CHAPTER II

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CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND THE
FORMULATION OF PROBLEM

I

The review of literature - this forms an invariable part of any research presentation, more so if it is from a research student.

The formulation of problem - this is considered invariably as the opening exercise for any piece of social research, more so when it is from a research student.

In this Chapter we will take attention to each of these 'invariables'. We will examine:

(i) What involves each of these, individually,

(ii) What are the lines of correspondence between the two.
(iii) In operational terms, what needs to draw our attention, more so with specific reference to the subject of the present research.

It is common knowledge in scientific social research that (a) Social research is the interface of 'facts' and 'ideas', in which 'the ideas' refers to 'theory', while 'the facts' refer to the empirical information. (b) There is a general agreement that 'there is an interdependence between theory and research, with both being reciprocally reproductive and difficult to dissociate.' R.K. Merton has at great length elaborated on the bearing of theory on empiricism, and on the bearing of empiricism on theory.

"The complete scientist is one who embraces theory and experimental practice at the same time: (1) he states a fact, (2) an idea occurs to him with regard to this fact, (3) with this idea in mind, he reasons, initiates and experiment, imagines and achieves the material conditions".

(Claude Bernard: Introduction to the study of Experimental Medicine, 1966).

II

1. The Review of Literature

(a) What involves this.

(b) Why do we need this.

In Social research the answer to each of these questions are common knowledge. This notwithstanding we better make brief mention to the answer to each of the two questions. It will help
ready reference and clarity. It will also help to continue our discussion in the present Chapter.

In the Review of Literature we have considered, here:-

(i) The academic writing on the broad theme of 'ethnicity'.

(ii) Such writings on the communities inhabiting Manipur, which provide insight/information relevant for the present study.

List of the written references has been presented in the bibliography.

2. The Formulation of Problem

Irrespective of the reality of whether the chick came first or the egg, namely, whether the research student has identified a broad theme, like ethnicity, or has made an observation, like 'the experiences' from Manipur, once the broad theme and the observation, both, are before the research student, a decision will need to be made in regard to defining 'the object of research'. As Durkheim observed" The sociologist's first step should be to define the things he is dealing with in order that one knows and that he knows what is in question." At the time of the preparation of the research Design, the exercise is referred to as 'defining the' 'key originating question'.

As discussed earlier, when dealing with the genesis of the present study, during the course of the study conducted as part of the M.Phil. programme, which dealt mainly with the
'historical' experiences, and later, continuing this with the observation of present-day situation, the initial experience was worded as one of 'fission-fusion' of identities by different communities inhabiting Manipur. A designation is offered to the 'observed phenomena'. It is at this point that the 'orientation' with which the concept is intended to be viewed needs to be clarified. The leads to define the 'orientation' become available from the 'theories' on the theme. We may recall the elaborate discussions presented by Merton in his discussions on "The Bearing of Sociological Theory on Empirical Research" and "The Bearing of Empirical Research on Theory".

As brought out through the discussion made earlier, we may restate, the starting points for the present study were two, distinct but intimately inter-related:-

(a) The empirical observation of the phenomena of fission-fusion of identities among the different communities inhabiting Manipur. The phenomena was referred to as one of ethnicity.

(b) "Without detracting from the merit of these more recent works (circa 1975), it is apparent that a theoretical framework capable of informing comparative ethnic studies has not yet emerged."

(Despers, op.cit.).
This suggests to us to present discussion on 'theory' and 'the direction of the study' in close company, as part of the same Chapter.

III

The Review of Literature - this expects a sort of systematization, trying to outline a typology and trend in the theoretical exercises. We can systematize the vast array of theoretical presentations on ethnicity on basis of -

(1) The different orientations which have contributed the theoretical perspectives.

(2) The different perspectives with which the theories have emerged.

(3) The key issues that emerge from a review.

Ethnicity and its different derivatives, is a phenomena which has been of attention with a wide range of social scientists, representing different academic disciplines.

The academic efforts on the study of ethnicity, can be divided into three broad categories, (a) those which have a prominent social psychological orientation, (b) those which have prominent orientation towards sociology and social anthropology, and (c) those with an orientation in political analysis.

The nature of studies initiated by Adorne and by Allport consequent to the experiences arising from (a) Hitler's Germany
(the Jew persecution) and (b) the racial discrimination in the United States (the Black-White divide) provided outstanding academic studies on the phenomena of prejudice, ethnocentrism, racism, and the like. The beginning of studies with such background, for obvious reasons, was in the thirties of this century.

Soon to follow studies with such orientation were the studies initiated by sociologists and the social anthropologists. Their concern was patently ethnographic, to outline social and cultural elements which define the 'ethnic group'. Studies with such background introduced the notion of 'ethnic groups'. The pioneering works with such orientation were by anthropologists like Barth, and sociologists like Moynihan, Glazer, Summer, Bogardus, Likert, etc. Their main focus was on themes like 'the boundaries of ethnic groups', and how these shape in situations resembling 'melting pots'.

The third category of studies, initiated through the analysis of politics of developing nations, is of comparatively recent origin. The studies with such orientation, the main focus has been on political stability and the bearing socio-economic transformations in the developing countries on this.
A critical reading of the three orientations, those from the social psychologists, from the sociologists, from the sociologists/social anthropologists, and the political analysts, provided two broad suggestions.

(a) The focus of analysis will need to be on the process element, rather than on the genesis, the implications, the supports, or any other elements of ethnicity.

(b) The processes involve the interaction of the structural dimensions, the normative dimensions, and the behavioural dimensions relating to the experiences.

