



## **ACADEMIC DEPENDENCY ON WESTERN DISCIPLINARY KNOWLEDGE AND CAPTIVE MIND AMONG SOUTH ASIAN SOCIOLOGISTS: A CRITIQUE**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This paper examines how academic dependency of South Asia on the West has resulted in what has been termed 'captive mind', and its impact on the knowledge production process of South Asia. To this end, it observes that the relationship between Western centres of Social Science teaching and learning vs. those of the global South, in particular Asia, is an unequal one that stems from the colonial past, leading to the treatment of Western methods and types of knowledge production as superior and therefore worthy of imitation. The application of American and European methods of studying the Social Sciences to Asian settings without due adaptation, it argues, has rendered South Asian Sociology largely incapable of generating original knowledge to contribute to the growth of an emancipatory sociological imagination that will function for the benefit of the populace. Therefore it appeals to South Asian Sociologists – and other Social Scientists – to abandon the practice of studying regional social institutions as if these are exotic phenomena, practices, norms and ritual, and evolve their disciplinary framework in more critical, creative, and relevant ways.

**Keywords:** Academic Dependency, Sociology in South Asia, Colonialism and Western Knowledge, Sociology & Global Division of Labour, Relevance of Western Social Science

### **INTRODUCTION**

Over the recent decades, sociologists including from South Asia have raised concerns about the validity of the Social Sciences inherited from the West or metropolis located in the

global North to comprehend social realities in the global South. They have pointed out that the relationship between Western centres of Social Science teaching and learning vs. those of the global South, in particular Asia, is an unequal one. This inequality is reflected in the way Sociology is practiced in Asia in its diverse forms such as teaching, research,

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publications, and knowledge construction in general. "Social scientists working in the periphery have a strong orientation to the world centres of their disciplines in the metropole" (Connell 2007, p. 217) where there is a concentration of a technically trained workforce working in universities, corporations and the state. "The practices of connection include academic travel, patronage and sponsorship, publication, and the formation of research networks" (p. 218). As such "ideas, terminology and research technologies get exported from the metropole to the periphery" (p. 218).

Alatas (2006) has explored this subject in detail from a political economic perspective. According to him, the relationship between the Social Sciences in the West and the Third World is an unequal one. To understand it, one has to scrutinize the global division of labour in the Social Sciences (p. 60-61). Alatas argues that the global division of labour in the Social Sciences plays a significant role in maintaining structures of academic dependency (p. 57). While noting that imperialist relations in the Social Sciences parallel those in the international political economy, he closely looks at academic dependency, academic imperialism and the global division of labour and states that "the development and expansion of social science in developing societies is influenced by and is a reflection of its development in the United States, and to a lesser extent in Great Britain, France, Germany and Japan" (p. 60)<sup>1</sup>. His delineation of the subject includes various forms of academic dependence including ideas, media, technology, aid for research, and investment in education (p. 61-70).

1. Alatas considers the academe as imperialist "(t)o the extent that the control and management of the colonized required the cultivation and application of various disciplines such as history, linguistics, geography, economics, sociology and anthropology in the colonies" (2006, p. 58).

Several social scientists from South Asian countries have also highlighted the features of academic dependency in the Social Sciences in general and Sociology in particular. According to Sabir, "it is widely argued by the region's sociologists and others that an academic dependency has been created in the relationship between South Asian sociology scholars/scholarship and those from the Euro-American centres of learning and 'Western' sociology" (2010, p. 36). Patel describes how functionalist sociological language and knowledge, in particular modernization theory, were diffused from the US to the rest of the world, and Sociology was institutionalised in former colonies legitimizing the colonial project of modernity and creating academic dependency (2006, p. 387-388). This situation of dependency has been described by the term 'captive mind'. Perpetuation of colonial knowledge is the result of captive mind. "Even an intellectually lively society like India has generally failed to indigenize the social sciences" (Alatas 2006, p. 24)<sup>2</sup>.

