

*OCCASIONAL PAPER*

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**SAMKHYA AND VYANJANA**

***Understanding Underdevelopment***

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# **SAMKHYA AND VYANJANA<sup>1</sup>**

## ***Understanding Underdevelopment***

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### **Abstract :**

*Understanding of underdevelopment is severely constrained by an excessive commitment to quantitative approach on the part of bureaucrats, consultant social scientists and politicians. Samkhya's hegemony forecloses an in-depth understanding of human sufferance due to underdevelopment. Those who devise development plans must grasp vyanjana of sufferance. Qualitative approach in Sociology can sensitize policy planners about the ways to reach and understand such vyanjana.*

(1)

This plea for sensitivity towards problems and pleadings of victims of under-development and skewed development has for its immediate and intimate urgency in sights and sounds of underdevelopment in a country like ours. But countries of the south and post-socialist societies are equally in the back of the mind. Evident here is a position against deafness and myopia, even a poor sense of consequence, on the part of the 'developers'. They are politicians, bureaucrats and social scientists who serve political regimes. Criminal and moral betrayal of people's trust is evident in many cases. If we take India, the 'contract' between the state and the citizen implicit in the Directive Principles of State Policy codified in the Indian constitution has been breached. One game politicians and state's men, that is

the bureaucrats, play is the money game, making public announcement of amount of money spent or projected to be spent on creation of social capital for the people. This is usually in statistical terms which common people and less than common people fail to understand. But prominent economists assert that 'just knowing how much money is available for a given number of people...will not take us very far. For we also need, at the very least, to ask about the distribution of these resources, and what they do to people's lives.'<sup>2</sup> An early pointer came from Saint-Simonians'<sup>3</sup> critique of capitalist industrialization: the 'statistical calculation' which 'proved that in a certain number of years they (men who lived by their hands) would have bread' did not offer any comfort to the 'thousands of famished men' who suffered because of technological changes.<sup>4</sup> The idea of developers (who, among other things engage in statistical estimation) or those 'entrusted' with the task of designing and directing the course of development, is rooted in the idea of trusteeship which represents the nineteenth century resolution of the development problem. While this relates to relationship between nation-states, one can detect the same in the relationship between the developers and the intended beneficiaries of their designs in post-colonial/ post-transition societies. This is despite a quantitative expansion of democratic rights, protest movements – old and new – which engage the state and the elite,<sup>5</sup> and social scientists recording people's voices not tutored by the powerful.<sup>6</sup> The appropriators of representation speak for the people without 'listening' to them. When they listen to people talking in times of calamities and in run up of elections, the politicians actually try to advertise themselves. Official admissions of failure, exposures on corruptions,<sup>7</sup> academic studies on underdevelopment<sup>8</sup> and Laxman's election time cartoons — all point out the insensitiveness of politicians.<sup>9</sup> Invariably, ruling politicians reel off statistics to show their concerns.<sup>10</sup> Their critics do the same for a counter-point.<sup>11</sup> Lost in the number game are

the nuances of pain and sufferance of illfare. When the politicians talk to them in small huddles and large meetings, they indulge in politics of talking.<sup>12</sup> The poor, the dispossessed, the disempowered and the marginal people most of the time fail to effectively react. But it is not that they do not have any understanding of political forces which account for their misery.<sup>13</sup> Bureaucracy is free from an imperative of publicly explaining their role in underdevelopment because they can hide behind their ministers. However this does not conceal their involvement. Hugh Helco has shown that British and Swedish civil service administrators have regularly been more instrumental in development of social policy than political parties or interest groups.<sup>14</sup> Because designs of development are based on information<sup>15</sup> and knowledge and bureaucrats are recruited on the basis of their intellectual competence, they are the more critical agent of state-directed development. 'We should — design a civil service which is development –oriented' was a resolution of a South African political movement in early 1990s but this conveys a widely shared position in the developing world. However its insensitiveness to limits of planning for a social membership as a whole or marginalized segments— weaker sections as well as weakened sections like those displaced by development<sup>16</sup> and pauperized by imperatives of capitalism— is inherent in the nature of bureaucracy. Weber's observations can be restated: One consequence of bureaucratic control is the 'dominance of formalistic impersonality—without hatred or passion, and hence without affection or enthusiasm.'<sup>17</sup> A certain calculation of self-interest adds to their 'soullessness'. Weber calls this *Pfrundenhunger*, 'hunger for salaried post, which provide a salary commensurate with the social prestige of the educated man, continuing if possible to the grave' implying their 'highest ideal—security: a position from which they could not be dismissed, and the certainty of advancement in predictable stages'.<sup>18</sup> Weber is more harsh when he writes about '—men

who cling to some minor position and strive only for bigger one—an attitude increasingly common among modern officialdom and especially among new recruits.'<sup>19</sup> This striving is likely to induce some members of bureaucracy to develop and exploit political connections particularly with a ruling party, or to make them vulnerable to manipulations by such a party. They may become deaf and dumb to misgovernance, 'insensitiveness' can be contrived and dictated by instrumental rationality. That bureaucrats tend to form a *stand*, a social stratum, further alienates them from their clients. Earlier, Hegel observed that by the beginning of the nineteenth century, bureaucracy itself became the state, placing it high above the civil society and making itself the master of it.<sup>20</sup> Marx is sharper: they form a 'Bonapartist caste'.<sup>21</sup>

