Sociology of professions

Sociology of Professions in India as a field of enquiry is a relatively recent phenomena. It is a new concept in the fields of social sciences as such except for a few case studies of doctors, lawyers and paramedicals, the entire emerging field of this branch of sociology is to be defined explored and analyzed.

In a wider sense, sociology of profession should deal with any calling or occupation by which a person habitually earns his living. In a restricted sense however, the profession is considered to be a vocation in which a professed knowledge of some department of learning is used in its application or an art founded upon it. In the medieval Europe the three learned professions of divinity, law and medicine were identified. With the passage of time more and more persons and groups got engaged in varieties of learned or skilled professions and these specialized professional groups earn their livelihood by practicing specialized knowledge and skill and interact with the public with their specialized roles.

With the accelerated professionalisation and complexity in
specialization it has become imperative for the social scientists to identify the sociological implication of the varied professions and study these from sociological perspectives. It is unfortunate, however, that social scientists have not taken the challenge seriously to study the sociological implications of these professions. A comprehensive survey, made by Danesh, A.Chekki in his book "The sociology of Contemporary India ", reveals that out of 5226 studies conducted between 1947–1972, are categorised under 27 items in which sociology of profession is conspicuously absent, of late however, a few sociologists and scholars of social work have made initial attempts to identify the professional groups particularly, doctors, nurses, lawyers, teachers etc.

To conclude then the main methodological issue in the study of professional groups is the selection of the units of study. It has to be handled carefully in the light of the objectives of the study. The units of the study have to be manageable. It is suggested that in some cases the anthropological approach of micro-study may prove to be useful. The organisations, the institutions and the professional groups have to be studied in a holistic and integrated manner. For example a holistic study of hospital/court. Where the professionals, clients/patients, administrators and the public interact and work in a system
will provide an integrated though a Micro picture of the professional organisation as well as of different interacting groups. The study of network of relationship within such an institution where several professional groups work and interact will be quite rewarding, in so far as one would be able to see the processes where by structures function can alter in the context of their changing environments. (Vidhyarthi L.P. 1984.)

II WOMEN'S STUDIES MID THE SOCIOLOGY OF WOMEN

The emergence of women's studies as an academic pursuit developed with the growth of the women's movement in the west. The women's movement over the decades created an awareness among women and the realisation to formulate a theoretical perspective that would be in congruence with the growth of the women's movement. However, the difference between this and other academic pursuits is important. Women's study is very closely interlinked with and depends upon the movement itself. The interdependence between theory i.e., women's studies and practice, i.e., the women's movement is inseparable. Otherwise there is a danger of research becoming a substitute for trying to change the present and the studys can easily get divorced from the original impulse which is radical. Thus women's studies do not mean the exploration of the role played by exceptional women in history or even the political aspect of women's
movement or part played by women into study of the labour movement. At the same time one cannot abstract a category called "Woman" either, and isolate it from the material conditions of women in each historical epoch. There is a danger here of creating an unchanging eternal ahistoric entity. Women studies should contextualise women in their social relations and at work, and also recognize that their social relations have changed over time (Lalitha.K. & Kalpana K., 1984).

Marx's thinking about history and his understanding about the significance of class conflict as a crucial factor in historical transformation, is significant. Marx's view of history was primarily concerned with the social consequences of class antagonist and not the conflict between men and women. This is not to deny marx's contribution to social-historical analysis. It does open up the possibility of bringing the mass of women within its scope and enables us to understand how women have only occasionally and sporadically been able to challenge male domination in culture—but, the specific oppression of women remains implicit. This is where the need is felt for a feminist perspective.

The situation of women was not the same all through history—according to the change in material conditions, their social relations have also changed. But where history looks at
women, it only does so through the situation of men. Now the focus has to be shifted, we have to look at women from a different angle to disentangle ourselves from total identification of the norm with the specific predicament of men. But as specific feminist consciousness is necessary to develop a critique of this male culture.

The women's Movement has made important theoretically contribution in terms of developing concepts like Patriarchy as a power system. So far the social relations in society have been understood in terms of class and for the first time the existence of oppression as distinct from exploitation has been brought into focus. To understand oppression of sex, caste and race, the mere analysis of the class system is not enough. One has to look at how power relations operate between women and men.

