CHAPTER – 2

METHODOLOGICAL CONCERNS

Colonial State collected information on various castes and tribes to bring them under control and subsequently to create a veritable body of knowledge on them. It was also used for various governmental programmes. This had its precedence in census programmes initiated by the British Government. Simultaneous collection of information on castes and tribes of India provided much required information on demographic structure, economic practices, aspects of social life etc of various castes. In the case of forest and tribal communities, such studies provide information on forest dependency and Adivasis. It also provides information on the intrusion made by non Adivasi groups in the Adivasi area. Many anthropologists who wrote on tribal communities refer to various types of conflicts that became central in Adivasi area\(^5\).

As part of colonial governance, a number of British scholar administrators took up studies on castes and tribes of various regions.

Edgar Thurston, Superintendent of Madras Museum, has provided detailed information on various castes and tribes of South India that pertained to the last decade of the nineteenth century and early decades of the twentieth century. He has published works such as “Castes and Tribes of Southern India” and ‘Ethnographic notes on Southern India’ which became very foundational to anthropology. The information has both diachronic and synchronic dimensions regarding more than three hundred castes and tribes.

Diachronic information provides much required historical data on communities that change through time while synchronic information refers to the conditions as they observed in the field. Most studies of this genre became source material for later day anthropological studies.  

Similar studies have been conducted by administrators and anthropologists throughout India and provided ethnographic knowledge of communities and castes. They provide information on changing nature of communities and castes in the wake of British colonialism. It

---

also recorded several cases of communities that were not seriously affected or influenced by colonial rule.

G.S. Ghurye is quite often referred to as a scholar who institutionalized sociology in India. He followed mostly indological or cultural historical approach to sociology. His sociological practice was heavily influenced by the traditions of British and German orientalism. Following this, G.S. Ghurye was interested in exploring Indian civilization sociologically. His first book ‘Castes and Races in India’ is a product of such an engagement. He tried to explain the origin and spread of castes by examining a wide variety of historical, archaeological and anthropometric evidences. His sociological practice was influenced by Hindu nationalistic interpretations. This led him to argue that lower castes and Adivasis are backward Hindus. He attacked the colonial tribal policy of protectionism. Cultural assimilation according to him was a natural process in India and he was in favour of tribal communities getting assimilated into the main stream. He was opposed to the arguments of anthropologists like Elwin Verrier and other administrators that the Indian tribes are different from Hindus. As a result of this he opposed the policy of cultural protection.

G.S. Ghurye was in favour of extending new governmental development programmes in independent India to ameliorate the
conditions of Adivasis. This notion of development was embedded in the ideas of modernization that became one of the central tenets of governance in Independent India.  

Irawati Karve is famous for her work “Celebrating the diversity of Hindu India”. She is the first woman anthropologist from Poona University. She belonged to the traditional Ghurye and combined herself to the indological and ethnological tradition. She was greatly influenced by German ethical anthropological tradition. Following Ghurye she accepted much of his culturalist interpretations of Indian society and she had argued that the character of Hindu society was ‘agglomerating’ many separate cultural entities. She had held the view that Hindu society is a patch work of castes physically and culturally differentiated.

Karve worked on a range of issues in physical anthropology, archaeology and cultural anthropology. In addition to that she was well versed in socio economic surveys. She also did considerable research on issues of women, language and rites. Her concern with socio economic

---

7 For details see : Ghurye,G.S, The aborigines-so called and their future, Poona, Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics, 1943
The scheduled tribes, Bombay, Popular Prakashan, 1959
Family and kin in Indo-European culture , Bombay, Popular Prakashan, ,1962
The Mahadev Kolis, Bombay, Popular Prakashan, 1963

8 Nandini Sundar, In the cause of Anthropology –The life and work of Irawati Karve in Anthropology in the East –Founders of Indian Sociology and Anthropology, New Delhi Permanent black publishers, 2007, p.377

9 Ibid, p.389
surveys helped a great deal in shaping the economic policies. She surveyed tribal communities such as Bhils of west Khandesh. She argued that the tribals were not different from other segments of Indian population. She was also opposed to the creation of the notion of primitive people. She had argued that while the tribals are to be helped to ‘advance’ and ‘assimilate’, there should not be any imposition of outside dietary practices such as preventing them from eating ox meat. She had also suggested that the education should be in the language of their own region. Her studies on the role of weekly markets in the tribal and rural settings show the significance of market in changing the tribal social setting.