Exactitude is a normative requirement of bureaucratic functioning. In reports bureaucrats produce and in their advisory conversations with their political superiors, they bolster their argument by using statistics. The term 'official' statistics tells all. Technical competence is what makes bureaucracy an efficient instrument of governance, and this is based on commensurate knowledge. 'Bureaucracy is superior in knowledge, including both technical knowledge and knowledge of the concrete fact within its own sphere of interest—.'<sup>22</sup> A competence in calculation is needed. Though Weber does not mention a grasp of statistics as a necessary qualification, need for it is implicit in his analysis of bureaucracy. 'Candidates are selected on the basis of technical qualifications. In the most rational case, this is tested by examination or guaranteed by diplomas certifying technical training, or both.'<sup>23</sup> In a different exercise on understanding of social action Weber observes: 'The highest degree of rational action is attained in cases involving the meaning of logically or mathematically related propositions; their meaning may be immediately and unambiguously intelligible. We have a perfectly clear understanding of what it means when somebody employs

the proposition  $2 \times 2 = 4$ .<sup>24</sup> Bureaucracy is what it is because of its commitment to rational action; and its instrumental rationality is contained in its capacity to measure well-being or destitution. But again lost in its measurement is the feeling of happiness and of misery and humiliation. As for the potentially powerful spokespersons of civil society, the intellectuals, some of them are appropriated by the regime, some by an interesting amalgam of conviction and greed become compradors. They do not always converse statistically. But as 'pure' intellectuals most of them are prone to it. Kenneth J. Arrow, a famous economist observed: '—economists have narrowed the range of their data very excessively.— I partly attribute this by the way to the economics of economics. Economics differs from almost all the other social sciences in that there are certain kinds of data which are provided free of charge by the government, as a byproduct of its activities. — The result is that you have this rather big batch of data, and you easily develop an aversion of going to collect anything else because anything else will be quite expensive and you also have to rethink the whole issue. Instead you have this whole machinery analyzing government data——.'<sup>25</sup> As result there is a strong possibility of 'myopia' and information loss.<sup>26</sup> It can occur in another way. A preoccupation with generalization with rigor for the purpose of macro-policy compels economists to set up models and operational indices, which lead to data loss. As Partha Dasgupta observes: 'It is perhaps unnecessary to emphasize that any such index will have a subjective element, but it is necessary to remind ourselves that there is a subjective element in the estimation of any index, even the familiar index of national income, in the construction of which it is necessary to dispense with information.'<sup>27</sup> A reference to economists is justified because among all the social scientists they are closest to political power. If social science curriculum is any indication, students are taught mainly if not entirely the positivist methodology and its tools. The Human Development Report, 2000, concedes limits of statistics though with a specific regard

to the issue of human rights accountability. 'Statistics come with strings attached. They provide great power of clarity, but also for distortion.'<sup>28</sup> But the critical importance of raising and answering fundamental philosophical questions is being recognized today. Accordingly, instead of dispensing with information, the urgent need is to have a wide range of data of all kinds for an adequate enquiry into the quality of life of a people. This includes knowledge of 'how people are enabled by the society in question to imagine, to wonder, to feel emotions such as love and gratitude...'<sup>29</sup>. In order to antidote the impersonality of statistics and the exercise to 'set forth in a tabular form' the 'unfathomable mystery' of human being, and to reach the human predicament, every body concerned with development must be ready to draw on a range of qualitative data. These are more likely to bring out the depth of human destitution no statistics however rigorously collected can reveal. 'Where science does not reach, art, literature and narrative often help us comprehend the reality in which we live.'<sup>30</sup> And art, literature and narrative give expression to *vyanjana*. *Vyanjana* means 'implied indication', 'suggestion' and 'underlying meaning'.<sup>31</sup> It contains meanings of words that gain in depth through accompanying expressions, verbal as well as non-verbal, even pause and silence. *Anubhab* or feeling *vyanjana* is the only way to know the sufferance of the marginal people who lack the power of expressive articulation or the courage to express in the face of retribution from the powerful likely to be threatened by such expressions. At a more fundamental level, the need for understanding *vyanjana* as well as triangulation of approaches to understanding has long been recognized in Indian theory of knowledge. Katha Upanisad, an eighth century B.C text says: 'intellect is (not) a useless guide. The account of reality given by it is not false. It fails only when it attempts to grasp the reality in its fullness....Intellect need not be negated, but has only to be

supplemented. A philosophy based on intuition is not necessarily opposed to reason and understanding. Intuition can throw light on the dark places which intellect is not able to penetrate. The results of mystic intuition require to be subjected to logical analysis. And it is only by this process of mutual correction and supplementation that each can lead sober life. The results of intellect will be dull and empty, unfinished and fragmentary, without the help of intuition, while intuitional will be blind and dumb, dark and strange, without intellectual confirmation. .... Only by the comradeship of scientific knowledge and intuitive experience can we grow into true insight. Mere reasoning will not help us to it.'<sup>32</sup>

(2)

Those who shape policies on development are not open to contribution of understanding of *vyanjana* of sufferance towards planning process. While the natural sciences have no place for *vyanjana* for obvious reasons, mainstream social sciences are skewed towards *samkhya* and what it symbolizes, namely the positivist epistemology. Those who join bureaucracy or become consultant social scientists on the strength of their academic qualification, are usually socialized into the positivist culture of knowledge. This epistemological mind set needs to be changed and the best is to do so is to use qualitative approach as developed in contemporary Sociology.

