

Indian Anthropology: A Plea for Pragmatic Appraisal

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Abstract: Anthropology in India is divided into various phases and located at various levels. Despite a long ethnographic tradition, there is hardly any notion reflecting 'Indianness'. This is not to undermine however, numerous laudable works of Indian scholars. Sadly, some works, despite their contemporary theoretical relevance, remained unnoticed. Included among these are numerous noteworthy ethnographic monographs produced by Indian universities and anthropological survey of India (ASI), which are not assessed appropriately. This article briefly elucidates some such works, which have both theoretical bearing and applied relevance. It is argued that there is need for a holistic appraisal of anthropological works including works of applied nature. This is specially so because, in the absence of knowledge about numerous admirable works, critiques seem to be too unkind towards entire Indian anthropology. In Indian anthropology the growth of ethnography itself is a fascinating subject. This article discusses relevance of ethnography in India, historically. It also discusses the 'ethnographic' uniqueness of people of India study in postcolonial era which suffers from misinformation campaigns. Lastly it is argued that anthropologists need to ensure best utility of their research. There are limits and they have to decide how far to advocate politically, balancing wisely between ethnographic pragmatism and political activism.

Introduction

This article describes some trends in Indian anthropology and highlights the modest growth of ethnographic tradition. It also discusses lack of pertinent research output, especially in the arena of applied/development anthropology and need for appropriate appraisal of existing works. Taking clue from various critiques of Indian anthropology (Debnath, 1999, Das 2002, Rao, 2012, Berger, 2012 and Guha, 2017) this article picks up a few issues and tries to locate them in relevant perspectives. It deals with comparative analysis of 'ethnographies' conducted over decades, including works of anthropological survey of India (ASI). Indian scholars have variously contributed in various sub- fields of anthropology, rather admirably, although some commentaries remain little too downcast. Long ago Debnath (1999) had shown concerns for anthropology and discussed crisis within Indian anthropology. Guha (2017) has argued that anthropologists have ignored research on issues of land alienation/acquisition and dispossession. He has argued that Indian anthropologists have especially failed to produce scientific data on the biocultural impact of land acquisitions and particularly on food insecurity and its subsequent impact on health and nutrition. He critiques lack of appropriate social impact study vis-à-vis land acquisition issues. This article, which briefly addresses such apprehensions, elucidates works of Indian anthropologists and argues that on account of lack of due publicity many a significant works have remained unrecognised, which have both theoretical and applied bearing. While pleading for pragmatic assessment of works of

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anthropological colleagues, this article examines the discourse of ethnographic pragmatism vis-à-vis political activism, in a larger perspective. It eventually proposes some points for future research.

Indian anthropology and Indian anthropologists have been criticised, in general, for imitating the 'western' masters. Several decades ago, Surajit Sinha had exposed the academic patronage of Western Gurus and Guru-Bhais in shaping anthropological enterprise in India (Sinha, 1971). This patronage endures in Indian anthropology since Indian universities pursue a syllabus which centres on western theories. Felix Padel has indicated that in Indian anthropology the mainstream analysis of tribal cultures still tends to understand them in terms of 'primitiveness' or 'backwardness' – a view basically established by colonial anthropology, that was geared towards controlling and 'civilizing' India's 'savage tribes' (2014). The latest ICSSR survey (2009) shows, that Indian anthropologist overwhelmingly adhere to study of tribes (Srivastava and Chaudhury, 2009: 92). Under land-alienation and bonded labour category only three studies are cited for last two decade period in ICSSR review of Indian anthropology (Srivastava and Chaudhury, 2009: 64). We cannot trace any specific study on 'poverty', even though one scholar mentioned that poverty among tribes was 44% in 1999-2000 compared to 16 per cent among non-tribes (A.R.N.Srivastava 1988). Land alienation was not an area of research even though B.D. Sharma had alerted the Indian Prime Minister that land alienation was a serious issue (Srivastava and Chaudhury, 2009: 86). Anthropology, since the 1980s, has rededicated itself to development, indigenous rights, and conflict issues; yet we find little initiatives in these fields in India. Some anthropologists like B. D. Sharma and B. K. Roy Burman tried to combine research with activism and aimed at political emancipation of the tribal groups from neo-imperialism and capitalism. Anthropologist Felix Padel has analysed the Adivasi land acquisition as human rights issue.

Anthropology in India: History, Research and Teaching

Anthropology has been criticized for its role in imperial invasion. Anthropologists gained the trust of natives using their linguistic proficiency in order to assist the colonial state in the implementation of policies that ultimately led to oppression and disempowerment (Pels and Salemink, 1999). Even today, anthropology is found to be 'morally dubious because of its entanglement with colonialism right up to the present, - - -, its aims questionable, its ethnographic method doubtful, and its epistemological assumptions naïve' (Prakash 1992: 262). From theoretical-methodological perspectives, colonial ethnography and postcolonial ethnography of India need to be distinguished. Value-loaded narratives and 'racial' prejudices were replete in colonial ethnography. As one scholar puts it:

"By the late nineteenth century - - - the colonial state in India can be characterized as the ethnographic state - - -. The ethnographic state was driven by the belief that India could be ruled using anthropological knowledge to understand and control its subjects. (Dirks 2001: 43n).

