THE INFLUENCES OF INDIAN SOCIOLOGY IN NEPAL: NEED FOR REGIONAL IMAGINING

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Introduction

It is the study of the "other" that constitutes the crux of what we know as comparative sociology and social anthropology. As such, the focus on the other society or for that matter the insistence on cross-cultural comparisons or explorations of a new culture was not unknown to Indian sociology/ anthropology. Earlier generation Indian sociologists/anthropologists like G.S. Ghurye and K.P. Chattopadhyay have made some notable contributions by incorporating cross-cultural comparisons into their studies. A handful of later generation Indian sociologists/anthropologists have also made pioneering efforts in this regard. However, compared to the volume of sociological/anthropological researches done on India by Indian sociologists/ anthropologists, the number of researches done by them on foreign countries is negligible. In fact, Indian sociologists/anthropologists rarely prioritized countries other than India for research. Given this reluctance towards pioneering research across the national boundary, the present paper seeks to map out the length and breadth of sociological/anthropological research highways from India to Nepal. Based purely on secondary literature and a close reading of the published materials, the present paper attempts to trace out the influence of Indian sociological/anthropological traditions (and its absence thereof) in the emergence of sociology/anthropology in Nepal. Following a stock-taking exercise on the existing sociological/ anthropological researches done by Indian scholars on Nepal, this paper will offer a critical analysis of the sociological/anthropological knowledge produced by the Indian scholars on Nepal. Finally, by weighing up the contributions in terms of their methodological concerns, analytical rigor and conceptual debates, the paper argues for a dialogical sociology/anthropology in developing a regional imagining in the way sociological/anthropological researches are done in South Asian context.

Overseas and Indian Influences in Making of the Sociology/ Anthropology in Nepal

Due to its physical proximity as well as the cultural and civilizational resemblances, it might seem probable that India and Nepal may share the standards of academia and scholarship. It is to be noted however that the birth of higher studies in social sciences is very recent in Nepal compared to India, and still more recent is the beginning of sociology/anthropology as an academic discipline to be taught at the university level in Nepal. It was only after 1951 that higher studies in social sciences flourished in Nepal with the opening of several colleges (private and government), many of which were affiliated to Patna University and had carried out their course structure until Tribhuvan University (TU) was established in 1959. In the absence of Nepali content, social sciences in Nepal continued to be influenced by the Indian model at the level of higher studies for about a decade (Hachhethu 2002a). Indian influence was prominent in other fronts too: Not only that the first generation of Nepali teachers were graduates from Indian universities, a large number of Indian teachers under Colombo Plan went to Nepal for imparting social science education (Yadav 2005: 67). This signals that substantial contributions were being made by Indian social scientists in studying Nepal during those decades (Budhathoki *et al.* 2015). What is important here is to note that while Indian influence upon the overall Nepali social science is somewhat prominent, such an influence in case of the twin disciplines sociology and anthropology seems insignificant. A close reading of the available literature examining the state of sociological/anthropological research and teaching in Nepal clearly reveals that sociology and anthropology grew in Nepal somewhat autonomously from the Indian standards (Bista 1974; Sharma 1984; Bhandari 1990; Gurung 2000; Hachhethu 2002a, 2002b; Mishra 2005).

Sociology and anthropology have been conjointly practiced in Nepal from the very beginning. Sociology/anthropology began its disciplinary journey in 1953 housed under non-academic institutions such as the Village Development Program (VDP) which trained village-level workers on national development. The idea of initiating academic teaching and research through a separate department under TU was mooted in the 1960s. The expressed desire to set off higher studies in sociology and anthropology culminated in the production of a feasibility report duly advised by Prof. Ernest Gellner who had come to Nepal in 1970 under the auspices of the British Council

to lay down the first institutional milestone for sociology/anthropology in Nepal. Initially the department of sociology and anthropology was established under the Institute of Nepal and Asian Studies, the precursor of the current day Centre for Nepal and Asian Studies (CNAS). It was only in 1981 that the Central Department of Sociology and Anthropology of TU was established formally. Meanwhile, five Nepali students were sent to India with TU scholarship for MA degrees in sociology and social anthropology in 1977 (Bhandari 1990: 13–15).[1]

Even though a handful of early generation Nepali sociologists/ anthropologists did receive their training from Indian universities and in some cases from the renowned sociologists of India, this hardly made any longstanding impact in the way sociology and anthropology evolved in Nepal. Instead of being influenced by the prominent Indian sociologists like Ghurye, M.N. Srinivas, N.K. Bose, Radhakamal Mukherjee, D.P. Mukherji or for that matter the Bombay School, Delhi School, Kolkata School, or Lucknow School, the traditions of sociology and anthropology in Nepal seem more influenced by the contributions from the British, French, German, American and even Japanese anthropologists/sociologists, of whom Christoph von Fürer-Haimendorf, Colin Rosser, Lionel Caplan, Alan MacFarlane, A.W. Macdonald, Bernard Pignède, András Höfer, J.T. Hitchcock, Jiro Kawakita, Hiroshi Ishii, and Shigeru Iijema are prominent names. The overseas sociologists/anthropologists continue to influence the sociological/ anthropological teaching and research in Nepal even today whereas the Indian sociologists/anthropologists hardly show interest in studying Nepal. It is ironic indeed that the Indian sociologists/anthropologists seem to engage more in studying their "own" culture even within the discipline whose major concern is to study the "other." The little efforts made by Indian sociologists/ anthropologists seem somewhat disjointed so much so that they could not set forth neither a trend of Nepal studies nor even of South Asian studies in Indian sociology/anthropology. We examine the worth of our claim in some detail in the following sections.

[1] G.S. Nepali completed his PhD in 1959 under the supervision of the father of Indian sociology G.S. Ghurye from Bombay University. Later on Mohammad Mohsin also completed his doctoral research from the same university while a few others like Khem B. Bista and Bed Prakash Uprety received their training from foreign Universities located in France and the U.S. (Subedi and Upreti 2014: 32). Few others had by then already completed their PhD from Indian universities.

A Stock-taking of Indian Sociological/Anthropological Researches on Nepal

The dearth of sociological/anthropological studies on Nepal made by Indian sociologists has been noted by many (e.g., Prasad and Phadnis 1988; Onta 2001 and repeated in 2015; Sundar *et al.* 2000). An exhaustive bibliography of Indian scholarship on Nepal prepared by a group of researchers working at Martin Chautari confirms that there are very few researches done by Indian sociologists and anthropologists on Nepal even though the size of broader Indian scholarship on Nepal is substantial (Budhathoki *et al.* 2015). A closer scrutiny of the three ICSSR survey reports on sociology and social anthropology (1974, 2009 and 2014) did not yield any strong case for Nepal studies in India. Indian researches on Nepal did not figure much in a recent review on the research contributions made by *videśī* (foreign) sociologists and social anthropologists on Nepal (Subedi and Upreti 2014: 24–31). The only exception seems to be that some of the early generation Nepali scholars, namely G.S. Nepali and Mohammad Mohsin had done their PhDs with Professor Ghurye at Bombay University and hence these individuals and institutions mustered some engagement with studies on Nepal (Subedi and Upreti 2014). Even their influence on the pedagogy and training is very faint when compared with the overseas influence manifest in the trajectories followed by Nepali sociology and anthropology. Taking cue from this stock-taking that Indian sociology and social anthropology have made little ventures into studying Nepal, the remaining sections of this paper offers a thematic review of the core topics and perspectives within the sociology and anthropology of Nepal.