S.C. Roy, in his study of Mundas and Oraons of Chota Nagpur showed his changing perceptions of the tribe along with his own change from an academic anthropologist to an active anthropologist.10

S.C. Roy’s major works –‘Mundas and their country’, ‘Oraon Religion and Custom’ are considered fundamental in understanding Chota Nagpur. He was extremely well versed in the affairs of the region and the people. His opinions on the tribal communities of Chota

---

10 For details: Roy, S.C, *The Mundas and their country*, Calcutta, City Bar Library, 1912
Nagpur have been sought as the most authentic even for judicial purposes\textsuperscript{11}.

S. C. Roy belonged to the Hindu nationalist tradition. It is noted that he sought to methodologically establish an ‘Indian viewpoint’ for anthropology, believing that the anthropology would contribute to the integration of national life\textsuperscript{12}. He felt it necessary to locate the aboriginal culture of Chota Nagpur in the present. According to him an understanding of their present along with this would contest the stigma of inferiority that had been thrust upon him. Both his works on Oraons and Mundas provide detailed analysis of the ethnography of their culture as well as the changes that have taken place in the colonial period. He had dealt extensively with the fundamental changes taking place in the lives of Chota Nagpur tribal community. Unlike many other anthropologists Roy was in favour of modern day developments treating Adivasis of Chota Nagpur. Such studies show the power of ethnographic research to understand the intricacies of the tribal social world.

\textsuperscript{11} Patricia Oberoi, et.al., \textit{Anthropology in the East–Founders of Indian Sociology and Anthropology}, New Delhi, Permanent Black Publishers, 2007, p.135

\textsuperscript{12} Gupta Das, O.p.cit., p.144
Samuel Mateer provided reliable information on the life and conditions of tribal communities of Travancore. He is driven by the idea of civilizing mission which included practical programmes for the uplift of the downtrodden\textsuperscript{13}.

Modernisation included changes in food habits, dress, spatial organisation of the tribal settlement and houses, reorganisation of their domestic space etc. Source books such as ‘Kerala in the 19\textsuperscript{th} century’ provide information on various aspects of socio-economic life of Kerala in the 19\textsuperscript{th} century. It also gives certain information on tribal communities that help us to understand their conditions\textsuperscript{14}.

L.K. Ananthakrishna Iyer’s work on *Cochin tribes and castes* was a monumental work that brought together valuable information on various aspects of castes and tribes of native state. This study in three volumes followed the patterns of similar studies in other parts of India. Being connected with census operations the compendium of castes and tribes provides information for governmental purposes. The

\textsuperscript{13} For details see:
Samuel Mateer, *The land of charity, A descriptive account of Travancore and its people*, London,1870
*Native life of Travancore*, London,1883

\textsuperscript{14} For details see : Kaliya,S.L, ‘Sanskritization and Tribalization’ in *Changing tribes*,(ed),Naik,T.B, Chhindwara,Tribal research institute, 1961
Bhaskaran Unni, P, *Patthonpatham nootandila keralam*(mal), Trissur, Kerala Sahitya Academy, 1988
enumeration of population became absolutely central to the system of governance under colonial conditions. At the same time it sets the bench-mark of ethnographic practices, like many others of this generation. Krishna Iyer was not a trained anthropologist; however his perceptive observations and studies led to the accumulation of anthropological data or information of the native state of Cochin.

One could point out the coalescence of governance and development and Iyer’s studies provided scientific data that continued to have great relevance even in the post independence period. The significant aspects of his studies for the latter day scholars could be deeper ethnographic practice that enables one to critically engage with the field15.

15 For details see
Nirmal Kumar Bose, *Tribal life in India*, New Delhi, National Book Trust India, 1971
*Rise of Anthropology in India*, Delhi, Concept publishing co, 1978
*Socio-Cultural Implications of Industrialization in India :A case study of the tribal Bihar*, Ranchi, Council of social and cultural research, 1970
In the post-independence period when tribal development programmes were initiated, the planners depended on works of scholars like Iyer to have a long term view of the tribal communities.

S.C.Dube’s anthropological and sociological researches deepened our understanding of Indian society. He in fact worked on various aspects of Indian society that included village society and its transformation, tribal societies and their transition. He had developed his concern with modernization that would help to resolve many problems of Indian society. But at the same time he had critiqued development trying to show the multiple problems that were associated with developmental problems. Many of his thoughts on these issues were informed by his nationalist concern and policy prescriptions\textsuperscript{16}.

