



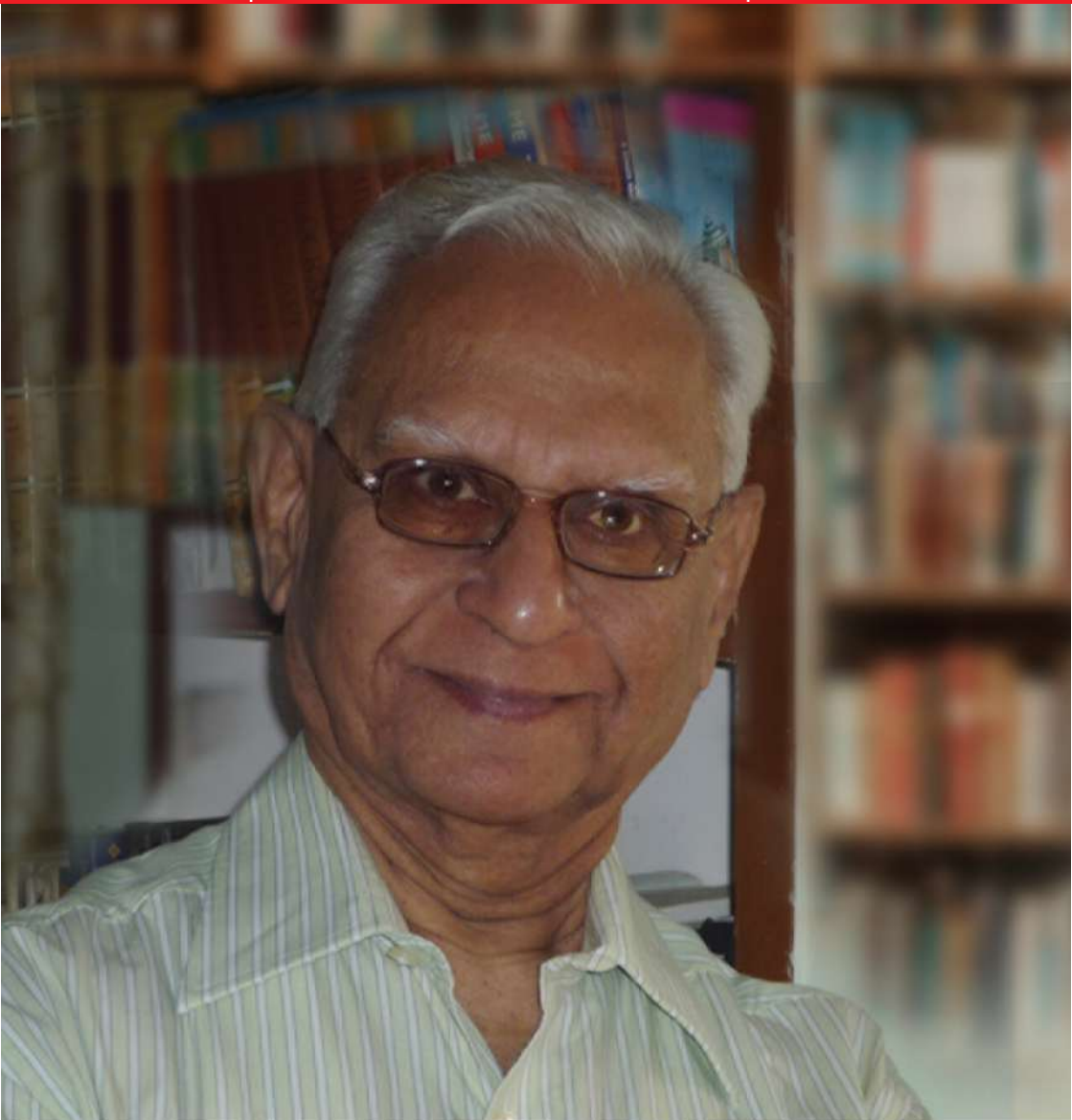
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THE SOCIAL FACT

ISSUE NO: 12

A SOCIOLOGY BULLETIN

DECEMBER - 2022



A.M. SHAH

**THE HOUSEHOLD DIMENSION OF THE FAMILY IN INDIA: A FIELD STUDY IN A
GUJARAT VILLAGE AND A REVIEW OF OTHER STUDIES**



Sivarajavel IAS Academy 's

THE SOCIAL FACT

is a monthly bulletin for sociology current affairs which tries to give aspirants a new dimensions in their sociology preparations. The Magazine has been designed in such away that the reading experience is enriching and insightful for the readers.

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THE SOCIAL FACT

INSIDE THIS SOCIOLOGICAL BULLETIN

Connecting the dots :

Sociology is a process in making. Everyday newspapers and weekly have many important news, which have sociological angle in subtle form. This chapter helps you to connect those dots and give a clear picture of the reality.

Sociology Explained :

World is one for sociology. Many authors explains social problems and social changes in length and breath through their research. This chapter collects and compiles those articles which are related to our syllabus.

Perspectives :

Beauty of Sociology, as a social science, is its capacity to offer different perspectives of a same topic. This chapter analyses a current topic with an unique social perspectives.



