Contextualizing Social Science in Nepal[1]

Dev Raj Dahal,[2]

Abstract

Social science informs about the ideals and trains experts to deal with the complex social realities. It has a public purpose rooted in what we call dharma (professional and institutional responsibility) as opposed to the arrogance of reason, self-will and self-rationalization intrinsic to contemporary rational choice and modernity. Learning has a synergy—establishing connection between the world of social science theories and the drama of social life. A lack of mutual learning between Nepal's traditional faith intellectuals and modern reason-based social scientists has created a big hiatus and contradiction. The academic life of social scientists in Nepal is completely outside of spiritual, moral and ethical influence experienced by ordinary public. The spiritual blindness of modern social scientists has thus opened multiple gaps between their worldview and those of the citizens on various frontiers--theoretical knowledge and practical experience, technical understanding and composite knowledge and secularity of social science and the vitality of the Hindu-Buddhist scriptures in the popular mind, culture, behavior and practices. This has reinforced a division between the system of knowledge of social scientists and the life-world of people.   The proponents of new social movements in Nepal, such as women, Dalits, Janajatis, Madhesis, youths and marginalized population are seeking a structural shift in reason-based knowledge to both reason and feeling in social science knowledge discovery. This movement can open the "captive mind" to social learning of contextual knowledge, conduct research with the citizens, provide inputs to the policy makers and reverse their linear, structure-bound, rationalist and disciplinary thinking into the one that represents what the Nepal mandala, the Nepali space, is really like and how to improve it for the better. The renewal and indigenization of qualitative social science research is important to overcome the spirited challenges posed by social forces in Nepal and contribute to the application of scientific reasoning in public policy and social change.

Key Words: social movement, Nepal

1.   Questions

What is the connection between social science and the life-world of various social classes in Nepal? Is the division of social science into various disciplines—anthropology, psychology, culture studies, economics, sociology, geography, etc capable of addressing the growing complexity of problems in Nepalese society? Or do these divisions simply represent a caricature of dominant social science discourse? Are the social science theories derived from the public political culture of the West suitable to Nepal's conditions? How can the underlying consensus between the general theories of social science and indigenous practice in Nepal be achieved? Is social science universal or culturally relative/ socially constructed? This paper focuses on the concept, structural constraints, art and science of social science, joy of teaching and research, delight in methodology, role of social science in Nepal, the resilience of classical

worldview, advent of reason-based social science, critical challenges and a short conclusion to capture the general imagination of the discipline.

2.   Elasticity of Concept

Social science can be considered as a human science because it is continuously engaged in a dialogue with the essential ideas of human affairs—human nature, human interest, freedom, laws, social justice, society, institutions, politics, etc. Social scientists cannot derive ideas independent of their own institutional background and worldviews. Learning and research largely depend on the awareness of the self-interests of learners and researchers. This demonstrates that social scientific thinking is based largely on possibility, likelihood and probability rather than objectivity, precision and certainties. The freedom and autonomy of teaching and research in social science are allowed only in democratic societies. It is because social science helps in the promotion of social consciousness, opinion and will formation, production of a number of choices in matters of public concerns as well as allows the evaluation and judgment of human action.

Science of society is not culturally neutral. "The one who sees reality differently has to account for his different viewpoint and his value premises, and to explain his motivation for choosing them. A disinterested or neutral view is not possible—for logical reasons" (Myrdal, 1970: 140). Education and culture are indivisible parts of human society and work life. For that reason, its resemblance to the natural sciences in terms of predictive generalization can be fiercely contested. "Modern natural science owes its great triumphs to having looked upon and treated earth-bound nature from a truly universal viewpoint, that is, from an Archimedean standpoint taken, willfully and explicitly, outside the earth" (Arendt,1958: 11). The rigorousness of social scientific

research, however, enables one to apply appropriate external knowledge and tools to gain contextual learning about constantly changing human affairs. The formula of social science can be grasped only by the harder route of contextual awareness of the subtle links of differing disciplines and even of genuinely comparative ways of doing socially relevant research.

Social utility of any discipline is established by the purpose it serves for the social goal of creating a good society. The choice of public goal is evaluative where policy makers assume position rather than becoming value-neutral and scientific. It can be scientific only if all social scientist share, up to their capacity, in determining public policy with the citizens and the state and strengthen their personal dignity by upholding professional integrity, ethical values and compassion towards citizens. Inventing new ideas are essential for the transfer of knowledge at various generations, solving societal problems and contributing to public policy intended to promote common goods. Social science deals the issues that fundamentally shape human lives and their environment. This suggests that social scientists are morally responsible for their teaching and research products. If their moral responsibility and action contribute to the promotion of positive values, institutions and processes, it will help the relevance of social science in nation-building and social change as well as boost its autonomy as an autonomous, inter-subjective discipline.