He began his study of the tribal community of Kamars of Orissa with his field work of 1944. He witnessed a number of important rites and ceremonies and recorded a full sociological census of a number of important villages visited, further facing nearly 200 genealogies.\textsuperscript{17}

\textsuperscript{16} Saurabh Dube, Ties that bind – Tribe, village, nation and S.C.Dube, in Anthropology in the East, New Delhi, Permanent black, 2007, p.489

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid, p.455
The book on Kamars provides a comprehensive presentation of ethnographic materials based upon careful field work enlivened by an anthropological sensitivity\(^{18}\). Dube takes note of Kamar life-ways as embedded within under social process. He places it within the larger terms of nationalist transformation imparting upon Kamer’s tradition\(^{19}\). However, Dube felt that Kamars as ‘almost untouched by the great political awakening which has given a new national consciousness to India during last 60 years’. And as barely affected by the ‘social and economic upheaval which had stirred the bulk of Indian society to its depth’\(^{20}\). His position was far from the assimilative policies suggested by Ghurye. In his writing Saurabh Dube has argued that the Kamars become at once object of anthropology and subject of nation. After the study of Kamars, S.C. Dube turned to the study of village and his famous book was ‘*Study of Indian village 1955*’ which became the most significant and path breaking study on Indian villages. It became a source book for methodology and practice of village studies in India. Combining the insights generated in his village studies, the present day scholars are able to explore the complexities of tribal and non tribal villages.

\(^{18}\) Ibid, p.458
\(^{19}\) Ibid, p.459
\(^{20}\) Ibid, p.460
One of the areas that received scholarly attention on tribal issues has been tribal economy. In Indian Anthropology or social sciences in general there is a long tradition of analysing the tribal economy. The tribal economy refers to the sum total of the economic activities of the tribal community under study while not losing sight of its connections with the larger economy of the region. It has been pointed out that tribal communities enter into the specific networks of production and exchange, even if they are engaged only in the collection of primary forest produce. At the same time there are tribal communities that have become peasantized. In certain regions of India the exclusiveness of tribal communities had been lost due to large scale migration of peasant castes to the tribal areas. In many parts of India it led to the alienation of land and destruction of several aspects of tribal economy. At least for the last one century, there has been control over the tribal economy exercised by local potentates or the powerful state and its agencies mainly, Forest Department.

The studies on tribal economy from various parts of India show the process by which tribal economies got gradually integrated with larger economies. The tribals cannot remain isolated in the economic
sphere even as some tribal communities continue with their traditional occupation and forest dependence\textsuperscript{21}.

Tribal economies lost their relative independence due to the expansion of dominant capitalist economy to their region. Tribal economies were largely subsistence economies that couldn’t be sustained for long in the context of capitalist expansion.

In the context of Kerala, scholars like Kunhaman has shown the significance of tribal economy and its transformation. He had also pointed out the inroads made by capitalist economic relation that impacted the tribal economy negatively eroding its sustainability. The tribal areas of the state of Kerala was exposed to capital intensive commercial cultivation in the form of modern plantations and other forms of commercial agriculture transformed tribal communities into

\textsuperscript{21} For detailed analysis of tribal economy and their transformation see:
Alok kumar ,Tribal culture and economy ,Tribal studies of India series T-118, New Delhi, Inter India publication, 1951
Danda,A.K, Tribal economy in India-Tribal studies of India series T-143, New Delhi, Inter India publication,1936: Differentiation of political structure in tribal Chattisgarh, Indian Anthropologist,vol-1 , No.1971
Devendra Thakur, Social economic development of India, New Delhi, Deep and Deep publications, 1986.
Enthovers R.E, The tribes and caste of Bombay, Delhi, Cosmo publications, 1975
Kunhaman M, Tribal economy of Kerala an intra-regional analysis, Economic and Political weekly, Sammeksha Trust publications, vol-20, No.11, March, 1985
Nag, D.S, Tribal economy-The study of the Baigas, Delhi, Bhrathiya Adimjathi sevak sangih, 1958
Sukumarn Nair, M.K, Tribal economy in transition, New Delhi, Indian institute for regional development studies, 1948
waged labourers without providing them any means to resist the onslaught of capital.

The recent writings of scholars have shown the socio-economic forces that alienated the Adivasis of their land and resources making them alien to their own land\textsuperscript{22}.

Migration and the spreading of commercial agriculture in the highlands of Kerala have transformed the Adivasi social life negatively. In the context of PTR one may observe certain other factors as well. Adivasis were forced out of land when Mullaperiyar Dam was constructed. Subsequently the forest regulation progressively limited their accessibility to the forest resources. They did not develop as a powerful social group to articulate their choices. These issues are probed in a detailed manner in the forthcoming chapters.

