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Revisiting the Re-studies in Social Anthropology

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Revisiting the Re-studies in Social Anthropology

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Abstract

Social Anthropology, as a discipline focusing on intense emic data gained inductively from long-term association with small communities has always attached particular importance to village studies. Due to an intensive involvement of the anthropologist with the site they study, it is common for them to re-visit the sites they or someone else originally studied. The re-studies of villages studied earlier not only provides academic rigor in theoretical terms but also offer a dynamic understanding of processes of change and continuity in the villages restudied. In Indian settings, numerous re-studies have highlighted the nature of socio-economic change that has swept the villages away and how wider forces are at work in transforming the faces of Indian villages. This article highlights some of the long-standing theoretical and methodological dimensions in the field or village re-studies as prevalent in anthropological circles. Drawing from a workshop on re-studies in University of Delhi; it combines practical examples from field-researches with the wider pedagogical dimensions of such studies.

Keywords

Re-Studies, Village Studies, Social Anthropology

Introduction

By the 1940s, field-based research had become a hallmark of social anthropology where a sustained involvement of the researcher(s) into the lives of people studied led the discipline towards a dialectical mode of dealing with the specific in order to refer to the general (Kemper and Royce 2002). Anthropologists, guided by the metaphors of that time, attributed equilibrium to the cultures described in traditional and contemporary standpoints of time; distancing themselves of diachronic approach of time as a process. The changing contexts of societies during and after the world wars attracted anthropologists to work among many of the peasant societies around the globe, ushering the times of village and community studies, especially in terms of 'social change' in 1950s-60s. In India, divergent studies of the villages came to formulate the rich sociological discipline subsequently known as village studies, so much so that good sociological practice was seen as synonymous to village studies (Jeyaranjan 1996). The study of these small-scale societies understood to be dynamically strategizing entities responding to both inner and external forces described in an 'ethnographic present' contributed heavily to the analytical framework and subject matter of peasant/village studies in anthropology (Kemper and Royce *ibid*).

However, newer perspectives kept on filtering into the anthropological and sociological theories. Bruner (1986:4) aptly articulates changing perspectives of social scientists towards social change in peasant societies that led them to describe “the present as disorganization, the past as glorious and the future as assimilation” in the 1930s-40s while the same was seen in the 1980s in terms of “the present as a resistance movement, past as exploitation and future as ethnic resurgence”. Such change of perspectives in studying peasant societies brings back in the dimension of time as a continuous process where present, past and future are situated on relative loci of understanding and actions in a particular society rather than being mere points of references at two given chronological time-frames.

The dimension of time as instrumental in auguring social change was conceptualized from and in turn, formulated a fresher field of enquiry that came to be called as re-studies and long-term field researches. Quoting Burawoy (2003: 646) “an *ethnographic revisit* occurs when an ethnographer undertakes participant observation, that is, studying others in their space and time, with a view of comparing his or her site with the same one studied at an earlier point in time, whether by him or herself or by someone else”. Stemming from re-look into and of earlier accounts of societies-sometimes corroborative, sometimes critical; these re-studies infuse a longitudinal perspective to the study of societies and their transformation. Along come numerous aspects associated with re-studies- types, nature, methodological and theoretical nuances, ethics, reflexivity, issues on reliability and validity and so on. Re-studies have marked their strong presence ever since their inception as a dynamic disciplinary endeavor, however, the focus in present time is all the more intense owing to wider implications of longitudinal studies in terms of both theoretical and applied interests in the field of humanities. This not only led anthropologists, sociologists and allied field researchers to study villages in contemporary time frame but also to study them over time and with repeated visits. Among many longitudinal studies conducted in Indian villages (see Hocks, 1999), the studies done by Kathleen Gough (1981,1989) in Tamil Nadu villages, spanning almost 25 years and Scarlett Epstein (1962, 1973; also Epstein, Suryanarayana and Thimmegowda 1998) in southern Karnataka for over a period of 40 years are noteworthy.