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CONNECTING THE DOTS

- *The Kerala Forest Department collaborated with the Indian Institute of Space Science and Technology (IIST) in Thiruvananthapuram to conduct a camp that focused on the basics of rocket design and launch. The three-day programme was the first in a series planned by the department's Eco-Development and Tribal Welfare wing to enhance scientific temper among forest-dependent communities in the State : **Verrier Elwin's approach towards tribals are criticised as Museumization of tribals. Now, the government is following the integration approach propounded by G.S Ghurye.***
- *An unmarried woman walked into the State-run J.J. Hospital in December last year seeking an abortion, she was turned away. Doctors at the hospital decided that her case was legally complicated. Her pregnancy had crossed 20 weeks, she was unmarried and the reason for her pregnancy was determined "as due to failure of contraception" : **This is happening despite the landmark judgment by the Supreme Court in September 2022 that unmarried women too can terminate their pregnancy until 24 weeks. This shows the apathy of society towards the women's rights.***
- *The past few weeks witnessed an outpouring of anger in the Jain community as hundreds took to the streets protesting two incidents related to holy sites in Jharkhand and Gujarat. While the outcry in Jharkhand was against the categorisation of one of the community's most sacred sites— Sammed Shikharji atop Parasnath Hill in Giridih district — as a religious tourist destination, protests spread to Gujarat against the alleged desecration of a temple in Shatranjuya Hills in Bhavnagar district : **Bainbridge advocates that conventional theory of modernity speaking about secularisation finds no space in empirical context of contemporary social life.***

- The Maharashtra government has formed a committee to study and gather information on intercaste and interfaith marriages. The 12-member committee has been named as Intercaste/Interfaith Marriage-Family Coordination Committee. : **The government's panel sought to embody the societal prejudice against non-endogamous marriages in India whose manifestations occur in the form of familial estrangement, social boycotts, "honour" killings, etc.**
- The Tamil Nadu police have commenced a probe into the presence of human excreta in an overhead water tank of a Scheduled Caste (SC) colony in Pudukkottai district. Residents of Vengaivasal in Muttukadu panchayat in the Pudukkottai district complained to the police after finding that human excreta was dumped into the overhead water tank that supplies water to the colony : **Dumont holds the notion of purity and pollution interlinked with the caste system and untouchability. The hierarchy of caste is decided according to the degree of purity and pollution. It plays a very crucial role in maintaining the required distance between different castes.**
- According to a 2020 study published in the Journal Clinical Child and Family Psychology Review, parents' behaviour differs depending on the gender of the kid. Based on 45 previous studies, the researchers concluded that parents unconsciously behave differently in the case of their sons and daughters. They may support gender equality openly, yet may act along gendered lines : **This will indirectly has an effect on children as non-verbal communication will impact more on kids as compared to the message being openly conveyed to them. (Socialisation and sensitisation process)**
- Tamil Nadu to introduce mental health programme in govt schools, In order to address mental health issues among adolescent children in government and government-aided schools : **Hussley says that education is vital for individual improvement in the society as the school helped them to develop the specialized others and generalized others. The values of equality, justice, and space for creativity make children in School self-confident and hence play his/her future social roles effectively.**

- *A court in Pakistan has caused outrage after it freed a convicted rapist when he agreed to marry his victim. Dawlat Khan, 25, had been sentenced to life imprisonment in May by the district court of Buner, in north-western Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, for the rape of a young deaf woman : **This is an example of victimisation of victim, Malveka Karlekar in her article 'Breaking silence' advocates that victims of rape do not break their silence in the court of law or in front of police rather they break their silence through suicide or by joining the brothels.***
- *Air India airlines has banned Shankar Mishra – accused of urinating on an elderly woman passenger in November – from its flights for a duration for four months. This four-month ban is applicable from January 18 and is over and above the one-month ban implemented by the airline on December 20 : **Durkheim is appropriate to say that in every normal society, there are some abnormal people. They have to be sanctioned to bring society back into harmony and integration. These incidents confirm another fact that value disintegration is real in modern society.***
- *Social diversity missing in the higher judiciary, center tells House panel. The center says the inequitable representation of backward and minority communities in the higher judiciary is evident from the fact that 79% of all high court judges appointed in HC are from the "upper caste", and only 2.8% are from a scheduled caste : **This lack of social mobility is the reflection of a little to no availability of cultural and social capital among the backward castes. The accumulation of knowledge, behaviors, and skills that a person can tap into to demonstrate one's cultural competence and social status is often denied.***
- *Recently, the Times of India published an article about the post covid firing in tech companies and found that a large number of employees are openly announcing their firing on social media, which was once considered taboo: **Many sacked employees announce it on social media because layoffs are no longer seen as a reflection of incompetence rather it is understood by the people as the part of the companies life cycle. It is an example of the percolation of modern values and the ability to differentiate professional life and personal choice.***