Over the last six decades, trained anthropologists have conducted extensive ethnographic fieldwork in India. In India, like in other Asian –African countries, structural functionalism was introduced to initiate ethnographic studies, in postcolonial era. M. N. Srinivas is regarded as a major representative of the structural-functionalist camp of British social anthropology. His 'Village India' is a classic example of an account of "social structure." The dominant caste fulfils, in his view, a unifying function for the village as a whole (Berger, 2012). In India, the postcolonial era witnessed focus on "village studies," from the 1950s onwards, and then works devoted to the "transactionalist" and "structuralist" perspectives of the 1960s, mostly undertaken by European specialists. From the 1970s onwards, "ethno sociology" was promoted by American anthropologists. The 1980s saw a "historical turn" and Berger (2012) has discussed multiple variants of historical approaches.

Louis Dumont's *Homo Hierarchicus* was one of two books that ultimately signalled the end of the village studies era, the other being Mandelbaum's *Society in India*. These books were influenced by village studies carried out in the 1950s and 1960s. Mandelbaum's two volumes are encyclopaedic, inductive, descriptive, and easy to read, Dumont's book is analytic, deductive, theoretical, and at times difficult to digest, as Berger rightly argues. *Society in India* is written within a functionalist framework describing family, jati, and village, and the different "roles" of actors. Caste ranking is perceived as an extreme form of "stratification," and "pervasive inequality" is indicated as a key feature of the caste system (Mandelbaum 1970: 6). Frederick G. Bailey was mainly interested in the political aspects of social life. He is a staunch critic of the "idealist" approach proposed by Dumont. In his book *Stratagems and spoils: A social anthropology of politics*, he fully develops his transactional and interactionalist vision of society (Bailey 1969). It was in post-World War II era that American universities in particular initiated well-funded research programmes to study Indian "civilization" from a grass-roots empirical perspective. Robert Redfield and Milton Singer, both of the University of Chicago, edited a series of broad social-scientific research projects called 'Comparative Studies of Cultures and Civilizations'.

There are many classifications of the history of anthropology in India, such as colonial and postcolonial. However no critical comparative assessments of contributions of various periods are available. Vasavi (2011) identifies 1920 as the beginning of anthropology of India. In 1921, S.C. Roy made the call for incorporating 'Indianness' into anthropology in India and established the journal, *Man in India*. Apart from M.N. Srinivas' coinage of the terms 'sanskritisation' and 'dominant caste', no other concept could be generated in relation to Indian society. Carroll (1977) has made a critical assessment of 'sanskritisation'. Nirmal Kumar Bose and Irawati Karve indeed emerge as true 'indigenous anthropologists' with pioneering contributions, at all-India level. When Gopala Sarana (2007) was asked to write on Indian anthropology, he chose the works of D.N. Majumdar, Irawati Karve, Louis Dumont, M.N Srinivas, André Bêteille, S.C. Dube, and Nirmal Kumar Bose. V.K. Srivastava (2000) has observed that traditional areas of research viz. kinship, religion, myths beliefs, and cosmology hardly attract students. Research in economy and polity has also declined in anthropology. IIAS, Shimla, organized a national seminar on 'urgent research in social

anthropology' calling to develop a 'model of Indian society' (Abbi and Saberwal 1969). Yet, after forty-five years, issues raised remain unaddressed.

There are about forty university departments of anthropology of highly differing quality, of which only six are composite departments. The UGC classifies anthropology departments in three categories, viz. integrated, fragmented, and composite. The integrated departments are those where all the main branches of anthropology are taught and researched (Srivastava, 2000). If Indian anthropology has any future it is essentially in terms of a composite and integrated discipline. It is heartening to see that ASI continues to espouse 'integrated anthropology' and it has also promoted allied disciplines like human geography, linguistics, folklore and psychology. We also witness proliferation of 'cultural study' and 'tribal study' departments in Indian universities, which follow anthropological trends. Historians, largely following the ethno- historical approach, have in recent years focused on 'adivasi study', even though term 'adivasi', much like term 'tribe', remains contentious.

People of India Study: Colonial and Postcolonial Versions

It is construed that the ethnographers of the British Empire, meticulously recorded the biological and cultural diversities of the Indian populations, such as H H Risley , author of 1915 People of India volume (Guha, 2017). Compared to colonial version, according to Jenkins (2003), cited by Guha (2017), the "postcolonial study of People of India" is an ethnographic account- 'almost in the fashion done by H H Risley'. In reality, the multi-volume People of India series of books published by ASI are more detailed than the ethnological surveys of the British Raj, which laid much emphasis on anthropometry. The intent of ASI study has been to produce an anthropological study of the differences and linkages between all communities. H.H. Risley's (1915) People of India was actually a rehash of the census report of 1901. Chapter on 'caste, tribe and race' written by Risley in 1901 census report (co-authored with Edward Gait), formed the main component of colonial 'People of India volume'. Included also are other chapters (including 'animism'), most of which were written by Gait and language chapter written by George Grierson. Risley's People of India was first published in 1908 and reissued as 'memorial' edition in 1915. There were two publications on people of India in colonial India. John Forbes Watson and John William Kaye compiled an eight-volume study entitled The People of India (1868 and 1875), which contained 468 annotated photographs of the native 'castes and tribes'.

<https://venkataramaniblog.wordpress.com/2016/09/22/ethnography-in-british-india/>.

H.H. Risley, the colonial ethnographer, was obsessed with the racial typology of people, ignoring occupational classifications; not least because of his unwavering faith in the classification of "castes and tribes" by the "nasal index" (Pinney 1990: 265). Risley focused only on British controlled India and a few

princely states, not entire India. Further, ethnographic information contained in colonial era works including the gazetteers have been replete with value loaded narratives, inserted in a perfunctory way.

