



## Conceptualising ethnography: History, process, and contestation

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### Abstract

Ethnography, as a qualitative research method, was used by earlier anthropologists (as well as colonial administrative agents) and has often been contested by post-colonial or contemporary ethnographers, especially in terms of techniques and styles, which, in turn, led to new ways of doing ethnography that are distinctive from the former. A more radical discourse concerns the insider-outsider debate in contemporary times. In this context, this paper used discourse analysis to examine how ethnography, a celebrated method for data collection and interpretation among anthropologists, was later critiqued by post-colonial or contemporary ethnographers and moved away from the former techniques and styles of doing ethnography. It first traces the history of ethnography, its techniques and styles, and how it is contested and shifts over time, if not completely, because the former ethnographic tradition is still seen as having been perpetuated in contemporary ethnographic research, though it is changing. It combines discourses from various ethnographers that address issues ranging from how to make field entry, build relationships with the community/participants, and record data, to how to translate text, engage in self-negotiation, and navigate insider-outsider debates.

**Keywords:** Ethnography, field entry, building relations, recording data, translating text, self-negotiation, insider-outsider

### Introduction

Traditionally, methodologists have avoided giving researchers instructions on conducting successful research. Instead, they focus on “transmitting an attitude, reasoning procedure, a way to deal with problems” (Gobo & Molle 2008<sup>[21]</sup>, Preface). For example, the researcher was given the freedom to navigate research challenges through personal experience and innovative ways, though it must be guided by basic rules of the specific situation they are dealing with. Because they feel that a strict adherence to rules does not necessarily ensure successful research. The personal experience of a researcher was often considered a significant research technique, whereas established rules were considered less effective (Gobo & Molle, 2008)<sup>[21]</sup>.

However, Gobo and Molle (2008)<sup>[21]</sup> argued that:

If you want to cook a dish, a book of recipes is preferable to an essay on culinary science. Because recipes, though limited and reductive, are practical... methodology which does not strive to produce recipes, advice, and suggestions is sterile, and that recipes without the guidance of a theory are impractical ... we need a theory founded on practice, and a practice founded the theory. (Preface)

The ethnographic tradition dates back to the work of Herodotus and Montesquieu. It is the method of enquiry that cultivates clarity, as Virginia Woolf stated. It is the method that decodes and records, describes the grounds of collective order and diversity, inclusion, and exclusion (Clifford, 1986)<sup>[10, 11]</sup>. In this context, this paper used discourse analysis to examine how ethnography, a celebrated method for data collection and interpretation among anthropologists, was later critiqued by post-colonial or contemporary ethnographers and moved away from the former techniques and styles of doing ethnography. At first, the paper will highlight the discourse on the history of ethnography and how it is contested and shifts over time. Second, by combining discourses from various ethnographers, it will highlight issues related to techniques of field entry, building relationships with the community/participants, recording

field data, translating texts, engaging in self-negotiation, and navigating insider-outsider debates.

### History and Shifting Ethnographic Tradition

Historically, ethnography was used as an instrument for understanding specific social life in natural settings, distinctive to the researcher. In other words, researching the other culture in exotic settings (non-Western society) through the lens of superiority (Western society) and an inferiority complex (non-Western society), where the researcher is someone who holds a superior identity and cultural affiliation. The information was often collected with the attitudes of othering and dehumanising the locals and their culture. It involves an imperialist agenda. There is a tendency to categorise and classify groups. To be more precise, it was claimed to have collected information for the colonial agenda (Gullion, 2016)<sup>[23]</sup>. For instance, the anthropologists in 1800s used expedition, excursion, or a “rite of passage” (Gullion, 2016<sup>[23]</sup>, p. 1) as a technique to research other culture whom they identified the locals/natives with derogatory terms such as exotic, primitive, savage, and a lot more, filled with superiority markers (Gullion, 2016)<sup>[23]</sup>. Bronislaw Malinowski (1884-1942) was among the celebrated anthropologists whose work, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*, published in 1922<sup>[31]</sup>, has become the foundation text and methodology in ethnographic studies, and thus, continues to influence non-reflexive contemporary anthropologists, because, as Gullion argued, it is a challenge to move away from historically embedded colonial mentality (Gullion, 2016)<sup>[23]</sup>.