Nepal Studies in India: Themes and Perspectives

A careful index search[2] of four major Indian journals namely *Contributions to Indian Sociology* (CIS,1967–2015), *Sociological Bulletin* (1952–

[2] This index search was entirely based on web sources. We have examined the articles/book reviews focusing on Nepal and classified each contribution into two categories: Indian and Foreign. These contributions appeared in the pages of the four major journals of Indian sociology and anthropology (namely, CIS, *Sociological Bulletin, Indian Anthropologists* and JIAS) and were locatable through their on-line index portals. The search was limited by the extent of coverage of the web portals themselves. We restricted our search to these four journals since we considered them as the major platforms where Indian sociologists/anthropologists contribute

2012), *Indian Anthropologists* (1971–2011), and *The Journal of Indian Anthropological Society* (JIAS, 1966–2005) revealed seventy one pieces on Nepal (see Table 1). However, a large number of Indian sociologists/ anthropologists' contributions (or 29 in number) seemed to be book reviews. Of the ten full articles written by Indian scholars on Nepal, seven were on physical anthropology (Gupta *et al.* 1987, 1991; Malik 1987; Singh 1987; Singh *et al.* 1987; Dastidar 1988; Kapoor and Patra 1998), one was on paleo-anthropology (Banerjee 1971) and only two focused on the social studies though only tangentially (Sinha 1976; Srivastava and Macfarlane 1991). It is also important to note that the two leading sociology journals—CIS and *Sociological Bulletin*—published no articles from Indian scholars on Nepal whereas overseas scholars' contribution was quite substantial in the same two journals (17 articles out of 23).

Table 1: Nepal Studies by Indian Sociologists/ Anthropologists in Leading Indian Journals

Journal Title	Articles		Book Reviews		Total
	Indian	Foreign	Indian	Foreign	
CIS (1967–2015)	-	14	12	6	**32**
Sociological Bulletin (1952–2012)	-	3	12	2	**17**
Indian Anthropologists (1971–2011)	4	1	5	1	**11**
JIAS (1966–2005)	6	5	-	-	**11**
Total	**10**	**23**	**29**	**9**	71

Source: Sarkar 2016: 26.

A broader review of literature of various genres[3] show only sporadic attempts made by Indian sociologists/anthropologists in covering Nepal. When we

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and that these are among those journals which contributed in a significant way to the development of sociology/anthropology in India. It would have been better to have considered the journals like *Man in India, South Asian Anthropologist,* and *Eastern Anthropologist*, the three significant journals of sociology/anthropology also published from India, but unfortunately they do not maintain online repositories.

[3] Besides the four journals (as mentioned in Table No. 1) we have endeavored to take into consideration a wide array of contributions made by Indian sociologists/ anthropologists. For that web portal based search was not that effective excepting

reviewed the publications (including books, book chapters, occasional papers, special lectures, unpublished seminar papers, theses, and research articles published in journals other than the already mentioned four) covering the period of 1924–2014, as many as fifty four such contributions (including 39 articles, 11 books, and 4 theses) were made by Indian scholars. But only a few of them referred to Nepal as a part of the larger objectives of the respective studies (see Table 2). It is significant to note that among the thirty nine research articles published by Indian sociologists/social anthropologists, only three articles were published in academic platforms of Nepal. In an edited volume published by Sociological/Anthropological Society of Nepal (SASON) Partha N. Mukherjee (2008) has contributed a research paper, T.K. Oommen (2010) has published one article in *Contributions to Nepalese Studies* while André Béteille's (2012) Mahesh Chandra Regmi Lecture was published by Social Science Baha, Nepal. Except these three isolated cases, Nepali academic platforms such as academic journals, edited books and occasional papers did not attract contributions from Indian sociologists/ anthropologists.

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our search for the Theses. *Shodhganga*, an on-line portal for PhD theses submitted to Indian universities, was helpful in locating a few theses done on Nepal by Indian sociologists/anthropologists. Besides this we took initiatives through personal contacts, individual effort and finding out the cross referenced pieces mentioned in other works on Nepal. All these yielded more than fifty contributions. We tried to enlarge the scope of our off-line search as wide as possible and we are open to include any further inputs, which may transpire in due course. We have covered book chapters, books, research articles, non academic journal articles, and theses produced by Indian sociologists/anthropologists on Nepal. We provided the results of this broad based search (beyond the four journals as outlined in Table 1) in Table 2 where we categorized the contributions under three headings: articles (including book chapters, journal articles, occasional papers, unpublished seminar papers), books (monographs and edited volumes published by a varied group of publishers), and theses (as procured from the *Shodhganga* portal). Based on the publication year of our limited resources accumulated so far (first being the case published in 1924 and the last in 2014) we labeled the table with a caption of Nepal studies in India during 1924–2014. However, we do not claim to have produced any temporally exhaustive list of published materials on Nepal by Indian sociologists/anthropologists. The citation detail of all the entries are provided in the list of references, besides that we attempted to provide a thematic analysis of the entries and made critical reflections on them under five sub-sections.

Table 2: Nepal Studies in India (1924–2014)

Themes	Articles/Book Chapters/ Occasional Paper/Special Lecture/Unpublished Seminar Papers	Books/Edited Volumes	Theses
I. Social Organization of Civilization	Ray (1969), Bharati (1976), Jha (1981), Messerschmidt and Sharma (1981), Jha (1987)	Jha (1971), Jha (1978), Jha (1995)	-
II. Caste, Community and Identity Politics	Chattopadhyay (1924), Bhasin (1970), Sinha (1985), Subba (1985a), Subba (1985b), Nepali (1987), Roy Burman (1987), Subba (1990), Mondal (1997), Subba (1999b), Subba (2002), Subba (2008), Sinha (2008), Subba (2009), Sinha (2011), Subba (2010), Jodhka and Shah (2010)	Nepali (1965/ 1988), Sinha (1979), Subba (1999a)	Bhasin (1968)
III. Peasants and Rural Social Formation	Yadav (1987a), Yadav (1987b), Yadav (1987–88a), Yadav (1997), Yadav (2000), Yadav (2012)	Yadav (1984), Yadav (1992a)	Yadav (1982), Chauhan (1982)
IV. Modernisation, Social Change and Development	Vir (1981), Vir (1982), Yadav (1987–88b), Nepali (1988), Yadav (1989–90), Yadav (1992b), Yadav (1993)	Vir (1988)	Vir (1979)
V. Democracy, Nation Building and Maoist Movement	Srivastava (2006), Mukherjee (2008), Oommen (2010b), Béteille (2012),	Arora and Jayaram (2013), Sundar and Sundar (2014)	-
Total Indian Contribution	**39**	**11**	**4**

Images of Nepal in Indian Sociological/Anthropological Literature

In this section we ponder on the selected images or representations of Nepal and Nepali society as revealed in the works of Indian sociologists/ anthropologists. Terms like "image" or "representation" imply an attempt

to make off-hand comments on the statements, observations, opinion and judgments. Our view is that the images of Nepal in Indian sociological/ social anthropological literature are nebulous and we therefore do not rule out that our pondering may be simply acerbic or hyperbolic. With such trepidations in mind we provide a brief outline of the existing body of Indian sociological/anthropological literature—howsoever little they may be—on Nepal. Not to mention that the themes and issues chosen for analysis are entirely subjective as they are based on our subjective perceptions. Naivety apart, such an endeavor hence cannot claim any exclusivity in terms of its analytical foci but can be treated as preliminary and tentative illustrations of issues, which can further be brought into the fold of much deeper and reflexive theoretical and methodological discourses. That however is beyond the scope of the present exercise.

