Presidential Address

Situating Development in a Culture Sensitive and Eco-Conscious Framework: A Roadmap for Policy and Practice

R. Indira, President, Indian Sociological Society and Formerly Professor of Sociology, University of Mysore, Mysuru

Environment has entered sociological discourse, both at the micro and macro levels as an issue that affects human wellbeing. Finding a meaningful solution to the struggle for restoring the environment, while at the same time restructuring the economy is one of the serious challenges being faced by our times. Development policies that have ignored issues of environmental sustainability have actually destroyed livelihood bases of a large number of people who are poor and dependent upon natural resources with which they have developed not only a sense of affinity but also reverence. This is where an understanding of the cultural beliefs and practices of people comes into the fore. In many popular debates on development, culture and development are presented as if they are diametrically opposed to each other because culture is perceived as something that blocks development. However, this is not true. The cultural ethos of many groups promotes practices that actually have simple and viable solutions to conserve the environment and prevent the kind of irreversible loss to human life and life sustaining resources that many development projects are imposing on us. A sensitive sociological analysis would also show how environmental catastrophes such as climate change, for example, caused by profit-centric development programmes are actually affecting vulnerable groups more severely than the elite groups who, in reality control a major share of the resources in all societies. Even the policies that are often totally insensitive to the kind of damage that they could do to the environment need to be re-visited and recast in a pro-people mould.

Professor M.N. Srinivas Memorial Lecture

Complicating 'Victimhood' in Diaspora Studies: The Saga of Tamils in Exile

Kamala Ganesh, Formerly Professor and Head Department of Sociology, University of Mumbai, Mumbai

The young field of Diaspora studies has been through much churning since its birth. Fundamental concepts have been revisited and redefined in a short time. With sweeping changes in the volume and forms of global migration and new circumstances and motivations underlying diaspora formation, fresh stories and unprecedented sagas have come to light. They push us to reconsider the original formulations and the revisions as well.

In its nascent and amorphous phase, Diaspora Studies coalesced around the classic Jewish model of suffering and victimhood. Forced emigration, displacement from the homeland and longing for return were the defining themes. But of course, people emigrated for many different reasons and forged different sorts of relationships with their places of origin. Definitions and conceptions had to expand to accommodate the burgeoning variety which is still unfolding.

But victim diasporas have by no means vanished. Ethnic Tamils from Sri Lanka fled en masse from Sri Lanka after the 1983 Colombo riots and found refuge and exile in many parts of the world. Traumatized by loss of home, property and lives of loved ones, they struggled and made their lives anew into a powerful transnational diaspora. They were also imbricated in a decades long terrible civil war in the homeland. In their diasporic trajectory, victimhood and agency are simultaneous and intertwined.

The example of the Tamils in exile enables us to revisit the old concept victimhood but also nuance it and complicate it with the concept of agency, its nature and purpose.

Plenary I Cultural and Developmental Contours in India – A View from the Margins

Deconstruction, De-Development: Cultural Contours of North East India

Vijaylakshmi Brara, Associate Professor, Department of Sociology, Manipur University, Imphal

Masculinity, Patriarchy and the Capitalistic ideas of development has erased the indigenous way of thinking and living. Today the whole of academia across the disciplines are debating the notions of development and contesting the "exploitation of resources" as a typical mindset of the existing developmental paradigm.

Development today is being seen as the extension of colonialism. Resources from the sources are getting over, there is no water, and big infrastructures are threatening the seismic movements of the earth, no air to breathe. In short clearly this kind of development is leading to our extinction. We certainly have gone wrong. So why the countries including India are still obsessed with this developmental contour?

The result is in front of our eyes, particularly in an attempt to "mainstream" the north east, it is leading this natural heaven into the same fate as the "mainland".

This paper will be dwelling into the various facets of so-called development in the north east India, the resultant displacements; physically as well as culturally, and the need to deconstruct the notions of development and to revert back to the indigenous way of relating with the nature.

This is certainly not an anti-development paper, but it tries to redefine and reroute its contours.