Therefore, traditional ethnographic methods were critiqued by numerous scholars who choose the method of reflexivity, reflexive turn, sensitivity to local culture, accountability and responsibility of field interpretation (alongside self-immersion) and focuses on natives or insiders’ point of view as part of decolonial and indigenous methodology (see also Clifford & Marcus, 1986; Narayan, 1998; Smith, 1999; Gullion, 2016)<sup>[10, 11, 23, 32, 37, 44]</sup>. There is a call to move away

from terms like “research subjects” and replace them with “equal participants,” breaking the hierarchical relationship between researcher and community. An attempt has been made to one’s own culture rather than to other cultures. Say, there are instances of sociological ethnographers conducting research on their own society in the United States (in urban settings) in the 1990s (Gullion, 2016) [23]. The notable works of Whyte’s (1943) [23, 49] *Street Corner Society: The Social Structure of an Italian Slum*, Geertz’s (1973) [19], *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*, Smith’s (1999) [44], *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, and MacClancy’s two major works (1) *Introduction: Taking People Seriously* (MacClancy, 2000) [29], and (2) *Exotic no more: Anthropology on the front lines* (MacClancy, 2002) [30] are the shifting trend in doing ethnography with a focus on decolonising methodology. As highlighted, the shift reflects a methodological departure from the dominant ethnographic tradition with an urgency to minimise violence against research participants, treating research participants as equals, promoting research ethics, fostering collaborative research, and co-constructing narratives (Gullion, 2016; Campbell, 1995) [7, 23].

### **Doing Ethnography: Field Entry, Relationship Building, and Recording Field Data**

The challenges of doing ethnography, particularly how to get into the field and familiarise the unfamiliar natives and detailing the ethnographic dialogues, have been articulated in the works of social anthropologists. However, Srinivas’s (1974) passage to Rampura village, and Campbell’s (1995) [7] style of arrival in a remote area of the Brazilian Amazon Forest and encounter with the Wayapi people with the help of government agencies, field assistant, and the village chief, and connecting people by associating with their emotional life reflects a popular tradition of getting into the field. And since learning a native language has been part of the ethnographic experience, from how to connect people to how to record detailed information about life events, or a precursor to ethnographic description, Campbell referred to words documented by missionaries and French Guiana, notebooks, grammars, and vocabularies, and used tape to document myth telling. Therefore, Campbell argued, “The limits of my language became prison bars” (Campbell, 1995 [7], p. 35). However, this is not the case in the context of Mead’s (1954) [35] mode of engagement with adolescents in the Samoan community. She would go right to the crux of the problem rather than simply spend time learning the Indiana language and culture.

Another challenge in ethnographic research is that recording field data is seemingly difficult in an unfamiliar world. However, they have used unique methods and methodologies to connect with people and settings. Campbell’s (1995) [7] ways of doing ethnography seek to draw the audience’s attention by explaining how he documented Wayapi’s life without pretending to be absent from the past and by reflecting on becoming “one of them.” He argued that doing anthropology requires appreciating the degree of observation and celebrating the responsibility of our interpretation. It demands the ethnographic appreciation of unfamiliar cultures and a flexible attitude toward strangeness. At the beginning of fieldwork, we should avoid fashioning and controlling what we see and what we understand. We should not get in the way and allow a vision of things to emerge naturally. We should accept that what

we say to the outside world is the culmination of our shared experience with the people we study. In the anthropological journey, the sole duty is to keep in mind the ethical and political implications of the people we study, if not to our readers. The historical text, like personal history, is envisaged as a verbal objectification of the tension between “reality” and desire.

The conventional method of ethnographic fieldwork is to participate in the activities of the community you are researching, meaning doing participant observation rather than “dictation, interpretation, and recording” the field (Clifford, 1986) [10, 11]. Because the anthropologists are expected to be what Chernoff (1986) [5] called “tolerant” and to focus on “customs and group life,” the critique might, in fact, disagree with the term “tolerant” itself, because it reflects an absence of elements of reflexivity (see e.g., Clifford & Marcus, 1986; Narayan, 1998; Smith, 1999; Gullion, 2016) [10, 11, 23, 32, 37, 44]. This would limit the use of “text” during fieldwork. This suggests how an observation is proposed, as it will facilitate the collection of relevant information about the researcher’s project. The ethnographer’s presence in natural settings for a longer period provides the advantage of acquiring deeper knowledge of the field the researcher is undertaking (Chernoff, 2002) [8].

Malinowski (1922) [31] suggests that the ethnographer should provide a space for facts to express themselves. It should record data with sincere attention and specificity in an orderly manner. The ethnographer should focus on conversations with the natives, engaging in native games, walking, visiting, and listening to them, rather than taking notes or recording with a camera. Similarly, we can see how Mead adopted participant observation as an ethnographic technique in her study of the antecedents of unrest during adolescence, particularly among the girl child in Samoa. For example, Mead observed adolescents’ behaviour and the intended causes of unrest, and drew a conclusion (Mead, 1954) [35].

