Practising Sociology through History

The Indian Experience – II

Part 1 of this paper considered those sociologists who used classical texts, i e, Indological sources, with a view to understanding contemporary social structures, institutions, and cultural practices. Part II looks at the work of later sociologists, who make up a different category: Those who take into account and narrate the historical background of the social reality that constitutes their research. This paper lays stress on the necessity of a "substantive" use of history for sociological purposes. It takes particular note of those sociologists who have used history rigorously to arrive at broader levels of explanation, generalisation and theoretical abstraction, in the process thereby ensuring a "completion" of their sociological mission. It is this process that needs to be further exploited by present day sociologists.

[This is the concluding part of the paper; the first part was published last week.]

D N Dhanagare

IV
Historical Studies of Social Movements

It has been observed that in studying social and protest movements in India, the historical approach has had a comparatively greater appeal among practitioners of sociology. In this context it is necessary to begin with a review of the work of A R Desai. Although a student of G S Ghurye, Desai was not in the least fascinated by Indology. In his frequently cited work, Desai (1982) has attempted a variant of Marxist analysis and interpretation of various socio-political and nationalist movements that gathered momentum, particularly after the spread of western education and the consequent rise of new social classes in India during the colonial period. Desai has perceptively applied categories of class analysis and the method of historical materialism[1] in understanding processes of socio-economic transformation in colonial India. He has not only highlighted contradictions inherent in the growth of parasitic capitalism in India but also revealed through historical assessment of the built-in deficiencies in the Indian national movement – deficiencies emanating from the class background of its leadership [Desai 1982: 384-86]. Diversity of class interests that surfaced in the form of the Indian National Congress did not, however, weaken the anti-imperialist freedom struggle. On the contrary, Desai argued that influx of new social forces built considerable pressure on its leadership to accommodate as many of them as possible by making serious comprises on the one hand and "brought dynamic energy to the movement" on the other hand. Nonetheless, the capitalist class – the Indian bourgeoisie – effectively controlled the rising aspirations of those forces that in turn were tied to foreign capitalism, i e, "metropolitan capitalism", to be precise (Ibid, pp 114-22). To Desai the class character of leadership explains why the process of nation-state formation remained deficient as well as incomplete in India. In his writings on rural transformation and agrarian struggles in India after independence, Desai extended similar explanation as to why most of the state-sponsored development programmes failed to bring about any substantive change in rural India [Desai 1979]

In analysing various socio-political movements A R Desai has used historical facts and narratives to delineate their key features and also brought his analysis of the past movements to bear upon the present day nature of the Indian state and to explain the failure of state – sponsored development programmes in rural India. It must, however, be noted that in his historical approach Desai has neither collected nor sifted primary historical sources as such, nor has he done any archival work himself. Quintessentially Desai relied on and consulted available studies on the Indian National movement as well as on socio-political reform movements. In trying sociological analysis through history, of course, there are no agreed norms, standards or rules regarding the extent to which a researcher has to, or ought to, consult primary sources. It rests, for all practical purposes, on a researcher's inclination, and accessibility to as well as familiarity with primary sources. Basically, sociologists who are inclined to use history, tend to use secondary sources that are known to be authentic and that they consider appropriate as well as adequate for their purpose. Naturally, those historians who believe that generalisations not founded on primary sources run the risk of being treated as untenable, think that such attempts often lack rigour. In evaluating historical analysis by sociologists, such historians generally act as "high priests" though in all fairness it must be admitted that at times their criticism of sociological work, based on historical method, is both fair and valid.

It may not be out of place to mention in this context that Desai's entire historical analysis and interpretation, both in style and content, has been greatly influenced partly by R Palme Dutt (1947), whose famous work, *India Today* was first written in the mid-1920s and partly by K S Shelvankar (1940). Those familiar with Palme Dutt's work would unfailingly notice that (a) Desai's line of substantive argument is considerably influenced by Palme Dutt's classic, and (b) that streaks of rhetoric occasionally punctuate Desai's style of writing as well as argumentation.

But Desai made no secret of his ideological predilections. Notwithstanding some rhetoric, it does not lessen the importance of Desai's contribution to historical sociology.

A note of I P Desai's study of the Vedchhi movement must be taken here for two reasons. First, this is a relatively less known work of I P Desai. Secondly, although it is an attempt to reconstruct historically the kind of response an adivasi area in Surat district in south Gujarat gave to Mahatma Gandhi's call for constructive work in the 1920s, Desai's primary source in this study was a series of personal interviews he conducted with a number of active workers of the movement. The study covers the life history of the Vedchhi movement from 1922 to 1967 and narrates the programmes undertaken by the Vedchhi ashram that had already initiated social reform activities, such as spread of literacy, prohibition and so on, before it was drawn into the wider political movement for independence under the leadership of Indian National Congress. Desai (1969: 1-78) has given the details of the activists, leadership, ideology of the movement, and how workers had adapted themselves to the new ethos and discipline introduced by the wider national movement. He has called his study a sociological one. Though the study involves historical approach and reconstruction of past events, Desai has not cited any sources – reports, documents, or published or unpublished material. Surprisingly his published monograph has no bibliography. Obviously, the principal source of information was the workers of the movement and interviews of some knowledgeable persons. In this sense it might be the unique use of historical method that relied solely on oral interviews.[2]

Among the first attempts to put together studies of social movements by various scholars was M S A Rao's two edited volumes (1978-79). Most essays in these volumes are based on systematic use of historical documents in reconstructing social movements. Among the contributions to these volumes, special mention must be made of Partha N Mukherji's study of Naxalite movement (Vol I, pp 17-90), Rajendra Singh's study of the peasant "Land Grab" movement in the Basti district in Uttar Pradesh (Vol I, pp 91-148), Chandrasekhar Bhat's study of"social reform movement among the Waddars" (Vol I, pp 169-89) and, Arun Bali's study of the Virsaiva movement (Vol II, pp 17-51). All these scholars have used historical documents to trace the systemic origins of disaffection or need for reform. Mukherji has used considerable amount of oral and archival sources to reveal the roots of Naxalbari movement in the zamindari and jotedari system of land control and land use in Bengal that has been the main source of discontent, which had developed historically but gathered momentum only in 1967 or so. Singh has probed into the caste and land control in Basti since 1810 onwards with the help of historical source material, and highlighted the consequences and political implications of the land-grab movement there. Comparatively Bhat's and Arun Bali's studies are based more on the use of secondary sources (i e, less of primary or archival sources), though all the studies have come out with historically developed sociological arguments.