The captive mind means the application of American and European methods of studying the Social Sciences to Asian settings "without the appropriate adaptation of imported ideas and techniques" (Alatas 2006, p. 30). This kind of uncritical imitation of Western Social Science is described by Said Hussein Alatas as a sign of continuing intellectual domination. It "pervades all levels of scientific enterprise including problem-setting, analysis, abstraction, generalization, conceptualization, description, explanation, and interpretation" (S.H. Alatas 1972a, p. 9-10 as cited in Alatas 2006, p. 30).

2. However, "not all the woes of social sciences in Asia can be blamed on academic dependency" (Alatas 2006, p. 31) as some of the problems faced by the Social Sciences are management and administration related.

In this paper, I examine this theme in more detail in the context of South Asia based on a review of relevant literature.

### **ACADEMIC DEPENDENCE IN SOUTHASIAN COUNTRY CONTEXTS**

South Asian sociologists have observed the existence of academic dependency in Sociology in their respective countries. For example, Sabir states that “the historical factors that initially imposed academic dependency on the US by Pakistani Sociologists and their isolation from its own endogenous scientifically valid knowledge production process raise some serious concerns for the investigators of sociology of sociology and of the sociology of knowledge” (2010, p. 36). He considers the Pakistan-US academic relationship as creating a vicious cycle of intellectual dependency. Introducing Sociology to Pakistan, the United States played a key role in the early stage of dependency (Sabir 2010, p. 12-13). According to him,

The US departure from Pakistan in the late 1960s and early 1970s marked a dividing line between the era of the dependent, but progressing, sociology and the era of an isolated and stagnated sociology. It is essential to emphasize that with the departure of the US from Pakistan, the country became totally removed epistemologically, conceptually and cognitively from the evolution of sociology in the rest of the world, yet it carried on in the spirit of inertia (p. 29).

Pakistani sociologists have contributed “to the international division of scientific labour as the producers of data” (Sabir 2010, p. 29). Furthermore, “more sociological studies on Pakistan have been conducted by European and American scholars than by Pakistanis

themselves” (p. 29).

On the issue of academic dependency, Sabir does not advocate termination of “cooperation in the form of an international division of scientific labor ... in order to give birth to a genuine and culturally imbedded intellect. Doing such would likely push them into quasi-isolation, as is evident from the case of Pakistan” (2010, p. 36). Nor does he advocate “covert Western dependency in the knowledge production process” (p. 36). Thus in countries like Pakistan, as long as sociologists remain in parasitic relation with the developed world, or isolated from the international scientific community and its knowledge production process, Sabir believes captive minds would prevail (p. 37).

Sociologists have commented on the fact that the ‘de-linking’ of the global and the national to the local becomes clear from a look at the ‘state of sociology’ writings in Nepal. “Most such writings fail to see the multiple levels of embeddedness involved in the evolution of sociology and social anthropology in Nepal” (Misra 2005, p. 101) . According to Misra, the Bhattachan review (1987; 1997) showed that disciplinary progress is very slow; even after five decades there has been no original theoretical contribution; Sociologists are preoccupied with ‘filling in’. Instead Misra argues that sociologists should focus on local experiences; synthesize the Western and the indigenous; and equality and social justice should become key themes (Mishra 2005, p. 112). These observations and comments show that Sociology in Nepal has been inward looking in its focus, leading to disciplinary parochialism.

Patel discusses how the British produced the Indian tradition and the theory of Aryan invasion of India creating a basic division of groups into castes and tribes - though castes were only one among many groups – and

how the village was given a boundedness. She explains how the colonial conquest was sustained by cultural techniques of rule (2006, p. 383-386). According to her, Indian students were taught that their own society was traditional and it was moving towards modernity. Traditional structures were introduced as religion, caste, kinship, and family. Students were taught that India “would mirror the process as they occurred in the West” (p. 388). Thus she shows the pervasive nature of Western anthropological and Social Science designs in terms of power and control. In a recent article she explores how Eurocentrism is not merely represented in sociological theories and methods, but also enmeshed in practices and sites that administer and govern sociological knowledge, such as journals and curricula (Patel 2014).