Patriarchal thinking, which installs the idea of male superiority, permeates all the institutions of our society. Policies which reflect paternalistic, patriarchal and sexist attitudes and beliefs are being implemented everywhere around us. The vast majority of women are subtly coerced into "femininity", that is, into subordinate, dependent docile persons who fit this sex - role stereo type. This is often coupled with "neutrality" and value - free nature of these institutions and policies, what is not immediately evident is that this is part of the myth that every political system
uses to perpetuate and justify its way of life.

It is difficult to adopt a value neutral stance in the area of women's studies and use the quantitative Method of analysis because the consciousness of women as women operates at two different levels. The "false consciousness** is reflected in her "normal* day to day life and this is the consciousness that will surface in response to quantitative modes of investigation. What needs to be taken account of therefore in the study of women is their expressions, the structure of these expressions, their experiences, their behavior, their subjective states and feelings and their reactions in periods of stress and crises. It is only an approach of this nature that will reflect the true consciousness of these women and help draw a distinction between myth and reality. (Lalita.K & Kalpana K, 1984)

XXX. The Feminist Literature - The question of subordination of woman, regardless of the fact about the adequacy with which scholars have dealt with it are important concerns of modern feminism. Feminists have also tried to apply the principles of historical materialism to achieve an understanding of the question of female subordination.

Shulasmith Firestore in " The Dialectic of Sex", (1972) argues that, unlike economic class, sex class sprang directly from a biological reality, men and women were created
different and not equally privileged. Because women bear children they were dependent on men for their survival. Dependence on men produced unequal power relationships and power psychology 'which formed the basis for all future stratification systems. Men derived pleasure from their power over women which led to power psychology*, the desire to dominate others. Thus stratification is based ultimately on biology rather than economics. The sexual division of labour and the 'sexual class system" predates and is more basic than the specialized division of labour which differentiates all members of society and the economic class system, which divides both males and females.

Firestone Gough (1972):- Gough explains that originally the sexual division of labour was 'natural' although it involved some degree of subordination of women because of women's relative immobility and their lesser physical capability and when changes in the productive forces took place, their role involved their confinement in the family while men pursued the important political and economic tasks. However the technological means have now become available to release them from this confinement. But even Gough does not ask why women still subordinate.

Simione de Beauvior, (1972), in the 'second sex', using historical and ethnographic data accepts Engels argument
connecting the position of women with the institution of private property, the advent of private dethroned woman and she was bound up with private property for centuries and her history in large part is bound up with that of the patrimony. Dunbar (1970) analysis women by explaining that sexism lies at the root of civilization as a result of women's reproductive capacity. Women were required to lead a sedentary life and it was females who developed communities. Man were transient and peripheral moving in and out depending on their hunting activities. As a result of this pattern woman developed food production and animal domestication to the point of self sufficiency. It was than, that, since it served his interest, man settled down within communities. The male intrusion into the communities involved a disruption of the female principle which governed cooperative communal living, males began to dominate it by imposing their set of values on it, she argues that the male's ability to achieve this take over was based on the prior existence of secret societies which were formed in reaction to female control of the community, males were able to dominate it and enslave women. Dunber concludes her analysis by saying that in contemporary capitalist society the family, and the women in it, now performs functions for the capitalist class. However, this class consists only of men and it is their interest which is being served by the institution of the family. At this point in history while working class men
will fight for nothing except for values associated with the Masculine ideology, the ideology of the ruling class family, house, property, country Male supremacy and white supremacy.

Thus various explanations are given of the change from communal society to patriarchy.

IV . Women's Liberation Movement in India. In India the period of late 19th and early 20th century witnessed maximum social change. The associational politics to gain the freedom of the country also simultaneously worked for the freedom of women. This was a period of many religious and social reforms, hen such as Ishwar chandra Vidyasagar and Beharamji Kalahari formed associations largely of men, wrote pamplets and worked for legal abolition of repressive social practices affecting women while laws were passed on abolition of child marriages and widow remarriage.

The next stage in the efforts to improve the status of women were women's associations started by men active in Hindu reform associations. The Brahmo Samaj in Bengal and the Prarthana Samaj in Bombay, were started with female relatives of the male members.

In 1866 the Brahmo Samaj formed by Raja Ram Mohan Roy split into two groups one group was led by Keshab Chandra Sen and other was led by Debendranath Tagore. K.C Sen's sponsored the
Arya Nari Samaj which was revivalist in spirit, as its purpose was to promote Hindu ideals of womanhood through discussions on women in ancient Hindu society they did not favour higher education for women and the curriculum at their schools included subjects like domestic economy, needlework and propounded Hindu ideals of womanhood. In contrast* the Brahma Samaj of Tagore was reformist in spirit, as its purpose was to promote modern ideals for women in encouraging among them interaction with men, thus women were appointed as officers of the educational and welfare organizations. They were also encourage to go in for higher education. The more radical group the Adi Brahma Samaj was devoted to the all round improvement of the status of women (JoyuLebra etal,1984).