Social science training, professional identity and competence must have the tendency to make their efforts both purposeful and continuous. It enriches their initiatives, relevance and solidarity. Genuine fellowship in occupation makes collective endeavor easier. Does the social science methodology capture the "third wave" of science (microelectronics, information and communication) and the third wave of human rights and

democracy? Or, is it muddling around behavioral revolution of scientification of social science and provoking a revolt against it by post-behavioral revolution by "establishing the relevance" of social science to social problems-- conflicts, youth unemployment, poverty, HIV-AIDs, nuclear proliferation, terrorism, torture, ecocide, human trafficking, slavery, etc.?

3.　Structural Constraints

Social science is heavily leaned towards the industrial and democratic revolutions and Enlightenment. Consequently, most of its theories are derived from the development processes of the West, such as dialogue on moral philosophy, reason, state, polity, social contract, social classes, impersonal laws and institutions. Structural freedom and autonomy of social scientists are, therefore, essential preconditions to creatively apply the general social science knowledge to the local situation and consciousness. The codification of the philosophy of positivism by August Comte laid stress on the logical unity of all sciences through value-free, factual knowledge and liberation of the reason from religion. Positivists used the notions like "objectivity, rigor and method to isolate science from non-science" and escape from the excesses of German idealism (Rorty, 1987:242). But, the continuous failure of reason to eliminate traditional status, passion and prejudice from the public life and public policy to shape human progress and solve social problems has given birth to critical theory, an anti-positivist appraisal of human knowledge (Borradori, 2003: 68). The proponents of critical theory argue that reason once used as a means to fight against prejudice and tyranny lost its emancipatory role in the hands of efficiency and capacity building programs of bureaucracy, technocracy and the judges. "They saw Marxism less as a science than as a method stressing the historical and cultural character of human social organization (Polity, 2002:3).

This theory has added new insights into the social science as it stressed on the historical consciousness of the present situation and brought to light multiple sources of knowledge—spiritual, rational and scientific, and its numerous forms and functions—emancipatory, empirical-scientific and hermeneutics—in society (Rorty, 2002:165). Hermeneutics is an interpretive theory and has been used as a social inquiry by the students of humanities as an alternative to legal positivist social science. It is "the art of understanding linguistically communicable meaning and to render it comprehensible in cases of distorted communication" (Habermas, 1987: 175). In the recent tradition of hermeneutics, "represented by authors such as Hans-Georg Gadmar and Paul Ricoeur, the intelligibility of human activity and institutions is associated less with what Max Weber called, 'subjective meaning' than with linguistic frames of reference" (Polity, 2002:3). But, there are several pitfalls with historicism—the notion that social science can establish general laws of historical development-- as it subordinates knowledge to the service of interest, power and prejudice than the service to ordinary citizens (D'Amico, 1989:73-95).

The nature of social science is context-bound and operates within the constraints of historical and philosophical principles of the West. This means social scientists' discovery of knowledge is theory-history-philosophy-determined whose research output might not resonate the historical perception of reality held by ordinary citizens of Orient. Even popular consent derived through discussion, election, communication and education on the output of research generate completely different standards of rationality. The political systems of the West have tried to bridge the gap between the intellectual class and popular opinion by means of professional mobility, regular discourse

free of domination, will-and-opinion formation and the rule of law.

Social science may be about social discipline, but it informs ideals and trains experts to deal with the complex social realities. This means it has public purpose rooted in what we call *dharma* (professional and institutional responsibility) as opposed to the arrogance of reason, self-will and self-rationalization intrinsic to contemporary rational choice and modernity. The belief in the solution of all social problems through the application of quantitative method of the natural science has been contradicted by evidence. And the universal relevancy of social scientific theories over time and across cultures has not been validated by natural-science-based reality tests. This has renewed the interest of social scientists in qualitative research. Only a structurally liberated mind is capable of undertaking qualitative research and innovation and contextualizes universal knowledge to local conditions. But, argues Habermas, "Freedom demands an action-orientation that is reflective and reaches into the future" (2007: 4).

4. Art and Science of Social Science

Social science can neither be reduced to a form of knowledge which is universally scientific nor without orientation to science. This dilemma of gaining knowledge about society's recurrent patterns as an art and "social" as a science presupposes researchers' engagements with citizens to understand their decision-making behaviors under various circumstances affecting their lives, liberty and property. An interface of social scientists with normative ideals helps in protecting human rights from the crassly neutral, value-free laws of market materialism, fundamentalism and populism of all sorts. Individuals, groups or parties based on these factors attempt to instrumentalize the diversity of society and try to promote homogeneity in the image of self-interest. This is a

threat to creative understanding of social pluralism and the right to dissent embedded in the concept of public intellectuals. The basic concepts that most scientists and social scientists derive from their learning are not-too-dissimilar that promote and nurture democratic culture—the meritocracy of thoughts that cross national boundaries and societies. The significance of diffusion, in the form of publication of outcome, public education and social change, begins the dialogue concerning innovation.

