

Review Essay

SOCIOLOGY ACROSS FOUR DECADES IN NEPAL

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Pranab Kharel and Gaurab KC, eds. 2021. *Practices of Sociology in Nepal*. Kathmandu: Vajra Publications.

Practices of Sociology in Nepal contains seven different chapters by Gaurab KC and Pranab Kharel (introduction), Youba Raj Luintel (ethnography of the 2015 bifurcation between Sociology and Anthropology at Tribhuvan University), Pratyoush Onta (state and problems of Sociology/Anthropology journals), Tika Ram Gautam (journey to a PhD at Tribhuvan University), Lokranjan Parajuli (teaching Sociology), Devendra Uprety and Obindra B. Chand (problem of integrated teaching of Sociology and Public Health), and Pranab Kharel and Gaurab KC (promise of integrated teaching of Sociology and Law).

Overall, the book is an important contribution to the state of practice of the discipline of Sociology and, to a lesser extent, Anthropology in Nepal. While a large number of articles and book chapters have been published on the status of Sociology in Nepal, this is the second book-length volume on the subject.¹ Sociology, in terms of its presence at universities in Nepal

¹ The first one, *The State of Sociology and Anthropology: Teaching and Research in Nepal* by Madhusudan Subedi and Devendra Uprety, was published by Martin Chautari in 2014. This reflexive tendency appears to be very high in Sociology compared to that in other branches of knowledge. For recent references in relation to India see Maitrayee Chaudhuri (2016) and see John Goodwin (2016) for recent references in relation to Europe and the USA. Enhanced reflectiveness has been variously attributed to Sociology's "unsettled" or multi-paradigmatic nature, the debate on Sociology as a perspective versus that as substantive subject matter, and the rapidly growing interdisciplinary nature of Sociology. The last is sometimes interpreted to indicate a substantively hollowed out disciplinary center in Sociology.

as well as popular reading and imagination, has expanded faster than any other discipline in the last three decades. Whether this popularity owes to the perceived “easy-ness” of Sociology, the relative usefulness and employability of graduates that it fosters, the personal framework that it might provide to make sense of the vagaries of a student or a graduate’s life or whether there are alternate substantive causes will hopefully be investigated by others later.

The book can be treated as a review of the correlates and outcomes of this expansion. It must also be read as an outcome of the malfunctioning of the academic enterprise that includes university systems, administrators, teachers and students. The encompassing national political, administrative and fiscal systems are necessarily implicated here also. In more concrete terms, however, this book is an account of the functioning and malfunctioning of the Department of Sociology at Tribhuvan University (henceforth, TU) through the last four decades. Parenthetically, it may be noted that Sociology has not taken roots in other universities in Nepal. There are many lessons here to be learnt and implemented on the craft and practice of Sociology. On a lighter note, the book can be treated as a free yet valuable consulting report for improving the organizational practice of Sociology. I congratulate the authors and the editors on the publication of the book.

It would possibly have been even better had the book also covered, whether in terms of additional chapters or stances taken in the existing chapters, the institutional and professional context of the rise of Sociology and its status. An examination of the “affiliation system” under which hundreds of far-flung campuses, departments and faculty members are required to surrender their intellectual and managerial agency, autonomy and power to the central organs and personnel of the university would have been useful. Second, the dominant role of the political parties and party-allied associations, e.g., multiple party-allied associations of students, professors and administrators which heavily impact upon the functioning of the university as well as departments and contribute to de-professionalize them could have merited examination. Third, it would have been useful to explore the impact of the nature of students who enter the humanities and social sciences stream when they graduate from high school as well as

While false, it nonetheless raises problems of identity and insecurity among some practitioners. Alternately, it has also been attributed to the professional role of a sociologist who is obliged both to visualize oneself as an actor within an encompassing structure while at the same time reflecting upon it.

