

Indian Society: Sociological Perspectives

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Week-12

Lecture-58

Globalization and Sociology: Risk Society of Ulrich Beck

Welcome back to the class. We are in the 12th week, the last week of the course. And in the last two sessions, you had a discussion with Dayal Paleri, a PhD student in the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, about recent debates on decoloniality. He has discussed with you a lot of arguments and debates about the recent discussions on the necessity to decolonise Social Sciences and the options and the alternatives that are being explored by many sociologists in India or many of these ex-colonial societies. So, in this class, as well as in the next session, I will discuss some of the more recent interventions about the changing nature of Social Sciences and Sociology in the light of globalisation. And I hope you remember that I made a very brief remark about globalisation in the very first class, the very first session of this whole course, when I was trying to trace the original development of Sociology from its early period of modernity to the most recent times.

The period of globalization, maybe in India, maybe for the last 30 years, has really presented a unique challenge to the discipline, how it is being visualized, understood, and is being practised. So, globalization as a phenomenon, as a comprehensive social transformation that is happening across the globe, has posed significant challenges to almost everything. As we live in a rapidly changing society, there is a global integration of various kinds.

And there have been very fascinating theorisation from globalization. I have offered

another course, another NPTEL course on globalization, titled Globalization Theoretical Perspectives. So, in that course, I deal with those globalization theories in detail. But in this class, as well as in the next one, I am going to look at two essays and two important people. One is Ulrich Beck, a German sociologist; the other is Manuel Castells, another very prominent sociologist, and what these scholars have said about the impact of globalization on Social Sciences in general and Sociology in particular.

This will open up some of the most recent debates about the arguments and concerns about changing the nature of social sciences and Sociology in a globalizing world. So, for the first essay, I am taking this essay titled The Cosmopolitan State, Redefining Power in the Global Age. So, this essay, written by Ulrich Beck, is basically a lengthy essay about the changing nature of the nation-state. And it is a fascinating essay in itself, where he talks about the transformation of nation-state in the era of globalization. As, nation state was a product of modernity. The nation-state as an institution emerged along with modernity, which continues to be the most important way nations are organised across the globe. This essay is a fascinating analysis of the transformation of that. It is a theoretical one and a very lengthy essay.

In the first part of this particular essay, Ulrich Beck talks about the transformations of Social Sciences. Why the Social Sciences needs to be more sensitive to the changing global society is a part of what I am talking about today. Why this particular section is included?. There is a very interesting discussion about a change from methodological nationalism to methodological cosmopolitanism, urging all Social Science practitioners, including sociologists, to be open to the changing transformations in society and not to confine their perspective within the national boundaries because globalization has become a reality. And what is national is no longer confined within the geographic boundaries of the nation.

However, it has been heavily impacted by transnational or global flows and then processes. So, that is the argument, and I am using this essay, and we will go through this essay briefly. So, what does globalization mean in the context of Social Sciences? What

does globalization mean? I define globalization as a reflexive rather than a linear process, taking the global and the local or the universal and the particular, not as opposite, but as combined and mutually implicit principles. These processes are historically variable and multi-dimensional.

This is a very important definition because, at least in the beginning, there was a tendency to equate globalization with Americanization or globalization with Westernization. So, to the argument that everything local is getting transformed after the influence of the West or it will be nothing but the West is taking over the rest of the world. However, the more recent theorisation, the more nuanced theorisation argues that the local and the global coexist, but there is a very interesting negotiation and dialectical process between the local and the global. So, he defines globalization as a reflexive rather than a linear process. It is not a linear process, but it is a reflective process where certain things undergo rapid transformation on the basis of how they interact with other things. In the meantime, it also influences the other, the spiralling of each other, not as opposite, but as combined and mutually implicit principles.

Their application goes further than mere interconnectedness, changing the relationship between nation-states and nation-state societies. They alter the quality of social and political within nation state societies. Here, I refer to the internal globalization of even cosmopolitanisation of nation-state societies from within. So, he argues that the nation state is not going to wither away, nation state is not going to disappear or to become irrelevant, but what is happening within the nation state is undergoing a significant qualitative change.