Qualitative method and its logic remained for long in the periphery. With respectable codification of qualitative method indicated in an increasing volume of literature<sup>33</sup>, it has become a powerful methodological counter-point to positivist and post-positivist positions. Taking ourselves, meaning those who are associated with research, we are reluctant to draw on qualitative method and data.<sup>34</sup> We use or advice our students to use

participant observation or interview but only as an exploratory first step towards a positivist procedure like survey. These two are the original techniques of data collection which adumbrated qualitative method, thanks to the initiative of social anthropologists and sociologists belonging to the 'Chicago school'. Despite the brilliance of the insights they offered, even a cursory review of textbooks and courses on research methods points out that sociological research and statistical analysis are taken to be synonymous.<sup>35</sup> Qualitative method and data, particularly beyond participant observation and in-depth interview, are still untouchable in our academia. The word 'quality' produces all kinds of apprehension in old-fashioned positivists as well as orthodox Marxists. For the former, there is a fear in loss of objectivity. For the latter the additional suspicion is about intrusion of liberal-capitalist subjectivity — and interestingly to the liberal social scientist, it is about intrusion of Marxism.

'Qualitative' denotes an attention to processes and meanings that are not subjected to measurement in terms of quantity, amount, intensity or frequency. Qualitative analysis is best understood in terms of what it intends to do: bring out the distinctive attribute of a social phenomena or relationship between phenomena which can not be represented by a quantitative indicator entirely or at all. The synonymous expressions for qualitative approach also imply its character. These are: 'naturalistic', 'inquiry from inside', and 'interpretative'. Along with such labeling, there is a critical attribution that it is a paradigm, meaning that it is a set of beliefs and imperatives concerning what should be studied and how. "Qualitative research is multimethod in focus, involving an interpretative, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms

of the meanings people bring to them. Qualitative research involves use and collection of a variety of empirical materials—case study, personal experience, introspective, life story, interview, observational, historical, interactional, and visual texts—that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individuals' lives."<sup>36</sup> Qualitative research is bricolage and the researcher is a bricoleur, a 'jack of all trades' ready to use any strategy, method or data. There is no prior commitment to any. A context sets a research question which in turn suggests a research practice. Qualitative research is a call for openness for the sake of better understanding.

The attributes of qualitative research establish how it seeks to locate distinctiveness of phenomena. These are: an explicit commitment to examining events, activities, experiences and their underlying normative framework 'through the eyes of' a people being studied; a detailed descriptive attention to aspects of everyday life process likely to reveal specific contexts of behavior; locating wider historical and social as well as immediate and particular context; and an examination of interlocking processes. The attributes are shaped by the sociological theories which underpin the approach. One reason why during 1960s a reckonable interest developed in this approach is the intellectual attention it received in the sociological community. Phenomenology has played a singular role in giving the fledging approach the power to contest quantitative approach not only at the level of data generation but also at a more fundamental level of epistemology. It recommends descriptive study of experience. Its interest is in the constructs that people use in order to make the world (experience) meaningful and intelligible. "The thought objects constructed by the social scientist.....have to be founded upon the thought objects constructed by the common-sense thinking of men, living their daily life within the social world."<sup>37</sup> Unless this is done (positivist) social scientists manage to formulate only 'second order constructs' of social actors' comprehension of social reality. Ethnomethodology, which makes the phenomenological position

felt in social sciences, directs social scientists' attention to peoples' practical reasoning and how they make the social order sensible to them. Ethnomethodology has gone beyond phenomenology by way of inspiring researches using participant observation and unstructured interview. In symbolic interactionism social life is an unfolding process in which the individual interprets his/her environment and acts accordingly. '(The) position of symbolic interaction requires the student to catch the process of interpretation through which (actors) constructs their actions,"<sup>38</sup> Further: "I take it that the empirical world of our discipline is the natural social world of everyday experience. In this natural world every object of our consideration—whether a person, group or institution, practice or what not—has a distinctive, particular or unique character and lies in a context of a similar distinctive character."<sup>39</sup> The reference to 'natural' is by way of arguing that the nature of a phenomenon should not be 'molested' by social scientists who probe into man as an object without trying to understand the meaning he attributes to his behavior. The basic inspiration came from Weber's *verstehen*. With so many theoretical impulses, and because of the fact that qualitative approach cuts across disciplines like education, social work, communications, psychology, history, organizational studies, medical science, anthropology and sociology, there are bound to be nuances in the operative meaning of qualitative approach. But the essential meaning shared by all the strands is: 'a naturalistic, interpretative approach to its subject matter', and 'an ongoing critique of the politics and methods of positivism.'<sup>40</sup>

(3)