those of the new members of the faculty as they embark upon a teaching career. Fourth, it may have been prudent to assess the nature and impact of the international linkage of the department that decidedly weighed in favor of Anthropology and not Sociology. This, of course, had much to do with the fact that Nepal has long been a backyard of European and American Anthropology. Sociology, which has sometimes been described—in contradistinction to Anthropology—as the study of one’s own society, has rarely been internationally active. Finally, it would also have been worthwhile to compare the organization and outcome of the discipline of Sociology vis-à-vis those of the other departments and academic centers at TU. After all, and even as those who run, in particular, the Department of Sociology must bear some of the responsibility of the shortcomings described in this book, wide-scale improvements are also contingent upon the nature of framework conditions. Lacking a reference to such key contexts, the book may appear to some as a compendium of “what is not there” than a dispassionate and overall review. But one has to learn from what has been made available. And what has been made available in this book is substantial enough.

While I shall make a cursory review of all of the chapters in the book, I will focus mainly on two chapters. One of the two is the introductory chapter by KC and Kharel. The other is the chapter by Luintel on the bifurcation of the Sociology and Anthropology Department into two departments, one of Sociology *and* another of Anthropology. As somebody who was fortunate enough to have been associated with the Department of Sociology at the University Campus of TU through its life, I find the totalizing tone of the introductory chapter particularly interesting. The chapter on bifurcation, in turn, is interesting because the split was widely discussed at TU campuses across the country and in Kathmandu through the mid-2010s and because I look at the bifurcation somewhat differently than has been described in the chapter.²

Luintel, who also is the current head of the Central Department of Sociology at TU, discusses the political-organizational history of a university department, brewing disciplinary specialization as well as conflicts and contradictions, and the eventual bifurcation of the Department of Sociology and Anthropology. The telling is blow-by-blow as it were, and draws the interests of a reader. In particular, he traces back the roots of the bifurcation to

² I may note that I had already read and commented upon the two chapters by Gautam and Onta previously.

a relatively minor event in 2006. On the other hand, I think the bifurcation was seeded right at the moment of the birth of the department in 1981 when the first batch students insisted that they had to be offered a Master's degree *either* in Sociology *or* Anthropology but not, as was envisaged by the university, in both Sociology *and* Anthropology. It is ironic that Uprety and Pokharel (2018) should attribute the bifurcation to a hankering for a “thicker soup” by sociologists. It was Uprety who, in 1981, led the first batch of students, struck classes and called for the Sociology and Anthropology Department and TU to agree to offer students a Master's degree *either* in Anthropology *or* Sociology, not in Sociology *and* Anthropology. The university agreed to the proposal. It was also agreed that the number of “bifurcating courses” at the Master's level would gradually be increased, which would further buttress the distinctiveness between the “two disciplines.”

The disciplinary distinction was driven further when the Bachelor's degree was also bifurcated such that students graduated, and developed affinity with *either* Sociology *or* Anthropology, not Sociology and Anthropology. Faculty members also mentally and emotionally began to belong either to Sociology *or* Anthropology but not both.

While most of us almost always, within a causal sequence, inflect the significance of the “final,” proximate or immediately preceding event, it is useful to recall the significance of the intervening and foundational conditions which culminated in the immediately preceding event. Of course, and as Luintel emphasizes, the initiative that started a bifurcated MPhil program in 2011 had a huge—the most immediately salient in my view—significance for the eventual bifurcation of the department. (More precisely, the preparation for MPhil took place in 2011 and the classes were run beginning 2012.) One of the knock-on effects of a bifurcated MPhil program was a completely bifurcated MA program. This initiative to completely bi-stream the courses for Sociology *and* Anthropology had a similarly telling effect, as is duly noted by Luintel.

There were many other factors that added up. Luintel brings them well to light. In addition, I recall a particularly flagrant misdemeanor during the last years of the joint department (2013–2015). Students who sought admission were advised by the administrators of the department that the Sociology stream was “already full” and that they should instead opt for the Anthropology stream that had “open seats.” When all of the preceding factors (e.g., the 1981 bifurcation of MA degree in Anthropology *or* Sociology,

slow-yet-consistent process of bi-streaming of courses, accumulation of various administrative grievances, the nature of international disciplinary linkage, bi-streaming of the MPhil program, completion of bi-streaming of MA courses) are given due weight, the principal significance allotted by Luintel to “ethnicized federalization” suffers a substantial lapse. To be sure, the issue was more than the last straw that broke the camel’s back. But one must regard it as any other proximate factor that almost always is made to weigh heavier in attributions of causality. It is generally the case that the explanation of most ruptured social relations and “cohabitation” is short-circuited to the cause that immediately precedes the outcome. The parties to the “cohabitation” perceive a series of “slights” and “sacrifices” that congeal together with changing outside conditions and lead to the “final factor.”