Generally speaking, cultures have existential reality, and sociological/ social anthropological knowledge of those realities are in most cases based on empirical investigations. In this sense all interpretations made by a social anthropologist/sociologist regarding other cultures are in a certain sense positivist in methodological orientation. Representations or images are thus best be treated as grounded in empirical reality and what distinguishes them from one another is the perspective that each of them followed. They are all representations of reality from a particular vantage point but are not to be treated as mirror images or as the natural narration of the reality. Sociological/ anthropological interpretations of Nepal as presented by Indian scholars are thus not to be treated as "truths" about Nepal. In other words, sociological/ anthropological knowledge is not aimed at producing either "truth" nor can they be labeled as entirely "false." But at the most, we argue, they provide perspectives towards understanding the social-cultural reality with some precision. The need is therefore to examine the images emerging out of those perspectives and how those images are represented in such perspectives. Equally significant are such questions as: How these perspectives were themselves articulated in terms of theoretical premise, methodological concerns, selection of concepts and analytical rigor? Our aim is to make some intervention in this regard by way of examining the works produced by Indian sociologists/anthropologists towards understanding Nepal.

Social Organization of Civilization

Perhaps the most enduring social anthropological tradition in relation to Nepal studies in India is related to this perspective that revolved around the basic presumption that Nepal is a cultural extension of India. This is probably because of Nepal's orientation as a country towards Hinduism and the official tag—"the world's only Hindu nation" that was intact until the promulgation of the Interim Constitution on January, 2007. On the other hand, Indian sociology/anthropology has also acquired a certain kind of recognition in the wider academia as Hindu sociology[4] it is not clear whether disciplinary engagement with Nepal emerged out of such intellectual preference that was widely prevalent in Indian sociology.

It is interesting to note that the attempts made by Jha (1971, 1981, 1987, 1995) to study Nepal following a perspective which was inspired by the contributions of American anthropologists such as Robert Redfield (1955) and Milton Singer (1955). Following Redfield and Singer, Hindu civilization was considered as a complex compendium of great and little traditions, and civilizational dynamics were attributed to the social organization of culture that was thought to involve cultural centers, performances, specializations and cultural media, and finally it was accepted that the structure of tradition and its transmission could be analyzed anthropologically following this conceptual frame. Redfield and Singer's ideas thus gave birth to a definite civilizational imagination in Indian anthropology with improvised terminologies such as sacred geography, sacred performances, sacred specialization, sacred complex, etc. Sacred complex studies became popular in no time and were found suitable as a home-grown perspective appropriate for understanding India anthropologically as a Hindu civilizational entity. The sacred complex studies in Indian anthropology marked the beginning with L.P. Vidyarthi and his *Sacred Complex in Hindu Gaya* (1961). Later, Makhan Jha, a student of Vidyarthi, extended his mentor's thesis to Nepal's civilizational core. Contributions on Nepal made by Jha appeared to be more a case of proving the rather infallibility of Vidyarthi's hypotheses. Except its central argument that cultural and civilizational background can never be delimited within the political boundary of a nation state, the image of

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[4] B.K. Sarkar's *magnum opus The Positive Background of Hindu Sociology* (1985[1914]) may be worth recalling here. Moreover, for a nuanced critique of Indian sociology as "Hindu sociology" see Ahmad (1976).

Nepal emerged out of this perspective is more of a field site for exercising Indian anthropological tradition. This is reflected in Jha's own statement with regard to his Janakpur study:

> ... we find that the terms and concepts developed by Vidyarthi (1961) are quite applicable and useful in the present study. It goes to prove that by mere location a Hindu place of pilgrimage does not lead to any significant difference except a few local and technical terms used in the analysis of sacred complexes which are bound to occur owing to their complexities.... Thus, both methodologically and theoretically the sacred complex receives universal recognition and acceptance. (Jha 1971: 104)[5]

Jyoti Sharma in her co-authored research paper on Muktinath pilgrimage center of Nepal did not however focus on Vidyarthi's model but attempted to nullify Victor Turner's thesis relating to sacred site symbolism (Messerschmidt and Sharma 1981). Likewise, Ray (1969) provided a historical account of Pasupatinath Temple and its organizational specificities in relation to India. These studies, in their zeal to prove the resonance between the sacred complex of Gaya with that of Janakpur, Kathmandu, Swayambhunath or Lumbini-Kapilavastu, sincerely contributed towards the consolidation of what may critically be labeled as "*rishi* syndrome"[6]—a typical Hindu gaze that viewed Nepal as basically a place for pilgrimage. Indian anthropological abstraction of Nepal thus glossed over the "actual" Nepal and remained confined with the "ascriptive" Nepal as spiritual zone. Some serious theoretical and methodological concerns were raised by Agehanada Bharati relating to the problems and prospects of considering

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[5] It is not out of place to mention that sacred complex studies in Nepal made little impact except in producing two PhD theses in anthropology on "sacred complex of Swayambhunath" in Kathmandu (by D.P. Rajaure) and "sacred complex in Lumbini-Kapilavastu" in Nepal (by P.R. Koirala). Makhan Jha happened to be the research supervisor for both the studies and the PhD degrees were awarded by Ranchi University, India.

[6] The notion of "*rishi*-syndrome" is borrowed from Agehananda Bharati who used this profitably to show the existence of an "actual" and "ideal" Himalaya in the Hindu conception of mountain (Bharati 1978).

Himalaya as a culture area[7] in anthropological sense where Nepal and other such places figure prominently with their diversities. Bharati also castigated the Indian anthropological attempts to project Nepal as "emulating the ritualistic purity-oriented ways of 'official' India-type Nepal" (Bharati 1976: 109).

Community, Caste and Identity Politics

Though community studies in Indian sociology/anthropology bear a rich tradition, concerns for studying communities of Nepal by Indian sociologists were limited both in number and variety. Although the multi-ethnic society of Nepal has a variety of castes and communities[8] the studies done by Indian scholars focused mostly on three communities viz., Newars, Muslims and Limbus. Subba (1999a) however made further attempts to study the Yakha and Rais besides the Limbus. In all likelihood the Newars received much attention from Indian sociologists/anthropologists. Anthropologist K.P. Chattopadhyay, prominent among the pioneers, published a lengthy piece on the Newars. This is to be noted that the first ever piece by an Indian anthropologist on a community of Nepal was not based on ethnography even though Chattopadhyay otherwise was well known for practicing rich ethnographic tradition. Based on the secondary sources and conjectural history, Chattopadhyay (1924) published his Nepal piece in the pages of the *Journal of the Asiatic Society*. Idiosyncrasies apart, the study gives us some important insights related to Newars and also Nepal of early twentieth century. Besides emphasizing the syncretism in their religious life that Newars owed to both Hinduism and Buddhism, Chattopadhyay much like colonial anthropologists, represented the early history of Nepal as devoid of civilization. Newar ethnology helped Chattopadhyay draw an evolutionary hypothesis that the cultural forces that had shaped Nepal as the cradle of Asiatic civilization came from elsewhere. Chattopadhyay's frequent use of such terms like "wild races," "rude tribes" and narrations depicting how the aboriginal people were devoid of the knowledge of arts, industries and even domestication of animal which they came to learn through their constant interaction with people of "advanced civilization [which] came from outside"

[7] For an in-depth anthropological understanding of Himalaya as a cultural area studies by Sinha (1979, 1981) are worth considering.

