Editorial

Teaching Social Sciences for a Better Future

The 'haves vs have-nots' discourse has become a strongly grounded reality in our country with respect to access to education in the past two years. Digital divide persisting in the country is crucial evidence for this. National Sample Survey (2017-18), prior to the outbreak of the pandemic, reported that less than 15 percent of the rural Indian households have internet access whereas it is 42 percent among the urban households. The India Case Study by UNICEF 2021 reported that only 32 percent of rural and 54 percent of urban population of 12+ years have internet access. In fact, other than the role of infrastructure and geography in educational access, gender and class also plays a role. Reports also suggest that the divide between the marginalised and the privileged sections of the society has also widened, particularly in terms of their educational access.

A notable impact of this pandemic is that 'collective good' (Rheingold, 1993) or the perks of being in contact with other people in a community has been challenged systematically. Same is with the culture of educational institutions developed over time through intergenerational exchange of institutional and educational ethos. This break in the transmission of ethos is obvious today in educational institutions post-pandemic, at least, after the first three waves of the pandemic if not certain about calling it post-pandemic. Today, in our attempts to reinvent normal routines in education, pandemic-driven adaptations in the teaching-learning processes are also carried along. For instance, conducting hybrid classes, over dependency on e-contents, continuing with online assignments and assessments etc. Many in the field of education deplore and resist such spill-overs into the post-pandemic phase whereas, others attribute the formers' resistance to 'culture lag'

(Ogburn, 1922), the lag in the mindset over techno-material development. Now, when the dynamic classroom spaces become ready for 'regular classes', how is it going to spare us with teaching-learning and what should be the focus of social sciences?

The Way Forward

Social science education has to play a socially productive role in today's society. Unlike sciences, social sciences are not able to catch the attention of commoners. Its use in the social realm has always been doubted. Flooded with ideologies and perspectives, many allege that the social sciences are becoming purposeless. A glance at the history of knowledge would reveal to us that 'social reality' has always been explained using the dominant ideology of the time. Knowledge production may require ideological inclinations. But, its dissemination in the classroom has to be done cautiously with a balanced representation of other perspectives. Teachers must avoid taking extreme ideological positions as it might lead young minds to develop myopic orientations. Nevertheless, when no truth is absolute, and no knowledge is sacrosanct, teachers have to play the crucial role of identifying information, skills, and knowledge, which are 'good' for the society in a given context.

Social sciences are criticised for their critical antagonistic approaches towards the established social, economic, and political arrangements. It is true that the perspectives in social sciences would tempt any fertile mind to deconstruct and question the established arrangements. All social, economic and political arrangements have both positive and negative aspects to be introspected. But it becomes problematic when one starts focusing only on the negative side of an arrangement in a given context ignoring the functional significance of it as a whole. Today, when social sciences are enriched with different perspectives, it is necessary and possible to have a balanced understanding of society. Dichotomous thinking leads to prejudices about alternate views and opinions. Fruits of knowledge lie not at the extremities of opinions/views, but at the juncture where different opinions/views meet, moderate and offer guidance for the benefit of the society.

Historically, knowledge development is attributed to the result of the human attempt to master the nature for self-preservation. This natural desire sometimes leads us to experience anxiety stemming from the fear of 'the other' people. They could easily be seen as a threat to one's success and existence in today's competitive society. The younger generation today has no other option than to submit themselves to this competitive ambiance or to totally ignore the social surrounding with a blasé attitude. In this situation, social science education has to be aimed at training the younger generation to realise their true social self by resisting the natural pull for immediate gratification through unhealthy competition. Aligning oneself with what is good for the society is vital in this regard. As a prerequisite, one has to develop the ability to negotiate with the societal push and pull by neither giving in completely to the competitive spirit of the modern society nor with an escaping attitude of ignoring it. Moderating oneself in this regard is an important virtue to be inculcated through social science education in today's fast changing world.

In this age of booming information technology, youngsters need not depend upon their elders for information. Unlike the traditional society, often the flow of abundant information overwhelms our capacity to analyse and assimilate. Today, we can get raw information on any topic of interest based on our natural proclivity. In the absence of a goal, we will be directionless in the perusal of the collected information. It is necessary to train ourselves to keep the objective of social good as an anchorage for sourcing and analysing information. In the absence of purpose, natural human desire for liberty and the quest for personal contentment will take precedence, undermining what is desirable for the collective. Therefore, it is important to train the younger generation to prioritise societal needs over individual whims and fancies. In this regard, writings of visionaries must be made part of the social science curriculum.