In recent years, the renewed interests in re-studies in anthropological and sociological academia are apparent by starting up of restudies of several peasant communities studied earlier by different anthropologists both in India and abroad, owing to great relevance of re-studies in contemporary understanding of social change in the events of economic influxes and socio-political factors. For example, on Indian peasant societies, School of Oriental and Asian Studies (University of London) is running a re-study project of 3 villages- Bisipara in Orissa, Malwa and in Madhya Pradesh and in Gujarat, studied in 1950s by F. G. Bailey (1957), Adrian C. Mayer (1960) and D. Pocock (1972) respectively. Also, the Anthropological Survey of India is funding numerous re-studies in order to analyze the effects of rapid socio-economic transformation of hitherto studied communities.¹

It is in the light of these trends in village and community studies in social sciences that a workshop titled “Revisiting the Re-studies” was organized by Department of Anthropology,

University of Delhi, wherein, the participants not only discussed various theoretical and methodological dimensions of conducting re-studies at length but also critically analyzed the changing perspectives in academic circles on notions of time, change and societies with special focus on communities in India. This workshop was a brilliant mix of academic trends worldwide to aid researchers working in village and community studies in Indian settings as well as challenges that they may face and issues that need to be addressed at the level of a long-term involvement with a particular community. Combining both theoretical discussions on myriad aspects of re-studies as well as visual and ethnographic examples of re-studies, the workshop fulfilled its aim of being conducive to critically discuss and act as a poser for further avenues in applied and theoretical dimensions of re-studying an earlier anthropological enquiry.

I. Theoretical aspects of re-studies

An ethnographic re-study can be approached from different theoretical perspectives. Whereas the structural-functional perspective would think of a re-study in terms of quantifiable points of time in a time-space coordinate on a linear scale (Jeyaranjan 1996), the more historically embedded re-studies view time as a process shaping the changes and continuity rather than points of reference in study of change and continuity. These two broad perspectives hinge on a common realist v/s constructivist debate.

According to V. K. Srivastava, an ethnographic re-study would mean carrying out a Cartesian observation on an earlier study by the original researcher or by some other researcher after a certain relapse of time. However, he was firmly eloquent that simply a comparative (before and after) approach leads to a poor ethnography. Thus, the re-studies must be filled with rich anthropological theory and thick data as case studies, etc. This also distinguishes anthropological re-studies from village re-surveys and experimental research which do not produce intensive holistic accounts of communities under study. Owing to the great deal of time, resources and emotions invested by anthropologists in their field intensive research, mostly starting during one's doctoral tenure, urges them to undertake a re-study of their field wherein returning back to the field gives not only a chance to re-assess their original studies and map the changes from the initial point of observation but also produces fascinating accounts of dynamism of the community under study.

As the fieldworkers return to their studied communities after few decades, they sense a reconfiguration of i) anthropological field-sites and ii) anthropology as a profession. Thus, not only the relation between an anthropologist and informants change over time but also does the field itself. It is natural that along with the researcher, people have also aged (Cohen 1992). Though what merits a mention here is the 'head notes'²² that a researcher has inscribed in her/his memory while the first visit which then can be taken as a point of reference in order to compare and analyze the newer observations done in the subsequent re-visits, while a researcher re-visiting another's field of research faces some hardship due to a lack of these head-notes. So,

Srivastava opined that a re-study is best undertaken by the same researcher who conducted the original study.

Taking the analogy from the rationality debate between Obeyesekere-Sahllins³ over Captain Cook's death in Hawaiian Islands, S. M. Channa argued that re-study as a concept is much more than what it appears at its mere face-value and hence, similar to the argument on level of theorization in Obeyesekere-Sahllins debate rather than ethnographic content, a deeper analysis is wanted in re-studies as well. Re-study as a concept needs to be deconstructed departing from its taken for granted connotations.

Bringing in the aspect of time as a process that shapes history and formulates the understanding of present, she made her countenance in favor of re-studies that are conducted with an aim of intercepting this flowing process of time rather than simply situating it at X and Y points of time in history. An ideal re-study, as such, would focus on interweaving historical analysis including ethno-history, archival research, etc. into ethnographic contexts in order to situate the ongoing process within a larger scenario of change and continuity.

Sharing experiences from her own ongoing re-study of the Dhobi community in Delhi which she first conducted in her early twenties, she talked about how the interception of time as a process, if done by the same researcher, leads her/him to undergo an inter-subjective transition which is not only about aging of the researcher-informants but also about intellectual and theoretical concepts taken to field by the researcher. If the same field is re-studied by different researcher(s), then it leads to two vantage points of intercepting this process of time in view of social change.

