Chapter II

Methodological Issues: The Landmark Role of Dhurjati Prasad Mukerji

2.1 Introduction

This section takes off against the backdrop of an Article written by Andre Beteille (1997). He has written a piece on ‘The Place of Tradition in Sociological Enquiry’ (1997). He mentions that the renowned journal, ‘Contribution to Indian Sociology’ has since the late sixties raised a discussion under the general title ‘For a Sociology of India’. Some of India’s finest minds of sociology have contributed notes towards the discussion. Beteille classifies these discussions into two contradictory dispositions: Hermeneutic versus positivist approaches; ‘insiders’ versus outsiders’ perspectives’. He argues that the debate has hardly made any theoretical advancement in the last thirty years. He finds an impasse so far this debate is concerned. This chapter would like to introduce the theoretical insight developed By Dhurjati Prasad Mukerji¹ so as to find a way out of this stalemate condition. The question of knowledge production plays an important role so far this Article is concerned.

How will knowledge be produced? To whom does knowledge belong? Who will have the right to knowledge? Who will create the path to revolution? How will the scheme for a movement be worked out? How, in which language, will the resistance against

¹ Dhurjati Prasad Mukerji (1894–1961) a major social scientist of the country was Professor of Economics and Sociology at Lucknow University where he taught from 1922 to 1954. He then moved to Aligarh Muslim University where he taught economics, till 1959. He was one of the founding fathers of 'Indian' sociology. He was a man of sweeping interests and of great intellect. Apart from being a social scientist, Mukerji was a novelist and essayist.
power evolve? True that none of these questions is new, yet we are far from arriving at the final answer to any of these much talked about queries. There are numerous answers and numerous opinions; not any universally accepted answer. Debates are on forever. Come, let us for once leave all these philosophical crossings, and look into some of the recent incidences.

Let us pose the problem by way of a recent experience. Waves of a similar discontent have also infected contemporary politics in West Bengal. It has assumed the proportion of a crucial political issue. It all started with the question of industrialisation in places like Singur and Nandigram. Transition from ‘agriculture to industrialisation’ is historically inevitable, and all work has to be modelled on this – this was the take of the government, experts who actually follow the logic of mainstream development paradigm. The ‘uneducated’ (?), foolish (?) peasants became bent on not allowing (capitalist) industrialisation on agricultural lands. They vowed not to allow (capitalist) ‘development’. They speak a stark ‘no’ to this particular concept of (capitalist) ‘development’. The mainstream development paradigm started producing a seemingly never ending series of logics to prove that the very definition of ‘development’ is this advent from agriculture to (capitalist) industrialisation. This model further stressed that the entire world history proves this point. What the peasants think, hence, is wrong. After all, what do they know about all these? The liberal economists following the mainstream development logic hence consider the peasants’ idea about development to be rather narrow, limited and local. To assess these in a wider perspective calls for the presence of some particular ‘knowledge’, which the peasants do not posses. Only the experts who follow the linear logic of agriculture to industry have access to such knowledge. In short, it can be said that the
logic of this model did not allow any heed to what the peasants were speaking. Rather, the State machinery was deployed to repress the voice of the peasants. The opposite camp built up their logic on the ground of peasant experience. In other words, this logic has given emphasis upon the spontaneous action of the peasant. Intellectuals, following this logic, started asserting importance to what these village-based people said. They questioned the assumption that the peasants could have no idea in matters related to development and further questioned why the experience of the peasants will not be taken into cognizance. They started raising several questions like these. That means, neither the experts nor the abstract theory, only peasants can say what needs to be done for their development. The two contradictory position; one group thinks that the definition of ‘development’ will be decided by experts and intellectuals who follow the logic mainstream development paradigm. Another group is of the opinion that this definition will be decided by the lived experience of the peasants. This debate produces a binary opposition of theory versus experience. No doubt, both stances are essentialist.

