



Barriers in the empirical study of tribes in India

Alpana Kumari

Assistant Professor, Birsa College, Khunti, Department of Political Science, Ranchi University, Ranchi, Jharkhand, India

Abstract

The constitution of India provides special privileges to the backward section of the society. This was done keeping in view that there was a wide disparity in the Indian society and to remove this inequality such provisions were made in the constitution. But after seventy one years of independence, no substantive improvement is seen in the tribal section of the society. They still constitute the most vulnerable section of the Indian society. This statement force the scholars to think as to where the mistake is being made. Whether it is a policy paralysis which is responsible for their backwardness or whether there is a loophole in the policy implementing agency. Actually, both are responsible to some extend. But, behind this it is also true that there is a lack of proper research in this area, which failed to bring out the real need of the tribal and it also miserably failed to give the correct policy for tribal development. Most of the research and study on tribes brought only the partial truth of tribes. This is because they do not mingle easily with outsiders, either because of their shy nature or because they see other community with suspicion or as 'diku'. They have an impression in their mind that the outsiders come to exploit them, so they easily do not co-operate with the outsiders. This forces the researcher to take the help of a middle men to communicate with the tribes. There is also a language barrier for which a middle men is required. There is every possibility that interviewing in front of the third party creates a hindrance to bring out the real picture of the tribal situation in India and their needs and aspiration. There also a sense of suspicion among the tribes as to what the researcher will do after taking their interview, so they hesitate to reveal all the truth about the mselves. There is also a mindset among the people that the study and survey will benefit only the researcher, so the tribesmen do not take interest to give all answers to the question of the researcher and reveal all the truth of their culture, tradition and believe syatem. . Apart from all this there is also a biasness on the part of the researcher. Most of the researcher are unknown about the tribal culture and theirbelieves. They go in the tribal dominated region with some bookish knowledge or the myths which they would have heard from some unknown unauthentic source. But its important to know that every tribal culture is not the same. Every tribe have their own dintinct language, culture and believe. Therefore the researcher must be open to the change these are the problems which creates a barrier in the empirical study of tribes in India.

Keywords: barriers, empirical study, research, tribes

Introduction

Tribes are the most vulnerable section of the Indian society. Therefore to improve their conditions and to bring them in the mainstreams of the society, several studies is being done. Many surveys and research are being conducted both by the government and Non-Government Organisations to improve their standard of living. Britishers did not make any commendable effort to uplift the life of the tribals, instead, they followed the policy of isolation and made them a museum species. This policy disconnected them from the other sections of the society. Although they were able to preserve their identity and culture through this policy. But the most unfortunate part of this policy was that, they were far left behind the other section of the society. They were devoid of even the basic needs of life. They lived in such a state that they were called as uncivilized and uncultured people. Independent India cannot leave any section of its society to live in such a pathetic condition. India will grow only when its whole section of the society will grow and prosper together with dignity and honour. Therefore a special privileges were given to the tribes, so that they could come at par with the other sections of the society. The fifth and sixth Schedules to the constitution were incorporated in the constitution to make special provisions for the protection of the interest of the Scheduled Tribes. With the view to

uplift the tribal society and to bring them at par with the mainstream population many tribal development schemes were launched by the government. From the second five year plan itself, a special attention for tribal development was given by the government. like "Multipurpose tribal Projects in certain selected tribal areas" and accordingly 43 special Multipurpose Tribal Development (TD) Blocks were started during 1954. Special emphasis was given to education in addition to health, agriculture, communication and housing programmes. Later, Integrated Tribal Development Projects under Tribal Sub-Plan were started. But these special privileges and schemes did not yielded the desired result. This forces the scholar to investigate the loophole area because of which the policy is not yielding a desired result as tribals in India still constitutes one of the most vulnerable section of the Indian society. This shows that the policy has not yet reached the roots of the tribal society.