- A caste conflict has snowballed into a major issue with the village development committee (VDC) issuing an illegal diktat to socially boycott more than 400 people belonging to the Munnuru Kapu community in Nizamabad. As many as 85 families who have been suffering because of the boycott have approached the district authorities seeking their intervention. : ***This is an extreme form of untouchability and pollution concept which is characterized by certain avoidance of physical contact, social sanction, social disabilities and the maintenance of social distance in the attempt to maintain the purity of an individual but here in addition to caste, economic reasons are also part of it.***
- The Supreme Court Collegium stood firm by its resolve to have the government appoint openly gay lawyer Saurabh Kirpal as Delhi High Court judge, saying every individual is “entitled to maintain their own dignity and individuality based on sexual orientation” : ***The lack of support from the government explains how The LGBT and Queer face innumerable difficulties in the society where the only Gender Based Movements accepted orientation is heterosexuality. Homosexuality is regarded as abnormal.***

A PICTURE TO PONDER



“Who has the right to decide ?”



SOCIOLOGY EXPLAINED

FUTURE OF ONLINE EDUCATION

Paper 1 : Education and social change.

Paper 2 : Challenges of Social Transformation:

We have long ignored the vital role public educational institutions play as exemplary sites of social inclusion and relative equality. In Indian conditions, this role is arguably even more important than the scholastic role. The current craze for online education (OE) reminds me of the wall graffiti advertising sex clinics that are visible across urban north India. These ads promise guaranteed cures — *shartiya ilaj* — for all kinds of ailments and afflictions. Today, OE is being force-fed to Indian education as a miracle cure — at all levels (school, college, university) and for all tasks (lectures, exams, admissions) — not only for pandemic conditions but for the future. Readers may have already decided that I come to bury OE, not to praise it. They are half right. I believe that the incredible synergy unleashed by information and communications technology (ICT) is the best thing to have happened to education since the printing press. Indeed, higher education today is unthinkable without some form of the computer and some mode of digitised data transmission. As products of this revolution, online methods of teaching and learning deserve our highest praise — but only when cast in their proper role, which is to supplement, support and amplify the techniques of face-to-face education.

The moment they are proposed as a substitute for the physical sites of learning we have long known — brick-and-cement schools, colleges, and universities — online modes must be resolutely resisted. Resistance to OE is often dismissed as the self-serving response of vested interests, notably obstructive, technophobic teachers unwilling to upgrade their skills. But these are not the only vested interests involved. Authoritarian administrators are attracted by the centralised control and scaling-at-will that OE offers. Educational entrepreneurs have been trying to harvest the billions promised by massive open online courses (MOOCs) — think of Udacity, Coursera, or EdX. Pundits are now predicting post-pandemic tie-ups between ICT giants like Google and Amazon and premium education brands like Harvard and Oxford that will launch a new era of vertically-integrated hybrid OE platforms. Whatever the vested interests, ultimately it is the perspective of students that should be decisive.

Is OE a viable alternative to traditional educational institutions (TEI) for the typical Indian student? Proponents of OE offer misleading answers to this question by making biased comparisons. Since no one with access to an elite TEI chooses OE instead, we know that OE always loses in best-to-best comparisons. Favourable impressions about OE are created mostly by comparing the best of OE with average or worse TEIs. But is it true that the best OE is better than the average college or university? To answer this question, we must examine the implicit claim at the heart of the OE project, namely, that the goals of TEIs are achievable without the latter's physical location or forms of interaction. In other words, OE claims that neither the campus nor face-to-face interaction are integral to education. Since the comparative evaluation of virtual versus face-to-face pedagogic interaction needs more space, the campus question is considered here. How does the typical student's home compare with a typical TEI campus?

Census 2011 tells us that 71 per cent of households with three or more members have dwellings with two rooms or less (74 per cent in rural and 64 per cent in urban areas). According to National Sample Survey data for 2017-18, only 42 per cent of urban and 15 per cent of rural households had internet access, and only 34 per cent of urban and 11 per cent of rural persons had used the internet in the past 30 days. It is true that many TEIs (both public and private) have substandard infrastructure. But these data suggest that the majority of students are likely to be worse off at home compared to any campus. The impact of smartphone capabilities and stability of vnet connectivity on OE pedagogy also needs to be examined. But it is as a social rather than physical space that the college or university campus plays a critical role.

We have long ignored the vital role public educational institutions play as exemplary sites of social inclusion and relative equality. In Indian conditions, this role is arguably even more important than the scholastic role. Though many ugly blemishes remain, the public educational institution is still the only space where people of all genders, classes, castes, and communities can meet without one group being forced to bow to others. Whatever its impact on academics, this is critical learning for life. Women students, in particular, will be much worse off if confined to their homes by OE. Its unacceptability as a substitute does not diminish the indispensable part that OE can play as a supplement to on-site education. It can use content and methods that are hard to include in the normal curriculum. It can put pressure on lazy or incompetent teachers. It can provide hands-on experience in many technical fields where simulations are possible. And it can, of course, be a powerful accessory for affluent students able to afford expensive aids. But it is fraudulent to suggest that OE can replace public education, the only kind that the majority can access.