Besides editing the two volumes containing a number of studies on social movements, M S A Rao has also done a pioneering study of two backward class movements – the SNDP movement in Kerala and the yadava movement in North India. In a comparative perspective, Rao (1979: 1-19) has examined the genesis, historical and structural conditions in which the two movements grew, their ideologies, organisation, leadership, social class base, and their internal dynamics – i e, ideological conflicts and rivalries, interaction with wider socio-political forces, and the two movements' impact – in terms of their social and cultural consequences. The SNDP movement represented aspirations of izhavas, a caste below the pollution line, while the yadavas are a non-brahman landowning middle caste. In the first case, Rao has historically traced the relative deprivation the izhavas experienced from the days of early British rule in Malabar. Rao then brings up the account of development of the movement upto the 1950s by which time the SNDP Yogam had succeeded in spreading its ideology among other castes with similar ritual status in different parts of Kerala, and thereby in creating an ethnic bloc as a powerful demand group in politics (Ibid, pp 102-22). Rao's study of the yadava movement also covers more or less the same life cycle of that movement. The only difference is that the Yadavas form a category that consists of several allied castes, are above the pollution line, and together constitute nearly one-tenth of India's total population. Tracing the history of identity formation of yadavas from the 1870s onwards when they began to adopt the Arya Samaj practices, Rao has focused his attention on showing how a micro-level caste identity got enlarged into a pan-Indian macro-level ethnic identity that helped the yadava movement to spread itself rapidly in Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Bihar, and Orissa on the one hand and to form quasi-political organisations in different parts of India on the other (Ibid, pp 123-47).

In presenting the historical account of both the movements through their different phases, early agitations, membership, and memoranda and petitions submitted to the government, Rao has done an intensive archival work himself, consulted all the relevant documents, official reports, censuses, and newspaper reports covering the span of about a century and a half beginning from the early nineteenth century for the SNDP movement and from the 1870s onwards for the yadavas movement (Ibid, pp 21-122, and pp 123-241). Rao has demonstrated how both these movements could bring about social transformation, in the sense that they led to formation of politically articulated ethnic blocs in Indian polity and thereby succeeded in creating space for backward classes within the power structure (Ibid, pp 249-56). Rao's study is thus an excellent demonstration of how comparative historical method could be deployed systematically to attempt a sociological analysis of social change brought about by two movements that had divergent social bases.

T K Oommen has studied the nature and dynamics of the agrarian movement in Kerala during the twentieth century. In this work Oommen' s focus is on understanding peasant struggles in Malabar as well as in Travancore-Cochin princely states that together formed the state of Kerala. Using largely secondary sources as also some of the accounts available in the vernacular (Malayalam), Oommen has attempted to reconstruct the initial process of mobilisation that gathered momentum when peasants were drawn into the anti-imperialist movement led by the Congress. His argument is that the anti-imperialist ethos of the early peasant movements gave way to new issues and more institutionalised forms of protests under the Leftist parties and their leadership [Oommen 1985: 35-53, 180-254]. However, it needs to be noted that in reconstructing the past, Oommen has depended heavily on secondary sources, barring some exceptions. This is quite evident in the end-notes that he

has added to each of his chapters. Similarly, studies on agrarian unrest in Thanjavur and on peasant organisations in south India by K C Alexander (1975, 1981) have used the historical mode of argumentation but these too are based largely on secondary sources.

In my work on social movements, I have covered studies of the moplahs in Malabar in 1921; peasant movements that were influenced partly by a local level leader like Baba Ramchandra in Faizabad district in U P in 1921-22, and partly by the Gandhian Congress and its ideology in the 1920s-30s (such as the Bardoli satyagraha of 1921 and 1928 in Gujarat and the "no-rent" campaign in UP in 1930-32); and case studies of the Tebhaga movement (1946-47) and the Telangana insurrection (1946-51), which were organised and launched as planned offensives against the state and class enemies by the Communist Party of India. In addition I have studied the left wing peasant organisations that were floated as "front organisations" during the 1920s-30s – their activities, leadership, ideology, and relationship with the mainstream nationalist movement from 1925 to 1947. My purpose was to historically reconstruct social origins of a given movement and to understand its lasting impact on agrarian power structure. In this comparative study I have located these movements in their agrarian structural settings, in an attempt to identify the social origins of peasant disaffection, whether in zamindari or in raiyyatwari areas, and then to highlight the issues raised by these movements, their ideology, leadership, and nature of the protest, and the grassroots participation in these movements. While my findings challenge the validity of the thesis on "passivity of the Indian peasant", propounded by Barrington Moore Jr, they also question the empirical validity of the "middle peasant thesis" proposed by Eric Wolf and Hamza Alavi. It has also been my endeavour to identify social forces that in the ultimate analysis determine the *form* of mobilisation and protest (see Dhanagare 1975: 17-112 and 1983: 213-27). In these studies I have extensively used primary sources, archival material – official reports, gazetteers, private papers – as well as some vernacular material, besides using authentic secondary source material. My submission is that this is the first ever attempt in comparative social history that aimed at contributing to the theoretical discourse on peasantry and peasant movements in Indian sociology.

An important piece of research by Hira Singh (1998) has provided us with an insightful view of the changing land relations between 'thikanedars' (landlords) and the kisans (peasants) in the context of princely rule in Rajasthan. This study historically traces the traditional code of honour that was accorded to the landowning class of aristocratic thikanedars within a feudalised agrarian setting. Singh reconstructs the entire process in which this class acquired a place of pre-eminence by virtue of its tight hold over economic and political power (ibid, pp 59-97). Hira Singh then draws our attention to the role and traditional rights of the kisans – their obligations (such as rent, cesses and unpaid 'begar', ie, compulsory labour) – that were the main forms of surplus extraction by the landlords, who imposed cultural restriction on peasant-tenants also (ibid, pp 100-124). In this fascinating historical account Hira Singh has not overlooked the responses of the durbar (ie, princely ruler) on the one hand and the paramount colonial power, i e, the British Raj, on the other to the dynamics of agrarian class relations. Finally, this study highlights the ways in which peasant movements in Rajasthan gathered momentum during the 1920s-40s and sought a complete transformation of the economic and political relations, and how with the help of some outside non-peasant leadership the peasant protests successfully acted as an agency that ultimately dissolved pre-capitalist feudal relations. Hira Singh has bestowed the transformative role on peasant movements in Rajasthan.

