

## **INDOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE**

### **Indology: Meaning and Definition**

Indology is known as the science of Indian Society. The Indological perspective claims to understand Indian Society through the concepts, theories and frameworks that are closely associated with Indian Civilization. It made a claim that Indian Society is unique in structure, function and dynamics and cannot be associated with the European Society. Indology relies on book view and culture and denounces rigorous empirical investigation.

Indology is both an approach to study the Indian Society and also an independent discipline with Indian Society as subject matter. In both the form Indology consists of studying language, beliefs, ideas, customs, taboos, codes, institutions, rituals, ceremonies and other related components of culture.

Indology demands inter-disciplinary, multi-disciplinary and cross disciplinary approach. Indology is also older than Sociology. It is antique in its origin owing its origin to 1784 by Sir William Jones of Calcutta. It was in the year 1987 that Sir William Jones founded the Asiatic Society of Bengal where he introduced the two departments of Sanskrit and Indology. It is the beginning of Indology in India, which has been followed by several other scholars.

### **Scholars of Indology**

As it is a fact that Indology is more a textual study, so a lot of scholars have conducted their studies depending on text. The studies conducted during this period covers a wide range of subjects such as social structure and relationships, cultural values, kinship, ideology, cultural transactions and symbolism of life and the world etc. the studies based on texts have been conducted by many scholars, such as Bennett (1976), David (1973), Fruzzetti and Osler (1976), Inden and Nicholas (1972), Khare (1975, 1976), Murray (1971, 1973), Marriott (1979), Pocock (1985), Eck (1985) etc. Most of these studies are based on the textual materials either drawn from epics, legends, myths, or from the folk traditions and other symbolic forms of culture. Most of them have been published in “*Contributing to Indian Sociology*” (New Series), edited by T.N. Madan.

Focusing on the origin of the perspective, Indological Perspective owes its origin to the contribution of the Orientalists like William Jones, Henry Maine,

Max Muller etc. They have contributed tremendously for the development of the society and from their contribution there was the evolving of Indological Perspective. All of them have based their studies on rich cultural tradition of India and the principle that govern India and out laws of Hindu. Therefore they were also called as the Indologist.

Many founding fathers of Indian Sociology are also influenced by Indology. The various scholars are like B.K. Sarkar, G.S. Ghurye, R.K. Mukherjee, K.M. Kapadia, Irawati Karve, P.H. Prabhu, Louis Dumont.

### **G. S. Ghurye**

#### **Life Sketch of G. S. Ghurye:**

Ghurye stands as the commander in the Indian Sociological frontiers. He has often been acclaimed as the 'father of Indian Sociology'. Ghurye was the first scholar, who had built up the entire first generation of Indian Sociologists in Post- independence period, almost single handedly. Ghurye backs the credits of being the founders of Indian Sociological Society and the Sociological Bulletin. Ghurye is often accredited as "Theoretical Pluralist" because he tried to study Indian Society and culture through multiple methods. He relied on both the empirical and textual methods for studying Indian Society. Ghurye was initially influenced by the diffusionist approach of Anthropology and later on he switched to the study of Indian Social reality from Ontological and Anthropological perspective. Ghurye's Indological Approach hovers around the study of Indian Culture and Social Structure drawing its sustenance from sanskritic literature base. He was more influenced by the writings of Indologists of Bhandarkan Institute of Bombay rather than the British writings established by Sir William Jones or Max Muller. So he is often said to be relying on indigenous Indology. Ghurye tried to make a judicious blending between the Indological and Sociological discipline.

Ghurye's "Caste and Race in India" tried to make a reconstruction of a very orthodox traditional and age old social institution of India i.e. Caste. In this landmark work he made a long journey from the traditional textual interpretation of caste from sanskritic literature base to its modern social reality with changing function. According to Ghurye Sociology of India is not static, it emanates from the ancient India, travels through mediaval India and reaches Modern India. Ghurye realized that if an institution cannot be studied in those three distinct

phases then we cannot make a claim that we have made a study in totality. Phasal study of an institution makes a study fragmented and haphazard. Ghurye viewed that an institution should be studied on the basis of three things that are transition, transplantation and transformation.