Let us discuss the problems of the first stance. Let us assume that the expert here is a sociologist. Having prepared a questionnaire, he has gone to the respondents. Respondents are answering his question. The sociologist is carrying out a survey research. Field is somewhat like a laboratory for the sociologist. The various animate and inanimate things in a laboratory are nothing more than ‘objects’ for a scientist. The sociologist too tries to think in the manner of a scientist; just as Emile Durkheim had analysed society and its relation with individuals as ‘object’. It means that the people who respond to the questions set up by the sociologist are nothing more than research objects for the sociologist. The only role of the respondents is to answer the prepared questions; they are not entitled to think of or raise their own questions.
Neither will they analyse those questions. The sociologist is not bound to assess whether the questions so framed are at all their questions. Nor is s/he compelled to listen whether they are thinking about something other than the prepared set of questions. ‘They’ are just research ‘objects’ who the sociologist is using to arrive at his own conclusion; to prove the ‘truth’ of his own hypothesis. So, in a way, it may be said that the sociologist as if engages in a monologue; talks to her/his own self. Despite having voice, here the respondents are voiceless. This structure leaves no room for self criticism. The logic of this structure does not provide any space self questioning. The logic is considered as truth beyond all questions.

For the other standpoint, the research-process starts from not the sociologist but taking into account the lived experience of the respondent. It is the common sense generated experience of the respondents that form dependable centre of the queries such as what needs to be done, what will be beneficial for the society or in which way can we achieve development. The previous stance did not have any active role or agency for the respondents. They were used as just a means for the research. Here, however, the researcher’s task is to document the experiences of the respondent without any error. The respondent can speak, can understand, and s/he knows what needs to be done. At the same time, it needs to be kept in mind that the each of the respondents’ experiences is unique and hence there cannot be any sort of generalization. The researcher or expert does not play any role here. It implies that their critical and analytical power is never called for. All they will do is document the several narratives derived from the analytical power of the respondents (which, in turn, is derived from their experience). Questions of power (in Foucauldian sense) or hegemony (in Gramscian sense) or question of subjectivity (in Lacanian sense) do not arise here. So there is no way to assess the manner in which what the respondents are
saying is determined by the power-hegemony-symbolic structure. The question does not arise as to whether what the peasants are speaking or writing are actually what they want to speak or write. The manner in which the peasants’ experiences are (re)produced by hegemonic power or symbolic structure also remains from being analysed. This stance is predicated upon the assumption that the lived experiences of the peasants belong to an innocent space, which lies beyond the pale of the play of power and symbolic structure involving modes of repression and foreclosure in language embedded in the so called lived experience and its expressions.

As per one ideal, researcher is the principal person. Respondents are just means for her/his arrival at the desired end. For the other, respondent holds the key. By virtue of their lived experience, the respondents know what will spell well for them. As a result – theory versus spontaneous lived experience – a binary is formed. So, the important question is – who has the right to possess analytical power? Who can do critical analysis? Is it the intellectual/expert or common people? What will be the source of analytical power - the experts’ theory and knowledge, or the commoners’ multifarious lived experience? Along with this comes another question – does either of these leave any space for self-questioning? Are not both the stances unilaterally assuming that their process and method of ‘knowing’ is ‘true’ beyond any question?

The reader might be a little confused having read all these. Wherein lies the relation between all these issues and Dhurjati Prasad Mukerji or DP? Answer to this question calls for a little more patience on part of the reader. Here we will try to see how DP has tried to address this problem. We will begin with a close reading of DP’s book We and They (Amra o Tahara).
2.2 Knowledge and Vidya

The first question would be: who does DP mean by ‘we’ and ‘they’? DP writes, “In we and they I am the speaker on one hand… I am using this singular form because I have noticed in myself the vices of the so called higher-educated” (Mukhopadhyay\(^2\), 2009: 10). He is labelling the higher-educated intellectual class as ‘we’, a class to which he himself also belongs. ‘They’ has generally been used to signify that majority populace who are outside this class of intellectuals. Despite mutual differences all critics of the book *We and They* agree on the point that ‘we’ and ‘they’ are autonomous individuals; they have different existences. This is a conversation between two different existences. It is not that Dhurjati Prasad does not hint at this. But he has also written:

> After all, all thoughts are dialogues; either between ‘I’-‘You’, or between ego and super-ego. Even if not entire history, at least its revolutionary part is some form of dialogue or debate between the self and the self, self and you, self and someone else (Mukhopadhyay, 2009: 16) (own translation).