As a young researcher, S. M. Channa(1985)tried to look into the economic aspect of the Dhobi community which she studied as a doctoral researcher wherein she wanted to study the effect of a fast changing and modernizing city on traditional occupation of the Dhobis. Re-visiting her community after around four decades has brought in a lot of new conceptual issues in addition to reflexive issues of age, status, rank, etc. Her re-study involves re-framing of her theoretical perspective wherein she is now focusing on the entire cultural complex with associated cultural processes of the Dhobi community for whom the river Yamuna is so central to their existence. Revisiting her field memoirs has also led her to formulate newer area of focus of understanding how Dhobis view and situate the city and the transition brought in their lives due to historical processes auguring social change.

Inevitably linked to the questions of theoretical perspectives in orienting the re-studies is the question of reflexivity in the accounts or re-visits. The reflexive concern in re-studies revolves around the realism- constructivism dichotomy.

II. Issues of reflexivity and types of focused re-studies

V. K. Srivastava highlighted that reflexive ethnography recognizes the dilemma that there is a world outside the researcher (realism), but ethnographers can only know it through their relation

to it (constructivism). Usually realism and constructivism are kept in poles-apart scenarios in the context of a research, but as is the case with ethnography (unlike surveys and experimental research); the researcher assumes a central role in voicing out of the community being studied. The ethnographers become the main instrument of research in the long iterative-inductive process of doing a study whereby larger world recognizes those communities not by first-hand contact but by the accounts of ethnographers. So, in actuality, constructivism can never be wholly taken out of a re-study. In addition to this, Burawoy (2003) also lists another factor in deciding a reflexive ethnographic revisit, that is, ethnographers are part of that world (internal moment), but only part of it (external moment). Burawoy (ibid) lists the focused revisit as the most comprehensive of all types of re-studies. This type of re-visit involves an intensive comparison by a successor's ethnography with the one done previously at the same site, usually by someone else.

Based on these factors, there may be four types of focused re-studies, two each under the constructivist and realist reflexive stances.

1. Constructivist Re-visits

The mainstay of a constructivist re-visit is the assumption that the change noticed in a re-study is not a product of actual change undergone by the site but rather due to differential relation of the researcher with the site, in terms of reflexive understanding or theoretical difference. Thus, these types of re-visits focus more on the agency of the ethnographer(s) in question. The following two are its sub-types:

i) Refutational

These types of focused revisits are those where the successor engages into re-study of ethnography to refute the claims of the predecessor. These re-visits rest on the assumption that the site itself doesn't change with time but it is the changed relation of ethnographer to the site that produces divergent interpretations. This category of re-visits has seen some of the most acrimonious debates in the history of ethnography, of which the Mead- Freeman controversy is most hotly debated. The revisit to Samoa by Derek Freeman (1983) as claimed by him, led to unveiling of a faulty study done by Margaret Mead (1928) wherein he claimed that Mead was fooled by the natives into believing that Samoans had an easeful and casual attitude towards sex and the transition to adulthood was not as traumatic as found in conflicting valued culture of the America. This refutation was based on a number of factors as labeled by Freeman, viz. lack of prior knowledge about Samoan culture, lack of expertise in local language, short fieldwork and narrow focus on just adolescence rather than whole society. However, since Mead was dead by that time, anthropologists largely re-grouped to rebut the claims of Freeman wherein they brought into picture aspects of observer-informant relations as to how a middle-aged man could be more successful in discovering sexual life of women than a young girl. Also, the long gap between the two visits had introduced numerous changes, of which the conversion to Christianity

leading to more conservative attitude on sex among Samoans was a major one. Freeman was also criticized for not offering any alternative theory to that proposed by Mead in favor of his refutation of her study. Others like Shore (1983) have talked about ambiguity found in Samoan character where both types of elements can be seen in Samoans inhabiting different islands.