Such bluntness may seem unseemly. It is necessary today when governments are using the cover of the COVID-19 emergency to push through regressive “reforms” — such as anti-worker amendments to labour laws — that would face vocal opposition in normal times. In this context, there is a real danger that OE is being groomed to play the role played by the “cashless economy” during the demonetisation crisis, but in reverse. The mirage of a cashless economy was a retrospectively invented justification for a catastrophic autocratic decision. OE could be the proactive trojan horse smuggled in under pandemic conditions to abrogate the state’s commitments in public education. The best last-ditch argument for replacing TEIs with OE is to first undermine the former to the point of collapse, and then innocently point out that, after all, OE is better than nothing. This cynical argument works only if we are somehow persuaded to be complicit in the destruction of public education. Unless we resist such persuasion today, OE is exactly the kind of “shartiya ilaj” that we may be coerced into buying tomorrow.



RESERVATION FOR DALITS CHRISTIANS AND MUSLIMS

Paper 1 :Religion and Society

Paper 2 : Problems of religious minorities.

Reports that the Union government intends to appoint a national commission to study the status of Dalits (ex “untouchable” castes) belonging to the Muslim and Christian communities is, to the say the least, intriguing. It is hard to imagine why this government might want to (or even want to appear as if it wants to) include these “alien” religions in the reservation policy when they were explicitly excluded from the Hindu rashtra by the founding father of Hindutva, V D Savarkar. Even if the motivations behind it may be murky, the move itself is welcome because the issue is crystal clear. This was established through a 2008 review-study commissioned by the National Commission of Minorities (NCM) and housed in the Sociology Department of Delhi University. Conceived at the initiative of NCM member Zoya Hasan (with the support of the then chairperson, Hamid Ansari), it was formalised under the chairmanship of M S Qureshi. The remit of the study was to conduct a comprehensive review of already existing social-scientific evidence that might offer answers to three questions:

One, what is the contemporary status of Dalit Muslims (DMs) and Dalit Christians (DCs) in terms of their material well-being and social status? Two, how does their situation compare with that of: a) non-Dalits of their own communities, and b) Dalits of other communities? And three, do the caste disabilities suffered by these groups justify state intervention? The study reviewed two main kinds of available evidence, ethnographic-descriptive and macro-statistical, in addition to semi-academic NGO reports and publications.

The only original (that is, freshly conducted) part of the study was an extensive analysis of the unit-level data from the (then) latest large-sample survey of the National Sample Survey Organisation (61st Round of 2004-05). The survey of ethnographic materials began with the finding that the existence of caste divisions – including the presence of ex-“untouchable” castes recognised as such – among both Muslims and Christians – was beyond dispute. DMs and DCs were identified and segregated much like their counterparts in the Hindu or Sikh communities. (The case of Buddhism is different because the overwhelming majority – around 95 per cent — of India’s Buddhists are Dalits.) As expected, there was significant variation in specific practices of discrimination and segregation across regions and communities, but this is common to Hinduism and Sikhism as well. Evidence was tabulated on five forms of caste-based social discrimination – the practice of untouchability; enforced ban on inter-marriage; occupational segregation; social and cultural segregation and finally, economic discrimination.

In each of these sites of discrimination, strong evidence was found to prove that DMs and DCs suffered broadly the same treatment as their fellow Dalits in other religions. The most common instances were separate mosques or churches (or hierarchically segregated seating); separate burial grounds; strict prohibition on inter-marriage with very severe punishments (sometimes extending to murder) for breaking this taboo; and general avoidance of social interaction and cooperation. The original analysis of the NSSO unit-level data employed five criteria for measuring relative economic status: Proportions of population in poverty or affluence; intra-community differences between Dalits and non-Dalits; average levels of consumption; occupational structure; and finally, educational levels. The main findings were that DMs are clearly the worst off among all Dalits, while DCs are somewhat better off than other Dalits except Sikh Dalits (who are by far the best off, especially in the rural sector).

As expected, DMs and DCs were significantly under-represented among the affluent and over-represented among the poor. The quantitative section was only indicative since it was handicapped by the small number of households in the NSSO sample that met the double criteria of religion and caste, and by the variations in self-reported official categories. There is a circularity about the lack of data that needs to be emphasised. Official national-level data – usually more reliable than other kinds – does not exist on DMs and DCs because they are not recognised as Scheduled Castes. Responding to petitions seeking recognition, the courts accept that “caste survives conversion” but complain about the lack of reliable data. No recognition, no data; no data, no recognition. But the larger reality here is that the refusal to recognise DMs and DCs is not because of data, or administrative-financial issues. Informal guesstimates (based on the 2001 Census and the 2004-05 NSSO survey) place the proportion of DMs at 1 per cent or less of the Muslim population, and DCs as anything between 40-50 per cent of the Christian population of India.