Referring to the massive growth of Sociology teaching in India since its inception in 1919, Patel (2010, p. 280-291) examines the historical evolution of the discipline in India under four headings. She critically reviews the work of Ghurye whose approach was indological (the study of scriptures) and empiricist; Srinivas who adopted a functionalist ethnographic approach to village studies (emphasizing organic integration of castes and naturalizing Indian tradition, rather than taking tradition as constructed by colonial modernity); Desai’s work that adopted a Marxist approach focusing on state, class and power; and the Lucknow framework that focused on social practice, and the manner in which higher education expanded to the provinces in the 1960s. The latter development has downgraded Sociology teaching to the lowest common denominator and a soft, commonsensical subject, making it a challenge facing Sociology practice in India. The second challenge relates to the demands from below in the

1970s and 1980s in the form of various social movements from agriculture, industrial, and urban sectors, as well as middle and lower castes. Some sociologists have used these voices from below to create new sociological traditions such as postcolonial, feminist, and Dalit studies. However, Patel states that they have not questioned the episteme of colonial modernity, universalisation of history, scientific reasoning, and the binaries created by the former. She argues that “the discipline’s identity in colonial discourses and its contemporary routinization in terms of practices of transmission are organically related” (2010, p. 280-281).

Writing on the deteriorating academic standards in the Social Sciences and the conditions responsible in the Sri Lankan context, Perera states that the intellectual set up in university departments teaching Sociology and Anthropology are anti-intellectual and mediocre. The disciplines have lost their intellectual edge in the country and no serious debate has occurred about the contemporary relevance of Sociology and Anthropology or other pertinent issues such as issues of subjectivity vs. objectivity, and ethnography vs. theory. In general, regular exchange of views and the tolerance of plurality of ideas are absent in the Social Sciences (2012, p. 96).

According to Hettige, “(t)he hierarchical relationship between the Western centres of knowledge production on the one hand and academic peripheries in the developing world on the other is often reproduced within each peripheral country as well” (2010, p. 302). For example, “marginalized scholars have no familiarity with the developments in international sociology and become increasingly insular in orientation” (p. 301). Many use outdated textbooks. What students receive is “an incoherent amalgam of material

drawn from a few sources” (p. 302).

He explains why there has been very little space for an independent and critical sociological tradition to emerge in Sri Lanka in the context of deteriorating academic standards, and for a trend toward nativism to emerge. Even after sixty years of independence,

Nationalist forces command a pervasive influence on educational institutions, including universities. Most university students remain largely cut off from Western, liberal academic traditions. With most teachers being the product of local universities, school children in general are not exposed to secular, liberal ideas emanating from dominant social science traditions. Those who have internalized such ideas constitute a small minority; while nativistic ideas linked to identity, nation-state, history, development, etc., dominate the public discourse, politics, and inter-group relations alike (Hettige 2010, p. 302).

Goonatilake (2001) provides a critique of anthropological work on Sri Lanka in the 1970s and 1980s founded on Western knowledge and philosophy by analyzing the work of four selected anthropologists. While being critical of Western Social Science in general, he explains how Buddhism, the main religion in Sri Lanka, provides a more appropriate epistemological framework to understand and explain contemporary human and social problems.

These reviews about the state of Sociology in Sri Lanka emphasize more on the negative consequences of the delinking of the present generation of sociologists from the global sociological discourse than the dominance of Western Sociology and academic dependence on Western Social

Sciences. Unlike other sociologists in the region, Hettige or Perera do not provide a critique of Western modernity or colonial influence on the Social Sciences. Nor do they speak about captive mind among social scientists. The focus is on how sociology practices have degenerated in comparison to the benchmarks set by Western trained sociologists and anthropologists of the bygone era. On the contrary, Goonatilake’s (2001) work includes a critique of Western theoretical and epistemological domination in the reviewed anthropological writings dealing with Sri Lanka.