Similar to this refutational revisit controversy in anthropology was another controversy in sociology where Boelen (1992) revisited Street Corner Society studied by William F. Whyte (1943, 1955) which had come to be seen as a classic in sociological literature. Her accusations against Whyte's study included factors like Whyte's in-expertise in Italian, lack of knowledge of Italian village life, poor ethics to dogmatic defense of flawed Chicago school theory of gangs. Whyte, who was still alive at the time of these accusations, defended his work by giving a point to point rebuttal of Boelen's claims in a series of articles which included his description of clear ethical stances, better knowledge of Italian than gang members and theoretical orientations. Boelen's refutational revisit generated much less interest in sociological circles due to twin reasons of less astutely delivered arguments against the original study as well as marginal position of ethnography in sociology as compared to anthropology (Burawoy 2003)

Both these examples of refutational re-visits are distinguished from the next category of focused re-visits by the fact that these re-visits simply challenged the original studies but did not offer, at any point of time, an alternative to the theoretical gist of the predecessor studies.

ii) Theoretical/ Re-construction

This type of focused revisits is also constructivist in nature as the successor tries to re-look the field from a different theoretical perspective that leads to a reconstruction of the original study's theory. Here, usually a different researcher brings fresher paradigms to the field of some other researcher and thus, engages in a re-formed view of the site which may or may not involve a total refutation of earlier study. However, what distinguishes it from refutational revisits is the formation of an alternative theory to the earlier research that is absent in the refutational re-visits. Most illustrative examples of studies of this kind in anthropology are those of re-study of Malinowski's (1922) Trobriand islanders by Weiner (1976) and Lewis's (1951) restudy of Tepoztlan earlier studied by Redfield (1930).

Among the many feminist re-constructions of canonical works in the field of anthropology and sociology, Weiner's re-visit (1976) brought in newer perspectives to the functionalistic perspectives of Malinowski's study (1922). In describing the mortuary rituals associated with banana leaves and skirts made of these, Weiner showed that how Malinowski omitted women's sphere of influence and position in the Trobriand society by focusing only on men and men's rituals associated with yam gardens. Though ahistorical in account, Weiner's study brought in the dynamics of power- relations between men and women in Trobriand society and thus, offered a deeper and fuller description than was done by Malinowski. Thus, Weiner's revisit was not

aimed at refuting the original study's findings but extending the findings through including a different theoretical perspective of feminism.

In another of the classic re-studies in anthropology, Oscar Lewis (1951) re-visited the village of Tepoztlan studied by Robert Redfield (1930, studied in 1926). Unlike Weiner, Lewis criticized the folk-urban continuum model used/proposed by Redfield in his study that highlighted a utopian, homogenous, in harmony and isolated village without disruptions and conflicts. Rather, Lewis found on his revisit a village factionalized with conflicts among various classes, schisms and lack of co-operation among the villagers. Not stopping here, Lewis offered an alternative theoretical explanation of his disagreeing findings through employing the Marxist theory of social change which was based on a real historical change rather than a position in the continuum between folk and urban societies. This was a re-study where the successor not only offered alternative theoretical version of an earlier study but also refuted the earlier study as misplaced.

2) Realist Revisits

Resting on the realist assumption of facts situated out there to be discovered, the empirical and structural revisits of a focused type are designed specifically to study historical change. However, in actuality, no realist account is completely devoid of constructivist elements of subjectivity of the researcher and effect of relation of the researcher to the field. Thus, constructivism deepens the realist accounts rather than disconcerting them. The re-visits of this kind actually locate the discrepancies found in the original and re-study accounts due to actual changes occurred in the field of study. Here, the original study is taken as a baseline to re-assess social changes taken place during the time from first study. The two types are as follows:

iii) Empirical

These focused re-visits tend to be empirical in their grounding and describe changes occurred in a site due to internal processes rather than explain those changes. An overt empiricist re-visit though, is hard to find. One of the most suitable examples for an empirical re-visit may be Lynd and Lynd's (1973) revisit to their own field-site of Middletown (1929), which though claimed to be largely empiricist re-visit to their own field by them, also had elements of re-construction interwoven in their account. The Lynds in their original study described the factors of class, employment, division of labor, economy, housing, etc. while re-visiting their field led them to describe not only changes but also continuity in the town of Middletown in terms of re-assertion of family values, consolidation of big business, expansion of education, more women seeking employment, etc. However, the account also had explanations of a Marxist orientation intermixed with the descriptions.

iv) Structural

These types of focused re-visits are those which tend to offer an explanation for the social changes occurred between the original and re-study unlike the descriptive empirical re-studies.

As such, they focus more on external than internal factors of social change and are structuralist in configuration.