In this exercise Hira Singh has not only criticised the colonial, nationalist and neo-nationalist historiographers but has also revealed deficiencies of the neo-Marxist dependency theories: theories of world capitalist system as well as of the colonial mode of production, and last but not the least the school of subaltern historiography, for their failure to recognise the historic role of popular resistance, ie, of peasant movements, in liquidating feudal social formations in Rajasthan (ibid, pp 215-48). Two noteworthy features of Hira Singh's contribution to historical sociology must be acknowledged without the slightest hesitation: First, he has developed a sociological argument historically, by reconstructing the pre-colonial, pre-capitalist feudal social formations in a princely setting in Rajasthan by tapping and purposefully using enormous archival sources that were not hitherto consulted by any sociologist. He has then enriched this account by insights he gained through personal contacts during his fieldwork. Secondly, and more importantly, notwithstanding the streaks of theoretical nihilism in his argument, his study is an excellent example of an exercise in historical sociology that has made valuable contribution to theoretical discourse on both feudalism and social movements.

On similar lines Pushpendra Surana has done a study of the Bijolia movement that gathered momentum in the princely state of Mewar in Rajasthan during 1917-22. Although the agrarian social structure was feudal in Mewar, with thikanedars controlling land and exploiting kisans, Surana shows how cultural symbols of landlord domination were inverted by the kisans as a form of protest. When the Thikanedar of Bijolia died, quite contrary to the custom, the kisans went ahead with the Ram Nawami celebrations instead of observing mourning. In Bijolia, thus, religious sentiments were used successfully to mobilise peasants and to convey through the incident a message that the authority of Thikanedars no longer commanded any respect from the kisans [Surana 1983: 70-72].

K L Sharma (1986: 109-33) has also studied the specificity of the feudal social structure in the states of Rajputana, and peasant movements that gathered momentum against the absolutist form of feudalism in Rajasthan, first from 1913 to 1930 and second from 1930 to 1947. Sharma provides relevant historical details of the jagir system – castes and classes that occupied position in the agrarian structure in Rajasthan and the peasant protest movements, including the Bijolia kisan movement in Mewar. An insightful narrative then backs up his account of the way in which peasant movements in Rajasthan coincided with the national awakening for Indian independence in the first half of the twentieth century. Sharma argues that peasant movements were carried out largely by various organisations like Marwar Hitkari Sabha and Lok Parishad, different "Praja Mandals", Rajputana Madhya Bharat Sabha, Sewa Sangh, that were engaged in welfare activities simultaneously with the task of political awakening of the peasant masses (ibid, pp 122-33). However, although Sharma claims to have used "structural-historical perspective" his essay is based more on secondary sources, and less on the use of primary archival material as such.

P Radhakrishnan (1989) has historically examined the interplay between peasant struggles and important land reforms in Malabar (Kerala) from 1836 to 1982. In this study he has probed the pre-colonial social arrangements concerning land, their interface with the hierarchical caste structure, and the intricacies of tenurial statuses within the upper caste 'janmis' (landlords) dominated agrarian setting in Malabar (ibid, pp 20-67). Radhakrishnan argues that some commissions were appointed by the then British government that suggested certain changes and reforms in land related laws between the 1880s and 1920s, largely because the historical processes of spontaneous peasant struggles were building pressures on the pro-landlord government. Thus, Radhakrishnan offers a historical explanation of land reforms that not only redefined land rights but also provided tenurial security to middle level peasants and to the "tenants-at will". His study suggests that transformative legal reforms were necessitated by the persistent occurrence of the moplah rebellions in Malabar from the 1880s to 1920-21. Subsequently, the same pressure continued be built and sustained by mobilisation of peasant organisations under Communist leadership from 1957 to 1970 that finally resulted in the enactment of the Kerala Land Reforms (Amendment) Act of 1969 (ibid, pp 71-109, 110-47). In this study Radhakrishnan has used extensively official records and publications of the government of India and government of Madras, in addition to secondary sources. He has convincingly demonstrated that state initiatives for introducing liberal land reforms proved to be transformative in Malabar only because of the sustained peasant struggles. He has thus generated a historical explanation that meets Nagel's (1961:15-28) criteria of the "genetic explanation".[3]

As a major contribution to historical sociology, Ramchandra Guha's study of an ecological, conservationist protest movement has attracted considerable attention. In his well-known study of the famous environmental movement, called 'Chipko' (meaning, hug the trees in order to protect them), Guha has traced the roots of this popular peasant struggle to the century old massive deforestation in the Himalayan region. Guha claims, and very rightly so, that his study has brought an ecological dimension to the study of agrarian history on the one hand and the study of peasant resistance on the other. The initiative of the popular movement like the Chipko, according to Guha, is embedded in a long historical process that witnessed ecological degradation and rapid decline. Guha (1991: xii-xv) has explained the rise of the Chipko struggle in terms of the relationship between the colonial state and its forest policies that favoured commercial exploitation of forest resources to protect the interests of contractors and government officialdom. So frequent were such protests in Garhwal and Tehri regions of Uttarakhand that rebellions of peasants had become routinised as a custom (ibid, pp 62-98; also Guha and Gadgil 1989: pp 144-77). Though Guha's study is basically sociological in nature, he treats sociology of social movements as inseparable from social history. By social history, he implies history of changes in the agrarian landscape resulting from ecological changes introduced by the state. In his pioneering work on the historical analysis of Chipko as an ecological movement, Guha has consulted enormous archival sources: records, reports, private papers, and manuscripts. This study of the *Chipko* movement is perhaps one of the best examples of how historical sociology could be tried and brought to fruition in the form of a historical explanation that broadly conforms to Nagel's norms mentioned earlier.

A study of the Jharkhand movement in Bihar by K L Sharma also deserves mention here. After spelling out the numerous instances of tribal insurrections and revolts in the Chhotanagpur region of Bihar during the 18th and 19th centuries, Sharma has historically explained how British administrative initiatives as well as missionary activities, especially in the field of education, contributed to identity formation among tribals in Jhakhand. The account includes some details of the famous Birsa Munda movement, the Unnati Samaj, and the Adivasi Mahasabha; this narrative is concluded with observations on the formation of Jharkhand Mukti Morcha [Sharma 1986: 189-209]. However, this study is based on secondary sources and not on any primary archival sources.