It may be useful to point how the two have been differentiated from each other. We need to know that the estimation of the differences takes a character depending on the point of departure. Let us begin with positivists in view of the fact that theirs was

the initial one and in this part of the world they dominate the 'establishment'. The proponents of the quantitative approach take participant observation as the mainstay of qualitative research. In view of qualitative research spilling over and much beyond participation observation, the feeling is that the differences have become more radical making some social scientists frown at the proposal for triangulation.<sup>41</sup> Some of the differences are: (i) The qualitative approach is credited at best with an exploratory power, kind of 'reconnaissance' before a more exact understanding of any phenomenon which becomes a basis of generalization and prediction. The counterpoint is that the qualitative approach is best suited for knowledge of meanings and motives an individual attributes to his/her social behavior, or for gaining an insight into the same. (ii) The qualitative approach runs the risk of losing on useful distance between the researcher and the object of enquiry because the researcher becomes, by choice, very close and persistently so to an individual or a people he /she chooses to study. He/she becomes an 'insider.' In the other approach, the researcher has only brief contact, and that can even be impersonal. The positivists appreciate this because they feel that it ensures detachment, objectivity and freedom from researcher's subjectivity. (iii) A chosen theory guides quantitative research and lends it meaning, the research findings point out the theory's validity and viability. For those who use the other approach, a theoretician's theory is very likely to miss out the subject's perceptions, which is vital for understanding something social. (iv) In quantitative research, a research is well-planned as to sample, instrument of data collection like questionnaire and method of analysis. To qualitative researchers this creates a straitjacket foreclosing the possibility of serendipity. (v) The nomothetic intention (discovering general law-like findings tenable irrespective of time and place) of those who subscribe to quantitative approach contrasts with ideographic aspiration

(locating findings in specific periods and contexts) of those who undertake qualitative research. (vi) Quantitative data are precise, exact and amenable to statistical manipulation— 'hard' and reliable. Qualitativists dismiss these as superficial. They 'produce' instead rich and insightful data which reach the 'depth' of a phenomenon. At the fundamental level the distinctions are about an epistemological issue as to what kind of data is acceptable as proper basis of knowledge. The sociological positivists think that conformity to scientific canons (of method) is the only test of knowledge. The anti-thesis grounded in phenomenology and *verstehen* consider this to be unsuitable for locating and interpreting actor' meanings and motives.<sup>42</sup>

The other way of locating differences between the two contesting approaches is to point out:

- (i) It is true that qualitative tradition began within the positivist fold in the sense that it shared the culture of natural sciences inhering in a commitment to formulate responsible observations rather than speculative or idiosyncratic ones. Some of the practitioners of qualitative approach have produced good qualitative research without being obstinate about use of rigorous methods and procedures—using quasi-statistics to back up findings of participant observation. Frequency distribution, tabulation and use of descriptive statistics through computer are also being used. However qualitative researchers avoid use of complex statistical measures. Their research is not also theory-driven as in case of positivist research.
- (ii) Against the positivist and post-positivist claim that their research is free from individual bias and subjectivity, 'hard core' proponents of contemporary breed point out the cost in terms of foreclosing the prospect of vital data. They share the post-modern critique of positivism and post-positivism. For them, the significance of their work lies in

'verisimilitude, emotionality, personal responsibility, an ethic of caring, political praxis, multivoiced texts, and dialogue with subjects.'<sup>43</sup> They are mainly inspired by critical theory, constructivist, post-structural and post-modern perspectives.

- (iii) The proponents of qualitative approach feel that a reliance on inferential empirical materials deny the positivists of an insight into subject's perspective which is vital for understanding his/her life process.<sup>44</sup>
- (iv) Qualitative researchers' subscription to emic, ideographic and case study enable them locate constraints of every day life. The nomothetic or etic science approach locates probabilities on the basis of a large number of randomly selected cases. (v) Rich descriptions of life process, qualitative researchers argue, are more valuable than terse, terminologised reports.<sup>45</sup>

A consolidated account of the differences reads like this : Positivism, postpositivism, critical theory and constructivism have been the four theoretical impulses in life and times of qualitative approach.<sup>46</sup> The positivism hallmark is verification principle which stipulates that the only valid knowledge is knowledge verified by sense experience. Scientific knowledge takes the form of logically interconnected general propositions, grounded in statements about basic facts expressed in strictly sense datum language. For sociologists, positivism is a belief that procedures of acquiring knowledge in natural sciences can and should be applied in enquiries on society. Post positivists argue that reality can never be fully apprehended. It can at best be approximately understood. Falsification principle is its distinctive stand. Without abandoning positivism's stand on discovery and verification, postpositivism is prepared to apply multiple methods. Critical theory stands for several alternative paradigms including neo-Marxism and feminism. Post structuralism, postmodernism and a blend of two represent it. These positions believe in value-

determined nature of enquiry. Constructivism envisages multiple realities.

As to the question of the purpose of enquiry, positivism and postpositivism claim it to be explanation of phenomena, eventually leading to prediction and control. Critical theory wants enquiry to critique with an intention to transform social, political, economic, ethnic and gender structures which constrain and exploit man. The inquirer becomes an instigator. Constructivism enquires into people's constructions about reality in order to understand these. It is open to possible new interpretations as information and insight improve. The four paradigms differ also on the question of nature of knowledge: The positions are: verified hypotheses acceptable as facts or laws (positivism), nonfalsified hypotheses acceptable as probable facts or laws (postpositivism), structural/historical insights which are subject to change as information increases through dialectical interaction (critical theory), and relatively consensual constructions/coexistence of multiple 'knowledges' despite disagreement among interpreters due to their different locations in social, economic, political, ethnic, cultural and gender structures. Each position locates the peculiarity of the process of accumulation of knowledge differently: by accretion with each fact serving as a building block (positivism and postpositivism), a dialectical process of historical revision/ no accumulation in an absolute sense (critical theory), hermeneutical/dialectical process leading to more informed and sophisticated constructions. An enquiry is good if knowledge possesses: internal validity (isomorphism of findings with reality), external validity (generalizability), reliability (stability) and objectivity (distanced and neutral observer) (positivism and postpositivism); historical situatedness (care taken about social, political, economic, cultural, ethnic and gender specificities of the studied situation) (critical theory); trustworthiness criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability, and authenticity criteria of fairness, ontological



