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INDIAN VILLAGE

SECOND EDITION

S.C. Dube

INDIAN VILLAGE

Indian Village is widely considered a "classic." Since its publication, over six decades ago, the book has received immense acclaim, attaining extraordinary success, especially as the first book on a single village in post—Second World War South Asia. Indeed, the work represents a key statement of the wider shift from tribe to village in Indian anthropology, part of the movement away from studies of "isolated" groups toward writings on contemporary communities in the sociology of the subcontinent. Written in an accessible, intimate manner, *Indian Village* needs to be understood today as a flagship endeavour of the social sciences in a young, independent India—a study that continues to be generously cited, including as a model monograph, in the disciplines at large.

S.C. Dube (1922–1996) was a founding figure of the social sciences in independent India. He wrote and edited around thirty books in English and Hindi. Dube's work has been translated into several Indian and foreign languages. He held academic positions at the School of Oriental and African Studies, London, as well as at Cornell, Lucknow, Osmania, and Sagar Universities. Among his other important appointments, Dube was Director, Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla; Vice Chancellor, University of Jammu; and National Fellow of the Indian Council of Social Science Research. His several honours include the SC Roy Gold Medal of the Asiatic Society and the Moorti Devi award of the Bhartiya Jnanpeeth.

"[*Indian Village* is] an excellent treatise. The description . . . frequently rises to the beautiful and is everywhere objective . . . Dr. Dube has given an excellent portrait of Shamirpet, the Telugu village located about 20 miles from Hyderabad city. Its setting, the composition of its population by caste and economic groups, the customs and rituals of the people, their family and home life, inter-group and inter-personal relations are described in detail, and the description always has a warm and human touch about it everywhere."

—*Economic and Political Weekly*

"Dr. Dube describes his book as a 'descriptive' study and at the level of description it is unsurpassed. The moral atmosphere and facts of day-to-day life are well conveyed. It is perhaps a sign of this richness of matter that problems of theory change."

—*The Times* (London)

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INDIAN VILLAGE

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INDIAN VILLAGE

Second Edition

S.C. Dube

Prologue by Saurabh Dube
Foreword by Morris Edward Opler

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Revisiting a "Classic"

How are we to approach today S.C. Dube's *Indian Village*—a study that has seen numerous editions and several translations across the world—as it (re)appears again, over six decades after it was first published? Are we to revisit/read the work as a timeless classic? Or are we to apprehend/understand *Indian Village* as an important exemplar of once significant scholarship that stands supplanted today by increasingly updated anthropological/sociological knowledge? Or indeed, are we to critique/castigate Dube's book as inescapably antiquated understanding, helplessly grounded in the functionalist paradigm of a now-obsolete institution, the village on the subcontinent?

To pose questions in this manner is to register the presumptions that shore up the disciplines, the conceits that undergird knowledge formations. In what follows, I shall neither confront nor unravel such conceits and presumptions, tasks that I have undertaken elsewhere.[1] Rather, I shall propose a manner of approaching *Indian Village* that queries our familiar ways of understanding the disciplines, past and present.[2] On the one hand, I shall oddly obliquely, even elliptically, turn to the crucial interplay of anthropology with time, of ethnography with history. Here, I shall emphasize especially the a-temporal predication of human action upon underlying structure in important disciplinary traditions.[3] On the other hand, having briefly laid out what went into the making of *Indian Village*, I shall seek to trace the ways in which Dube set to work functionalist tenets in his text. Which is to say, I would track the contrariness that ran through the text of an Indian anthropologist-sociologist and subject-citizen as he articulated dominant disciplinary dispositions, which while principally Western appeared as presumptively universal. This shall further allow me to raise questions regarding histories of anthropology, pasts of sociology, and genealogies of the village in South Asia.

Overture: Issues of Temporality

For a very long time now, anthropological understandings have displayed varied dispositions toward issues of temporality and history, from willing disregard and uneasy elision to formative ambivalences and constitutive contradictions.[4] Yet time itself has never been absent from such comprehensions. Today, there is wide acknowledgment of the epistemic violence that attended the birth and growth of modern anthropology. Here were to be found temporal sequences, based on evolutionary principles and racist presuppositions, which projected hierarchical stages of civilizations, societies, and peoples. At the same time, it is worth considering if such hierarchically ordered, evolutionary mappings of cultures and societies—turning on the "savage" form and the "primitive" figure—were excised from disciplinary formations with the emergence of fieldwork based "scientific" anthropology in the first half of the 20th century.

First, the apparent ruptures of functionalist and structural-functionalist anthropology with evolutionist principles on the grounds of their speculative procedures had wider consequences. They no less entailed a wider suspicion toward, the placing of a question mark on, history as such within the discipline.[5] Now the practice of anthropology could proceed in contradistinction to the writing of history. Second, these tendencies were conjoined with the influence of Durkheimian sociology in the shaping of functionalist tenets. Such conjunctions led to pervasive presuppositions that societal arrangements were better understood in abstraction from their historical transformations. They called forth and rested on analytical oppositions between "synchrony" and "diachrony" or "statics" and "dynamics", where in each copula the former term was privileged over the latter notion concerning the object of anthropology. Third, these emphases were further bound to wider anthropological predilections toward seeking out continuity and consensus, rather than change and conflict, in the societies being studied. Fourth, the ambivalence toward the temporal dimensions of structure and culture within the discipline was implicitly founded on broad disjunctions between Western societies grounded in history and reason, on the one hand, and non-Western cultures held in place by myth and ritual, on the other.[6] This is to say, intrusive presumptions that sharply separated the dynamic time of the ethnographer's society from the static temporality of anthropological objects. Fifth and finally, pervasive procedures of anthropological practice forged a tendentious timeless "tradition" through narrative techniques and analytical projections of a lasting "ethnographic present." This has meant that in widespread ethnographic orientations, change and transformation usually enter native structure in exogenous ways.

