconciliation of the great opposites or complementarities of Freedom and Organization, Equality and Order, Community and Individualism, Competition and Collectivism, Democracy and Totalitarianism (*ibid.*148).

The Eastern Embrace of the Transcendental

Mukerjee notes with concern what he terms 'social Europeanisation and lapse of the higher values of life' (1951: 54). This association between the two is revealing and offers us a peep into his idealisation of the Indian/Eastern way of life and culture. He eulogises the Hindu scheme of life. The latter contains the sequence of obligations and virtues (*yajna-parampara*) that enables 'the individual to seek and fulfil the manifold interests of life, integrated and graded in the light of eternal verities and ultimate values without that imbalance, excessive specialisation and hypertrophy in the pursuit of

limited, fragmentary and proximate goals of life that dwarf and mutilate personalities in many social cultures' (Mukerjee 1951: 27). A tolerant and eclectic Indian culture is one of the givens for him. He valorises this character of Indian culture which has successfully absorbed the varied mystical movements as well as mass protest against priesthoods, ceremonials and caste differences. He sees such a culture as the bedrock for 'a humane and compassionate Indian socialism' 'that looks beyond organised economics and politics to trans-social ultimate values' (*ibid.* 71). To him, this culturally imbued socialism has better capabilities 'to sustain and fulfil the inherent dignity and majesty of the Common Man' (*ibid.* 72) than western socialism. He is emphatic in asserting that 'India's ancient and essential egalitarian ideal springs from the conception of the immanent divinity in every man and in every human relation. Indian credo of "each for all, all for each and all with all" is to be the source of new moral imperatives. In this light, 'this essential, humane Socialism will be the expression of the true metaphysical values that India prizes through the ages in the present economic and social structure. It will revive the best in our past as the promise of the noblest in our future' (*ibid.* 74).

Mukerjee's zeal to appropriate the ideals of modern socialism as part of the continuous unfolding of Indian metaphysics is anchored in his almost axiomatic assertion of the superiority of Indian civilization. He posits three reasons to project the great significance of Indian civilization in human history. First, its extraordinary continuity for about five millennia is evidence of its vitality. This vitality, in turn, is the outcome of its humanistic spirit and distinctive system of values and social arrangement. Second, its felicity with the universal is another important factor. Indian culture has had the universal aspirations that culminated into the establishment of a unity of Asian civilization through several centuries. It has been the special genius of India to facilitate this civilising movement from specific culture to universal culture, from tribe nationalism to a

unified world society. And last, India's distinctive reflection on the problems of human life and society, vigorously pursued since the dawn of civilization, has produced and nurtured a mental pattern somewhat distinct from the Western and East Asian. Mukerjee finds in this reflection the prominence of a boundless devotion to the quest of peace and harmony. According to him, the State, politics and conquest are far less significant in India than metaphysics, religion, myth and art as factors in social integration: 'there are hardly any people in the world who have been ruled so little by political occurrences — a reign, an invasion, or a war— and so much by metaphysical and religious movements; by scholastic formulations of common myths, norms and social traditions' (1959a: 9). As the historian Sabyasachi Bhattacharya justifiably observes, 'the continuity of the Indian civilization over millennia was a vital element in nationalist imagination of India's past, but such a community could only reside in the society and culture of the people, there was no political entity that survived for that length of time' (2011: 82). In this, Mukerjee's understanding of Indian civilization is piece of the general intellectual temper where a socio-cultural continuity was a surrogate for political-territorial continuity.[1]

Mukerjee accords due credit to some of these features of Indian civilization 'that have welded Middle, East, and South-East Asia for several centuries into one spiritual community' (*ibid.*). Arguably, Mukerjee is selective in his presentation of the essential characteristics of Indian civilization, history and culture. He picks up only those episodes and supposedly catholic traditions that make him build the case for inherent catholicity and universalism of the Indian culture. For example, he states that the stress in India has been on purely intellectual and metaphysical traditions rather than theological dogmas and creeds. Moreover, both cosmology and the system of social values and institutions derive from the intellectual and metaphysical traditions that account for the flexibility and

catholicity of Indian culture. Viewed thus, the large measure of success India obtained in assimilating alien and backward races and peoples both within the country and abroad becomes the apogee of its civilizational achievement. He writes:

> no race could elaborate, as India has done, a myth or fiction, racial miscegenation (*varnasamkara*) in order to throw open her doors to myriads of inferior and alien stocks. Right from the Upanishadic stress on the virtues of compassion, self-discipline and charity, and the austere eight-fold path of the Buddha, the Indian code of Dharma has insisted upon gentleness, tenderness and non-violence, qualities through which India has tamed and civilized many peoples without the weapons of fire and sword (Mukerjee 1959a: 10).

In effect, Mukerjee puts forward an integrative and cultural rather than merely political approach to Indian history. His history moves around fundamental 'ideas-in-action', myths and values rather than invasions, conquests and the rise and disintegration of the various kingdoms and empires. Through this heuristic move, he makes light of the incidences of political chaos, or a succession of dynastic crises and other kinds of political upheavals. It is noteworthy that this inflation of the political in Indian history has been part of the Orientalist scholarship that has privileged the ritual power of the Brahmins over the secular power of kings. Louis Dumont's *Homo Hierarchicus* has theorised this devaluation of the political through the twin notions of encompassment and being encompassed.[2] On this count, Mukerjee appears to have internalised the projections of those British scholar-administrators who maintained the essential indifference of Indian social structure to the countless political revolutions that swayed over the land since times immemorial.[3]

India presents herself to Mukerjee as the exemplar case of the identity of land and dharma. He regards this congruity between the two as the precious gift of the Rig-Vedic Aryans to the sub-continent. He avers, 'the fundamental conceptions that Bharata and Dharma are identical and that neither Dharma nor its favoured homeland can perish, in spite of the vicissitudes

of history, have kept alive the faith of the people in political crises and defeats through the millenniums' (Mukerjee: 379). By contrast, neither the spread of Greco-Roman institutions or of Christianity, nor the empires of Augustus, Harlemagne and Napoleon were able to produce in Europe the deep, underlying unity that is characteristic of India. He adds:

> This unity of civilization is far more potent than any brought about by the forces of race and region, nationalism or political suzerainty. Indian culture has stood at once for the infinite extension of the human community and for the plumbing of the deeper recesses of the self, identifying the one with the other; this is the common ideology behind the various systems of thought and the numerous forms of spiritual practice in the country. This is the central theme of Indian thought, the very core of her collective existence (Mukerjee 1959a: 384).

Mukerjee's incessant quest for a philosophy and ontology as the basis of cosmic humanism makes him go for interchangeable use of terms like Indian, Asian and Eastern. He associates frequently these generic terms with virtues such as absolute and inexhaustible love, compassion and transcendence that belong to the essential structure of being, reality or cosmos. For instance, he posits, 'The East has termed the ultimate Reality as Being, All-Mind or That: Brahman or Chit in India, Hsing in China and Tathata or Sunyata in Buddhist philosophy — all symbols of the abstract and pure human mind which exists at the beginning and end, and from which all forms in the cosmos emerge'(Mukerjee 1968: 37). Moreover,

> In Eastern religions and moralities human affections and tendernesses, cosmic in their sweep and depth, are, to be sure, ways to the Real and the Absolute. Cultivated and magnified constantly and assiduously through systematic yogic discipline, these erase the distinction between the self, other and love, and lead to the realization of the metaphysical Real —Atman, Brahman or Void – and the achievement of the unlimited community of mankind and of cosmos (*communitatus communitatum*) (Mukerjee 1968: 81).

He takes for granted the contrast between the Eastern and Western philosophy.[4] At the same time, he takes pains to emphasise the essential similarities of Eastern religions and

metaphysics. Thus, he considers the I-Thou-and-All or cosmos motif as distinctively Indian and Chinese to be variously expressed in Vedantic, Buddhist and Confucian cosmic humanism. More importantly for him, 'this breaks through the limitations of Cartesian and Kantian dualism in metaphysics and religion, of Western Naturalistic and Scientific humanism and of the modern pragmatic and opportunist psychological conception of the self at the mere biological and social dimensions of experience' (Mukerjee 1968: 110). Put differently, Mukerjee's endeavour to restore the man to 'his primordial oneness and solidarity with mankind through a fresh vision of the social reality —the open, triadic system of the human person, values and community in their dynamic reciprocity and togetherness'(1966: 5) propels him to elaborate the essentialised contrast between an Indian normative-philosophical versus Western naturalist-empirical notion of the self. And, it is this understanding that compels him to look natural-science oriented psychology and sociology as inadequate academic disciplines.

Towards a Synthesis

Admittedly, Mukerjee's mining of Eastern philosophical traditions is fuelled by his desire to create a unified and value-based social science. In his scheme of things, the crisis in social sciences is inextricably linked to the crisis of modern times. He places 'the state of valuelessness' at the centre of both the crises. He finds the stubborn refusal of modern social sciences to investigate values and assimilate them into their methods and materials puzzling. Not surprisingly, he rallies against 'the stifling encrustation of economic, sociological, anthropological and cultural assumptions and theories that militated against a broad view of the common humanness and development of mankind' (Mukerjee 1964b: 10). To him, a rethinking of the goals of social sciences in a humanist, universalist perspective

appears imperative for mankind's survival. His search is for such a philosophy of man that can harmonise and integrate human goals and social purposes. And, he sees such a co-ordination happening only by philosophy in terms of the unity, wholeness and transcendence of human personality, values and community.

And, that is why, Mukerjee launches a tirade again the compartmentalisation of social sciences. In his assessment, each is concerned with its own fractional values for the human individual, and has little relevance to the goals and methods of the other social sciences or to the broad common aim and purpose of mankind. Cumulatively, this compartmentalisation has generated the present contradiction and chaos of goals and values of man. He states:

> The rigidly demarcated, narrow and isolationist man-and-culture approach of modern social science ... is a most unfortunate product of the Industrial, Agricultural and Commercial Revolutions of nineteenth century North-Western Europe, characterized by the dominance and variety of impersonal economic relations and behaviour. The insulation of the theories and concepts of economic science—which is older than political science, sociology and anthropology as well as the sciences of human behaviour—from concrete social and cultural reality had a profound impact on all social disciplines that were more or less developed in separate water-tight compartments, and that acknowledged in common the physicalist and mechanical assumptions and procedures of natural science-oriented biology and psychology as basal disciplines... Every theory of man which is specialized, compartmentalized and segmented in a narrow, limited perspective, and yet absolutized into a complete human knowledge provides a wrong image of man and of his values and possibilities and leads man, society and culture astray (Mukerjee 1965a: 83).

For him, unification of the knowledge of mankind is the prime goal of social sciences. A social science that is based on the persistent pernicious dualisms of matter and soul, body and mind, flesh and spirit, natural and supernatural and factual and ideal twists and distorts the cosmos-picture of modern mankind. It fractionalizes the human reality and parcels it out into the relativities and perspectives of the various sciences. The clear

cut answer to this knowledge gap is a synthesis 'of the facts and values' and a state of affairs where the various social sciences are unified into 'a general social ethics and philosophy as integral parts of the philosophy of values and ontology' (Mukerjee 1965a: 84). In other words, social sciences have to serve as a vehicle for the philosophical unity of mankind and its practical application. In his view, trans-humanism and fabrication of world-wide democracy rest on the openness and universality of the tripartite, circular and dynamic transactions of the conceptual triad—Personality, Values and Community—towards which man both as individual and as species moves (*ibid.* 85).

The peculiar constitutive logic of modern social sciences emanates from the peculiar character of the contemporary Western thought. The latter displays a sharp cleavage in respect of the role of values in intellectual analysis. To quote Mukerjee's words, 'disagreement, if not chaos, is serious as regards the relevance of value considerations and deployment of oughts or normative standards in natural science-oriented social thinking (Mukerjee 1964b: 10). Besides, Mukerjee discerns a 'neurotic dread for any metaphysics'(1964c: 65) in modern western thought. He opines:

> The tone and temper of Western civilization has been such that while there is no end to man's intellectual pursuits, to his quest for science and knowledge and their applications for the practical and utilitarian needs and interests of life, the field of his disinterestedness, absolutism and universalism is left inadequately explored and clarified. The achievements of his positive sciences, both practical and applied, far outshine those of his reflective thinking and analysis concerned with human motivations and values, and especially the possibilities of human nature in which transcendence, goodness and love are both self-revealing and self-actualizing (Mukerjee 1964c: 138-39).

He adds, 'yet, Western man, dominated by Stoic philosophy and Christian theology, cannot abandon the idea that he occupies the central place in the cosmos in its hierarchic system' (*ibid.* 159). Metaphysically, he continues, Western civilization

has rooted itself in the Greek discovery of man as the measure of things — the absolute value of the individual self or ego. From this stem the notions of the universality of the individual, which is common to all individuals, and of the inalienable subjective rights of the free citizen in democracy, who contains society and civilization in himself. Both his sense of cosmic wholeness and transcendence, and of the unity, continuity and solidarity of men with cosmos is conspicuously weak. Evidently, Mukerjee's problem lay with the very conceptualisation of the individual self as bereft of communitarian, cosmic and transcendental values.