The postcolonial People of India (PoI) study of ASI was necessitated by the fact that there existed an information-gap about a very large number of communities. The People of India project was launched by ASI on 2nd October, 1985 to cover entire human surface of India for the first time, using scientific methodology. It corrected many inaccuracies of colonial classification. People of India project for the first time concentrated on ethnonyms, surnames and internal articulation of identity of people of India, which was missing in colonial ethnography (Das 2006C).

The postcolonial People of India study is not the product 'solely' of the ASI. As many as 26 universities and research institutes had actively participated in the project in collection of data and writing the community reports. Over 40 per cent 'community' reports of PoI are written by university scholars. Most importantly, the renowned scholars of Indian universities edited the state volumes of PoI project. For example, Bihar/ Jharkhand volume is edited by Surendra Gopal and Hetukar Jha; West Bengal by Shekhar Bandyopadhyay; Kerala by T. Madhava Menon, Manipur by M. Horam, Nagaland by Lima C. Imchen, Meghalaya by B. Pakem ; Tripura by Jagadish Ganchaudhuri and S. Sailo, Mizoram by C. Nunthra, and Arunachal by Parul Dutta, to name a few. ASI scholars were made associate editors only. The expertise and understanding of these university scholars have gone in shaping the state volumes. Madhav Gadgil, his team and ASI scholars have used PoI data of ASI to write papers for reputed journals.

K.S. Singh, the director-general, ASI, and general editor of the PoI volumes coined the maxim 'human surface of the entire country'. Walter Hauser (2006) believes that it is a mind-boggling concept that had embedded within (combination of) the methodology of historical research and anthropological fieldwork. M.N. Srinivas, stated that, "if compared with British era ethnographic survey, one departure of this project is the attempt to understand the process of changes that have taken place in each of 4635 communities of India". Summarizing salient features of PoI study, M. N. Srinivas further stated that,

"In India the regional identities in every part of India show themselves in language, material culture, food habits, folklore, ritual, local forms of religion etcetera. 83 percent of the population of India lives within the linguistic and political boundaries. It is seen that people of India are generally immigrant. As a result most of the Indians are bilingual. Cultural exchange, co-existence and tolerance are part of Indian ethos. These are revealed".

"The concept of unity and diversity has become a political cliché. We should first ask for acceptance of diversity and then we should say that this unity goes beyond what we have thought, - - - It may be argued that caste itself is a model of unity in the sense that we all accept cultural diversity. We are a tolerant society because of the caste system. India, however, comprises both horizontal unities based on caste and vertical unities based on region, language, religion, and sect and so on, which these data show".

'Rarely has a project as important as this from the national point of view and from the scholarly point of view been pursued with such determination, vigour, attention, and speed, and I must congratulate Dr. Singh, his colleagues and collaborators. (M. N. Srinivas, Foreword, People of India- Volume I, Delhi: Oxford University Press 2002).

There have been many evaluations of the POI project. One of the more balanced evaluations, according to Walter Hauser (2006), comes from the cultural anthropologist Christopher Pinney of the University College, London, who said, "These volumes were assembled by an extraordinary man as part of a remarkable project. K.S.Singh is one of a long tradition of administrators turned anthropologists. The circumstances of the project's inception help make sense of these volumes" peculiar qualities— social idealism mixed with an uneasy legacy of Victorian social science against the background of statistical gigantism' (Christopher Pinney, *The Times Higher Education Supplement*, 2 September 1994, cited in Walter Hauser, 2006). The POI project has been criticized for relying too heavily on colonial categories, what Pinney may have had in mind when he referred to a 'legacy of Victorian social science'. This is a major misconception since the project constantly used the term 'community' to describe the castes, tribes and minorities in a particular state. In many instances the categories of "scheduled" castes or tribes are not used blindly. Ethnonyms and historical growth of identities are critically investigated and noted. One Naga scholar has acknowledged how the ethnographic report prepared 'exclusively' on Pochury tribe (by N.K.Das under POI project) had helped the community to seek recognition as an 'independent tribe', which was ultimately granted. Use of the term 'community', in POI project, also helped study the status of speakers of minority languages in a state. Thus Bihari, Nepali/Gorkhali, Bengali and Assamese, for example, are studied as 'communities' in all states of northeast.

There is a futuristic angle about POI project. K.S.Singh had surmised that "we have laid the groundwork for a more comprehensive ethnography of the people of India that needs to be continually updated and built upon by successive generations of researchers and scholars" (Note on the Series- POI, Introduction, Vol. 1, 2002, p. xxvii). Supporting such perception, Walter Hauser (2006) wrote that, " - - -(It strikes me as a legitimate goal, and if the published and computer data bases of the POI project builds on the many data bases of its colonial and Indian predecessors, it will be a boon to many generations of historians and anthropologists, among other social scientists. I speak here as a historian of modern India, who with many generations of students has benefited from the data bases left by the British and their Indian successors. Anyone who has spent time in libraries, archives and record rooms working long hours with pre-computer pencil and paper in the revenue materials, settlement reports, gazetteers, and census records, will perhaps understand and appreciate what Kumar Suresh Singh and his colleagues have wrought". Hauser (2006) also observed that K.S.Singh's latest book 'Diversity, Identity, and Linkages' is indeed the final reflection on the massive People of India project, reinforcing, as he would want, the idea that India is a complex and diverse social and cultural space, but that within that diversity there is found an inherent connectedness. That connectedness or unity was for Suresh Singh the ultimate definition of what it meant to be Indian. Walter Hauser also wrote that Suresh Singh was a rare combination of historian, anthropologist and civil servant, which had resulted in his classic *The Indian Famine, 1967: A Study in Crisis and Change* (New Delhi: People's Publishing House, 1975).