It is not easy to make social science scientific because it cannot be unbounded from ideologies and utopias. Many "isms," which sought to achieve the "end of philosophy," "end of ideology," "end of modernity," or "end of history" are still rooted in a grand utopia--the notion that belief in a particular ideology can bring a perfectly harmonious world order. The failure of each grand utopia was attributed to the fact that each sealed itself off from the positive criticism, distorted communication and rationalized the control and colonization of citizens which it wanted to emancipate. The proclamation of each "end" has clearly ignored the imperfectability of human nature—some of the irrational thinking, free will and behavior of human action—which acted as obstacles to a more perfect world. This demonstrates the inability of the ideology to understand and to cope with the social problems which the ages posed to human beings.

Every modern society, therefore, provides basic qualification for citizen participation in public affairs through socialization, education, training and historical orientations so that they are governed more by human norms than only by human nature and instincts and able to debunk the myth that underlies any utopia—grand or mini—through a process of *nirwan*, the enlightenment. Science can help human beings both in understanding human nature and falsifying the destructive power of utopia. The belief in the redeeming

power of science can equally be destructive without its relation to social purpose-- the purpose of improving the conditions of human life. This social purpose seeks a moderate confluence between science, social science and humanities and deliberate on the perennial dualisms—mind and material, inevitability and experience and value and fact—of human life.

A functional social system is based on an organizational structure that allows all members to involve in decision-making by combining their resources, educating them and others, formulating ideas and programs that they can articulate and struggling to realize them through the scientific use of the social science. In the absence of critical awareness, governance becomes "polyarchy," the domain of an elite group or the rationalization of elite domination. In this system, mass participation in political power is confined to leadership selection and experts dictate the course of public policy in economic and social matters whether based on indigenous or alien knowledge devoid of local awareness. The selective application of science and social science in the society is governed by the cybernetics like pre-programmed political interest of elites than the very nature of science itself. Social science has yet to resolve the dilemma between scientists' concern for general rule for society and politicians' imperative to flout rigid rules to continuously modify them according to changing needs and circumstances (Morgenthau, 1946: 1-10).

The division of labor of social scientists focusing on various areas is certainly important to cope with the complex division of labor in society and growing demands for the specialization of functions. In this sense, social science is public science, civil science or the science of citizens. As a human science, social science theories and research are geared towards achieving ideal potential of human life, such

as equality of citizens, a system of rights, freedom of organization and expression, power of representation and fulfillment of basic human needs. No other sciences value these concepts very much. For example, history is socially conditioned and determined by the knowledge, interest and power of historians. Therefore, for each new generation it has become an open canvass to project its vision of present and the future. Economics focuses on efficiency and brutal competition, implying the fighting ability of individuals in the marketplace. Economics, in this sense, is the domain of virtue, a legitimizer of greed in social life. Sociology explores the hierarchy of mankind. The degree of freedom of individuals or lack of it depends on their location in the hierarchy. But, equality becomes disastrous if citizens are not properly trained in education and research and enabled them to select the best leadership for governance. Political science is the domain of rights, institution and decision-making. Only a philosophy of social science can create a codependency of various disciplines and optimize their competition for supremacy in the life of society.

5. Joy of Teaching and Research

Teaching social science is a purposeful action because it incorporates systematic educational programs for the students that enable them to achieve social responsibility in the life-world, self-determination, self-confidence and autonomy in public life and decision-making. A good polity requires informed citizens who know about the institutions that dispose of power, the rules through which they operate and the motives of the individuals who govern them. Teaching and research are mutually reinforcing. Both utilize the concepts, values, assumptions and procedures in their search for understanding of the social universe, transmission of knowledge to various generations and contribute to generate better-informed conception of the public interests.

Research is a method of acquiring, conforming and verifying knowledge and information (data) about the meaning of social life and theory of ecological, social, economic and political processes. Social researchers often cross the disciplinary boundaries if the knowledge they intend to discover is inter-subjective in nature. Systematic collection, description, quantification and analysis of information require ideas (conceptualization) and imagination (hypothesis) which are provided by research methodology—the rules and methods social scientists apply in understanding and interpreting the human nature, nature of human relationship and their relationships with the nature, culture and society. Theory-building, generalization and abstractions are worthless unless their propositions (knowledge of relationships, sequences and laws) are tested in the life-world and their approved findings are applied in improving the social standards.