[8] National Population Census 2011 of Nepal has recorded more than 125 communities in Nepal.

(Chattopadhyay 1924: 475) bears the heavy imprint of the "colonial gaze." Newars of Nepal were also studied by Gopal Singh (G.S.) Nepali (1988/1965) in the 1950s.[9] Understandably, Nepali's work smacked off the colonial anthropological fixations in documenting the life world of a community as was prominent in Chattopadhyay's work. That aside, Nepali's study also carried the overload of Ghurye-type Hindu sociology.[10] His description of the Newar society was reflective of his own puritanical Hindu standards as he placed his discomfort about the many un-Hindu things that the Newars did (Nepali 1988[1965], chapter XII, especially pp. 338–341). Berreman (1968: 992) and Bharati have strongly criticized Nepali to the extent of claiming that Nepali's work "is an extremely important study not so much of Newar society, as of normative Hindu attitudes towards deviant forms of cultural behavior" (Bharati 1976: 112). Bhasin (1968, 1970) has also attempted to study the Newars of Nepal from a physical anthropology standpoint and came out with certain interesting observations. A careful investigation of blood groups and ABH secretion among three Newar sub groups led him to the conclusion that the Shreshthas, Gubhajus and Jaypus did not differ from each other genetically and that caste rigidity among the Newars was of recent origin (Bhasin 1970: 375).

[9] Sociologist G.S. Nepali was from Nepal but he received his academic training in India and also served as faculty in different Indian Universities throughout his career. It may be unjustified to consider him in the list of Indian sociologists but his book and articles that we considered for the present review were published when he was actively engaged as a member of Indian sociological fraternity initially through his posting in the Banaras Hindu University (BHU, 1963–1986) and later in the Centre for Himalayan Studies, North Bengal University (1986–1988). He has also taught in several Indian institutes beginning his career as an assistant lecturer at Sir J.J. College of Architecture in Bombay and as a lecturer in sociology in 1961 at the University of Gorkahpur before joining BHU. Nepali has also worked as University Grants Commission (UGC) visiting professor of sociology to L.N. Mithila University and Darbhanga University in 1979.

[10] It should be noted that G.S. Nepali's intellectual grooming took place in Bombay University and under the supervision of Ghurye, who was well known for his sociological treatment of Indian tribes. Ghurye treated Indian tribes as 'backward Hindus' that in all likelihood was reflected in Nepali's treatment of the Newars. G.S. Nepali was awarded the PhD Degree in Sociology in 1959 by Bombay University and Ghurye was his research supervisor.

Unlike the Newars, Muslims of Nepal were studied by one Indian social anthropologist in the recent past. Although T.N. Madan's edited volume on the *Muslim Communities of South Asia* (1976) is an important contribution, the only essay on the Nepali Muslims in that collective was contributed by Marc Gaborieau (1976), a non-Indian anthropologist. Conspicuously enough, the Muslim community of Nepal has attracted the attention of the political scientists more than the sociologists/anthropologists.[11] Based on secondary sources Mondal (1997) highlighted the history of settlement, social structure and the idea of assimilation and distinctiveness of the Muslims in relation to the dominant Hindu society of Nepal. Drawing largely from Gaborieau (1976), Mondal dealt with the plights of Muslims in Nepal and their social-status in the caste hierarchy and their position as the "other" in the eyes of dominant Hindus. He also tried to accentuate the question of intra-community variation among the Muslims and the role of Islamization in social-mobility within the social hierarchy of their inner social structure. However, relatively lesser attention was drawn in the sociological work on Nepali Muslims towards the rise of political consciousness among the Muslims vis-à-vis the democratic body politics.

A.C. Sinha made some commendable interventions with regard to the question of community identities in the eastern Himalayas. He made a critical estimation as to how communities spread over the eastern Himalayas got divided from each other out of colonial frontier policies (Sinha 1985). This is a significant observation in that it helps us problematize the interstices between community identities and the state structure. Communities in the Himalayan region have been torn historically by the different shreds and patches of overlapping cultural and political boundaries. Such concerns are prominent in Sinha's another piece on "Lhotshampa, Madhesi, Nepamul: The deprived of Bhutan, Nepal and India" (2008) where he examined the predicament of the Nepalis in Bhutan, the Madhesis in Nepal and the Nepalis of India living in Darjeeling and Dooars. As a result of the advent of sovereignty, democracy and other politico-cultural forces these communities are facing turmoil of ethnic cleansing in case of Bhutan, dilapidated identity as in the case of Madhesis of Nepal and Nepalis of Darjeeling and Dooars. Sinha also highlighted the need for a sound policy measure from the Indian, Nepali and Bhutanese states that may amicably address this political

[11] A number of studies by Indian political scientists were made on Muslims of Nepal in the recent past viz., Dastider (2000a, 2000b, 2007), Shukla (1997).

problem related to community identities. Sinha further drew his attention in another of his publications on the Lhotshampas, whom he considered as the residents of the southern Bhutanese foothills and as an integral part of the Nepali-speaking social commonwealth spread in Nepal, Bhutan and India. He showed how the Lhotshampa destiny gets significantly influenced by events taking shape in Nepal and India and how the future of this distinct community of Nepali-speakers—the Lhotshampas—will depend upon the flow of events taking place in Bhutan, Nepal, India and the UNHCR, and the Western countries of resettlement (Sinha 2011). Given this reality, how the issues like trans-border flow of people and culture could have smooth sailing without problematizing the statist discourse of nation and nationalism? Questions of this sort inform the conceptual basis of T.B. Subba's several works, which we discuss in the following paragraphs.

T.B. Subba's works can be divided into two categories although they share a common conceptual frame of analysis. In his earlier works, Subba focused on the flow of cultural institutions and practices between India and Nepal as well as the processes of change and adaptation took place in relation to the questions of caste and religious practices among the Nepalis of Darjeeling and North East India (Subba 1985a, 1985b). Besides Subba, Nepali caste system drew attention of some other Indian sociologists as well. For example, J.J. Roy Burman (1987) traced out the history of caste system in Nepal since the fifteenth century with the Malla Kings and emphasized on its consolidation that took place during the Rana regime. In the absence of field work, his paper reflected more on the book view of Nepali caste system. But even then it raised an important issue that, unlike India where caste is more an expression of religious and cultural system, it is the outcome of economic and political changes in Nepal. G.S. Nepali (1987) also discussed in detail the changing dynamics of the caste system of Nepal in general and Newar caste system in particular. Much like Subba, the comparative analysis of caste in a concrete manner figured well in Jodhka and Shah's (2010) analysis. Perhaps for the first time caste question has been analyzed in a systematic way covering all of South Asia in their work. The internationalization of the system of caste was discussed in relation to the significance of issues like caste recognition/Dalit politics, caste demography and means of caste discrimination across South Asia. Reality of caste in the official discourses of state and the cross-cultural ramifications and specificities of such politics were elaborately discussed. This is a study where India and Indian sociological acumen showed the way

for regional imagining of scholarship that could foster academic and policy research collaborations between and amongst South Asian countries.[12]