Indic Civilization, State Formation and Tribal Movements

Since its beginning in 1945, ASI focused on 'tribes' in remote areas. Teams comprising cultural and physical anthropologists, psychologists, biochemists, and linguists visited those areas, with photographer. ASI, once a 'big' organization, has been suffering on account of steady curtailment and non-filling of vacant positions. K.S.Singh was practically the last director-general of ASI. In ASI, major academic changes were introduced in 1960s. In this period, N. K. Bose had launched the All India Material Traits Survey, conceiving Indian Civilization in terms of 'culture zones' which he argued did not coincide with the linguistic zones. Bose and Surajit Sinha both coordinated the project in which data were collected from 313 districts. It involved the mapping of distribution of material traits and sketching of artefacts. The summarised result of this national survey was published under the title 'Peasant Life in India: A Study in Indian Unity and Diversity' (Bose, 1961). Through the publication of this work Bose had facilitated the decolonization of Indian anthropology and shaped the indigenization of anthropology, which was further pursued in Pol study of ASI in 1990s. Bose was a multi-faceted personality. He was an anthropologist and an outstanding Gandhian. Besides N.K.Bose and K.S.Singh, Surajit Sinha is another eminent anthropologist who headed the ASI and made important contributions. Sinha was associated with the larger project of comparative studies of civilizations initiated by Robert Redfield and Milton Singer. Thus, Sinha, pursuing the Indic civilization approach proposed the concept of 'tribal-peasant/caste continuum' and argued that tribespeople once entering into service relations with other jatis, started incorporating certain Hindu deities and the elements of Hindu cosmology (Sinha 1965). Gradually, the little tradition of the tribes became a part of the great tradition of the Hindus (Sinha, 1958). The other significant method of the tribal absorption was seen by Sinha (1962) in terms of state formation. State formation has been a major area of research of ASI scholars. Besides Surajit Sinha and K.S.Singh, ASI scholar Thushu used the concept of state formation in his study of Gond kingdom. N.K.Das and R. K. Saha discussed the tribal state formation in northeast India. Das (1993) has also pioneered study of 'segmentary lineage system' vis-à-vis stateless/acephalous tribe. H. Kulke (1993) has traced processual model of integrative state formation in Odisha relating tribal family deities with Jagannatha, the rastradevata of the "imperial" Gajapati king of Puri. He also observed that Risley was first to have proposed the Rajputisation model, when he narrated the mobility of "leading men of an aboriginal tribe" to the rank of Maharajas and their recognition as Nagbansi Rajputs (Kulke, 1993).

During late 1970s the ASI launched a composite study of the tribal society in order to assemble data on tribal laws, tribal economy and tribal movements. The then director K.S. Singh conceived and guided this work. Specific teams were formed and scholars conducted fieldworks to gather data on these themes. This exercise led to several national seminars. The first seminar on tribal movements was inaugurated by Rani Gaidinliu in 1976. This exercise led to publication of Tribal Movements in India, Vols I and II (Singh, 1982, 1983), which became very popular. K. S. Singh's earlier book 'The Dust Storm and the Hanging

Mist' (1966) had established Birsa Munda as a cult, which inspired folk literatures, and most significantly, according to Alpa Shah, Singh's Birsa study formed the basis of Ranajit Guha's (1983) *Elementary Aspects of a Peasant Insurgency* and thus the foundation for subaltern studies (Shah, 2014). The second all-India study dealt with tribal economy. ASI scholars presented their case studies in national seminar inaugurated by Ramakrishna Mukherjee. A. R. Desai, Fürer-Haimendorf, B.K. Roy Burman and L.K. Mahapatra were other presenters in the seminar. This seminar led to publication of popular book 'Economies of the Tribes and their Transformation' (Singh 1983). The third publication in this sequence was "Tribal Ethnography, Customary Law and Change" (Singh: 1993). These three sets of ASI books continue to remain compulsory reference text in university circles.

Rethinking Tribes, 'Hindu India', Syncretic Discourse and Cultural Pluralism

Following colonial era approach, anthropologists in post-independence era remained obsessed with phenomenon of 'Hinduisation of tribes'. They used western theories such as little/great tradition and acculturation and wrongly looked at culture change among tribes as a one-way phenomenon. N. K. Bose (1941) thus pointed to tribes being absorbed into Hindu society. Ghurye (1963:205) described tribes as 'backward Hindus'. Kosambi (1956) highlighted tribal elements being fused into the general Hindu society. Tribal religions remained eternal elements of Hinduism in the writings of anthropologists belonging to Chicago School. Singer thus subsumed within widespread "popular Hinduism" many beliefs and practices observed among tribes, including the worship of numerous godlings, animal sacrifice, witchcraft and magic (Singer 1972: 45). Singer placed "Sanskritisation" at par with model of "Hindu method of tribal absorption" proposed by N K Bose. Surajit Sinha, another product of Chicago School, saw the tribal culture as a "folk" dimension of the "little tradition" of Hindu civilisation (Sinha 1958).