There have been studies on the dynamics of market in tribal life. Some scholars have also shown the existence of inter-tribal markets\textsuperscript{23}. In


\textsuperscript{23} For a detailed discussion on intertribal market see:
Sinha, D.P, Cultural change in an intertribal market, Bombay, Asia publishing house, 1968
Mittal, A.C & Sharma, J.B, tribal education administration and development,vol-3,tribal economy, Radha publications, New Delhi,1998
Naik,T.B, The Bhil:A study, New Delhi, Bharatiya adimjati sevak sangh, 1957
Changing tribes, Chhindwara, Tribal research institute, 1961
PTR although it does not have an intertribal market; tribals are integrated with the modern market. This modern market needs, in addition to usual commodities it deals with, tourism products and services. It makes the market at PTR considerably different from the markets available in other Adivasi areas. This market is a very important space for tribal-nontribal interaction.

Anthropological and Sociological writings on tribal communities have for a very long time been engaged with the problem of social change. Social change became the central concern for the studies on tribals. In the colonial period the problem was to identify the phase of social change as the tribals in various parts of India have come into contact with Europeans, European missionaries or non-tribal settlers from the plain such as money lenders, businessmen and government officials of the various departments.

In the late 19th and early 20th century there were tribal movements aimed at achieving social change by putting an end to the exploitative systems to which they were subjected to for centuries.\textsuperscript{24} In certain instances, social change meant reorganisation of tribal social world. In certain others it meant selective adoption of the practices that became

familiar to them through their interaction with the missionaries, colonial officials and western education.

In the 20th century especially before independence there was a great deal of discussion on the desired extent of social change for tribals. Opinions differed on this. One section of Anthropologists and social scientists wanted Adivasi to remain as they were; while some others wanted them to be modernised. In the post-colonial conditions also this debate continued. However, at this point of time we find the coming of Indian state as the most important modernising agent. This programme of the state influences the tribals across the country25.

The present study tries to understand different genres of anthropological writings on tribal communities. However, in order to understand the contemporary situations critically we find many of those categories such as civilizational paradigm inappropriate. For various reasons such as negation of the agency of tribals, the modernization paradigm is also not acceptable.

25 For details see:
Luiz, A.A.D, Tribes of Kerala, New Delhi, Bharatiya adimjati sevak sangh, 1962
Pariyaram, Chacko, M, Tribal communities and social change(ed), Themes in Indian Sociology, Sage publication, New Delhi, 2005
Sachidananda, Culture change in tribal Bihar, Calcutta, Book land Pvt Ltd, 1964
The tribal village in Bihar :a study in unity and extension, New Delhi, Munshi Ram Manoharlal,1968
In the present study, we found critical social science perspectives that help us problematise tribal marginality. The studies on tribal communities that we have discussed so far help us to understand the conditions of tribal communities of PTR to have a comparative perspective. In the following section we discuss the methodologies followed in the present research.

**METHODOLOGY**

The present study combines the methodologies of historians as well as ethnographers. Historian’s methodology consists of analyzing the data related to past events by engaging with source materials that could be written and non-written. The non-written sources would include oral traditions, architecture, layout of settlements, nature of building materials used in the construction of houses, dress designs, images and signs etc.

Ethnographic researchers also consider non-written sources related to a community or a social group and written sources provide historical account of social groups. However, there is a greater concern with field work that enables them to have primary data. In the case of the tribal communities of PTR we do not have much written sources. So any research on tribal community necessitates ethnographic field work
and the present researcher approach with the tools of Participatory Research tested elsewhere in ethnographic studies.

Ethnography plays to provide the most authentic knowledge on observant society or social group. This frame of the ethnographer rests on the fact that he / she has intimate knowledge of the field studied.

Following the canons of ethnographic research the present researcher had undertaken field work among the Mannan and Urali tribal communities of PTR. This ethnographic research enabled the present researcher to understand the field with the awareness of the limits of ethnographic knowledge in understanding the life world of the tribal communities of PTR.

Although we are aware of the possibilities of ethnographic research, we are equally concerned with the dimensions of power that operates between the researcher and the community that we studied. However, we have tried to overcome such barrier as far as possible to know the social and cultural tribal life world. For instance in order to understand funerary practices, the researcher had resorted to participate in a funeral ceremony of the Mannans which is discussed in detail in chapter 4. In participatory research the ideal situation is to transcend the
limits of object-subject relationship and to reach a situation of subject-subject relationship.

Ethnomethodology actually refers to various methods by which people make sense of their everyday world. It enables them to grasp the complex world of the everyday life while considering seemingly ‘insignificant’ things of life. Such insignificant things would acquire centrality in ethnomethodological practices.