Hutchinson (1996) revisited Nuer land earlier studied by Evans-Pritchard (1940, 1951, 1956) amidst the devastations of second civil war between north and south Sudan. She took Evans-Pritchard's finding as a baseline to assess change in over sixty years. However, her questions were entirely opposite to those asked by Evans-Pritchard. Whereas, Evans-Pritchard focused on functional utility of Nuer community, Hutchinson focused on effect of disruptive events. She followed up on historical turnings of Christianity and external forces of education and monetary economy and "cattelizeation of money" among the Nuers to account for the tremendous disruptive social changes occurring in their society.

III. Typology in Re-studies

Re-studies in social sciences cover numerous different courses of actions followed to re-gather or re-look at the data gathered in the original visit. For an apparent need of clarity to this dimension and to situate one's research better in terms of theoretical orientation and methodological tools to be followed while data collection during re-studying an earlier field studied by oneself or by someone else, a typological classification of various forms of re-studies arms the potential researcher to the expectations and grounding of research into a wider disciplinary frame.

V. K. Srivastava following Burawoy(2003) elaborated upon the set of typology associated with re-studies starting from the basic understanding of a re-study from the point of view of whether the same researcher goes back to her/his field or whether a researcher goes to re-study a field earlier studied by a different researcher. In addition to these two possibilities, there could exist one more- where a researcher studying a particular type of communities visits yet another similar community for study. Further, re-studies can be distinguished on the basis of following terminologies:

a. Ethnographic Re-analysis

In this type of a re-study, the pre-existing data is secondarily re-analyzed in order to find the worth of earlier data-set without actually conducting field re-study. Here, the aim is more to substantiate the findings rather than addressing newer questions in research (Heaton, 2004). An example of this could be the re-analysis of Malinowski's published and unpublished work on Trobriand Islanders by J. P. S. Oberoi (1971) without actually going to the field.

b. Ethnographic Update

This type is usually conducted in sociology wherein a researcher goes to the field-site of their or other's original study in order to find out the changes that have occurred since the time of previous research rather than re-studying the entire original work. It is a re-study that brings the earlier study up to date but does not re-engage it (Burawoy 2003: 646-7).

c. Replication

In social sciences, replication, unlike in physical and natural sciences, is more concerned with robustness of findings than actually replicating the earlier findings. Unlike replication studies in these fields which aim at minimizing intervention and controlling research conditions in order to prove constancy across diverse cases, re-visits essentially focus on explaining historical and social change through bringing to field the different perspectives and newer orientations. Among various shapes such a re-visit can take is a case when a researcher starts her/his research with a brief idea about an earlier research done at the same site but without an in-depth analysis of the findings. Later, the findings from the re-visit are compared with that of original study in order to minimize the bias induced from knowledge of prior findings.

Various other types of Re-visits:

Rolling Re-visit

The fieldwork is a rolling revisit when it involves visits that are succession of experimental trials so that each visit though separated from other is still in conversation with preceding ones. Each visit is followed by not just writing of the data but also analysis and hypothesis formulation and theory elaboration which is further checked in successive visits (Burawoy 2003).

Punctuated Re-visit or long-term field research

This type of field research is a long term research where a researcher or a team of researchers conduct study of a site over many years of time in a longitudinal manner, For example, the study of Mexican village Tzintzuntzan by Foster et al (1967; see Kemper and Royce, 2002) spanning several decades is a case of a team of researchers rather generations of researches continuing research in same site while the research of Colson (Scudder and Colson 1979) in Gwembe-Tonga is one of same researcher re-visiting the same field over a number of years. These restudies are particularly concerned with historical processes of change and continuity.

Valedictory Re-visit

This type of re-visit occurs when a researcher reports back to the informants after the completion of original study, whether in published or unpublished form in order to ascertain from the informants' responses what changes have occurred since the last visit. Here, the motive is not to re-conduct the ethnography but to re-assess the findings and theory.

IV. Re-visiting a Sikh village in Punjab

I.P. Singh restudied the community originally studied by him under the ICSSR funding in 2008⁴ with an objective to understand and compare the contemporary peasant life in Punjab. His original study in the village of Daleke (1958, 1961) in Taran-Taaran tehsil, being the only Sikh majority village was suggested by Robert Redfield. Largely an empirical revisit to original field

site, the study assessed the changes that have swept the village from both qualitative and quantitative data. The quantitative data collected from all households focused on demography, infrastructure and facilities for health, education, entertainment, etc. while the qualitative data collected from half of total households focused on interpersonal and caste relations, religious and ceremonial affairs etc.