In fact branding variously pre-existing religions of tribal communities as "essential ingredients of Hinduism" had only reflected the prejudices of anthropologists who were blind to realities. In fact, denial of autonomous existence of tribal religion, which came to be revived often, was advanced only to bluntly justify the "acculturation" theory and concepts of great /little traditions, which were "imposed" without appreciating the unique Indian culture characterized by syncretised religiousness (Das, 2003, 2006a). Regrettably Indian anthropologists continue to pursue concepts of great /little traditions and acculturation. The problem with concept of 'acculturation' is its linearity. Indeed elsewhere anthropologists have discarded the superficially defined 'acculturation' mainly, on account of its excessively monochromatic implications. In reality very seldom it is possible to trace culture change in such a unidirectional and one-dimensional way (Chance, 1996, Gutmann, 2004, Das 2006b).

It is obvious that culture-change in tribal areas of India have been studied from the Hindu-centric perspective ignoring the pervasive syncretistic coexistence of multiple religious traditions (Das 2003, 2006). Syncretism is combination of attributes and elements from two or more religious traditions,

ideologies, or value systems. In Indian context, it emerges as a most ideal concept to describe the composite culture, cultural pluralism and blending of religions as a result of culture contact, as this author has proposed (Das 2003, 2006a, 2006b). This author has pleaded to adopt 'syncretism' as a viable field of study, by discarding the theory of acculturation (Das 2006b). It is argued that on account of various levels of culture-contact, the tribes of India had often borrowed material-cultural traits and religious practices of various sects and major religions such as Buddhism, Hinduism and Christianity. However, the tribespeople perpetually adhered to many aspects of native religion even after their adoption of new faith. In his many publications focusing on syncretism (Das 2003, 2006) this author has narrated the 'continued existence of many elements of tribal religion', often as vibrant as ever, despite embrace of many cultural/religious traits of Hinduism on part of tribes of peninsular India and Brahmaputra valley.

In 2004, ASI launched its first national project on 'syncretism in India'. ASI Scholars were asked to study both tribal and non-tribal scenarios, including Hindu-Muslim syncretised interaction and facet of Sufism. Being the coordinator of this project this author was entrusted with organizing an international seminar on theme of 'syncretism' to display findings of ASI, including photographic coverage. On advice of Prof. T.N. Madan, the seminar title was rephrased as 'Identity and Cultural Pluralism in South Asia'. Presentations were made by scholars representing all South Asian nations, including five European scholars. Keynote address was delivered by T.N. Madan and T. K. Oommen made the first academic presentation by elucidating themes of identity and cultural pluralism in entire south Asia. Ten ASI scholars made presentations. The papers of the seminar are included in the volume 'Identity, Cultural Pluralism and State: South Asia in Perspective', (N.K.Das and V.R. Rao with Foreword by T. N. Madan, 2009). T. N. Madan has called this contribution as a 'substantial' contribution of ASI.

Bio-Cultural Profile and Kinship Studies

ASI's objectives, modified via policy resolutions of 1985 and 2002, led to study of bio-cultural profile of all people of India, mapping of intangible cultural heritage including bio-cultural diversity and making ethnographic films. Anthropologists of ASI have published about 300 monographs and over 2000 research papers. These are other than Encyclopaedic People of India Volumes. ASI has been conducting research on physical growth and development of India's children, including nutritional background and growth of infants since 1971. Besides all-India studies on nutrition and public health, a mammoth bio-anthropological survey had led to around thirty major region-wise publications.

Kinship as an area of study has indeed declined elsewhere, but ASI scholars such as B. Mukherjee, B.B. Goswami, N. K. Shyam Chaudhury, D. Danda and N.K.Das took up the study of kinship, particularly in Northeast India. Dipali Danda's work among the Dimasa led to exploration of double descent. The monograph 'Kinship politics and law in Naga society' has elucidated segmentary lineage system, age-set

system and customary law in a south Nagaland tribe called Zounuo-Keyhonuo (Das 1993). In this book, this author observed that jural status of the daughter/married women are visible through the dual inheritance of two categories of property, such as Pazuopu and Tepumi-Kitsa, the former being a matrilineally inherited property which is transmitted only in the female line, and second being 'patrilineal inheritance'. This dual pattern of filiation gives rise to the bilateral extension of kinship ties. In his review of this ASI monograph, F. K. Lehman finds it striking that,

"in spite of fairly strict agnatic descent as the principle of the clan and lineage organization, daughters inherit, though in a manner less irrevocable than do sons. Moreover, while on the one hand a woman is said to be transferred to membership of her husband's lineage, on the other she retains a distinct claim on land and other property of her natal family as well as on possible residence there, so that "we find a nice instance of a principle common to asymmetrical marriage systems (in Southeast Asia) namely, that the more a woman seem to be transferred at her marriage, the more it is because what is really transferred is her status as a member of an affinal lineage, a principle Edmund Leach was unclear about with regard to Lushai, Lakher, and Kachin instances" (F.K. Lehman *Anthropos* 92, 1997).

From this standpoint then the Naga data indeed provide an empirical illustration to add and even improve upon former theoretical postulates of 'alliance' and 'descent' models.