The Arya Samaj, the Ramakrishna Mission, the Theosophical society, all urged their women to apply broader and more humane religious ideals to social problems, including the degradation and oppression of women. The Arya Samaj called for a return to vedic practices and promoted women's education on this basis. Thus the revivalist ideology provided an alternative rationale for improving the status of women.

After 1886, many women missionaries, wives of British officials and non-conformist western women also became involved in the improvement of women's status and the Indian nationalist movement. (Elizabeth Wilson, 1925)
V WOMEN IN DIFFERENT HUMAN CULTURES

V.1 The anthropological literature:

Analysis of women has been made right from primitive to modern societies making use of different perspectives. According to the theoretical writers of the Victorian era – Herbert Spencer (1885) for example, Women in primitive societies are property to be bought and sold and are treated as slaves or even animals, enjoying neither sympathy nor respect. Hobhouse, Wheeler and Ginsberg (1915) in their Material Culture and Social Institutions of the Simple People use a great variety of criteria but attach most weight to the kind of rights secured by women by custom and law, such as whether the husband has the right of chastisement, whether the wife is protected by law or by her kinsfolk. The general conclusion reached by them is that, on the whole the position of women in the simple societies is unfavorable and "in this respect", says Evans Pritchard (1980) "there is no great difference between hunter, agriculturalists and pastoralists". The in-depth understanding of primitive societies by Evan Prichard (1980) says that at the primitive woman is well socialized in her culture and she does not desire things to be other than what they are and it would greatly puzzle her if she knew that there are societies in
which women choose to be unmarried and childless. In such societies and many other oriental societies sexes do not intrude on one another all the time as they might tend to do so in modern societies, especially among spouses. The sense of companionship between man and woman is not so strong as in advanced western societies. One reason why sexes do not display intimate interrelationship is that there is a relatively clearer division among the primitive communities between the sexes than found in the present day western societies.

In simple societies a married couple has a family life together with children in its home, but outside the home the man and to a lesser extend the women has an independent social life and goes about such affairs as concern him or her, as man or women, in the absence of the sex not concerned with them (Evan Pritcard 1980).

From the point of view of modern thinking primitive women may be missing a refinement of modern life, but here again she does not think that she is missing anything. Moreover she accepts culture as 'given' and does not expect it to be other than what it is and therefore, suffers fewer disappointments. While looking at the social position of primitive women, one might say that she has an inferior position, but primitive woman does not see herself as belonging to an under privileged class against a class of men.
with whom she seeks to gain social equality. Women have never heard of social equality and they do not want to be like sen. In primitive societies the spheres of activities of the sexes are clearly demarcated where one sex does not intrude into the domain of activities of the other sex. If this demarcation is for primitive societies a restriction it is also a protection.

Evan Pritchard's field researches and readings reveal that in societies where any section of the population is in a servile position, the position of woman is correspondingly low with regard to the male sex and especially in the married state. This is often very evident in those societies in which the mass of population are subject to and exploited by a ruling class.

Anthropologists Lionel Tiger and Robin Fox (1972) explain sexual division of labour in terms of genetically based programme which predisposes mankind to behave in certain ways, this they call human 'biogrammer'. These predispositions are inherited from man's primate ancestors, in part they have developed during man's existence in hunting and gathering bands. These predispositions are not the same as instincts since they can be considerably modified by culture but they remain basic influences on human behavior. Although the 'biogrammars' of men and women are similar in
many respects, there are important differences between them. They argue that compared to women, men are more aggressive and dominant. These differences are because of different male and female hormones. These differences are due partly to genetic inheritance from man’s primate ancestors, partly to a genetic adaptation to a hunting way of life. Tiger and Fox (1972) argue that the basic family unit consists of mother and child. By comparison women are programmed by their biogrammar to reproduce and care for children. In other words, ’Nature intended mother and child to be together*. It does not particularly matter how this basic unit is supported and protected. It can be by the addition of a single male, as in the case of the nuclear family or by the impersonal services of the welfare state. Tiger and Fox (1972) maintain that the mother and child band is essential to the well being of the child.