The importance of social research lies in the power of forming images and concepts that catches the essence of things perceived. Concept forms the core of scientific thinking and so the limitations of concepts, by definition, mark the limitation of self-expression—whether it is research or teaching. Learning a concept has a synergy—establishing connection between the world of social science theories and the drama of social life. Obviously, teaching and research in social science is not a part of indoctrination, it is a critical process of self-discovery, innovation and the transmission of public knowledge across various citizens. Genuine teaching and research are independent of power consideration. If they are less genuine, then, students fall prey to the system of exploitation and education becomes largely superficial and unrelated to the reality of citizens' lives. Social scientists' expression of social truth before power and opposition of a condition where citizens are silenced and human rights violated can establish their relevance in society. Enslavement

to power distances them from becoming a scientist and removes their human sensitivity from the lives and hopes of powerless citizens. Social scientist, largely removed from human sensitivity, loses relevance in public life.

Indoctrination controls human thought about public affairs, while the purpose of social science is to liberate their thought and provide choices in policy matters in order to create a basis for civic culture. Those who are subjected to indoctrination, suffer from illusion in later life once they are exposed to media, scholarly research and publications as well as scientific inquiry. Freedom of thought helps to develop a culture of rational argument in which differences and conflicts are solved through dialogue and peaceful means. Social science teaching and research, in this sense, expects a participatory methodology from both researchers and the citizens, because it supports all efforts for the further democratization of attitudes, beliefs and orientations and provides the ownership of all those who had furnished answers to the questions asked by researchers.

6. Delight in Method

Participatory methodology, by definition, is input-oriented, interactive, dialogical and mutually learning. It is entirely different from other instruments of imposing knowledge and information, which are, by nature, oppressive and restrictive of freedom. The purpose of every social science is the liberation of mind and body of the students and strengthening their ideas, values, skills, knowledge and competence. In social science comparison and case studies, therefore, hold enormous significance. Instrumentalization of education makes the students convinced of their intrinsic inferiority, weakens their power of thinking and imagination as well as yields them to a culture of silence. This sort of education is anti-democratic, essentially exclusive and, therefore, prevents the attainment of self-realization. In this sense, social science

teaching and research, have purposive orientation to strengthen participatory democracy.

Social science deals with inter-subjective, rather than objective truth. An element of objectivity can be attained through critical self-reflection and recognizing one's own biases than withholding judgment. Social scientists' search for truth is both contextual and universal depending on the level of generalization, comparison, complexity, embeddedness and abstraction. How waves of civilizations were followed by counter-waves, ruptures and reversals, what went wrong with the development process and how they can be corrected in the future have become a matter of perennial debates among scientists and social scientists. System theorist, David Easton, in his essay "The Future of the Post-behavioral Phase in Social Science" indicates that central tendencies of social science teaching and research are the loss of purpose, direction and euphoria characteristics of behavioral and post-behavioral revolutions.

Now, there is not a single dominant view in social science inquiry and imagination. It has increasingly suffered fragmentation, disorientation and loss. What it requires now is, therefore, integration and coherence of different branches into a creative synthesis so that it can again become an intrinsic part of political wisdom. It is possible if social scientists, humanists and scientists work hard on theoretically-grounded research based on empirical studies, develop a modified constructionist position that is well-founded on universalistic multidisciplinary sciences including biology, natural science, practical philosophers, anthropologists and political scientists to understand the basic human nature, nature of society and their interaction patterns. Many influential strands of the philosophy of science within social sciences, has pointed the unbridgeable gap between

interpretive or hermeneutic and explanatory social science. New problems emerging in the world entail new knowledge, new processes and institutions to solve them. The movement of things, then, follows the movement of contextual thought—both can produce the deepest law of human nature— freedom, justice and solidarity. Here we agree with Amaratya Sen, the Nobel Laureate's equation of development with freedom-- the development of human beings. For the future of social science it would be relevant to conclude with a quote from David Easton again, "If we were looking around for a label to capture one major aspect of the changes already underway as we move to a new phase in the discipline, neo-behaviouralism, might well serve that purpose."

7.   The Role of Social Science in Nepal

Where do Nepalese social scientists stand in relation to the production of knowledge, public policies and formation of critical mass of community for social change? Professional social scientists in Nepal do not treat the Hindu and the Buddhist scriptures as social science although these religions continue to have a profound impact on the daily life of the citizens and have contributed to the formation of their personal and social identity. This fact demonstrates that the academic life of social scientists in Nepal is completely outside of spiritual, moral and ethical influence experienced by ordinary public. Spiritual blindness of Nepalese social scientists has thus opened multiple gaps between their worldview and those of the citizens on various frontiers--theoretical knowledge and practical experience, technical understanding and composite knowledge and secularity of social science and the vitality of the Hindu-Buddhist scriptures in the popular mind, culture, behavior and

practices. This has reinforced a division between the system of knowledge of social scientists and the life-world of people.