### **Methodological approach of Ghurye:**

In describing Ghurye, two approaches may be approximated. First, one may divide the entire range of Ghurye's writing into a number of broad themes and analyze each of these items showing how Ghurye discussed the institutions and processes. As the following unit will reveal a thematic analysis of Ghurye's writing as an imperative necessity to assess him properly. In fact despite some of the interesting diversions. His major writings have been arranged thematically. Thus caste, tribes, family and kinship, culture and civilization, religious institution, social tensions etc have been separately analyzed in the body of this unit. An attempt has also been made to explain not only the thoughts of writing of Ghurye but also to make a critical assessment of them vis-à-vis contemporary sociological thinking and researches obviously, the present author tried to be as much as analytic as possible in accepting or confuting Ghurye's contributions.

Secondly, the question whether Ghurye's writings can be divided into different phases is also relevant here. The question is important because Ghurye was a prolific writer and had written for more than sixty years. We know that there are writers who have changed their opinion and even approaches in different phases of their life. Harde Laski, for example, possessed an acute, an analytical and receptive mind and one is to take into consideration the different phases of life in order to analyze his thoughts.

### **Works & Writings:**

The few broad areas that have been identified in Ghurye's writings are;

1. Caste.
2. Tribe.
3. Kinship.
4. Culture and Civilisation.
5. Religion.
6. Sociology of Conflict and Integration.
7. Family and Marriage.

**The various writings of Ghurye include:**

- Caste and Race in India (1932)
- Indian Sadhus (1953)
- Bharatnatyam and its costume (1958)
- Family and Kinship in Indo-European culture (1955)
- Social tensions in India (1968)

**Caste in India**

Ghurye's understanding of caste is comparative, historical and Indological as well. Unlike his contemporaries he doesn't glorify or condemn caste, rather he considers caste as a product of Indian culture, changing with the passage of time. Hence, it is a subject of sociological interest. Ghurye studies caste mostly as a diffusionist and a historian than as an Indologist. In his book "Caste and Race in India", he agrees with Sir Herbert Risley that caste is a product of race that comes to India along with Aryans.

Ghurye considers it as unfortunate that caste system is mostly understood in terms of Brahminic domination. Caste has gone through the process of fusion and fission in different ways in Indian history. During Vedic period caste was a product of race. Aryans distinguished themselves from non-Aryans just in terms of color but subsequently different ethnic groups developed alliance/relationship with each other and Hindu culture and values moved from Aryan community to non-Aryan communities. Aryans never introduced themselves as Brahmins or as a superior race as against non-Brahmins. Aryan society itself practiced different kinds of occupations which were allocated to different individuals and families. On the basis of their occupation caste names were allocated to different groups. Therefore Aryans society had architects, peasants, warriors, artisans and their society was highly disciplined, organized and progressive.

Ghurye tells that it may be a matter of fact that caste evolved in India with the advent of Aryans, as their racial character was different from Indians. But at the same time there were different racial categories present in India prior to coming of the Aryans. India was not the home land of one racial group. Aryans advent added one more race to the already existing ones.

Caste was not a hierarchical exploitative system. Aryans carried with them caste system which promoted discipline in their life giving them specialization over particular occupation. No caste was superior or inferior. Occupation change was possible. Hence Aryans became highly specialized and indigenous. People

looked forward to Aryans for progress. Therefore they started imbibing these elements into their life. Rulers were taught the virtues of Aryans by the Brahmins who glorified the Aryan culture. These mobile saints spread the embodiment of caste to non-Aryans.

Ghurye points out that caste was considered as central to organized form of division of labour in Aryan society. When Aryans and indigenous communities developed interpersonal relationship through communication and warfare, the disciplined nature of Aryan society was appreciated by indigenous rulers who injected the elements of caste into their social life. In addition to that, priests, monasteries and travelers glorified the virtues of Aryan caste system. Hence the element of caste radiated from northern India to other parts of the country.

### **Features of Caste:**

Ghurye explains caste in India on the basis of six distinctive characteristics:

- Segmental division of society;
- Hierarchy;
- Civil and religious disabilities and privileges;
- Lack of unrestricted choice of occupation;
- Restriction on food, drinks and social intercourse;
- Endogamy.

### **Segmental division of the society:**

Segment is the compartmentalization of the population into groups. It is basically horizontal in character. It generates social grouping but not labelling. The membership is ascribed in character, i.e. it is based on birth and flows from generation to generation. Based on the membership every member has fixed status, roles and tasks. According to the roles assigned they have to perform it. There are moral ethics, obligations and justification value behind these roles.