Since independence many efforts have been done to improve the life of the tribals. Many policies and programmes are made for the welfare of the tribals but still they constitute one of the backward section of the society. Prima-facie result for this is that either there is a drawback in the policy or unwillingness on the side of the policy implementing agency, but one of the core reason behind this

is that, the research or study on tribes have not been done properly. There is a loophole in research on tribes which failed to give proper solution of tribal problems. Till now, most of the research and study on tribes have just touched the periphery of the tribal life and have not touched their in-depth life. This is the reason why the government policies and programmes have just benefitted only those tribals who had some link with the mainstream population. This statistics reveals that the research on tribes are done mainly in the presence of a middle man or a mediator who influences the outcome of the research and does not allow the benefit to reach the core of the tribal population. Here one would suggest that the research on tribes should not be done in the presence of a mediator. But, it's also true that one cannot do research without the help of a mediator in the extreme tribal areas. The researcher has to go through a lot of difficulty while doing research in a tribal area. The very first barrier which a researcher faces while doing research on tribes is that, it is not safe to enter the tribal area without taking help of a person from their own community. So, one needs to find a link to enter the area and get the data collected. The tribal areas are not only located in an inaccessible region where the main land people are afraid to go but most of the tribals are also very violent towards the outsiders. They have their own way of life and do not allow others to interfere in their personal customs and beliefs. They do not appreciate any person outside their community to enter their area. Apart from tribal areas being an inaccessible region, most of the tribal areas in central India are also affected with Naxalite problems. This poses another challenge to the researcher to go in that area. To visit this area one needs a strong mediator who holds a good reputation in that area and could strongly put the researcher's view in front of the tribes of that area. Even if the researcher manages to enter the tribal region the very next challenge which the researcher has to face is that of a linguistic problem. Every tribal group has their own distinct language, like, Santali is spoken by the Santal group, Kurukh is spoken by the Oraon group, Ho by the Ho group while Kharia by the Kharia group etc... The popular adage in Hindi fits well here that "every two miles the water doth change, and every four the dialect". The linguistic problem could be settled by keeping a middle man or a mediator to interact with the concerned tribal community. But here it should be taken care of that the mediator should have a good hold of the language and should be able to interpret not only the language but also the inner hidden feelings of the people while giving an interview. However, the linguistic difficulty is not a very big problem today. Most of the universities in India are also offering different tribal languages as their course of study in higher education. Overcoming this hurdle comes the next hurdle. This barrier is related to the inherent nature of the tribes. The tribes have always chosen to live away from the mainstream population, in the jungles and in inaccessible areas. The theory of isolation of tribes given by Verrier Elwin has further encouraged them to live away from the mainstream population. This theory has converted them into a museum species. The Britishers never took effort to integrate them into a mainstream population and the tribes also never liked to live with the mainstream population. They see outsiders with suspicion or as 'dikus' and as someone who has come to rob their land and culture. In this scenario it becomes difficult for any person outside their community to do research on them. Therefore, the

researcher has to spend some years of his life with the tribal people to get friendly with them and to win their confidence. But, for this to happen, here also, one needs a person from their own community who is attached to its own community as well as shares a link with the people outside its community. Such persons are called middle men or a mediator. A mediator makes the tribal community understand that the research scholar has come to do study on them and the outcome of the study will prove good for them and their people. Their needs, aspirations and demands will reach the government and the outside world through the research and the government will make policies for their welfare and development according to the study report. But making them understand this is not an easy task. It will be more better if the researcher becomes a part of that community and does not reveal anyone that the motive behind entering the area is to do research on them. This can give an exact picture of the tribal situation in India. However, it will prove to be a time-taking process. One cannot exactly say, how much time it will take, it can take one year or the whole life of the researcher could be spent on research. Practically, it requires a lot of dedication to spend a whole life with the tribals. At the same time the researcher also requires government assistance for this. Mostly, the researcher spends five to seven years to complete their research work. In this short period, it's not possible to explore every nook and cranny of the research topic, because to know someone's behaviour, culture and tradition, it's important to spend a long period of time with that community, then only a real essence of the cultural practices could be felt. In this case a middle man is always present while taking an interview or survey. This is not a healthy sign for a genuine research as the outcome could vary and the real result could get tempered in front of the middle men. And if the mediator is not good and has its own personal motive behind helping the researcher then the mediator could influence both the researcher and the tribal community which could take a whole research in a different direction. This is a great barrier in the way of a genuine research.