However, I am not convinced by Mead’s argument that we can determine which children experience greater difficulties in adjusting to adult society during adolescence. She argued that the ideal method is to classify adolescents into five hundred groups for each family type (Mead, 1954) [35]. How is she so predictable that, by classifying adolescence into groups, an ethnographer will be able to validate the adolescent unrest? I am a little bit suspicious of her other stand that simple societies are much easier to collect data from, which is why she avoids studying complex societies. If so, then I feel she is ignoring the challenging issues. I would also like to open up the question regarding her method of enquiry where she argued that she avoids studying the language and culture that is familiar to her. Only the activities that are unfamiliar to her will be her subject matter of study. Then she is ignoring the important method that Savvasachi (1998) [42] called “unlearning fieldwork.” The unlearning method opens up space for greater inclusiveness in fieldwork. This enables the fieldworker to distinguish between modes of thinking and habits that promote dialogue and discourse. It focuses on self-reflexivity. It interrogates the stereotypes, assumptions, preconditions, etc. that a researcher has before the field study about other societies. It enables us to unfold the meanings of difference and plurality and encourages dialogue, discourse, reciprocity, and participation. Thus, the

fieldworker is not only the one who made enquiries about others, but he is also the subject of enquiry. It is expected to be alien to oneself and to the subject of study. The ethnographer should unlearn the culture that he acquired during his socialisation process (Savyasachi 1998) <sup>[42]</sup>. Above all, it offers a new way of doing fieldwork by “moving from the study of self-in-the-other to the self itself” (Jose, 2000, p. 303).

### Translating the Text

In terms of ethnographic translation, the way the ethnographer translates texts differs from that of a translator. The ethnographer does not have any text (primary or independent) that is available for reading and translation by others. Ethnography is historically decided based on the ethnographer’s encounter with the field of enquiry (Crapanzano, 1986) <sup>[13]</sup>. Its focus lies in the structure of society rather than in activities and social conditions linked to politics and history (Rosaldo, 1986) <sup>[41]</sup>, although Fischer offers a different view, in which, among the six ways mentioned for ethnographic writing, history and politics were considered critical to ethnographic writing (Fischer, 1986) <sup>[17]</sup>. For example, “African transparencies” is a classic example of how discourses were done with simplistic intent (Rosaldo, 1986) <sup>[41]</sup>. Ethnography was neither defined by scientificity nor politics, but by ethics. Ethnography is not to do with suppressing or emancipating people or searching for universal knowledge, nor is it equal to science and politics. Ethnography is simply a superordinate discourse where other discourses are related and find meaning and justification (Tyler, 1986) <sup>[48]</sup>. Asad, in his work *The Concept of Cultural Translation in British Sociology Anthropology*, published in 1986 <sup>[5]</sup>, proposed adopting cultural translation as a technique of doing ethnography. For Lienhardt (1954) <sup>[28]</sup>, translation is not about language but about the mode of thought. Its focus is on building intimate relationships with the community (both in life and in language), rather than on sentence integration. Therefore, all good translation involves the reproduction of the structure of an alien discourse within the translator’s language (cited in Asad 1986) <sup>[5]</sup>.

### Negotiating with the “Self” and “Subjective” Explanation and Meanings

In the ethnographic journey, ethnographers have encountered challenges in doing ethnographic work in the modern world-system (Marcus, 1986) <sup>[32]</sup>. The construction of “I” and “other,” or “superiority” and “inferiority,” complexes along the line of the ethnographer’s and participants’ relationship is a serious concern in the history of the ethnographic tradition (see also Gullion, 2016) <sup>[23]</sup>. Pritchard’s (1976 <sup>[16, 23, 27]</sup>/1937) assumption of European culture as superior to Azande, and Crapanzano’s (1980) <sup>[12]</sup> arrival in Morocco with an awareness of “otherness” as prior to his field study, is a reflection of how the concept of “othering” is being reproduced, or the embeddedness of ethnocentrism, consciously or unconsciously. Pritchard (1976 <sup>[16, 27]</sup>/1937) argued that the ethnographer could discover “oneself” in the “other.” But the point is, how much could he reduce the idea of “otherness” in his ethnographic enterprise? What is required in conducting research and ethnographic analysis is the adoption of what Jackson called “inter-subjectivity,” where the main concern is more pragmatic: redressing biases toward “subjectivism

and objectivism” within the anthropological discipline. The anthropologists are not supposed to misconstrue intersubjectivity, such as shared experience and empathy. It is linked to the reciprocity of intersubjective life. Its focus should be on the relationship between the subject and the object, and between the ego and the alter (Jackson, 1998) <sup>[25]</sup>.