If I may, that I personally remain “not visible” during the split, as is noted in the chapter, was indeed suggested by Luintel. I knew right away, of course, that this was not how it would proceed at all. In addition, most sociologists in the department were fully involved in the tug for the bifurcation. More generally, I have a feeling that Luintel consistently prefers to put himself in the center of the initiative. This was the case on some but not all fronts.

Finally, it would have been good for the chapter to draw general conclusions of this bifurcation for the management of university departments or other managerial units in Nepal and elsewhere. Luintel seems to make a beginning toward this direction but does not proceed much ahead.

A footnote by Luintel makes the point that I not only did not ally myself with those who had been wishing to split the department starting early on but argued that disciplinary specialization, in this context between Sociology and Anthropology, was not desirable. The note makes the additional point that I rather favored a much greater interdisciplinary interface, including with Economics, Political Science, History, and so on.³ With a slight amendment, I agree to this version. The only amendment I put forward is that I did not wish the split to be prioritized early on. In an intellectual sense, I continue to hold that position dear and, to a limited extent, practice myself. On the other

³ The call for an open and un-siloed search for knowledge goes back a long way. Fernand Braudel, Immanuel Wallerstein and other world-systems theorists’ push for a singular “discipline” of Historical Social Science, which started in the late 1950s and early 1960s, can be regarded as a recent watershed in this respect. Wallerstein *et al.* (1997) is a good place to start. For a more recent and even broader statement and call, see NASEM (2018).

hand, I could see that my position could hurt some faculty members and even students in the department not only because of the nature of specific personnel involved in running the department but also, more generally, because of the sharply disciplinary nature of the modern university system where norms and values, job slots and ranks, power and privilege are allocated within a disciplinary foundry.

While I am at it, and with reference to the courses of study preparation committee that Luintel writes about, I may also clarify that I was intimately involved in preparing the academic framework of the department right from 1978. The terms of reference of my first appointment letter to TU, which is dated end of February 1978, tells me to prepare a syllabus for the Masters' program in Sociology.⁴ I drafted and conferred with various faculty members of social sciences and humanities and the heads of the departments in Kirtipur. As I recall, during 1978, I also consulted with Sociologists George and Nancy Axinn in Kathmandu on the syllabus I had drafted. George was then working with the Institute of Agriculture in Rampur. (George and Nancy, I may note, were parents of the famed University of Michigan Sociologist William Axinn, who has himself been working extensively on Nepal.) I then submitted the syllabus to Professor Soorya Lal Amatya, who had just been appointed the dean. The Sociology initiative was then delayed for reasons that I am not aware of. Following a gap of about one year, the university decided to re-start a department to teach *both* Sociology and Anthropology instead. I was displeased that my work found less space than anticipated. On the other hand, I did not mind it in intellectual terms. I was asked to work in the new committee as well for some period. Because I had taken up a job with the Centre for Nepal and Asian Studies (CNAS) of TU when my annual contract with the humanities and social sciences faculty expired, I was not, after a period, active on that front. I was later, during early 1981, invited to head the department. I continued to keep my job at CNAS and became, at least nominally, a part-time head of a department. I was to find out later that it was far more than a part time job.