Writing about hybrid Sociology where theory and/or method come from one tradition and data come from another, Kais (2010) explores academic dependency, captive mind and the marginalized position of Sociology in colonized countries. Taking Bangladesh as an example, Kais characterizes the development of Sociology in Bangladesh as an example of borrowing from the West.

The lack of resources and facilities for research in universities and the involvement of academics in INGO-led research do not contribute to the production of Sociology knowledge or sociologists with analytical-critical thinking abilities and the capability to produce alternative theories and paradigms in social sciences (Kais 2010, p. 345). In this context, there is a tendency for academic dependency, and the “captive mind syndrome has even been institutionalized” (p. 348). According to him, for the Bangladeshi sociologists, it is practicable and labour saving “to simply borrow theories and concepts from Western sociology, applying them to the Bangladesh context by using methods innovated in the core countries” (p. 347). As an example of academic dependency he cites the practice of Bangladeshi sociologists preferring to publish in metropolitan journals.

According to Islam and Islam who review the crisis of Sociology in Bangladesh, sociologists “have concerned themselves little with theory and method” (2005, p. 382). In their view, “[t]he curricular history of sociology in Bangladesh shows how the sociological discourse in the country has remained ossified and ritualistic” (p. 385). They state that “Sociology has failed to develop a creative discursive tradition because of its imported origin and ... intellectual milieu of a rentier class” (p. 377, citing Aminul Islam 1999).

Moreover, “[s]ociological discourses in Bangladesh have largely been shaped by its peripheral socio-political structure, which has not been favourable to the discipline” (Islam and Islam 2005, p. 386). Sociologists in the country have taken no effort to “seriously examine the lack of a viable sociological tradition” (p. 387). Karim (2014) provides an account of the evolution of Anthropology in Bangladesh in relation to global links, with a focus on how it changed from being a philosophical-theoretical subject to an applied one. However, his account does not address academic dependency or captive mind as such.

According to Sabir, “inequalities, produced by today’s global division of labor in sociology, in relations between the knowledge producing countries and the recipient countries are maintained and even exacerbated by specific features of the current division of labor in global knowledge” (2010, p. 12). He observes a lack of productive relationships between Pakistani sociologists and their counterparts internationally except for a brief period during the discipline’s inception in the country. He asks as to why Sociology has not grown in Pakistan, and instead remained isolated from the knowledge production process. He examines historical and structural factors such as state policies, scarcity of resources and the

US role in introducing the discipline, as well as the role of English in finding answers. He examines Pakistani Sociology’s dependence on Western/American Sociology (p. 25-29) and observes that the US departure in the early 1970s led to a situation of isolation of Pakistani Sociology.

Sabir (2016) examines these themes further in a recently completed research dissertation. The main research question he examines is how Sociology as an institutionalized discipline in Pakistan has been shaped by different socio-political and historical contexts with a “particular focus on the way in which conceptions of social scientific knowledge and ideology have historically been constructed, normalized and reproduced” (p. 23). The dissertation explores the process of institutionalization of Sociology by viewing it principally as “created by Pak-US foreign policies, which have impacted upon the definition and development of academic sociology and its practice in the postcolonial Pakistan” (p. 23). Moreover, “[w]hile identifying the hegemony of US sociology and its continuity in the experience of Pakistani academic sociology, it endeavors to understand the trajectory of Pak-US political relationship and knowledge as a breeding source of dependency of the captive mind of the knowledge periphery (Pakistan) on the center (US) of ideas, on the medium of ideas (e.g. journals, conferences), on the technology of education, on financing the social research, and on educational infrastructure” (p. 23).

Sabir’s argument is that “Sociology in Pakistan was introduced as a developmental norm of the modernization project. It perpetuated the intellectual anomie by disconnecting the scholars from indigenous culture, native languages and their historical past” (p. 29). Indeed, this is an important argument that has relevance to other South Asian countries as

well.