There is even a cosmopolitanisation of a nation state societies from within. So, the nation-state is no longer cut off from the rest of society or the society within the nation-state is no longer cut off from the rest of the world, and the society within a nation-state is getting internal globalization or even a a process of cosmopolitanization. But what does internal globalization of cosmopolitanization from within mean? One can answer this question by referring to the theory of reflexive modernization. Beck and

Giddens and Lash, they have a very interesting essay on reflexive modernization, where they tend to disagree with the theorisation of postmodernism.

After 1980s, there is a huge theoretical advancement in the name of postmodernism, which to a large extent, rejected outrightly many of the principles or premises of modernity. But most of the sociologists, including Castells and Ulrich Beck and Giddens are not ready to hop on this postmodernist bandwagon. Rather, they argue that what is happening after 1980s is a radicalised modernity or what they call it as a reflexive modernity. The first modernity has kind of radicalised itself and Beck and calls it as a reflexive modernity.

One central operational thesis, basic indicator of reflexive modernisation is the pluralisation of borders. This is supposed to be true for fundamental dualisms like the borders between nature and culture. So, one of the important arguments about reflexive modernisation is that the binaries are becoming less rigid. The fundamental dualisms like borders between nature and culture, nature and society or nature and culture, society and unawareness, subject and object, peace and war, life and death, we and other are becoming more and more complicated. If one focuses on globalization from within, the pluralisation of borders means the pluralisation of nation-state borders or the implosion of the dualisms between the national and international.

There a multitude of non-identical borders emerging from which theme and dimensions and with what effects? For example, he is talking about the asymmetry between mobility of capital and labor migration, cultural, the transnational communication flows and lifeflows, lifestyles, private and public cross-border networks, decision-making structures, number of types of transnational marriages and births, political, state, the post-national citizenship. These are all some of the most recent advancements. For example, the post-national citizenship, there are theories about a new generation of people with cosmopolitan outlook, cosmopolitan lifestyle, who are globetrotters, who do not live in a particular place for long, who are frequent travellers, who do not identify themselves with any any particular motherland or native place or anything. So, a host of

new transformations including global risk and technology and internet and other things have to define the nature of the contemporary society. So, in terms of methodological nationalism, this is a very important term, in terms of methodological nationalism, which has so far been dominant in the Social Sciences, these borders coincide, deviations are considered exceptions, the axiom of the congruity of borders.

So, what does it mean? For example, if you are studying Indian society, then naturally, it is assumed that you are talking about Indian society as an entity that is well within the boundaries of the Indian nation-state. If you are talking about the Indian economy, you understand this is an entity that is very much within the boundaries of Indian territory or Indian nation-state. Sociology and Economics are supposed to study Indian society and the Indian economy as if they are enclosed within the boundaries. That particular scenario is changing according to Ulrich Beck. Now, in terms of methodological cosmopolitanism, these borders diverge.

So, earlier, if you were to talk about citizenship or if you talk about culture or society or economy, it was supposedly from within this particular border, but at the time of methodological cosmopolitanism, these borders diverged. Internal globalization, thus stands for dissonance in the drawing of border lines, the axiom of the incongruity of borders. In other words, borders are no longer predetermined; they can be chosen and interpreted, but simultaneously also, they have been redrawn and legitimated anew; there are both. An increase in plausible ways of drawing new borders and a growing tendency to question existing borders. So, he is talking about the reason, the process of globalization are how it is bringing in a lot more complexity in terms of our understanding of what is inside, what is outside, what are the kind of a border and what are the dualisms and then binaries that we use to have taken for granted.

When cultural, political, economic, and legal borders are no longer congruent, contradictions exist between the various exclusion principles. This is again an interesting topic because it is almost similar to what Arjun Appadurai argued when he theorised globalization as an increasing disjuncture between various scapes between ethnoscape,

financecapex, then mediascape and ideascapex. This is exactly what it means. It is no longer happening within the boundaries of a nation-state, but rather there is increasing disjuncture. When the cultural, economic and legal borders are no longer congruent, you may have a political map of India representing its political boundaries, its geographical boundaries, but these geographical boundaries are less significant and with a cultural boundary or with an economic boundary or legal boundary.