Pratyoush Onta explores a singularly important facet of the academic world, that of the publication of journals. Onta is well known to the readers of this journal as one who, with his colleagues, has been publishing not one

⁴ As an aside, the appointment letter, signed by Professor Parthiveshwar Timilsina, Dean, Institute of Humanities and Social Sciences, also asks the campus chief of the Kirtipur Campus, my duty station, to provide me with a chair and a table!

but two regular journals for long years. This gives him an authenticity that few can rival in Nepal. He makes an exhaustive catalog of Sociology and Anthropology journals published in Nepal and shows that the number of such journals is quite large and has spread out to campuses and locations far outside the Kathmandu Valley. As a second step, he incisively discusses why almost all of the journals remain occasional than regular. At the first instance, the paucity of regular journals in Nepal is a telling reminder of the weak organizational and intellectual dedication of university teachers and researchers. However, Onta shows that such weaknesses are rooted in highly limited and short-term institutional commitment, narrow attachment to a single campus or entity, small editorial and management team, and a paucity of good articles. He also makes the point that financial constraints, which are often cited as a key constraint against the regularity of journals, is mostly an excuse. I would myself imagine that this fate is common to most disciplines, departments and journals in Nepal and many other similar countries. There is much to be learned from Onta's chapter.

I do not really wish to comment much on Tika Ram Gautam's write up, not the least because the chances of my biases creeping through may be high. I am, as his PhD supervisor, and apart from the TU and Gautam himself, the main actor there. It may be prudent for me to note here, however, that the supervisory system (whether in relation to MA, MPhil or PhD) at TU remains very largely unregulated. There are few norms on the frequency of meetings between a student and supervisor. Mutual expectations are neither regularly nor explicitly defined. Even the minimal stipulated standards are often matters for mutual negotiation. Eventually, after four, five or more years of often relatively unfruitful mutual "work," there is only a rare supervisor who refuses to sign on the dotted line. That the level of preparation in terms of critical reading, independent thinking and writing as such is so poor, of course, impinges substantially upon the nature of supervisor-student relations. That the intellectual self-expectation of most students is low does not help either.

The chapter by Lokranjan Parajuli makes a number of excellent diagnoses. These relate to the severe paucity of the number of full-time and engaged Sociology teachers in most campuses, the difficulty students face with the English language, the poor state of mentoring that partly leads to poor MA and other theses, plagiarism and other intellectual corruption that perhaps have become normalized, and so on.

The only issue I would take up here is that it might have been useful to make a sharp distinction among teaching practices at the BA level and the graduate level. It seems to me, in particular, that while Nepali language texts are likely to be much more accessible to undergraduate students, graduate-level study should preferably rely on English language texts. For one graduate study is far more “optional” for students than the undergraduate level. Two, the graduate student should be expected to work harder than an undergraduate student. Finally, a graduate student should be expected to be far more open to wider knowledge than what can be accessed through a puny set of required texts. Far more non-text knowledge can be accessed through a knowledge of English than Nepali. It is also noteworthy that in almost all classes, despite the use of mostly English language texts, and, as Parajuli notes, “solution or guide books,” actual classroom teaching takes place in the Nepali language. Examples offered in classrooms are, once again, almost always from local and national life.

Importantly, Parajuli argues that use of Nepali-language texts is germane to university education. Following my reasoning above, I would largely although not wholly agree with him as far as undergraduate education goes. I disagree, however, that the argument is valid across the board and to the graduate level. Democratization must not become a justification to slide toward the lowest common denominator. For that matter I am uncertain if English language is the single most salient blockage to graduate education in the social sciences and in Sociology. Parajuli has also identified and analyzed a series of problems and weaknesses in the composition of Master’s thesis. The analysis is pithy and deserves a close review.

Sociology is taught in various other faculties and disciplines, e.g., Public Health and Medicine, Education, Engineering, Law, Public Administration, Agriculture, Forestry, Roads, Irrigation and Drinking Water. The last two chapters of the book are devoted to the problem and promise of such “cross-disciplinary” teaching.

The first of the two, on the teaching of Sociology in the faculty of Public Health is taken up by Devendra Uprety and Obindra B. Chand. The chapter provides a history of public health education in Nepal, describes and carries out a critique of the public health courses of study as well as the course preparation processes at three different universities, and dissects the pedagogical methods adopted and the paths through which teachers are hired. While the details are brought out fairly well, the chapter could have

been organized much better. In addition, it is not clear why the writers do not describe and examine their own agency in preparing courses, being hired, teaching and pedagogical stances adopted.