The latter works of Subba were concerned with more serious questions concerning community identities. He critically assessed the trans-national flow of identity politics among the Kirata communities in general (Subba 1999a) and Limbus in particular (Subba 1990, 1999b, 2010) spread throughout the eastern Nepal and Darjeeling-Sikkim region of India. Subba's finesse also helps us understand the crux of Nepali/Gorkha identity politics in India and Nepal in this regard (Subba 2002, 2008, 2009). How in state's conception the singular identity of its citizens are superimposed virtually bypassing the quotidian life experiences where an Indian can simultaneously be a Nepali, a Kirata, a Hindu or a tribesman or woman. He raised several such significant questions and successfully established the point that cultural ties ran far deeper than the road to nationhood. The question of identity of the Nepalis is not governed much by the free movement across the porous border but more by the perception of the Indians on who is a Nepali. The Nepali experiences across the open border is in line with the experiences in the rest of South Asia that cultural, linguistic, religious, and literary interactions cannot be prevented by the boundaries of nation-states (Subba 2002: 135).

Peasant Studies and the Work on Rural Social Formation

Out of ten contributions listed above on peasants and agrarian social formation of Nepal, nine were written by Professor Sohan Ram Yadav who currently heads the Department of Sociology in the Banaras Hindu University and who had earned his PhD under the supervision of G.S. Nepali. Focusing mainly on the Tarai region of Nepal, largely inhabited by the group of people who share similar entourage to that of the people living across the border in Indian side, Yadav highlighted issues like migration, rural and agrarian social structure, rural social change, feudalism, development, cultural life, rural poverty, and land reform (Yadav 1982, 1984, 1987a, 1987b, 1987–88,

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[12] The findings of this paper are based on a four-country study on "Caste-Based Discrimination in South Asia" covering Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Nepal. Coordinated by the Indian Institute of Dalit Studies, New Delhi and funded by the International Dalit Solidarity Network, Denmark the study team included Krishna B. Bhattachan, Tej B. Sunar and Yasso Kanti Bhattachan from Nepal besides other members included from each of the respective countries—Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Pakistan and India.

1992, 1993, 1997, 2000, 2012). Nepal is a land of diversity in terms of her topography, people and culture. Tarai region itself is full of diversity. The emphasis on this diverse character of the region is missing in Yadav's work. Excepting the Madhesis the ethnic minorities (like the Rautes, Rajis, Dhanuks, Tharus, Kumals, Danuwars and others) hardly find mention in his works, though the titles of most of his works promise to examine Tarai in a comprehensive manner.

One may expect that Yadav has attempted to address the crucial processes following which feudalism grew, matured and informed much of Nepal's rural formation (especially when the title of his book reads *Nepal: Feudalism and Rural Formation* 1984) but he neither deals with the transition debate relating to the dynamics of rural social formation vis-à-vis feudalism in case of Nepal, issues which have enriched Indian rural sociology so significantly, nor even he shows adequately how feudalism loomed large in the agrarian relations of rural Tarai. One is left with an overload of field data but inadequate analyses in relation to a serious question he himself proposed: how did the land reform measures of 1964 fail to transform the agrarian relations in the Tarai region? His works touched upon the history of land tenure system only tangentially and the changing dynamics of agrarian social formation were analyzed with little rigor. It is also to be noted that Yadav's contributions were least influenced by Indian sociology which has a rich tradition in agrarian studies. It might be fair to say that Yadav was successful in generating a rich corpus of empirical data but his work lacked serious theoretical engagement on questions relating to feudalism and the dynamics of rural social formation in Nepal.

Karan Singh Chauhan (1982) did his doctoral research on the peasants of Nepal. Following Daniel Thorner, Chauhan classified Nepali peasantry into three categories: absentee landlord, owner-cultivator and landless worker but his work concerned little with the way how these categories were fused in the broader agrarian relations within the rural social structure and how they have impacted the participation or non-participation of the peasants in the political road map set by the peasant organization.[13] Instead,

[13] After the introduction of democracy in 1951 Akhil Nepal Kisan Sangh (All Nepal Peasants Organization) was established in Nepal. By 1954 a few other peasant organizations like Nepal Peasant Union, Nepal Peasants Party cropped up mostly as splinter groups of the communist led Akhil Nepal Kisan Sangh. In December 1960 King Mahendra dismissed parliamentary system and political parties

Chauhan was more focused on the organizational aspects (involving issues like composition of the organization in terms of various social groups, their socio-economic background, political preferences and attitudes of the leaders to the functions of the organization) of peasant organization and his work seemed rather descriptive in dealing with the problems and prospects of peasant organization in Nepal. The entanglements between the state and peasant politics found little space in his thesis even though his work recorded that the peasant organizations had more than two lakh members at the time of his research. Although the author often referred to different political affiliations maintained by different peasant organizations, the treatment of peasants was more or less homogenous, and it seemed that the questions of caste and community was mostly ignored in his work.

Modernization, Social Change and Development
Three authors—Vir (1979, 1981, 1982, 1988), Yadav (1987–88b, 1989–90, 1992b) and Nepali (1988)—seemed to share concerns on three broad topics: modernization, social change and development from sociological perspective. Vir examined the social change and modernization in Nepal in the light of education in general and college level education in particular. He focused on the role of the state policies on college education. In his examination of the New Education System Plan (NESP), he analyzed the data gleaned from around 500 college students selected from the two colleges to conclude that the new education system had not been successful in bringing

and political organizations were banned in the country. Through a government proclamation in 1961 during King Mahendra's reign seven government sponsored class and professional organizations were established that included organizations for peasants and labor, students, youth, children, women and ex-servicemen. These class organizations were based on four-tier structure parallel to the panchayat system functioning at the local, zonal, district and central levels. The National Congress of Peasants' Organization, the one Chauhan studied, was at the central leve. Chauhan's study was conducted at three levels: national, district and panchayat. Besides the central level he covered the functions of peasant organization operating in four districts (Kathmandu and Bhakatpur from the Central region and Mahendranagar and Kailali from the Far Western region) and eight village panchayats (namely, Indrayani and Moolpani village panchayat from Kathmandu, Dadhikot and Lokanthali village panchayat from Bhakatpur, Jhalari and Sudha village panchayat from Mahendranagar and Geta and Godavari village panchayat from Kailali district).

in significant changes because higher education remained within the confines of the higher echelons of the caste, class and religious orders. He argued that instead of ameliorating the situation the NESP consolidated the already existing social hierarchy and reinstated the grip of caste and community over the secular field of education. Vir seems also to be fascinated by the policy shifts introduced by the government by shifting its attention from the colonial prototype of Indian education towards the embracement of vocational courses which could replace the earlier mode of producing cadres to the latter mode of producing more capable manpower with the potentials of contributing to the modernization of the country. He even suggested the other South Asian countries learn from the Nepali experience on achieving modernization through a shift in educational policies. This seemed to be a contradictory position given that his data actually showed that there had been no change in the way education was being appropriated by the social elite. He did substantiate how the NESP was more or less successful in meeting the desired goals of the state even if it showed a complete disregard for the social reality in which it was implemented.