All of this has critical ramifications. Johannes Fabian has pointed to the repeated ways in which anthropological inquiry has construed its object as the irremediable other through measures turning on temporality: the ethnographic object is denied the "coevalness of time" with the instant of the anthropologist subject.[7] In other words, the (observing) subject and the (observed) object are precisely separated through time to inhabit distinct temporalities, the historical time of the former always ahead of the mythic time of the latter. Here, the temporal divide has meant that not only anthropological objects but ethnographic practices have emerged as being out of time, albeit in ambivalent and disjunctive ways. On the one hand, the temporal dimensions of anthropological writing have appeared effaced through their elision with both, the taken-for-granted time and space of the modern subject and the objective time of scientific knowledge. On the other hand, the temporality of anthropological others—their time/timelessness—could only emerge as being external to and lagging behind the space and time of the writing of ethnography.[8] All of this has defined the "savage slot" and the "native niche" of anthropology that have been constitutive of the discipline.[9] Under issue in fact is nothing less than the hierarchical ordering of time-space as part of the wide-ranging interplay between modern knowledge, anthropological understandings, historical blueprints, and their quotidian configurations.[10]

At the same time, it is critical to consider that such schemes have been attended by contentions and contradictions, exceptions and excesses within the discipline. At stake are attempts, in anthropology for example, to reconcile tensions between "generic human rationality" and "the biological unity of mankind", on the one hand, with the enormous variation of cultural formations, on the other. Now, these tensions are themselves bound to the contending elaborations of the analytical, ideological, and everyday separation between enchanted or traditional cultures and disenchanted or modern societies. My reference is to opposed tendencies that have been described as those of rationalism and historicism, of the analytical and the hermeneutical, and of the progressivist and the romantic. It is critical to track the frequent combination in intellectual practice of these tendencies in order to trace the contradictions and contentions and ambivalences and excesses of modern knowledge(s), as part of processes of modernity, all issues I have elaborated elsewhere.[11] My point now is that such tensions and contentions need to be kept in view as we turn to the ways in which Western paradigms of the social sciences were articulated by, even as they critically contained, non-Western scholarship: specifically, the analytical contrariness and its apparent resolutions at the core of *Indian Village*. Yet before we broach these questions, it is important to track how the study came to be in the first place, which shaped too the terms of the book.

The Making of Indian Village

The composition of Dube's (second) monograph was inextricably bound to his—and Leela Dube's—move to Hyderabad.[12] Here Christoph Fürer-Haimendorf served as the Advisor on Tribal Welfare to the Nizam's government, and also held the position of professor of anthropology in the sociology department at Osmania University. He was soon to leave India, and had suggested that Dube replace him, at an appropriate junior rank, in the University. Dube was invited to Hyderabad. Following a meeting over a drink with the vice-chancellor, Nawab Ali Yavar Jung, at the Secundarabad Club, Dube was formally interviewed the next day under informal circumstances and offered the position.

Amidst somewhat eccentric, rather colourful, yet graciously supportive colleagues, Dube reorganized the syllabi. At the same time, it was research that truly occupied Dube in Hyderabad. On Fürer-Haimendorf's suggestion that he work on a tribe in the region, Dube had explored possible projects in Adivasi pockets in Andhra country, witnessing the ruthless killings by the police of communists and their sympathizers in the process. Yet, the research he eventually undertook was wholly different, the study of a village, Shamirpet, located in the Telangana region, 25 miles from the twin cities of Hyderabad and Secundarabad.

The project was an outcome of the shared imaginings of a seasoned, visionary administrator and a young, ambitious scholar,

> the result of a conjunction of two somewhat dissimilar ideas. Ali Yavar Jung . . . had in mind an experimental rural social service extension project in which the different faculties of the university could pool their insights and resources to work for the uplift of the village. I was thinking of an in-depth study of a non-tribal village, different from the hundreds of surveys done by governmental agencies. The inputs of the several specialist units could enrich my study, which itself could serve as a benchmark for later extension work. Ali Yavar Jung recognized the fit between the two objectives and gave me the go-ahead to draw up a comprehensive plan.[13]

The choice of Shamirpet combined practical and sociological considerations. Not too far for project members to reach and return on the same day, the village was more than merely a sub-urban extension; and in terms of its size (area as well as population) and caste composition, Shamirpet was "representative" of the villages of the region.

As the reader will soon find out, the project team consisted of eighteen members drawn from six faculties—arts, agriculture, veterinary science

and animal husbandry, medicine, engineering, and education—of Osmania University. Each unit carried out a research survey and conducted social work in the area of its interest and competence. The units had considerable autonomy with respect to social work, limited chiefly by the funds and resources available to them. At the same time, Dube and four other members of the sociology department designed the different surveys, also helping in the conduct of research by all units at every stage.[14] The inter-faculty team carried out 20 weeks of work over two summer vacations, while the anthropology/sociology unit was active in Shamirpet for an entire year. Dube himself divided his time between Shamirpet, where he directed both the welfare and research activities of the project, and Hyderabad, home to teaching, administration, and family life with Leela and their newly born son, Mukul.

