CHAPTER III

SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH IN INDIA: A STATE-OF-ART
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III.1 GENESIS OF SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH

Social Sciences may be defined as the discipline, which deal with humans in their social and behavioural references. They are concerned with a systematic investigation of the behaviour of man in society with the aim of formulating a body of relevant theory. Generally speaking, the social sciences include Sociology, Economics, Political Science, Psychology, History and Anthropology. The social sciences cannot be kept within the limitations of demarcated boundaries. This is because every human activity is a multi-faceted activity. The social sciences overlap other disciplines and also relates to Natural and Human Sciences along with the Arts. In totality, social sciences study the structure and properties of human groups, the way the individuals interact with one another and within other environmental groups.

The synthetic merging of the social sciences continued steadily. The most important factor, which has encouraged this trend, is the inter-disciplinary character of the present day research. Research in social sciences has probed, inquired and encroached into other disciplines. With the knowledge expansion at a fast speed in the present day scenario, and resulting in information explosion, the inter-disciplinary impact of research is growing vigorously. The UNESCO has regrouped the social sciences into four main categories: (i) Homothetic Sciences, (ii) Historical Sciences, (iii) Legal Sciences, and (iv) Philosophical Sciences. All the four groups are very closely inter-related.
The idea of social sciences developed from Philosophy and did many other branches of knowledge. There was scientific approach to the intellectual activities in the earlier centuries rather than the scholarly approach. What is now stated as social sciences was formerly known as social discipline, but with the advancement of time, due to the distinctive achievements of the scientific method on our way of life, the term social discipline was taken over by the term social sciences.

Edwin, R.A. Selegnian (in 1st chapter of Encyclopedia of Social Sciences) has defined social sciences as "those mental or cultural sciences, which deal with the activities of the individual as a member of a group." It was gradually felt that Research is in every way important and helpful to the proper study of social sciences as it is to that of natural sciences.

A gradual diffusion occurred in social sciences with a trend towards specialization which gave way to inter-disciplinary research. Thus, a few vital areas like political sociology, economic anthropology, industrial sociology and political economy have developed as a result of crossbreeding.

Social sciences as we can observe now are of recent origin. There has been virtual explosion of social sciences in India as a result of which there has been rapid growth of social science research and training organizations in the country.

The first two research institutions outside the University system for the purpose of research, teaching, training and policy formulations were formed as early as 1927, one working in the field of Public Administration, i.e. All India Institute of Local-Self Government, Mumbai and the other having an inter-disciplinary character, i.e., Indian Council for Africa, New Delhi. In 1935, two more social science research organizations came to be set up—one for Economics and the other for Statistics. Gradually, institutions were set up in other
areas like Political Science (1943), Anthropology (1945), Commerce (1946), Psychology (1949), Management (1949), Demography (1956), Law (1959), Criminology (1961) and Defence Studies. As the inter-disciplinary approach grew, most of these institutions composed of multi-disciplinary approach. Some of them even imparting training for future researchers and administrators.

As the Social Science Research Institutions grew, in terms of number as well as disciplines, three important agencies were involved in sharing and assisting research, i.e. Government, Private Bodies and International Organizations. Obviously, the Government contribution is highest, i.e. about 90 per cent, since the social science research Institutions in India receive their regular grants from the Government sources.

With the establishment of ICSSR, the social science research took a different outlook. Dr. J.P. Naik, the first Chairman of ICSSR in 1973 argued that the ICSSR should take initiative to formulate a “National Social Science Policy.” It was stated that this policy should be formulated with a view to give importance and relevance of different types of research and researches in different areas, i.e. (i) for theory building and methodological innovations in the discipline; and (ii) for solving social problems. Another major concern in the early years of ICSSR was the need for a direct and active link between research and training. The Review Committees for the working of ICSSR emphasized on this aspect. The working of the ICSSR and the programmes initiated by the Council were reviewed by the Working Committees. A brief mention of the objectives of these Committees is given below.

