

Book Review

Inayatullah, Rubina Saigol, Pervez Tahir (Eds), *Social Science in Pakistan: A Profile*, Council of Social Science Pakistan (COSS), Islamabad, 2005, pp 512, Price Pak Rs. 500, US \$ 20.

Social scientists study various facets of human society. Historically, societies were understood and explained through religious and philosophical texts. History, Philosophy and Politics also developed as independent disciplines. One thinks of Plato's **Republic**, Chanakya's **Arthashastra**, and histories by various Greek, Roman, Arab, Persian, Turk, Chinese and Indian writers. One notable contribution to the study of societies is by Ibn Khaldun, the 14th century Tunisian, considered the first sociologist of the world.

However, it is the advent of the Industrial Revolution – first in England and later its spread to the rest of Europe and North America – that gave rise to a new type of society, the like of which had no precedent in history. This new industrial society had totally new characteristics not observed in earlier ones. New sciences of sociology, economics, psychology, and anthropology were developed. Advances were made in the older disciplines of philosophy, political science and history. Europeans who had colonized the Americas and Oceania in the 16th- 18th centuries completed the colonization of the rest of the world by the first decade of the 20th century. They introduced newly developed knowledge along with new institutions for governance, control and exploitation during the colonial rule. The British introduced a new educational system with schools, colleges and universities in the 19th century. The Punjab University was one of the first five universities established in the sub-continent in the last quarter of the 19th century. Science and social science disciplines, developed in Europe, were introduced in the colonies. Newer disciplines like anthropology, ethnography, and linguistics that helped understand the newly subjugated societies were developed.

The book under review takes stock of the state in which various disciplines of the social sciences exist in Pakistan. It consists of twenty essays, seventeen of which describe the state of Economics, History, Pakistan Studies, Political Science, International Relations, Peace and Conflict Resolution, Area Studies, Strategic Studies, Sociology, Public Administration,

Linguistics, Journalism and Mass Communication, Philosophy, Psychology, Anthropology, Women's Studies and Education. One essay assesses the contribution of NGOs to social science research in Pakistan, while another looks at the quantitative development of the social sciences. Inayatullah has contributed an introduction, while Rubina Saigol has provided a conclusion. All contributors hold senior positions in universities and research establishments. All essays evaluate the state of their discipline, quantitatively as well as qualitatively. They also try to identify the factors that have helped or hindered the development of their respective disciplines.

Pakistan inherited the colonial state and other affiliated institutions, the schools, colleges and the Punjab University. At that time only traditional disciplines such as economics, political science, history and philosophy were taught at undergraduate levels in colleges. The practice continued in the earlier years after independence. Since Pakistan became a US ally in the Cold War soon after independence, American influence replaced the earlier British colonial perspective in the study of various subjects. With American assistance, newer disciplines were introduced: Public Administration in 1955, Sociology, Social Work, Applied Psychology in the 1960s, Anthropology, Area Studies, Strategic Studies, International Relations in the 1970s and Peace and Conflict Studies and Women's Studies in the 1990s. A significant development of the late 1970s has been the decline of the discipline of History and the introduction of the subject of Pakistan Studies as a compulsory subject up to the undergraduate level. This has made the teachers of this new subject the largest group among college teachers.

All contributors have noted that, despite impressive growth in the numbers of teachers and institutions, the state of social science in Pakistan is very unsatisfactory. Hardly any significant research has emerged from these institutions despite a large number of theses churned out by post-graduates.

The book is successful in its endeavour of giving the reader a comprehensive picture of the state of development of various disciplines of the social sciences. However, except for a very few, most articles are descriptive rather than analytical. They shed little light on the reasons for the sad state of the social sciences in Pakistan.

Rubina Saigol notes in her concluding essay, "overwhelming ideological orientation of teachers across the disciplinary spectrum revolves around religious and nationalist thinking.....so deeply rooted are the teachers and students in the hegemonic version of state and society that even the social sciences, which are tasked to produce alternative visions, fail

to do so.” “The absence of debate and controversy, discussions and contention, makes most of the universities very dull and insipid places where received knowledge from old books is transmitted from generation to generation in the same unchanging way”.

This book is a wake up call for all thinking individuals as well as social scientists in Pakistan, as it highlights the dismal state of the social sciences in Pakistan. Social scientists have failed to study and understand the contours and the dynamics of their own society, leaving the task to foreign governments and academics. That is not enough or even appropriate. Pakistan, though a new country, is peopled by the descendents of one of the oldest civilizations. It has witnessed the interaction and intermingling of indigenous people with those from the West and North. It has been the birth place of Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism and it has welcomed Muslims, Christians, Jews, and Zoroastrians. So many influences have gone into the making of the personality and psyche of her people. Pakistani social scientists should study and explore their society so that they can identify the problems and suggest their solutions to help the people to transform themselves into a prosperous, peaceful and humane nation.

Lahore School of Economics
Lahore

Dr. Anis Alam