

Commemorating two Pioneering Modern Sociologists of India

(Prof. Yogendra Singh and Prof. Arvind Manilal Shah)

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Introduction

There are a number of learned and respected people around the globe who lost their lives due to Covid-19 and its socio-psychological effect. During this pandemic time, we lost numerous intellectuals whose contributions will remain unforgettable in the future. The two renowned Indian sociologists Prof. Yogendra Singh and Prof. Arvind Manilal Shah passed away during the peak of the pandemic. They will always be remembered for their contributions toward the indigenization of sociology. This is a modest attempt to write briefly about them and express a deep sense of respect and gratitude.

Yogendra Singh (1932-2020)

Professor Yogendra Singh passed away during the peak of the lockdown period of the pandemic at his Delhi residence on 9th May 2020 after a massive cardiac arrest. He was born on 2nd November 1932 in a rural Zamindar family of Chowkhara village in Basti district, U. P. He completed his Post Graduation and PhD from Lucknow University. He was the student of eminent sociologists like, D. P. Mukerji, Radha Kamal Mukherjee, D. N. Majumder and A. K. Saran. He started his early career in teaching from Institute of Social Science Agra, Rajasthan University, Jodhpur University and finally become the main architect of the Centre for the Study of Social Systems at JNU.



Prof. Singh was one of the iconic Indian sociologists who established sociology as a respectable discipline within the realm of Indian social sciences. His writings cover the diverse fields of themes and perspectives.

His pioneering contribution to Indian sociology is concerned with modernization, tradition, cultural change, social stratification, media, identity and globalisation. His outstanding book, *Modernization of Indian Tradition: A Systematic Study of Social Change* (1973) opened up a new perspective in Indian sociology. Mukhopadhyay writes that the strength of this book is its ability to employ the universalistic framework of modernization with a keen eye to the historical specificities of changes in India (Mukhopadhyay 2020).

He is also credited with other remarkable works like, *Essay on Modernization in India* (1978), *The Image of Man: Ideology and Theory in Indian Sociology* (1984), *Indian Sociology: Social Conditioning and Emerging concerns* (1986), *The Sociology of Culture* (1991), *Social Change in India: Crisis and Resilience* (1993), *Social Stratification and Change in India* (1997), *Culture Change in India: Identity and Globalisation* (2000), *Ideology and Theory in Indian Sociology* (2004), edited series on *Social Science: Communication, Anthropology and Sociology* (2010), *Indian Sociology: Development and Change, Vol. 2* (2014), *Indian Sociology: Identity, Communication and Culture, vol-3* (2014). His research works were published in several national and international journals. He had supervised the PhD theses of some well-known contemporary sociologists of the country like, K.L Sharma, P.K Bose, Dipankar Gupta, J.S. Gandhi and so on.

Prof. Singh's long-standing colleague and eminent sociologist, T.K. Oommen remarked that Prof. Singh extricated the orientation of Indian sociology from the shadow of British social anthropology and made it what we call modern Indian sociology. Gupta in his recent article on tributes to Prof. Singh mentions that he was a great home-grown social science theorist who could hold his own against the best anywhere in the world. He was not a nativistic propagandist who would Indianise social science, strong believer in historicising social theorist and contextualising concepts (Gupta 2020).

Going by his writings one can understand that he was neither a Marxist nor a functionalist. He used an integrated approach to understand and investigate modernity, cultural change and social stratification in India. K. L. Sharma his first doctorate student has categorized Prof. Singh's sociological approaches into five major theoretical orientations. These are: a) Comparative-historical approach, b) Logico-philosophical approach, c) Structural-functional approach d) Philosophico-sociological approach and e) Statistical-positivistic approach (Sharma 2020: 29).

Apart from teaching, he was actively involved with several administrative institutions such as, Planning Commission, ICSSR, he was UGC's National convenor on sociology to formulate a committee for preparation of syllabus, distinguished member of Indian Sociological Society etc. He was also a visiting faculty at McGill University and Stanford University during his days in Jaipur and later he travelled around fifty countries on academic assignments. He received several awards for contributions to Indian sociology, including Lifetime Achievement Award by the Indian Sociological Society in 2007 and Best Social Scientist award from the government of Madhya Pradesh.