Contrariwise, in his rendering, the Indian man loves to merge his individual existence, divested of all ego-attributes and values, in the transcendent cosmic process. He looks towards the profound aesthetic and mystical apprehension of the cosmos-total as cherished immediate experience: 'There is no civilization like India's where the individual seeks a personal, immediate cognition of the One-and-Real and cosmos, beyond all dogmas, doctrines and symbols, and undertakes long and strenuous discipline and contemplation for this realization with courage and renunciation (Mukerjee 1964c: 93). This yearning is all-pervasive to be found in Brahmanical myth, legend and art. In fact, 'man's state of meditation, his polarities of sex and ecstasy, penance and enlightenment are all sculpted with a zest and abandon that only India has experienced. Such cosmic figurations of deities, men and angels enable the common men of the land to move skilfully and harmoniously to and fro between spiritual imagination and aesthetic appreciation and ordinary life and experience (Mukerjee 1964c: 132).

In a sense, Mukerjee treats Indian visions of man and cosmos as inherently superior to the Western ones. The rhetorical flourish that he employs to underline to 'the East's unflinching loyalty to the absolutes and the universals' stems from his axiomatic acceptance of the Indian way of 'disinterested and detached pursuit of Reality, i.e., of the nature of self and Cosmos

in which it lives and moves'. He imparts Eastern knowledge traditions with a disinterested ontological approach to Reality which includes values as one of its intrinsic qualities. For him, the Eastern sense of absoluteness and universality of moral values and obligations has to be the beacon for modern social sciences (Mukerjee 1964c: 138).

In effective terms, Mukerjee's celebration of Eastern/Indian knowledge traditions affords him that conceptual space where he could forcefully argue for a blend of the philosophical-normative with the scientific-empirical. His plea is for such methods and principles of social sciences that can properly interpret 'the dynamic interchange between Person-Values and Cosmos in their progressive convergence in the coming world civilization'. He abhors the pre-eminence of natural science methods and principles in the study of human civilization. These methods, in the context of social sciences, have yielded 'a strangely shallow and sophisticated theory of ethical and cultural relativism ... that it is impossible to conceive of absolute truths and norms independently of the values and the worth of man, unrelated to his social and historical context' (Mukerjee 1964c: viii).

However, Mukerjee's sense of universality is markedly different from the reigning notions of universality to be found in Western social theorists of his times. This becomes evident in his avowed dismissal of Marxism. No other Indian social scientist of any repute has been as brazen as Mukerjee in the outright dismissal of Marxism. He writes:

> World civilization should discard the Marxist doctrine of the universality and inevitability of the pattern and mechanism of human progress through class struggle in Dialectical Materialism as mechanistic and Laplacean. It should also reject the Marxist philosophy that destroys human freedom by affirming economic determinism as the law of the social universe, mutilates social relationships by viewing them as class relationships, uproots the foundations of religion, morality, law and culture by identifying them with class prejudices and interests, and finally, makes of all intrinsic and ultimate values of man merchandize to be exchanged for the instrumental and

proximate economic values of wealth, economic security and power. All this is opportunistic and unethical (Mukerjee 1965a: xi).

Despite his fascination for the theory of the oneness and solidarity of mankind, he fails to accord Marxism any significance as embodying a new dimension of social analysis. He does not see in it a blueprint for a new type of synthesis of the empirical and the normative— a synthesis he has ceaselessly been striving for. This is intriguing for Mukerjee's writings reveal an extensive sense of familiarity with what he usually terms as modern age or global environment. True, his understanding of his times is moralising in tone and texture. Quite often, it is couched in esoteric language. Though, he holds enough optimism to visualise a future where the era of fear, insecurity and rage among the nations ends. He projects a future where 'the more affluent ones show unprecedented goodwill, compassion and sense of justice-noble moral impulses that are responsible for massive economic technical and educational aid to undeveloped nations, steadily mounting up as the years pass' (Mukerjee 1965a: xiii). Besides, he talks in terms of an economic, political and legal commonwealth of mankind. Such a commonwealth can only be promoted and sustained by 'the various social sciences expounding and seeking not segmental but whole values of the total man, society and culture as parts of an integrative philosophy of man and values' (*ibid.* xiv). In a certain sense, for Mukerjee, the unification of the knowledge of mankind and the development of practical humanism on a global scale go hand in hand. This probably explains his continued insistence on values as intimate part of the integrative framework of social sciences.

To be sure, his advocacy for the proper place of values in social sciences is not merely a handle to proclaim the superiority of the East versus the West. Instead, it affords him an epistemological resource to transcend the binary of the East/West to project a common vision for humanity. This vision finds its clearest articulation in his formulation of the philosophy

of community — 'the restoration of man to his primordial oneness and solidarity with mankind'. Emphatically, he pleads for the acknowledgement of true community as an ontological notion by the social sciences. This turns out to be the only way out for him to resolve the profound moral crisis of the age. Moreover, such an approach fits in with his general primacy of the normative, transcendent context. The incorporation of values helps bridge the fundamental gap that the social sciences have brought into being through their persistent differentiation of 'the categories of essence and existence, of being and becoming' (Mukerjee 1964a:14).

The study of values helps him discard 'the current notion of the single, isolated, subjective self as the unit of valuation, which stems from social philosophy, warped by modern empiricism, subjectivity and behaviourism'. It facilitates an appreciation of 'the self in relation to cosmos and reality'. Interestingly, Mukerjee draws upon a host of Western thinkers for the articulation and formulation of a unified theory of values: Bertalanffy, Muller and Dobzhansky, among the biologists, Maslow, Gardner Murphy and Kurt Goldstein, among the psychologists, Mead, Sorokin, and Mannheim, among the social scientists, and Whitehead, Jaspers and Hocking, among the philosophers. This engagement with the other traditions internal to the West, while critiquing the dominant West, is something that is clearly visible in Mukerjee's work. Though, he stops short of giving the entire credit to this alternate West for his formulations and conceptualisations pertaining to values. He notes 'the stream of eastern philosophical tradition and of contemplative experience, which ground the norm of valuation on the truth about cosmos-total or the essential being and its many accents, dimensions and polarities'.

For Mukerjee, 'values are derived from life, from environment, from self, society and culture, and, beyond all, from the ideal, transcendent dimension of human existence and experience'. Values are indispensable for positive human

fulfilment. Unfortunately though, the sciences of man, society and culture have not been able to appreciate 'the unity, wholeness and transcendence of the value system, grounded in both human actualities and human possibilities' (Mukerjee1964a: 9). In accordance with such an understanding, he finds fault with the denigration of the ideal, metaphysical or transcendent dimension in terms of the lower dimension by the modern social sciences. He envisages a free passage between biological or psycho-social dimension and the ideal dimension so far as the study of values is concerned.

In his understanding of social life, 'both the demands of finite, biological human nature and the demands derived from its profound affinities with the unlimited cosmos and reality' figure. Indeed, Mukerjee envisages cosmic and universalist value-system rather than man-and-society centred—'a comprehensive, harmonious gestalt comprising the whole of man's transactions with cosmos-total or being that he may apprehend and appreciate'. He insists, 'It is within his total physical, cultural and metaphysical context, at once human and beyond human, social and trans-social, that he selects, assimilates and orders his 'natural' hierarchy of goals and values and discovers his value absolutes and categoricals' (*ibid.*12).

Mukerjee's comparative framings of the East and the West are part of his overall approach towards social sciences that is characterised by his distinctive understanding of the dimensions of human evolution, the philosophy of personality and a common cosmic view of values, ideals and norms. Self-consciously, his formulations rest on convergence of concepts and conclusions of various academic disciplines, ranging from biology and psychology to social science, philosophy and metaphysics that are deeply concerned with human values. Although, he finds such an inter-disciplinary treatment exceedingly necessary and consistently laments its absence today, he ends up passing on to us a blueprint of the discipline that appears daunting by its sheer metaphysical weight. It is

hardly a surprise then that sociology in India appears to have turned its back on his contributions. Indian sociology has grown in a way that has consciously pitted its conceptual and methodological repertoire against the social philosophy of the day. Its self-acquired mandate as an empirical here-and-now discipline has insulated it from its intellectual ancestors for whom cultural critique, metaphysical reasoning and philosophical speculations were as worthy sociological endeavours as doing fieldwork in a village or a tribal hamlet.

Mukerjee's Vision of Sociology and its Coordinates

In a manner of speaking, Mukerjee conceived of sociology as an intellectual discourse mediating between civilizations and the universal aspirations of humanity. Though he was deeply involved with some of the major development and policy initiatives of the pre-and-post-Independence nation-state, his sociology was not meant for conversing with the national state alone. He envisaged the possibility of sociology in a civilizational sense. It was meant to be a reciprocal sociology embodying not only an Indian reading of the West as a counter-gesture but also as an attempt at a more polyphonous universalism (Uberoi 1968). Yet, as Shiv Visvanathan (1998: 200) rightly underlines the subsequent terms of debate 'for a sociology of India' and its official memory put into place a certain sociological manifesto that marginalized other prospects of doing sociology including 'the most intellectualist school of the time': 'What began as a debate on the politics of knowledge and the need to construct India as something beyond an epistemic other for the West, has sometimes degenerated into a sociology of the profession in India'. Mukerjee may have been marginalised or forgotten. But the questions his oeuvre raises are tied up to certain crucial conceptualisations of the idea of a universalist sociology in our times. After all, intellectual history urges us to be sensitive to the multifarious ways in which books escape

their original contexts and play divergent roles in later ideological debates of which their original authors and readers would have known nothing. Understanding Mukerjee's vision of sociology then becomes an attempt to capture the history of the acquisition and deployment of his ideas in arguments that are relevant to our academic practices as well. In other words, it is about knowing the history of what has been done with Mukerjee's formulations in terms of contemporary debates.

The power of self-transcendence, for Mukerjee, is the essential feature of man as *Homo Symbolicus*.[55] It is not merely a process of conflict and encapsulation but more prominently of harmony and freedom (*ibid.*). He finds such a quest to be an essential feature of Indian civilization which is devoted to the exploration of 'order, beauty, transcendence and mystery of the cosmos-process as the central Reality - the focus of absolute or transcendent values'. This fundamentally contrasts with the Western Civilization which has historically been engaged in its perennial quest 'of the dignity and majesty of the human individual regarded as the ultimate goal and supreme reality' (Mukerjee 1964c: 92). He declares in his characteristic style, 'the thought pattern of the West since the European Renaissance, its strange spiritual arrogance and intellectual shallowness, and its denial of human freedom, dignity and worth for the considerable masses of population in spite of the conquests of poverty, ignorance and disease have all contributed towards the diffusion of the notion that absolutes and universals neither exist for man and culture, nor can be striven after by them' (Mukerjee 1964c: 138). This probably explains as to why the achievements of Western sciences far outshine those of its reflective thinking and analysis. The Western civilization has always privileged science and knowledge and their applications for the practical and utilitarian needs and interests of life whereas the field of 'human motivations and values, and especially the possibilities of human nature in which transcendence, goodness and love are both self-revealing and

self-actualizing' has been left inadequately explored and clarified (Mukerjee 1964c: 138-39). Yet, 'Western man, dominated by Stoic philosophy and Christian theology, cannot abandon the idea that he occupies the central place in the cosmos, in its hierarchic system' (*ibid.* 159). As against this, the East's 'unflinching loyalty to the absolutes and the universals stems from its disinterested and detached pursuit of Reality'. For Mukerjee, 'a disinterested ontological approach to Reality which includes values as one of its intrinsic qualities is responsible for the Eastern sense of absoluteness and universality of moral values and obligations' (*ibid.* 138).

Mukerjee has consistently exposed the fallacy of appraising reality from a uni-disciplinary approach. Nor was he much convinced about the adequacy of the inter-disciplinary approach which was widely publicised by the behaviourists in the West. However, in many respects he went further than the behaviourists. While endorsing the latter's critique of the disciplinary boundaries and their constraining effect on an unambiguous appraisal of social reality, he emphasises the unitary base of all 'disciplines': a fact which was more *or* less lost to the uni-disciplinary or the multi-disciplinary approach to understanding reality. In order to remove the artificial walls erected between disciplines Mukerjee (1960) posited the trans-disciplinary approach for an unequivocal and comprehensive appraisal of social reality. As per his integrated approach, discipline-specific boundaries become redundant as a unitary base of social science as the discipline is firmly established for all specializations in its realm to contribute equally importantly. This facilitates an unfragmented appraisal of social reality. In this respect, Mukerjee was professedly influenced by the idealist variety of Hindu philosophy; so that, his ordinal valuation of social reality became more and more synoptic. This tendency in Mukerjee as an academic can be traced from his earlier years, but became more and more pronounced with his maturity, and in his old age (see Mukherjee 1989).