Changing Landscape and the Political Culture of the Indian University System

Suresh Babu G.S, Faculty, Zakir Husain Centre for Educational Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

The kind of transformation taking place in the internal fabric of the university system is called for an urgent intellectual response and public attention in our times. As a well organised social institution of society, the university stands for intellectual pursuit and generation of advanced knowledge. Hence its structure, content and actual functioning deemed to respond to the developmental trajectories of society. The political language of educational policies of the last three decades led to the exponential growth of the educational landscape followed by mass enrolment rates in the universities. It transcended old social signifiers and as a result identity politics. In the phase of the knowledge economy, such expansion of the educational landscape is justified because of the demographic transition. But they were not adequately explained on how the system accommodates with the expansion or negotiate with new aspirations of young learners come from the diverse social background. On the other side, the expansion has brought about complex configurations of cultural politics in the university system as resilience to diversity. The multicultural values and its political presence have deeply implicated and challenged the universities. Consequently, universities in India have become an arena of social and cultural contestation. Although there is overwhelming public attention on the problematic of university education, among the intellectual circle it was alleged that they were under-theorised. In this context, this paper seeks to understand the changing landscape of the Indian university system, which gradually redefines and radicalises the political language of education. This paper is drawn from the primary observations and empirical details of my ongoing research, which maps out the political culture in the universities of India.

From the Margins of the Spice Garden Economy: Agroforestry and Gendered Practices in the Western Ghats, Karnataka

Manisha Rao, Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, University of Mumbai, Mumbai

The promise of infrastructure has been accompanied by destruction of the environment and increased vulnerability of the Western Ghats. Along with this is the change in land use patterns in the region. The Malnad (up-ghat) region of the Uttara Kannada district of Karnataka is known for its diversified spice garden agroforestry practices. Over the last decade, however, there has been an increasing conversion of paddy land and forest encroachments for cultivation of areca, thus changing the bio diversity of the region. The changes in the land use patterns and the destruction of the environment due to infrastructure projects have resulted in increasing drought like situations in an area known to be the wettest region of the Western Ghats.

In the shadow of the areca-spice garden economy of this region, there is a lesser known but growing economy- the home garden agroforestry. The gendered practices of the home gardens run mainly by the women of the community, provides the vital everyday inputs for the household in terms of the vegetables, tubers, fruits and flowers. Though it is high in terms of use value, it is

low in terms of exchange value. It is in the context of mapping the cultural and developmental contours of this region that one tries to understand the gendered practices of the local communities. The 'Deremelas' (flower festivals), the seed collectives, the marketing cooperatives that women have initiated, that have given them a sense of empowerment and fulfilment. One attempts to examine the marginal though crucial initiatives of women of this district in terms of preserving the biodiversity of the region. The attempt is also to place these gendered practices in the larger context of changing development initiatives.

Prof. Radhakamal Mukerjee Memorial Lecture

Citizenship, Gendered States and the Right to Privacy

Kalpana Kannabiran, Director, Council for Social Development, Hyderabad

The Puttaswamy judgements – I and II on the fundamental right to privacy and Aadhar respectively -- speak to the right to privacy, the first placing restraint on the state and its surveillance regimes, in the interests of autonomy of citizenship; the second triggering an implosion of citizenship through an authorization by the state of pervasive surveillance. There is also, in Puttaswamy I, an attempt to situate fundamental rights under the constitution, within a larger framing of the modern state and rights to citizenship The defining concepts of citizenship and the state, critical to the workings of the Constitution, particularly the application of fundamental rights, are presumed in the judicial discussion on privacy. While judicial decisions eschew deep theoretical/polemical discussion, focusing instead on questions of fact, questions of law and random reflections and borrowings that are for the most part idiosyncratic, a critical debate on these concepts and their shifting meanings and political contexts is indispensable to an understanding of the scope, possibilities and limitations of the right to privacy in India. What are the strategies of masculinist, heteropatriarchal, colonizing statehood in the post-colony? What are the technologies of rule deployed in different locales and how might we thread these together to arrive at a better understanding of Indian state? And what of the borderlands incessantly resisting the drawing/sealing of borders? This paper will reflect on some of these concerns, drawing on a range of interdisciplinary scholarship, through a law and society lens.

Plenary II Making of the Nation in the Post-Liberal Era – Shifting Agenda and Identities

Crossing Boundaries in Emerging India: Some Reflections on Migration, Development and Globalization in the Post-Liberal Era

Chandrashekhar Bhat, Formerly Professor and Head, Department of Sociology, University of Hyderabad, Hyderabad

From the early notions of India as a nation-state of 'little republics', India and Indian sociology have traversed a long terrain to a nation of global villages and cities in the new millennium, crossing innumerable boundaries created by spatial, socio-cultural and politico-economic impediments and opportunities. This presentation proposes to explore some of the significant processes such as migration, development and globalization in this transformation from village

to city, local to global. The paper also attempts to examine the how the above processes impact on socio-cultural issues and environment.