As per the 2011 Census, Muslims are 14.2 per cent and Christians 2.3 per cent of our population. Taken together, DMs and DCs are likely to form less than 2 per cent of the total Dalit population of India, more than 90 per cent of which is Hindu. Adding DMs and DCs will not rock the boat of reservation, since the increment will be roughly one-fifth of the 10 per cent reservation readily granted to the upper castes as the Economically Weaker Sections. To use a newly-famous word, the real issue here is the *kartavya* (duty) of the Indian state. A fresh study is definitely needed, but the existing evidence already shows that DMs and DCs suffer from the same kind of social discrimination as Hindu or Sikh Dalits. Like Muslim and Christian scripture, Sikh and especially Buddhist scripture do not recognise caste. Therefore, granting Dalit Sikhs and Buddhists reservation while denying it to DMs and DCs is plain hypocrisy.

In India, every Hindu, Muslim, Christian or Sikh also has a caste identity, whether chosen or imposed. And in every single community without exception, the Dalit vs non-Dalit divide is the most intensely and brutally patrolled border between social groups. Despite a rare consensus that there is no administrative, rational or moral reason to treat Dalits of different religions differently, no government has addressed this issue. The reason for this is, of course, politics. It is wise to remember that “study commissions” are a classic device of evasion and suffer widely varying fates. We must wait and see if the government will walk its talk.



LIVING - A SOCIO SPATIAL ANGLE

Paper 1: Scope of Sociology

Paper 1: Sociology- The discipline

It is important to study both how residents socially construct meaning in their settlement spaces, and how the built environment shapes social life. The socio spatial perspective (SSP), which is a framework for studying urban social life that integrates sociological and political economy dimensions into the analysis of urban space and social life. (For more discussion see The New Urban Sociology.) This approach to urban sociology is deeply informed by Mark Gottdiener's efforts to bring Henri Lefebvre's writing to urban sociology. Drawing on Lefebvre, the SSP focuses on the social production of space, and as we explain in the book, examines how everyday life throughout metropolitan regions is affected by the interplay of cultural, political, economic, and social forces.

Among the key aspects of the SSP are that it takes on a regional perspective (through multi-centered metropolitan regions) that looks at the role of the built environment on social life across urban and suburban settlement space, second it investigates how the global system of capitalism shapes wellbeing of local areas, then it Examines how government policy along with developers, financiers, and other actors in the real estate industry shape settlement space and social life and lastly it applies urban semiotics to illustrate how cultural symbols and material objects organize everyday life across metropolitan regions, and understands both that spatial arrangements shape social interactions, and also individuals alter existing spatial arrangements.

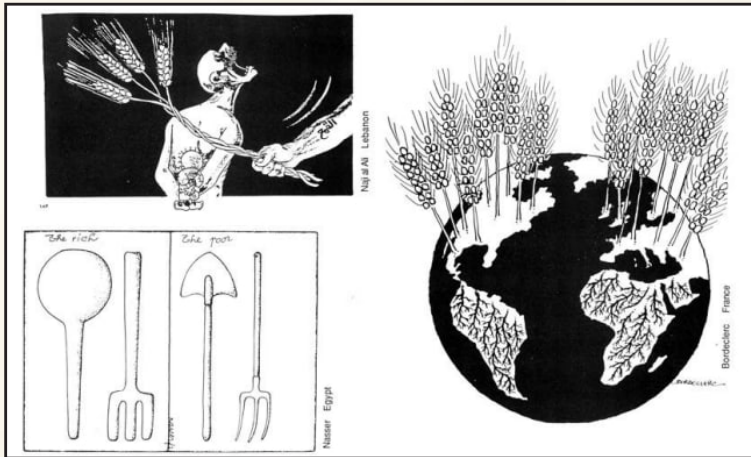
Examining urban social life across regions (or MCMRs), rather than cities is a key insight here. We have all seen how suburban sprawl and the expansion of capital investment and development across regions has re-shaped the geography of urban social life. This perspective also aligns with Neil Brenner's analysis of the rescaling of urbanization and showing how new forms of urban development are the result of globalization. The MCMR shifts the scale through which we study urban social life, decoupling the urban from the city, and reveal the role of connections both within and between MCMRs. The SSP is at the root of Gottdiener's thinking on urban theming, which we can see in the use of signs to sell goods and experiences of the built environment using cultural motifs, in places like Margaritavilles or Hard Rock Cafés. Gottdiener elaborated this concept in his 1997 book *The Theming of America: Dreams, Visions, and Commercial Spaces*. This concept of urban theming is related to the concepts of place character and place branding, which I've written about previously here at the Everyday Sociology Blog in describing Portlandia's depictions of Portland, Oregon, and the ways Pittsburgh Dad presents a particular idea of the city of Pittsburgh.

This all also relates to the concept of place making, or the shared reinvention of urban space involving changes in both the physical space and the social meanings associated with it. Fellow Everyday Sociology Blog contributor Jonathan Wynn explores in his book *Music/City*, on the role of music festivals in Austin, Nashville, and Newport. The socio-spatial perspective also draws on Lefebvre to help urban observers make sense of the way in which real estate operates as a second circuit of capital. Because the real estate market is an attractive and often very profitable area in which investors are able to make money from their capital, their investment decisions can drive particular patterns of growth. The development which in turn reshape metropolitan regions in ways that are not always aligned with the interests of local residents.