Mukerjee firmly believed that duty, love and goodness are higher spiritual values of a civilisation. He laments, 'For more than three centuries in Europe, ethical thought and practice have been warped by a profound distrust of any moral principles and values not derived from the interests, exigencies and crises of social life, or from the framework folkways, customs and institutions that reflect prior social judgments'. He castigates this firmly established ethical relativism that has been reinforced in the West by 'the logic of subjectivism in philosophy and of evolutionary naturalism in the social sciences and by the Kantian tradition of cleavage between the realm of reason and the realm, of ends and values' (Mukerjee 1964c: 137). To the extent these values guide and shape personality in the everyday business of life and human beings are continually engaged in the search of these values at the level of society, they have to be made subject matter of social sciences. His is a plea for an appreciation of the continuity between personality and universe, social order and cosmic order. He writes:

> Metaphysically, Western civilization has rooted itself in the Greek discovery of man as the measure of things-the absolute value of the individual self or ego. From this stem the notions of the universality of the individual, which is common to all individuals, and of the inalienable subjective rights of the free citizen in democracy, who contains society and civilization in himself. Both his sense of cosmic wholeness and transcendence, and of the unity, continuity and solidarity of men with cosmos is conspicuously weak. The Indian man loves to merge his individual existence, divested of all ego-attributes and values, in the transcendent cosmic process, and there is profound aesthetic and mystical apprehension of the cosmos-total as cherished immediate experience. *There is no civilization like India's where the individual seeks a personal, immediate cognition of the One-and-Real and cosmos, beyond all dogmas, doctrines and symbols, and undertakes long and strenuous discipline and contemplation for this realization with courage and renunciation* (Mukerjee 1964c: 93; emphasis mine).

This belief animated Mukerjee's attempt to synthesise theories and concepts through a close collaboration of sciences of life, mind and society so that a general theory of society can be developed. For him, society is not divisible. It is a total institution

comprising habits, values and symbols. No wonder, he envisages a master science of society that includes the human ecological theory, sociological theory and the theory of values and symbols. In macroscopic terms, his master science unites various social sciences and fills the gap between the various islands of theoretical knowledge. In his studies of regions, he has tried to pursue an integrated social science approach where the walls that keep the different social sciences in watertight compartments crumble down. According to him, only 'a blend of the philosophical-normative with the scientific-empirical methods and principles can properly interpret the dynamic interchange between Person-Values and Cosmos in their progressive convergence in the coming world civilization'. He faults the dominance of natural science methods and principles in the study of human civilization. It is this dominance that is responsible for 'a strangely shallow and sophisticated theory of ethical and cultural relativism now ruling in social science' (Mukerjee 1964c: viii).

He asserts that man lives in a multi-dimensional environment. Values and symbols are synthetic products of the human mind that enhance, elevate and refine social relations and processes and bind men together in ever-expanding, ever-deepening participation and communication. Society is nothing but an organisation and accumulation of values that define and govern the structure of personality. A society in order to persist must regularly fulfil the supreme values of personality. Viewed thus, a civilization needs a social science theory of full and integrated personality and of free and universal society. Expectedly, he integrates the study of social values within a general theory of society. His theory of society is no less informed by his interest in the bearing of religion on the health of human institutions. That is why, mysticism as a recurring theme permeates much of his writings. Through his consistent advocacy of the study of values, Mukerjee, of necessity, also offers us a critique of the modern secular culture as the ultimate foundation of social

scientific knowledge.

Essentially, Mukerjee's conceptualisation of a general theory of society integrating values of society, culture and personality is broader than the science of sociology itself. Sociology, in this reckoning, is nothing but an aspect of the general theory of society. His ultimate goal is to accomplish a unity of social sciences based on an infinite, superhuman, and super-social frame of reference. Naturally, here is an approach which combines empirical and scientific viewpoints with philosophical and artistic. While admitting religion as faith in the permanence of values, Mukerjee endeavours to evolve a social philosophy that bridges the gap between the biological and the moral man, and man and society and between the philosophy of science and the science of values. Thus, Mukerjee's distinctive approach to the study of society, culture and individual testifies to the breadth of his intellectual scope and vision.

The next chapter contextualises Mukerjee's intellectual sensibility and his distinctive understanding of the East-West contrast in relation to the unfolding of colonial modernity in India. The way Indian intelligentsia encountered the West has had definitive implications for the constitution of different knowledge domains including social sciences. In particular, one's orientation to tradition has had the definite imprint of one's understanding of the West.

Viewed thus, the next chapter enlarges the scope of discussion by going beyond the usual sociology of knowledge literature and grafts some of the concerns of the social history of ideas on to the discussion presented therein. The parameters of discussion include larger issues of knowledge production, the nature of colonial mediation, the resuscitation of traditionalism as an ideology, the quest for a historical self, the nationalist framing of cultural identity and through it all the ambivalence of the Indian mind.

NOTES

1. To understand the particular articulation of such a tendency in colonial Bengal see Swarupa Gupta's (2009) masterly work entitled *Notions of Nationhood in Bengal: Perspectives on Samaj, c. 1867-1905.*
2. For a counter-view see Dirks 1992.
3. See Metcalf 1998
4. Bhudev believed that the Asian societies shared a set of values which were essentially different from those of Europe: 'In Asia ethical norms dominate; in Europe there is an excessive pursuit of material pleasures. In Asia, especially India, the tradition is one of forbearance; in Europe, both tradition and usage is geared to the pursuit of self-interest' (cited in Raychaudhuri 1987: 26-27).Indeed, a purposive exploration of western culture is part of the new weltanchuang, which in turn is an outcome of nineteenth century intellectual history in Bengal. In a large measure, in such explorations, the West and East dichotomy is equated with that of materialism and spiritualism, respectively.
5. Mukerjee states (1968: 81),
   In Eastern religions and moralities human affections and tendernesses, cosmic in their sweep and depth, are, to be sure, ways to the Real and the Absolute. Cultivated and magnified constantly and assiduously through systematic yogic discipline, these erase the distinction between the self, other and love, and lead to the realization of the metaphysical Real — Atman, Brahman or Void — and the achievement of the unlimited community of mankind and of cosmos (*communitatus communitatum*).

Chapter 6

Western Modernity and the Ambivalence of the Indian Mind

Much has been written about the trajectory and implications of colonial modernity in relation to the emerging intelligentsia in the nineteenth and early twentieth century India. A disproportionate share of such writings concerns themselves with the nature and character of Indian renaissance. Mostly an outcome of the work done by intellectual and cultural historians, they attempt to bring out the nuances of the stances vis-à-vis Western culture taken by the key intellectual and cultural figures. Cumulatively, they help us unpack the hitherto prevalent categories of 'traditionalists', 'revivalists, 'modernist', 'progressive', 'orthodox', 'heterodox' that have frequently been used in available literature to pigeonhole historical protagonists. Not only do they render such binaries problematic but they also help us transgress the simplistic dichotomous framework of 'Western impact-Indian response' in relation to the larger historical processes at work. While offering fresh insights into the making of intellectual-cultural sensibility in colonial India, they open up new ways of examining the processes of knowledge production in a colonial setting. Their appreciation of wider intellectual currents compels us to revisit the most basic narratives and the ways in which knowledge has been configured in a colonised context.

However, such works centre mostly on litterateurs (for example, Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay),[1] essayists (Bhudev Mukhopadhyay and Akshay Kumar Dutt),[2] social reformers (Rammohan Roy and Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar),[3] religious

preachers (Ramkrishna Paramhansa and Vivekananda) and political leaders (Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru).[4] Very few of them take as their subject matter what we call today as social scientists or social science professionals.[5] Even when they do, they remain circumscribed by the demands of the narrowly-conceived disciplinary histories.[6] Beyond token acknowledgement of the colonial-nationalist context, they exemplify the usual protocols of intellectual history in the tradition of Skinner and John Adam.[7]

This chapter moves away from the narrow confines of the disciplinary history of Indian sociology and the place accorded to Radhakamal Mukerjee's work in that particular history. It explores the larger context that impinged on the production of knowledge in general and social sciences in particular. To the extent that social sciences in the early twentieth century India were hardly seen as finished products, such an exercise can tell us a lot about pathways taken (and not taken) by our intellectual forbearers and their bearings on the contemporary practices of the discipline. At a time when social sciences were taking shape as distinct academic disciplines in colonial educational set up, it would be worthwhile to learn about their historical framing as 'uncertain transplants' (Saberwal 1982) and to assess the possibilities of transcendence of the aforesaid colonial legacy. It affords us the historical context against which the later set of concerns around ethnocentrism, indigeneity and nativism can be examined (Chapter 7). To reiterate that as formative disciplines, social sciences in India have been deeply embedded in colonial-nationalist zeitgeist is not enough. At a time when colonialism is being relativised as merely 'one form of othering among others, albeit a uniquely powerful and profoundly influential one' (Uberoi *et al* 2007: 21), it is imperative to look at the contact with the West as a crucial factor in the transformation of modern Indian sensibilities.

The West as Metaphor

Among the historians, Tapan Raychaudhuri (1999) has devoted consistent scholarly attention to the ramifications of this contact with the West. Contra Srinivas's notion of Westernisation, Raychaudhuri (1999: 4) considers the changes traceable to the contact with the West as the end result of processes which went far deeper than 'mere imitation, borrowing or amalgamation of disparate cultural traits'. To him, the West acted like a catalyst triggering off responses and reactions which acquired a life of their own. And, the results, 'manifest in new ways of thinking, feeling and action, were very different from their counterparts in the Indian past or the contemporary Western experience'. According to him, the Western experience was mediated by three mutually overlapping areas of social and cultural experience: over-all perceptions of Western civilization, interpretations of colonial rule, and responses to western critiques of Indian life and culture. Evidently then, when one looks at the West, one has to factor in this complex set of cumulatively generated emotional affects which informed attitudes and action of those segments of Indian intelligentsia that lived through this encounter with the West.

It is a truism that from the early decades of the nineteenth century, an informed awareness of the West became an overpowering presence in the consciousness of educated Indians. Equally true is the fact that the British or the English came to be seen as surrogates for European (*ibid.* 24). Concomitantly, the particular experience of colonialism on the part of Indian intelligentsia led to an anxiety to recover a glorious past. This angst-ridden process of the retrieval of the golden past and the glorious indigenous traditions would have been difficult without the reigning presence of the discoveries of Orientalism. To put it differently, the nationalist agendas for cultural reconstruction and the collective urge and endeavour

to articulate them, and attempt their realisation, were deeply implicated in colonial encounter.

However, Raychaudhuri stops short of granting omnipotence to the colonial experience in the context of India's historic encounter with the West. He traces two distinct components in the valuation of Europe —'one embodying the world-view and value-systems of the old civilizations, unaffected by the encounter with the West; the other reflecting the complex, varied and highly nuanced evaluations by people whose outlook had been affected profoundly from the catalytic impact of the same encounter' (*ibid.* 22). He asserts, 'for one thing, the Orientalists did not see the civilizations of Asia exclusively as Europe's other, nor did they de-emphasize altogether the shared inheritance of mankind. *Contact with the West and the experience of colonial rule are two analytically separable historical categories*, though the impact of the two overlapped and interacted in multiple ways' (*ibid.* 27; emphasis mine).

Yet, what remains undeniable is the idea of the basic superiority of European culture that engendered the pressing sense of an enquiry into the needs and possibilities of Indian society in the light of perceived deficiency in the indigenous culture. This necessitated a fundamental recasting of the protocols of cultural apperception. As a matter of fact, the primacy of reason as the basis of social and individual life captured the imagination of the new intelligentsia. If India was to measure up to the standards set by the advanced Western nations, reason and rational enquiry had to be accorded the pride of place in the Indian scheme of things.[8] Thereafter, the rational assessment of current needs and received traditions, both indigenous and alien, became the hallmark of Bengali thought in the Nineteenth century. Thinkers like Akshay Datta started looking at the pursuit of reason and knowledge as developed in Europe as a way out of the then prevalent cultural impasse (Dutta-Gupta 2007). In fact, hardly any Bengali intellectual remained unaffected by Positivist philosophy around this time (Forbes 1975).

Thus, the colonial encounter brought in its wake the explosive potentialities of a new epistemology that increasingly acquired a measure of autonomy. Indeed, the new Indian way of looking at things was more than a simple synthesis of western and Indian traditions. It was incredibly new, 'a product of a specific historical experience of cultural encounter which had a catalytic impact on the perceptions and preferences of the Indian literati' (Raychaudhuri 1999: 28).[9] As Raychaudhuri (1987) rightly notes, the public discourse in the nineteenth-century Bengal is suffused with the continual references to western models as norms, either to be accepted or rejected. More importantly, 'the psychological need for cultural self-assertion induced inevitably a quest for the limitations of European culture — of evidence to prove that they were no better than us' (*ibid.* 2).