V
Historical Studies of Agrarian Structure

Some scholars have systematically used the historical method to analyse changes in agrarian social structure to understand class formation process and production relations. However, not all of them necessarily link these changes with any peasant mobilisation or protest movement as such. For example, Virginius Xaxa has traced the entire history of evolution of agrarian structure and changing class relations in Jalpaiguri district of north Bengal from the 1860s when the first survey and settlement operations were conducted there. Xaxa brings out how the highly commercialised plantation economy existed there side by side with a purely traditional subsistence farm setting. Although market forces had deeply penetrated this region, they did not alter the subsistence agricultural setting; rather traders, moneylenders and new investors of capital in the region continued to rely on traditional forms of sharecropping and encouraged the leasing in and leasing out practices [Xaxa 1980: 62-82]. Xaxa has used this interesting historical account to establish a pattern of, what he called, "economic dualism", in which a dialectical relationship between plantation and subsistence economies got accommodated into each other, and this symbiosis was sustained despite the fact that the two economic systems have been drawn into global capitalist economy [Xaxa 1997: 59-133; 251-65]. Nonetheless one of the two settings developed faster while the other stagnated.[4] For this study Xaxa did considerable amount of archival research by consulting original survey and settlement reports, other official records available at the district headquarters, and the files and records of the tea plantation estates (from 1860s onwards) in his fieldwork area.

Likewise, M N Karna (1981: 184-206) has historically constructed the landlord dominated agrarian structure in the Madhubani subdivision of the Darbhanga district of north Bihar from the times of the permanent settlement (1793) onwards. He has traced the origins of the bataidari (sharecropping) arrangements that were used by landlords for extortion and exploitation of sharecroppers. Karna then explains the rise of the bataidars' struggle during 1965-75 by attributing it to the oppressive agrarian structure in Madhubani and to the politicisation of peasantry during 1920s-60s.[5] Quite on similar lines Partha N Mukherji and M Chattopadhyay (1981: 137-62) have probed the history of the evolution of agrarian structure in Birbhum district of West Bengal and the emergence of a large mass of

agricultural labourers in Birbhum, Naxalbari and Gopiballavapur areas, which subsequently became the locus of the Naxalite movement. Here again these scholars have explained the Naxalbari movement in terms of the growing proletarianisation in this region. In doing so they have used historical records and other archival material quite fruitfully.

A truly creative collaboration between history and sociology is seen in a study of rural elites and agrarian power structure in Basti district (UP) attempted by Rajendra Singh (1988). He has examined the dynamics of power and authority against the backdrop of the historically changing relationship between land, power and people. Rajendra Singh has combined the historical and contemporary data on rural elites and agrarian power structure. His historical analysis covers the period from 1801 to 1970 and brings out the changes during the pre-colonial and colonial periods in Basti district. Accepting the method of reputational identification of elites and leaders, he has investigated changing statuses in terms of land control, caste factor, and the critical differences between the established and the emerging elites and their social profiles [R Singh 1988: 11-16; 55-70, 78-187]. Singh has used historical data to show the changing sources of power and its correlates as well as to gain insights into persistence and change in institutions and everyday practices in the past as well as in contemporary society in Basti (ibid, pp 237-45). In this study Rajendra Singh has only obliquely referred to peasant revolts and movements (ibid, 191-95), but that was not his main thrust. This is yet another significant study that addresses a sociological research problem and uses history to that end purposefully. Rajendra Singh has apparently done considerable amount of archival work for this study, besides consulting a large number of secondary sources.

A study of the changing agrarian structure in the face of land reforms in Dakshina Kannada District in Karnataka by C B Damle focuses on the impact of the Karnataka Land Reforms Act 1961 (subsequently amended in 1974) in a commercial setting and a subsistence setting. Damle has attempted to blend a comparative-historical approach with a conventional diagnostic exploratory approach that has yielded fresh insights into the differential impact of the 1961 legislation and the 1974 amendments on class relations in villages from the commercial as well as subsistence settings he studied. He has highlighted the changing land market, the nature of tenancies, conditions of agricultural labourers, the attempts by landlords to evict their tenants before the implementation of the 1974 act, and rural credit in the commercial and subsistence settings [Damle 1993: 196-236]. He has shown how the impact of land reforms, of tenancy legislation in particular, varied not only between the two settings but also between the two villages selected by him from each setting, and he attributed the differences to the accessibility tenants and labourers had to the machinery of implementation of reforms [Damle 1989b: 83-97]. Again, for historical understanding of the development of commercial and subsistence agriculture in the D K district, Damle has consulted several reports and records of the government, gazetteers, census reports (from 1891 to 1961, statistical atlases from 1913 to 1965, and published and unpublished private papers [Damle 1989a: 1896-1906; and 1993: 245-46]. However, Damle's explanation of the differential impact of land reforms in the two settings is not derived entirely from the historical reconstruction of the contrasting agrarian structures in the plantation and the subsistence settings in that district.

Probing the connections between the changing agrarian structure and the growing indebtedness among farmers in Haryana, Surinder Jodhka (1995) has first traced the history of the pre-colonial jajmani (patron-client relationship) system that regulated exchange between landowning families (producers of goods) and service castes (i e, producers of services). While such an arrangement ensured distribution of surplus, it also guaranteed minimum subsistence to the poor in times of scarcity. Jodhka then looked at the changes in the social arrangements on land during the colonial period, especially highlighting the land settlement operations, commercialisation of agriculture, and increase in demand for rural credit – and all these leading to emergence of money lending activity that resulted in the growing land mortgages and alienation, and to leasing-in and leasing-out practices from 1870s to 1920s in the Haryana region [Jodhka 1995: 31-55]. Though Jodhka has used only secondary sources to construct this historical background, he found that background as crucial for understanding debt and dependency patterns even in the institutional credit network created under the state sponsored development programmes after independence. He has thus attempted to link the present with the past.

More recently, Parvez Abbasi (2005) has conducted an innovative study of the changing agrarian structure, i e, land control and its interface with caste and lineage structure in a predominantly Muslim village in Meerut district. Abbasi collected data by scanning the original historical records, viz, land accounts as entered in land records at the time of the first, second and third land settlement operations that were conducted in the years 1860, 1897 and 1936 respectively in village Hajipur that he studied in 1992. He then looked into the lineages and their genealogical charts and the landholdings owned by members of those lineages at the four points of time including his field study in 1992. His analysis has revealed that while some dominant lineages had not only continued their hold over agricultural land but also managed to acquire more during the last 135 years. Other lineages had lost their farmlands while a new lineage too had appeared in the village. Within the gaddi caste there have been ups and downs for different lineages. Hence, caste as such was no longer a homogenous category among Muslims. Rather, Abbasi has interpreted internal differentiation within a caste group in terms of landownership as an indication of emerging class structure in Hajipur [Abbasi 2005: 562-70]. This interesting piece of research has shown the enormous potential that historical documents, such as land settlement records, have in enriching our understanding of the changing agrarian structure and social relations in rural India. He has ably demonstrated that by using such records one can generate a convincing sociological analysis in a longitudinal research design.