A legal boundary need not be congruent with a political or geographical boundary. A multinational company who is working in India need not go by the legal system within the country itself or the cultural aspects, the media that you consume, the food that you consume, and the entertainment that you buy need not be specific to the culture, to the geographic or to the physical boundaries of the place in which you live. That is an argument about the non-congruence of the the incongruity of borders. Globalization, understood as the pluralisation of borders, produces, in other words, a legitimation crisis of national morality of exclusion. This emerges under two conditions.

Firstly, insofar as the nation, national and social and political problems context becomes transnational and are recognised as such, demanding transnational solutions in turn. So, another very important point often spoken about is that most of the problems that humanity is facing in a globalized era are transnational and are much beyond the capacity of a single nation-state to understand and resolve. Whether it is the case of international terrorism or the case of global warming, pollution or economic recessions, all these things have become much more transnational in character and are much beyond the capacity of individual states. Secondly, demanding transnational solutions in turn. Secondly, insofar as national and ethnic ties are pluralised, overlap and are de-essentials within one and the same lived context. Insofar as national and ethnic ties are pluralised, people of a particular nationality no longer live within the geographic boundary. That is the whole study about diaspora. Now, the presence of Indians in the USA or the UK and that the current Prime Minister of the UK is of Indian origin. So, this is going to be the situation in the coming days as well. So, Indians will be there everywhere, Pakistanis will be there everywhere, or Chinese will be there everywhere, or Americans will be there

everywhere and that particular situation creates a lot more complexities, and it is no longer a situation where a particular nationality lives within the boundaries of that particular nation-state.

At this point, questions as to the distribution membership open up. On which principles are the internal hierarchies between minorities, the majority and migrants of communities or states based? In addition, questions about the distribution of civil rights, who and on which principle decide who enjoys civil rights. So, these are all the definitions of the questions that Ulrich Beck argues. We begin to influence every society, and of course, that includes India as well.

Maybe India has not globalized to the extent that you may not find many foreign people coming and settling down here, but that is not the situation elsewhere. He essentially talks about in this particular section that globalization has come, and it will continue to be a major force to reckon with. People will move across the globe; people will do large-scale transnational migration, and people in the form of refugees, workers, visitors, and students will travel across places. So, that will create quite a lot of challenges to every society.

Now, if that is the case, what are the implications of such a scenario to Social Sciences is what he is actually asking and that is what we are also interested in. The question of a cosmopolitan Social Science. So, his argument or rather a consensual argument is that modern Social Sciences are preoccupied with the nation states. As I mentioned earlier, Indian Sociology was concerned with Indian society as seen as people living within the national boundaries, and there was hardly any attention paid to the kind of large transnational influences and transnational flows. In the understanding of Social Sciences, society generally stands for its plural societies.

This, however, implies that there are as many societies as nation states. The state is the creator, controller and guarantor of society. That is a conventional understanding that we have when you talk about Indian society; we often equate it with the Indian state and

India is seen as an Indian state having complete control over the Indian society. Societies are considered containers that emerge and are sustained within the states' sphere of influence. This container theory of nation-state societies, which define and limit societies territorially, is deeply ingrained in the self-perception of Sociology.

In its categories and concepts, one could say in the sociological imagination, the nation-state gaze has become Sociology's limit of perception. In this context, it is possible to speak of a methodological nationalism, meaning explicit and implicit assumption that nation state is the container of social processes and that the nation provides the core order for the analysis of social, economic and political processes. It is exactly this nation state a priori of the Social Sciences which is becoming fundamentally questionable in the course of the pluralisation of Borders. The same point that we discussed the conventional understanding that the geographical boundary of a nation state, it contains almost every processes that happen here whether it is cultural, economic, social or political or anything.

And that situation is no longer tenable because there is a pluralisation of border happening and the a physical boundary or the geographical boundary or even the political boundary is becoming less significant. Thus we have to query for example, the assumed correspondence between national territory and the national as well as the related implication that the nation and the non-national are two logically mutually exclusive conditions. In fact, however, this previously constitutive distinction collapses as a result of globalization process, what occurs within the territory of sovereign state is not necessarily to be read as a national process. Rather, it can be heavily influenced by the kind of a transnational processes. The localisation of the global or non-national within national territories and the national outside the national territory undermine the key differentiation of the national and the non-national as being logically and empirically mutually exclusive conditions, which lies at the heart of so many methods or conceptual frameworks of the Social Science. This is the core of the argument.