The last chapter by Pranab Kharel and Gaurab KC, in turn, examines the interface between teaching Sociology in a Law college. In contrast to the preceding chapter, the agency of the authors comes out very well here. The context, that goes unexamined in all other chapters in the book (of the integration between Sociology and Law in this case) also is brought out well. How two diverse disciplines can be integrated in terms of courses, engaged teaching, classroom discussion, etc., is sketched finely as well as instructively. This is something that those who are in the business of “cross-disciplinary” integration noted above can learn from.

I have kept Gaurab KC and Pranab Kharel’s introductory chapter for the last. The chapter, I am afraid, has serious problems, and does not hold up to the quality of the other chapters in the book. Nor does it introduce the book—whether as a whole or as summary introduction to each of the chapters in the book. At one level, the chapter appears to focus on the Master’s level courses of study in Sociology. More broadly, however, it claims that the chapter “pitches...[itself] at the ideational...level” (p. 4). That is, the chapter seeks to grasp the zeitgeist of the “practice” of Sociology at TU. It also claims, in the same paragraph, that the chapter raises “varied epistemic issues.”

The chapter is highly judgmental. It seeks less to characterize and explain the “practice” of Sociology at TU than to charge headlong into judgments. One wishes the chapter had identified and stayed on with a few key issues, substantiated them and come up with alternative courses of action. The rush to judgment, however, is much too palpable for reasoning and substantiation.

The call in the chapter to utilize more Nepal-centered texts is warranted. However, the thrust in the chapter is much too nativist, exclusive, narrow and Nepal-*vādi*. Indeed, the chapter denigrates the significance of theory as such. (Paradoxically, it also manages to slip a hint that it opposes presentism.) It is clear enough, however, that knowledge, including Sociology does not come attached to citizenship. Yes, human beings also live local identities. But that is not what completely defines them. Any attempt to fully contain personal and professional identity within a given slot misrepresents and stultifies it.

Further, a nativist or “indigenist” stance is not what can sustain research, knowledge generation, theory building, and much of that is valuable in scholarship. The intellectual work that takes place at a university must seek to

touch if not grab the universal and the historical. Knowing entails juxtaposing and placing the specific and the local along and within the general and the encompassing. A university cannot remain fully or even mostly rooted to the local and the ahistorical; that would cancel the *raison d'être* of a university.

To be certain, the “universal” and historical are not equally valued in all disciplines. Anthropology has historically preferred to valorize the local and the ahistorical, more so during its colonial and “tribal” days and functionalist and interpretative avatars. History itself has often been bounded much too tightly to specific localities, regimes and relatively narrow “periods.” On the other hand, other social sciences, at a university setting in particular, have largely emphasized the importance of an integration of theory and empirics, local and encompassing, and present and past.

One must remain wary of Eurocentrism and its various avatars. The allure of the West and Western thoughts is powerful. Foremost, the West presents itself as the future of the non-West, an evolutionary forerunner and the “modern,” as it were. In addition, it intrudes as the paradigmatic, theoretically large-scope and empirically well-substantiated. However, the repeated and non-substantive derogation of the West in the chapter is unwarranted. “Imports from the west,” “imported frameworks,” “fetishism of the west,” “captive minds,” “western obsession,” “development/donor sector,” are some of the expressions frequently utilized in the chapter. This is done in order to express antagonism against the “West” and then to castigate Sociology at TU. Criticism of the use of the English language in the practice of Sociology forms part of this genre. The nativist or “indigenist” stance in the chapter, in addition, runs the risk of supporting a rightist call to attend to valorize “tradition” and all institutions and processes it entails.⁵

The chapter refuses to acknowledge the intellectual production of members of the university faculty and its graduates, including in the Nepali language, which is a language they prefer. While the corpus produced by

⁵ Lest they appear ethnocentric in their repeated castigation of the West, KC and Kharel come up with an untenable distinction between the “West” and “west,” and argue that “western” “is a generic category and does not specify a particular region” (p. 2, f.n. 2). By this definition, Doti and Baitadi in western Nepal and London and New York in the UK and USA would be part of the same “west.” On the other hand, in the same footnote, they also make the argument that “western is a political construct and not a proper noun.” However, it is difficult to see how “western” but not “Western” can be a political construct.

university sociologists and graduates are not of a very high quality, it is sizable particularly when compared to that in the other social sciences. On the other hand, and despite the valorization of “Nepali” texts, only 11 out of 74 texts listed in bibliography of the authors’ chapter are Nepali-language texts. It is another matter that the authors list as many as 17 of their own texts. Only three among the 17 are written in Nepali.

