

Note from the Editor

The Bangladesh Sociological Society in association with the Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB) and the South Asian Sociological Society (SASS) organized a two day international conference titled "South Asian Sociology Conference" in Dhaka, on March 10-11, 2008 at the IUB premises. The Conference was participated by a large number of sociologists from India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh and delivered on issues relating to sociology both in the regional and global contexts. Besides a number of substantive areas, like poverty, health, gender, environment, and post colonialism, the Conference also focused on the theoretical and methodological concerns. A few selected papers from the conference are presented in this issue.

The first of these, "Sociology: From Science to Pseudoscience" by Nazrul Islam brings forth the age old concern with the status of sociology as a science. The author argues that in spite of the fact that sociology was conceived as a science and is generally treated as one, in the light of the current demarcation criteria, it fails to live up to that promise. Indeed, he argues that, since we continue to treat it as a science, when it is not, we are in reality a pseudoscience. He goes on to suggest that given the present level of technology today, it is possible to penetrate into the body and mind of man and as such experimentation, the hallmark of the sciences, with human beings or their society has become a reality. Thus, the time for sociology, to become a real science, is now.

Following on a similar line of thought, P.K.B. Nayar in his "Sociological Theory and Knowledge Society" argues that since the advent of globalization the societies all over the world have seen substantial changes. This is more so as the IT revolution is taking the societies to a stage identified as the knowledge society. The paper "examines the prospect of sociological theory in the wake of Information Technology and Knowledge Revolution that are overtaking societies the world over".

In the third paper, Moinurul I. Khan raises a few fundamental issues relating to the implantation of sociology into an alien society. Sociology was proposed in relation to the realities that existed in the 19th century Europe but, he asks, to what extent can that sociology be institutionalized in the socio-historical context of Bangladesh or any other non-European society with immensely differing social experiences?

Suvash Biswas similarly questions the possibilities of transplanting Western sociology in the peripheral setting. In the backdrop of the developments up to the 21st century, the paper intends to find out the problems associated with the development of sociology in general and, West Bengal in particular. An attempt is also made here to find out the possibilities involved in the development of sociology as an academic discipline as well as a discipline with practical significance.

Mokerrom Hossain and Shahid M. Shahidullah examine the socio-historical context of the rise and significance of criminology and criminal justice in the societies of South Asia. They look into the need for redefining the traditional meaning and boundaries of crime, punishment, and justice, in the light of the changes induced by globalization. They also look at the spread of cross-border crimes as a recent phenomenon in the South Asian experience. They suggest greater awareness building and the opening up of various institutions for the acquiring and spreading of knowledge in the field.

D. Parimala makes an exhaustive study of the various facets of poverty in the region focusing on the poverty reduction programmes. She notes that the incidence of poverty among women in South Asia is especially high, with women and men experiencing poverty differently and often becoming poor through different processes. The process of feminization of poverty, in South Asia, she argues, is closely linked to the cultural and institutional constraints that restrict women's

participation in economic activity. She then evaluates the poverty reduction programmes in the region.

The other papers presented dealt with major constraints facing the region in terms of environment, women and empowerment questions, and health issues. Lively debates ensued on issues like post-colonialism and the prospect for an indigenous methodology for the region. Some sessions took on the task of evaluating the sociology curricula of the various universities of the region. NGOs, poverty reduction and microfinance dominated the discussions at other sessions.

Participants then met on organizational matters and charted a new course of action for the sociologists of South Asia, by first adopting a draft constitution and then forming an executive committee based on the constitution for a period of four years. The following were elected as the office bearers:

Office bearers:

- (i) **President: Professor Partha Nath Mukherji**, Professor S. K. Dey Chair, Institute of Social Sciences, New Delhi, and former President of The Indian Sociological Society .
- (ii) **Vice-President: Professor Fate Mohammad Burfat**, Professor and Head, Department of Sociology and Criminology (? check), University of Karachi, President, Pakistan Sociological Association.
- (iii) **Vice-President: Professor Tudor K. Silva**, Professor and Head, Department of Sociology, University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka.
- (iv) **Secretary: Professor Nazrul Islam**, Professor and Director (Dean), Independent University, Bangladesh, President Bangladesh Sociological Society.
- (v) **Treasurer: Professor S. Aminul Islam**, Professor and Head, Department of Sociology, University of Dhaka, Bangladesh.

Members:

- (i) Professor Bazlul Mobin Chowdhury, Vice Chancellor, Independent University, Bangladesh.
- (ii) Professor Uttamrao Bhoite, President, Indian Sociological Society.
- (iii) Professor P.K.B. Nayar, former President, Indian Sociological Society.
- (iv) Professor Siri Hettige, University of Colombo, Sri Lanka (proposed in absentia)
- (v) Dr. Professor Mahbuba Nasreen, University of Dhaka, Bangladesh.
- (vi) Dr. Ravinder Kaur, Associate Professor, Indian Institute of Technology, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, New Delhi, Treasurer, Indian Sociological Society.
- (vii) Dr. Rana Saba Sultan, University of Karachi, Pakistan.
- (viii) Professor Krishna Chaitanya, Professor, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu, Nepal (proposed in absentia).
- (ix) Dr. Prema Kumar, University of Colombo, Sri Lanka (proposed in absentia).
- (ix) One member from Bhutan after consultation.
- (x) One member from Afghanistan after consultation.
- (xi) One member from Maldives after consultations.

The Conference ended on a high note with the promises of major future contributions from the region.