. You can have a company here maybe, but owned by somebody from a particular

country, but the whole process of production might happen somewhere else or they can even shift that or the whole process might happen in the digital world even without, with very limited physical presence. So, what is national and what is transnational? What is happening within the country and what is happening outside the country appear to be more complicated. The localisation of the global within the national territories and of the national outside national territories. The other multinational companies coming and then setting up stores and then activities here in a particular nation as well as the people from within the nation going out and then setting up at other places, all these things are becoming extremely commonplace in a globalized era. A widespread and certainly justified worry within the empirically oriented Social Sciences is that an inclusion of globalization phenomenon and questions create the dangers of a relapse of Social Sciences into a metaphysics.

That means it might lose its emphasis on the empiricism. An empirical Social Science of globalization is not in sight and may even be impossible because empiricism usually works at a much lower level and that may not be possible in the case of a globalized society. The fear that globalization will lead to a revival of theoretical sociological theory without an empirical base has been qualified by numerous studies, but cannot be dismissed so easily in view of the over theoretical nature of this debate. The conceptual and methodological study of cosmopolitan sociology of the internal globalization of the nation state societies should thus have the goal of creating a cosmopolitan index. This should include the systematic treatment of questions such as the following.

So, for example, he gives this example, why not sociology take up a question of preparing a cosmopolitan index. So, for example, looking into, of course, all these studies by Beck and Castells, all these are heavily from the experience of the European societies which are far more globalized than a society like India. But the concerns and debates about sociology remain valid. How many people in Germany, Great Britain, France, etc. marry foreigners of another nationality, how many children grow up in a binational context? How many languages are spoken? What do people most identify with? The place they live, local identity, the nation, national identity or with the fate of

the world as a whole, cosmopolitan identity.

He is asking a such a series of questions basically to construct a cosmopolitan index. Because this was unthinkable or this was unnecessary sometime back in most of the societies because people who live in a particular nation state would be of that particular nation, would be getting married to those particular people or people from the same group, speaking the same language, consuming the the cultural products that are produced within that, but that is no longer the case. So, he is giving the example of producing a cosmopolitan index for that matter. Now, similar data ought to be taken from the areas of tourism in travel in general. Great care has to be taken however not to oversimplify the interpretation of such indicators or variables as a proof of change of consciousness or behavior pointing towards a cosmopolitan society.

So, he is giving examples about how this for example, this whole idea about cosmopolitan index is important and why that every nation is now confronted with this question of having more and more people of different nationalities coming into those societies and living and what issues and what problems that this particular situation can arise. It is however extremely difficult to break up forms of observation and conceptual systems centered on nation state even when they are confronted with the problems of empirical validity and logical inconsistency. What is required therefore is an epistemological break. The predominant tools and methods of analysis are simply not adequate to address the roots of the new power game, the drama of transnational border, pluralisations and conflicts and to uncover and decode them at the empirical theoretical level. So, he says that globalization really necessitates a radical transformation of the ontological and epistemological basis of Social Science.

Because Social Science has a particular history, especially Sociology has a particular history which about originating in the 19th and 20th century in Europe and under particular context and that context provided its epistemological anchorage to this particular discipline. And Beck would argue or even Manuel Castles would argue that the time has come to revise this epistemological base. Ultimately, the discourse of

globalization casts doubts on the relation between our knowledge of the world on one hand and social structure on the other. Social structures or social reality and dynamics to put it more carefully are being transnationalised. An appropriate epistemological change of perception corresponding to this ontological transformation is required.

That is from a methodological nationalism to a methodological cosmopolitanism. There is a necessity for a new differentiation of social and political analysis between the levels of appearance. National phenomena are possibly circularly misinterpreted in the nation state frameworks of analysis and at the level of essence.