Reorienting Anthropological Methodologies:

Adivasi Land Rights/ Land Alienation and Tribal Movements:

Felix Padel has stated that entry of the private capital to the resource rich tribal societies has intensified debates on the political economy of dispossession, displacement and tribal rights. Hence, there is need to reorient anthropological studies to fit into the domain of indigenous rights (2014). On theme of indigenous rights this author has organised three international panels within IUAES congress in three countries. Felix Padel's book, 'The sacrifice of human being' (1995), had provided the pioneering analysis of the colonial power structure imposed over a tribal people. The issues of land, forest and development-induced displacement are ingredients of current tribal movements which are now being studied by anthropologists. These are the issues discussed by anthropologists in a new book 'Dissent Discrimination and Dispossession' (Misra and Das, 2014). In this book Behera reviews the issue of land alienation critically and discusses tribal rights by examining land policies. Felix Padel, in his paper, discusses land acquisition by situating the tribal resistance in terms of 'cultural genocide in an age of investment induced displacement' (2014). The issue of tribal livelihood and resistance is discussed by Walter Fernandes. Lidia Guzy, Binay Kumar Pattnaik and Amiya Das have discussed the impact of industrialization on tribes and pattern of tribal resistance and capitalist expansion in Odisha. Lianboi Vaiphei and N.K.Das have studied the land and forest related marginalization of tribes in northeast, with special reference to illegal logging.

Poverty, Land Acquisition and New 'Land Acquisition Act': Safeguards for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes

A major cause of poverty is lack of access to productive assets and financial resources. India's new land acquisition Act called 'Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013' (RFCTLA-RR Act 2013) came into force on 01.01.2014 by repealing the Land Acquisition Act, 1894. This law, praised by some and despised by others, is a complex piece of legislation, which remains misunderstood by many. The operation of this Act falls under the purview of state governments and indeed some states like Tamil Nadu have made suitable amendments already. The new law is meant to ensure that the extent of land for any acquisition is the bare minimum land required for the project. Appropriate governments are empowered to take steps for exemption from "Social Impact Assessment" and "Special Provisions for Safeguarding Food Security". The Bill enables the government to exempt five categories of projects from the requirements of 'Social Impact Assessment', 'Restrictions on acquisition of multi-cropped land', and 'Consent for private projects and public private partnerships (PPPs) projects'. The five categories of projects are- Infrastructure including PPPs where government owns the land, Industrial corridors, Affordable housing, rural infrastructure, and Defence related projects. Changes in the provisions of the RFCTLARR Act 2013 is said to be intended to facilitate farmers to get better compensation and rehabilitation and resettlement benefits in lieu of land compulsorily acquired by the appropriate Government (<http://indianlawwatch.com/practice/legal-developments-in-land-acquisition-2015/>). Congress leader Jairam Ramesh, who had contributed towards enactment of the original land law, has argued that the 2013 law has not been disturbed but several states such as Telangana, Gujarat and Tamil Nadu have already taken recourse to clause-254 (2) and have considerably weakened the consent and social impact assessment system provisions provided by the 2013 law.

Under the Land Act 2013, no land can be acquired in scheduled areas. It also ensures that all rights guaranteed under such legislation as the PESA (Panchayat (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996, and the Forest Rights Act 2006 are taken care of. Special safeguards meant for weaker sections are as under:

- Safeguards against displacement: no dispossession unless all payments are made and alternative sites declared.
- Compensation for livelihood losers: Bill provides compensation also to those who are dependent on the land being acquired for their livelihood.
- Consent: Prior-consent shall be required from 70% of land losers and those working on government assigned lands only in the case of public-private partnership projects and 80% in the case of private companies. Included is consent about compensation amount.
- Time-bound social impact assessment: The Bill mandates completion of social impact assessment within six months.
- Higher land-for-land area for SCs/STs: In every project SC and ST will be provided land equivalent to land acquired or two-and-a-half acres, whichever is lower (this is higher than those of non-SC/ST affected families).

- Additional amounts: In addition to a subsistence amount of rupees 3000 per month for a year (to affected families), the SC and ST people displaced from Scheduled Areas shall receive an amount equivalent to rupees 50,000 (<http://www.livemint.com/Politics/FXZ9CrJApxRowyzLd8mb2O/All-you-wanted-to-know-about-new-land-acquisition-Bill.html>).

Theoretically indeed it appears that robust safeguards for scheduled castes and scheduled tribes are provided. Nevertheless, it is doubtful if in reality all benefits will be passed on to weaker sections.

Shrinkage of Forest Rights Act, 2006 meant to Empower Tribespeople: Intrusion of Prime Minister's Office

Tens of millions of India's tribespeople depend on forests for their livelihoods, gathering leaves, fruits, flowers, and fuel wood. Yet, India's 80 million tribespeople had been forced to live like "encroachers" on their own land, since the British era. In this backdrop, the Forest Rights Act, 2006 (the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest-Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006) arrived as an historic landmark. The Act came into force on December 31, 2007 and since then it led to some positive achievements. However, as a review suggests the implementation of the FRA, 2006, has not led to any real change on the ground for the poor forest dependent tribes. There are other overlapping laws that negate the spirit of FRA (<https://socialissuesindia.wordpress.com>). To worsen the scenario further, in December 2012, the Prime Minister's Office issued a directive watering down the FRA Act. At the heart of the matter is whether tribal people should be able to veto projects, like mines and dams, on their lands. It is broadly acknowledged that the Forest Rights Act has certain lacunae, yet it remains "the best instrument that exists for protecting the rights of India's Adivasi people. Hence, watering it down, in the interests of industry, is a dangerous violation of the rights and must be stopped"

(<https://www.survivalinternational.org/about/fra>).