As explained in Chapter 3 of the book, development across metropolitan regions is “the outcome of negotiations and contending interests”. This perspective goes on to explain that Developers, for example, must negotiate with a network of government planners and politicians, citizen groups voice their concerns in public forums, and special interests such as utility companies or religious organizations interject their stakes and culturally defined symbolic visions in metropolitan growth. The end result of these negotiations is a built environment that is socially constructed, involving many interests and controlled by the quest for profit. Understanding how this dual process of collaboration and competition drives real estate investment and urban development is a key insight from the SSP. It’s also a key idea behind the game mechanics that Matt Cazessus and I implemented in our educational board game AudaCity, which we developed to model urban development processes, as we explained in a 2018 issue of *Currents in Teaching and Learning*.

Ordinary citizens and activists are working to solve urban social problems in ways that highlight the spatial aspects of the social problems they are working to solve. For example, the housing justice movement in Seattle, where organizations are working to ensure affordable housing for working poor and middle class residents. The efforts of these organizations spurred local policies which brought in substantial revenues that led to the construction of more than 800 affordable housing units. While this number remains well below the projected housing needs for the Seattle area, it illustrates how citizen organizing through social movements can lead to changes in how urban space is built and how social life operates in those spaces. While the shape of our urban environments do shape the contours of social life, we all also create, change, and recreate the spaces we live in through the choices we make every day.

A PICTURE TO PONDER



“Complex harsh reality of stratified Class and globe in a simple picture”



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PERSPECTIVES

DIFFERENT VERSIONS OF NATIONALISM

Paper 1: Politics and Society

Paper 2: Perspectives on the study of Indian society

The wave of historical revisionism that India is experiencing today finds expression in different kinds of misrepresentation of the past in textbooks as well as in public discourse. Jawaharlal Nehru is one of the main victims of this trend — either he's erased from history or his role in the freedom movement and the making of modern India is distorted. Mahatma Gandhi himself, although the government continues to use him as an icon in India and, even more abroad, is not recognised any more as the chief architect of India's fight for independence. Non-professional historians today claim that independence was won by those who took up arms despite Gandhi. Some of them consider Veer Savarkar and his disciple, Nathuram Godse, who feature prominently in a play I recently saw in London, "The Father and the Assassin", as the real heroes. To know who Savarkar and Godse really were, one can read excellent books, including Gandhi's Assassin by Dharendra K Jha and Hindutva and Violence: V D Savarkar and the Politics of History by Vinayak Chaturvedi, both recently published in India. They help us respond to many questions, including the only one I'm interested in here — in what sense was Savarkar a nationalist as compared to Nehru and Gandhi? Savarkar retained the image of a nationalist because of the revolutionary commitment he developed as a young man, which resulted in his arrest in 1910.

He was then sent to the Andamans and remained a prisoner of the British till 1937. After his release from prison, his main target became Muslims. This shift was evident from the many speeches he gave as President of the Hindu Mahasabha. By 1941, his main motto was “Hinduise all politics and militarise Hindudom”, which implied some collaboration with the British. The government of the Raj was recruiting Indian soldiers in the British army and for Savarkar that was a “unique opportunity to press on the movement for militarising our Hindu race”. He was in favour of “extending military cooperation with the British government [...] to secure permanently a dominant position for the Hindus in the Indian army, navy and air-force wherein today the Moslems are almost monopolising...” He assured the viceroy that “no help the Moslems have given or can give to the government can ever outweigh the help which the government has already received and is sure to receive in future from Hindudom as a whole in India”.

Hindu Sabhaites toured the country requesting young Hindus to join the army and supported the war committees that the British had established in the Central Provinces and Bengal. Narayan Apte — Godse’s accomplice in the assassination of Gandhi — became an assistant technical recruiting officer and, in this capacity, took part in war services exhibitions. Savarkar, in the same vein, asked the viceroy to appoint 15 Hindu Sabhaites to the war advisory council. The Hindu Mahasabha was extending support to the British in a very specific context. In 1939, the Congress, which was in office in more than half a dozen provinces, withdrew from these governments in protest against the British dragging India into World War II. More importantly, Mahatma Gandhi was preparing to launch the Quit India movement. Savarkar, as his biographer Dhananjay Keer points out, was against the Quit India movement. His priority was not independence, it was the fight against Muslims for which Hindus would need to occupy as many posts as they could in the army and in the state machinery.

In October 1943, Savarkar made it clear again: “I once more exhort my Hindu sanghatanist comrades to capture as many places of vantage as possible in the political machinery of the land whether in the legislatures or in the ministries or in the executive council”. The Hindu Mahasabha tried to form coalition governments in several provinces, including in partnership with the Muslim League. In June 1943, Savarkar argued that in League-dominated governments, Hindu Sabhaites should “capture as many seats in the ministry as possible” and in Hindu majority provinces, “Leaguers or Moslems should, of course, be invited to join the ministry”. Where were the so-called Congress “collaborators” of the British at that time? After the Quit India resolution was passed by the party on August 8, 1942, most of the members of the Congress Working Committee were arrested.