On the one hand, given its novel objective of village welfare and rural research as part of nation building in a former Princely State, a "feudal" terrain, from the beginning the project attracted considerable attention in the press, including a documentary film on the venture. This tended to draw curious visitors and onlookers, their presence often annoying and even aggravating, a difficulty resolved partially and gradually. On the other hand, the villagers themselves were at first sullen and suspicious, regarding the project as a missionary endeavour and then as anti-communist government propaganda, their apprehensions allayed in steps:

> our resources, especially our tents, crockery and cooks and buses impressed them. The co-operation of highly placed officials rehabilitated us in the eyes of the village folk, and many of them who went to the city and made enquiries about us from educated relations returned to the village satisfied about our credentials. But more than all this, the excellent work of the Medical Unit established rapport with the community, and the sympathetic welfare activities of the Agriculture, Veterinary and Education units further helped us to establish more intimate contacts with the people. They were benefiting by our presence . . . This changed the attitude of the people considerably. To begin with the investigators making anthropological enquiry were regarded as a nuisance; now they [we] were tolerated as inquisitive but friendly outsiders. In a few days there was a change for the better. We had never talked politics or religion, there was no propaganda or attempt at reform and no superiority of city-ways and sneering at the rustic ways of the village people in our attitude. Indifference turned in to warmth and friendship, and at this point we intensified our anthropological investigations.[15]

The passage speaks for itself and of the texture of the times, optimistically straddling the instrumentality of fieldwork and empathy for its subjects, easily intertwining the means of rural welfare and the ends of village anthropology.

Beginning with a general sociological census, the anthropological enquiries of the project focused upon themes of social, economic, ritual, kinship, and family structure of the village. Here an important role was played by intensive investigations by means of a selected sample of 120 families (out of a total of 380) —representing different castes and religions, at distinct levels of income, education, and urban contact—together with 80 episodic and topical life-histories and 11 full biographies, recorded through free-association interviews. Besides, the social sciences team used "the established method of participant observation and the usual techniques of anthropological enquiry", also studying carefully available village records.[16] Surveys on diet and nutrition, village agriculture, and animal care provided useful, supplementary information. As a team endeavour, engaging the joint energies of several members, the research conducted by the Osmania project on Shamirpet village was wide ranging—in its sweep and depth. At the end, Dube had "three-thousand sheets of notes neatly typed and systematically classified".[17]

Even as the project was underway, Dube was invited by Fürer-Haimendorf to spend a year as a Visiting Lecturer at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London. Resolving to write up the study of Shamirpet in the year abroad, during the late summer in Hyderabad, from June to August 1952, Dube immersed himself in the notes and the data, sketching an outline, preparing tables, and producing a tentative draft of two chapters. Sailing by ship, a month later, Dube was in London.

Amidst seminars and lectures, lodging in the home of the archaeologist couple Raymond and Bridget Allchin, with a social life largely limited to academic acquaintances, working up to 14 hours a day, Dube read widely even as he searched for means of giving shape to the materials in front.

> My main difficulty was that I had no model for my study. The complexity of working on the caste system made everything so different and difficult. Redfield's studies and many other books on villages around the world were helpful, but they could not solve several of my problems. The Wiser's *Behind Mud Walls* was limited in scope, and the village surveys of the time were tilted toward economic rather than sociological data. I was aware that some studies were in the pipeline. M.N. Srinivas was doing a Mysore village. With his cooperation the *Economic Weekly* . . . was publishing a series of studies done by anthropologist and sociologists, including one by

> me, though it was not on Shamirpet. There was news that McKim Marriot at Chicago University had planned a symposium volume on village India, but its contents were not known to me. As I was working on a tight schedule, I had to find my own way.[18]

Dube's aim was an integrated account of an India village community, providing a feel of its fabric, conveying a sense of its texture. Two seminars helped him shape such a study: his own at the School of Oriental and African Studies and that of Raymond Firth at the London School of Economics, where Dube presented some of his materials and arguments. In each case, the imperatives of clear exposition and the responses to his presentations proved crucial to the framing and the writing of the work.

Once the manuscript was complete, Dube sought the "professional opinion" of a senior colleague.

> Raymond Firth agreed to read the typescript, and with some trepidation I handed it over to him. Ten days later he asked me to lunch at the LSE. On his desk rested my typescript, with the brief notation "First Rate—R.F." My vegetarian meal in the senior dining room could not have tasted better.[19]

Firth also felt that the work deserved a quality publisher, sending the manuscript over to Routledge and Kegan Paul. Not much later, Dube received a letter of acceptance: the book was to form part of RKP's prestigious series "The International Library of Sociology and Social Reconstruction."

Indian Village received wide acclaim, attaining extraordinary success, especially as "the first book on a single village" in post–Second World War South Asia.[20] Indeed, it represented a key statement of the wider shift from tribe to village in Indian anthropology, a work presented further as part of the movement away from studies of "isolated" groups toward writings on "modern" communities in the discipline at large.[21] Andre Beteille recalls that as a college student in the late 1950s, *Indian Village* appeared to him as embodying meaningful, relevant anthropology, distant from the dead weight of tribal studies, providing for his own arguments in discussions with friends such as Sukhomoy Chakravarty.[22] The book's contents and its close connections with a collective project of social welfare carried intrinsic interest in an India aiming at directed change in rural areas through Five Year Plans. The work's moorings in a multi-disciplinary team endeavour captured the attention of the social science in the post–Second World War United States, where collective research projects signalled the mood and interest, sensibility and ambition of departments of the state and the

academy.[23] The intimacy of the account and its straightforward nature led to mentions of Dube's "Indian background and Western scientific training" as providing him with a "double insight" (*The New Statesman*); of his exploiting "to the full his advantages as a man of the country to gain that kind of information and insight usually denied to the Western sociologist in India" (*The Times Literary Supplement*). Indeed, the work blended with the times, making *Indian Village* something of a flagship endeavour of social sciences in a young, independent India—generously cited, extensively drawn upon as a model monograph, and heavily used in teaching in different parts of the world. As indicated, it has gone into several hardcover and paperback editions in the UK, United States, and India, coming to be widely excerpted and translated into Indian and foreign languages.