VI
History in Studies on Caste and Caste Movements

First important research work in caste movements is that of Gail Omvedt. Her study of the non-brahman movement in Maharashtra is particularly noteworthy. In the early 1970s she undertook an extensive and exhaustive historical survey of the development of the non-brahman movement from the times of Mahatma Jotiba Phuley, including its ideological foundations

and social origins, of that movement from the mid-19th century onwards. Omvedt (1976: 1-14; pp 285-303) has argued that articulations of identity in the bahujan samaj movement, led by Maratha and other non-brahmin castes in Maharashtra, were not only a form of protest against the exploitation of peasantry in rural economy but also a form of cultural revolt against the upper caste brahmin landowners throughout the colonial period, especially during the phase of the nationalist movement. Omvedt has used this argument subsequently as a device to understand and explain the contemporary dalit movements, or anti-caste struggles in India. She has also painted some of the new social movements (farmers', women's, and ecological and dalit movements) as the rise of alternative politics for "reinventing revolution" [Omvedt 1993: 257-319]. Though the dalit movement has been inspired mainly by Ambedkar's thought and ideological articulation, some of the dalit struggles have also been the outcome of agrarian distress being enmeshed with class struggles in different regions of India. Omvedt (1994: 336-41) has termed them as "unfinished revolution". Omvedt's ideological leanings are at times expressed in a rhetorical manner; that apart, in the present context it needs to be acknowledged that her studies demonstrate systematic use of historical source material to reconstruct the development of protest movements of lower castes in India, especially in Maharashtra. Historical sources used by Omvedt as her research material, particularly in her study of the non-brahman movement (Cultural Revolt), are simply enormous, and these have yielded rich analytical insights as reflected in her work.

Social protests of lower castes against the cultural hegemony of upper caste brahmins in Maharashtra have attracted attention of a senior sociologist like M S Gore nearly a decade and a half after Gail Omvedt's first path-breaking study was published. Gore has first probed the changes that had taken place during the 19th century as a result of the initiatives taken by the colonial rulers and the Christian missionaries, and that were entailed by expansion of modern education, trade and industry, because these were the principal sources of change [Gore 1989: 4-18]. He has then discussed the ideology, leadership, and nature of protests during two phases of the non-brahman movement: first, from the beginning of Mahatma Phule's Satyashodhak movement till the 1880s (ie, Mahatma Phule's times), and second, the 'Brahmanetar' (ie, non-brahman) phase in which the princely ruler of Kolhapur took over the leadership of the movement. In the second stage, the dominant maratha caste, joining hands with the non-Maratha middle castes of peasants, artisans and workers, turned the Satyashodhak Samaj into an anti-brahman movement (ibid, pp 18-78). Gore's main purpose in undertaking this study was to focus on the interface between social structure (ie, patterned behaviour) and the process of social movements. In attempting this sociological analysis, Gore has relied on secondary sources, mainly on writings of Dhananjay Keer, Rosalind O'Hanlon. Gail Omvedt, and Y D Phadke, and has not consulted primary sources himself. Nonetheless, he has developed a historico-sociological perspective in this study of a caste movement.

An important study of conflict between upper caste Hindu and Muslim zamindars and the low caste peasants (mostly yadavas, also known as gowalas, Ahirs, Kurmis and Keoris by Hetukar Jha (1977) deserves careful attention in this context. In the course of his archival work, Jha had come across repeated references to riots and conflicts between these interest groups with upper caste zamindars over five-year period (1921-25) in the government reports, available in political files in north Bihar districts. Jha consulted these archival papers to find out the causes of such conflicts. The most common explanation then advanced in sociological and anthropological literature was that such conflicts in rural India were a sequel to the process of sanskritisation[6] (footnote no 10). After probing into his historical documents and source material, Jha has pointed out that socio-economic oppression of the low caste peasants in general, and yadavas in particular, by the upper caste zamindars was truly the root cause of such repeated conflicts in the 1920s. Actually, the low caste peasants resorted to sanskritisation primarily to get rid of their socio-economic exploitation [Jha 1977: 554-56]. Thus, low caste peasants began wearing the sacred thread and refused to perform begari (ie, forced and unpaid labour) for zamindars as a form of protest against their oppression. Here is an excellent example of a sociological query into the factors underlying conflicts and tensions between castes during a certain historical period. Jha himself consulted all the relevant documents and archival sources to contradict the then well established thesis on sanskritisation [see Srinivas 1966: 1-45] and to show that vested interests of zamindars were primarily responsible for economic privations and exploitation of peasants that constituted the root cause of the conflicts in the early 1920s in north Bihar.

In another study Hetukar Jha has looked into the issue of cultural identity of Mithila region of the north Bihar districts. Two caste groups, viz, brahmans and kayasthas, who formed the Mithila Mahasabha in 1910, have been the main actors behind the identity politics there. These two emerged as the elite section pampered by the maharaja of Darbhanga [Jha 1980: 200-02]. Jha has explained the simultaneous rise of the elite castes and the maithili identity movement in terms of the great divide between masses of poor peasants, harijans, bonded labourers and other toiling masses on the one hand and interests of the two elite castes on the other. The gulf between the elites and the masses was institutionalised by certain historical practices of making "rent-free land grants", bestowing zamindari titles and privileges on the two upper castes, custom of slavery and special privileges for the elite castes in education (Ibid, pp 188-89). In this study, Jha has marshalled his evidence by perusing primary archival records of the Darbhanga Raj, survey and settlement reports, gazetteers of various districts of Bihar and Bengal, census reports, and several secondary sources.