In short, they argue that male and female biogrammars are adopted to a sexual division of labour in a hunting society. Compared to cultural change, genetic change is slow. Thus the stale female biogrammars of a hunting existence continue in modern industrial society. From this it follows that attempts to abolish gender roles and replace them with unisex roles, however desirable this may be, will go against nature.

George Peter Murdock, (1949) also sees biological
differences between men and women as the basis of the sexual division of labour in society. He suggests that biological differences, such as the greater physical strength of men and the fact that women bear children, lead to gender roles out of their practicality.

Ernestine Friedle (1972):— She explains sexual division of labour in terms of cultural conditioning. She says that jobs which are in one society assigned to women are found to be men's in another. For example she observes that in some societies, activities such as weaving, pottery making and tailoring are thought to be 'naturally' men's tasks, in others, women's. However it is significant that in societies where such tasks are defined as male roles, they generally carry higher prestige than in societies where they are assigned to women.

VI The Sociological Literature:
Sociological approach has explained the hierarchical division between the sexes, in terms of biological determinism. Durkheim (1947) propounded the view that men and women in primitive societies are fairly similar in strength and economically independent. However he also said, that with progress of morality, women became weaker and their brains smaller. This led to their increased dependence on men and cementing of the conjugal bond through the division of labour.
Similar arguments are advanced to account for the role of women in industrial society by Talcott Parsons (1951). In his opinion, the fundamental explanation for the allocation of the inferior role of women lies in the fact that child bearing and their early nursing establish a strong presumptive primacy of the relation of the mother to the small child and this in turn establishes a presumption that the man who is exempted from these biological functions, should specialize in the alternative instrumental directions. According to Parsons (1951) the family today serves two functions: The first is to socialize children into society's normative value system and the second is to inculcate appropriate status expectations and to provide a stable environment that will cushion the worker from the psychological damage of the alienating occupational world. The term 'worker' refers to the male worker. Another assumption is made about wife's primary role being rooted in the household of the family. Her role is expressive and by implication she is a non worker. His theory is very much a part of the patriarchal mode of thinking.

Sherry B. Ortner (1991) Claims that it is not the biology as such that ascribes women to their status in society but the way in which every culture defines and evaluates female biology. Thus if this universal evaluation changed, then the basis for female subordination would be removed. She says...
that in every society a higher value is placed on the culture than on nature. Culture is the lean by which man controls and regulates nature. By invention and technology man has gained power over nature and therefore is seen as superior in nature. The universal evaluation of culture as superior to nature is the basic reason for the devaluation of women. Women are seen as closer to nature than men and therefore as inferior. Ortner (1991) argues that women are universally defined as closer to nature because their bodies and physiological functions are more concerned with the natural processes surrounding the reproduction of the species. Since the Mother role is linked to the family, the family itself is regarded as closer to nature as compared to the activities and institutions outside the family. Since men are engaged in politics and warfare and other economic activities they are seen closer to culture. Since culture is superior to nature, 'Women's psyche is devalued. She says that the subordination of women owns to the cultural evaluation of Women's biological make up. Sociological literature, especially associated with functional school of thought shows a preoccupation with what "is" and not "what ought to be", as a result existing social arrangements and relationships are believed to be positively, functional for the maintenance of solidarity, harmony and integration in the system. This preoccupation with the
integrative renders invisible the maladies that exist with change in role relationship within the broader arrangements and relationship between sexes.

The situation of women has not remained static in history, complex changes are taking place with technological and social evolutions especially of the last century or so. Sociological analysis is still confined to studying formal and conventional appearances, the need is to study the relative changing positions of sexes in society. Transitory conditions and a variety of forms of role relationships in specific historical circumstances too need to be explained.

Sociologist have not dwelt satisfactorily into the problem of the relative positions of the sexes in societies which are undergoing considerable and probably lasting alterations in most of the human societies.

The transitional phase which has given rise to social and psychological maladjustments in family life, which in the absence of functioning kinship ties, has made women to bear too heavy an emotional load, the uncertainty of status has given rise to friction, confusion and drudgery for women — We may come to the conclusion that taking everything into consideration and on balance, women certainly do not enjoy favourable or equal position in society. Where history looks at women, it does so only through the situation of man, the
understanding and categorization of women's experiences in male term has a crucial consequence. A large part of women's lives that men do not share are totality disregarded in sociological analysis. The need is therefore to shift the focus and disentangle ourselves from the total identification of the norm with the specific predicament of men. It is time that sociologists start recognizing that social relations have changed overtime between men and women and attempt to understand women's lives as dual role player - their social relations at work as well as at home.