## **REASONS FOR ACADEMIC DEPENDENCY: A SUMMARY**

According to the reviewed literature, several factors stand out as contributing factors to the academic dependency in South Asian Sociology. They are described below:

*Historical factor:* Sociology emerged in the European context and then expanded to the US. It was introduced to South Asia during the colonial period by Western academics and those who were trained in the West with the use of Western theories, perspectives, methods of research, and resources. They continued in this role until brain drain started occurring in these countries. Ex: Pakistan in the 1960s and Sri Lanka in the 1970s.

*Teaching and Pedagogical factors such as syllabi and textbooks:* The younger generation of sociologists continue to use 'old Sociology' notes and text books in teaching almost in dogmatic fashion. Most of the time the reason is that text books produced in Western countries have become expensive. Local textbooks produced by these sociologists then naturally constitute a reproduction of old knowledge rather than creating innovative and original concepts, theories or perspectives suitable for the South Asian context.

*Language factor:* When the language of instruction changed from English to vernacular, sociologists not only continued the teaching of old Sociology as described above, but also were unable to connect with global Sociology and its developments due to the English language deficiency and lack of familiarity with Sociology jargon. Additionally, lack of awareness of new material coming from the West via journals and latest textbooks also hindered any prospects of meaningful engagement with the global literature. As a result, they simply continue imitative forms of teaching instead of developing critical forms.

*Research factor:* Instead of engaging in theory production, fresh imaginative or reflective work, sociologists have started embracing, due mostly to financial incentives, NGO funded development research as consultants, and/or state funded research oriented to national development that produce reports based on surveys whose design and purpose are developed in Europe or USA.

*Institutional factor:* Institutions in peripheral countries lack the necessary leadership and role models to inspire new generations of sociologists to engage in intellectual work suitable for the region. Political, cultural, and regional factors have been instrumental in promoting this mediocrity. In this context, sociologists seem to be ignoring their own intellectual traditions, and also at the same time failing to constructively engage with global developments.

*Disciplinary and epistemological factor:* The training of sociologists has been largely Eurocentric whose roots can be traced back to European and American contexts. Yet institutional and pedagogical practices in South Asian countries that were designed by colonial powers, were calculated to promote such roots as part of the colonialist-modernist agenda. These practices then continued into the nationalistic and post nationalist phases reproducing captive minds within disciplinary practice.

## **WESTERN SOCIAL SCIENCE THEORY'S IRRELEVANCE TO SOUTH ASIA**

Alatas (2006, p. 133-135) has elaborated several aspects of Western theory's irrelevance to the Asian context by citing the following points:

*Lack of Originality:* Captive mind is characterized by a way of thinking dominated by Western thought. Furthermore, Asian sociologists assimilate Western knowledge uncritically. This is apparent in the way

teaching and research are conducted. The knowledge produced by such academics would be of little relevance to their local contexts.

*Discord between assumptions and reality:* Misplaced abstraction, misinterpretation of data, and erroneous conception of problems are all consequences of this. One question arising here is whether social scientists formulate their assumptions based on Western literature and theory or the empirical reality at hand?

*Inapplicability of theories, concepts or models:* Here the practice of reproducing age-old theories, concepts and models particularly in teaching without regard to their applicability needs to be revisited and revised.

*Alienation:* Refers to the alienation of the Social Sciences from their surroundings. This is a crucial factor noted by sociologists in Asia and elsewhere in the global South. Reliance on theories, concepts and methods imported from the global North/ West to Asian Sociology practice with no direct relevance to the context has resulted in this crisis, and constitutes a serious concern among some sociologists in South Asia.

*Redundancy:* Uncritical imitation of redundant propositions and the propensity to assimilate verbal inventions that do not represent new ideas is a highly regrettable outcome impacting on teaching and thwarting innovation.

*Mystification:* The use of jargon to mystify knowledge does not add to knowledge. Western/English terminology used in sociology contributes to this. The vernacular equivalents for these English terms confuse students and other readers even more than the original terms.