8. The Resilience of Classical Worldview

The vitality of Hindu-Buddhist worldview astonishingly presents the legitimacy of their daily contact, communication and conversation in ordinary public life and helps to shape the sociology of knowledge. The proof is that genuine social researchers, as citizens, try to connect themselves with the comprehensive knowledge of people, modestly submit themselves to ordinary public as participant observers and elicit answers to their empirical questions to learn from their contextual understanding, everyday life-experience, memories, multiple voices, beliefs, behaviors and cultural patterns to construct a science of reality. This exposes social researchers' basic understanding of theoretical knowledge into practice and broadens their disciplinary minds. It establishes that the sovereign domain of knowledge are citizens, the resiliency of their philosophically derived worldview and free will who think, speak and act according to their own composite cognition rather than compartmentalized arguments. This condition in no way does justify the intellectual superiority of researchers or social scientists just because they conceptualize and generalize the several points of view of ordinary citizens to produce a synthetic version and claim as their own original creation.

The limitation of empirical test is that it relies on small set of explanatory variables. This raises doubts about the generalization. Lack of societal feedback and approval of generalized knowledge pose another question about its validity, reliability and relevance. Maintenance of regular ties of social scientists with citizens and assumption of responsibility to analyze, change and improve society can provide recognition and validity of their scientific efforts in the accumulation of knowledge. Buddhism has provided a

construction of secular knowledge about reality and was validated by public discourses. Modern empirical discovery also relies on statistical correlation and causal laws of social life though social scientists do not seek endorsement from the public for fear of being old-fashioned or social reaction. Closure of local ideas, oral literature and personal experience of citizens makes research neither social nor science not even contextual in terms of learning from the environment.

Unlike Cartesian science, Buddhism presents a symmetry between past (cause) and present (effect). This method is utilized by political leaders all over the world to resolve various types of problems and conflicts of society. Buddhism also maintains a harmony between the ends and means of social action and advocates, like Jacques Derrida, the deconstruction of selfish desire and structural injustice through the transformation of the system of knowledge and behavior. Unlike mechanistic worldview of Descartes and Newton, both the Hindu and the Buddhist philosophies do not see human life as individual fragments. They are creatively woven into what post-Cartesian system scientist Fritjof Capra calls "web of life" of the wholeness (1977: 9). There is a room for freedom for each individual so long as it does not upset the systemic balance. The post-Cartesian thinking, like Buddhism, is entrenched in life sciences and exposes the "system blindness" of the disciplinary science and social science and their inability to solve the complex problems of society through the application of reason and reason-based action.

Similarly, Hindu-Buddhist philosophy recognizes that knowledge is public, not the intellectual property of those who invented it, relied on the importance of public education rather than its privatization which is common today. It also opposed the greed-based thinking, institutions and behavior which are basic source of the suffering of living beings and

nature. Oblivious of the decadence of social conditions and social forces, the native faith intellectuals—priest, wanderers, sage, teachers and social elites – for centuries sanctified the real over the ideal, fostered the method of rote learning, remained blind to the feeling of lower social classes and women, subjected themselves to social determinism and failed to liberate scholarship from political power. This has become a major cause of anxiety in the historical rationalization of Nepalese society, economy and polity and overcome the nation's backwardness. Why did this collective amnesia occur? Nepal's great poet and essayist Laxmi Prasad Devkota replies, "The immediate and the proximate enslaved our spirits and barred the line for our wider and remoter visions" (1997: 35).

The true *advaita vedanta* treats all atomized phenomena as imperfect manifestation of one reality. A move towards social perfection requires an analysis of society as a whole –its relationships of power, conflict and potential for change— and the material, spiritual and scientific achievement of the whole society. For centuries, the native faith intellectuals of Nepalese society did neither revise their epistemology nor invent any big motives to strengthen the scientific basis of human progress although their origin was organic. This disparity in rhetorical preaching and action led many reformist poets and historians a thorough revision of orthodox knowledge in the light of the realities of the situation. Historian Babu Ram Acharya forcefully debunks the causes--ugly political maneuvers, intrigues, schemes and illicit love affairs of power elites of the country for Nepal's lack of progress and eloquently warns the leaders and intellectuals in his book *Aba Yasto Kahilei Nahos,* not to repeat this dreadful drift again. This book exposes the profane political context in which excessive exploitation of citizens, absolute power and attrition of patriotism among the ruling classes caused deep-seated poverty, illiteracy and backwardness of peasants and workers in Nepal. Even before 1950s, poets, essayists and social reformers criticized the position held by faith intellectuals and the conditions of public life. Their reflections and insights are hardly synthesized in the composite writings of later social scientists. The loss of *rajdharma* (statecraft) in terms of inability to perceive the hierarchical social structure as a whole and an unawareness of *sanatan dharma* (cosmological ordering) broke the spiritual, material, social and moral springs of Nepalese society. There is a need for fresh reflection about the classical ideas and situate them to contemporary relevance.