authenticity (enlarging personal constructions), educative authenticity (leading to improved understanding of others' constructions), catalytic authenticity (stimulating action) and tactical authenticity (empowering action) (constructivism). While value-freedom is a value in positivism and postpositivism, critical theory and constructivism want value-driven enquiry and its outcome ensuring empowerment of the marginal people. For positivism and postpositivism ethics is extrinsic to enquiry; for critical theory it is intrinsic because the task of social theory is to erode ignorance and misconceptions; it is so for constructivism as well because of inclusion of participant value in an enquiry. The investigator is a 'disinterested scientist' (positivism and postpositivism), a 'transformative intellectual' confronting ignorance and misconceptions (critical theory), and a 'passionate participant' engaged in enabling multivoice construction of his/her own as well as of other participants. The positivist investigator is trained in technical know-how of various quantitative methods and not so much in formal theories. Postpositivism gives them an additional equipment in qualitative methods. To prepare investigator for research, constructivism requires him or her to be resocialized in hermeneutic/dialectical methodologies to locate their advantages over positivist position. As of now in history of social science research, positivism and its revised version has held sway. Postpositivism dominates the mainstream. Critical theory and constructivism are emergent challenges. Being still somewhat marginal they resist the idea of convergence, unlike postpositivism.

But sober theorists of methodology feel the necessity of coming together of proponents and paradigms.<sup>47</sup> In the same vein the proposition here is that we combine *sankhya* and *vyanjana* for a fuller understanding of the human cost of underdevelopment and for epistemological completeness. Further, understanding of *vyanjana* can bring back passion into enquiry: 'passion for people, passion for communication and passion for

understanding people'. This will allow us to give up the hegemonic notion of 'average man' formulated by a Belgian statistician Adolphe Quetelet who for the first time called attention to the kinds of structured behaviour that could be observed and identified only through statistical means.<sup>48</sup> However, mentalities die hard and antinomies are persisted with, as Immanuel Wallerstein has cautioned us in Report of the Gulbenkian Commission on Restructuring the Social Sciences.<sup>49</sup>

The way to this standard is to practise what is conceptualised as phronetic social science.<sup>50</sup> Phronesis is an Aristotelian term which means prudence, practical wisdom. In *The Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle defines it as 'true state, reasoned with regard to things that are good or bad for men.' Phronetic social science 'goes beyond both analytical, scientific knowledge (episteme) and technical knowledge or know-how (techne) and involves judgements and decision made in the manner of a virtuoso social and political actor.'<sup>51</sup> The difference between the three intellectual virtues is grasped easily if we just define them: Episteme is scientific knowledge which is universal, invariable and context-independent. It is based on analytical rationality. Techne is craft which is pragmatic, variable and context-dependent. It is founded on practical instrumental rationality directed by deliberately set goals. Phronesis is ethics which involves deliberations about values concerning praxis. It is pragmatic, variable and context-dependent and oriented towards action. It is based on practical value-rationality. There are at least two attributes of this approach which justify the use of qualitative method. One, anthropologists have found that it is practised, may be unknowingly, by common people in their every day life process. Aristotle thought that it was found, among other institutions like state, at the level of household. The other, narration has a central place in phronetic social science. Phronesis's orientation to action and practical value-rationality makes it appropriate for development, and in understanding of

under-development.<sup>52</sup> Since the state has critical association with development and under-development, Aristotle's conception of state as phronetic institution, engaged in controlling and directing while taking care of particular circumstances, makes phronetic social science relevant for us. Also, at the core of phronesis is 'reflexive analysis and discussion of values and interests, which is the prerequisite for an enlightened political, economic and cultural development of any society.' This finds best expression in four value-rational questions which guide such a social science: where are we going? Who gains and who loses? Is it desirable? What should be done?<sup>53</sup> Concomitant methodological imperatives are: focus on values, situate power at the centre of analysis, get close to reality, emphasize little things, examine practice before discourse, study cases and contexts, narrate for making sense of experience, combine actor-level and structure-level analysis and attend to a polyphony of voices.<sup>54</sup> A mere statistical approach to underdevelopment and destitution is exceptionally limited. Numbers conceal nuances, may even distort them. *Samkhya's* hegemony over *vyanjana* must end. Pains of hunger, tears for a lost child, anxiety about shelter, awe at other's prosperity are more revealing than statistics on BPL, child mortality, development induced displacement and gini coefficient. Making sense of underdevelopment and destitution is more urgent than measuring the same.

