



## Radha Kamal Mukherjee and His Idea of Ecology and Environment

**DR. Pankaj Kumar Singh**

Assistant Professor, Sociology, Maharana Pratap Govt. PG College  
Bilsa, Budaun (U.P.), India

Received-13.06.2020, Revised-19.06.2020, Accepted-24.06.2020 E-mail:pankajsociohdi@rediffmail.com

**Abstract:** *The environmental sociology is not just sociology of the environment, but rather a sociology informed by an understanding of ecological limits. The thinning of ozone layer, pesticides residues in food, nuclear waste and water pollution, should make it abundantly clear that human activity has a direct effect on the natural world. Conversely, the natural environment influences the social realm as well. Environmental Sociology explores these effects by examining the interdependencies between population, organization, technology and environment.*

*As such, this approach departs from traditional sociology in that it emphasizes the natural and built environment as factors influencing human behaviors and social organization.*

**Key Words:** Environment, Nuclear waste, water pollution, social organization, Ecology.

**Introduction-** The seriousness of the recent forms of environmental degradation had led the contemporary sociologist to predict that the 21st century will be characterized by a massively endangered natural environment if the present trend of ecological devastation continues. Further, it is predicted that this aspect will become increasingly dominant in the field of politics, foreign affairs, development policy, education, technology and research. In the century of environment, the ecological imperative will determine law and administration, city planning and agriculture, arts and religion, technology and economy. Intervention for a radical transformation in the contemporary situation, which may be termed as the 'Earth Politics' alone can be salvage the future. In the recent times, however, environmental concerns, both the origins and nature of environmental deterioration and the emergence of environment centered politics have been articulated in sociological writings. Many Sociologist namely, Anthony Giddens, Ulrich Beck, Jurgen Habermas and others have addressed themselves to these issues.

**Perhaps this new found concern is based illustrated by two well - known but contrasting episodes:** The Chipko

movement that acclaimed initiative of the Himalayan peasantry towards forest protection, and the gas leak at Bhopal, that most devastating of industrial tragedies. If Chipko demonstrated the resilience and folk wisdom of the rural poor, Bhopal for its part revealed the dark side of modern technology.

The two are the dramatic illustrations of the social consequences of environmental degradation. At a day to day level, however, the majority of Indians are faced with more prosaic but equally significant environmental problems. Indeed, virtually every segment of Indian society has to cope with chronic shortage of natural resources. To take the forestry sector alone, there are acute shortages of forest land for shifting cultivators, fodder for pastoral nomads, fuel and small timber for peasant farmers, and raw materials for forest based industry. There is also serious crisis in the quality and availability of water, excessively high rates of urban and industrial pollution and a continuing loss of biological diversity. We are faced with an ecological crisis of monumental proportions, whose most serious consequence is increasing social conflict, inevitable as different groups exercise competing claims on a dwindling resource



base.

Both the cause and consequences of environmental degradation are, of course, research problems within the purview of the social sciences. Yet it is notable that the environmental crisis has caught the social science community unawares. As yet, they have contributed little to environment debate to India. By contrast, environmental journalists, social activists and natural scientists have contributed significantly to our understanding of the social implications of environmental degradation.

The dominant social science traditions in the West and India do share one assumption: that, to quote Durkheim, social facts can only be explained with reference to other social facts. True, for any particular social or historical process there are always competing explanations. Thus, in the most famous textbook example in sociology, the rise of capitalism was interpreted by Karl Marx as a consequence primarily of changes in the economy, whereas Max Weber was inclined to grant greater significance to the role of religious beliefs. How then does an ecological approach modify the basic assumptions of the social sciences, and more particularly of sociology? It appears that sociologists implicitly work within a model of society as being divided into four broad categories: the economy, the polity, social structure, and culture.