Further, “reflexivity” offers a compelling approach to conducting research of any form (Davis, Watson & Cunningham-Burley, 2000) <sup>[14]</sup>. Although important, the practices of “self-reflection” (Fischer, 1986 <sup>[17]</sup>, p. 232) and the articulation of “interiority and autobiography” (Fischer, 1986 <sup>[17]</sup>, p. 232) were minimal in the earlier ethnographic tradition (Fischer, 1986) <sup>[17]</sup>. However, self-reflection derived from encounters with the self or with participants is characterised by complexity (Crapanzano, 1980) <sup>[12]</sup>. Therefore, Marcus (1986) <sup>[12, 13, 32]</sup> pointed out that the conceptual structure should be understood from the actor’s point of view or what Malinowski and Narayan called “natives point of view” (Malinowski, 1922, p. 19; Narayan, 1998 <sup>[31, 37]</sup>, p. 164), including the life and vision of the world (Malinowski, 1922 <sup>[31]</sup>, p. 19) to raise the challenges of interpretation and present the scope for innovating writing account of social reality. The core focus of anthropologists is making sense of how people interpret and act in the world differently, listening to what people say, observing what they do, and situating their words and deeds in context. Therefore, it demands taking people seriously (MacClancy, 2002) <sup>[30]</sup>. Similarly, Crapanzano suggests that the ethnographer should study with “empathy” the conscious life of another individual. This enables the ethnographer to understand how participants depict social reality through symbols. If ethnographic relations, negotiations, and encounters are shaped by ethnographic intimation such as sympathy, empathy, and care, it allows the ethnographer to comprehend both the world and himself (Crapanzano, 1980) <sup>[12]</sup>. Notwithstanding, the negotiation and dialogical relationship (Freire & Macedo, 1987) <sup>[18]</sup> between the ethnographer and the participant enables them to make sense of each other and open up to the reciprocity of information, and the participant is not only the one who was studied but also an active participant. The continuous reflexivity in narrative making, meaning the complete rejection of “othering” participants in research, ensures a relevant life history across time. But one has to keep in view that “familiar distance” is necessary for the frankness of our discourse (Crapanzano, 1980) <sup>[12]</sup>. However, the possibility of self-immersion into the informant’s ordinary life is a serious question in ethnography. Campbell’s (1995) <sup>[7]</sup> ethnographic study of Wawai in the Amazonian forest represents the mirror of self-immersion during the ethnographic encounter. Although he demonstrated the methodological underpinning for familiarising the unfamiliar world, the unconscious self-immersion limits the maintenance of a scientific and ethnographic ethos, although it is argued differently by Tyler, who prioritises ethnographic ethics over scientificity and politics (Tyler, 1986) <sup>[48]</sup>. Campbell’s subjectivity and exaggeration are also reflected in his fantasy about the place, in which he portrayed the surrounding forest as evergreen, comparing its beauty to that of a cathedral, and expressing affection for its peaceful rhythms. He was associating with the timeless uncertainty of fascinating enterprise and romanticising the field (Campbell, 1995) <sup>[7]</sup>.

Similarly, in the context of Crapanzano's (1980)<sup>[12]</sup> and Mintz's (1974)<sup>[12, 36]</sup> ethnographic journeys, they were deeply immersed in the lives of their informants. Crapanzano could not only realise the privilege of being a narrator, but also failed to understand his position as an ethnographer. The selection of the informant based on the enterprise reflects the normative content in his ethnographic encounter (Crapanzano, 1980)<sup>[12]</sup>.