One way of getting close to reality of deprivation and destitution is doing ethnography of underdevelopment. An ethnographer participates overtly or covertly in people's daily lives for an extended period of time watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions — thereby collecting whatever data are available to understand a chosen problematic.<sup>55</sup> Bureaucrats, even those who operate at grassroots level are not in a position to do these. The nature of their office would stand in the way. Political parties can do. We have at least one approximation of ethnography on a massive scale,

called 'four histories movement' — *ssu shih* — during 1963-65 and 1972-76 in China. This was towards understanding of changes in a village or locality, including transformations in ecology, class structure, economic culture, customs and ways of life. Among things examined were documentary materials like land sale documents, judicial records, genealogies, clothes and beggars' bowls of the poor peasants — along with in-depth interviews. A triple alliance of workers, cadres and economic historians — the first two being non-professional social researchers — undertook the task. They also took part in applied policy research — *tiao-ch'a yen-chin*.<sup>56</sup> For making sense of underdevelopment visuals can be used for grasping *vyanjana* of social suffering.<sup>57</sup> Another way to an intimate sense of destitution is to consider authentic narrations which come in the form of autobiographical conversations / writings. Let me give two illustrations: "It was the hunger season, the lean autumn months after the rains had stopped. Most of the spring rice was gone, the winter leaves and berries were not ready, and the mosquitoes seemed more virulent than ever. For the next three months, there would be little for the local adivasis to eat other than crushed mango seeds, mango paste and a daily bowl of gruel."<sup>58</sup> And: " — we were always hungry; most of the time we starved — we ate whatever we could find; snails from the river, leaves and rice from the field. Once a day the adults ate cooked food, mostly *pakhaala* ( watered rice ) but they gave most of it to us. I remember when I was 5 years old, we ate hot cooked rice only very rarely, once every two weeks, and it was a great feast for us"<sup>59</sup>

This is no absurd attempt to denigrate statistics and its uses. The need to grasp *vyanjana* arises from a feeling that *vyanjana* is a more powerful sensitizer than *samkhya* which reduces men, women and children to digits to be counted. Statistics is cold, *vyanjana* is warm. The developers' heartlessness with regard to social justice, heartlessness which is heightened by life-style

differential between them and those who look up to them, is likely to lessen if they are touched by *vyanjana* of sufferance. Researches in political psychology suggest that affective intelligence 'augments and works cooperatively with reason (rather) than working antagonistically, and with detrimental consequences — emotionality sustains our capacity to use reason in precisely those circumstances when the benefits of reason are most required and most warranted — democracies prospects do depend jointly on reason and passion.'<sup>60</sup> *Vyanjana* will create the emotional urgency for development.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>*Samkhya* and *Vyanjana* mean number and nuance, respectively.

<sup>2</sup>Nussbaum, Martha and Sen, Amartya, eds. *The Quality of Life*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994, p.1.

<sup>3</sup>Blanqui, Infantin and Comte, self-styled disciples of Saint-Simon (1760-1825), an insightful precursor of Sociology and a critic of early capitalist industrialization. See Cowen, M.P and Shenton, R.W: *Doctrines of Development*, Routledge, London and NewYork,1996, pp21-27.

<sup>4</sup>The importance of Saint-Simon lies in the fact that he first powerfully spoke about the need of designing development. The justification of drawing on his observations, which are untenable on various grounds, is that classical sociologists contributed more than economists to development of historical consciousness of development.

<sup>5</sup>A good example, Shah, Ghanshyam: *Social Movements and the State*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 2002.

<sup>6</sup>Selected examples: Roy, R and Srivastava, R.K: *Dialogues on Development: The Individual, Society and Political Order*, Sage Publications, 1986; Narayan, Deepa et al: *Crying Out for Change, Can Anyone Hear Us?*, From Many Lands (in the *Voices of the Poor* series) published by Oxford University Press, New York, 2000; Bourdieu, Pierre: *The Weight of the World: Social Suffering in Contemporary Society*, Polity Press, Cambridge, UK, 1999; Dutton, Michael: *Streetlife China*, Cambridge University Press, 1998; PROBE: *Public Report on Basic Education in India*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1999; Tandon, Rajesh and Mohanty, Ranjita(ed): *Does Civil Society*

*Matter?*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 2003. The author of this paper is working on a paper: *Anusochona*, a study on regrets and griefs expressed by villagers in Mohola in Birbhum district, West Bengal.

<sup>7</sup>The 55<sup>th</sup> Republic Day Presidential speech was focused on the issue of corruption perpetrated by political parties.

<sup>8</sup>Pratichi (India) Trust: *The Pratichi Education Report*, TLM Books, Delhi, 2002.

<sup>9</sup>For some idea of sufferance during degeneration of socialism, Boym, Svetlana: *Common Places: Mythologies of Everyday Life in Russia*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1994; Leung, Laifong: *Morning Sun: Interviews with Chinese Writers of the Lost Generation*, M.E.Sharp, Armonk, New York, 1994.

<sup>10</sup>In Britain towards the close of 17<sup>th</sup> century, statistics was called 'political arithmetic'. Attempts to gather statistics on population, income and wealth provoked stormy protests. In fact, in western Europe the process of state-formation demanded increasing use of statistics. See for details, Creveld, Martin Van: *The Rise and Decline of the State*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, U.K, 1999, pp 145-147.