**SOCIAL SCIENCES IN INDIA: RETROSPECTIVE AND PROSPECTIVE — A REPORT (2 Vols.) (1973)**

The committee was set up in 1973 under the Chairmanship of Dr. Malcolm S. Adiseshiah. The major objectives of this Review Committee were:
(i) to identify the significant trends in the development of research in various social sciences, to assess their value and relevance and to identify the gaps in social science research, which should be filled in the future;

(ii) to study the problems confronting social scientists in their research and to suggest ways of overcoming them;

(iii) to evaluate the aims and objectives and examine the structure and procedure of operation of the ICSSE; and,

(iv) to identify the various programmes of documentation services, training and development and recommend new strategies to be adopted by the Council for developing research in social sciences.

The report of this Review Committee emphasized not only for the services, which were extended to social science research and to the ICSSR. It was widely consulted for planning and decision making in every sphere of education.

The report assessed the work done during the Fourth Five Year Plan with an outline of programmes for Fifth and Sixth Plans.

REPORT OF THE SECOND REVIEW COMMITTEE (1978)

The Second Review Committee was constituted in 1977 under the Chairmanship of Prof. V.M. Dandekar and put up the following issues:

(i) to review the work of ICSSR during the last ten years and especially during the Fifth Five Year Plan period; and,

(ii) to make proposals for the development of the work and programmes of ICSSR over the next ten years and especially during the Sixth Five Year Plan.

This report indicated the need to broaden the periphery of social science research keeping in mind the objectives and programmes. It also emphasized on the role of
various research Institutes, Universities, etc. and to mobilize and strengthen the infrastructure for research in various areas.

**THE THIRD REVIEW COMMITTEE (1986)**

This Committee was constituted under the Chairmanship of P.N. Dhar, the references of which are as follows:

(i) To review the work of the ICSSR during the last 16 years and especially during the Sixth Five Year Plan;

(ii) To make proposals for development of the work and programmes of the ICSSR during the next decade and especially during the Seventh Five Year Plan;

(iii) To suggest steps whereby social sciences can more effectively interact in solving the problems and challenges of national development; and,

(iv) To recommend steps for a wider dissemination and utilisation of social science research findings among academics, the public and policy-makers.

In the light of the policies and programmes of ICSSR, the Committee redefined the objectives of ICSSR programmes to bring about specific improvements. The Committee also discussed the various financial provisions for these programmes.

**III.2 GROWTH AND IMPORTANCE OF SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH**

The research in social science is of recent origin. The recognition to social science research got complete recognition in the World Congress of the Arts and Science in 1904. Gradually Social Science Research caught momentum as the interdisciplinary approach to social sciences increased. The various disciplines of social sciences were thus divided into three categories by Seligman:
(i) Purely Social Sciences,
(ii) Semi-Social Sciences, and
(iii) Sciences with Social Implications.

Under these categories are grouped various disciplines of social sciences. Now when we talk of research in social sciences, we must emphasis on what research actually aims at. "Then aim of research is to gain new knowledge through systematized efforts. Mere fact finding, data collecting, census taking or remarking records cannot be recognized as actual research. They are only preliminaries to research. Scientific research is conducted through a method 'sufficiently objective' and systematic to make possible classification, generalization and verification of data observed."

Specifically in social sciences research, the inferences are liable to be more vitiated due to the judgments derived by human intellect himself. The status and social science research can be derived from the indicators like number of Universities and Research Bodies engaged in research, number of Post-Graduate Departments, number of Doctoral Theses, number of M.Phil students, number of students registered for Ph.D. and above all social science researchers in terms of manpower.

With the growing disciplines and inter-disciplinary approach towards research in social sciences, various methodologies for its research were adopted. This emphasized on the importance of developing scientific methodology for social science research. The scientific method a never ending spiral movement (as put by Ranganathan) which passes through four sectors in each cycle. Over a period of time, emphasis was laid on various aspects of social science research in view of its growing importance. These issues were:
Training in research methodology,
Establishment of a National Council for Social Science Research and Regional Research Councils,
Role of organizations in social research,
Standardization of research studies, and,
Exploring the possibility of funding for various aspects of social science research in support of its growth.