Prof. Singh will be remembered for his simple demeanor, unassuming behavior, fine intellect, his work on the historical roots of Indian sociology and his patronage of Indian institutions of science and critical learning (Mukhopadhyay 2020).

Arvind Manilal Shah (1931-2020)

Professor A.M. Shah passed away on 7th September 2020, due to sudden heart attack in Surat. He was born on 7th August 1931 in Vaso, Gujarat. He had pursued his Master's and PhD from Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda in 1955. He was the first doctoral student of renowned social anthropologist M.N. Srinivas, with whom he later worked as a colleague in Delhi University. Prof. Shah had started the journey of his career from his own M.S. University of Baroda concluded it in Delhi School of Economics, DU.



During his under graduate life in 1952 he accompanied M.N. Srinivas on field work in Rampura village, Mysore for two months and by the end of Post-graduation he already had published two research papers in Economic Weekly (now EPW) and journal of Maharaja Sayajrao University in 1955 (Patel & Lobo 2021). His work on family and kinship, caste, sect and Hinduism and recent historical sociology have been extremely influential. One could understand his work through his creative skill in writing articles related to history with sociological facts. He was much influenced by M.N. Srinivas which can be seen from his preference to be called a social anthropologist rather than a sociologist.

Prof. Shah's most significant works are *Household Dimension of Family in India: A Field Study in a Gujarat Village and a Review of Others*

Studies (1973), which is widely recognized as a landmark study on Indian family. His other crucial works are, *The Family in India: Critical Essays* (1998), *Exploring India's Rural Past: A Gujarat Village in Early Nineteenth Century* (2002), *The Grassroots of Democracy: Field Studies of Indian Elections* (2007), *Structure of Indian society: Then and Now* (2010/2019 2nd ed.), *The Structure of Indian society* (2012), *The Household and Family in India* (2014), *Sociology and History* (2017), *The Legacy of M. N. Srinivas: His Contributions to Sociology and Social Anthropology in India* (2019). And his other writings with co-authors include, *Social Structure and Change vol-1 to 5*, (co-authors with B.S. Baviskar and E. A. Ramaswamy 1998), *Understanding Indian Society: Past and Present* (co-authors with B. S. Baviskar and T. Patel 2011). *Essays on Suicide and Self-Immolation* (Indian Anthropology 1886-1936, with Lancy Lobo as co-author, 2018), and *Anthropological explorations in East and Southeast Asia* (with Lancy Lobo as co-editor 2020) were his recent works.

Janaki Abraham writes that Prof. Shah was always open to discuss the societal issues, at any time. Kinship and family studies was one of the significant work done by him where he has conceptually clarified how a keen ethnographic eye could understand the basic concepts and transformation (Abraham 2021). According to Patel and Bhardwaj, 'He was a meticulous researcher, teacher and research guide, he would painstakingly read the drafts of his students and colleague's papers because he believed that scholarship is always enriched with comments and criticism. Almost all his PhD students' theses have been published by reputed publishers' (Patel and Bhardraj 2020: 637).

Prof. Shah has been honored with several distinguished awards by various institutions such as Lifetime Achievement Award by the Indian Sociological Society (2009), Swami Pranavananda Award by the UGC, the Distinguished Service Award by the University of Delhi and Prestigious Malcolm Adiseshiah Award (2020). He held fellowships of various reputed foreign universities such as, Centre for Advanced Studies in Behavior Science Stanford, University of Chicago, Institute of Development Studies Sussex and University of New England.

Professor A. M. Shah will be remembered in the future for his remarkable contribution in the field of joint family, household, caste, religion and more recently on historical sociological studies.

Conclusion

The perspectives of both the scholars have always enlightened us on how Indian sociology has developed its own unique discourses without importing the western sociological ideas. Both were the third-generation Indian sociologists who spent their life's most valuable time to understand the Indian sociological tradition. We have lost two visionary sociologists in this pandemic time whose contributions and efforts to reorient and modernise Indian sociology will never be forgotten. Both of them were globally reputed contemporary sociologists. They will be always with us through their intriguing writings, which have enriched Indian sociology immensely. They are true pioneers of modern Indian sociology.

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