It is disconcerting that Raychaudhuri looks at the contact with a totally different culture and colonial rule as two separate, yet mutually overlapping, historical experiences. He proclaims, 'perhaps the most interesting features of the Bengali concern with western civilization are those which have no casual links with the fact of colonialism and are traceable instead to an uncharted arena of the group mind — the selective and eccentric curiosity about other societies' (*ibid.* 3-4). He does not regard the burgeoning interest in Europe's life and culture as a joyless pursuit. The question is if colonialism as a structure ever yields to the colonised that autonomous space to pursue joyfully 'the selective and eccentric curiosity about other societies'. This parcelling out of the encounters between different cultures as a domain analytically separate from the circumstances of political domination does not sit easily with the burgeoning nationalist consciousness that was informed powerfully by an emphasis on the retrieved Hindu identity from the classical past. He concedes that 'a clearly articulated nationalist ideology was very much a part of elite consciousness in Bengal in the latter half of the nineteenth century' (*ibid.* 3-4). One wonders if this nationalist consciousness contained elements of usual cultural curiosity. In effect, Western culture was a culture of the

conquerors. Western culture in colonial India was not just any *other* culture. It represented the civilizational superiority of the imperialists and the moral, cultural, and spiritual degradation of the vanquished (Bhattacharya 2011: 60-62). Such a power-laden and structurally asymmetrical historical context can hardly be seen as conducive to dialogue and reciprocity and facilitative of unmediated cultural curiosity about each other.

Understandably, the emergence of Hindu revivalism too was not an innocuous politically-neutral response to the benign presence of Western culture. True, these revivalists, like many Indians of their time, shared the psychological need to assert the superiority of the inherited tradition in relation to the established superiority of Western culture. But this was not bereft of colonial mediation which rendered the total surrender to the materialistic civilization of the West morally unacceptable to a large number of Indians. Raychaudhuri (1987: 8) concedes that 'this particular manifestation of national sentiment invariably coloured all perceptions of the west'. Given the context, it is difficult to accede to Raychaudhuri's claim that 'nationalism, and its multiple expressions were, however not the only determinants of Bengali perceptions of the west' (*ibid.*9). His attempt at creating a trans-national cultural perception of the west underplays the all-encompassing nature of colonialism that reworks the culture of the colonised in irreversible ways through its own distinctive forms of knowledge (Dirks 1992). However, there is no denying that Indian intelligentsia generally perceived Europe 'as the essence of one aspect of the human mind' for the express purpose of condemning that essence. In their delineation of the historical significance of their encounter with the West, they unselfconsciously blurred the distinction between 'the West as a metaphor' and 'the West as a historical category' (Bhattacharya 2011: 59). And this blurring of the conceptual boundaries has had consequences that continue to inform contemporary debates on knowledge production in social

sciences in India as it shaped the reception of the West amidst colonial intelligentsia in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Arguably, the blurring of the distinction between 'the West as a metaphor' and 'the West as a historical category' can very well be seen as a strategic act on the part of the colonial literati and the nationalist leaders. Mahatma Gandhi's *Hind Swaraj* (1909) is a classic case of the wholesale use of the West as a metaphor (Bhattacharya 2011: 47-67). The use of the West as a metaphor paved the way for the essentialist representation of the West. And it is in the very nature of essentialism to contain sweeping generalisations, oversimplification of attributes, and the reduction of a vast and complex civilization to few essences. This essentialism enabled the literati to ignore contrary intellectual and philosophical trends within the occidental civilization. Nationalist leaders like Gandhi highlighted only those aspects of the West that would call for moral rejection by one and all. This was the only intellectual recourse that was open to them to cope with the historical situation of subjugation. Inevitably, one finds pervasive use of this strategy by the leaders and intellectuals of the colonised nations across the board (see Mishra 2012). It is the metaphoric use of the West that would help characterise West as a civilizational entity 'which creates machines to subordinate Nature, that which drives man as *homo economicus* to endless consumption, that which acquires power for its own sake in the spheres of economy and politics and knowledge' (Bhattacharya 2011: 59). Very often, against this representation of the West, another essentialist representation of the East would get posited and endowed with opposite values.

On the other hand, the acknowledgement of the West as a historical reality exposes one's knowledge to ambiguities and complexities of its history and culture. One would then be compelled to enter the domain of empirically verifiable descriptive statements about realities, both Western and Eastern. It would demand judgements of other kinds. In this case, the

outright condemnation of a civilization would not do. It would call for an engagement with the particularities within that civilization and one may find many elements in a given civilization that would be worthy of regard and even emulation. We know too well that our forebears straddled the two uses of the West depending on the context and the objectives that they wished to achieve. In a way, it was this duality of their engagement that offered them the requisite cultural space to manoeuvre where they could come up with their own rhetoric of the classical, the indigenous, the native and the like. Viewed thus, the indigenous and the traditional, nay, the very idea of the authenticity of a civilization and the idea of an inside of a culture, get discursively framed within the parameters laid down by the West.

Nationalism and the Defence of the Cultural Tradition

Of necessity, nationalism for the colonial intelligentsia was much more than an anti-colonial political project. It was the cumulative fountainhead of a historical churning that found expression in a variety of domains including ideology and culture. The historically inevitable reception of the West 'through a process of filtration engendered by colonial domination' (Panikkar 1995: 53) simultaneously created the desire to foreground 'the ideological base of a modern society, distinct from the traditional and the colonial' (*ibid.*56). This perspective enables us to see the anti-colonial consciousness as an embodiment of collective elaboration of an ideology which would counter both the traditional and the colonial. And, precisely this is the source of their ambivalence. They are historically constrained to draw upon the elements represented by both. Evidently, theirs is not an endeavour to return to 'tradition per se but rather an attempt to challenge and deny the pretended supremacy of the culture of the colonizer as well as to reassert the cultural identity of the colonized' (*ibid.*78).

In other words, the cultural choices before the colonial intelligentsia are not only historically determined but are also enforced by the inescapable contradiction between the colonised society and the colonial power. In this light, their defence of the indigenous turns out to be a consequence of colonial cultural intrusion. It does not appear on the historical stage as a voluntary act. The compulsions of an identity quest congeal in their celebration of the indigenous, the authentic, and the traditional. As K.N. Panikkar rightly argues, 'the tendency to rely on the vitality of traditional culture and to reinterpret it to meet the requirements of contemporary society was a part of this quest. It represented not cultural revivalism, but cultural defence' (*ibid.* 84). Indeed, it is hasty to brand such attempts as reactionary and revivalist. True, there is incessant invocation and reinterpretation of the past. But, this is not a call to the golden millennium as found in some messianic movements. It was not inherently regressive. Rather, it was a potent means of cultural assertion and communitarian self-strengthening. In no way, their vision of the future was a prisoner of their glorious invocation of the past.

All the same, nor was their vision a replication of the western model divorced from the cultural specificity of the Indian civilization. Despite their exposure to the historical antecedents of a bourgeois society in the West, they did not envisage social transformation in India along those lines. The premium they placed on the rootedness in the cultural traditions of the land has been the defining feature of the processes of intellectual transformation in colonial times. In this sense, the apparent articulation of 'nativism' is the sure sign of cultural defence than cultural revival. As a complex phenomenon, it deserves to be seen 'not just an attempt at religious revival and glorification, but an intellectual enquiry into the past, embracing almost every field of social, cultural and political endeavour' (*ibid.* 101).

It is incumbent on us to be mindful of this inherent

contradiction in the nature of intellectual transformation in colonial India before rushing for value judgements. There was no simple cultural struggle between the competing visions of the Western bourgeois ideology or traditional culture. Nay, the uninhibited interaction between the two was also negated by the mediation of colonial culture. In such a milieu, it was but natural for the Indian mind to increasingly turn inward. Only then could they attempt to prove Indian superiority in a variety of fields of human accomplishments. It gave them that promise of a future that was not indexed by their abominable present. They could imaginatively display their capabilities and potential in a framework of assiduously acquired historical self-confidence.

Whereas the attempted recasting of tradition and the selective appropriation of the restructured cultural complex were seen as necessary prerequisites for the realisation of the nationalist potential, at times, it generated its own excesses. For instance, in the specific case of such debates in sociology in India, Kewal Motwani(1971) in his book *Towards Indian Sociology* claims that *Manu Smriti* is 'the ancient science of social life and synthesis, known in India as Dharma Shastra' (1971: 127). Not just another intellectual discipline for liberal education, it is to be retrieved as the art and science of nation-building. While claiming that Auguste Compte was influenced by Manu's *Dharma Shastra*, he looks at 'India as the creator and sustainer of the integral, dharmic, sociological view of man and society' (*ibid.* 110). He proclaims, 'the basis of Indian culture is dharma, synthesis, spiritual, intellectual, temporal, and in every mode of life and in every branch of human knowledge. Further, any temporasing (sic) with the study of this basis of Indian culture or instruction in it, its modern version being sociology, is a clear traitorship to India and all that she stands for' (*ibid*. xiii). In fact, Motwani's is an exceptional case of such an unambiguous understanding of India, Indian culture and Indian sociology.[10] As a rule, the general run of scholarship on Indian

history and culture, especially in terms of India's encounter with the West, reveals a much more ambivalent legacy.

The Ambivalent Legacy

Although the division of intellectual labour that followed in the wake of the diverse trajectories of the various forms of colonialisms was not uniform, a discernible pattern emerged. Conceptual, theoretical work that sought to universalise its findings from particular, provincial locations was the preserve of the colonial scholars. Knowledge produced by scholars located in the colonised societies had a particular geographical referent, constituted a case study and hence had no theoretical contributions to make, except indirectly in its role as raw material for abstract theorising by colonial scholars. In the case of sociology in particular, the specific division of intellectual labour that emerged over the course of time had very well-defined characteristics. A few notable exceptions notwithstanding, knowledge produced by scholars located in metropolitan societies was deemed to be general and universal in their implication regardless of how local or provincial their terms of reference might be. At the same time, social scientific knowledge produced in locations considered 'peripheral' in the overall intellectual landscape is generally regarded as a specific case study with little if any general implications. In general, titles of books and articles analysing non-metropolitan societies usually always identify the society or location. Conversely, titles of papers and books discussing metropolitan societies rarely disclose the location of research, presumably because the spatial or cultural coordinates of the study are irrelevant since the claims advanced by such accounts are not about a particular society or culture. Interestingly enough, sometimes it is the spatial location of the researcher and not the site of research that confers a universalistic gloss on the knowledge thus produced. Hence, if a scholar situated in a

metropolitan location studies a non-metropolitan society or community, the knowledge thus produced is generally considered to be universal and general in its implications (Baber 2003: 618).

In the more specific case of Indian anthropology and sociology, Veena Das (2006: 192) interprets ethnographic or sociological text on India as containing at least three kinds of dialogues — that with the Western traditions of scholarship in the discipline; with the Indian sociologist and anthropologist; and with the 'informant', whose voice is present either as information obtained in the field or as the written texts of tradition. She adds:

> For the western anthropologist, it is a part of modern enlightenment values to comprehend the values of other culture intellectually. This intellectual attempt poses no threat to his present values, for 'the otherness' of alien cultures can supposedly remain hermetically sealed from the life-world of the anthropologist. ...for the Indian anthropologist, however, there is no possibility of participation in the demystification of the 'universalist', 'objectified' categories of Western sociology by showing traces of an alien culture in the making of these categories. Thus the possibility of transcending his own ideology through an intellectual appropriation of other values is open to the Western anthropologist, but the Indian anthropologist has no legitimate way of applying the same method to the ideology of his culture. The knowledge categories of non-Western cultures are simply unanchored beliefs, while Western categories have the status of scientific and objective truths. The future of a sociology rooted in the values of a culture different from the West's is already foreclosed, for it is known beforehand that such a sociology is fascist or 'neo-Hindu', 'provincial' or 'backward'. In this way, the fate of Indian systems of knowledge is sealed. They have a place in the history of ideas; they can be intellectually apprehended to provide the means by which 'we' of the West can transcend of limits of 'our' ideology, but they are not resources for the construction of knowledge systems inhabited by the modern Indian. Other cultures acquire legitimacy only as objects of thought, never as instruments of thought (Das 2006: 192).

Her discomfort with the role of the Indian sociologist as that of an informant is revealing of her general critique of the conditions for participating in the making of a sociological discourse. Such a discourse, for the non-Western anthropologist,

presupposes an active renunciation of the contemporary possibilities within her own culture (Das 2006: 197). Gopal Guru and Sundar Sarukkai (2012) shift the focus away from the global academy. While taking note of the reactive mores characterising social theories in/of non-Western societies, they foreground colonisation of the mind as a fundamental impediment to the growth of original and creative reflections on the nature of diverse Indian experiences. They lament the uncritical inheritance of theories from the Continental and Anglo-American traditions. Such an approach downplays the problem of understanding 'our' experiences through 'our' framework. We always make sense of 'our' experiences through 'their' framework. This incongruity is indeed a problem of great urgency for societies like India where there is an acute need to seriously engage with some Indian intellectual traditions to generate new ideas and vocabulary for describing contemporary experiences.

In their reading, the myth of universal theories is not only an undesirable burden for Indian scholarship but it also masks a deluge of theories from the West. At the same time, Indian scholars remain untrained in and unexposed to Indian and other non-Western intellectual traditions. Theirs is in no way 'a call to completely depend on ancient, medieval, and modern Indian intellectual resources (although the West has done exactly this in drawing *only* upon ancient Greek and later European and Anglo-American thinkers!) but is a call to integrate different ways of knowing and thinking by drawing on intellectual resources from all parts of the world' (Guru and Sarukkai 2012: 150). Their unease with the prevalence of 'a huge asymmetry between the use of conceptual resources of the 'theoretical West' as against those from the 'empirical East' as well as a great asymmetry between representations of the non-West by Westerners and the representations of the West by non-Westerners' is revealing of the inherited intellectual legacy of the Indian intelligentsia.