DP uses the singular form ‘I’ which actually represents ‘we’. This ‘I’ is not some uninterrupted whole. It is fragmented. The novelty of DP’s thought lies in the manner in which he breaks the notion of Cartesian ‘I’. This very ‘I’ of DP is a split self, contains an ‘other’. Within this ‘I’ is being carried a dialogue, debate, conversation between self and other. Let us present an example, in ‘their’ language:

> Please do not ever think that under all circumstances we are rather ordinary. We too have a philosopher inside us, just as a very ordinary person occasionally peeps from inside you. And that non-philosophical person inside you often peeps out, but, sadly, not in your writings.

\(^2\) In Bengali writing, he always uses *Mukhopadhyay* as a surname whereas he employs *Mukerji* in his english writings.
I: Then, is actual reason for all your objections and irritations the fact that we consider you as ordinary? …

They: It has to be said that you have charted out the nature of our objection! Arrogance is the name for your identification of us as ordinary. But your arrogance is useless because its basis is formed by the rather ordinary mentality of some ordinary person like us.

I: Just now you said that the ordinary person hiding inside us occasionally peeps out. And now you say that very ordinary person forms the basis! I agree to the former, not the latter (Mukhopadhyay, 2009: 19) (own translation).

Through this conversation, DP contends that there is a philosopher inside the so called ordinary people. It implies that we can search for philosophy even in the experiences derived from common-sense. On the other hand, there is a non-philosopher inside the intellectuals as well. And that philosophy too is a form of common-sense. None is an uninterrupted whole. They comprise of certain self-contradictions, doubts and presence of the ‘other’. DP will never endorse either common sense or philosophy as foundational. Perhaps he would like to say that philosophy is one kind of common sense and the latter too is a type of philosophy. DP thus problematises the binary of philosophy versus common sense. These two cease to remain some water tight compartment; one seeps into the other.

To consider something as foundational means doing injustice to the myriad other possibilities. Engaging in dialogue, for DP, is the way to acknowledge the ‘other’. To engage in dialogue does not mean reaching at some final, unquestionable conclusion. Dialogue possesses, in words of DP,

   easy pace and relative freedom of conversation. This structure can create textures of several threads. This structure provides much space for
movement…. Here, it is easy to take turns. Just as it is easy to enter this, so is the way to exit. Its entrance and exit – both are open and strong enough. (Mukhopadhyay, 2009:13) (own translation).

Once engaged in dialogue, there remains no way to accept one singular stance as final or universal. It spells an incessant spell of analysis of words and logics. And its special characteristic is that it can also be stopped. It does not become possible to express any form of ego-centrism; because, both have to be acknowledged. Here, the ‘I’ is always ready to respond to the call of the indefinite. In this mode of treading the path, both the so called theory and common sense engage in a conversation with each other and the one point to the limits and limitlessness of the other. Consequently, it becomes impossible to be static at one singular stance.

There was mention of Egypt towards the beginning. With it had come issues related to mass-uprising and revolution. Let us see what DP has to say about these. Two essays from his book *We and They (Amra o Tahara)* will be important in this regard – *About Revolution 1 and 2 (Biplaber kotha ek o dui)*.

They: The revolutionary psyche is universal… It can never be agreed to that there is nothing called a revolutionary psyche. …

I: Everything – from a smile to revolution – is rather easy for you! … No Sir, I am serious, a lot needs to be read. May be there was a time when revolutions took place without much of reading, … Irrespective of the immensity of the heart that yield in the blow of air, it, after all, is just a blow of air; once out of breath, it is done. Revolution is not some quackery (Mukhopadhyay, 2009:82) (own translation).

So the debate has taken a quite engaging proportion now. The given (and accepted) social sense believes that there is something as a revolutionary psyche. Revolutionary awareness remains ingrained inside people’s mind. This essentialist statement is being
questioned by DP. For him, revolution is associated with the concept of Vidya. It needs to be read and learnt. And this process gradually builds up the revolutionary psyche. Does DP, then, take theoretical knowledge as the pre-condition for revolution? Does experience/action have no role to play?