Housing and Management Housing management has an important place for better production of dairy animals. For their good health, growth and maximum production, as much as breeding and animal feeding is necessary, their housing arrangement is also as important so that they can be saved from adverse environment like strong sunlight, rain, heat and harsh wind. Also, they can be protected from wild animals and fodder. All the work can be done efficiently in less time and cost. They are taken care of properly. This prevents many types of diseases and also reduces mortality rate. Milk production and The present ecological crisis a more recent concern is significant to modern social theory.

The modern society is seen to be characterized by large-scale environmental degradation. The hitherto neglected area of relation between human beings and nature and the deleterious effect of human action upon the latter, especially in the last century and a half, has emerged as a major issues. The growth of the environment politics or environment movements that offers a challenge to the modern industrial or capitalist mode of production as well as consumption is another important issue in contemporary theory of environment.

**Ecology and Environment: Indian Sociological Perspective-** Today we are confronting the problem of ecological survival on a planetary scale. The western model of capitalist industrial development exists as the dominating development paradigm. Since globalization and liberalization loomed large, this model of development is actually preparing a recipe for disaster. With the emergence of modern environmentalism and the gaining of popularity of the concept of 'sustainable development', there is a present and ongoing search for an alternative paradigm of development to save the planet earth from ecological disasters. People of many hues and cries are involved in this process –many 'isms' are invoked. All these and other social ecological aspects of rural and urban life find as an engaging treatment in the group aspect of human ecology.

**Mukherjee's Ecological Thought and Assessment-** In the time period in which professor Mukherjee wrote, there is no denying of the fact that at that period of time environment and ecology was hardly a matter of concern, either popularly or scholarly.

However, these exist several such occasions where R.K. Mukherjee had showed grave concern for environment and ecology. For him social ecology was a complex formulation in which a number of social sciences interested.

The geological, geographical, and biological factors worked together to produce

*PIF-5.003/ASVS Reg. No. AZM 561/2013-14*



an ecological zone. In its turn, ecology is conditioned by social, economic, or political factors. As there is a definite link between ecology and society the development of ecological zones must be seen in terms of a dynamic process: i.e. challenge of the environment and response of the people who establish a settlement.

Besides the Indian thinkers there were many Western thinkers with whom Mukherjee worked and who influenced his writings. Some of them were sociologists like Edward Allsworth Ross, Robert Ezra Park of Chicago Mckenzie and P. Sorokin. Most of these American Sociologists were interested in the study of Region, Urban Disorganization, Human Ecology, Social Change and so on. The influence of the Scottish ecologist, Patrick Geddes, and the French historian, Lucien Febvre, is visible in his early explorations of the regional basis of social life. At the same time, Mukherjee kept pace with the developing discipline of scientific ecology, and was personally acquainted with pioneers like the British animal ecologist, 'Elton. He drew fascinating parallels between ecological influences on the plant, animal, and human worlds respectively. While eschewing ecological determinism, he illumined the influence of the 'web of life' on human economic, political and social relations.

Finally, Mukherjee tested his theoretical ideas through empirical studies of different geographical regions. Several studies focused on ecological and socio-economic renewal of the Indo-Gangetic Plain, while another dealt with the princely state of Gwalior, whose peasants were plagued by soil erosion and declining yields. Mukherjee's prose style is both unwieldy and wooden, but he was working towards an integration of ecology with the social sciences that was considerably ahead of its time. In the present context when the application of biological principles and techniques to the study of balance and interrelations of the human species and communities has grown the new discipline of human