Misunderstanding surrounding 'Social Impact Assessment' Studies:

Anthropologists have studied the impact of industrialization in tribal areas. Compared to such studies, Social Impact Assessment (SIA) or Socio-Economic Impact Assessment Study (SEIAS) is an intricate matter. In reality 'impact studies' are a job of multidisciplinary specialists and professionals such as economics, geography, sociology, anthropology, development studies, policy planning, and management. SIA Reports prepared under SIA are to be shared with local Panchayat officials in their 'local language' along with a summary. In India, SIA has been generally carried out as part of the Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) clearance process (Council for Social Development, August 2010). The SIA relies on both primary data and secondary data including government census data, land records, including records of land transactions and other administrative records. SIA needs to be undertaken at various levels such

as cultural impacts; demographic impacts; economic and fiscal impacts; gender impacts; health and mental health impacts; impacts on indigenous rights; including psychological impacts. It is beyond the capacity of any university department or ASI to undertake such studies.

Landlessness and Marginalization among Weaker Sections -Dalits, Tribes and Others

There are numerous studies/publications of ASI on socio-cultural subjectivities of landlessness with a focus on marginalization, involving access and ownership to land resources, land alienation and landlessness. Among the major studies on Dalit/SC and OBC communities, mention may be made of national project on weaker sections which resulted in publication of 'Anthropology of Weaker Sections' (Sinha, Bhattacharya and Das, 1993). The ASI under the guidance of Surajit Sinha in late 1970s had conducted this comprehensive study of economic marginalisation of the Dalits in 24 villages spread in 16 states. ASI scholars examined the organisation of caste, relationship of castes, position of dominant caste, and the network of relationships centered in the village and beyond it. What is unique is that these studies represent the first anthropological study of the Dalit communities/ Dalit villages at all-India level, with focus on their weak resource base, their low position in social hierarchy, their relative lack of access to facilities provided by developmental programmes and their inadequate participation in governance institutions. Since Sinha had left ASI, the reports could not be published for long fifteen years. K.S.Singh, director-general ASI, retrieved the material for fresh analysis and papers were put together for publication. He wrote the introduction by updating the poverty backdrop of Dalits in India. This author was entrusted to finally edit and critically review the earlier reports with present scenario and contribute a concluding chapter. The material published constitutes a solid bench-mark for Dalits in 24 villages (Sinha, Bhattacharya and Das, 1993).

'The Scheduled Castes' is the ASI National Volume of People of India which depicts the status of Dalit communities in 1990s, including their 445 segments and 306 territorial units. This is the most comprehensive account ever of the Dalit castes, which comprise 15.75 per cent of India's population. Data presented are based on first-hand surveys conducted using ethnographic method supported by exhaustive questionnaires and household survey. This volume presents an accurate list of India's Scheduled Castes, which are spread across the country and which are mainly landless, with little control over resources such as land, forest and water. It also shows the persistence of 'untouchability' in many pockets, and the 'minimal' success in achieving equality. It reveals that Dalits have been increasingly involved in modern occupations, such as service in government departments wherever traditional industries have declined. As a consequence, a new sense of self-respect is in the air, gradually replacing some of the old myths which sought to legitimize their degradation (Singh, 1995).

A fresh national project on problems of Dalit communities launched in 1996 allowed ASI scholars to conduct in-depth intensive research in single villages having sizeable Dalit populations. A special issue of ASI Journal contained detailed reports of this project, depicting the landlessness and marginalization of Dalits. Under this project, this author had studied the Satnamis of Chhattisgarh in a village called Kugada. Satnamis, kept outside the realm of pauni (jajmani) system, emerged as marginal farmers. Few Dalit families could eke out livelihood exclusively through self cultivation (7.45). ASI also brought out an Illustrated 'Atlas of Scheduled Castes' based on 1991 census. It shows the distribution pattern of 478 communities. The atlas has 31 plates.

In his study of rural Bengal, Sinha revealed that articulation of Bhadrakok-Chhotok is deep-rooted and was not a by-product of British Raj. It was a simplified version of distinction between the 'unclean' Sudra and the upper castes. It is a 'caste-styled' system of stratification since it recognizes castes as component units and the stratification 'roughly approximates' the varna order. Although the essence of Bhadrakok-Chhotok hierarchy has to be defined in terms of 'style of life' and 'status stratification' in Weberian sense, one also finds remarkable congruence of the dimensions of class and power within this category of status stratification (Sinha and Bhattacharya, 1969).

A national project of ASI, on social exclusion, discrimination and stratification in tribal societies, enabled scholars to conduct 24 'village Studies'. Findings of these studies are included in the volume 'Exclusion, Discrimination and Stratification: Tribes in Contemporary India' (Das, 2013). The tribes represented divergent economies such as hunting-gathering (Chenchus), shifting-cultivation (Lanjia Saora, Koyas), shifting-plus-terrace cultivation (Riangs), wet plough cultivation (Lepcha), terrace cultivation (Noctes) and settled agriculture (Lalung, Santal, Bedia). Pastoral tribes (Gujjars, Todas) and artisan tribes (Mahali) were also studied. These village studies show how the tribes have been subjected to multiple processes of discrimination and social exclusion. Even though there are provisions of affirmative action, tribes in many places could not avail the benefits. In most cases tribal families, lived in the periphery of the village settlements, away from settlements of caste people; and were discriminated as landless agricultural labourers. The bulk of tribal families with land often are just the marginal and small farmers. The tribespeople are broadly differentiated into cultivators, agricultural labourers, white-collar/salaried workers and even shopkeepers/traders and industrial workers. Tribes are disadvantaged in terms of access to education, income/wealth, and political power and so on (Das, 2013).