Migration is an imminent part of all human history that has been ever increasing with each millennium and Indian is no exception. During the post liberal era, it is further augmented today by education and occupational diversification, and also owing to advances in technologies of transport and communication. India's urban population reached 31.16% in 2011, recording a growth rate of 31.8% during 2001- 2011 essentially through migration to cities. Indian overseas migration too increased to 3.1Cr. in 2018.

Migration often leads to development at the destination including that of migrant. Migrants play significant role in the development at destination, whether it is a village, city or country. Globalization has further increased the flow of migrants within and across countries. Contemporary globalization is all pervasive impacting almost every sphere of life besides economic. Global institutions have made their inroads into India as well as India has moved beyond India, through what Appadurai termed as 'global cultural flows', namely 'ethnoscapes, mediascapes, technoscapes, financescapes and ideoscapes'

The post-liberal era saw the steep increase in migration, urbanization and globalization challenging the traditional institutions of caste and identities. It also inspired emergence of multicultural communities and alignment of culture with politics in Indian democracy. Migration, urbanization, globalization and development have deep impact on environment, leading to its over exploitation and abuse inflicting with harmful chemicals and gasses endangering all forms of life and their sustenance.

Social Identity and the Constitution in Contemporary India: The Question of Caste

G. Mohan Gopal, Formerly Director, National Judicial Academy and Formerly Vice Chancellor, NLSIU, Bengaluru

As the Constituent Assembly began its work in December, 1946, caste was a most contentious issue in the country. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar had published in 1936 his famous speech demanding the "annihilation of caste", arguing, "turn in any direction you like, caste is the monster that crosses your path. You cannot have political reform, you cannot have economic reform, unless you kill this monster." Dr. Ambedkar's views in this regard were backed by strong contemporary, as well as a centuries-old history of, anti-caste social reform movements of "depressed classes" across the country. A dalit member of the Constituent Assembly expressed deep concern in a speech to the Assembly on 27th August 1947 that "the Hindus are getting into power and that Hindu Raj is coming into force and they may introduce the Varnashrama that was obtaining years back, again to harass the Harijans". On the same day, another dalit member suggested that if the caste Hindus cannot assure oppressed classes their "due share", India should be partitioned again on caste lines to assure social justice.

On the other hand, in the words of Dr. Ambedkar in this speech, although "Brahmins form the vanguard of the movement for political reform and in some cases also of economic reform…. they are not to be found even as camp followers in the army raised to break down the barriers of

caste.…[because] the breakup of the caste system is bound to affect adversely the Brahmin caste".

The Constituent Assembly, dominated overwhelmingly by Caste Hindus (12 of 14 members who participated most in the proceedings, speaking more than 50,000 words each, were male Caste Hindus), turned down the demand for social reform and social justice and refused to "annihilate" or proscribe caste as demanded by the 'depressed classes'. It limited itself to prohibiting untouchability and providing some broad ameliorative measures for oppressed castes (such as reservations). If the Constitution was not to ban caste and a post-caste India was not to be, what then was/is the organizing Constitutional principle of society in post-independence India?

The answer to this question is not explicit in the Constitution. It has to be deciphered from its text and the preparatory debates, as well as in the Constitutional jurisprudence emerging from our Courts in the last seven decades. The paper will seek to initiate a debate on this question.

The paper will argue that the emergence of a post-liberal India starting around the 1975 Emergency should be understood as a consequence of the failure of Indian liberals to deal with and "annihilate" caste not only in the Constituent Assembly but also subsequently through constitutional amendment. The paper will briefly compare Constitutional developments in India to the United States in this regard.

Rights, Religion and Law: What Can Sociology Bring to the Conundrum?

Anindita Chakrabarti, Associate Professor, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, IIT Kanpur, Kanpur

In India, the post-liberal era has witnessed an unprecedented (re)-engagement of religion in the public sphere and very often the site of these engagements and contestations has been the appellate courts. In this talk, I dwell on the question: what does the current spate of judgments around religious versus citizenship rights tell us about political secularism on one hand and state-inspired religious future on the other? I plan to traverse this conceptual minefield by concentrating on the issue of Muslim Personal Law but comparing and contrasting its trajectory with other legal battles at the apex court. Tracing the historical development of religion based personal law regimes in India, I will draw on current research on this topic and show how sociology has much to contribute to what otherwise remains caught up in rights discourse and normative frameworks.