They have to be analysed and theoretically explained as transnational phenomenon and dynamics in a cosmopolitan framework. Use of the nation state paradigm can this be or become very illusionary or mistaken, leading us to believe that we are observing national phenomena when in fact we are dealing with transnational processes or processes endearing a new ambiguity. Transnational dynamics are refracted in persisting nation state institutions and forms of consciousness, Very important argument. Many things that we tend to consider and then understand as national phenomena need not be national phenomena, but are heavily influenced by transnational processes. A host of examples, one of the examples could be the recent or the current discourses about sexuality. The current discourse about sexuality, multiple sexuality, multiple sexual orientations and sexual multiple sexual identities. These are all part of a much larger transnational discourse which is taking very different and concrete and localised forms and articulations in the Indian context. Results that are thus identified as national phenomena and strategies even in the context of standard international comparative studies should in fact be identified under conditions of border pluralisation as consequence of mobile transnational capital, cultures and information flows.

Technologically determined changes in the human images, risks and transnational inequalities etc. The paradigm shift is founded on and signaled by dualism characterised by the opposite terms of international and transnational. So, he is making a distinction between international and transnational. When you are talking about an international process, you give predominance to the nation state.

Whereas, a transnational gives more importance to the process rather than the national, significance to the national. So, there is a shift when you talk from international to

transnational. When in an international scenario, nation-states are still important, and you see nation-states playing an important role in making certain things kind of international. Whereas, a transnational, the significance and centrality of nation state has come down very, significantly.

So, that is what is being explained here. The opposing thesis of transnational actually does open this end-day framework of meanings from the inside. Against the background of the transnational, it suddenly emerges that the national and international cannot be clearly differentiated. Nor can they serve to separate homogenous entities from one another. National realms are denationalised, so that the national is no longer national and international no longer international. In the course of transnationalisation, the container of power that is the nation-state is simultaneously been open from the inside and outside and a new view is established.

A new perspective of space and time, and new coordinates of social and political, as already mentioned. The world is designed anew, justifying a new epochal term that of the second age of modernity. So, gives lot of examples. Globalized, the same goes for the conflicts of gender, class, ethnicity, and homosexuality, which, though they have emerged from the national realm, have long been left behind and, in reality, overlap and interconnected with the transnational, same point that we discussed.

Globalization is taken to its conclusion. To summarise, the argument thus far means that the Social Sciences must be founded anew as a science of transnational reality. Conceptually, theoretically, methodologically and also organisationally. This is the core argument. The key concepts of modern society are household, family, class, democracy, power, state, economy, public sphere, politics, etc.

must be removed from their fixed setting in the methodological nationalism. So, all these terms we used to anchor within the nation-state need to be removed from that and then seen in a transnational picture. They must be redefined or rethought in the framework of methodological cosmopolitanism. This has to be done elsewhere. So, he is not going into the elaborate thing. However, a table is given where he makes a very useful distinction between methodological nationalism and methodological cosmopolitanism.

For example, borders in the methodological nationalism that is in the conventional sense of Social Science is a congruence of borders. The national differentiation inside and outside dominates all areas. Political membership is predetermined and then exclusive. You have to be born in a particular nation to get the nationality.

Whereas methodological cosmopolitanism is very different. Borders have continually to be redrawn and justified. Elective, plural, political membership. Then similarly, there is economy, state politics, class, social inequalities, ethnicity, culture, everything so ethics and globalization. So, the table given in the book is something very useful to understand the different frameworks used in the era, in the time of methodological nationalism and methodological cosmopolitanism. So, why this part of the essay? Maybe in the remaining part of the essay, Beck talks more specifically about the cosmopolitan state, which I am not going to discuss because that is a different topic.

But anybody is interested to understand what is Ulrich Beck's arguments about the transformation happening to nation state in the era of globalization, this is a very important essay. He talks about the transformation in the autonomy and sovereignty of the nation-state and how that was different in the first modernity, very fascinating essay. But this particular section that we discussed so far is I think sufficient enough to give you a broad understanding of the larger debate within globalization studies about the need to reorient Social Sciences basically to understand the global character of our contemporary society.

So, the transnationality has become the most prominent term. It has become the buzzword, and Social Sciences, including Sociology, have to reinvent themselves to comprehend this new reality, and that is what this argument talks about. So, as I mentioned, the reason why I included it is because it is an essay or part of an essay that reflects the kind of influence of globalization studies on the nature of disciplinary boundaries, disciplinary definitions and frameworks. So, I will end the class here, and we

will take up one more essay in the coming class that is by another important sociologist, Manuel Castells. See you then. Thank you.