Agenda for 'Anthropology of Future'

'Indian society is traditionally pluralistic and the same spirit is embodied in the Indian Constitution. The recent debate on 'multiculturalism' of the western societies is a non-issue in the Indian context. In the Indian context cultural pluralism and the issues related to identity of all the sections of society should be value free. It may be argued that issues related to culture should be treated as part of the broader development issues. The policy of promotion and protection of diverse forms of culture needs to be re-

contextualised and must consider issues beyond folk forms of music and dance. The role of the State is not expected to be only that of the facilitator of cultural programmes'.

The above statements are part of the 'recommendations' prepared by the panel of anthropologists constituted during International Conference on Identity, Cultural Pluralism and State', organised by ASI at India International Centre, New Delhi from 27 February to 1 March 2006. The Panel consisted of T. N. Madan, Chairman, A. C. Bhagabati, D. K. Bhattacharya, K. K. Chakravarty, T. K. Oommen, M. N. Panini, George Pfeffer, T. B. Subba, A. K. Danda, N.K. Das, S. Goonatilake, Lidia Guzy, L. Khubchandani, L. K. Mahapatra, K.C. Malhotra, D. P. Mukherjee, R. Mukhopadhyay, M. Srinathan and A. K. Singh and V. R. Rao as Member-Secretary. The panellists unanimously recommended that appropriate inter-ministerial dialogue be organised involving the Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Environment and Forests, Ministry of Science and Technology and Ministry of Tribal Affairs. Such dialogue may be through a forum, which should also include representatives of the universities and concerned research institutes. Recommendations were sent to the government of India under the signatures of chairman and member-secretary. There is need to pursue this effort and see that the present government takes up the recommendations for compliance.

The recommendations also articulated an agenda for anthropology of future. Some relevant points of the agenda are as follows:

- It was felt that when we discuss people's cultures (often described as folk cultures) we come across syncretic traditions that bring together traditions drawn from different sources.
- Certain nomenclatures are used to denote the disadvantaged sections. Moreover, the terms 'tribe' 'caste' as used have no biological basis. It was recommended that India should rather adopt some value free and neutral term like "community" to describe all categories of people of India. Nevertheless, the positive discriminations and the constitutional safeguards should remain in place.
- It was felt that the State has not taken adequate notice of all vanishing cultural traditions. Indigenous knowledge systems are fast losing their relative isolation; it is essential that people's knowledge related to biodiversity, the intangible cultural heritage, and the folk knowledge of sustainable development are combined with broader development issues. There is need to strengthen these age-old knowledge systems. Anthropologists might play an important role in identifying, documenting and conserving different forms of intangible cultural heritage.
- It was felt that the State should not only protect minority cultures, but minority languages as well. The erosion of language diversity in the country is a matter of concern.

Concluding Remarks

Among the major criticisms levelled against Indian anthropology/ Indian anthropologists are conformity to Western trends, use of simplistic frames to study complex societies, and the failure to influence administrative

structures and practices (Gopala Sarana, 2007). Sarana and other scholars have highlighted the need for an integrated approach that constructs a bridge between academic circle, government, development realm and aesthetic principles, so as to aptly face the new crises of globalization. Some scholars, as we discussed above, have raised issues of poverty, land acquisition, displacement, discrimination and pitiable implementation of regulations and laws meant for weaker sections. Under these circumstances, the prime task of the anthropologists in India today should be to commit themselves more sincerely in order to generate a reliable database through fieldwork pertaining to impact of development initiatives and democratization processes meant for empowering the weaker sections including the womenfolk. Such endeavour should include study of effects of large- and small-scale land acquisitions in tribal and non-tribal areas and gather people's own versions of narrative of sufferings. Since new land and forest laws are in place and demands for transparency are growing steadily, anthropologists in India are well suited today to undertake studies of poverty, health issue, food security, landlessness and other maladies, more proactively. Notwithstanding, apprehensions of all sorts about crisis and insolvency in Indian anthropology (Debnath, 1999, Guha 2017), substantial relevant works surfacing within Indian anthropology need to be duly accredited. The evaluation above has pointed at deficits; yet it showed certain hopefulness for resurgence and rededication on part of Indian anthropologists to indulge in meaningful researches.

Some Indian anthropologists have focused rather on urgency and need for genuine re-focus on contemporary issues instead of critiquing anthropology/anthropologists (Rao, 2012; Das, 2002). It is argued that greater need is to provide good training to students, and carry out research relevant to the contemporary society. Rao cites Firth (1992) who said that, "Much has been written about what anthropology can do, little has been shown of what anthropology has done. We need to document this, project this, and make use of it, with the objective of developing an outlook for future". Future exists for anthropology and there is no reason for cynicism (Rao, 2012).

The "crisis of representation", heralded by the critiques of anthropology in 1980's was part of the post-modern turn. Since then anthropologists have accepted the modern challenges and moved beyond such talk of "crisis of representation". Anthropologists, in India or elsewhere, have prime duty towards their informants. Yet they are bound by their own ethical imperatives. Anthropologists need to ensure ultimately that their research is used in a precise manner. There are limits and they have to decide how far to advocate politically, balancing between ethnographic pragmatism and political activism.

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