They: … What is the meaning of Vidya?

I: … I do not consider something far removed from life as Vidya. It can be named as scholarship or knowledge or anything else, but not Vidya. Activity is needed for Vidya. And for activity we need to keep our eyes wide open. If so, we will manage to discern the several whirlpools embedded within the stream of events. To put it in other words, there is a plan or scheme of events. That plan, in turn, contains its own patterns.

Threads of multiple colours constitute this pattern. At times these threads get knotted and the knots can also be undone. But we cannot keep trying like toddlers. We have to realize the exact manner in which these knots need to be undone. It also demands patience. This sense of direction is called Vidya. It calls for patience, because this Vidya will help you understand the technique of undoing the knot (Mukhopadhyay, 2009: 84) (own translation).

Science works by maintaining a detachment from all sorts of attachment. Upon this maintenance of detachment is depended the success or failure of scientific knowledge. At the very outset, DP has said no to this given condition of science. He talks of attachment. Without proper contact, we can achieve knowledge, and that may be termed research or scholarship, but not Vidya. The reader must have realized that DP uses the term Vidya, and not science. He also creates a distinction between the two words. Vidya calls for activity. And this activity means establishing attachment. Attachment here does not mean to get bound within certain limits. Close attachment is
realized within the several prints being textured by the threads of multiple colours. All these demand patience. Nothing can be achieved in a hurry. There cannot be fast arrival at some conclusion. Nor can there be any presumptions. This complexity cannot be assessed if everything is performed from a safe, detached distance. Attachment makes us learn the touch of the complex situation. And, detachment teaches us to view a reductionist shape of complexity. By *Vidya* is meant not only an understanding of the several coloured prints of several threads, but the technique of undoing those knots as well. It implies reception of the complexity as well as deciding on the proper direction from a particular standpoint. *Vidya*, to DP, means patience, *Vidya* means the technique of undoing the knot, of assimilating the power of deciding on the right direction.

DP mentions two types of researchers. One such group subscribes to scientism. Their research is marked by the maintenance of a distance of detachment. Another group’s work is exercising *Vidya*. DP does not provide any generalized assumption about researchers. There are several types of researchers and intellectuals, and neither does DP talk of any homogenized entity. There are certain epistemo-ontological differences. DP is trying to assess the roles played by researchers and intellectuals in context of a particular standpoint. DP’s take on intellectuals (such intellectual researcher who understands revolution in terms of *Vidya*) in context of revolution is:

So far intellectuals have been born in the class of those who have rights. Not that they are always the first to have felt dissatisfaction about something, but the articulated expression of such dissatisfaction, which you can call as speech reactions, is possible only by them. For the other group, the dissatisfaction only is their reality, but they do not possess a language for this. Revolution begins at the confluence of two streams – language and activity – and thus is created a new myth which, in turn, is
received by the common people. … It is never easy for such people to sustain a revolution who live by words only. They need to create new symbol, interpret them and bestow them with life (Mukhopadhyay, 2009: 92) (Own translation).

It is the task of the intellectuals to create new ‘myths’ and ‘symbols’. The ruling class creates a specific kind of myth and symbol in the society. People start believing them as real and natural. Again, an article of these very commoners gradually starts understanding the ploy behind such myths and symbols. They realize these to be tools for maintaining the exploitation and division in the society, and protest against those myths and symbols. But it requires the engagement of intellectuals for creation of newer myths and symbols to give this protest of commoners the shape of a counter-hegemonic. Intellectuals create these newer myths from the protests and grievances of the common mass. It may now be questioned if DP, then, sees the role of the intellectuals (irrespective of the qualitative differences he sees among the intellectuals) to be bigger than that of the common mass? DP writes:

The upper stratum of the society is dead. But, it seems, some are trying to push them to come to the top. Their cries reach our ears. Is this the sound for which Rabindranath Tagore waited all his life? Yes, I want to be one among the rescue-party, but that should never mean that I will expect their gratitude. May the pride of providing help never touch me. May they come out and take control of their own lives and, in the process, also change our courses of lives (Mukhopadhyay, 2009: 97) (own translation).