The increasing interdisciplinary approach towards social science research gave way to social scientists to explore new ideas and areas of research. This witnessed a lot of changes in social science research. A prominent change seen was research by teamwork and research-in-series. Gradually, a definite trend in scientific research patterns was established which are:

Team work research,
Flexibility in research,
Advanced approach to scientific knowledge,
Region-wise area study,
Inter-disciplinary research,
Approach towards large scale co-operative research,
Application of the existing theories,
Evolution of new theories for research.
Symbiosis between fundamental and applied research, and,
Development of research methodology.

With such a vast periphery of research patterns in social sciences, more and more took to scientific research. They were:

Individual Vs. Team research,
Universities
Government Institutions
Private Agencies
⇒ Industrial Establishments, and
⇒ International Bodies.

Thus, diffusion of social science research took place and witnessed more professionalism in its research. This resulted in internationalization of social science research with an assurance to more advancement in social science by ways of interdisciplinary and hybrid approach towards its research. The social sciences became essential tool for the study of the conditions and need of modern society, without a proper use of their methods and results, control of economic, social, financial and demographic developments or manpower requirements is possible. Proper planning at all levels of research at the global level is required with a larger contribution of researchers with extensive knowledge and training in social sciences.

III.3 SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH – A STATE OF ART

As is clear from the previous part of the study that during the first few years after Independence, the main responsibility for research and higher study in development and social sciences was borne by Universities. The main thrust of development oriented study of social sciences and research was felt in new schools of advanced learning which were established with Government’s sponsorship and financial support. It was strikingly observed that disproportionate attention was focussed on economic aspects of development in the research carried out in Universities. Other areas of social sciences were not encouraged so much so as sociology which came into being by the early 1960s.

The Centre for study of Developing Societies was the first to integrate the interdisciplinary approach in 1963 under the leadership of Rajni Kothari, a Political Scientist. Gradually between 1960-1970 three different types of research Institutions
emerged all having emphasis on inter-disciplinary approach. The National Institute of Community Development (NICD) in Hyderabad was the first one. The first ever blend of higher education and research was canvassed by the Jawahar Lal Nehru University, New Delhi, in the 1960s. The Indian Institute of Advanced Study (IIAS) in Shimla was a National Centre of Academic Excellence to provide the senior and eminent scholars towards contributing to academic pursuits.

Thereafter, several other Centres for social science research were established in the later 1960s. The situation of social science research gradually got an acceptable shape and it was thought that it should help to achieve development and social justice within the framework of democracy. This new direction of research created enormous demand for information on various aspects of the economy and society and its analysis and interpretation for use in policy making. It was thus that the institutions that are funded and largely controlled by the Government emerged.

In the 1950s and 1960s, social science research was concentrated in the metropolitan cities of the country, like Kolkata, Delhi and Mumbai. The Delhi School of Economics and Presidency College, Kolkata, were reputed for research in Economics. These institutions captured the larger picture but failed to cover the local perspective. This, however, remained to be a major problem for a few years in our large and diverse country. At the same time social sciences suffered in Universities because their concentration was mainly on teaching. However, with the process of decentralization of social science research, which began in the early 1970s with the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) a number of Institutions were set up across the country for enhancing of social science research. This gave the social science research a facelift and a new direction. These Institutions enjoyed a high degree of autonomy from the point
of view of government intervention and impact of changing policies. They focussed on research and adopted a multi-disciplinary approach. By the late 1990s, there were 27 Institutions under the ICSSR. They are largely financed by the ICSSR while the Government of the States in which they are located also contributed substantial funds.

Now what kind of policy-related research is conducted by these social science research institutions is a question and in what ways do Indian social scientists contribute, if at all, to the generations of knowledge for the making, implementation and critical evaluation of public policy?

III.4 COVERAGE IN SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTIONS IN INDIA

However, there are four types of social science research institutions in India:

(i) Research Institutions, Organizations, Bureaus, Units or Directorates located within Central Government Ministries or State Government Departments or directly under their jurisdiction;

(ii) Government funded but legally autonomous research institutions;

(iii) Degree granting educational institutions, educational institutions whose faculties engaged in social science within a department or research centre located within the College or University; and,

(iv) Private consultancy firms that conduct research under contract from private or public sector firms and government departments and Ministries.