Ethnomethodology enables us to understand the particular rationality with which any group or people make sense of their own external social world. In the case of tribal communities of PTR, ethnomethodology enables the researcher to understand the external social world of the tribals and how they organize their social activities. These methodological insights guided the researcher to conduct group interviews with the tribal community. Group interviews were conducted at each of the Eco Development Committees (EDCs). The details of the EDCs functioning are discussed in Chapter seven. The functioning of the EDCs and its effectiveness and how the tribal people were made part of development process are discussed in detail.

In order to elicit information on the working of EDCs, the researcher had attended Eco-development committee meetings which were held in the community hall and it comprised of elected representatives of the tribal communities and forest officials.

Interviews with the EDC members were formal and were directed by a formal questionnaire. Informal unstructured interviews were conducted with women of Mannan and Urali tribal settlements. Similarly unstructured interviews were conducted with practitioner of tribal ethno-medicine and tribals who have opted fishing in the Thekkady Lake as an alternative to their means of livelihood.

In the present study certain notion of reflexive sociology is also used to talk about the transition of tribal life. Reflexive Sociology enables us to question the assumptions behind our own argument and formulation of our hypothesis. It has the additional advantage of being critical about our own methodology. Along with that the researcher could analyse the assumptions behind the formulations of the informant. This participation in development process is different from certain forms of development activities that treated the tribal as targeted population. In other words tribal communities were considered to be the passive recipients of government programmes oriented to their welfare. So in
the new programme there is space for understanding the meanings that they attribute to development, their expectations. The present researcher believes that ethno methodology shall enable an understanding of their expectations. The initiatives of EDCs could open windows of opportunities for the tribal communities. For example, contrary to the earlier practice of selling their pepper much before its harvest to the money lenders or the middlemen. With the coming of the EDC enabled them to harvest their own produce and realize their profit. This gradually released them from the economic burden of accumulated debts. People began to save money for their future purposes which signalled a fundamental change in their rationality.

Although they live in a forest area, PTR cannot be understood as an isolated forest. The particular “ethno scape” which is multi-dimensional as people from various parts of the world come to PTR as tourists. Tourists introduce certain forms of urban culture that had substantial transforming power on tribals. Although the urban physical features are absent in their location, the complex ‘ethno-scape’ has created urbanity even without urban built space. These kinds of observations are possible when we follow ethno methodological perspectives.
As regarding the collection of empirical data, participatory research with extended interviews supplemented by ethno-methodological strategies was followed. Ethnography, as we understand, refers to the field practices of anthropological research by scholars on various communities and social groups.

The researcher had surveyed 20% of Mannan households at PTR. Mannan settlement consisted of two hundred and sixty eight households while Urali hamlet had sixty seven families. Considering the demographic difference between the two communities it was necessary to survey more Urali households. In order to elicit qualitative information on the tribal communities of PTR, we surveyed forty five Urali households and two hundred and sixteen Mannan households. The comparative advantage that the Uralies have in the spheres of education, average land holdings and employment in the government sector, although the settlement is inside the forest, made us to collect more qualitative information on Uralies.

As part of the survey group interviews were conducted with seventy two respondents from both Urali and Mannan settlements. For conducting group interviews members were selected from each of the EDCs. The selection was made randomly and the focus was to have
informants from different age groups, sex, occupation and the location of the settlements inside forest and fringe areas. In order to generate information regarding the social structure and level of acculturation and the general response towards the State development programmes, discussions were held in the presence of the forest officials and the heads of the hamlets.

**SOURCES**

Primary and secondary data was necessary for the present study. Primary data includes the data collected from the extensive field work which includes information from personal and group interviews with the tribals. Secondary data including government documents, reports, and published articles and ethnographic studies are consulted. Extensive and informal dialogues are taken for obtaining the qualitative data to substantiate the quantitative data.

**Scheme of Study**

The first chapter tries to situate the tribal communities of PTR in the larger context of socio-economic development. Programmes for socio-economic development initiated by the government became the defining feature of post-colonial period.
The second chapter discusses various aspects of social science methodologies that are found necessary for the present study.

Third chapter tries to introduce the geographical location of Periyar Tiger Reserve and its tribal communities in general.

The fourth and fifth chapters give a detailed description of the socio-economic profiles of the Mannans and Uralies of PTR respectively.

The sixth chapter analyses the transition of the Mannan and Urali tribal communities of PTR. The two communities are compared in terms of their respective developments in the socio-economic, educational and health care fields.

The seventh chapter describes the different welfare measures in general and on eco-development programmes in particular.

In the eighth chapter we conclude with the impact of Government welfare programmes implemented for the uplift of tribal communities. We also discuss the influence of different external forces which had motivated a gradual change in the social life of the Mannans and Uralies of PTR.