DP is talking about the ‘bottom/below’ level. He makes this call to the intellectuals to keep their ears open. He asks them to do away with habits such as self-pride, and arrogance. Just as he mentions particular type of intellectuals in the previous quote (who will engage in exercising Vidya), here he says something else. People from the
‘below’ will change the intellectuals. At this point one might find DP guilty of inconsistency in what he says. Now he is for the importance of intellectuals and the next moment he says that people from the ‘below’ will change the intellectuals. What exactly does he want to say? Does DP’s approach become, on the one hand, a method of streamlining intellectuals through contact with the people from below and on the other, of restructuring the people from below through interaction with intellectuals? Does the researcher adopt top-down approach? Does he/she take off from the people from below?

2.3 Beyond the positivist-hermeneutic circle

He begins treading this path with a question: “Are we so sure that the old methods of natural sciences are applicable to the social and historical?” (Mukerji, 1945:13). DP mentions Dilthey in search of an answer. According to Dilthey, as per DP, the human sciences are autonomous, with different sets of subject-matters, which are not possible to be comprehended through application of just scientific methods, based upon generalization. Dilthey is among the best known philosophers of the Hermeneutic School. DP was deeply attracted by the Hermeneutic School’s strong criticism of scientism. While talking about the philosophical elements of this school, DP mentions, “it is a new way of grasping the total reality without fragmenting it into simpler parts as ‘scientific’ explanations succeed in doing” (Mukerji, 1945:12). DP criticises the Cartesian wholeness, which the usual modes of scientific operations abide by. In Cartesian conception, the whole is produced from fragmented smaller parts and then discussed. One major strand of criticism of the tendency of scientific exercises to fragment the whole into smaller units and simplify them was highly influenced by the Hermeneutic School. According to DP, the greatest contribution of
Dilthey was the latter’s attempt to employ the category of ‘understanding’ (in the broader sense of the term) in analysis of historical experience and expression. How ‘understanding’ is important in methodology and why the model of ‘natural sciences’ would not work has so been argued by DP:

… as historical experience differs from epoch to epoch and from country to country, ‘understanding’ and expression cannot be of a uniform pattern which the procedure of natural sciences would impose or occasion (Mukerji, 1945:13)

Experience is not one-dimensional; there are numerous types of experience. Hence there cannot be one universal experience, irrespective of time and space. One tendency of scientism is to reduce innumerable, disaggregated experiences into some homogenous sign. According to DP, Dilthey criticises this attempt to forcibly present these many experiences in one straight line. DP also mentions another person other than Dilthey – Troeltsch. DP’s idea about Troeltsch is:

His concept of ‘Kultur’, each of its own concrete and individual wholeness, is one grand protest against the abstractness of general laws popularized by the mechanical sciences and their application to the sphere of the relative (Mukerji, 1945:13).

Troeltsch is in favour of realising the concreteness of existence, the specificity of individuality, in its entirety. It is impossible to reduce complexity to any abstract general model. DP lends a sympathetic ear, but it would be oversimplification of DP to consider this as DP’s stance. But in three recent Articles on DP (Bhattacharyya & Bhattacharyya, 2010; Chakraborty, 2010a; Chakraborty, 2010b), he has been argued to have not only accepted Dilthey’s methodology but to be in favour of employing such methodology. The issue however is not this simple. DP writes:
While admitting the great value of such a method and its attraction for an Indian historian… it is difficult to uphold with Troeltsch that the concreteness of the individual whole is only to be ‘intuitively’ grasped. Intuition has its own important place in every sphere of life. It is a short cut to understanding and action; it occasionally seizes parts and aspects of reality denied to intellect; … it is likely to be highly selective, and neglectful of other aspects and implications (Mukerji, 1945:14)