Yadav particularly focused on the study of rural poverty in the Tarai region and examined its socio-economic backwardness vis-à-vis unfavorable land rights, upper caste and feudal domination, unequal wage structure within agriculture, low level of productivity and minimal opportunities for commercialization (Yadav 1993: 80–97). He also critically assessed the policies and programs adopted by the then government of Nepal for eradication of the poverty, and the various other rural development programs meant for the progress of rural community. His remark was that the development programs only enlarged the social divide within Tarai. He also hinted as to how the culturally rooted rural backwardness led to widening the gulf between the people of Tarai and the hills and went on to consider that the peripheralization of Tarai may endanger the national integration of Nepal (Yadav 1987–88). Even if he did not substantiate this, Yadav briefly pointed out that people's alleged Indian connection might have contributed towards its "peripheral" status.

G.S. Nepali (1988) attempted to develop a cultural critique of development in his work on the eastern Himalaya. Bringing in several examples from Indian tribal communities that opposed mainstream development, he urged that development should be redefined within the cultural terms and with an orientation towards community life. Drawing on his study of the Newars,

he advocated for resocializing the idea of development according to the given cultural contours of Nepali society. Nepali went ahead of his time in raising serious concerns against the roadmap of mainstream development as practiced in the eastern Himalayas at a time when such arguments— commonplace now-a-days in the debates of ethno-development (Clarke 2001)—were rare in South Asian sociology as a whole. What is indigenous people's understanding towards development and why it is necessary to think of development based on the strengths of the indigenous culture? G.S. Nepali argued that development can never be culture-neutral or culture-insensitive because the process of development has to occur within the realm of culture. He argued that the development plans based on modern science and technology with little respect for the local knowledge systems and values of the local indigenous communities of the Himalayan region could be disastrous for the entire region.

Democracy, Nation Building and Maoist Movement
This theme is significant because it covered reflections of Indian sociologists/ anthropologists on certain crucial political issues/processes of contemporary Nepal. While Arora and Jayaram (2013) and Béteille (2012) took up the issue of democracy, Srivastava (2006); Mukherjee (2008) and Oommen (2010) looked into nation-building and Sundar and Sundar (2014) commented on the Maoist movement and civil war in Nepal. It needs to be mentioned that while Mukherjee (2008a) and Oommen (2010) focused thoroughly on Nepal, the remaining four looked into Nepal as part of their larger focus on theory.

In the "Introduction" to their edited volume, Vibha Arora and N. Jayaram (2013) showed how democracy in the Himalayan region has been experimental and clamorous thus affecting the people living in this entire region in various ways. In their view, Nepal achieved democracy in the 1990s when the political firmament was favorable. Like other Himalayan states, Nepal also underwent a process where its traditional socio-political order encountered Western liberal democratic ethos. The co-existence of pre-modern political institutions along with the modern political institutions gave shape to a dynamic political environment in Nepal. They identified the *Janaāndolan*s of the 1990s and 2006 with two different agenda: social equality in the first phase and the participatory decision making of the hitherto marginalized groups in the second. They hinted at the demand for equality and share of resources for development as germane to the cause of violent

movements where the nationalities of Nepal demanded their claims to ethnic homelands and safeguarding of their rights. They put forward their view that the South Asian problem does not obligate national intervention rather it calls for regional intervention (Arora and Jayaram 2013: 8). They highlighted the issue that the process of democratization in the Himalayan region is transnational in that it transcends political boundaries; as a result the process of democratization in India led to a multiplied effect in Nepal and other small nationalities. It is curious to note that on the one hand they pleaded for determining democracy through a cross regional focus that could consolidate ethnic aspirations undermining the territorial supremacy of the nation state while on the other hand they rendered faith in participatory democracy and its competence to empower the historically marginalized ethnic groups as practiced in national contexts of South Asia. In all likelihood, therefore, the analytical strength of what they proposed as "routing of democracy" as a conceptual framework for understanding democracy in the South Asian context appears to be epistemologically opaque.

In his paper delivered initially as the *Mahesh Chandra Regmi Lecture* and later published in *Economic and Political Weekly* (EPW), Béteille (2012) argued that institutions of democracy cannot be the same for all nations because the social institutions with which they are intertwined vary temporally and spatially.[14] He reminded that it would be unrealistic to expect that democracy in Nepal would flourish by following the Indian footsteps simply because democracy evolves in different ways and takes diverse forms in different nations. He argued that the political institutions of democracy are shaped also by the historical conditions of their origin and by the history of the nation's interaction with other nations (Béteille 2012: 2). One may get befuddled as to what Béteille would have meant by suggesting Nepal to learn from "neighboring countries" implying obviously Indian democratic experience. It is well known that Indian democracy has survived for over a half century with several challenges of which some were attended, some more are enduring and still some others are intrinsic to the very idea of Indian democracy itself. Moreover, we are also told that academic autarky is not meaningful only in relation to Western academy the same also characterizes South Asian academic scene greatly (Deshpande 2002: 3628). Reading Béteille's instructive lecture in the light of the above statements gives us a

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[14] The same paper by Béteille also appeared in the pages of *Economic and Political Weekly* (see Béteille 2013).

clue to comprehend the problems and prospects of regional imagining in South Asian sociology.

T.K. Oommen (2010) in his paper focused on the measures of inclusion as one of the best strategies of nation-building for the war torn Nepali polity and society. He made it abundantly clear as to how the Western conception of nation-state would prove to be disastrous to a culturally diverse country like Nepal. Oommen's observation that constitutional recognition of cultural diversity and linguistic diversity has to be fused with the project of building up federal Nepal is indeed a serious concern shown by an Indian sociologist towards contemporary Nepal. He made worth considering a point for future Nepal when he argued that federalism lies not in constitutional or institutional structures but in the society itself and therefore it is wise to consider federal government as a device to give voice to the cultural diversity of a given society (Oommen 2010: 6). Like Béteille, Oommen also suggested that Nepal should be directed inwards to build up future trajectories with an appreciation of the general characteristics that it shares with other societies (implying India and other South Asian countries perhaps). But unlike Béteille, Oommen emphasized that Nepal should not go for pursuing the beaten tracks and copying constitutional provisions of the so-called "advanced," "developed" or "modern" societies (Oommen 2010: 12). Oommen's advocacy for the decoupling of citizenship and nationality much in tune with Will Kymlicka's proposition of "multi-cultural citizenship" and its appropriation in the South Asian context is undoubtedly a significant observation, which still is not very widely discussed in South Asian social sciences.

Unlike Oommen, Mukherji (2008a) takes a concrete proposition that civic nationalism would be worth following a path for nation-building for future Nepal. Though he has made enough critical reflections in many of his earlier writings (Mukherji 1991, 1992, 1994, 1999) on the Western conception of nation state and its inherent homogenizing project of sabotaging cultural diversity, it is striking to note his assertion in relation to Nepal when he states that "ethno-based nation state in a culturally plural society is vulnerable, because it is internally, sub-ethnically, as well as, class differentiated" (Mukherji 2008a: 33). He confidently proposed that by auguring for an ethnic federalism or for that matter opting ethnic composition based state formation as a strategy Nepal would be inviting a disaster for its future generation. Unlike Oommen and Béteille, he however thought that a mutual respect between Nepal and India was needed in order to appreciate each other's

political experience, and that a dignified symmetrical partnership with India can help Nepal fully exploit the opportunities of the globalized economic order and to strengthen the process of her nation building.