Jha has done a similar exercise for understanding historically the abysmal conditions of the scheduled castes in Bihar and Jharkhand, where they have remained subjected to life of acute indignity, privation and socio-economic oppression. The colonial policy of protecting the interests of upper caste Hindus and absentee landlords (i e, zamindars), who were perceived by the British raj as its useful allies and collaborators, further intensified the miseries of the lower castes. Since independence, however, the state policy of social justice, protective discrimination, and state sponsored development programmes have played an instrumental role in sharpening the identity of scheduled castes, while the elite sections continued to hamper the development of masses [Jha 2000: 423-44]. In a more recently published article, Hetukar Jha (2005) has traced the historical roots of the present day tendency in Indian villages to use casteism, factionalism and amoral familism as petty means for acquiring positions of power and/or access to

in her study of the non-brahman movement (Cultural Revolt),

resources and to benefits of development programmes. Jha has observed that in the initial phase of the colonial rule, Indian village life was marked by self-sufficiency, relative autonomy in internal management, and effective regulatory mechanism for resolving disputes and conflicts. However, the community life gradually declined as new land settlement operations and revenue administration brought the peasant (i e, 'rayyats') in direct contact with the colonial state. Furthermore, monetisation of economy and commercialisation of agriculture gave rise to the class of moneylenders on the one hand and to growing indebtedness among peasants that led to massive alienation of land and consequently to depeasantisation on the other (ibid, pp 495-98). Moreover, the newly introduced British legal system was too formal and alien for the rural society to grasp. This resulted in increased court litigation and delayed justice. Finally, the British administrator tended to regard caste as the fundamental fact of Indian society and therefore a principal instrument of policy intervention. This was reflected in the way census operations, started in 1871-72, gave prominence to caste enumeration. Formation of various caste sabhas (associations) was a direct outcome of that policy. As caste interests began to be articulated in a narrow perspective, competition and conflicts between castes followed (Ibid, pp 499-500). Thus, Jha has explained the decline of village community as a function of the colonial legacy. Jha generates this historical explanation with the help of several authentic secondary sources.

There are a few studies of either castes or caste movements in which history is used only marginally for providing historical background of a contemporary movement or problem. Satish Kumar Sharma (1985: 56-77) in his study of relationship between the Arya Samaj and the untouchables in Punjab has provided a historical account of how the Arya Samaj was against the political movements of untouchables. It never encouraged any moves for separate identity and solidarity of dalits as it was interested primarily in preventing estrangement of the untouchables from the mainstream Hindu society. A part of Sharma's study involved ascertaining socio-economic conditions of cases that had joined Arya Samaj, their causes for joining the Samaj, and its impact on their social status. One of the important conclusions of this study is that the 'shuddhi' (purification) movement did not have much success in Punjab. However, one does not find in the historical background any traces of "why this should happen". Similarly, a study of Dalit Panther movement by Lata Murugkar (1991: 1-11) has given a brief historical background of the movement but one does not find any meaningful linkages between this historical background and the internal factionalism and rivalries among leadership of various factions on which she has focused her attention. In contrast, Jogdand in his study of the dalit movement in Maharahstra has used historical sources for constructing social reform movements in Maharashtra and for critically assessing their impact on the formative process of the dalit movement both before and after Ambedkar [Jogdand 1991: 22-96]. Here again the conclusion is that the dalit movement in post-Ambedkar period turned to a kind of radical activism, but "why" despite the initial impact of the legacy of social reform in Maharashtra, the dalit movement turned to militancy has not been explained. Use of history in all the three studies thus borders on nominalism, if not ritualism, because its purpose seems to be restricted to providing background information only.

VII
Studies of Industrial/Urban Settings

Harish Doshi has done one of the first studies on industrial cities in which historical background has been used to show a meaningful relationship between a traditional neighbourhood organisation and challenges of modern industrialisation. He has briefly narrated the history of the growth of the textile sector, i e, cotton mills, in Ahmedabad city from 1861 to 1961. Its concomitants such as in-migration of labour force, population growth at a phenomenal rate and high density of population in old parts of the city [Doshi 1968: 23-24] posed serious challenges before the close-knit neighbourhood organisations called 'pols'. Under the pressure of industrialisation the pols, that Doshi studied, showed the capacity to survive by continuing to provide security and basic civic amenities to its inhabitants and also to face the challenges by marginally changing its traditional rules and practices [Doshi 1974]. However, Doshi's emphasis was more on presenting the ethnology of pols and less on tracing the history of its development, although the theme had potential to offer explanation of the changing function of a traditional institution in a rapidly changing industrial city.

A study of Shiv Sena in Bombay by Dipankar Gupta must be mentioned in this discussion for two reasons. First, Shiv Sena was established in 1966 and from its very inception Gupta has observed various stages of its development (between 1966 and 1974) until he concluded his fieldwork [Gupta 1982: vii-viii]. In a sense it was a study of an ongoing movement that was a source of sensational news almost everyday. Secondly, he has looked into the causes of formation of Shiv Sena in the 1960s, such as "increasing unemployment and a growing sense of deprivation among the lower and middle classes in Bombay, resulting from contradictions inherent in the economic structure characterised by dependent capitalism and nature of industrialisation in India, particularly in Bombay metropolis, which discouraged employment but fostered in-migration to the city" (Ibid, pp 52-58). Gupta goes into the political history, ideological currents and party politics in Maharashtra, particularly shortly before and after its formation as a separate state following the massive agitation of the Samyukta Maharashtra Samiti in the 1950s (Ibid, pp 39-48). However, this historical account, which is characteristically brief, seems to have very little bearing on the conclusions of the study (Ibid, pp185-88).[7]

In a study of Ahmedabad textile industry that focuses attention on the capital-labour relationship during the 1920s-30s, Sujata Patel has traced the history of the system of trading and marketing in textiles to the institution of "pedhis" in Gujarat. This institution handled such activities ranging from export and import of textiles and moneylending to some kind of organic coordination between merchants and artisans who were organised in trade guilds since the early 16th century. The guild organisation in Gujarat was strong enough to facilitate collective political action of artisans and workers against merchants when required. Over the years, in Ahmedabad a system was then evolved to resolve disputes through arbitration by the 'nagarsheth' [Patel 1987: 13-14]. This unique system of dispute settlement in the Ahmedabad textile sector in a sense created space for Mahatma Gandhi to effectively unite capital and labour in taking stance against British colonialism. In turn, Gandhi could institutionalise this relationship between capital and labour in such a manner that necessarily replaced encounters

and confrontations by peace and capital-labour collaboration. Thereby, Gandhi could bring them both to support the nationalist movement (Ibid, pp 30-110). For this important study Patel did the entire archival work all by herself. She consulted official reports of the federal and provincial governments, gazetteers, reports of commissions of inquiry and of tariff and textile boards, proceedings of legislative councils and assembly, and also looked into unpublished documents, what, in historical method, are referred to as "primary sources" (Ibid, pp 153-54). In addition, she has gathered valuable insightful data through interviews with important political and business personalities.