The problem with Dilthey and Troeltsch’s methodologies is that they try to realise action-based expression in an over-simplified manner. Action-based expression is not critically understood; in the words of DP, it is “denied to intellect”. By ‘intellect’, DP probably hints here towards being critical. DP on the other hand is against dealing in universals, which is why Dilthey and Troeltsch’s ideas are significant for him. DP’s is a will to write a new history; a history where ‘difference’ will be acknowledged, where the specificity of distinct ‘tradition’ of thought will be acknowledged/recognized. This also happens to be idea of Dilthey and Troeltsch. DP wants to distinguish himself from them by not willing to view the special ‘tradition’ of thought in disengagement from relations. He could be seen as suggesting the need to create the meaning of the special ‘tradition’ of thought in relation to the numerous tensions and highs and lows. DP is not in favour of understanding ‘tradition’ in the accepted sense of the term. That is why he wants to introduce the category of ‘intellect’. DP doubts that sticking to Dilthey and Troeltsch’s theory would result in a narrow, confined understanding of ‘tradition’.

DP thinks that it is possible to maintain an empathetic relativity from the theorizations of Dilthey and Troeltsch. He opines that the various modes of expression and the multidimensional nature of experience can lead one towards the forms of relativity. He writes:
Above all … empathetic understanding which is rendered possible by the interpretation of an individual whole in terms of the values of the whole leads inevitably to historical relativism (Mukerji, 1945:15).

DP does not want to mention relativism in his theorization. He is against the idea of flowing with the tide of relativism. More than a matter of choice, his objection is theoretical. He writes:

Dilthey’s ‘understanding’ and Troeltsch’s ‘intuition’ may easily mean a severance from logical analysis and painstaking research (Mukerji, 1945:16).

DP notices absence of logical analysis in the researches of Dilthey and Troeltsch. DP refers to a critical perspective by ‘logical analysis’. Critical viewpoint is extremely crucial for one who has decided not to write history by remaining confined within the given categories and meanings. However it would be wrong to consider ‘logical analysis’ as belonging to the class of western Rationalist philosophical tradition. DP did not want to use to the term ‘logical analysis’ to mean ‘Rationalist’. He did not want to assign much theoretical importance to ‘Rationalism’ as a philosophical tradition. He wants to engage in a logical examination of accepted methodologies; to problematise the ‘naturalness’ of accepted methodologies. He wants to use ‘logical analysis’ while framing the questions. Will we then have to yet again return to ‘objectivist’ History? DP has made an objection against the method of ‘objectivist’ History. He says:

… the objectivist historian can look at History as from the royal box in a theatre (Mukerji, 1945:22).

History has to be written by following the methods of ‘natural science’. Sociology will try to be like natural science. The only way of writing history is as if to write it in an objective manner. DP mentions Dilthey and Troeltsch while exploring the
problems of writing a pro-science history. DP is in agreement with the criticisms put forth by them. But, he has certain problems with what they try to posit as the method. To put in simple words, DP is against accepting either ‘objectivity’ or ‘hermeneutics’ (as mentioned by Dilthey and Troeltsch) as the sacrosanct method. DP cannot settle at the stance of either the objective outsider or the embodied insider. What will then be the methodology of writing history? Is there any ‘third’ way out? Let us see what DP points to as the methodological characteristic:

…we want a method which would respect the special features making up the Indian pattern without cutting adrift from the sheet-anchor of historical analysis; in other words, we demand a method which would pay due regard to the relativity of Indian History and yet put it in the perspective of the evolving world history (Mukerji, 1945:17).

The methodology will be such that it assigns importance to relative identity and also analyses difference from the perspective of entirety. That is, not a method based on some part/whole binary division. These two are rather related to each other, there is always a two way flow working in between the two. The question arises as to which mode and method would make this work possible? DP answers, “Such a method is offered by Marxism” (Mukerji, 1945:17).

### 2.4 Critical engagement with Marxism

This Article looks up how DP sets up a critical engagement with the dominant orthodox-classical tradition of Marxism. He wants to produce a new methodology. Writing for him is doing; to act. History is a creative impulse for him. But, he is not willing to write history as per the norms of the known domains. He has felt, “the first defect of our historical scholarship has been the result of a misunderstanding of the methodology of History” (Mukerji, 1945: vii). The defect lies with methodology; he rather talks of Marxist methodology, though he is free from any infatuation towards
Marxist methodology. His outright comment is “If it is not, it can be discarded”. If necessary, he can also discard Marxism.