Analytical Implications

Constitutive of *Indian Village* is simplicity of style, ease of exposition. Setting out to provide "a clear and intimate picture of some aspects of life in one Indian village", Dube singularly succeeded in the endeavour.[24] From Shamirpet's physical, historical, and demographic attributes, to its social, economic, caste, political, and ritual structure(s), to its ethos and ambience, the book presented a compelling, vivid portrait of the village. This led Maurice Opler to describe the work as "a total study, not in the sense that it gives us all possible details concerning the village Shamirpet, but in the sense that it presents between its two covers all important aspects of the culture of this community."[25]

Here the descriptive devices and narrative techniques of the book were bound to its terms of theory. A latent functionalism unobtrusively woven into the texture of the account, the presentation of dominant norms and main variations—with personality often projected as "explaining" the latter—shoring up the description, a tight terminology entwined with the narration, in the book analytical categories and empirical materials were imbricated in each other. As Edmund Leach wrote, in an unsigned review, in *The Times* (London):

> Dr. Dube describes his book as a "descriptive" study and at the level of description it is unsurpassed. The moral atmosphere and facts of day-to-day life are well conveyed. It is perhaps a sign of this richness of matter that problems of theory change.[26]

Rounding off the picture were Dube's concern with social change, interest in "binding forces in Indian culture",[27] engagement with issues of

"civilization" on the subcontinent,[28] and insights into "psychological" dimensions.[29]

Yet Dube's fluid, graceful prose, seamlessly binding the analytical and the empirical, equally contains contrary strains, lying at the heart of the narrative. Let me turn here to the tension between the presence of history and the present of anthropology—or the push and pull between projections of a village shaped by the past and propositions regarding a community out of time—at the core of *Indian Village*. On the one hand, in the account, Dube not only questioned the notion of an entirely "representative" village, casting matters instead in terms of the important distinctions and structural similarities between villages in India. He also crucially argued that "we cannot regard the Indian village community as static, timeless and changeless. Time and the interplay of historical and sociological factors and forces have influenced the structure, organization and ethos of these communities in many significant ways".[30] As an Indian anthropologist who was also a nationalist, writing in the aftermath of Indian independence, Dube simply could not readily relegate Shamirpet and its subjects to being anachronistic entities, mere objects of social-scientific schemes, in order to cast them instead as "modern" or almost so. For, on the other hand, the burden of disciplinary dispositions and analytical imperatives meant that the village and its inhabitants were yet located as inhabiting a somewhat seamless "internal structure", an endless ethnographic present. Thus, in the narrative, transformations through time primarily made their appearance at the opening and the close of the account. Here, the first steps were its framing devices and the last strides its masterful finale, a comprehensive chapter describing the changes in the village, in the past and the present.

All of this is to say that the work of history is not absent from *Indian Village*. Such labour inhabits the edges of the account, intimating its ends. At work is a breach between change and transformation that come from outside the village and continuity and stability that inhere within the community. Here is a divide between external history and internal structure. But this is not all. For the narrative equally presents historical processes and contemporary developments as encompassing the village, thereby further inserting and instituting Shamirpet in a lasting ethnographic present. The disciplinary object of *Indian Village* is descriptively a place in history, analytically an entity out of time.

These twin attributes are a result of the interplay between structure of the work and its style of writing, between the longings of an Indian subject and the weight of disciplinary schemas, which work in tandem. Let me explain. The organization of *Indian Village* and Dube's earlier monograph *The Kamar*, bear a family resemblance, each discussing the changes

affecting its subjects at the end. At the same time, Dube's exploratory prose in his first monograph could not rein in the transformations of "tradition" among the Kamars. Thus, despite the work's analytical-schematic predilections concerning an unmoving social structure, the scholar's hermeneutic-immanent dispositions toward reregistering the Kamars as subjects who were coeval in the time-space of the nation meant that he was compelled, even against his own disciplinary will, to track the reworking of the Kamar community over time. In contrast, within his second study, *Indian Village*, an accomplished, elegant writing appeared to fit such tensions into the flow of the work. The measure was neat. Yet the suturing was not quite seamless. Together, this allows us to trace the contrary stitches that run through the narrative fabric of *Indian Village*.

Such questions of substance and style, of nationalist desire and its disciplinary containment, have wide implications. Andre Beteille has hinted that an appropriate reading of *Indian Village* today would consist of revisiting the work in light of what we have come to know of villages on the subcontinent since its publication.[31] While this might well be one manner of approaching Dube's study, arguably one that projects the village as an already-known object of enquiry, two other modalities suggest themselves. On the one hand, an adequate reassessment of *Indian Village* not only involves considerations of how later village studies, too many to recount here, were influenced by the terms of Dube's writing—both its implicit assumptions and explicit descriptions—in order to bracket ethnography from history, forging a tendentious relationship between anthropological structure and historical process. On the other hand, a critical reassessment of Dube's study equally entails placing the work in the wider pasts of Indian anthropology/sociology alongside the conflicted genealogies of the village itself in South Asia. It is by briefly exploring the latter set of issues that I conclude this Prologue.