Of course, this asymmetry is not merely a function of the absence of a democratic exchange of world views, ideas, and concepts in contemporary practices charactering social sciences. Neither is this an outcome of lack of receptivity and inclination for learning on the part of metropolitan social scientists. The roots go much deeper in history and the reasons are structural. They explain the dismissal of the availability of theory in Indian traditions by thinkers ranging from Hegel to Gadamer, through Husserl by remarking that 'theory was used to legitimise the superiority of the European societies with respect to the colonized ones'. It was frequently claimed that the colonisers had theory while the colonised did not possess the capacity for doing theory.

Impliedly, the overall neglect, both within and outside, of Indian intellectual traditions in social theorising stems from the ambivalence of the Indian mind towards colonial modernity. There continues to be excessive dependence on philosophical concepts drawn from European experiences to understand and theorize experiences that characterize Indian societies and cultures. And, this persistent deployment of the conceptual vocabulary often derived from other theoretical traditions to describe 'Indian' experiences fails to project itself as a fundamental problem of knowledge production. Notwithstanding increasing critique of Western ethnocentrism, this act of borrowing continues apace in the belief that concepts and theories are universal.

Interestingly, Mukerjee's work challenges this pedestrian idea that what holds good for one description is potentially usable for a description of another society. His life-long mission has been to demonstrate the inadequacies of many a Western notions to capture the distinctive phenomena characteristic of Indian experience and culture. Sure enough, he was set against any easy appropriation of theoretical structures from the West. More importantly, he never bought the prevailing wisdom that concepts derived from Indian contexts are specific to the

contexts they originate from, and thus, cannot attain universal applicability. On the contrary, he imbued Indian concepts with the same universal ambitions that have been the preserve of western concepts and theoretical traditions. Yet, Mukerjee would hardly be considered a thinker or theorist in the Western sense of the term. He would remain confined to the domain of the particular and the empirical, not the conceptual and the theoretical. For example, the contemporary debate about embedded economies would abound with references to Karl Polanyi. But, one would never come across a single reference to Mukerjee despite his valuable contributions to the field.[11]

In fact, unlike Veena Das, Gopal Guru and Sundar Sarukkai do not accord their attention to the practices of the Western academia alone. They bring under their analytical gaze the practices of Indian social scientists 'who continue the myth that western theories have as good, if not better, a capacity to describe Indian experiences as compared to 'indigenous' concepts, histories and narratives' (Guru and Sarukkai 2012: 150-51). The indifference to Indian theoretical attempts and traditions is as much a problem from within as from without. Indian scholars are equally complicit in the general neglect of intellectual traditions not only about India but non-Western societies in general. In such a scenario, it comes out as an intellectually daring act on the part of Radhakamal Mukerjee that he continuously deployed resources from Indian and other Eastern (specifically Chinese) intellectual traditions to make sense of the phenomena and processes that inhabited his world and his times. Instead, he made attempts to render these resources as part of the universal conceptual repertoire of global social sciences and hardly thought that they are not on par with the Western theories in terms of their universality and explanatory power.

As a matter of fact, the presence of sociologist like Radhakamal Mukerjee has not altered 'the derivative status of theory making in India' (*ibid.* 224). Despite Mukerjee, and

despite the all-pervasive realisation of foregrounding indigenous intellectual resources, even now we tend to look to European sources as a default mode. Other intellectual traditions hardly fire the creative imagination of the contemporary breed of scholars. Theorising remains an exclusive and geo-political enterprise, to be zealously guarded in its secure environs and not be allowed to reach the local level. No wonder then that 'Western philosophical and intellectual vocabulary, drawn and developed from an engagement with their special experiences become part of a universal discourse applicable to all societies whereas similar vocabulary — even if developed from non-western societies—are at the most applicable only to those societies' (*ibid*. 223). In effect, Indian social scientists have become consumers of the knowledge games of the Western academic world and are not seen as equal partners in this enterprise. The startling absence of Indian thinkers in encyclopaedias, intellectual biographies, and in textbooks, as Guru and Sarukkai note, is testimony to the charge that Western academics do not see Indian theory as having a stake in their discourse. The Western academy's 'unreasonable indifference' to work from non-Western societies seriously circumscribes democratic participation in the creation of 'universal' theoretical frameworks. Our dependence on the West remains unshakeable for we need acceptance by the West of our theoretical capabilities to describe Indian experiences.

Notwithstanding these persistent asymmetries in terms of knowledge production and dissemination, it is noteworthy that the writings of Radhakamal Mukerjee exhibit distinct considerations of Indian and Eastern cultural traditions and its transformations. As Saurabh Dube (2007: 1-73) notes, such articulations were equally enmeshed with inherently varied articulations of the terms of history and civilization of India (*ibid.*17).[12] It is a different matter that with the passage of time an increasingly specialised practice of the anthropology/ sociology of India has made such engagements appear as

antiquated knowledge. Indeed, tracking the specific and shifting ways in which notions and understandings of tradition, history and civilization were played out in the writings of the first generation of sociologists has the potential to unravel the archival lineaments of Indian anthropology and sociology. Dube is right on the mark, and no one can have disagreement with him that such an attempt to engage with the forebears need not be a simple celebration and eulogisation of their scholarship. Instead, it is imperative to trace 'their constitutive considerations and contradictions, their formative ambivalences and excesses' (*ibid.*17).

Even if one is not convinced about the presence of a distinctive paradigmatic tradition in Radhakamal Mukerjee's work, the fact remains that the efflorescence of more synchronic studies after the 1950s (under the influence of M. N. Srinivas) rendered earlier understandings of history, civilization and tradition as the speculative procedures and common-sense projections. As a consequence, Mukerjee's work, and those of his colleagues at Lucknow University, became marginal, if not obsolete altogether, to the mainstream practices of the discipline. Not only did these works impart a culturally rooted historical sensibility to the practices of sociology and anthropology but also foregrounded a new set of presuppositions, conjectures and analytic pathways regarding Indian civilization and history. They displayed the promise of the making of a reverse anthropological gaze to make sense of the difference that European social theory necessarily gave rise to. One can borrow Sudipta Kaviraj's formulation used in another context to argue that Mukerjee's work exemplified 'the need for historical reflection as the originary moment for the beginning of social theory—mandated to enable Indians to grasp the truth of European modernity from 'the other side, a Hindu historical sociology of European modernity' (Kaviraj 2007: 261). In his evocative phrase, it embodied a 'new agenda of reflexivity, understanding their own history in the path, and the new,

external, unwanted, but still unavoidable history in which colonialism has placed them'(Kaviraj 2007: 278).[13]

On the other hand, Yogendra Singh (2007: 175), taking a much more restricted understanding of sociology, finds the new agenda of reflexivity reactive and derivative of the colonial perceptions of the Indian realities. He does not find in them the churnings of an indigenous social theory. According to him, they were attempts 'to bring in modifications to western misrepresentations of the Indian society and civilization and contained both adaptive and exclusionary approaches'. At most, these varied intellectual responses could only constitute a pre-sociological paradigm. For Singh, Western enlightenment ideology is the key to an understanding of the nature of sociology as a discipline (*ibid.*161). He takes the sets of conditions (e.g., institutionalisation as an academic discipline in the universities, empirical research, methodological rigour and the like) for the transition from pre-sociology to sociology as a given, and thereby finds epistemological inadequacy in the writings of the first generation of sociologists at Lucknow. In his words, 'on the logical and methodological issues of social sciences and sociology, however there exists a tendency of critical acceptance, an alternative discourse not shaping up to a systematic level lacking empirical observations and systematic societal vision' (*ibid.*178). Moreover, Singh is too tied up with the idea of the institutionalisation of sociology as a separate academic discipline to do full justice to the assessment of contributions of scholars like Radhakamal Mukerjee. Not surprisingly, his numerous accounts of the history of the discipline do nothing more than placing such contributions under the rubric of philosophical approach. It falls short of exploring the fundamental asymmetries constituting the theoretical discourse of the social sciences in India. His consistent invocation of sociology of knowledge perspective though underlines the fact that sociology in the Indian context has been a political enterprise in the fundamental sense of the

term. Any exercise in disciplinary history has to look at the ways in with scholarly practices in Indian sociology have been subservient to the dominant ideologies of the day. Nationalism has certainly been one of them. But, the feigned universality of Western theory, and its wider acceptance by the practitioners in non-Western settings, has been no less constitutive of sociological enterprise in India.[14]

Curiously enough, Mukerjee's writings corresponded quite closely with the trends of sociological writings in the West, particularly in the United States of America notwithstanding his brave attempts to establish a unified theory of society based on eastern values (Singh, 1984: 157). True, he was not dazed by the theoretical sophistication of the Western conceptual baggage and has exhibited exemplary sensitivity to the ideological character of Western social sciences. Even, in one of his earlier works, *The Foundations of Indian Economics* (1916: 330), he is categorical in asserting the cultural specificities of systems of knowledge: 'The attempt to force systems and methods of industrial organisation, economic arrangement and institutions which have admirably suited a different geographical environment will always be futile'. Also, like many of his generation steeped in colonial modernity, he thought that the realm of values alone offered an arena for self-search as also for mobility aspirations. This was a dominant intellectual response on the part of Indian intelligentsia as the only way to bear, and probably escape, the burden of alien colonial presence. The irreconcilable binary of a material West and a spiritual East was not only soothing but also helped construct a golden (and recoverable) past (see Chatterjee 1986). This binary also helped Indian intelligentsia to respond sceptically to the Western ideological formulations on India. More often than not, their response was imbued with an acute sense of history and an intense consciousness of tradition.

In the domain of the academia, the substantive and intellectual concerns were deeply influenced by the nationalist debates on

the pros and cons of the Western colonial presence. It was generally believed that the meta-concepts of social sciences derived from the West to interpret Indian society did not have relevance for the abstractions from a different culture cannot be applied to the Indian society. Mukerjee's synthesis of Vedantic philosophy with Hegelian dialectics should be seen in this context.

A deep sense of ambivalence towards Western social sciences is as true for Mukerjee as for his contemporaries and followers alike. Arguably, the great bulk of the nineteenth century social scientific studies in India originating from Western sources (with the exception of the Orientalists) tended to deny, rather than affirm, the identity of India as a nation. Without negating this colonial legacy lock, stock and barrel, Mukerjee and his fellow social scientists continued to function within the broad parameters of social sciences laid down by the western metropolitan centres. Thus, we see the paradox of the national self-awareness on the one hand and the dependence upon the Western tradition of social science on the other as a central feature of Indian social scientist's contributions, including Mukerjee's.

We know from the work of cultural historians like Sudhir Chandra (1992) that as colonialism progressed, an increasing engagement with the West necessitated a discovery of the indigenous and the authentic in our own culture. The political project of nationalism demanded a solid anchorage in a classical civilizational past and a sense of belonging to a culture with deep historicity, if not a timeless one. The nature and direction of social change unleashed during the colonial rule generated a series of conscious efforts on the part of Indians to create, to retrieve, to invent, and to belong to their 'national' culture. In other words, colonial period saw two simultaneous processes at work: the sustained creation of the indigenous along with the sustained critique of the West.

For the majority of the 'enlightened' Indians, neither an

unquestioning rejection of modernity nor a blind advocacy of the indigenous seemed to provide the way out of the cultural impasse which they lived and experienced as a colonially subjugated lot. True, cultural closure was not their ideal. It would be labouring the obvious to argue that they were neither mesmerised by the West and nor by indigenous cultural moorings *in toto* even when they acutely felt a strong alienation from their own tradition and culture. The point to be noted is that the tradition they wished to belong to was not a pristine and pure tradition but a newly created tradition —a tradition that they consciously created under the weight of the given historical conjunctures. We should not forget that it was colonial mediation that helped create in Indian minds an idea of a traditional India.[15] Therefore, to read the Indian mind of the colonial times calls for an acknowledgement of the historically generated cultural ambivalences. The colonised Indian mind was neither resigned to uncritical acquiescence to Western modernity nor to its disproportionate valorisation at the expense of tradition.

Moreover, the very framework of (indigenous) tradition and (western) modernity has an inherent danger of charactering the lived experiences in terms of invented categories people themselves might not be familiar with. It amounts to explaining past events, happenings, beliefs and attitudes in terms of invented categories. Indian responses to the Western modernity, as also to the indigeneity and traditional culture, need not to be seen as exclusive options. The acceptance of the one did not mean automatic rejection of the other or *vice versa*. Most of the educated Indians exhibited a certain mixture of the two. This pragmatic approach towards their existential dilemma does not obliterate the momentous epistemological changes unleashed by the Western modernity. These changes, while overshadowing the pre-colonial ways of living and thinking, also imparted to the Indian mind new sense of history and time. As a consequence, Indian intelligentsia, through a process of

selective appropriation, retention and rejection, and reorganisation, could project an indigenous account of Indian tradition and culture for the resumption of the lost self-pride and for challenging the colonial cultural onslaught (Chandra 1992: 6).