To these four types can be added a fifth: the Scientific and Engineering Institutions that have social science cells or departments.

After knowing the four types of social science research Institutions in India, we can easily say that almost all areas of social sciences are covered in them in order to
establish social science research as a major growth industry in India. Over the years, there is a strong network of these Institutions and social scientists engaged in research in terms of co-ordination of research. The University Grants Commission and the Indian Council of Social Science Research have been allotted substantial sum of money to nurture social science research in Universities and autonomous research Institutions. At the same time, the Ministry of Human Resources and other Central Government Ministries and State Government Departments give out research grants. This grant is either recurring or non-recurring, or in form of research grants or even one-time grant for research purpose. These research grants have been from time-to-time expanded because it is ultimately social science research in various socio-economic political areas that will contribute to country’s development.

III.5 EFFORTS TOWARDS BUILDING SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH

As the social science research took pace, coordinated efforts were put in to study the various aspects of social science research. The Research Programme Committee of the Planning Commission encourages, integrates and finances different research schemes. Ranganathan emphasized on Scientific Methodology of Social Science Research which is possible through the application of the scientific method.

A seminar on the “Methodology of Social Science Research from the Perspective of Social Action” was held by the Gandhian Institute of Studies, Varanasi in November, 1964, and recommended:

⇒ Training in Research Methodology,
⇒ Establishment of a National Council for Social Science Research and Regional Research Councils,
⇒ Role of Organizations in Social Research,
Standardization of Research Studies,

Exploring the possibility of:

(i) Founding an inter-disciplinary journal of social research;
(ii) Publication of fuller research reports;
(iii) Publication of Model Research Studies; and
(iv) Creation of Documentation and Abstracting Services.

UNESCO in 1952 established a Research Centre on Social Implication of Industrialization in South Asia (Headquarter in Kolkata). Its name was later changed to UNESCO Research Centre on Social and Economic Development in South Asia, in 1961. Its' Head Office was now in Delhi. The main aim of this body was to collect and disseminate information on social and economic research in order to enhance social science research in India. This body also brought out various bibliographies subsequently.

This UNESCO Research Centre merged with Institute of Economic Growth, Delhi in 1967. This Centre also provided various services for researchers naming "South-Asia Social Science Abstract" 1952-58, Bibliography "South Asia Social Science Bibliography" and "Research Information Bulletin: Social Science Projects in South Asia" (1956), which is still being published.

Gradually during 1961-1970, Economics, Sociology, History, Psychology witnessed their own growth and developed inter-disciplinary approach. This thereby helped each disciplines to utilize research methodology of the other disciplines. The inter-disciplinary approach to research was also harnessed due to increasing documentation facilities to research scholars.

A very significant National Seminar was organized by the Department of Library and Information Science, North-Eastern Hill University, Shillong, in 1988. The discussions were held on the following themes:
(i) Structure and development of social sciences;
(ii) Information needs and user studies,
(iii) Characteristics of social science literature and its availability; and,
(iv) Information systems, services and planning.

This National Seminar explored the possibility of several areas of research that open up for empirical studies:

(i) Patterns and use of literature in innovative and inter-disciplinary fields;
(ii) Time-lag in terms of the use of foreign literature; and,
(iii) Cost accounting of the financial and intellectual inputs in terms of effective use of Information sources.

These varieties of efforts towards building social science research help the researchers in conserving the research potential for specific purpose. Thereafter, researches were being conducted in series and not in a parallel pattern.

III.6 FUNDING IN SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH

A study sponsored by the ICSSR in 1974-78, carried out by J.L. Azad, Suresh Kulkarni and S.V. Khandelwal gives a picture of funding of social science research in India in the early 1970s. The study covered 181 research Institutions all kinds, 19 in the East, 66 in the North, 53 in the South and 43 in the West. Until the mid-1960s social science research institutes were mainly set up by private organizations, although they often received grants and projects from the Governments. Most of these Institutes were very small in size, more than half had less than 10 Faculty Members and less than 10 supporting staff. Only 21 of the 181 Institutes had a total staff strength of more than 50. It was also not true that the Government Organizations were larger, private and government institutes were evenly distributed by size. In terms of research facilities, only two institutes in the entire country had libraries with more than 1,00,000 books and only 21 others had more than 25,000
books. However, from the late 1960s, there was a greater expansion in libraries due to greater availability of funds.