<sup>11</sup>Reportedly, Napoleon 1 asserted that 'The advancement and perfection of mathematics are intimately connected with the prosperity of the State'. A slogan in Mozambique read 'Let us make mathematics a weapon in the building of socialism.' Relationship between development of the calculus and the emergence of capitalism and influence of eugenics on the development of statistics in Britain is recorded. See 'The Social Construction of Mathematics' in Restivo, Sal: *The Sociological Worldview*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, UK, 1991.

<sup>12</sup>One is reminded of F.G Bailey's unconventional political anthropology. In this connection I recall my grandmother telling me how clever a certain woman she knew was. She would use a ploy to wean away a maid in somebody's employment. She would want the maid tell her about the frequency of meals at her present place of work. Told that it was given twice a day she would feign indignation at deprivation meted out to the maid. She would exclaim: 'in early day and then only in night' ( sei ebela, aar o bela). She would suggest an impropriety by her manner of speaking. Then she would offer her a meal a day but make it sound better deal by repeating in quick succession: 'you will get a meal today and tomorrow', shortening the speech space between 'today' and 'tomorrow'. ( aaj khabi kaal khabi, aaj khabi kaal khabi ) as if the maid would get meals more frequently.

<sup>13</sup>See 'Governance: Poor People's Scorecards' in Narayan, Deepa: *Crying Out for Change*, pp 197-233; Narayan, Deepa: *From Many Lands*, p 163. For their understanding of inequality, see Kar, Kamal: *Participatory Impact Assessment: Calcutta Slum Improvement Project (CMDA assisted by DFID)*, systems Vision, New Delhi, 1997, pp15-16.

<sup>14</sup>Hecllo, Hugh: *Modern Social Politics in Britain and Sweden*, Yale University Press, New Haven, Conn.,1974.

<sup>15</sup>The need for factual knowledge was probably the most critical correlate of the rise of the modern state. "Early modern social science responded in large part to the knowledge needs of the state, as is perhaps best indicated by the names under which it made its appearance: "statistics", "police science", and "Staatswissenschaft." There is enough basis to assume that states are likely to have only partial or incomplete knowledge at their disposal. See 'On the Road toward a More Adequate Understanding of the State' by Peter B. Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, and Theda Skocpol in their edited *Bringing the State Back In*, Cambridge University Press. Cambridge, London, New York, 1985, pp 357-358.

<sup>16</sup>Raina, Vinod, Chowdhury, Aditi and Chowdhry, Sumit: *The Dispossessed: Victims of Development in Asia*, Arena Press, New Delhi,1997.

<sup>17</sup>Weber, Max: *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, tr. Talcott Parsons, Oxford University Press, New York, 1947, p340.

<sup>18</sup> Beetham, David: *Max Weber and Theory of Modern Politics*, George Allen and Unwin Ltd. London, 1974,pp 80-81.

<sup>19</sup>ibid pp92-93.

<sup>20</sup>For an excellent analysis of building of bureaucracy as an integral part of making the state an instrument in course of west European state-formation between 1648 and 1789, see Crevelde, 1999, pp128-143.

<sup>21</sup>Poulantzas, Nicos: *Political Power & Social Classes*, Verso, Great Britain, 1978.

<sup>22</sup>Weber, Max: *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*.

<sup>23</sup>ibid, p 333.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid, p91. Interestingly, '2x2' is attributed different connotations by writers. 'In *Notes From the Underground* — Dostoevsky uses "2+2=4" to symbolize the taken-for-granted and often oppressive world of everyday life, and "2+2=5" to symbolize the anti-authoritarian and creative impulse in human beings. Orwell uses the same symbols in *1984*. But for Orwell, "2+2=4" stands for

everything that is true, beautiful and liberating in society, and "2+2=5" stands for everything that is authoritarian, totalitarian and oppressive.' Restivo, p164.

<sup>25</sup>Swedberg, Richard: *Economics and Sociology: Redefining Their Boundaries*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1990, pp 145-146.

<sup>26</sup>In my student days I came to know about a book 'How to Lie with Statistics' published by the Pelican.

<sup>27</sup>Dasgupta, Partha: *An Inquiry into Well-Being and Destitution*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1996, p129.

<sup>28</sup>It observes: 'Data collection is often biased toward institutions and formalized reporting, towards events that occur, not events prevented or suppressed. But lack of data does not always mean fewer occurrences. Structural repression is invisible when fear prevents people from protesting, registering complaints or speaking out.' UNDP: *Human Development Report*, 2000, OUP, 2000, p90. This only apparently concerns development, the focus of this paper. But underdevelopment, protest and state repression are historically related.

<sup>29</sup>Nussbaum, Martha and Sen, Amartya, eds. *The Quality of Life*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994, p.1.

<sup>30</sup>Flyvbjerg, Bent: *Making Social Science Matter: why social enquiry fails and it can succeed again*. Cambridge University Press, U.K., 2001.

<sup>31</sup>Monier –Williams: *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary (1899)*, New Edition, Motilal Benarasidas, Delhi, 1970, p 1029.

<sup>32</sup>Radhakrishnan, S: *Indian Philosophy, (Vol 1)*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1999, p 179.

<sup>33</sup>A good example: Denzin, Norman K and Lincoln, Yvonna S (ed): *The Landscape of Qualitative Research: Theories and Issues*, Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, 1998; Denzin and Lincoln (ed): *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials*, Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, 1998; Denzin and Lincoln (ed): *Strategies of Qualitative Enquiry*, Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, 1998. The use of the word 'landscape' and three covers, showing an early morning landscape, terrace cultivation, and an old city with a canal connected to sea, suggest a breakthrough in research orientation.