Coda: Critical Considerations

Consider the fact that the work of important Indian anthropologists and sociologists, whose reputation was already well established in the pre-Independence era, was frequently shaped by implicit presuppositions and explicit projections regarding the civilization and history of the subcontinent. Here, scholars as diverse as Nirmal Kumar Bose, G.S. Ghurye, and Iravati Karve combined readings of Hindu, classical texts with insights from ethnographic, field materials. Their scholarship initiated thereby distinct enquiries into common concerns such as the integration of "tribes" into Hindu society, also addressing issues involving arrangements of kinship

along pan-regional lines on the subcontinent.[32] Similarly, in the writings of Radhakamal Mukherjee, D.P. Mukerjee, and D.N. Majumdar, who were all based in Lucknow, distinct considerations of cultural "tradition" and its transformations were enmeshed with inherently varied articulations of the terms of history and civilization of India.[33]

My point is that it is easy but hasty to prejudge such scholarship as antiquated knowledge, which was firmly superseded after the 1950s by an increasingly specialized practice of the anthropology/sociology of India. Instead, the more difficult yet productive task entails tracking the specific, shifting ways in which notions and understandings of tradition, history, and civilization were played out in this terrain. Indeed, to undertake these efforts would be to unravel the archival lineaments of Indian anthropology, especially its engagements with and articulations of empire and nation, Western categories, and nationalist considerations. None of this suggests simple celebrations of such scholarship. Rather, it implies the requirements of critically yet cautiously entering the protocols of this knowledge and its forms of knowing in order to trace their constitutive considerations and contradictions, their formative ambivalences and excesses.[34]

From the 1950s onwards, writings in the anthropology/sociology of the subcontinent came to be cast in ever more synchronic moulds, particularly under the influence of functionalist, structural-functionalist, and structural analyses. In both implicit and explicit ways, such emphases put a question mark on what now appeared as the speculative procedures and commonsense projections—particularly concerning history, civilization, and tradition—within earlier scholarship. At the same time, it would be much too sanguine to assume that considerations of the terms of Indian civilization and tradition, including often implicit articulations of patterns of history, simply disappeared from the newer writings.[35] Rather, these were variously folded into the creases of more tightly organized, synchronically structured, and self-confidently social-scientific analyses.

Once again, it is critical to unravel the presence of notions of Indian civilization and tradition—and the implied projections of history—as shaping influential accounts of the village and social structure on the subcontinent in anthropology after Independence. Indeed, it is such questions that I am raising in relation to S.C. Dube's writings in the period around and after independence, especially *Indian Village*.[36] Dube knew very well the senior figures of Indian anthropology/sociology that were mentioned earlier. (Radhakamal Mukherjee, D.P. Mukerjee, and D.N. Majumdar were his senior colleagues in Lucknow, and Iravati Karve he had met even earlier.) Did Dube's engagement with their work—and his personal conversations and intellectual discussions with these luminaries—influence him as a younger

scholar and a concerned Indian? Did all this underlie Dube's rendering of dominant sociological paradigms in ways that marked his writing with an uneasy hesitancy and a certain contrariness? Were such contrariness and hesitancy merely unproductive? Or are they acutely indicative at once of the conditions of possibility of Dube's writing *and* of the genealogical grooves of social-scientific formations on the subcontinent? These queries have wide implications.

I am suggesting that when focussing on a nationalist anthropologist studying subcontinental society soon after Indian independence, to ask such questions is to indicate the importance of revisiting and rethinking—of engaging and extending—a range of critical questions: of the "denial of coevalness" between the anthropologist author and the native subject, raised by Johannes Fabian; of the presence of "never, never lands" in ethnography, indicated by Bernard Cohn; of the "savage slot" of anthropology, intimated by Michel-Rolph Trouillot; of the persistence of "enchanted spaces and modern places", suggested by myself; and of the pervasiveness of "exotics at home" in social worlds, highlighted by Micaela di Leonardi.[37] This is to say that the contrary tracks of the timeless object of an enquiry/civilization who is also the coeval subject of a nation/knowledge require further investigation. Now, to pose matters in this manner is not only to be vigilant of how dominant disciplinary dispositions—obviously of the metropolis—came to be variously translated in academic practices within a newly independent nation. It is also to be aware of how such procedures equally hold a mirror up to the contradictory strains that could shore up metropolitan anthropology.

Yet there is even more to the picture, once more better begun as questions. Are there perhaps even longer genealogies of key transformations of villages on the Indian subcontinent, especially in the 19th century? Did such makeovers lead to particular crystallizations, distinct condensations, of the village as metaphor and meaning, imagination and institution? Here, it warrants emphasis that I am speaking simultaneously of discursive-cultural shifts and of political-economic mutations, making a case for the incessant overlaps between these terrains—domains whose very separation is a matter of aggrandizing analytics as gathering unto themselves the irregular formations of everyday worlds.

Put simply, we often forget that the Indian village, at least as we know it, emerged only in the course of the first half of the 19th century. This was the outcome of distinct yet interlaced processes, of contentious meanings and contradictory practices. I cannot recount the entire story here, which is drawn from a range of historical scholarship. But allow me to telegraphically signal major departures and key developments. Here are to

be found the East India Company's practices of settling borders, of controlling populations, and of maximizing revenues alongside colonizing policies of outright warfare and quotidian conquest. These led to the redrawing of commons, decimation of forests, alterations of climate, and emphases on "settled" socio-spatial subjects and terrains. We are in the face also of the drawing of categorical demarcations between the "civilized" and the "wild" —themselves drawing in differences between "field" and "forest", *vana* and the *kshetra*—that sought to stamp out the earlier ambiguities and ongoing ambivalences of these distinctions. All of this underlay the emergence of a distinct agrarian order characterized by discrete agricultural castes and petty commodity production, or the Indian village as we know it.[38]

Is there not an abiding irony in the fact that such formations of villages in India, recently configured in their emergent avatar, came to be projected, all too soon, from the second half of the 19th century, by colonialists and nationalists alike if differently, as the primordial, unchanging, millennia-old site and scene of society on the subcontinent? Don't we need to further consider the legacy afforded to the post-independence sociology of India by the prior presence, the extended tradition, of colonial and nationalist writings on the village in the subcontinent?[39] How might we engage here with claims that colonial modalities of knowledge/power themselves shifted from the "historical" to the "ethnographic" between the first half of the 19th century and the final decades of imperial rule?[40]

Might these be some questions to consider, problems to ponder, issues to address as we seek to read anew S.C. Dube's *Indian Village*?