*Mediocrity:* Alatas has defined this problem as “shallow social science that nevertheless

gains a respectability in the non-Western out backs” (2006, p. 135). The imitative nature of Sociology taught in South Asian universities contributes to the lack of interest in finding concepts, theories, models and perspectives stemming from, and more relevant to the local context.

The manner of academic dependency and the manifold consequences of Western dominance have been further elaborated by several sociologists such as Alatas, Patel, and Connell, which can be encapsulated in the following points:

1. Sociologists become captive minds that reproduce rather than innovate and create. “The theory of captive mind is characterized by a way of thinking that is dominated by Western thought. The problem is not the appropriation of Western thought per se but rather the uncritical and imitative manner in which Western knowledge is assimilated” (Alatas 2006, p. 133).
2. The poverty of concepts, theory or new methods that arrest the potential of sociologists to better understand the human condition and existence.
3. Incompatibility between Western theory and non-Western realities that render Western theories, concepts and assumptions irrelevant (Alatas 2006, p. 133).
4. Disenfranchisement of alternative knowledge and theory as a result of the hegemony of Western forms of knowledge (Connell 2007, p. xi). This includes the non-recognition of local writings as a legitimate body of sociological literature, and the absence of textbooks in local languages that are not imitative of the Western theory and knowledge due largely to the issue of non-recognition.



5. Sociology not becoming a liberating discourse (Alatas 2006) and instead maintaining elitism in one dimension and marginalizing those who do not fit into that disposition. A telling example is the fate of regional sociologists who perform in local languages.
6. Some regional sociologists with vernacular orientation tending towards a degree of nativism i.e. uncritical use of native or nationalistic concepts and ideas in teaching, which is the other extreme of excessive dependency on Western knowledge, i.e. reactionary dependency solely on native knowledge as a mode of resisting the Western dominated discourse that has sidelined them.
7. Focus on micro sites rather than macro links, such as the neglect of local-global nexus in research, has led to ignoring the bigger picture and structural factors that condition micro level interactions.
8. The inability to contribute to global Sociology, let alone metropolitan Sociology, due to the production of redundant knowledge.
9. The inability to contribute to public discourses on local social and other issues due to lack of relevance of the knowledge produced.
10. Lack of critical engagement with the effects of modernity (Patel 2010) leading to a decrease of overall critical thinking crucial to the development of the discipline.

When considering the unequal relationship between centres of Social Science practice and their Southern counterparts, particularly in South Asia, it is necessary to consider the changed role of the sociologist in the evolving socio-economic, political and cultural contexts in those countries. In the

next section, this is attempted in brief.

### **CHANGED ROLE OF THE SOUTH ASIAN SOCIOLOGIST**

Since colonization and modernization, the role of South Asian sociologists and anthropologists as the intermediary between the global Sociology-Anthropology professions and local idioms, values, beliefs, customs, and practices has undergone transformation. Instead of the field research assistant for anthropologists who were interested in village studies, rural development, family, caste, land tenure, religion, rituals and belief systems in the early era, now local sociologists working in universities in the region are compelled or encouraged to function as 'consultants' for various international bodies operating in the region. Examples are development consultants, education consultants, water consultants, environment consultants, wildlife consultants, health Sociology consultants, Sociology of medicine consultants or even consultants on housing and irrigation. There is a substantial difference in pay rates between local and international consultants. The data gathered by various research projects and the reports produced based on them serve the interests of organizations in the metropole that employ such consultants including some university departments located in the US, UK, Canada, Australia, or European countries. Critical sociologists claim that the contribution of such consultants to 'knowledge construction' in Sociology is marginal. The fact that research on knowledge construction does not attract the same remuneration as in consulting work on other topics has been noted as a causal factor for this situation.