At times, any liberal economy, for its growth and survival, has to promote consumption by creating artificial needs for luxury products. In today's consumerist society, one consumes products and services not only for the fulfilment of his/her needs. What one

consumes becomes a symbol of his/her status as well. This attitude has led to the proliferation of products in the market and unrestrained consumption habits. Our younger generation is the most vulnerable group to this type of consumerism. It seems that there are no looming risks involved in this trend. But, in fact, unrestrained consumption is an expression of an untrained human mind which attempts to make use of all shallow self-gratifying opportunities provided by the immediate social environment. Such a tendency would kill creativity and innovation to promote unhealthy competition by diverting human energy towards self-gratification. Most societies with surplus production face this challenge today. Social science education must help our younger generation find self-contentment in socially productive activities. Promoting altruism and simplicity through social science education is the need of the hour.

People in modern societies live with multiple identities. Identities are either enabling or disabling according to the context in which they are manifested. Social science education must inculcate values that would help people transcend the limiting qualities of identities to promote social harmony. Extreme ideologies would polarise the masses and create contexts which would facilitate the entrenchment of the disabling nature of identities like caste, religion, ethnicity, language, etc. Discussing and debating these identities in the classroom must be directed at mitigating the disabling nature of them. Mere ideological orientation would not help in this regard. Teaching social sciences must be aimed at helping students to overcome their unconscious proclivity to the 'dominant' and the disregard for the 'subordinate' cultures and people. This objective could be achieved only through a self-detachment from disabling identities prompted through a deeper understanding of their essence. Such an understanding would also lead to greater social tolerance.

Discussions and debates in the classroom and engaging the students on different ideologies would help the latter to participate effectively in the public sphere (Habermas, 1962/1991; Fraser, 1990). Creating an academic ambiance for unrestricted discussion and debate is important. Such an ambiance will help to strive for

solidarity by engaging different opinions and ideologies. At the same time, it is also important to constantly evaluate the usefulness and repercussions of issues that we take for discussion in a given context. Of course, everything is worthy of academic discussion. But, unlike sciences, social sciences are non-paradigmatic. Diverse and polemic perspectives coexist. Merely subscribing to them will not help for the betterment of society. One needs to practice the art of negotiating and synthesising those diverse perspectives for the benefit of society. For instance, the ability to synthesise the best out of the perspectives of Gandhi and Tagore on nationalism. It is high time to use discussions and debates in social sciences for the benefit of the society rather than enjoying them as mere intellectual exercises.

In this Issue

In the current issue of the *Artha Journal of Social Sciences*, we have four articles with four different socially relevant themes. In the article *Conceptualising the Phenomenon of Femicide as an Embodiment of Symbolic Violence*, Aastha Mishra discusses the act of femicide and analyses it using the framework of Pierre Bourdieu. This article has attempted to interrogate the phenomenon of femicide and find the connection between elementary-physical and the complementary-symbolic dimensions of violence. This paper put forth the argument that rather than the act of femicide in its literal sense, the phenomenon implies symbolic meanings and soft violence. The author claims that if femicide is understood from both physical and symbolic aspects, it is possible to derive a correlation between both and hence the physical-symbolic dichotomy will no longer exist. It is agreeable with the author that any practice of physical violence is backed by its symbolic counterpart.

The social reality of divisions among the labouring community in India is portrayed in the article titled *Social Divisions among the Indian Labouring Masses* by Annavajhula J C Bose & Surendra Pratap. The absence of opportunity and under-representation of labourers, particularly Dalits and women, in the policy making

process and accessing national resources, are discussed elaborately in this article. The authors have highlighted how the social, cultural, economic and political systems in India are built to operate in such a way to produce and reproduce the social hierarchies and thereby intensify the divisions among the labourers.

In the article titled *Evaluating the Effectiveness of UGC's Policy to Prevent Sexual Harassment: A Systematic Review*, Disha Pathak has made an analysis on the effectiveness of the policies formulated by the University Grants Commission (UGC) in India to prevent sexual harassment in the context of the higher educational institutions in India. By evaluating the policies of the UGC (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal of sexual harassment of women employees and students in higher educational institutions) Regulation 2015 and the Saksham Report (Measures for ensuring the safety of Women and Programmes for Gender Sensitisation on Campuses) 2013, the author finds crucial loopholes that needs to be addressed by the policymakers, such as adopting proper care while appointing Internal Complaints Committees (ICC), ensuring the representation of sexual minorities in such committees and matters concerning gender programmes.

Joseph Magali & Godfrey Japhet Jacob in their article *The Influence of Entrepreneurship Orientation on Loan Repayment: Evidence from Morogoro and Mvomero Teachers SACCOS Ltd.* investigated how loan repayment performance is influenced by entrepreneurship orientation, taking teachers from Morogoro and Mvomero Savings and Credits Cooperative Societies as the sample population for the study. This explanatory study suggests that factors like competitive aggressiveness and autonomy positively influenced the loan repayment performance where as, innovation influenced the loan repayment performance negatively. The authors, through this work, recommends the government to initiate policies that will enforce entrepreneurship training for SACCOS clients.

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