9.   Advent of Reason-Based Social Science

The reason-based social scientists have set off a counter-current in Nepal in the fifties as they began to de-legitimize the historical knowledge for its weak cognitive capabilities, lack of scientific tradition of positivism and failure to uplift Nepalese society. These social scientists were non-organic, faithless and subordinated themselves to the Western epistemology of blending fact, theory and evaluation, set a hard-hitting critique of faith intellectuals and, accordingly, sought a total break with the traditional intellectual tradition. They saw the native reality through the standards of outside knowledge and uncritically utilized techno-scientific methods to study Nepalese according to "empirical data" and quantifiable variables to determine the nature of society and solve national problems. This method reinforced individual group's self-awareness, its contradiction and differences with other groups and division of labor rather than their common needs to sustain human life and progress. The conflict between economic growth and equity, the parts and the nation as a whole and system and the life-world since then appeared sharp in various social programs. This pushed the state-society equilibrium towards instability and sought to transform the caste-based society into class-based one

through a set of programs—land reforms, market institutions, impersonal laws and urban-centric development. It also suppressed the ability of *dharma*-mediated power and knowledge to maintain cultural patterns. To hide their elite ideology and collaboration with the state power, they pretended themselves as scientists in the facade of value-neutrality. In the process they naively ignored the elementary fact that social science has been developed in the West in response to the specific problems of their societies. The Western social science is changing itself with the changing nature of problems. It is an ongoing process rather than a fixed formula designed to support one central theme only. Therefore, without its indigenization as per the local conditions it cannot wear the face of rationality and social sensitivity. Hindu-Buddhist views see that society is made by connectors rather than dividers.

Obviously, Nepalese society does not have sufficient preconditions to sustain unlimited amount of experimental methods based on caste, class, nation, market and now territoriality and ethnic determinism. Major changes in the society require the innovation of powerful social and moral concepts to grasp its wholeness and put a tab on its hole, rupture and breakdown of society through knowledge discourse and political action. National innocence, ignorance or self-righteous delusion of social scientists about their power to resolve social predicament required their own emancipation from structure-bound, interest-based knowledge that shifted the power relationship from peasants at the local level to urban and international constituencies. The tragic failure of planners in Nepal to achieve national goals to develop and decentralize power at the local level can be attributed to their progressive alienation from social and cultural life of citizens. It also confirms the moral unaccountability of official social scientists and the growing loss of their relevance to the nation's life.

The Nepalese social scientists have to labor hard to creatively interact with various disciplines, build academic cooperation, construct scientific concepts from the social processes of the society and supply the politicians, policy makers and students illuminating insights to liberate them from primordial naive belief that the God, social scientists or scientists have magic formula to solve the entire problems and puzzles the ages have posed to the Nepalese society. Similarly, the geographic isolation of Nepal is no excuse for the intellectual marginalization nor is their revolt against the feudal order a guarantee of virtue so long as their own society becomes closed nobility unintelligible and inaccessible to ordinary public. Enormous internal diversity of the ecological and social life of the nation has given them enough room for cross-cultural comparison, generalization and theory building. But, their inability to move away from a preoccupation with power and unaccountable activism to a position of reclaiming relevance of ethics, discourse and difference to express a sense of moral responsibility for the life of citizens requires their own liberation. It is central to creative knowledge production. As a result, the position of Nepalese social scientists in relation to policy adaptation is high while innovation is pathetically low. This requires them to reconnect to the wider world of philosophy as participant in the production of knowledge and refining it through citizens' experience for public policy output. Is there a possibility for this? The historical trends indicate the impossibility of breaking this conceptual jailbreak in the short-run and, consequently, social scientists will be fated to repeat its deep-seated, petrified cultural patterns over and over again.

Enamored with grand theories of the West Nepalese leaders, policy makers, planners and intellectuals since the 1950s have uncritically imposed them to the Nepalese society for

modernization, rationalization and development of the country regardless of knowledge about preconditions, contextual relevance and negotiation with ground realities. The Nepalese social scientists can, therefore, be acknowledged as "paradigm consumer" and their integration in the world is characterized by unequal exchange and unequal division of labor in the global social science market. There is a need to reveal their creative potential before they engage in the emancipation of citizens. The conquest of Nepalese social scientists over the Hindu-Buddhist philosophies' utility in public policy has not liberated the citizens from the historical vale of fear, tear, existential crisis and the crisis of identity—personal and national. Nepalese economic historian Mahesh C. Regmi aptly argues, "…every Nepali of the present lives a vicarious existence, with the atavistic urges for political power and economic security and feels strongly that political rivalries among the political elite today are no less pronounced than they were two centuries ago" (1995:ii).