As for funding, the single major source of funding 1973-78 for institutes in the East, North and West of the country was the Central Government. In the South, however, it was the State Governments, which were the best funded and had the largest research staff and libraries. Institutes in the East had the least funds. The average per institute expenditure in 1997-79 in the country was Rs.1.37 million. This average was the highest in the West (Rs.1.84 million) and the lowest in the East (Rs.0.81 million).

The study indicated that although institutes in the East were the least funded and had the least research facilities, they published more books and journal articles per researcher. The number of programmes per institute was also the highest in the East, even though the average size there was the smallest. Performance per researcher was the highest on all counts in the Institutes of the Eastern region. One surprising observation shown in this study was that research output did not necessarily improve with increasing funding. So other conditions are necessary for research funds to have desired results.

The study also estimated that the total expenditure in 1977-78 from all sources of funding taken together on social science research in the country was Rs.21.82 crore. Compared to the size of the total government expenditure, this was about 0.09 per cent. The total expenditure of the ICSSR in 1977-78 was 1.79 crore. This was only about 8 per cent of the total social science expenditure in the country. Since the study found that except in the West, the largest source of funding for social science came from the Central and State Governments. Thus, the study clearly shows that the ICSSR accounted for only a small part of the total government expenditure on social sciences.
This is still the picture today. Besides the UGC expenditures on the centres of advanced study and other special assistance programmes, the research today is mostly supported by the Government Agencies like various economic Ministries and the Planning Commission, the Reserve Bank of India, etc.

The ICSSR’s total expenditure in 1997-98 was Rs.12.87 crore. This increased to 30.07 per cent between 1977-78 and 1997-98. Due to the introduction of revised pay scales in the research institutions, the expenditure went up further by 2000-01. This expenditure still went up after the revision of pay scales was introduced in the research institutes. In 1996-97, the ICSSR received a total grant of Rs.69.9 million from the Government of India. Of this, Rs.46.4 million, i.e. 47.9 per cent was distributed in the form of grants to the ICSSR research Institutes. Only Rs.4 million, i.e. just over 4 per cent was given as research grants to scholars, while a whopping Rs.22.5 million, i.e., 0.23 per cent was spent under various heads on the ICSSR’s own administration (ICSSR, 1998).

The research institutes of ICSSR faced major financial crunch in the late 1990s due to freezing in grants by ICSSR. The budget of Ministry of Human Resource Development to the ICSSR based Institutes is very meagre as compared to other higher education bodies. Since the State Governments provide matching grants of Central Government grant to these research institutes the budgetary provisions prevail all the more. This problem is faced by all the ICSSR based institutes. Most of these institutions are sustaining this financial crisis by way of non-government grants. They are getting non-state funding from international agencies under various heads. This is besides the proliferation of consultancy projects sponsored by Government agencies to these organizations. Since the state supports only the basic establishment and development
costs, so public funding becomes even more important. Some of the ICSSR Institutes like G.B. Pant Institute of Social Sciences, Allahabad, CWDS, New Delhi, Institute for Social and Economic Change, Bangalore are however, undertaking various self-generating fund programmes.

There has been reasonable fund flow in all the ICSSR institutions through the funding agencies like Ministry of Human Resource Development (through ICSSR) and the State Governments. So there were two ICSSR and State Government nominees each on the Institute Board. But still there was no interference in the working or in academic matters.

During 1980s and 1990s gradual changes were seen in social science research. Along with the regular funding the social science research got linkage with the UN System, the World Bank, Ford Foundation, Macarthur, agencies like SIDA, DANIDA, NORAD, etc. This could, to an extent balance the financial crunch which started occurring during this decade. But due to perpetual decline in funding from the Government of India, the responsibilities of ICSSR (the parent body of these Institutes) had to ensure smooth functioning of these Institutes in terms of their resources. Thus, persuading the Ministry to earmark larger resources to ICSSR for these Institutes.
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