Notes

1 See, especially, Saurabh Dube, *Subjects of Modernity: Time-Space, Disciplines, Margins* (Manchester: Manchester University press, 2017); Saurabh Dube (ed.), *Historical Anthropology* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2007); Saurabh Dube, *Stitches on Time: Colonial Textures and Postcolonial Tangles* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2004); Saurabh Dube, *After Conversion: Cultural Histories of Modern India* (New Delhi: Yoda Press, 2010); and Saurabh Dube, "Lost and found: Villages between history and anthropology", in Diane Mines and Nicolas Yazgi (eds.), *Village Matters: Relocating Villages in the Contemporary Anthropology of India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 31–50.

2 In this Prologue, I draw upon a range of my earlier writings and ongoing work, citing them at appropriate moments. This noted, two further clarifications warrant emphasis here. First, in the references and notes, I distinguish between two Dubes, in each instance spelling out in full whether it is S.C. Dube or Saurabh Dube whose work is being referred to. In the text, however, all references to

Dube mean S.C. Dube. Second, throughout the essay I use anthropology as a short-hand for social-cultural anthropology as well as qualitative sociology on (and of) the subcontinent.

3 At stake especially are the vexed linkages between action and structure within functionalism and structuralism alongside the wider questioning of these theoretical traditions. As is well known, functionalism and structuralism have been prominent paradigms within the social sciences, the former till the 1960s and the latter till the 1970s. The two traditions have understood "structure" differently. Yet both have accorded primacy to the object(s) of structure over the subject(s) of history, emphases that, as we shall soon see, worked in tandem with their privileging of synchrony over diachrony. The point is that such emphases underlay the a-temporal predication of human action upon underlying structure in these theoretical traditions, which overlooked the interleaving of structure and practice across, through, in (and as constitutive of) time-space. Saurabh Dube, *Subjects of Modernity*. It also bears emphasis that functionalist tenets and structural analyses did not simply disappear from the academic scene from the 1970s onwards. Rather, they have continued to variously exercise their influence on anthropology, also being differently reconfigured in distinct disciplines. S.N. Eisenstadt, "Functionalist analysis in anthropology and sociology: An interpretive essay", *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 19, 1990, pp. 243–251; Sherry Ortner, "Theory in anthropology since the sixties", *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 26, 1984, pp. 127–132, 135–141; and particularly, Joan Vincent, *Anthropology and Politics: Visions, Traditions, and Trends* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1990), pp. 335–341.

4 This section draws especially on Saurabh Dube, *Subjects of Modernity*.

5 I distinguish between "functionalism" (of, for example, Malinowski) and "structural-functionalism" (of, for instance, Radcliffe-Brown) as analytical procedures but also consider together the shared orientations of these traditions to time-space in the practice of anthropology. See Bronislaw Malinowski, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific: An Account of Native Adventures in the Archipelagoes of Melanesian New Guinea* (London: Routledge, 1922); A.R. Radcliffe-Brown, *Structure and Function in Primitive Society* (Glencoe: Free Press, 1952); Eisenstadt, "Functionalist analysis in anthropology and sociology"; Adam Kuper*, Anthropologists and Anthropology: The British School 1922–1972* (London: Allen Lane, 1973), pp. 92–109; Vincent, *Anthropology and Politics*, pp. 155–171; and George Stocking, Jr., *After Tylor: British Social Anthropology 1888–1951* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995), pp. 233–441.

6 This discussion brings together arguments offered by varieties of critical engagements – going back at least to the 1950s – with functionalist analyses. Rather than provide numerous citations, it should suffice to say that my criticisms would be widely accepted in the critical practice of anthropology today.

7 For Fabian, in anthropological analyses the work of time brings into play projections of space through procedures of visualization, taxonomy, and classification. While I have learnt much from Fabian's critique of naturalized "Time-Space", my wider arguments also intimate somewhat different emphases, especially concerning the everyday production of time and space, heterogeneous yet overlaying temporal and spatial formations, and an unwillingness to succumb to the distinction between "real" and "representational" (or ideological) space. Johaness Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object*

(New York: Columbia University Press, 1983); Saurabh Dube, *Subjects of Modernity*.

8 Here I am once again engaging and extending Fabian, ibid.

9 None of this is to deny that such schemes have been attended by contentions and exceptions within the discipline, a matter explored ahead. On the notion of the "savage slot" of anthropology, see Michel-Rolph Trouillot, "Anthropology and the savage slot: The poetics and politics of the otherness", in Richard Fox (ed.), *Recapturing Anthropology: Working in the Present* (Santa Fe: School of American Research Press), pp. 17–44. On the "native niche" of the discipline, see Saurabh Dube, *Stitches on Time*.

10 Saurabh Dube, *Subjects of Modernity*.

11 Ibid.

12 S.C. Dube's early (and later) life and work are discussed in Saurabh Dube, "Ties that bind: Tribe, village, nation, and S.C. Dube", in Patricia Uberoi, Satish Deshpande, and Nandini Sundar (eds.), *Anthropology in the East*: *Founders of Indian Sociology and Anthropology* (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2007), pp. 444–495, and this section – as well as the next one – draws extensively on this essay.