Importantly, the authors’ charge that university sociologists and graduates have *not* focused on Nepal is patently false. Sociologists in Nepal, as noted, can be seriously faulted for the intellectual scope and quality of their writing. But they cannot be faulted for writing about other countries or for not writing about Nepal. Indeed, possibly excepting for a few publications on India, China and the USA, the focus has remained on Nepal. It could, of course, not have been otherwise, which makes the charge so outlandish in the first place. As such, sociologists in Nepal have written about some of the most important structures and processes that make up Nepal, Nepali society and social relations today. For example, they have written about democracy, politics, capitalism, communism and Maoism, migration, remittance, social and occupational diversification, urbanization, population size and structure, public health, education, corruption, caste, ethnicity, gender, inequality, inclusion, federalization and federal structure, religion, tourism, and so on. Some have written on political parties, bureaucracy, NGOs, INGOs, the international aid regime, etc. Some have produced accounts of different ethnic, caste, and gender groups, the diversity and inequality embedded there and the social movements they have unleashed. Some others have published on local government, human rights, development and growth, and so on. They have analyzed various data sets on Nepal, namely, the decennial censuses, Nepal Living Standard Survey, Nepal Demographic and Health Survey, Nepal Labor Force Survey, etc.

They have also, during the last decade in particular, frequently made themselves felt in the mass media. In fact, newspaper article titles with the prefix “Sociology of...” or something similar have become more frequent in the media and, in my view, these engage a substantial number of readers. I can see a substantial public “proto-sociology” or folk sociology being spun off by such publications. It is also notable that except for Economics such public engagement seems relatively rare in relation to other social sciences (and humanities). Some, a smaller number, prefer to focus on Nepal and the Nepali society theoretically, i.e., within an encompassing inter-locational and

global as well as longitudinal and historical framework. Once again, and even as the productivity and quality of sociologists can be questioned, it is foolhardy to suggest that they lack a purported “Nepal focus.”

The authors also charge that sociologists (and anthropologists) in Nepal operate as if the country had been a closed society for very long, certainly before 1951. The authors make it seem like the “closed Nepal” thesis has been derogated in the chapter for the first time ever. In fact, the idea of a Nepal that had long remained thickly open—to India, China and other parts of Asia at least from the sixth century BCE as well as during the colonial and, more recently, the world-spanning structures and processes was put forward much earlier. The idea of course, continues to be concretized by sociologists (and many others). The authors, however, do not regard it prudent to cite the relevant literature. In any case, the “closed social system syndrome” is a relic of Old Anthropology. Even within Anthropology, this is far less the case today than used to be.

Even as Sociology in Nepal, as suggested in the chapter, should incorporate more texts published by key sociologists from India, the absence of a couple of specific, old and named writings on Nepal by Indian scholars within the courses of study of Sociology in Nepal can hardly be a ground for a charge of an “anti-Indian” and “pro-Western” bias. The charge, however unwarranted, on the other hand, should prompt sociologists in Nepal to be attentive to high quality sociological texts by Indian authors. These will, more than likely, be texts that teach us, even in the form of subtext, not only about India but about the changing human social condition and Sociology in the world today.