This vicarious existence of citizens has an effect exactly opposite to the one intended to thwart by Nepalese faith intellectuals, planners and social scientists. What is the difference between native intellectuals—priests, wanderers and sages—and modern social scientists—teachers, researchers, policy makers and preachers in terms of the utility of their outcome to national upliftment? There is a big pause as modern social scientists, like their native counterpart, have not been able to liberate scholarship from political power. The social sciences have "served as instruments of the disciplinary society, the connection between knowledge and power rather than between knowledge and human solidarity" (Rorty, 1987:253). Can they collectively reflect about their failure and learn from each other for the refinement of their knowledge and practical applicability of their ideas in teaching, research and policy

making? Development success largely depends on appropriate adaptation of the universal knowledge, tools and policy as per the cultural traits, social norms, history, ecology and institutions. The blanket imposition of the grand theories invented in an entirely different industrial context into agrarian societies of Nepal has evoked continuous growth of the ignorance of planners about social reality and corresponding development failure, crisis of institutional stability and a growing disharmony between the society and the state.

This failed development implies the failure of social scientists to apply creative mind and prescribe to the leaders a reasonable course of action to prevent the downward spiral of the Nepalese state, polity, society, economy and overall psychology. Today, Nepalese society is terribly suffering from collective anxiety, tension, conflict and self-doubt and exposed to painful choices—in the restoration of order or work more for freedom. Its effect is: inability of the leadership to think and plan beyond *affno manchhe*, one's own close circle of friends, relatives and clients. This has undermined the possibility to develop the concept of nationality—the attachment of the citizens with the state and its ideology—nationalism and constrained the possibility to evolve a cosmopolitan outlook. The growing shrinkage of the public sphere of the nation is the symptom of the failure of governance. It is a clear inversion of Hindu-Buddhist concept of emancipation through the abnegation of self for public good. Has there been no reflection by social scientists about it? Or, have they found more benefits in transplanting new ideas and projects of conflict or post-conflict planning than resorting to concrete social learning? Or, are they incapable of indigenizing universal knowledge to local conditions?

The bewildering explanations --fatalism or the cyclical view of life, colonized mind, land-lockedness of the nation, gender

biasness, marginalized status of intellectuals in negotiation, growth of a comprador class, external dependence, foreign domination, non-investment of social surplus in the economy, lack of democracy, capital flight, strategic alliance of the state, Kathmandu-centric view, lack of devolution of power, paternalistic approach of planners, etc supplied by the Nepalese social scientists for the nation's failure in any national initiative including development reflect their disciplinary biases than concrete understanding on the basic problems of, and challenges to, Nepalese citizens. There are no concrete efforts in integrating these strands for a coherent, unified gaze and energizing vision. This condition demonstrates that Nepalese social scientists are capable of "thick description" of already invented ideas abroad but are in capable of penetrating the core of knowledge innovation (Tanigawa and Dahal, 1996: 122). This clearly explains their underdevelopment status and inferiority complex. As a result of this, neither the Universities nor the National Planning Commission of Nepal (NPC) have gained a central locus in knowledge production and constituted as an authority to define widely acceptable development and action. Gripped by the mundane human weaknesses for power, resources and recognition, Nepalese social scientists remain disorderly both in terms of fellow feeling with their community, cross-cultural disciplines and disciples.

10.   Critical Challenges

The relationship between social science and Nepalese society is based on freedom from each others' responsibility and leaving them to resort to their own devises. This is the reason a number of market institutions, civil society, NGOs and citizens' institutions are competing with and producing counter-knowledge against the conventional state-centric social science discourse. International funding opportunities for issue-based research, social science consultancy and collaborative research have opened the possibilities for

interest-based research. But, they are fractious in origin, clientalistic, devoid of institutional memory and social feedback and, therefore, have not contributed much to both social cohesion and nation-building. Like the Buddhist and the Hindu *mantras* which are daily spoken publicly by ordinary citizens in their family and social life, shape their worldview and validated by public discourse to remove the gap between those who know and who do not know, the jargons of social science are neither pronounced by citizens in family and social lives nor in the discourse of duty-based, charity-oriented civil society. Its outputs are validated only by urban consultants, advisors, human rights elites and pollsters. They opportunistically rationalize the irrationality and manufacture consent. These habits have made them free of human emotions, affections and accountability. There is a risk in the disintegration of integrative meaning of society by the instrumental action of these experts.

The social researchers have to go beyond their seminar circle in private places, maintain a critical attitude towards their own self-interest by the modest realization of the fact that temptation to inflict injustice to voiceless either by the power of reason, logic, unverified empirical data or law amounts to the corruption of one's own profession and does not help much either in opinion or will-formation, education, socialization and social transformation. This implies that social science research in Nepal must be an open-ended process, subject to critical inquiry, discourse and change with the transformation of knowledge, actors, issues, rules and context undergoing in Nepal. New inclusive concepts are required to capture deeper insights into the change process and societal rationalization and their application in advocacy, teaching and research and contributing to nation-building.