<sup>34</sup>The Sociology Research Unit of Indian Statistical Institute, Kolkata, takes a credit, and justifiably so, in applying '...for the first time in India, statistical method in sociological research with emphasis on systematic collection of

empirical data on social structure and social transformation.’ As for the Institute, the Vision Document 2003 recalls: ‘ In accordance with the objectives of Indian Statistical Institute as stipulated in the Memorandum of Association, Statistics has played and should continue to play a pivotal role in all scientific programmes of the Institute.’

<sup>35</sup>Bryman, Alan: *Quantity and Quality in Social Research*, Unwin Hyman, London, 1988, pp1-5.

<sup>36</sup>Denzin, Norman K, *The Landscape of Qualitative Research: Theories and Issues*, Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, 1998, p 3.

<sup>37</sup>Schutz, A, *Collected Papers I: The Problem of Social Reality*, Martinus Nijhoff, Hague, 1962, p59, quoted in Bryman ( 1988 ), p 51.

<sup>38</sup>Blumer, Herbert quoted in Bryman ( 1988 ), p55.

<sup>39</sup>Blumer, quoted in Hammersley, Martyn, *The Dilemma of Qualitative Method: Herbert Blumer and the Chicago Tradition*, Routledge, London and New York, 1989, p124 .

<sup>40</sup>Denzin and Lincoln ( 1998 ), p8.

<sup>41</sup>For a history of evolution of qualitative approach, Denzin and Lincoln, ‘Introduction: Entering the Field of Qualitative Research’ and Vidich, Arthur J and Lyman Stanford M, ‘Qualitative Methods: Their History in Sociology and Anthropology’ in Denzin and Lincoln (ed), *The Landscape of Qualitative Research* (1998), pp11-22, 41-110.

<sup>42</sup>Bryman (1988) chap 5.

<sup>43</sup>Denzin and Lincoln: *The Landscape of Qualitative Research* (1998), p 10.

<sup>44</sup>American critics have made pejorative remarks about excessive reliance on statistics, ‘quantophrenics’ (Sorokin), ‘the fine little mill of the Statistical Ritual’ (C.Wright Mills), and ‘social relations huck-sters’ (Schlesinger), referred in Denzin and Lincoln (ed), *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Material*, (1998),p 50.

<sup>45</sup>ibid, pp8-11; pp 197-200.

<sup>46</sup>These are also called ‘paradigms’. Paradigm is a basic set of beliefs, hence accepted simply on faith, there being no way to establish their truthfulness. The beliefs are about: the form and nature of reality (ontology), the nature of relationship between the knower/would-be knower and the object of knowledge (epistemology), and the form and nature of the way of knowing (methodology). In a paradigm, ontology dictates epistemology which dictates methodology. A paradigm is a matter of choice, which is exclusionary. An assumption of a reality out there excludes an aesthetic or a

moral issue, the insider’s perception and a value commitment, and factors which are not legitimate objects of enquiry given a research design. Evidently, a paradigm is a human construct and hence not inherently right. Its power lies in persuasiveness and utility rather than proof.

<sup>47</sup>For a fuller discussion see Guba Egon G and Lincoln, Yvonna S: ‘Competing Paradigms in Qualitative Research in Denzin and Lincoln, *Landscape of Qualitative Research* (1988) pp195-220.

<sup>48</sup>Encyclopedia Britannica, 2001.

<sup>49</sup>Wallerstein, Immanuel et al., *Open the Social Sciences: Report of the Gulbenkian Commission on Restructuring the Social Sciences*, (1996), Vistaar Publication, New Delhi, p 95.

<sup>50</sup>Flyvbjerg , 2001.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid, p2.

<sup>52</sup>Flyvbjerg, Bent: *Rationality and Power: Democracy in Practice*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, Illinois, 1998; Flyvbjerg, Bent with Nils Bruzelius and Warner Rothengatter: *Mega Projects and Risk: Making Decisions in an Uncertain World*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, for a review of phronesis inspired social science research see Flyvbjerg (2002), pp 62-65, pp162-165.

<sup>53</sup>Flyvbjerg, 2001, p 60.

<sup>54</sup>ibid, pp 129-140; also Fay, Brian: *Contemporary Philosophy of Social Science: a multi-cultural approach*, Blackwell Publishers, Cambridge, USA, 1996, chap 6.

<sup>55</sup>Hammersley, Martyn and Atkinson, Paul: *Ethnography: Principles and Practice*, Routledge, London and New York, 1995.

<sup>56</sup>Wong, Siu-lun: *Sociology and Socialism in Contemporary China*, Routledge, London, 1979.

<sup>57</sup>Pink, Sarah: *Doing Visual Ethnography*, Sage Publications, London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi, 2001.

<sup>58</sup>Freeman, James: *Untouchable: An Indian Life History*, 1979, p 261.

<sup>59</sup>Ilaiah, Kanha: *Why I am not a Hindu: A Sudra critique of Hindutva*, philosophy, culture, and political economy, Samya, 1996, p 66.

<sup>60</sup>Kuklinski, James H (ed): *Citizens and Politics: Perspectives from Political Psychology*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, U.K., 2001, pp 41-42.

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