Finally, to go back to the book as a whole, this is a reminder not only that there are holes to be plugged but that multiple levels of successively encompassing work is required in order for the theory and practice of Sociology to competently grasp the nature of flowing social institutions and relations as well as appropriate pedagogical materials in Nepal. This, of course, is an ever present challenge for all universities and all sociologists. But TU has more work cut out for it than for some others—including the better and even some middle-grade universities in India, which have remained TU’s reference points for long. It is also, on the other hand, the case that individual sociologists, even those in the university departments cannot solve the problems by themselves. Therefore, each university Sociology faculty has to read through, assess and practice what personal-professional

improvements can be made from among those noted in the book. It is, foremost, the responsibility of the Department of Sociology in Kirtipur, which also leads the Sociology Subject Committee for the university, as well as other Sociology units throughout the different campuses of TU, to institute what reforms they can by themselves. Finally, wherever members of faculty and the departments and units cannot make improvements by themselves it is obligatory to reach out to the dean and other officials at the university.

TU, along with almost all of the rest of the universities in Nepal, remains severely afflicted by the political party system that run amok through it, the affiliation system and a Nepal-wide multi-campus structure. Political party structures pervade the agencies and agents at the university. Appointments to senior managerial positions are often contingent on political party connections. Political party allied associations of professors, administrators and students keep narrow party-based, factional and individual interests at the forefront where professional interests are very often pushed to the backseat. The affiliation system, under which TU franchises hundreds of private campuses without actually supervising them in professional terms, leads to a serious lapse of intellectual and academic quality. Inasmuch as the central organs of the university—and not the campuses that actually house students—make all the academic and intellectual decisions, the campuses and the professors there forfeit much of the “thinking functions” normally required of university teachers. Essentially, they reconcile to intellectual dependency. This is also the case in the campuses that the university “owns itself,” the so-called constituent campuses. The intellectual dependency of such campuses and teachers is at the same order as that for the campuses that are franchised. The nationwide spread of the constituent campuses also makes running TU managerially highly inefficient. It also fails or makes it very difficult to accommodate regional, cultural, etc. diversity in course planning, hiring of teachers, etc. Sociology at TU shares all of these ills. Professional reforms become difficult if not impossible without canceling or markedly reducing the correlates and outcomes of these professionally intrusive structures.

On the other hand, waiting for the larger ills to cure themselves cannot be an option either. While personal-professional improvements can be carried out only within an institutional framework, the dominant public culture today that attributes everything to “the state” and other superordinate structures and nearly-absolves all public selves of personal-professional

responsibility, will not let us improve, including in Sociology. For tenured faculty members at TU, substantial conditions for personal-professional improvement already exist to a salient extent. A fairly higher level of demand can be made from this category of faculty members—at least those who teach in campuses in the Kathmandu Valley. It does not appear to me that most of them are pulling their weight. Similarly, compiled texts are made available to students at minimal costs. The tuition fees across remain fairly low across the Bachelor’s and Master’s levels. As such, a higher level of academic demand should be made from the students. I think a more stringent yet sensitive admissions policy in which those who put up a concrete, engaged and agentified program of study, combined with a framework of regular and frequent assessment and personalized mentoring, will go quite some way to improve the level of student accomplishment. The last should also be geared to promote independent thinking and writing than passive reading. These initiatives can pay back, among others, in terms of credible student research and thesis writing.

Both constituent and franchised campuses, departments and faculty members must be challenged to formulate plans for professional improvement for themselves and for students. This would include, initially, the challenge to prepare plans for specific “localized” or more general courses as also to teach such courses. Meeting intellectual challenge and preparing oneself to gradually meet the full spectrum of professional challenge must be encouraged in concrete terms.

Similarly, in campuses where the number of tenured teachers or teachers under full contract is impossibly low, the Sociology faculty at TU, possibly in consort with the Sociology Subject Committee, which otherwise remains a highly ritualized and moribund organ, must take strong steps to enter into negotiations with the top management of campuses and central organs of the university. Should negotiations not be successful a variety of other strategies can be adopted. One such strategy would be to go public with issues and processes of ongoing negotiation as well as the justification for the stances taken in the interest of improving the status of Sociology.

This book comes out as a critique of some facets of the functioning of Sociology at Tribhuvan University. A critique, however, can often be translated into a suggestion. It seems to me that such translation, prepared in a prioritized and staggered format, is now due.

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