Patel's study is an ideal case that fits into what is broadly termed as "historical sociology" because the question she has raised regarding the relationship between capital and labour in Gujarat at a certain historical juncture is basically sociological. Furthermore, by deploying the method of historical analysis Patel has established the fact that contemporary reality of unique relationship of two classes, that otherwise had had antagonistic class interests, had its roots in the 16th century institution of dispute settlement in Gujarat. In her subsequent study of AMUL, a project of the Kheda District Milk Producers' Cooperative known as the "Anand Pattern", Patel (1990: 27-56) has attempted a socio-historical analysis of the developments in the political economy of the 'charotar' (central Gujarat) region that led to the transformation of a milk cooperative into a giant corporate establishment (i e, Amul) under state patronage. In yet another study of corporatism in Ahmedabad textile industry, Patel (2002) has argued that the Gandhian ideology of corporatism initially helped workers in securing better wages and more congenial working conditions, and in getting enacted certain legislations favouring protection of workers' interests as well as the interests of textile industrialists. However, through Gandhian ideology of corporatism both classes came to be co-opted in the politics of the nationalist movement, then led by the Indian National Congress. In the post-1947 scenario subsequently the Gandhian variety of corporatism became state corporatism that, ironically, fettered the textile workers in particular [Patel 2002: 103-13]. Here Patel has attempted to build a historical argument to test the validity of the theory of corporatism in general and European syndicalism in particular and to show how the Gandhian and European corporatist ideologies were quintessentially different.[8]

D Parthasarathy in his study (1997) of collective violence in Vijaywada – a provincial city, has extensively used demographic history of the city to depict its changing social composition, evolution, and the changing statuses of various caste groups – their migration and their shifting occupational patterns from 1871 to 1991. Based on this historical profile of the city, Parthasarathy (1997: 18-83) shows how demographic, social and political pressures drew the rich peasant class to the cities, how their participation in the changing urban-industrial economy was influenced by their rural origins. Keeping the power base of the dominant classes in the rural hinterland intact, rich peasants often resorted to violence as a means of reprisals, to settle old scores. Thus, rivalries inherited from the rural settings and carried over to the new urban-industrial setting drew the contours of collective violence in the city. Hence, far from being spontaneous and irrational, urban collective violence, whether rioting, arson, or gangsterism, over half a century has been an instrument of hegemonic assertion of dominant classes in Vijaywada (Ibid, pp 123-69). While Parthasarathy does not attempt to reconstruct any past events, he has established historical links between evolution of a city's social structure, patterns of urban land use, and emergence of urban slums (particularly after 1967) on the one hand and collective violence on the other. In doing so, he has used demographic history, caste and ethnographic data as also migration and occupational data covering the span of over a century.

Before concluding this somewhat exhaustive review of the use of history in sociological work in India, it is necessary to mention two studies that are significant and yet quite different in the sense that they do not fit either into studies of movements or agrarian studies, or studies of caste or caste conflict per se. In a major research work on B R Ambedkar's political and social thought, M S Gore has looked into the entire history of evolution of Ambedkar's ideology and its development, through stages of various protest movements he launched from the 1920s onwards, and through the phase of Ambedkar's active involvement in the nationalist movement and in the parleys between Gandhi and Indian National Congress on one side and the imperialists on the other [Gore 1993: 73-190]. In a sense, Gore's attempt was aimed at putting together Ambedkar's ideas on various issues from the standpoint of a leader and spokesperson of the downtrodden and how his ideological articulation then conditioned the development of the dalit protest movement in the post-1951 period (Ibid, pp 191-337]. Gore's study could as well be interpreted as an exercise in sociology of ideas as much as in sociology of a protest movement inspired by Ambedkar's ideology. In either case, his use of secondary historical sources is significant, and social construction of ideology in itself is a theme that is sociological in nature.

Somewhat on similar lines, Hetukar Jha has done a study in history of ideas in which he has elaborately focused on the historical significance of Vidyapati's discourse on 'purush' (man). He has attempted to reconstruct the 'image of man' as a poet-statesman, Vidyapati from Mithila, had posited it during the medieval period in Bihar. Vidyapati had propagated ideas of dharma in secular terms, emphasised on the irrelevance of caste, varna and 'kula' in a situation where manliness is put to the test in the face of internal strife and ideological confusion and crisis on the one hand, and the onslaught of the Islamic conquests and politico-religious power on the other [Jha 2002: 9-104]. In many ways Jha could have projected Vidyapati's discourse on man as a precursor of a contemporary theoretical discourse on "modernity" that has occupied centre stage in Indian sociology for considerable length of time. Though Jha has used history methodically in constructing Vidyapati's views, his overall concern remains confined at best to history of ideas. In substance, Jha has summarised or reinterpreted those ideas of Vidyapati on 'purushartha' (in contrast to what was presented in the Indian tradition) that, to him, have some contemporary relevance to the issues of national reconstruction and development.

Conclusions

While summing up this elaborate review it is necessary to highlight the main tendencies among historically oriented sociologists and the way they view the relevance of history in their sociological studies. The first category of sociologists consists of those who have used classical texts, i e, Indological sources,

in understanding contemporary social structures, institutions, statuses, roles, values, and cultural practices by tracing their origins to one or more Sanskrit texts and then reinterpreting or rationalising them in the present day context. In the second category we find those sociologists, not few in number, who narrate the historical background of social reality, either of the past or contemporary one, which they are researching for. In some cases such a historical account is given as a routine matter to assure readers that the relevant past has not been ignored. However, neither such a historical account forms a part of researcher's explanatory scheme nor is it integrated with their sociological analysis. In some cases, though, researchers do believe that the historical background given in great detail deepens their understanding of the research problem or may help them to search appropriate answers to their research questions. In the second category, what is involved is mostly a *metaphoric* use of history.