The foregoing discussion makes it clear that the contributions of an Indian social scientist are intimately linked by his/her approach and orientation to Western modernity. In this context, it is only appropriate to ask if Mukerjee's conceptual and theoretical innovations should be treated as rejection of Western modernity lock, stock and barrel or only as refutations of Western ethno-social sciences. Against this backdrop, the concluding chapter examines the difficulty of the task of reading Radhakamal Mukerjee today. In an attempt to situate Mukerjee's concerns in the larger context of the history of the discipline, it discusses the complex issues pertaining to the quest for indigeneity in sociology in India. It outlines the emerging challenges to the idea of an indigenous social science in relation to the larger geopolitics of knowledge production. This endeavour is not altogether new though. In fact, sociologists in India have been front-runners in frequently turning their critical gaze on the ethnocentrism of the Western social sciences. They have been unsparing in their criticism of the conceptual categories used by their fellow social scientists which they have found to be 'the precipitates of the Western social, intellectual and particularly academic history that rarely fit Indian definitions of reality' (Marriott 1990:1). Their treatment of Indian cultural realities in Western framework and the attendant imposition of an alien epistemology on Indian reality have at times provoked extreme responses – from the impossibility, as mentioned, of an Indian sociology (Saran 1958) to the calls for an Indian ethno-sociology (Marriott 1990). Needless to add, at the core of such responses is the contestation over one's approach and orientation to Western modernity.

NOTES

1. See Sudipta Kaviraj 1995; Amiya P. Sen 2011
2. See Bhattacharya 2002; Dutta-Gupta 2007; Forbes 1976; Raychaudhuri 1998
3. Amiya P Sen 2011; Joshi 1975; Sen 1977
4. See Patha Chatterjee (1986) on Gandhi and Nehru; Sumit Sarkar (1998) on Ramkrishna Paramhansa; Raychaudhuri (1987) on Vivekananda
5. Swapan Bhattacharya (1990) and Roma Chatterjee (2007) on Benoy Kumar Sarkar, and the collection of essays in *Uberoi et al.* (2007)
6. S.K. Pramanik on G.S.Ghurye, Madan (2013) on sociologists at the University of Lucknow
7. See Brian Cowan's essay (2006: 171-88) 'Intellectual, Social and Cultural History: Ideas in Context'
8. The search for real history of the Bengali people by Bankim and others can very well be seen as part of this realisation.
9. The shift from rationality as a powerful element in the intellectual tradition of modern Bengal to a profound emotionalism by the turn of the nineteenth century has been noted by Swarupa Gupta (2009). The fact is that the milieu in which Radhakamal Mukerjee grew was permeated with an emotionally charged cultural self-assertion.
10. Hardly representative of the conceptualisation of sociology as an academic discipline in India, it is interesting to note the following observation: 'Sociology, as developed in the western world, is unquestionably materialistic since all the basic sciences of which it is a synthesis pursue empirical methods of investigation and are wholly devoted to the physical plane existence' (Motwani 1971: 42). It is instructive to compare and contrast Motwani's quest of an Indian sociology to that of Radhakamal Mukerjee.
11. See, for instance, Humphreys, S.C. 1969. 'History, Economics, and Anthropology: The Work of Karl Polanyi', *History and Theory*, Vol. 8, No. 2, pp. 165-212.
12. This refutes Sabyasachi Bhattacharya's claim that very few Sociologists engaged with the idea of Indian civilization in their scholarly work. See Bhattacharya 2011.
13. Kaviraj (2007) credits Bhudev Mukhopadhyay for grasping the need for a theory of European modernity as essential for the historical survival of Hinduism. He urges us to appreciate the inextricable connection between social theory and anthropological enterprise in colonial times to the extent that the possibility of knowledge of self is predicated upon knowledge of the other. He rhetorically asks if social theory in the modern sense is a forced enterprise.
14. Yogendra Singh's essay (1984) 'The Metaphoric Use of Theory in Indian Sociology', by implication, shows his allegiance to the dominant

understanding of theory in the Western academy.

15. That's why, Tapan Raychaudhuri's (1987) assertion of a traditional Indian displaying usual cultural curiosity about the West sounds so implausible.

Chapter 7

Ethnocentrism and the Quest for an Indigenous Social Science

For quite some time now, social science scholarship in India has been critical of the Eurocentrism of the modern social sciences. The emergence of postcolonial theory and the attendant visibility of diasporic intellectuals in the global academy have lent renewed weight to the project of 'provincializing Europe'. An increasing number of scholars inhabiting diverse locations in the global South have set upon themselves the task of challenging Eurocentrism. Even as they differ in their intellectual strategies, their primary aim continues to be a definite displacement of Europe from its privileged place in contemporary thought and processes of knowledge production. The concerted articulation of such a common agenda, differences in approach among the exponents notwithstanding, has kept the issue of indigeneity alive. Indigeneity has come to be viewed as an epistemic intervention promising meaningful contribution to the production of knowledge apart from its decolonising endeavour. It is seen as an effective antidote to the embedded Euro-centricity of much that passes as social theory. It not only has the potential to contravene globalising hegemonic ideologies but also to act as an enabling construct for the purpose intellectual autonomy and self-determination in the global south. After all, the exhortationary mode used by the advocates of an indigenous social science can very well be seen as a strategy to forcefully reveal the parochialised Western modernity which was sought to be made universal by the particular notions of reason and history.

Indeed, the indigeneity question has relatively been more marked in the case of sociology in India. Some sociologists in India have consistently emphasised the need for 'indigenising' social sciences in the face of uncritical acceptance and application of concepts and theories derived from the West. It would not be an exaggeration to say that indigenisation has been a recurrent concern among them. Some have found this concern as routine in the sense of its coming to the fore with a disconcerting regularity among scholarly forum such as journals, seminars and conferences. To others, it has appeared as a relic of the nationalist past when 'decolonisation of mind' and 'swaraj in ideas' was projected to be worthwhile goals for a post-colonial nation-state. Yet, there have been some for whom the aims and methods of science are universally uniform. Still, others have reflected on 'the problem of science in relation to society' (Uberoi 1968) and have come out with plea for contextualisation (Oommen 2007). The point remains that the concern with 'eurocentricism' and the related plea for indigenisation have been constitutive of the self-identity of the discipline of sociology in India (Mukherji and Sengupta 2004).

Though this work has not gone into the contentious presumptions and entailments of each of these perspectives on what sociology in India has been, and ought to be, the way it has been framed is revealing of the centrality of the indigeneity question in the discourses and contemporary practices of the discipline. Spanning generations, this question has persisted to the extent of generating boredom among the present students of the discipline. This work has briefly outlined the contours of this concern in the works of Radhakamal Mukerjee. One finds Mukerjee ahead of his times as someone who (long before postcolonial theory became the buzzword for radical academics) questioned the historical privileging of Europe in the context of modern social sciences. Not only did he challenge Europe's position of centrality in terms of modern knowledge systems, but also conceived of the alternative frameworks of

understanding human action, meanings and purposes.

Besides, we find the life and times of Radhakamal Mukerjee interesting not because he succeeded in altering the conventional trajectory of the growth and emergence of modern social sciences through his work and academic practices. He is interesting because of his ambiguities. His work reveals a series of antinomies (discussed in the preceding chapters) that brings home the complexity of the challenge that he had set for himself. His career trajectory was hardly a simple narrative of a successful academic championing an indigenous challenge to Western notions of individual, nature, society, culture, civilization and sundry other categories that constitute the foundations of what we learn now under the rubric of social sciences. Mukerjee could not fashion a school in an epistemological sense. He could not attract a critical mass of students and future practitioners of the discipline to follow his path. Indeed, many of them found his path not well-defined — too muddy and confusing to follow. He could not be an academic leader of a newly found discipline setting up signposts for its future growth and expansion: he was no Srinivas, not even Ghurye. The Lucknow school (in popular parlance) today can barely be seen carrying his legacy. If ever there was such a legacy, it is long dissipated. Barring few of his own substantive works, the Lucknow School is scarcely a place to look for empirical works full of theoretical and methodological rigour. So in what ways, reading Mukerjee today is a relevant endeavour for contemporary practitioners of the discipline? We reiterate that Mukerjee is interesting for the type of questions he raised about the academic practices of his times. Reading him is not an exercise in antiquarianism precisely because his questions remain as pertinent today as they were during his times. He is worth studying for the character of his intervention, the courage of his aspiration and the sheer breadth of his interrogation.

Reading Radhakamal Mukerjee Today

In a certain sense, Mukerjee's contributions are forerunner (though hardly recognised as such in the larger landscape of social science scholarship in India) to the works by Dipesh Chakrabarty, Walter Mignolo, Timothy Mitchell and others. The latter works not only contest the dominant accounts of modernity offered by the social sciences, but also demonstrate the rootedness of very concepts through which such accounts are fashioned 'into the intellectual and even theological traditions of Europe' (Chakrabarty 2000: 4). This does not in and of itself mean that they are 'merely' European and provincial, but it does mean that the analytical categories which the social sciences presume to be universal may not be so. As Sanjay Seth (2009, 2013) states, 'Provincializing Europe' is thus neither a matter of rejecting Europe or European thought, nor principally of developing historical accounts that show Europe to be less unique and central than the conventional historical accounts would have it. It is, instead, in Chakrabarty's words, 'to explore the capacities and limitations of certain European social and political categories... in the context of non-European life worlds' (Chakrabarty 2000: 20).

Given these concerns, Mukerjee's works acquire relevance and salience for helping us revisit the constitutive asymmetries of modern social sciences. In a recently published essay, Sanjay Seth (2009) distinguishes between the two interrelated strategies — historical sociology and postcolonial theory —of displacing Europe and European thought from the centrality that it is normally accorded. The former generally contests the privileging of Europe by questioning, and in some cases providing an alternative to, the conventional historical narrative according to which modernity begins in Europe and then radiates outward. This largely remains on the terrain of the empirical, counter posing some facts against other facts, and making ''hard'' claims to accuracy and truth. Works of this sort have a wide range of historical reference, and bristle with facts, figures

and comparisons. On the other hand, postcolonial theory aims at mobilising a non-Western history or slice thereof in order to show that the categories through which we think are not fully adequate to their task (Mignolo 2000, 2002, 2003, 2005; Mitchell 1988, 2000). The latter seeks to problematise the governing assumptions of the social sciences, usually by juxtaposing their analytical categories with non-Western pasts and presents.

As discussed in chapters 5 and 6, we see Radhakamal Mukerjee taking the latter course, of course, without having the benefit of the currently regnant post-colonial theory. In the contemporary parlance of post-colonial theory, Mukerjee appears to have pitched his critique of modern social sciences at the level of the politics of knowledge. His is not the mere concern of correcting a given bias of a given theoretical framework. His is not the plea of making appropriate adjustments in our tools and techniques of apperception of a given slice of social reality. Rather, he is reflecting on the larger philosophical question of the very notion of the empirical: should the empirical be the sole referent for modern sciences of man? What would, or should, happen to the affective, the intuitive, the ethical, the metaphysical, and the mystical? Should the non-empirical be banished outside the kingdom of modern social sciences? Should we just remain content by stating *ad nauseum* that because the central categories of the social sciences are the product of a European history, they are not necessarily adequate to everywhere, even in their amended versions?

To borrow Sanjay Seth's phrase, Mukerjee is not too worried about just the 'content' of the social sciences (the explanations they offer, the narratives they construct), but their very 'form' (the concepts through which explanations become possible, including the very idea of what counts as an explanation). He is convinced that the categories of the social sciences have been shaped by European and colonial histories. But he would

not simply pit Indian categories vis-à-vis them as superior versions or as good as the Western ones. That is why, one does not find even traces of relativism in his writings. He does not abandon even for a moment the aspiration to understand and explain the social phenomena in a universalist language. Indeed, his contention is that Western categories are anchored in a rather restricted vision of man and his world. As a consequence, the subject matter of social sciences itself is narrowly conceived.

Viewed thus, Mukerjee's is not an outright rejection of the social sciences (unlike A.K. Saran) as a knowledge enterprise. Social science categories are not simply wrong because they are purely European and Western in origins. These categories need to be fundamentally rethought because they often provide only partial understanding of not only the non-Western contexts but of the human enterprise as such. Notwithstanding this discomfort, he remained engaged with the social scientific categories of his times, and mostly with those very categories which were current in the Western academy. His works in the areas of social ecology and demography are but examples of his sustained engagement with the concepts that had acquired global currency. Should one assert then that Mukerjee's life-long mission was to register and explore the 'simultaneous indispensability and inadequacy of social science thought' (Chakrabarty 2000: 6)? Instead, Mukerjee's task has been to problematise the modern Western thought, of which the natural and social sciences are the formalised expressions. He takes issue with the foundational assumptions that underlie modern secular knowledge. He refuses to see the human world as disenchanted and, thereby, finds the social sciences limiting.[1]

Put it differently, Radhakamal Mukerjee wanted to use Indian principles to create a universal sociological theory. This theory is seen to be applicable across geographies. On this count, Sujata Patel (2012) finds Mukerjee's approach similar to that advocated by Akinsola A. Akiwowo, the Nigerian sociologist. The works of sociologists like Mukerjee and Akiwowo offer

us the possibility of recapturing the debate on indigeneity in order to explore the identity of sociology in the South and its relationship with European social theory and modernity. In her assessment, Mukerjee's concern goes beyond an attempt to combine the particular time-space attributes with the universal (Patel 2013b). However, such belated appreciation of Mukerjee's contribution does not mean that his works have generated a receptive constituency of practitioners of sociology in contemporary India. Rather, by and large, sociologists in India appear to be wary of the promises of indigeneity as an epistemological resource.