Nehru, Sardar Patel, Maulana Azad and others stayed behind bars at the Ahmednagar Fort till June 1945. Their definition of nationalism was different: They fought for a free, multicultural and secular India where all communities would live on an equal footing. To force the British to Quit India was their priority and they succeeded by resorting, mostly, to non-violent techniques — a unique achievement in the history of the world. In contrast, Savarkar’s view of the nation was ethno-religious. True to the notion of Hindutva he had formalised in 1923, he wanted Hindus to prevail over other communities because, according to him, they were sons of the soil and recognised this land as their “punyabhoomi”. His priority, therefore, was to defend Hindus against Muslims and use martial power for the purpose. Hence his desire to collaborate with the British in order to learn from them the art of war and to occupy the seats of power they could offer their subjects. These are the terms of the debates that could preside over intellectual conversations in order to expose historical revisionism. To live in history is not necessarily a bad idea, but to know the history one lives in is even more important.

RISK TAKING AND ITS IMPACTS

Paper 1: Sociology as a science

Paper 2: Non-positivist methodologies.

Sociologists have long sought to understand what drives people to break rules or laws, both formally (breaking a law upheld by a particular governing structure), and informally (breaking unwritten rules of societies or groups), or what we refer to as “norms.” Particularly since the 1980s, crime has also become an increasingly prominent issue in U.S. politics with multiple candidates – the latest example being Donald Trump – running on a platform of being “tough on crime.” A major theoretical approach to understanding criminal behavior frames crime as a form of risk-taking. Under this framework, scholars have argued that people commit crimes in pursuit of excitement or as a way of escaping the mundaneness of everyday life.

In an effort to explain why crime is often concentrated in lower-income and marginalized communities, some research taking such an approach reasons that working-class or impoverished individuals may have “boring” lives and little access to socially acceptable outlets for excitement. Of course, such arguments have been criticized for being class-biased and for lacking consideration of how middle-class and even wealthy individuals engage in criminal risk-taking behavior, too. Instead, criminal risk-taking is now mostly considered a personal orientation rather than a class-based characteristic, and risk remains a key component in the study of crime for many scholars. However, much like any social phenomenon, criminal behavior is not just about personal proclivities. Social structures also shape criminal behavior in important ways.

As we might expect, the observably higher crime rates in communities of color compared to predominantly White communities are not the result of White people somehow disinclined to take risks. Rather, crime is often concentrated in economically deprived neighborhoods that have faced disinvestment for decades – which, because of the severe racial segregation plaguing the U.S., tend to be predominantly Black or Latino neighborhoods. As such, criminal behavior can be understood a complex web of social structures interacting with personal orientations toward risk-taking. In a recently published article in *Sociological Forum*, authors Eiko Strader and Miranda Hines use data from the U.S. Army to untangle this very issue. Although people with a criminal record face immense barriers in the labor market, the military frequently hires individuals with a criminal history, the military being considered a “second chance” for those who have been incarcerated. Given the theory that criminal behavior involves some level of risk-taking, Strader and Hines ask whether having a criminal record in the military leads to different outcomes in terms of combat exposure and casualties.

They find that soldiers with criminal records are more likely to be assigned to positions with higher combat exposure than those without, and that soldiers with felony convictions are more than twice as likely to die as their counterparts without felony convictions while in non-combat positions. In light of these results, the authors argue that one explanation for this disparity is that soldiers with criminal records may be engaged in more high-risk behavior while on the job. After all, most casualties and injuries in the military are not a result of combat, but rather the result of accidents (e.g. transportation-related) – which may be more likely to happen when individuals engage in risky behavior. Clearly, these findings importantly demonstrate that the military might not be as productive of a “second chance” for ex-felons as it is thought to be.

As the authors point out, an unfair burden is placed on those with criminal records in the military, arguably some of the most vulnerable members of society. Although personal orientations toward risk may indeed impact the outcomes for soldiers with criminal records, several other factors – the stigma associated with criminal behavior, the structural barriers facing individuals with criminal records, to name a few– undoubtedly also play a role in their overrepresentation in combat positions and increasing their casualty rates.

Regardless, this study sheds some interesting light on how individuals navigate risk and how we think about the connections between crime and risk-taking. It also raises important questions about how policy can potentially intervene in this issue. While the answer is not to make it more difficult for people with a criminal record to join the military, since they already have few options in the labor market, we need to find an alternative “second chance” for this vast population that is less precarious and dangerous than the military. Because as it stands now, this funneling of individuals with criminal records into the military is clearly costing lives.



A PERSPECTIVE ON EWS RESERVATION

Paper 1: Sociological theories of power

Paper 1: Protest, agitation, social movements.

With its majority verdict upholding the 103rd Amendment to the Constitution delivered on November 7, the Supreme Court has finally performed the antyeshti – or last rites – of reservation as an instrument for the redressal of caste discrimination. The anti-discrimination idea of reservation had already died on January 9, 2019, when the bill to provide reservation for the “economically weaker sections” (EWS) became a full-fledged act of Parliament in just three days. This idea had been on its deathbed for well over a decade as demands for reservation from relatively prosperous and powerful castes like Jats, Patidars, Marathas or Kapus gathered momentum across the country. In any case, the dominant common sense shaped by the upper castes had always rejected the idea, preferring to think of reservation as a kind of government charity driven by electoral compulsions. The Supreme Court has ensured that the upper castes can now drink from the only well that was ever forbidden to them.