Special Address

Culture Trauma, Morality and Solidarity:⌷ The Social Construction of "Holocaust" and Other Mass Murders

Jeffrey C. Alexander, Lillian Chavenson Saden Professor of Sociology, Yale University, USA

Cultural Trauma Theory is a new cultural-sociological approach to social suffering and its consequences. This new model was formulated in the late 1990s, and the many studies and publications it has spawned have transformed it into a genuine research program. In this lecture, I will initially present the theory, spending the rest of paper elaborating the new model in terms of empirical examples and case studies. Rather than viewing social suffering in only objective terms -- as the "material" impact of political, economic, and racial and ethnic oppression -- CTT emphasizes the subjective and cultural experiences of oppression, and how there is no single response that can be expected. Cultural traumas occur when groups -- families, races, castes, classes, regions, religions, nations, even entire civilizations -- experience damaging injuries to their collective identities. Whereas traumatic injuries might be immediately experienced psychologically for individuals, the wounded collectivity -- as a set of bounded collective representations -- is something more mediated. Collective injury is, to some significant extent, something imagined: it must be creatively coded, symbolized, and narrated in order to have social effect. This requires carrier groups that project and audiences that receive symbolic performances. These cultural projections define what happened (what is the trauma), to whom did it happen (who were injured victims), and who is responsible (the perpetrators). This "cultural work," which depends on cultural and material resources, is critical for mobilizing social movements of the victimized, which try to gain empathic understandings with broader audiences and, in so doing, to repair, or re-organize, society in such a manner that the trauma will not only be rectified but will not happen again. Socialism and communism are responses to the felt injuries of the working classes because of industrialism. Peasant-centered liberation movements are responses to imperialism. "MeToo is a response by women to sexual harassment in the workplace. In this paper I will spend describe first, and at some length, the emergence of the "Holocaust" as a cultural trauma, and how this provided a model for a series of national, racial, ethnic and civilizational traumas during the last half of the 20th and early 21rst centuries. I will also talk about "incomplete" and "inverted" traumas, where perpetrators are not forced to confront their responsibility for social suffering.
Interactive Session

Interactive Session

The Civil Sphere: Theory and Practice

Jeffrey C. Alexander

In this lecture, I present a cultural-sociological theory of democracy, first conceptualized in book form in 2006 in The Civil Sphere, which I had developed over two decades before. Firstly, I trace historical phases of the term "civil society" and the historical development they reflected

and crystallized: CSI (the traditional idea of a democratizing civil society conceived as all groups outside the state); CSII (the critical view, beginning with socialism and Karl Marx, of civil society as a bourgeois, anti-democratic sphere of selfishness and economic accumulation); and CSIII (the idea of "civil sphere" that is differentiated from all other spheres in a modern society). I then move to lay out in detail this third, "civil sphere" theory, arguing that the relative autonomy of a civil sphere is necessary for democracy in a social, rather than merely a governmental, sense. The civil sphere is defined by universalizing and idealistic ambitions for a fully inclusive solidarity among all members of a collectivity, based both upon mutual obligation and respect for individual autonomy. Over thousands of years, and depending on many cultural and political and social developments, there has emerged a binary code of sacred and profane qualities that defines qualities that "deserve" to be inside and "deserve" to be excluded from civil spheres, and there are both communicative (public opinion, journalism and media, polls) and regulative institutions (laws, elections, office) that specify how these broad cultural codes, or signifiers, should be instantiated, in the traditional categories of class, race, religion, etc. Powerful founding groups seek to hegemonize their own (religious, racial, ethnic, regional, religious, economic) qualities as essentially civil, and those the qualities of those they dominate, or precede in a social space, as anti-civil and "other." However, the ideals of the civil sphere cannot be entirely captured by such historically specific instantiations. As long as there remains some autonomy for the civil sphere, oppressed groups can and do experience contradictions between the ideals and the realities of actually existing civil spheres, and it is around these strains that social movements form. These movements aim to invert the application of the civil/anti-civil binary, to crystallize and defend the un-recognized "civil capacity" of excluded groups, and repair and expand the civil sphere to include them. At the end of this lecture, I will describe a series of conferences and books I have organized in an effort to "de-provincialize" (or: globalize) civil sphere theory. There are now 8 books, five of which have been published, another in press, and two more in the planning stages, including The Indian Civil Sphere.

Plenary III Rebuilding Kerala Society: Technological and Environmental Challenges

Rebuilding Kerala Society: A Perspective

T. K. Oommen, Professor Emeritus, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

The current concern for rebuilding Kerala society emerges from the recent 'natural' disasters Kerala experienced through floods. But one needs to take a long duree perspective. In doing this, the failure of social science, particularly Sociology, to incorporate environment into its analyses becomes self-evident. But environment in itself is incapable of causing any harm as it does not have agency. But with the help of modern technology, human beings can and do exploit nature which leads to environmental degradation and destruction. Modern technology is a conditional good and in deploying it in development one can adopt either a homocentric or cosmo-centric perspective. The homocentric perspective focuses only on human welfare and ignores what needs to be done in developing a cosmo-centric perspective which nurtures humans, their culture, particularly of the weak and minorities as well as the environment / ecology.