In some cases, it is also seen that some of the tribal communities are very violent towards the people of other communities. Research on such tribes could prove to be dangerous and one's own wisdom and cleverness could help the researcher to handle this situation. However, to tackle all this is not so easy. Apart from all the above hurdles, the most unfortunate part is that the researcher may not be a well-trained person. Most of the PhD research scholars in India, do research just to complete their academic work. This feeling keeps the researcher away from the emotional and psychological touch of the tribes as a result the required effort is missing in the research work and the outcome is also not satisfactory.

There is also a biasness on the part of the researcher. A biased researcher gives the biased output, which prohibits the real truth of the tribes to come out. A researcher visits the field area with all the positive or negative impressions which one would have got through various books, journals, internet etc... these secondary sources of information are so deep-rooted in the mind of the researcher that sometimes the reality gets blurred. Most of the research on tribes are based on myths or prima facie experience of the researcher or on what the middle men would have told the researcher. This is also one of the major hurdles in carrying out research on tribes. One needs to be unbiased while doing research. It

may be difficult but not impossible. Apart from all this, many of the research in India are also cut and paste work. The primary reason for this is that the quality of research in India is not so good. The main focus of Indian Universities are on quantity of the social science research work and not on the quality.

But, some genuine research has also been done. Which still forms the base of research today. However, if one looks at the present perspective, the tribal society has changed a lot. So one needs to look at the tribal society from the present perspective.

It is true that there are barriers in the empirical study of tribes. But one needs to minimise those barriers, so that research and surveys could be conducted easily and government policies and programmes could reach even the last person standing in the line. The person who is interested to do research on tribes, need to know the barriers which one will have to face in the course of the research work and accordingly should develop a skill to overcome those barriers. This skill could be developed only by knowing the culture, language and traditions of the tribes on whom the research is to be conducted as this is the main key to get friendly with the tribes and win their confidence. If a researcher is unable to do so then a genuine interpreter is required for better communication. Presently, many of the tribal languages are also a part of the higher education which is a good initiative by the government of India. There is also an effort made by the government and universities together to codify the tribal languages. It is indeed a good initiative to preserve the tribal language and culture.

Objective of the study

The objective of the study is to reveal the hurdles which a researcher face while doing research on tribal community as tribes do not allow outsiders to enter their area. They do not have a positive view for the outsiders. They see outsiders with suspicion and as 'dikus'. Apart from their suspicion and fear, the researcher too has its own biasness. Moreover, the whole research on tribe is conducted in presence of a third person, who works like a mediator between the researcher and the tribal people or community. So, in this scenario, it becomes interesting to know that how the research is being conducted on tribes.

Research Methodology

This article is based on both primary and secondary data. It is primarily based on personal experience while some secondary sources were also referred like internet, journals, books and both print media and electronic media were referred for the study.

Scope of the study

The scope of the study is limited to research methodology based on empirical data. This study only reveals the barrier which a researcher faces while doing research on tribes. The solution of the hurdles is also present in a brief.

Limitation of the study

This article is limited to the hurdles which most of the researcher face while doing research on tribal community.

Data interpretation and analysis

Data is scientifically collected and carefully analysed using content analysis method.

Findings and conclusion

There are lot of hurdles in the empirical study of tribes in India and while carrying out survey in a tribal dominated area. When a research is done in the presence of a third person who acts as a mediator between the researcher and the tribal person. In such a scenario, the research outcomes get influence in the presence of a mediator. This is one of the most serious drawback of research on tribes. To reach the government policies and programmes to the whole of the tribal community, a dedicated researcher is needed who could chalk out perfect policies for the tribals and bring them in the way of development.

Recommendations and Suggestions

There is a need to minimise the barrier on the study of tribes in India. Presently, one finds that the tribal language has become a course of study which is a very welcome step to minimise the barrier in the tribal study. There is also an effort to codify the tribal language which has become endangered. It is recommended that whenever a research is done on tribes, firstly the researcher should spend some time with the tribal community to understand their customs and believes in a better way and become friendly with them so that the person shares easily everything with the researcher. And do not jump in a conclusion at once.

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