### **Hierarchy:**

It is the second major characteristic of caste through which Hindu social organization and Indian Society penetrates. After the segmental divisions of the society, they are put in a pyramidal structure then it is called as hierarchy.

Certain cultural principles like purity and pollution, prioritization of certain group, preferences of the society, determine the positioning of the social

segments in the hierarchy t in layer. The layering of the segments is basically vertical in nature. This caste hierarchy is responsible for spelling out the access and prevention of caste and it becomes the primary consideration for role allocation, responsibility sharing and the imposition of restrictive rules. Hierarchy determines caste norms. According to Ghurye hierarchy becomes the major consideration for deciding all these aforesaid variables. It basically implies the Division of Labour. The entire gamut of activities in the society is divided into four types like religious, governance, maintenance and menial. Among all these activities the religious activities are given the highest position in society. Therefore Brahmin are given this responsibility. The second major activity is governance, which implies for managing the state craft and defending the populee from external aggression. So it is accorded to Khatriyas. The managerial activities are fixed on Vaishyas, who have to generate sustenance for the society. And the menial activities though an integral part of the society, are given the least priority and accorded to the shudras.

Thus it is the hierarchy that determines the roles. The higher the position in the hierarchy the greater is the role and higher is the responsibility. Hierarchy also determines the individual's access to life chances (education, health, nutrition) and life resources (wealth, power, property). The higher the position in caste hierarchy the easier becomes the access and vice-versa.

The concept of distributing justice was never prevalent but was ever violated in caste system. It was not the productive contribution but the preferential caste position that determines the caste rights. Rights were never demanded in caste society but were preferentially imposed on certain caste. Prevalence was for higher caste and prevention was for the lower caste.

Restrictive rules were hierarchically driven in character. Every caste had got its typical culture. It formulates its own rules to govern the activities, behavior, attitude, perception of its own members. Restrictive rules in general had its own inter-caste and intra-caste implications. Restrictive rules were more for the Shudras in terms of taboos set for them. Restrictive rules did not have rigor or figure in the middle of hierarchy like Khatriyas, Vaishyas but restrictive rules were again strengthened for the higher caste like Brahmin.

### **Civil and religious disabilities:**

Civil and religious disabilities expressed the rigidity of the caste system. To Ghurye the general reflection of Hindu social life was observed and felt through such disabilities. The disabilities were common to caste in different parts of the

country but the caste groups included in it were not common, rather there are variations. Civil and religious disabilities basically came from the concept of purity and pollution. Disabilities were for impure and polluted caste and privileges were for is for pure/higher castes.

**Lack of unrestricted choice of occupation:**

The occupations have been fixed by heredity. Generally they have not been allowed to change their traditional occupations. Members of a caste maintain their supremacy and secrecy in their jobs and do not allow the other caste group to join in. The upper caste people like Brahmins are free to opt for study of religious books, while this cannot be done by other classes. The lower ranking activities like sweeping bathrooms, washing clothes, scavenging etc have been kept in untouchable category.

**Restriction on food, drinks and social intercourse:**

Some rules have been imposed upon all caste people. Restriction on feeding and social intercourse are still prevalent in Indian society. There are two types of food i.e. Kachha (cooked) food and Pakka (raw) food upon which certain restrictions are imposed with regard to sharing, for example:

- Caste groups from whom twice born caste people can accept Kachha food;
- Caste group from whom twice born caste people can accept Pakka food;
- Caste groups from whom twice born caste people can accept water but no food;
- Caste groups from whom twice born caste people do not accept water or food and maintain distance.

**Endogamy:**

Indian caste system is also polarized due to endogamy being determined primarily by Caste. People can marry within caste only. To disobey the caste rule is not only treated as a crime but is also condemned as a sin. The caste panchayat not only denounces inter-caste marriages but also imposes severe punishment upon those who break these rules.