13 S.C. Dube, "The journey so far", in Yogesh Atal (ed.), *Understanding Indian Society: Festschrift in Honour of Professor S.C. Dube* (New Delhi: Har-Anand, 1993), p. 24. This short text primarily consists of Dube's autobiographical recollections of his times in anthropology/sociology and academic administration.

14 At the same time, S.C. Dube was the only one who produced an academic account (ethnographic or otherwise) based on the work of the project.

15 S.C. Dube, *Indian Village* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul; and Ithaca: Cornell University Press), pp. 14–15.

16 Ibid.

17 S.C. Dube, "Journey so far", p. 32.

18 Ibid., p. 33.

19 Ibid.

20 David G. Mandelbaum, "Review of *Indian Village* by S.C. Dube". *American Anthropologist*, 58, 1956, pp. 579–580.

21 S.C. Dube, *Indian Village*, pp. 8–13.

22 Andre Beteille, interview, 2002.

23 See, for example, Bernard Cohn, *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), pp. 11–15; Clifford Geertz, *After the Fact: Two Countries, Four Decades, One Anthropologist* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), pp. 99–109.

24 S.C. Dube, *Indian Village*, p. 15.

25 Maurice Opler, "Foreword", in Dube, *Indian Village*, p. vii.

26 Leach was suggesting that the book delivered marvellously at the level of description but that there was also more to the work. With theoretical considerations woven between the lines, quietly organizing the study, the very richness of the materials presented in the book meant that they raised new questions for anthropological theory.

27 Opler, "Foreword", p. ix.

28 Yogendra Singh, interview, 2002.

29 McKim Marriott, interview, 2002.

30 S.C. Dube, *Indian Village*, pp. 3–7.

31 Andre Beteille, "Shyama Charan Dube (1922–96)", *Economic and Political Weekly*, 31, 1996, p. 811.
32 See, for example, Nirmal Kumar Bose, *The Structure of Hindu Society* (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1975); G.S. Ghurye, *The Aborgines – So Called – and Their Future* (Poona: Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics, 1942); G.S. Ghurye, *Caste and Race in India* (Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1969); Irawati Karve, *Kinship Organization in India* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1953); and Irawati Karve, *Hindu Society: An Introduction* (Poona: Deccan College, 1961).
33 For a persuasive reading, see T.N. Madan, *Pathways: Approaches to the Study of Society in India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 3–36. Indeed, D.P. Mukerji explicitly articulated the Marxist approach in a book on history. Dhurjati Prasad Mukerji, *On Indian History: A Study in Method* (Bombay: Hind Kitabs, 1945). Consider also Radhkamal Mukerjee, *The Indian Scheme of Things* (Bombay: Hind Kitabs, 1951); D.N. Majumdar, *A Tribe in Transition: A Study in Cultural Pattern* (Calcutta: Longman, Green & Co., 1937); and D.N. Majumdar, *Caste and Communication in an Indian Village* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1958).
34 For key efforts toward such readings, see, for example, Madan, *Pathways*, pp. 3–36, and Ravindra K. Jain, "Social anthropology of India: Theory and method", in Indian Council of Social Science Research, *Survey of Research in Sociology and Social Anthropology, 1969–1979* (New Delhi: Satvahan, 1985), pp. 1–50. See also Veena Das, *Critical Events: An Anthropological Perspective on Contemporary India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 50–54.
35 Redfield's formulations concerning "great" and "little" traditions of civilizations exercised an important influence here. It was while articulating this influence that Marriott asked: "Can a village be comprehended and conceived as a whole in itself, and can understanding one such village contribute to an understanding of the greater culture . . . in which the village is embedded?" Robert Redfield, *Peasant, Society, and Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956); McKim Marriott (ed.), *Village India: Studies in the Little Community* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955), p. 171.
36 The issues can be usefully extended to the seminal works of M.N. Srinivas. I have in mind works such as M.N. Srinivas, *Religion and Society among the Coorgs of South India* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952); and M.N. Srinivas, *Social Change in Modern India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966). See also Jain, "Social anthropology of India", pp. 8–11; and Satish Saberwal, "Sociologists and inequality in India: The historical context", *Economic and Political Weekly*, 14, 1979, pp. 243–254.
37 Fabian, *Time and the Other*; Bernard Cohn, "History and anthropology: The state of the play", *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 22, 1980, pp. 198–221; Trouillot, "Anthropology and the savage slot"; Michel-Rolph Trouillot, "North-Atlantic universals: Analytical fictions, 1492–1492–1945", in Saurabh Dube (ed.), *Enchantments of Modernity: Empire, Nation, Globalization* (London: Routledge, 2010), pp. 45–66; Saurabh Dube, *Stitches on Time*; Saurabh Dube, "Enchanted spaces and modern places", in Saurabh Dube, Ishita Banerjee Dube, and Edgardo Lander (eds.), *Critical Conjunctions: Foundations of Colony and Formations of Modernity,* a special issue of *Nepantla: Views from South*, 3, 2, 2002, pp. 333–350; and Micaela Di Leonardi, *Exotics at Home:*

Anthropologies, Others, American Modernity (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

38 Two clarifications follow. First, I am not simply blaming an all-conquering, ever-efficacious, essentially destructive colonialism here. At play in these processes were the coalescing of colonial rule, indigenous authority, and everyday arrangements on the Indian subcontinent. Second, it bears emphasis that these were worlds very different from the formatively shifting terrains of (and until) the 18th century. In these newly emergent arenas the boundaries between *vana*, *gochar*, and *kshetra*, field, commons, and forest, were sought to be categorically and clearly demarcated. In the prior terrains, nomadic pastoralists with enormous herds of cattle moved between mountains and plains; shifting cultivators could now take up settled agriculture and again move back to mobile practices, all within five generations; ascetics were warriors and traders; and labour rather than land was the scarce resource, allowing land-less labourers to move on in the face of extreme adversity.