ecology, of which Prof. Mukherjee is a pioneer covers few but important aspects of human settlement, in some of his writings Prof. R. K. Mukherjee indeed says at the very outset that, the ecology and sociology of rural and urban habitations are not merely of theoretical interest for interpreting forces and trends in contemporary society but also of considerable practical significance for mitigating the present disorder in economy and technology and in man's ecological, occupational and power relations in all countries. Social ecology studies the positional and distributive factors, the spatial and food relations of human beings, habitations and institutions. It concentrates its attention on 3 fundamental inter-relations between man and his milieu: i) The influence of the habitat upon his food and aggregation, his occupational and social relationships. ii) The position of sustained maximum economy for man in the midst of changing environmental pressures, adaptations and balances. iii) And the influence of mobility, specialization and distance on the relations between individuals and on the stratification and segregation of functions groups and classes. According to him the sociological situation is one single ecological whole, but in analyzing the problem of human habitation a selective approach must be made. Prof. Mukherjee covers few but important aspects of human settlement, in some of his writings. To make it clear he encompasses the following points

1. The study of human habitations explains in the first place, the spatial patterning of population and settlement forms.
2. The study of habitations accordingly analyses the inter-relations between density, mobility and tempo of life and thus relates types of human habitation to fundamental ecological processes.
3. Such a study also includes an investig



tion of the social and institutional implications and consequences of density, mobility and distance, normal social trends as well as deviations and misfits in different types of habitation, village, small-town, city and metropolis .Ecological relations of individuals to the land or to the system of machinery and to fellow individuals as competing or cooperating units in the struggle for food, position and status govern social interaction. To him, society everywhere arranges its density, spatial distribution, occupation and social stratification so as to fit harmoniously into its ecological base. To him, social distance between groups helps towards appropriate collective social-ecological adjustments that help population towards maintaining and average stable abundance. Social mobility and distance are thus mechanism of establishment of numerical balance in the ecological order. Prof. Mukherjee again paid a little heed to the distinction between rural and urban community on the question of solidarity with nature and on social distance. He Measure the rural-urban difference on the basis of struggle for status, man's segmental and composite role and on group patterns, he depicted that, physical and social mobility, heavy density of population, punctuality, computability, guided by pecuniary and intellectualistic scheme of valuation, fear and uncertainty along with enterprise dominate the complex urban community. On the other hand, in the rural community, a relatively fixed economic and social status and rigidity of social groups tend towards the acceptance of stability and security in the world as a norm. According to him, there is no hard and fast dichotomy between village and city. Social cohesiveness, stability of primary group controls, settled habitations, exhibit common institutions, habit and attitudes above all the settled habitations characterized the ruralism, on the other hand, ecologically speaking urbanism is characterized by a demographic and mechanical technique base; biological speaking by a preponderance of a heterogeneous foreign

-born, adult population; sociologically speaking – is a system of superficial, transitory human relations, groups and institutions characterized by high physical and social mobility and interchangeability, and psychologically speaking, a system of ideas, attitudes and ideals marked by formal objective and pecuniary standards. To him, the ecological region, physiologically, is a following stream of human circulations with centers or nodal points, channels or routes, and orbits or boundaries. Structurally it is a constellation of different types of habitations, scattered and weak or nucleated and intense foci of human circulations. Prof. Mukherjee advocated this by assuming the region as an ecological conscious entity. To him, the region is not only a man made through fare, but is also a great living current of solidarity and consciousness of mind. Thus human habitations and circulations, route and region form together an integral indefinable entity made up of both material and intangible elements. Prof. Mukheerjee said that, mobility changes the dominant interests and elements of group formation in the neighborhood hamlet or village. Caste and kinship used to underlie the relative stability of many relationships and the continuance of village institutions; mobility becomes the solvent of tradition, caste and ancient social functions and institutions. As the facilities for travel, communications and intercourse break the barriers of physical and social isolation the inter relationships of villages change. The size and the nature of both the primary and secondary markets vary according to the facilities of communications, density and the standard of living of the rural populations. The fairs –which are characteristically of religious, social, economic and recreational, are also significant. According to him, the hamlet, the village the town, and the city are interlinked in a system of circulation of men, goods and services, developed on an entirely new scale both in extent and intensity where some special natural advantages may