Srivastava (2006) explains how the text books of Nepal, Bangladesh and Pakistan function as cultural capital. How school level social science text books institutionalize the idea of nationalism and how they contribute to legitimize the already existing institutional arrangements. The text books of these countries especially that of Nepal, she argues, have tried to emphasize more on the uniqueness of Nepal than on reflecting upon the common cultural ground of nationalism in South Asian context. She further commented that the text books of these countries in their zeal to promote nationalism incorporate selectively chosen facts and events linked with the celebration of respective country's political project of statist nationalism. Besides these, she mentions that the text books are the representation of the elite culture of these countries where women and the common people do not find space.

Aparna and Nandini Sundar in their "Introduction" to the edited volume *Civil Wars in South Asia* (2014) critically estimated the role of the state in relation to South Asian civil wars. Nandini Sundar in her chapter discussed Nepal's civil war and found Nepal's experience as the most unusual kind as the Maoists took part in governance. She discussed the historical records that probably led to the Maoist movement in Nepal ranging from the oligarchic Rana rule and the various political pursuits attempted at the overthrow of the monarchy and the success and failure of those pursuits in bringing in the age of democracy and inclusive development. The root of Nepal's civil war she credited to the result of local governance unlike the process of decolonization of other South Asian countries. They highlighted on the security concerns of both countries in relation to the Maoist movement and felt that civil wars at least in case of Bangladesh and Nepal brought about some genuine changes (Sundar and Sundar 2014: 12).

Towards Conclusion

Our thematic analysis of the contributions made by Indian scholars on Nepal raises several methodological concerns. It is observed that most of the contributors maintained a particular stand of their own and showed a willingness to make their standpoint known with little care to acknowledge the viewpoints of the Nepali sociologists/anthropologists and a complete

disregard for resources produced by them in languages other than English.[15] It is well known that pervasive indigenous assumption of a society provide the basis on which sociologists/anthropologists construct their narratives to explore "other cultures" (Madan 2000: 98; Marriott 1976: 109). On this count, the attempts made by Indian scholars to explore Nepal have failed to adequately address the indigenous cognitive categories and to develop interpretation of behavior in terms of such categories. Suitability of culturally rooted Indian sociology/anthropology for understanding Nepal was never critically examined and in some cases social realities of Nepal were reduced to fit into Indian sociological/anthropological categories of thought. Cognitive categories derived from modern Indian experience were occasionally found helpful in making sense of what is happening in contemporary Nepal. Given their nationalist leanings, much of the Indian scholars have taken India's modernization for granted and were tempted to come out with similar findings when they ventured to explore social change and development in Nepal. However, there were attempts also made by Indian scholars to examine from the standpoint of the dispossessed and marginalized people of Nepal. In such analyses, Indian sociologists/anthropologists did provide valuable insights in understanding Nepal in her own terms.

To give these observations an analytical perspective T.N. Madan is extremely helpful in using the notions "view from above" and "view from below" while contextualizing the images of India in American sociology (Madan 2000: 101). Madan's emphasis on "view from above" and his subsequent emphasis on the "view from below" should not be confused to mean that library-based research is the former and field-based research the latter. Madan's emphasis was on the gaze that is intrinsic to sociology as a discipline. Viewed as such this helps us situating the whole analysis (summarizing all the works made by Indian scholars on Nepal referred to here) in two dimensions: First, the "otherness" of Nepal in terms of its cultural distinctiveness from India as emphasized in this "view from above" is something that needs to be preserved, mystified and if necessary eulogized for the sake of maintaining status quo. These refer to the studies on sacred complex, education and change, communities, peasant society were of this

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[15] Pratyoush Onta (2015) in his paper maintains similar kind of observation that Indian scholars exhibit little awareness to Nepali scholarship and particularly anthropological writings by Nepali scholars in English or Nepali or any vernacular language of Nepal.

kind. Second, and in contrast the "view from below" as reflected in some of the studies, the other body of Indian research on Nepal emphasized its cultural distinctiveness not for the sake of preserving or praising it but for showing ways for affecting and abolishing it or celebrating its cause as the reservoir of those forces that contributes towards dismantling the status quo. This infers the genre that studied identity politics, nation building and the Maoist movement.

The real significance of the works made by Indian scholars on Nepal are not merely to be assessed in terms of their truth value or falsity of the images that they produced over the years about Nepal nor even by judging the entire stock of information and analysis that such works have produced regarding the past, present and future of Nepal, but possibly through the debates regarding the appropriate perspectives—conceptual, theoretical, methodological or otherwise—to be pursued in understanding Nepal sociologically/anthropologically. Such debates in social sciences are, however, always inconclusive nevertheless they are productive at the same time. For, such debates can help us build the possible inventory of a dialogic sociology/anthropology for both Nepal and India, if not for the entire South Asia as well. Some such debates that came up in our analysis are concerned with: i) Whether Hindu categories of thought are suitable to understand Nepal sociologically? ii) How far nationalist sociology is productive in realizing the changing contours of Nepal's social and political reality? iii) The justification of rigorous critique of Western conception of nation state as a promising political structure for future Nepal; iv) Appropriateness of multicultural citizenship in the given reality of porous border and cultural similitude between both the countries; v) Feasibility of a home grown model of democracy faithful to cultural pluralism and civic nationalism.

In order to appreciate the worth of these debates in understanding Nepal sociologically one is left with several unanswered question: is Indian sociological knowledge about Nepal adequate? What the Nepali sociologists have to say on the knowledge created by the Indian sociologists on Nepal? Did the Indian sociologists contribute towards the formulation of South Asian sociology through their respective "particular" studies on Nepal? Whether Indian knowledge about Nepal, inasmuch as it was the case of Western knowledge about India, is to be considered *ipso facto* superior to their (Nepali sociologists') knowledge about themselves? This interrogation is necessary since in South Asian academia India and Nepal are still strongly

marked by asymmetric academic relations.[16] South Asian academic scene is also marked by the conspicuous absence of dialogue among the sociologists. Instead of creating a dialogic space that could have opened up scope for reciprocal knowledge building, the sociologists of South Asia more often than not have restricted themselves to being within the ghettos of "nationalistic intellectualism."[17] The fact that Indian sociologists/anthropologists and their Nepali counterpart rarely interact and share their knowledge has been pointed out by many (Chhetri and Gurung 1999; Mukherji 2008b; Pathak and Perera 2015). One ready reference regarding the fallout of such absences of intellectual interaction between sociologists of Nepal and India may be drawn from the findings of Shiv Visvanathan's study. In an important two volume series on *World Anthropologies* published under the auspices of World Anthropologies Network (WAN), Visvanathan (2006) assessed the nature and form of Indian sociological/anthropological imagination in the light of global sociology/anthropology. Upholding the promise (as championed by Gustavo Lins Ribeiro and Arturo Escobar, the editors of *World Anthropologies* series) of building up paths for practicing anthropology in "non-hegemonic" ways, Visvanathan convincingly claimed that the postcolonial possibilities of Indian sociology vis-à-vis the imperatives of global sociological imagination would open up the scope for "regional South Asian imagination." However, the intellectual appreciation of such a possibility rests upon his claim that Indian anthropologists have much to learn from Nepali sociologists/anthropologists who studied water in a much better way than their Indian neighbors did. In all likelihood Visvanathan's finding that water studies constitute the primary focus and a dominant sub field of Nepali sociology is hard to establish as a fact. A handful of studies on water and irrigation by Prachanda Pradhan (1989), Rajendra Pradhan (1996, 1997a, 1997b) and Ujjwal Pradhan (1990, 1994) do not necessarily determine the nature and scope Nepali sociology/anthropology in its entirety. Visvanathan's claim that Indian sociology has come out of its "obsession with the United Kingdom and United States" may be worth considering an observation but it is doubtful whether it has been replaced by a "sudden dynamism and diversity of South Asian ideas" (2006: 257). This seems to be a fact especially when as Indian sociologists/

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[16] For a detailed account of the asymmetric academic relations in South Asian academic scene vide Deshpande (2002).