The prevalent tendency is to view the phenomenon such as floods, droughts, earthquakes, cyclones, tsunami, and tornados are 'natural' and hence cannot be prevented. But some of these

such as floods and droughts are the result of defective formulation and implementation of environmental policies. Although phenomenon such as earthquakes, cyclones, and tsunamis cannot be always be predicted accurately, through early warning systems their disastrous consequences can be substantially reduced with the help of high technology. The position taken here is not anti-high technology but that of technological pluralism, deploying technology, which is appropriate to specific context and areas. In rebuilding Kerala society, this perspective may be profitably invoked.

Rebuilding Kerala: Environmental Perspective

Oommen V. Oommen, Dept. of Computational Biology and Bioinformatics, University of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram

Two unfortunate floods and landslides in 2018 and 2019 and a recent cyclone that hit Kerala coast have impacted the state's ecosystem, both terrestrial and aquatic, adversely. Rebuilding the lost infrastructure for the welfare of the citizens of our state is a big challenge and has to be met with scientific and sustainable approaches. The above said environmental disasters are believed to be due to climate change that impacts the world's ecology and ecosystem. Therefore, all attempts to rejuvenate the lost biodiversity and its habitat should be a priority on the agenda of Govt. and all other agencies concerned. The proposed action plan should involve a comprehensive and all-inclusive master plan taking into consideration of the sustainable development envisaged by the CBD, and the Biodiversity Act of India. The activities should ensure the participation of all concerned population with the aim of achieving the 17 SDGs of the U N, to be achieved by 2030. The basic requirements for ensuring life on the planet earth are good air, good water and safe food. All these three come from the environment around and the biodiversity it holds. The protection of the biodiversity and ecosystem is essential to ameliorate the adverse effects of climate change and this can only be achieved by the participation of the people that inhabit the planet.

Rebuilding Kerala in the context of climate change should be aimed at as a long-term plan to ensure that the state natural resources and climate is safe guarded for future generations. This will help to end poverty and hunger which will ensure dignity and equality. The Govt. may ensure that developmental activities may be based on all regulations and rules framed in Environment Protection Act, Paddy and Wetland Conservation Act, Biodiversity Act etc. By U N sustainable development plans for a better future may be achieved through people, participation, partnership, peace and ultimately prosperity for the people of the state.

Rebuilding Kerala: Eco-centric Solutions for Eco-restoration and Sustainable Development

Biju Kumar, A. Professor, Department of Aquatic Biology and Fisheries, University of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram

Kerala provides a geographical and ecologically circumscribed but complex mosaic of land where the development-environment link is getting neglected and disrupted. The environmental systems here are very fragile because of the inherent nature of geography, climatic conditions

and ecological characteristics, further amplified by ever increasing consumption patterns, capitalism and climate change. The complex interconnections between ecosystems and the resultant ecosystem services maintain the dynamism of life in the state, especially along the Western Ghats in the east and fertile coastal zones in the west, besides ensuring long term assets for sustainable development. The key economic activities of the state, including agriculture and tourism are also linked with the health of the ecosystems of the state, besides provision of essential life support systems such as drinking water, clean air and food. As a state with high population density and a state implementing developmental activities in a decent pace, the pressure on environmental systems would continue to enhance. The issue of climate change need much more serious attention in all the realms of development in the state, as the reflections of increasing temperature are much more effervescent in the forms of variations in monsoon patters, extreme climate events such as floods and cyclones, and changes in the pattern of distribution of biodiversity. Further, it may also severely impact the livelihood and future economic sustainability paradigms of the state. The Rebuild Kerala Initiative (RKI) was launched by Government of Kerala to "bring about a perceptible change in the lives and livelihoods of its citizens by adopting higher standards of infrastructure for recovery and reconstruction, and to build ecological and technical safeguards so that the restructured assets could better withstands floods in the future". This paper reiterates the need for ecocentrism and science based eco-restoration initiatives towards 'nava keralam', with a paradigm shift from the capitalist ways of unbridled economic growth which is least bothered about ecological sustainability, and the need for sustainability education as integral part of education curriculum including in higher education, in order to create ecological civilizations much need to achieving the proposed sustainable development goals.