The question remains: what does DP mean by the characteristic feature of Marxist methodology? It has already been explained as to why neither the ‘hermeneutic’ nor the ‘objectivist’ route is accepted as a method of knowledge production. What about dialectics? But DP then avers:

The ‘laws of Dialectics’ have been made to behave like the *laws of Karma* – pre-determining every fact, event and human behaviour in its course; …

History is a going concern – despite the efforts of historians to close it by summing it up in their age and their views… Marxism too is not a closed system (Mukerji, 1945:18, italics added)

DP questions dominant tradition of Marxist dialectic theorization for its Brahminic tendency. There is an attempt to fit everything into a pre-designed matrix; an attempt to bring everything within the confines of some pre-given domain. If the dialectical modes start following Brahminic *laws of Karma*, they will create blockage for the subjects’ creative development. It hinders the process of becoming. History, hence, cannot be tied to any particular, pre-given matrix. Instead for DP, the association of a researcher to materialistic methodology is resolved via a Marxist standpoint approach. DP writes:

The Marxist, … investigates the given socio-economic complex and lays bare the content of the process, … the Marxist historian struggles that in the evaluation of events an ‘objective’ account is incomplete on the very ground of its neutrality, and complete by *self-inclusion* into the object of evaluation. This is the methodological significance of ‘taking sides’ which, Lenin said, was the clear duty of the materialist, i.e. the Marxist historian. (Mukerji, 1945:22, italics added).
Researchers never include themselves within the object of research in scientific objective researches. Question is, why does a researcher, in the first place, read what s/he reads; why the researcher chooses the research topic that s/he decides on working upon? The researcher selects the research topic based on some previously conceived analysis or some previous reading or theoretical stance. Is it so that, during the course of the research, the researcher (un)knowingly undergoes some sort of transformation? That the researcher is influenced by one or more theoretical analyses is obvious from her/his selection of research topic. Again, the chosen subject of analysis too keeps influencing the researcher’s analyses. This is a ceaseless tread; an endless path. As the researcher consults the archive materials, library books or becomes engaged in fieldwork, does it create any sort of bodily relation with those documents-Articles and those people? Do they influence the researcher despite the fact that they have all been selected on basis of the researcher’s stance? It becomes difficult to say which precedes the other.

DP problematises the subject/object binary concept. You either demand to be working with ‘subject’ or your demand is just to be ‘objective’. An either/or relation. DP doubts the veracity of such an either/or situation. Is it at all possible? Queries DP. Knowledge production necessitates both; it would be grossly inadequate to concentrate on only one. In DP’s words:

The point is that the historian often works on two levels of consciousness, the scientific [read objective] and the intuitive-moral [read subjective], because to produce a total picture he finds it awkward to ignore either. Dilthey’s claim for the autonomy of the historical method does not yield the secret of the combination of the two, but only segregates them without guarding against the dangers of dichotomisation (Mukerji, 1945:31 – italics added)
To confine oneself to either of the two with regard to knowledge production is tantamount to being essentialist. For DP, wholeness does not mean an all-consuming universal totality. He quotes Edgar Wind to write:

…”in the language of E. Wind, ‘The investigator intrudes into the process that he is investigating’… An investigator, be he [sic] in the library or in the archive, must be historically conditioned towards the instruments and records to be able to register signs, signals, significance; he must coordinate them, select them round about a hypothesis. In the study of history, the date being comparatively smaller in quantity in the relatively unknown periods, and also being unrepeatable by nature, hypotheses tend to get mixed up with motives. But this only calls for greater caution which as we know, is provided by grammatical and critical axioms of hermeneutics. So the separation is not of the order of body and soul in medieval theology, Government and people in British India, or say, the Communist and the nationalist in today’s frustrated India, but of the order of part and whole by the common fact of intrusion. ‘By this intrusion into the process that is to be studied, the student himself, like every one of his tools, becomes part-object of investigation; “part-object” to be taken in two-fold sense; he [sic] is, like any other organ of investigation, but a part of the whole object that is being investigated. But equally it is only a part of himself that, thus externalized into an instrument, enters into the object-world of his studies’ (Mukerji, 1945: 31-32, italics added by the author)