The real damage to the anti-caste-discrimination dimension has been done by the unanimous opinion that economic criteria alone may be used to determine eligibility for reservation. The even-handed use of economic criteria across all castes denies the possibility of a specifically caste-based form of discrimination (or even disadvantage or deprivation). Since the majority opinion of the Court also sets aside its own earlier limit of 50 per cent on the extent of reservation, the social justice apparatus of the Indian state is poised to recreate the Madras presidency’s “Communal Government Order” of 1921 that distributed government jobs and seats to different castes and communities according to a political formula.

In fact, the November 7 judgment can be seen as the culmination of a journey that began with the Supreme Court's 1951 decision in the State of Madras vs. Srimathi Champakam Dorairajan case, which struck down the Communal Government Order as violative of the fundamental right to non-discrimination guaranteed by the new Constitution. In June 1950, the Madras High Court admitted the plea of Dorairajan that she was being denied admission to a government medical college solely because of her Brahmin caste. Seats had been distributed as per the Communal GO and the Brahmin quota had been filled by candidates with higher marks than Dorairajan. But she had higher marks than some candidates awarded seats under the share allotted to other castes, and the High Court agreed that denying her admission amounted to discrimination based on caste alone. The Madras State's appeal against this decision was dismissed by the Supreme Court on the grounds that, while an explicit exception (permitting caste quotas as part of the state's constitutional duty to redress caste disabilities) had been made for job reservations, a similar exception had not been made for educational reservations.

This omission was corrected by the First Amendment to the Constitution passed in July 1951, which inserted Clause 4 into Article 15 protecting "any special provision for the advancement of any socially and educationally backward class of citizens or for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes". The 103rd Amendment uses exactly the same method to protect EWS reservations from challenge on grounds of discrimination. However, EWS reservation is represented here as "any special provision for the advancement of any economically weaker sections of citizens other than the classes mentioned in clauses (4) and (5)". This effectively means that EWS beneficiaries are "any economically weaker sections of citizens other than" those already provided reservation — SC, ST or Other Backward Classes (OBC).

By declaring that such a provision does not violate the Constitution, the majority judgment of 2022 reverses the logic of the unanimous Full Court judgment of 1951. Then, writing on behalf of his six other colleagues, Justice Sudhi Ranjan Das had argued that though the plaintiffs had not qualified for the seats within the Brahmin quota, they were still entitled to compete for the seats allocated to other castes. Now, writing on behalf of two of his colleagues, Justice Dinesh Maheshwari has effectively argued that the existence of quotas for the SCs, STs and OBCs disqualifies them from competing for seats in the EWS quota. This is despite the fact that, according to the letter of the law, eligibility for the EWS quota is determined not by caste, or social or educational backwardness, but solely by economic “weakness” – an attribute that any citizen might possess. But the spirit behind the EWS law (now ratified by our highest court) achieves exactly what it aims for and struggles so hard to avoid stating openly – reservation for the Hindu upper castes. And so a new chapter begins in the long saga of the appeasement of our most powerful and most pampered minority.

Any illusions that this is a step forward in the fight against poverty can easily be laid to rest if you compare the EWS scheme to any of our anti-poverty schemes. Though estimating poverty after 2011 is difficult because of data issues, the most recent rural and urban all-India poverty lines are pegged at Rs 972 and Rs1,407 respectively. Taking the average to be roughly Rs 1,200 per person per month, and assuming a household of five members, this amounts to a yearly consumption expenditure of Rs 72,000. The eligibility limit for EWS of Rs 8 lakh per annum is more than 11 times this amount. Clearly, economic “weakness” has nothing to do with poverty. Moreover, there are important differences with the “creamy layer” exclusion – also pegged at Rs 8 lakh – required for availing the OBC reservation.

In the OBC case, this is a condition for the disentitlement or exclusion of some members of a group that is otherwise entitled to reservation. In the EWS case, it is a positive condition for creating entitlement within a group (upper castes) whose members are otherwise not entitled to reservation. Our Constitution has continually struggled to balance the conflicting demands of tacitly supporting the status quo by insisting on strictly formal equality, and offering hope to the have-nots by promoting substantive equality. The EWS decision marks the beginning of the end of this struggle



A.M. SHAH



- A.M. Shah was a student of M. N. Srinivas in 1952 and became a teacher in sociology at Maharaja Sayajirao University, Baroda, in 1958.
- The Household Dimension of the Family in India (1973) is regarded as a landmark study and His work on family and kinship on caste, sect and Hinduism, and on historical Sociology (which in a sense he pioneered in India), have been extremely influential.
- He was insistent that flights of analytic imagination and interpretation had to be based on ethnographic detail, at times layer on layer.
- He still revelled in the life of the intellectual and the sociologist and the company of sociologists. He received the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Indian Sociological Society in 2009.



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