Thus, it demands "reflexive turn" and the "anthropological distance" (Crapanzano, 1980<sup>[12]</sup>, p. 133) to prevent the misrepresentation of the actual social world, or "ethnographic distance" (Crapanzano, 1980<sup>[12]</sup>, p. 133) is imperative for masking the ethnographer's position as well as for rationalisation (Crapanzano, 1980)<sup>[12]</sup>. The ethnographic field entry is expected to be characterised by the reflexivity of one's informed worldview, to help maintain "self and reality" (Crapanzano, 1980<sup>[12]</sup>, p. 133). Further, ethnographic interpretation involves what Clifford (1980)<sup>[12]</sup> calls "partial truths" (p. 1) and Sinha (2009)<sup>[43]</sup> describes as a "partial picture of reality" (p. 47), both of which require careful reflection<sup>[1]</sup>. Say Clifford draws on Price's (1983)<sup>[39]</sup> work, *First-Time: The Historical Vision of an Afro-American People*, to argue that it is non-reflexive and presents a partial truth (Clifford, 1980). The problem does not lie in presenting accurate data; rather, it lies in the question of "authority, personal experience, scientism, and originality of expression" (Pratt, 1986)<sup>[38]</sup>.

Similarly, in the context of ethnography on children, Thapan (1984)<sup>[3]</sup> argued that the methodology of researching children's experience<sup>[2]</sup> is discursive, in the sense that the exercise of making sense of how children relate to their world is inevitably partial and imperfect. There are compartmentalised views and approaches based on the tradition of different schools of thought, although the culture of triangulation or mixed-method has acquired a significant position in the field of social science. The historical perspective viewed children as objects of research rather than as subjects, as child-related processes and persons. Although not closely related, recent movements, including social constructionism and the social-scientific wing of postmodernism, have undermined the significance of the experience. As Greene and Hill wonder, "Can research access experience?" (Greene & Hill, 2005<sup>[22]</sup>, p. 7). In this context, it demands a partial understanding of children's experience and process, such as mental, physical, and behaviour (Greene & Hill, 2005)<sup>[22]</sup>.

Others suggest that individuals act as agents and experiencing subjects, as in the case of Giddens (1989)<sup>[20]</sup>, who draws much interest in individual agency (cited in Greene & Hill, 2005)<sup>[22]</sup>. Mead's (1930)<sup>[22, 34]</sup> conversation with young individuals in New Guinea and Samoa, and Buhler's (1930)<sup>[6, 34]</sup> use of diaries to locate the experience of teenage girls, reflect how children are considered to be the informants of their own lives. The ethnographer should have an interest in the experience itself because, as James (1990)<sup>[26]</sup> argued, "Individual experience defines the scope of psychology" (cited in Greene & Hill 2005<sup>[22]</sup>, p. 2). Others opined that children are heterogeneous, and their world experience is exclusively individual and varies across children. The lives of children should be recorded in a manner that represents their views and experiences of life. Since different people interpret the world in different ways (MacClancy, 2002)<sup>[30]</sup>, the researcher should view each child as a unique, individual, or, as Durkheim (1982

<sup>[15]</sup>/1895) called it, "sui-generis" (MacClancy, 2002<sup>[30]</sup>, p. 6), and as a significant individual with lived experience of the world (MacClancy, 2002)<sup>[30]</sup>. However, social science research is assumed to be subjective. As James (1990)<sup>[26]</sup> notes, "We begin our study with our own experience since other experiences can be intelligible only in these terms" (cited in Greene & Hill 2005<sup>[22]</sup>, p. 7). And this researcher's "subjectivity" further complicates the research. But it is also noteworthy to argue that not all social scientists would presuppose the popular notion of "researcher objective myth" (Greene & Hill, 2005, p. 8)<sup>[22]</sup>. Thapan (1984)<sup>[3, 22, 46]</sup>, in her finest doctoral thesis, *Education and Ideology: School as a Socio-Cultural System*, explains the significance of "subjectivity" and "objectivity" in fieldwork as a methodological doctrine. For her, "Fieldwork has been not only an exercise in the collection of data in a disciplined manner but also a rich human experience ... completely immersed in and personally involved with the many dimensions of school life" (Thapan, 1984<sup>[46]</sup>, p. 39). Fieldwork is the core method of anthropologists, which means living like a local for a prolonged period and engaging in their everyday life activities (MacClancy, 2002)<sup>[30]</sup>.

For example, in the context of India, the fieldwork as a method of enquiry began in 1772 by Warren Hastings, whose policy was to learn Indian languages, culture, and social activities with the idea of controlling the people of India. The fieldwork tradition is classified into two types: (a) One is a practice that subscribes to a dualist nature, ethical and cultural neutrality. For instance, the cultural policy was not concerned with interrogating the perspective of the British liberal political thinkers. Rather, it contributes to the domination process through legitimisation without questioning the power structure. Therefore, this kind of method undermines the rationality that exists. The dualism in fieldwork is both exploitative and a mechanism of domination. (b) Another tradition holds that it promotes nationalist consciousness and responsibility among Indians. The Indological and ethnographic standpoints, for example, emphasise the idea of the existence of socio-cultural pluralism. However, it is often seen to have coexisted with cooperation, conflict, and confrontation (Savyasachi, 1998)<sup>[42]</sup>.