Alongside the problematisation of the subject/object binary division, DP takes aid of Wind’s idea in order to explain what he understands as the dialectical relation between ‘subject’ and ‘object’. The elements put to use by the researcher are not ahistorical. Rather, history influences and conditions the researcher’s engagement with those elements. Researchers themselves are part of their research; parts that
require proper investigation as well, despite the fact that researches enter the process of research from outside. Even when inside the research, the researcher stays outside it, and the vice versa. This passage and this tension is and ever continuing process. In DP’s words, “… the process of … ‘making’ is never ending” (Mukerji, 1945: 33). What, then, is ‘truth’ for DP? Is there any idea of ultimate truth? He writes:

It may not offer the truth. Truth is the concern of mystics and philosophers. Meanwhile, we may as well be occupied with the discipline which is most truthful to the wholeness and the dynamics of the objective human reality (Mukerji, 1946: 11, italics added by the author)

Most truthful to the wholeness — this particular expression sentence upsets/frustrates the postmodern mind. DP is talking about wholeness; does he talk about the classical-orthodox Marxist understanding of social totality? Does DP return to the old Marxist paradigm? The dominant academic norm in contemporary humanities is to focus on fragmentary truths. Disaggregation, fragmentation, contingency are fundamental signifiers which structure the given language game of humanities. DP violates the given structural norms of the academic principles. It is also important to point out that the objection against the monolithic truth has philosophical underpinnings. It has become clear that the claim of universal truth has been materialized through repressing (violence) the other truth rooms. The shift from universal truth to plural truths is a politico-philosophical necessity; it is not just fashionable endeavour. DP is not advocating the singular truth nor is he in favour of relativism of truths. He further problematises his position by inserting another proposition that brings to fore the question of dynamics of the objective human reality How to reconcile between taking side and being truthful to the wholeness? What is meant by being most truthful to the wholeness?
DP begins from a particular standpoint which is finite but it does not end in itself. It is a site which is always in the process of making. The process of making is not limited to some given alternatives. Something unthinkable might happen which is not considered as problem but comes up as a new possibility. The *dynamic of the objective human reality* is something which inaugurates the journey towards infinity while it is grounded in the specific materiality. Positivism imposes closure upon the process of becoming. It halts the journey towards infinity. Positivist philosophy restricts one from seeing beyond his/her boundary. S/he has come to believe that the boundary is the natural; that this is the ultimate truth of life. DP’s notion of dialectic, on the other hand, presumes that life never ends, it is ever dynamic. Positivist philosophy confines imagination; it limits the process of becoming. But this confinement or limitation is not acknowledged by positivism. It rather posits confinement as the universal truth. What appear as the universal truth is a particular fact but it is not disclosed by positivism. Hermeneutic philosophy does not hold the idea of universal truth. It posits that the truth is plural. It also criticizes the natural science impulse, which structures/informs positivist philosophy. It also criticizes the totalizing tendency of positivism. Hermeneutic philosophy posits the plurality of truths; it celebrates the shades of differences. The wholeness is sacrificed for the sake of differences. Positivism embraces the idea of the whole whereas the hermeneutic possesses the idea of the part. Part-Whole debates remain unresolved. DP’s rendition of the dialectic offers a way out to resolve this part-whole debate.

### 2.5 Conclusion

Two traditions of western sociology – Positivism and Hermeneutic – are brought under interrogation. DP highlights the problems within these two strands of thought. He analytically shows how working with these two schools will prove inadequate.
The points of departure are laid bare. Marxist dialectics is forwarded as the ‘third’ avenue. Dialectics for DP is not laws of Karma. He does not view dialectics in a teleological pattern with its reductive properties. D.P Mukerji’s interpretation of dialectic offers a way out of the entrenched part-whole debate. D.P Mukerji’s rendition of dialectic combines three principles: taking sides, dynamics of the objective human reality and most truthful to the wholeness. This research follows the dialectical method, as developed by D.P. Mukerji. Neither the positivist method (Capitalism as the law of the society) nor the hermeneutic strategy (valorising peasants’ lived experience) has been deployed in this research.