What is, however, important is the *substantive* use of history for sociological purposes. Among Indian sociologists there are some who have used historical analysis and method substantively, in the sense that they have deployed it as an explanatory device, or to test a hypothesis. It is immaterial whether they have used primary archival sources or secondary sources. A R Desai, Yogendra Singh, P C Joshi and a few others have attempted macro-analytical exercises primarily with the help of reliable secondary source material. Ramkrishna Mukherjee, however, used both. Significantly enough quite a few Indian sociologists have tried their hand at historical reconstruction by using or consulting primary archival sources that they thought was necessary for their sociological inquiry. They include A M Shah, M S A Rao, Anand Chakravarti, D N Dhanagare, Ramachandra Guha, Hetukar Jha, Gail Omvedt, Sharit Bhowmik, Sujata Patel, P Radhakrishnan, Hira Singh, and Rajendra Singh.[9] It is even more heartening to see that some of the younger sociologists, like P Abbasi, C B Damle, Surinder Jodhka, D Parthasarathy, Virginius Xaxa and a few others have further enriched this tradition of substantive use of history in their sociological studies. All of them have displayed remarkable sense of commitment and discipline in using history rigorously to arrive at broader level of explanation, generalisation and theoretical abstraction wherever possible without which, they thought, their sociological mission would have remained incomplete.

My argument is that it is the potential of the substantive use of history, whether for a macro or for a micro-analysis, whether by consulting secondary or primary archival sources, that needs to be fully exploited further by Indian sociologists. Over three decades ago A M Shah (1974: 454) had suggested that "sociologists should not depend entirely on historians for historical knowledge but should themselves go into historical research". His suggestion has not been taken seriously enough.[10] It is high time that Indian sociologists rediscover the intrinsic value of history and historical method by creatively using it in their researches and by using them in their pedagogic practices. EPW

Email: ddhanagare@hotmail.com

Notes

[The first draft of the manuscript of this was presented at the Special Session on: 'Perspectives and Challenges in Indian Sociology' organised at the XV World Congress of Sociology, held at Brisbane (Australia) on July 7-12, 2002. Comments by T K Oommen, D Sundaram and Sujata Patel on my presentation were quite useful. A fully developed paper, emerging out of the first draft, was subsequently presented at the Centre for Social Studies, Surat as the 18th I P Desai Memorial Lecture. It was presided over by A M Shah. While finalising this paper for publication, I have richly benefited from some of the points he raised in his closing remarks that were not only pertinent but also perceptive. My thanks are due to all of them. However, usual disclaimer applies.]

1 For the difference between 'dialectical materialism' and 'historical materialism', see Aron (1968: 119, 154-57) and Lefebvre (1970: 60-100).

2 In fact I P Desai (1969: Appendix, 1-6) has given a separate note on method of work at the Vedchhi ashram, but he has not revealed the source material used for his study. Obviously, his major source was personal interviews with a large number of activists of the movement and some knowledgeable people.

3 K L Sharma has also studied and written on land tenure systems, land reforms and social change in Rajasthan [Sharma 1986: 139-76]. However, unlike Radhakrishnan he does not relate these changes to peasant movements in Rajasthan. Sharma's essay aims at contributing to the famous debate on 'feudalism, semi-feudalism and capitalism in Indian agriculture' only.

4 The first such study of class formation in tea plantation estate in the Dooars during 1874-1947 was undertaken by S K Bhowmik (1981: 38-79). His emphasis was more on understanding the plantation system, the nature of work and wages of labour, and the role of trade union movement in the 1970s. Nevertheless, he has carefully traced the present day problems of plantation labour to the very origins of the system of recruitment of plantation labour force and the concomitant migration of tribal labour in the north Bengal region. Bhowmik has observed that the predicament of the tea garden worker from the very beginning of plantation was linked to the manner in which the plantation economy in India was tagged to international capitalist system (Ibid, pp 49-56).

5 Anand Chakravarti (1986) has done a somewhat similar study, of the sharecroppers' struggle that he has described as "an unfinished struggle". It also ties well with his subsequent study [Chakravarti 2001, already discussed] in which he has explained why till about 1979-80 bataidars and agricultural labourers could not resist landlords' oppression by launching a struggle.

6 M N Srinivas has, however, argued that in the Sanskritisation process members of lower castes emulate the life style, behaviour pattern, cultural practices, dress, food habits and norms and values of members of the dominant castes primarily to claim higher status and greater acceptability from upper castes. For details on the concept of Sanskritisation [see Srinivas 1966: 1-45].

7 For instance, when Dipankar Gupta started his study of the Shiv Sena movement in Maharashtra in the 1970s it was still an ongoing movement. Even then it would have been fruitful for him had he probed the historical background of the making of the Shiv Sena leader Bal Thackeray, who has inherited certain political ideas and social attitudes from his distinguished father Prabodhankar Thakare, whose writings in the 1920s and 1930s provide enough insights into the ideological eclecticism that appears to be the hallmark of Shiv Sena today. See, for example, D Kamble (2003: 50-86, 102-76). However, it is not suggested here that all studies of social movements must necessarily use historical method, or consult historical records in great depth. This is particularly true for studies of ongoing movements that may not have roots in the past. Even when a researcher has looked into historical background, it may or may not have any bearing on a contemporary movement and his/her conclusions about it.

8 Sujata Patel (2000: 288-321) has also attempted a rigorous historical construction and reconstruction of women in Mahatma Gandhi's thought and action (or strategy) that steered the Indian national movement. However, to us this work belongs to the field of 'Women's studies or gender studies' in which several other scholars across different disciplines have done studies using history. They include Neera Desai, Bina Agarwal, Malvika Karlekar, Chhaya Datar, Maithreyee Krishna Raj, Meera Kosambi, Prem Choudhary, Vidyut Bhagwat and others. It was not possible to review them all within the scope of this paper.

9 One more Indian sociologist, Satish Saberwal has consistently and creatively engaged himself with history in understanding the historical development of caste mobility, communalism, and Hindu-Muslim divided identities over centuries. For reasons of space, however, I could not delve on his contribution to historical sociology at some length but

that does not lessen its importance. Despite his somewhat unhappy experience of working in a major history centre at JNU, Saberwal (2000: 31-32) recommends 'sociologists to have a bifocal vision that commands a generalised insight one gains from sociology and also a familiarity with historical junctures that have shaped and reshaped social processes through time'.

10 Quite a few younger generation sociologists in India have been turning to history in a meaningful way. Works of some of them have been reviewed in this paper. However, those whose studies could not be discussed here are Nandini Sundar (1997, 2005), Rowena Robinson (2003) and Debal K SinghaRoy (1992, 2004). Of course, not every one of them has used historical approach with the same intention and rigour. However, their writings are pointers to a promising future that historical sociology has in India.

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