[17] We draw this from Onta who talked eloquently about "nationalist intellectual ghetto" in one of his essays published in the *Himal South Asian* (1998).

anthropologists (for example) we know but very little about the volume of works produced by the fellow sociologists/anthropologists in another South Asian country (here in this case Nepal).[18]

Given this reality, we argue for developing a dialogic space for sociologists across South Asia as the rudimentary steps for building up South Asian sociological imagination. A space—physical or virtual—of reciprocal scholarship that may provide the opportunity to know each other's particular sociologies and thereby to prepare the grounds for a possible South Asian universal sociology/anthropology. A field of dialogic sociology would have definitely been created if the Indian sociologists/anthropologists vis-à-vis their Nepali counterparts could have located a common project, a community of discourse that would have united them communicate their different practices in order to become productively intelligible to each other. So far as this review is concerned the situation is not that encouraging one though the trend is not totally frustrating as well. Despite the fact that Indian sociologists/anthropologists have produced more than fifty pieces on Nepal but such a body of literature appears to be inadequate to equip one who wants to know/explore Nepal sociologically/anthropologically. The volume of Indian sociological/anthropological researches done on Nepal failed to

[18] The need for developing a South Asian sociological/ anthropological academic community that would learn about the others and about themselves more from direct interactions through collaborative and comparative efforts than from handed down knowledge from elsewhere was emphasized perhaps for the first time in the South Asia Workshop held at Surjakund (Haryana, India) during February 23–25, 2005. Organized through the collective initiatives of International Sociological Association (ISA), the Indian Sociological Society (New Delhi), Department of Sociology, University of Colombo (Sri Lanka), Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR), New Delhi and the Ford Foundation the workshop strongly pleaded for a common regional platform for the practitioners of sociology and social anthropology in South Asian countries to meet face-to-face, to share their experiences, and express their views and concerns on issues of common interest and thereby to enrich sociology and social sciences in South Asia. In the recent past similar attempts were also made by the Department of Sociology, South Asian University (SAU, New Delhi). In collaboration with Japan Foundation the Department of Sociology, SAU organized a one day seminar on February 6, 2015 under the title "South Asia?: Explorations of the Region, from Within and Without." Critical questions relating to the ways of practicing, researching and teaching of sociology and social anthropology in the South Asian context were discussed. For details see Pathak and Perera (2015).

produce a coherent body of knowledge regarding Nepal although each of the contributions in their singularity has successfully reproduced a nation-state outlook on society and politics of Nepal. What was missing in such studies is perhaps the regional imagining out of which both the countries could have gained as in most cases the problems that attracts sociologists'/anthropologists' attention are common in both India and Nepal. Hopefully we could locate some such themes from our review where the need and significance of regional imaginings were emphasized in some fashion. Studies on democracy (Arora and Jayaram), civil war (Sundar and Sundar), nation building (Béteille, Oommen, Mukherji), and the four-country study on "Caste Based Discrimination in South Asia" (a glimpse of which is addressed in Jodhka and Shah's attempt) are the cases in point.

It is our contention that the prospect of a dialogic sociology/anthropology for Nepal, India or for South Asia is depended much upon a call for making sociology a "post-national" discipline. We argue that the regional imagining of South Asia for the practitioners of sociology would remain a lofty assumption as long as sociology as a discipline continues to be practiced as a national discipline[19] in South Asian context. As the "realist" view of sociology that flows from a state-centered paradigm and considers the fulfillment of nationalist interests as the primary goal will continue to view societies within the limits of political boundaries undermining regional and cross-national cultural overlap. In fact, national fixation of social sciences under the rubric of area studies programs impaired sociology to look beyond the dominant geo-political calculus of "sovereign paradigm"[20]—an approach whose obvious entailments are fear, suspicion and otherness. In a certain sense, sociology's "post-national" avatar demands detouring the discipline to avoid even the shadowy presence of what is known as Area Studies and to fall back on the journey towards South Asian regional imagining. However, the claim for a "post-national" sociology does not necessary imply a call for

[19] Sujata Patel in many of her works (e.g., 2010, 2011) has referred to Indian sociology's nationalist roots as attempts to "provincialise" the discipline in tune with the strictures and structures of the project of nation state and the elitist notion of nationalism.

[20] Our indebtedness to Pathak and Perera's (2015: 220) reportage is obvious where they mentioned about Navnita Behera who in her presentation actually used the phraseology "sovereign paradigm" to critique sociology's obsession with the nation state.

the "death of nation-state" but a reorientation of the discipline in tune with the newly emerging forms of interaction between communities and cultures across the state systems. The dialogic nature of this post-national sociology is to be informed by reciprocal respect for the sociological scholarship of each participating nations—be it India, Nepal or other South Asian countries and beyond. If sociology has to be faithful to its disciplinary callings that share an elementary interest in the study of diversity and humanism (Oommen 2007: 32, 165) then it is imperative that the discipline has to look beyond the territory of the nation-state. As both the issues, diversity and humanism, as ideas are antithetical to the project of territorial limits and are not restricted to the concerns of one's co-nationals or fellow citizens alone.

By raising the plea for building up of sociology as a post-national discipline we attempt to argue much like Ulrich Beck (2007) that sociology needs to come out of the assumption that humanity is naturally divided into a limited number of nations, which on the inside, organize themselves as nation-states, and on the outside, set boundaries to distinguish themselves from other nation-states. This is more than an epistemological necessity in an age when there is a convergence of challenges posed by the neo-liberal order across the South Asian states. If common history gives rise to common problems within South Asian regions global trend also bound them together. In order to meet both these realist and epistemological requirements sociologists/anthropologists (of both India and Nepal, for example) need to develop a dialogic space where their engagement as critical, professional, policy and public sociologists/anthropologists may develop teleological connections between and amongst particular sociologies.

We propose that a field of dialogic sociology may be conducive towards fostering the idea of regional imagining necessary for practicing sociology/ anthropology in South Asian context. The need is to rethink Nepal by an Indian sociologist or for that matter India by a Nepali sociologist as countries placed within the civilizational matrix of South Asia and not merely as political units placed within the cohort of nation states whose interconnectedness can be explored and explained through examining the domain of people rather than of citizens, popular culture rather than of national culture, civil society initiatives rather than of nation state outlook. A dialogic sociology is not impossible a project though it is yet to be realized in the South Asian academic scene. The reciprocity of sociological/anthropological scholarship between India and Nepal is feasible when the disciplinary practices are prompted by

a regional imagining the roadmap of which may prepare the building blocks of a South Asian sociology/anthropology beyond the rubrics of nation-state outlook on society, politics, law, justice, and history that still governs much of our sociological/anthropological imagination.

Acknowledgements

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