Undoubtedly, Mukerjee questioned the Western social sciences' claims to analytic universality. He proposed new interpretative approaches and categories for the analysis of Indian society and culture. Also, his vast corpus of work displays his evident inclination for indigenous cultural concepts. He has been foremost among Indian social scientists to work out the deeper implications of the pervasive use of Western models for the construction of Indian reality. Not only has he been critical from the very beginning of the application of concepts and methods of the Western origin for the study of historically distinct entity such as India, but also underlined the ethnocentrism of the Western social theory that placed India in a relationship of cultural inferiority and dependence vis-à-vis the West. Moreover, Mukerjee was against the extension of positivistic-utilitarian tradition of the Western social science on the ground that the latter has been based on certain nominalistic philosophical assumptions. These assumptions accorded a place of pride to the concept of individual that, for Mukerjee, did not do justice to Indian values and traditions.

But then, as Yogendra Singh (1984: 15-16) notes, at the meta-theoretic level the effort to incorporate Western concepts with Indian modification have been the most common practice among Indian social scientists. Mukerjee is no exception to this trend. One finds in him attempts to indigenise Western

concepts, an ideological self-consciousness about the legacy of Western modernity, and a tentative outline of indigenous responses to the category and structures of ideas inherited from the West. This, as Singh underlines, has obviously given rise to many cognitive and paradigmatic tensions in his writings along with other pioneers. However, Mukerjee, unlike some of the sociologists of his generation, does not treat sociology as a 'style of cultural critique or reformative ratiocination' (*ibid*.). His contribution to social science was more substantial and empirical, if not enduring. Besides, as a creative writer and literary critic, his contributions reveal responsive yet critical note on the Western interpretations of the Indian society, its institutions and cultural patterns. So far as sociology as an academic discipline is concerned, Mukerjee, as most of its patrons in the initial years of its institutionalisation, had come from outside this discipline, and was not initiated into its logic or methodology as such. Despite this obvious handicap, Mukerjee's voluminous writings display the blending of contemplation with fact-finding. He is regarded as an original and creative thinker by some of his students (see, for example, Joshi 1986a and 1986b). Gifted with powerful intuition and imagination, he was also extraordinarily productive. His powers of synthesis were equally great. Expectedly, his idea of an Indian sociology turns out to be 'encyclopaedic and synthetic, and for good measure took on most if not all the aspects of a complete social philosophy' (Becker and Barnes 1961: 1144).

As part of his attempted critique of Western modernity, Mukerjee laid emphasis on the uniqueness of Indian value system, the centrifugal, communalistic and non-hedonistic character of Indian culture and polity. Towards this end, he worked tirelessly to make Indian sociology exude larger concerns of social philosophy. He comes out with a clear-cut rejection of the Western conception of man and social order including the Marxist idea of class conflict and communism for which he offers alternative concepts of the *sangh* or the

collectivity. According to him, *sangh* is characterised by non-hedonism and sustained by a spiritual tradition rather than being based on a materialistic conception of man and society (see also Singh 1967: 166-67). This perpetual quest for indigenous modes of thought and methodological orientation has subsisted throughout Mukerjee's sociological works. To quote Mukerjee (1950d: 16), 'since man's behaviour and experience cut across many dimensions, and metaphysics provides the law of his living, it is metaphysical speculation as regards man, society...that furnishes the ultimate postulates of all social sciences and social action'. While rejecting the utility of imperialistic positivistic method for sociology and brining in the indigenous notions of *dharma*, *sangha* and transcendental values, Mukerjee has rendered a yeoman service to the continuing Indian challenge to Western ideological hegemony and cultural dominance.

Indigeneity and its Discontents

As stated earlier, an increasing number of writers (Connel 2007; Dussel 2002; Lander 2002; Mignolo 2002; Quijano 2000) have made us sensitive to the continued presence of the foundational narrative of western modernity. Even today western modernity acts as the dominant episteme affecting not only sociological theories but also the entire production and reproduction of sociological knowledge within nation-states and regions. The universals of European modernity refuse to vacate the knowledge corridors that adorn the global academy. This realisation has, of necessity, led to the making of a counter-discourse where the epistemological validity of local/indigenous/folk/endogenous sciences has been put forward. But then the path towards an alternate and autonomous universal theory is laden with its own ambivalences, contradictions and silences.[2] It brings into picture the larger enterprise of reflexivity and its embodied expression in terms of social theory and the

latter's enmeshing with capitalism and the geopolitics of knowledge production.

The interrelationships between specific values and universal theory, and the dependent construction of the social, have equally informed some of the recent writings on the history and sociology of sociology in India. Tangentially though, such reflections refer to the works and times of pioneers like Radhakamal Mukerjee.[3] While there is general appreciation that 'sociology [in India] not only interrogated (even if partially) the received inheritance of colonial theories and methodologies, but also promoted a new language with new perspectives and methodologies that defined itself as Indian sociology', it 'dominated and universalised its 'local' subalterns and muted their voices' (Patel 2011b).

All of a sudden, nationalist sociologies have become the target of sustained criticism from different quarters. They have been critiqued for their imposed silencing of various regional traditions, and also, in the Indian case, for having projected the dominant high-caste, middle-class Brahmanical view at the national level. It is more common these days to talk of sociological traditions in supra-national and infra-local terms. Instead, Sujata Patel (2010) talks of diverse (instead of universal), and international (instead of global). Although, she acknowledges that 'methodological nationalism was a self-conscious embrace of a place/territory to create a set of guidelines to confront colonial discourses of social sciences', she finds it wanting as a potent and self-contained framework in contemporary times. Moreover, she distinguishes between two versions of indigeneity: a *strong* version underlining the need to create an alternative national sociology based on indigenous and national cultural and philosophical positions and a *weaker* version privileging some experiences that have historically been distinctive to the nation-state. Such claims and counter-claims have been framed in terms of the binaries of the universal-particular and the global-national. The epithet of

ethno-sciences has also been attributed to some such indigenist articulations.

In fact, there appears to be a conflation of categories and time-frames in many a narrative accounts of the quest for indigeneity that has informed debates and discourses in sociology in India. There is general celebration of the anti-European and anti-colonial tenor of the early nationalist sociology. Simultaneously, there is the thorough-going critique of the nationalist strategy for its hegemonic role in relation to its internal others. The levels of discourse effortlessly shift from the need to confront colonial dependencies with the cultural confidence of the high nationalism to the current imperative to create a collective political language and the intellectual infrastructure of the global South. While creating an air of intellectual solidarity and the attendant need for an alternate discourse, such rhetoric dissolves many distinctions that characterise the global south. It flattens the varied historical trajectories and knowledge traditions that differentiate them from one another. A mere recognition of the matrix of power that has organized global divisions is no substitute for the collective quest of indigeneity in individual national traditions. The presence of the various voices and the plurality of traditions do not automatically render any search for indigeneity precarious and culturally hegemonic.

Other commentators have critiqued the quest for indigeneity from the perspective of globalisation. For instance, Satish Deshpande (2009) stresses the need to delink the question of indigeneity from that of location. Highlighting the inadequacies of the earlier binary of patriotic particularism and cosmopolitan universalism, he foregrounds the necessity of acknowledging the non-viability of older spatial standpoints in the wake of irreversible changes wrought by globalisation. To him, arguments for 'indigenous' social theory are predicated upon the constitutive role for place and accord undue analytical primacy to the idea that place matters.

He locates the quest for indigeneity in the political dynamics of anti-colonial nationalisms. He avers, 'the colonial dialectic forced the colonised to oscillate between sameness and difference. Successful intellectual resistance to the colonial master necessarily involved producing theory that was as good as (therefore comparable) but at the same time different from (therefore acquitted of the charge of mere mimicry) the master's theories'. Natural corollaries of such an intellectual enterprise have been 'the invocation of authenticity and an almost religious sense of rootedness in a sacralised geo-spatial location, the motherland or homeland'. In its extreme versions, such aspirations have attracted the charge of intellectual autarky and cultural solipsism.

Deshpande's point is that 'foreignness' of a theory is not a reliable guide to judge its accountability to context or the possible mismatches between theory and context. 'Native' theories could be as insensitive to contexts as the foreign ones. In other words, 'accountability to context does not require pure indigeneity, and, conversely, a purely local theory may not necessarily be the best to address the particularities of place'.

The dismissal of the plausibility of any necessary relationship between the usefulness of a theory and its origins renders the enterprise of indigeneity intellectually suspect. The birthmarks of a theory are to be seen as having little implications for its usefulness or effectivity. The pedigree of a theory is not an independent variable so far as the shortcoming of the theory is concerned: 'the biography of a theory offers no clue as to when, where or how it may prove to be useful'.

At the same time, Deshpande looks at the 'elusive search for indigeneity' as 'the affective revolt against the reality or prospect of domination that triggers this search... in its most progressive form, the desire for an indigenous social theory is the desire to claim full autonomy and sovereignty in a context where they are denied or absent'. He does not see this desire as obsolete or anachronistic so long as power, domination,

inequality and injustice are part of our socio-political landscape. Does he advocate a different casting of the notions of indigeneity rather than giving them up altogether?

His resolution of the conundrum is to argue for a heuristic separation of a politics of location in relation to social theory from the essentialisation about native origins that the quest for indigenous (native born or 'local) theories necessarily entail. This helps overcome the two interrelated problems with the older enterprise of indigeneity —the instability of common reference categories (such as a nation state, cultural region or civilisational area) and the question of degrees of indigeneity (or foreignness). Once the reference categories cease to be treated as self-evident and eternal categories, their taken-for-granted character will be subjected to rigorous examination. It will also make it clear that the authenticity of a given tradition, culture and the history of a particular nation state or cultural region is often a contested terrain.

Very often, an authentic tradition comes to us as a packaged and a particular version or subset of a polyphonic tradition. Indigeneity turns out to be a differential placing of a given social group to various permutations and combinations that make up national traditions or cultures. Such an understanding discourages us to look for authenticity in terms of entirely homogeneous or unitary traditions. It also rids the question of indigeneity of an all-or-nothing attitude towards authenticity and makes it sensitive to degrees and gradations of indigeneity —something that is not theoretical in the earlier versions of the indigenous quest. It means that cultural distinctiveness as the defining marker of indigeneity has to be re-calibrated in the light of the differentiated notion of indigeneity. But then can this new quest for indigeneity retain the same power of resistance to global hegemonies? The consistent questioning of the reference categories of indigeneity (indigenous to what? with respect to what unit is/should indigeneity be defined?) may end up making it a purely symbolic enterprise oblivious

of the real effects of global geo-politics.

Yet, as Raewen Connell (2007) demonstrates, the terms of intellectual production remain asymmetrical notwithstanding the changes wrought by globalisation. Not only do categories produced in the metropole do not feel the need to dialogue with the ideas produced by the colonised world, but also continue to treat them as 'traditions' of historical or ethnographic interest alone. The hegemony of metropolitan theory continues unabated and the Indian intellectual is forced to relegate local bodies of thought to the past, and never as sources of intellectual authority in the present. She insists that 'sociology was formed within the culture of imperialism, and embodied an intellectual response to the colonized world' (Connell 2007: 9).

While teasing out the geopolitical assumptions underlying the debate around current politics of knowledge production, she identifies four characteristic features of what she calls the northernness of general theory in sociology —the claim of universality, reading from the centre, gestures of exclusion, and grand erasure. The confidence that all societies are knowable in the same way and from the same point of view without any acknowledgement of the contrarian point of view persists in the metropole. Likewise, much of intellectual energy is invested in attempts at resolving problems arising out of metropolitan theoretical literature such as subjectivism and objectivism. Moreover, theorists from the colonised world are very rarely cited in metropolitan texts of general theory. Their works generally remain illustrative of exotic items but not ideas from the periphery to be incorporated as part of the general reflections on the human condition. At best, such works get celebrated as grand ethnography based on the hideous distinction between the pre-modern and the modern. This distinction subtly renders the social thought of colonized cultures irrelevant to the main theoretical conversation in the north. And lastly, the grand erasure of the experience of the periphery to the extent social theory is embedded in empirical knowledge

derived wholly or mainly from the metropole completes the picture of total hegemony.