39 Such writings are discussed by Ronald Inden, *Imagining India* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1990), pp. 131–151.

40 Nicholas B. Dirks, *Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of Modern India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001). It is also worth considering here the emphases of Louis Dumont, "The village community from Munro to Maine", *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, 9, 1966, pp. 67–89.

FOREWORD

In his informative and stimulating introduction to the present volume, Dr. Dube has said, 'what we need to-day is a series of studies of village communities from different parts of the country covering the many divergent patterns of organization and ethos.' Dr. Dube has not only stated the need; he has shown us what can be achieved in striving to meet it. His volume is a solid study and one which will doubtless take its place among the standard community studies made in various parts of the world which he cites in his bibliography.

In a number of ways this volume is especially valuable and challenging and is a tonic to present-day research into Indian village life. In the first place, it is a total study, not in the sense that it gives us all possible details concerning the village Shamirpet but in the sense that it presents between two covers all important aspects of the culture of this community. Though the author has been at pains to keep the account fairly general and uncluttered, the reader receives a convincing and reasonably adequate introduction to the historical, geographical, and political setting and the social, economic, and ritual structure of the village described. One puts the book down with a feeling that one has really come to know Shamirpet, its background, people, and problems quite well; even if everything about something is not there, something about almost everything is given. This is almost a departure in social science writing about Indian village life. Such studies have tended to be topical, specialized, and often too brief. Of attempts to give a sustained, many-sided picture of an Indian community we have very few; there are Gertrude Emerson's *Voiceless India* and William Wiser's *Behind Mud Walls*, both pioneer efforts, and a few others.

There are a good many reasons why more total studies of Indian villages have not been written to date, but one obvious reason should not be overlooked—the study of Indian village life yields material extremely complex and difficult to deal with in this manner. The village is a unity, yet

half of its adult population, the women, come from outside communities with which the village is linked by complicated marriage relations. Each individual belongs to a caste which exercises a great deal of control over him yet whose ruling group has jurisdiction far beyond the village confines. Each one of the many castes is a veritable subculture, with special traditions, prerogatives, rituals, food habits, and status, and this caste and its attributes is ordinarily a regional or national rather than a village phenomenon. Moreover, Indian culture and philosophy are old and rich. It is not easy to do justice to these background traditions which are the ultimate basis of much that goes on in present-day Indian village life and yet convey freshly and convincingly the localized, modern derivative of these historic impulses. And in this instance Dr. Dube's task was not made easier by the presence, in this village, of a sizeable group of Muslims. Consequently, at least on the religious side, he had two great traditions with which village activities had to be linked and in terms of which they had to be interpreted. It was necessary to take into consideration all these outside influences and links and still retain a focus on the village. Only those who have struggled with the intricacies of Indian village material and have before them the task of ordering it can fully appreciate Dr. Dube's accomplishment.

But this study has more to recommend it than that the author has given us ample coverage and has not been distracted from his central object. One of its attractions is that it rises above mere description; it provides analytical insights and provocative concepts. Students of Indian village culture and of folk culture in general will do well to examine Dr. Dube's definition and treatment of 'allied families' (as distinct from the lineage or general body of close relatives). Again, by analyzing out six major factors which contribute toward status differentiation in Shamirpet, the author cuts through a bewildering maze of data and provides a key to the understanding of the relative status positions of the sub-groups of the village and of individuals within these sub-groups. There is nothing remarkable or even particularly original in the factors he recognizes, but their application to the data in context is illuminating. It is the same with the identification of the new set of influences which, according to the author, are today playing upon the community. Whether the list is complete or not, it serves to explain much that has happened in the recent past and acts as a guide, or at least a hypothesis, to predict some future developments.

Dr. Dube's book has still another attribute which will intrigue many readers. He is not only interested in principles or factors which will illuminate specific aspects of the culture, but he is searching for abstractions of a higher level, integrating ideas which characterize and colour the entire culture. This quest is particularly marked in the concluding pages where

'the adjustment of the individual to the universe . . . peaceful adjustment and adaptation to the laws that control the universe,' and the tendency 'to view everything as hierarchically structured' are singled out as fundamental drives in the thought and activities of the group. The interest in discovering the kind and number of unifying and harmonizing principles which can be identified for any culture is strong to-day, and Dr. Dube's views of the binding forces in Indian culture and the effect of contemporary events upon them should receive close attention.

In the 'boiling down' of a large body of data to book size, it is often the sad fact that the vital essence is boiled off and a flavourless brew is left. Dr. Dube has off-set this necessity for general statement and summary by introducing source material and case material at strategic intervals. In this way, we are constantly reminded that even the statistics point to the joys and sorrows, triumphs and defeats of very real people and very vivid personalities.

The volume has one other characteristic which deserves attention. The data which have gone into it are the product of group research. It is, in fact, one of the first examples of what can be accomplished through a group, inter-disciplinary approach. More than eighteen staff members and students of Osmania University gathered the material under Dr. Dube's direction. Six faculties of the university were represented in the effort. Much of the material which the natural scientists collected is technical and specialized and will appear separately under appropriate auspices. But, because of this field method, Dr. Dube had excellent technical advice and solid material at his command in dealing with matters of agriculture, health, and nutrition—subjects which the social scientist may often have reason to touch upon with diffidence. Consequently, the book has a ring of authority which might be hard to achieve at points without this kind of collaboration. Group research is expensive, and it is not always easy to bring and keep together in amicable work relations specialists with different but highly cherished vocabularies. There have been those who, not without reason, have questioned the whole business. Dr. Dube's book does much to dispel doubt and raise hope. He and his associates are to be congratulated.

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