## **Tribes in India**

Ghurye considers that multiple ethnic groups were present in India prior to the entry of Aryans. Hindu culture was not imposed on tribal communities; rather an interaction Aryan culture that was mystical, magical and spiritual got entangled with Tantric culture, magical culture and materialistic culture of different ethnic groups gave way to evolution of Hinduism. Therefore considering Hindu culture as Aryan culture is nonsensical. The tribal deities like Ganesh, Kali, and Shiva were getting equal space in Hinduism with Aryan deities like Indira, Vishnu, Brahma. Animism, totemism, naturalism for establishing synthesis between multiple culture present in Indian society. As a result the tribes of India consider the Hindu society and its cultural tradition a new home for them. Therefore voluntarily they assimilate themselves within the folds of Hindu

society. Many tribal leaders like Tana Bhagat, Vishnu Bhagwat, Kabir Panthi and others successfully carried Hindu cultural attributes to tribal life. As a result, the tribes of the heartland of the country sharing Hindu values have Hinduised themselves. Hence their assimilation within Indian society is almost complete. Ghurye writes "Tribalism always contribute towards the construction of Hindu temple that is yet to be completed", meaning Hindu culture is evolving through a series of dialectics addressing to the demand of people in time and space. Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism largely embodied Hindu values with new ideas and doctrines contributing for decline of Hindu culture and tradition. He considers that Hindu cultural values were shared by tribal communities in mitigating the tribe – caste differences. Therefore tribes of India are backward Hindus. Backward' because of epistemology of Hinduism like Sanskar, distinction between Buddhi, Mana, Ahankar are yet to reach them even though they have already gone for Hindu life, ritual and way of life. Ghurye was critical to Elvin's approach of 'isolationism', indicating that forced isolation of the tribes from the larger society will accelerate suspicion leading to secessionist movement. He further indicated that separatist movement in North East India is a product of the cultural distinction between tribes located there and the larger Hindu society. In conclusion one can advocate that Ghurye understands of tribes and their problems largely manifest his nationalist appeal as he considers cultural unity between tribes and caste can only promote integration in Indian society.



## **Rural- Urbanization**

Ghurye says that urbanization in India was not just due to the industrial growth; rather it started within the rural areas itself. He took the references from Sanskrit texts and documents to illustrate the growth of urban centres from the need for market felt in a rural hinterland. Development of agriculture needed more and more markets to exchange the surplus in food grains. So in many rural areas, one part of a village started functioning into a market. This led to a township, which in turn developed administrative, judicial and other institutions. In the past, urban centres were based on feudal patronage, which had demands for silk cloths, jewellery, metal artifacts, weapons etc. this led to the growth of urban centres such as Banaras, Kanchipuram, Jaipur, Moradabad etc. In brief, it may be said that Ghurye's approach to 'rural-urbanization' reflects the indigenous source of urbanism. During colonial times, the growth of metropolitan centres altered the Indian life. The towns and cities were no longer the outlets for agricultural produce and handicrafts but they became the major manufacturing centres. These centres used rural areas for producing raw materials and turned into a market for selling industrial products. Thus, the metropolitan economy emerged to dominate the village economy. Therefore, the urbanization started making inroads into the rural hinterland in contrast to previous pattern. A large city or metropolis also functioned as the centre of culture of the territory encompassing it.

For Ghurye, the large city with its big complexes of higher education, research, judiciary, health services, print and entertainment media is a cradle innovation that ultimately serves cultural growth. The functions of the city are to perform a culturally integrative role, to act as a point of focus and the centre of radiation of the major tenets of the age. Not any city, but large city or metropolis having an organic link with the life of the people of its region can do this work well.

Ghurye views an urban planner must tackle the problems of sufficient supply of drinking water, human congestion, traffic congestion, regulation of public vehicles, insufficiency of railway transport in cities, erosion of trees, sound pollution, indiscriminate tree felling and plight of the pedestrians.

## **Critical Appraisal**

He fails to recognize the rise of modern India and the contribution of Islamic and British rulers. Town planning, architecture, new administration and

technology by both made India altogether different from what it was during Vedic and non-Vedic period. If sociology is a science then sociologists must have to honor the fact rather than ideology. In Ghurye's sociology ideology predominates over the fact and that is a tragedy for Indian sociology.

A.R. Desai writes that, studying India from the lens of culture provides us no space to understand the real India that lives within inequality, diversity, dialectic and exploitation. Therefore one has to come out of the bondage of Ghurye's sociology to understand real India and the challenges and problems associated.

In a nutshell, one can advocate that Ghurye's sociology is romanticizing India what it is not. Therefore there is a need for Indian sociology to change its goalpost from book view to Field Approach.