Does this condition point a drive towards post-modernism or reactive re-tribalization of social science research and praxis

in Nepal? Can there be a synthesis of modernity which provides a meta identity—Nepali and post-modern mini-identities such as ethnicity, class, gender, caste, territoriality and religion for the evolution of new research agenda for nation-building? Post-modernist skepticism of the existing state-centric knowledge and its dissidents are struggling to seek the transformation of the power and property relationship in society and resisting the institutionalization of non-representative and anti-change geopolitical pseudo-science that tends to close the opportunity of "open moments" (Bleie, 2003: 1-34) created by various political movements in the country. Globalization of the Nepalese state, economy and society is further deconstructing the disciplinary knowledge, disciplinary society and disciplinary institutions and constitutions. Internally, dominant social science discourse has become a site of resistance by subsidiary identities of the nation. Disciplinary construction of knowledge itself is sectoral in origin in Nepal and has failed to capture the larger domain of public mood and public policy. This condition requires a new inter-subjective conceptual and structural adjustment of social science research and teaching in Nepal mediated by local relevance, contexts, needs, aspirations and vision.[3]

Different traditions of disciplinary knowledge and research in Nepal have set off controversies about the root causes of Nepal's underdevelopment and the continuing irrationality of governance—unable to make right policies and implement them. This equally applies to a choice of conflict resolution mechanism. A pluralistic consensus is needed to accommodate minorities to the scheme of national

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[3]   The dilemma of social scientists in really understanding what is happening in the developing countries and of framing rational development policies "if we remain in a strange state of innocence about these facts of life and continue to deal with their development problems by the biased post-war approach" (Myrdal, 1970:239).

governance and establishing social justice at all levels of society. Given the diversity of the nation, there is no institutional mechanism to prevent minority becoming majority in due course of time. Nepalese social scientists cannot escape themselves from this fact. The moral problems of society is too complex for disciplinary social science to grasp and the Nepalese social scientists have mastery over certain types of secular knowledge and have successfully sealed themselves off from the feedbacks of communities' life in rural and remote areas.

Dialogues with the citizens and bridging micro-macro gaps through cross-fertilization of social science research is, therefore, important in Nepal through training like "Qualitative Research Methods in Social Sciences" so that a synergy can be developed through a balance between empirical and normative, local and global, reflection and action and societalization of social science rather than its alienation from both society and human rationality. Universal codes of social science based on reasons are likely to prevent Nepalese researchers to resort to ancient Hindu curse theory of history, expose themselves to an awareness that knowledge is time-bound and context-laden and help to invent their own *karma*, the destiny, through rights-based, demand-driven and politicized discourse. Will this discourse bring the left out and marginalized into a systemic whole? Or, like their predecessors social scientists, they will also disown the intellectual tradition of their immediate past, unlearn from it and enslave themselves to what great Nepali poet and essayist Laxmi Prasad Devkota laments, "How we always first thought of ourselves before we thought of the nation in any of the dreams or schemes that we thought or sought to promote or implement" (1997:35-37). This peril posed to ordinary citizens has prompted a group of social scientists to enter into a qualitative research in order to save social science

from its self-consolation, dryness and futility and generate a hope for ethically and ecologically informed policies.

11.   Conclusion

The proponents of new social movements in Nepal, such as women, Dalits, Janajatis, Madhesis, youths and marginalized population are seeking a structural shift in reason-based knowledge to both reason and feeling in social science knowledge discovery. Their engagements have created contradictions and tensions. As they have found that Nepalese social scientists stand in a chain of social causation, as an acting and reacting force, rather than emancipatory, they are looking for a representative knowledge in teaching, socialization and research where socially constructed institutional and knowledge biases are eliminated by opening them to dynamic interaction of various worldviews. The explanation of social transformation undergoing in Nepal requires a clear, coherent, systemic vision rather than an attitude of muddling around conceptual confusion and enlarging it into the public political sphere. Innovation of multi-version of democracy has made Nepalese citizens, politicians, journalists and donors victims of this cacophony and daily encounter an ironic refutation of their dream of mastering historical breaks through instrumental rather than emancipating reasons. Social science in Nepal has been alienated from the major questions of society and has become a source of confusion in public life because it has introduced too may rasping ideas beyond the comprehension of normal mind to learn, internalize, synthesize and practice.

This is the reason new social movements have questioned the legitimacy, validity and ownership of social science products. This movement can open the "captive mind," (Alatas, 2004: 83-98) to social learning of contextual knowledge, conduct research with the citizens, provide inputs to the policy makers and reverse their linear, structure-bound, rationalist and disciplinary thinking into the one that represents what the *Nepal mandala,* the Nepali space, is really like and how to improve it for the better. This opening is essential to expose them to native reality, learn from it, adapt them to the technological evolution of society as per the spirit of the Age and undergo a deep reflection about the gap they created between context, reason, expert knowledge and human feelings. The renewal and indigenization of qualitative social science research is important to overcome the spirited challenges posed by social forces in Nepal and contribute to the application of scientific reasoning in public policy and social change.

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