In the words of Davis *et al.* (2000)<sup>[14]</sup>, we see how the researcher is expected to be reflexive of one's own position as an enquirer while recording the everyday and ordinary lives of children (cited in Greene & Hill 2005)<sup>[22]</sup>, or, as Hogan articulated, the greater reflexivity in research models would enable the inter-disciplinary research (Hogan, 2005)<sup>[22]</sup>. Reflexivity helps maintain the "detachment," which, in a way, is detrimental to "objectivity" (Thapan 1984, p. 40)<sup>[46]</sup>. As Probyn (1993)<sup>[3, 40]</sup> argued, "Reflexivity needs to extend to processes occurring within the academy, not just within the field" (cited in Alldred & Burman 2005<sup>[4]</sup>, p. 188). Further, it demands that fieldwork be seen as a "temporal dimension," or as a "process," involving "continual discovery and self-discovery" (Crapanzano, 1980, p. 138)<sup>[12]</sup>. However, Marks (1996)<sup>[12, 33]</sup> argued that the idea of reflexivity demands transcending the dialogue (cited in Alldred & Burman, 2005)<sup>[4]</sup>. Therefore, the new sociology of childhood, as Christensen and James (2000)<sup>[9]</sup> proposed, avoids adopting a particular method for researching children's lives (cited in Greene & Hill, 2005)<sup>[22]</sup>. In the minds of Thapan (1984)<sup>[3, 22, 46]</sup>, the consolidation

of multiple methods<sup>[3]</sup> assisted her in understanding “the social reality of the school” and “the totality of school life,” or what Lacey (1976a)<sup>[27]</sup> called “spiral of understanding” (cited in Thapan, 1984)<sup>[46]</sup>. Further, since the ethnographic journey is personal (Pratt, 1986)<sup>[38]</sup> and context-based experience, it demands flexibility in methods depending on the setting, which allows the researcher to use his/her creative methods of enquiry (Thapan, 1984)<sup>[3, 46]</sup>.

### **Conclusion: Who has the Right to Theorise the Lives of Marginalised Communities: The Insider or the Outsider?**

I place the discourse on insider-outsider in the conclusion to show that the contestation is not limited to demanding reflexivity, responsibility, accountability, and sensitivity from the outsider ethnographer or anthropologist. It takes on a more radical form in contemporary debates, where native/insider ethnographers/anthropologists question the validity and authenticity of outsiders. It rejects the idea of outsider ethnographers/anthropologists conducting research on communities that don't belong to them. The rejection is closely linked to being inaccurate and to a dominant outsider's approach, which invites debate across disciplines, especially in social science research. For example, there are intellectual contestations and intellectual tests on the question of (a) who is a “native and foreign” or “insider and outsider” anthropologist, and (b) who has the capacity to generate authentic information from the field experience. Now we would find the new researcher in the form of indigenous ethnographers or insiders studying their own culture, where the way they comprehend it differs from that of outsiders. Gopal Guru and Sundar Sarukkai's (2012)<sup>[24]</sup> *The Cracked Mirror: An Indian Debate on Experience and Theory*, an influential and widely discussed work, demonstrates the contestation between them over the question of the right to theorise Dalit experience. Guru strongly asserted that only Dalits have the right to study their own experience, not outsiders. He writes, “Lived experience of Dalit is the only valid and authentic experience, and moreover, only Dalits have the right to theorizing” (Guru, 2012<sup>[24]</sup>, p. 30). However, there is a point of departure as it would affect many people both in academia and outside (Sarukkai, 2012)<sup>[24]</sup>. Narayan makes a similar argument, arguing that anthropologists should view through the lens of shifting identities. It demands the enactment of hybridity in the text, where the author is seen as bi-cultural, in the sense of belonging to the world in both scholarship and everyday life. For instance, M. N. Srinivas (1916-1999), a trained anthropologist, is thought to have carried out his research among the Coorgs through the lens of a native. However, whether the native anthropologist in a world composed of global flows of trade, politics, migrations, ecology, etc., can enable us to provide authentic information. As an insider or partial insider, the anthropologist is drawn closer in some contexts, while in others, it is not. Every anthropologist is characterised by a multiplicity of subjectivity along with cross-cutting identification, where the identity changes based on the context (Narayan, 1998)<sup>[37]</sup>.

### **References**

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