focus powerful centripetal forces. While discussing about the functions of river, route and town, he cited a excellence instance of how kolkata assembles and accumulates the agricultural products and raw materials from its hinterland for exportation, but has added to itself the new roles of an important industrial centre and the major distributing centre of imported manufactures for the greater part of India. Changes in areas and forms of services also caught the attention of the author, where he said that, the physical and cultural isolation of rural community is constantly being challenged by drifting, temporary or permanent raids of new occupations; mobility somewhere in the neighbourhood accordingly introduces new ecological and social interactions in the stable rural community. The nature and functions of an industrial town its mobility and grouping alignments are for different from those of a country town or a "rurban centre" through which rural society seeks larger integrations of services and interests in the wider drama of national life. Prof. Mukherjee, pointed out the burning problem of personal disorganization in new cities and industrial towns which is a product of social disorganization, excessive mobility as well as the entire trend of social and economic forces. He argued about the probable hindrance about this disorganization through social welfare. The essence of social welfare is to fight anti social attitudes and behaviour through the re-establishment of a stable community organization which may be redefine the social situation and gradually rebuild the life-organization for persons who have suffered loss of status .Cities in different ages and cultures differ in types and in their areas of dominance. The dominance of the business zone - where control and co-ordination are centralized, brains and ability concentrate and the community is most alive - is the result of in-avoidable process of division of labour and segregation. To him the towns are urban villages or village agglomerations-developed at all focal points of human

circulation, especially markets and defense and pilgrimage centers. While discussing the role of the culture he pointed out that, it is the cultural traditions of the village which on the whole determine the tone of civic life and also govern the distribution of utilities services or facilities in the separate natural areas of the town, villages and towns in India were, indeed planned according to a religious symbolism which governs the layout of wards and streets, the location of temples, monasteries and village halls as well as of open spaces, tanks and gates. According to him, on the basis of these factors the ancient Indian towns were classified into capital city, commercial emporium fortress town, little town, market town, bigger market town, frontier town, trading outpost and last but not the least university town. These classified towns change their spacing of human beings and utilization of urban sites and facilities as they change their dominant functions, occupations and interests. Prof. Mukherjee said that, it is the culture that determines the predominant characteristics of a city, whether it is industrial and commercial or whether the main reason for its being is religion, education, health or recreation. It is the culture which governs the spatial distribution of population units, social institutions and urban facilities. It is the culture that nourishes appropriate expressions and symbols of civic life and consciousness.

**Conclusion** - Rahda Kamal Mukherjee in the first place grounds the amorphous rural and urban sociology in the scientific concepts of social ecology derives from the biological dimension; secondly he uses modern ecological concepts for the interpretation of the regional organization and its trends of balance, unbalance and optimum and thirdly, formulates certain ecological and psychological indices, such as location, density, mobility, specialization, distance, dominance and tempo of work and life for qualitatively measuring social relations and patterns of an entire region community and culture. An integral holistic, trans disciplinary social science procedure, which is introduced by social ecology, studies the human community's ecological balance, industrial equilibrium and cultural harmony in there dynamic reciprocity and interchange. The interchange between man and his environment - i.e. in his habitation, natural resources and technology and his social habits and values is reciprocal and intimate. It can be argued that ecological planning will

*PIF-5.003 /ASVS Reg. No. AZM 561/2013-14*



have to be aided and reinforced by the human community's recovery of its ancient sensitiveness and responsiveness to 'Mother Nature' and 'Mother Earth'. This formative principle in man's social living, growth and culture and in his pattern of habitation and aggregation must no longer be eclipsed by out grown technology and outworn social attitudes and values of life.

#### REFERENCES

1. Mukherjee, R.(1942). Social Ecology. Longmans, Green.
2. Mukherjee, R.(1930). Ecological Contributions to Sociology. The Sociological Review.
3. Mukherjee, R.(1968). Man and His Habitation: A Study in Social Ecology. Popular Prakashan.

\*\*\*\*\*