The restudy used the findings of the original study as a baseline to assess social change over the years in Daleke. The study describes the changes in terms of population, literacy, number of schools and health centers, infrastructure like roads and technical improvements, etc. Whereas the population has increased by three times, the number of households has gone up almost by four times, highlighting the emergence of nuclear family setup, particularly among the *dalits*. Literacy rate has increased substantially from 10 % in 1958 to 70 % in 2008 with girls faring better in school enrollment and pass-out rate. Daughters are increasingly seen as an economic asset highlighted in the improved sex ratio in the village. Infrastructure-wise, the village now had metaled roads with connectivity to all major regions in Punjab and beyond, electricity, improved lifestyle and occupational technologies. However, the agricultural mainstay of the village has seen a shift and the few practicing agriculturalists bend heavily towards cash crops than food crops leading to issues of soil degradation, crop-management, etc. The suicide rate has also increased considerably since the times of original study.

This re-study highlights the contemporary scenario of a village in the fast-changing socio-economic impetus today and thus, offers a comparative understanding of change and continuity of Indian villages.

V. Re-visiting Rampura in Delhi

Oscar Lewis (1958) studied Rampura, a village on the peripheries of Delhi in 1950s. The ethnography titled as ‘Village Life in Northern India’, describes the life of inhabitants of the village where *jats*- the dominant caste were agriculturalists by occupation. Covering chapters on marriage and kinship, caste relations and the *jajmani* system, religious customs, rituals and factions; he also gave a comparative analysis of the life in Rampur and his other studied village in Mexico (1951). Villagers’ conception of disease causation and cure with emphasis on diseases like malaria, smallpox, hysteria, etc. was also discussed as a chapter.

In a brief re-visit to Lewis’ village of Rampura, a team of several assistant professors led by Prof. P. C. Joshi of University of Delhi, as a part of capacity building workshop funded by ICSSR⁵, did an ethnographic update on Lewis’ original study. The aim here was to understand the socio-economic change that has swept the village during



the last sixty years from the time of original study. Not only could the team locate various locations pictured in the original study but also interviewed several of the originally listed villagers or their kin. The revisit highlighted the change and continuity of various aspects of life in Rampura since the original study. Even though the caste-relations, occupational profile, architectural and spatial order, education and lifestyle had undergone immense changes, the continuity is visible in terms of symbolic persistence of various rituals, kinship and worldviews on health and disease. The factions have undergone a shift from caste-based to electoral-based groupings with the rise of various regionally active political parties. One of the most noteworthy change was seen in the pathetic conditions of the village commons such as the village ponds, *chaupal* community hall indicating a rise in individualistic tendencies in contemporary villages. This re-visit was an important step towards the possibility of in-depth restudies of villages studied originally in years just after independence which could give substantial information on the processes of socio-cultural change in villages in an increasingly connected and globalized world.



VI. Discussion

A number of aspects of re-studies merit a careful discussion, which range from terminological to methodological and theoretical. A point of contention in village re-studies is the focus on quantifiable data of original study used as a baseline (Jeyaranjan 1996) and if the re-studies capture the socio-economic scenario of the village better than village surveys (Dasgupta 1978; Rao and Nair 2003). The quantitative update followed in re-studies assumes a minimum of two time frames which change over a linear time-scale measured in terms of variables set by author leading to reductionism (Jeyaranjan 1996) and un-acknowledgment of reflexivity on part of the researcher. As S. M. Channa points out, such a re-study runs the risk of neglecting historical processes in favor of a more objective understanding where time is itself understood to have

caused the change found in the re-study. Here, the re-studies need to be more historically grounded and aware of time as a process which is both relative and changing. Thus, history looks at time as one that has become 'past' and is 'productive of the present' while anthropology looks at time from a reverse angle where past is re-fined by the present.