These asymmetries surreptitiously creep in the way experiences from the global South are referenced. Thus, one finds Pierre Bourdieu waxing eloquent on kinship strategies and peasant body in Algeria but, simultaneously, erasing the historical experience of colonial war in his book *The Logic of Practice* (*ibid.* 44-48). As Connell puts it pithily, 'with few exceptions, mainstream social theory sees and speaks from the global North' (*ibid.* 50). Indeed, 'the common logic is that a system of categories is created by metropolitan intellectuals and read outwards to societies in the periphery, where the categories are filled in empirically' (*ibid.* 66). One is intrigued that someone like Satish Deshpande, who otherwise has succinctly captured the diversity and dynamism in the making of social sciences, does not see any epistemological disenfranchisement inherent in the very process of globalisation. He overlooks the ways in which 'the production and circulation of knowledge are organized generally to produce metropolitan dominance and peripheral marginality in social science (*ibid.* 219).

In a way, globalisation may have enhanced the North's ability to function as a metropole by augmenting the institutions and processes that support that ability —the metropole-capacity or the metropole-apparatus of the countries that occupy the dominant position in the world economy, international relations and culture (*ibid.* 217). Unsurprisingly, metropolitan social science persists with a conceptual style in which 'theory is monological, declaring one truth in one voice' (*ibid.* 221). Unfortunately though, the long-continuing quest for indigenous sociologies has failed to challenge the conceptual system of metropolitan sociology. The high hopes of challenging not just the propositions but the whole cognitive style of mainstream social science lie scattered. Even now, the social science in the periphery is dependent on theory in the metropole. On the

contrary, metropolitan theorists rarely pay attention to research from the periphery while social scientists in the periphery rarely feel authorised to rewrite the ideas of the metropolitan expert (*ibid.* 224-25).

Connell is justified in claiming that 'on close examination, mainstream sociology turns out to be an ethno-sociology of metropolitan society, howsoever splendid' (*ibid.* 226). Despite this realisation, what is discomforting is that scholars tend to place disproportionate burden of exclusionary tendencies like nativism and jingoism on the proponents of indigeneity. They are often made to appear as reactive, as proponents of parochialisation of non-Western variety. As a consequence, they are always made to talk a defensive language lest their act be seen as adding to the fragility of the makeshift global cosmopolitanism. Metropolitan intellectuals, by definition, are relieved of these burdens. One comes across the usual suspicion that radical epistemological projects like indigenous sociology can internally be a conservative political project. Such projects have been shown to be exclusionary towards its internal others. Similarly, the primacy of indigenous cultural materials may privilege the outlook of a narrow group, a charge that has been levelled against Akinsola Akiwowo's quest for indigenous sociology in Yoruba oral poetry. Moreover, one equally discerns not so unusual tendency among nationalist intellectuals and indigenists from the periphery everywhere to try to publish their work in metropolitan academic journals—one of the indices of what Hountondji calls extroversion.[4] That is to say, indigenous sociologies have been equally vulnerable to 'the same vagueness of method, the same implausible assumption of homogeneous and static cultures, the same complicity with nationalism, and the same difficulty in connecting with international dialogue except on terms of unequal exchange (Connell 2007: 105).

Sociology as a Universal Social Science

Notwithstanding the hegemony of metropolitan social theory and the persistent call for retrieval of distinctive national traditions of sociology, scholars in India today see themselves as part of an international academic milieu where the dominant conception of sociology as a universal science rules the roost. Sociology textbooks comfortably talk about the constitution of society in relation to groups and communities in universal terms. Through a plethora of concepts like role, status, stratification, etc., students learn about the constitutive elements of social processes. They also know something about the reproduction of social structures in relation to caste, class, gender and race. To talk about Radhakamal Mukerjee and his quest for an Indian sociology in this context is bound to attract different sets of charges.

First, there remains the charge of nativism and the series of exclusion that any nativist plea generally entails. In the particular case of Mukerjee, given his delineation of Indianness and the nature of his selective drawings on indigenous cultural resources, his binaries and inflections, it is easy to surmise that Mukerjee's indigeneity is a cloak for a high-caste, middle-class Hindu view of Indian society and culture. However, for the purpose of the present work, what is important is that Mukerjee's work affords us an opportunity to make sense of those antinomies which inform his life and times. We realise that it is slippery to operate with binaries such as revivalists versus progressives, cultural nationalists versus cosmopolitans, sociology versus social philosophy, reason and emotions, indigenous resources and western epistemology for an assessment of the contributions of the pioneers like Mukerjee. At the same time, it would be facile to say that the pioneers of sociology as an academic discipline were the product of their times, and very few of them could transcend the historical limits of their times, and, certainly, Radhakamal Mukerjee was not

one of them. It would be more interesting to probe the historical conjuncture that orients the invention/retrieval of a worthy nationalist past to the traditions of certain social groups.

Second, we find that generally the terms of discourse pertaining to indigeneity are framed by the same dominant framework which it supposedly contests. In the particular case of Mukerjee, we see that his investment for much of academic legitimacy is in the standard format. He meticulously follows the usual western protocols, namely, sustained publication in professional journals, visibility in terms of international professional organisations, visiting lectureships at foreign universities. Moreover, it has been pointed out that even his substantive research interests paralleled, if not followed, the trends in the West. Not only his books are replete with the citations of western sources but also is there an urge for appreciation by Western colleagues. A careful reading of the prefaces to different books, the notes of appreciation on the blurbs and back covers of his books, and his detailed description of his visits to foreign universities in his autobiography are pointers to this. Alternatively, one could read this as an attempt to engage with the West as a historical category and not merely as a metaphor (see Chapter 6). It could be seen as an attempt to open channels of dialogue with the alternative traditions and publics in the West. If the West is not a homogeneous historical category then there must be a concerted attempt to tie up with the West's internal others as well (see Uberoi 1968).

Third, as noted earlier, his works reveal unbounded conflation of the normative and the analytic. His voluminous works on histories of Indian culture, art and civilization apart, he appears to impart excessive weight to the determining power of agentless abstractions stripped of history. His understanding of social relations is too metaphysical or abstract to carry the imprint of any serious grounding in empirical evidence. Besides, unlike D.P. Mukerji, Mukerjee's works do not exhibit a robust grasp of politics of his times. As Fredrick Cooper (2005: 231) rightly

observes, 'how one does history shapes how one thinks about politics, and how one does politics affects how one thinks about history'. Nothing can more aptly describe Mukerjee's understanding of politics and history. Undoubtedly, D.P. Mukerji fares much better on this count. Mukerji had a better sense that that intellectuals from the Third World themselves have been a product of the historical encounter with the 'West', and, to that extent, he stressed the need to problematize 'traditionalism' as an ideological stance implying rootedness in history. Traditionalism, for the colonised intelligentsia, did not mean mere adherence to tradition (Hegde 2011). However, it is worth remembering that Mukerjee questioned these very distinctions to begin with. Now that social science scholarship is opening up to the virtues of the affect and the emotions, such criticisms need reconsideration.

The point is not to argue that Mukerjee's work does not have inadequacies in terms of conceptualisations. The attempt is not to put him on a high pedestal as an 'indigenous' hero and sing paeans of our collective gratitude to him for having illumined the task of sociological enquiry in this benighted land. What needs stressing is his sustained articulation of the fact that the task of sociological enquiry is substantively and epistemologically of a different order in India thanin the West. 'The manners in which colonialism's deep structures continue to inform the political economy and political sociology of scholarship in the formerly colonized world' (Lal 2003: 87), a critical and comprehensive assessment of Mukerjee's work has the promise to provide us with a richer narrative of the sociology of Indian intellectual life in the decades preceding and following Independence.[5] Also, it may underline the need to rework what generally passes on as 'proto-sociological' roots or 'pre-sociology' of sociology in India in the mainstream histories of the discipline.

Most of the accounts of sociology in India inhabit the established power/knowledge framework wherein our

understanding of the intellectual endeavours of colonial Indians is linked to the latter's distinctive (and varied) reading of Indian history and culture. The nationalist devotion to the reconstructed 'Hindu' past and the demands of nation-building occupy prominent place in these narratives. What this work hints at is the need for an integrated framework where the debate for an 'Indian' sociology is aligned with the perspectives of intellectual history and social history of ideas. It asserts that the discourse on Indian sociology cannot be taken as something intrinsically aligned to, and complementing metropolitan sociology.

On the contrary, the thickening interactions with global academic practices do not automatically render any enabling search for the deployment of 'indigenous' cultural resources a slide towards belligerent nativism, cultural solipsism and intellectual autarky. As Radhakamal Mukerjee's work demonstrates, it is perfectly possible to explore, and aspire for, a universal language of social science from within the tradition without lapsing into cultural relativism. True, this tradition can be a slippery ground, and one can oscillate between categories such as East/Asian/Oriental/Indian as Mukerjee did. Essentialisation of categories and certain innocence about high nationalism are bound to accompany any such endeavour. At any rate, strategic essentialism could be an effective and lasting antidote to ethnocentrism masquerading as universalism.

But so far as an 'indigenous' endeavour retains futuristic orientation, it would be hard to wish it away as mere nostalgia. Irrespective of actual accomplishments, it is noteworthy as a statement of aspirational intent for it embodies the potential of resistance to intellectual-cultural hegemonies of an unequal geo-political order. More importantly, the quest for indigeneity is a way of underlining the need for an intellectual temper that foregrounds reciprocity (and not asymmetry) as a sought-after value in the context of intellectual exchange, as also in terms of knowledge production. For how long can we go on being just good respondents, meticulous data collectors and keen

observers whereas the West continues to act as the prime locale of theory-building? Dipankar Gupta (1995: 46) justly asks 'Why is it that when Talcott Parsons or Alfred Shutz write about social theory they never mention 'case study' —the middle class Protestants in the Eastern seaboard? They write with their own societies in mind but the analytical conclusions they derive are cast as universal truths, applicable to all societies'. On the contrary, 'we suffer from excessive caution. When we have a conceptual point to make, we immediately circumscribe its validity by a limiting subtitle. Thus, we stay within the realm allotted to us by the West' (*ibid.*). As long as these asymmetrical structures persist, the quest for indigeneity will continue to galvanise people to mobilise all kinds of epistemological resources that help them challenge, resist, dismantle, and ultimately create, an alternative framework for knowledge production and dissemination. Indeed, 'another knowledge is possible' (Santos 2007).

NOTES

1. Mukerjee's ideas find echo in Sanjay Seth's recent essays where the latter underlines at once the indispensability and inadequacy of social sciences as such. He writes, 'these inadequacies are most immediately apparent (for those willing to see) in relation to the non-Western world. But modern knowledge has not so completely remade the West that the social sciences are fully adequate to it either' (Seth 2009). Further, in the West too, the analytical categories of the social sciences do not neatly and fully map onto the entire social space, for many and varied forms of human solidarity and belonging have not wholly given way to, or been subsumed by, citizenship; older public arenas and their rituals and practices of identity have not been completely effaced by the rituals of statehood; and the secular assumptions of the social sciences have not become the common sense of everyone. Thus, a project that begins by critically examining the universalist pretensions of social science in relation to non-Western pasts and presents may end up doing more than challenging Eurocentrism. And this may prove to be the most important difference between historical sociology and postcolonial theory—that whereas the former assumes that the social sciences can (be made to) be applicable everywhere, postcolonial theory argues that they are fully adequate nowhere.

2. For representative works see Hountondji (1997) and Adesina (2006). In the case of the former, the discussions include issues like the culturalist essences, colonisers' gaze, extroversion, culture of science, methods to examine the truth of indigenous knowledge, and the applicability of reasons, and the privileging of myth and magic whereas the latter looks at the question of legitimacy in relation to traditions of sociology across the world.
3. For example, Sujata Patel employs the category of 'modern-traditionalists' for Radhakamal Mukerjee and D.P. Mukerji. She considers them to be concerned with contemporary material and human issues (and in many ways modernists) while using 'traditional' language. She writes, 'Both sociologists framed their ideas regarding sociology in juxtaposition with (European) classical theorists. They wanted a sociology that could analyse the modern problems of India, through a language that extracts from the history of India and that applies it to the analyses of the changes occurring within the nation-state'. While taking note of their acute sensitivity to the issues of poverty, the negative impact of industrialization, the problem of landless and agricultural labourers together with those of urban population, and their interest in the planning process as a mode to stall these evils, she credits them with 'the formulations of indigeneity and indigenous thought in India' (Patel 2010: 286).
4. This aspect of extroversion fits Radhakamal Mukerjee's professional trajectory so well.
5. Writing about the immense popularity of subaltern school of historiography, Vinay Lal (2003: 206-7) writes:
   A school of thought from a formerly colonized nation receives such a critical attention in the Western academy however, "the subaltern historians are comfortable with Marx, Hegel, Heidegger, Jakobson, Habermas, Foucault, Barthes, and Derrida, as well as with French, American, and British traditions of social history, but the interpretive strategies of the Indian epics or Puranas, the political thinking of a Kautilya, the hermeneutics of devotional poetry, the philosophical exegesis of Nagarjuna, and the narrative frameworks of the *Panchatantra* or the *Kathasaritsagara*, are of little use to them, and even the little literature of the countless number of little traditions, such as proverbs, ballads, and folk tales, *seldom* enters into their consciousness.

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