There are numerous references on this topic in emerging sociological literature in South Asian countries including by the

authors previously mentioned in this paper. For example, Perera (2012) states that such consultants have colonized the Sociology profession in Sri Lanka to such an extent that the regular conduct of Sociology practice in the universities has been reduced to a routine activity without critical sociological imagination. The indirect charge is that these local sociologists have sold their heart and soul to foreign funding-research bodies, and that instead they should be producing locally relevant scholarly work while training the next generation of sociologists to think critically. However, the question here is whether we should blame individual sociologists for this situation or the system that produces such work conditions? This calls for an in-depth reflection of Sociology practice by the community of sociologists in the region.

## CONCLUSION

Academic dependency and captive mind are disturbing characteristics visible in the Sociology practice in South Asian countries. Though these are outcomes of the colonial project, in particular the embedding of a modernist framework of thought in Sociology and other Social Sciences serving the interests of metropolitan powers at the time, there is no reason as to why we should not awaken to this reality and open our eyes far and wide not only to understand this reality but also to start a discourse on how to develop an indigenous Sociology – or for that matter Social Sciences – that enable us to comprehend our own problems and device solutions. Understanding society for the sake of understanding is not enough in the present context where our societies, cultures and peoples face various socio-economic, political and cultural problems of high magnitude. Thus social scientists have an important role to play as public intellectuals without diluting their status and role with political party

platforms, to speak authentically on behalf of the society, in particular disempowered segments without a voice.

The unequal relationship that South Asian sociologists and anthropologists have with their counterparts in Europe and USA continues to be dominated by Western epistemology, academic dependency, and practices associated with teaching, research and publication. This is not in the best interests of the South Asian academia or students who have become culprits of a teaching and research culture caught in dependency on Western sociological heritage and the resulting captive mind. Such a culture perpetuates Western dominance and dependency, exposing Sociology to charges of irrelevance. A critically reflective, well informed core group of sociologists and anthropologists from the region is required to lift the discipline and its practices above this unsatisfactory situation and provide the necessary epistemological framework and a tool kit suitable for the regional context in the 21st century. Such a group can evaluate the state of Sociology in South Asia in light of academic dependency and western dominance by examining the emerging literature as well as facilitating seminars, conferences, and publications on the one hand, and generating dialogue about the nature of a grounded Sociology disciplinary framework suitable for the region that draws from local intellectual, philosophical, religious and cultural traditions on the other. Together these efforts can contribute to the growth of an emancipatory sociological imagination that will function for the benefit of the populace – not only the policy makers and governing bodies – and steer the knowledge corpus away from the existing sterile imagination perpetuated by practitioners in the name of Sociology.

In this regard, sociologists in South Asia have to make efforts to not only critically re-assess the value of the language, terminology, theories, and methods of Sociology inherited from the global North (West), but also look for alternatives while attempting to be free from being prisoners of such language and terminology etc. As Vasavi says, “what may be possible and even more relevant is not a pure ‘indigenous social science’ or sociology/social anthropology but a self-conscious, sensitive, representative body of knowledge that overcomes the multiple problems associated with current social sciences, their orientation and pedagogy” (2011, p. 407).

Here I need to emphasize the need for sociologists (and other social scientists) to make a significant contribution not only to the task of understanding society and its problems, but also to coming up with feasible solutions based on a deep understanding of one’s own society, economy, culture, polity, family, kinship, etc. (see Gamage 2016). Continuing to study our social institutions as our Western-trained predecessors did (and some anthropologists still do) as if these are exotic phenomena, practices, norms and rituals is not suitable for the present post-colonial context, and we as sociologists and anthropologists have to be more proactive in salvaging these disciplines, their concepts, theories and methods from the Western grip and evolving our own disciplinary framework in more critical, creative, and relevant ways. In this regard, in addition to the work of sociologists such as Alatas, Connell, and Patel, Sabir, etc. readers may also access the work of Rosa (2014), Santos (2014), and Takur (2015)<sup>3</sup>.

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3. I will review their ideas in a forthcoming journal article and a book chapter to be published in 2017.

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