I. P. Singh opines that like change, a re-study has to understand the continuity as well since the time of original studies to be aware of micro-processes of social life in villages. Commenting on the re-visit to Rampura, he discussed how villages in India are no more sort of republics they were at the time of independence and are much more dependent on the wider world in a manner of sub-urban spaces in Euro-America. Thus, a re-study is appropriate in understanding the newer forces at work shaping the Indian villages and the continuities in the socio-cultural and economic life of these villages.

M. K. Kennedy highlights the need to study market-economy and urbanization as integral to village-restudies in order understand influence of wider implications of these forces in changing of traditional occupations in villages. C. Mahajan on the other hand emphasized the understanding of critical life events and cataclysmic processes on change in social and inter-personal life of village inhabitants and whether villages undergoing such criticalities can be seen as different from those who do not. Also, since most of the re-studies are done from point of view of locals, it would be worth trying to study these from a point of view of outer contextual embedding.

A terminological distinction between the terms -'re-visit' and 'restudy' was raised by R. P. Mitra who was of the view that a 're-visit' should refer to the re-working of the same researcher in her/his own field-site while a 're-study' should be the one done by a researcher in a different researcher's field-site. However, differing from this view, S. M. Channa viewed a re-visit as a part of a larger re-study wherein a difference of perspectives towards the field-site lends to the distinction between a re-visit and a re-study. Citing Susan Seymour's work (1975, 1999) of twenty years in Orissa, she labeled her work to be a re-visit as every time she visited her field she built on the same parameters. Following this, her work would have been a re-study if she would also have involved different parameters for her re-visits. Thus, she calls her going back to her original fieldwork among Dhobis of Delhi as a re-study since it involves a totally new perspective of looking at their society. However, R. P. Mitra opined that if a perspective is totally different from the original study, then it does not fit in the frame of a re-study as it becomes a totally novel work of enquiry.

I.P. Singh added to the discussion saying that a difference in perspectives of the researchers gives the re-study more dynamism for which he cited his own field experience. He talked about his finding of the original study of Daleke village where he concluded that Punjab is dominated by Sikh culture to a change in perspective that rather it is dominated by *Jat*-culture to a final change from his re-study that Punjab has a dominant peasant-culture. Thus, openness to newer perspectives helps bring newer elements of research in understanding the village life.

Overall, a consensus was reached that re-studies of villages and peasant communities in India and beyond are immensely significant in order to understand the changing dynamism of these societies with respect to both internal and external forces of politico-economic and ecological dimensions. Not only the re-studies contribute to a knowledge-base about the change and continuity of villages but also lead to a constant refinement in intellectual debates on methodological and theoretical rigor of research in social sciences, particularly social anthropology and sociology. Hence, this field of revisiting the original works on various communities is an emergent scholarly pursuit that calls for an enthusiastic participation from social scientists world over.

Notes

¹ Personal communication with Prof. K. K. Misra, former Director, Anthropological Survey of India

² The term headnotes in ethnographic fieldwork refers to the stored memories and interpretations that arise from participant observation being filtered by the ethnographer's overall theoretical stance. Headnotes are an essential complement to fieldnotes (and to more formal fieldwork data sets). These are employed to make sense of one's own fieldnotes when they are re-read later for ethnographic writing. When anthropologists attempt to use another ethnographer's fieldnotes, they realize the difficulty in understanding them without any headnotes of their own (for a fuller description, see Ottonberg 1990)

³ Obeyesekere and Sahlins were embroiled in an acrimonious debate over interpretation of Captain Cook's death in the Hawaiian Islands over the apparent form of rationality used by the natives; where Obeyesekere ascribed natives to be possessing same form of rationality as the Europeans had, Sahlins argued for different forms of rationality that are equally rational and that saying all cultures lead to form of rationality same as Europeans would be Eurocentric. (see further, Obeyesekere 1992; Sahlins 1995)

⁴ ICSSR had awarded senior research fellowship to Dr. I. P. Singh former Professor and Head, Department of Anthropology, University of Delhi to undertake the re-study of Daleke village in Punjab.

⁵ This re-visit was a part of ICSSR funded two weeks Capacity Building Program for Faculty in Social Sciences organized at Delhi University during February 3-14, 2014. A total of 27 young Assistant Professors from various social sciences departments across India attended this workshop. The Re-visit was led under the guidance of Prof. P. C. Joshi as part of anthropological fieldwork. The participants were divided into different teams for re-studying different chapters given in the book originally written by Oscar Lewis (1958).

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