A critical review of the orientations as represented by the different academic discipline (social psychology, sociology/social anthropology, and political sociology) suggested that we can classify their approaches in terms of three broad
perspectives—(a) the historical perspective, (b) the typological perspective, or (c) the evolutionary perspective. (Coleman, 1971, 73).

The historical perspective has been more descriptive in its efforts and has tried to present the totality. The descriptive presentations do not reveal any effort of critical analysis or explanation, and as such, therefore, such accounts have not been based on any hypotheses. The main contribution of such efforts has been to define sets of descriptive variable like time, location, precipitating incidents, genesis, natures of behaviour, the nature of groups involved, intentions, implications. we have excellent accounts of social histories, economic histories, movements and restive behaviours (such as revolts, revolutions, insurgency, etc.) state formation and nation building.

The studies which reveal a typological perspective, their main effort has been to (a) present the process from the two polar ends the 'traditional' ethnic identities to the 'emergent' (modernized) ethnic identities, and more importantly, the trait-lists to differentiate between the 'traditional' and the 'emergent' forms of ethnic identities.

The studies with an evolutionary perspective have tried to examine the dynamics of ethnicity as a processual change in the systems-phenomena involving the elements of the structural, normative and behavioural dimensions of the society to put this
in more clear terms, those who have adopted the evolutionary perspective, assume that (a) the process of ethnicity is a systems-phenomena, namely, the outcome of interaction of various elements of a system, (b) the elements involved with any system can be put into three broad categories, the elements involving the structural dimension of the system, the elements involving the normative dimension of the system, the elements involving the behavioural dimension of the system. In view of these, (c) the process of ethnicity needs to be analyzed, and explained in terms of the structural dimension, the normative (functional) dimension and the behavioural dimension.

The Perspectives.

One of the approach to categorize the different theoretical orientations is on basis of the set of variables, namely, the perspectives with which the phenomena is viewed.

Ethnicity as a subject of academic discussion, the history of this can be traced to the writings of Park and his colleagues made in the early years of this century. (1913 onwards). Around the years of the second World War, three writings gave some new direction to the academics of ethnicity and race relations. Gosnell in 1935 and Cox in 1948 brought out their volumes on Negro relations, while in 1939 Furnival came with his volume on the study of plural societies in Netherlands India (the present day Indonesia).

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"Current analytical discussions in the study of race and ethnicity provide useful grist for the contemporary mills of sociology of knowledge. Not only do they demonstrate the historical evolution of different epistemological stances, they also reflect the ongoing synthesis that we create between these academic traditions and the specific politico-academic contexts in which we operate. These contexts to a large extent determine our perspectives, focus our interests and through criteria of relevance set our priorities (cf. Murphree, 1986).

The tradition of academic writings on ethnicity and race relations have been influenced visibly by the academic heritage as well as the empirical location of academician. We can adopt the following two schemes to organize the academic writings on ethnicity and race relations:

1. **On basis of academic disciplines**
   
   (i) Ethnicity and race are subjects which have taken the attention of every core academic discipline in the social sciences, to name them in alphabetic order, anthropology, economics, history, human geography, political science, psychology, sociology. It will be interesting to note the thrusts in each, and the pattern of shifts within each. The anthropologists for the most part have confined their study with reference to tribal communities, while the sociologists with
negro race relations in urban and industrial areas. The psychologists may be said to have initiated their engagement with the analysis of anti-semitic (Jew) situation in Europe, which yielded much literature on prejudice, but later they extended their focus to analysis of urban situations with reference to the negro urban situation. This yielded much material on stereotypes. In political science, much different from this, academic attention on ethnicity formulated with comparative political analysis of developing societies and the third world countries. Such a neat designation of key thrust area with each of the academic discipline should not be carried too far. In course of time there has been variety of academic excursions.

(ii) During the several decades in which study of racial and ethnic relations has occupied an important place among social scientists, theoretical disagreements have often rested on the different levels of analysis from which they proceed. Rather than seeing these different levels as part of an interdependent system, the tendency in many cases has been to emphasize one level as fundamental. There are three broad category of dimensions which can be identified.

(a) The early observers to whom prejudice and discrimination was the main characteristics.
(b) A second level of analysis which sees inter-racial and inter-ethnic relations as expressions of struggle for power, income and prestige. It is within this that the Marxist perspective of analysis has developed.

(c) The level of analysis which takes attention to the process by which individuals are socialized, and the nature of self-regard, wants and values instilled by the society.

Analysis of the traditions which have developed in anthropology need some closer attention.

According to one appraisal (Despres, 1975), "reflecting more specifically upon the literature of social anthropology, one is tempted to consider ethnic studies B.B. and A.B. (Before Barth and after Barth, editor, 1969). Before Barth, excluding a few studies of racial and cultural minorities, ethnic phenomena receive their most explicit theoretical attention in the work of those anthropologists who are concerned with the organization of plural societies. Barth perceived ethnic exchanges as situations disclosing a more inclusive system of ecological, political, social and cultural relationships and the structure and organization of their respective communities which need to be explained in terms of part of this system. Barth thus explained that ethnic groups are formed to the extent that actors use ethnic identities to categorize themselves and others for
purposes of interaction, and that a stable system of inter-ethnic relations presupposes a structuring of interaction along the boundaries of ethnic groups, that is to say, it presupposes a set of rules governing situations of inter-ethnic contact. According to one scheme a distinction can be made between the subjective view and the objective view of ethnicity. Cf. van den Berghe, "Ethnic groups are defined both by the cultural modalities of their behaviour (including most importantly their linguistic behaviour), and by their subjective views of themselves and each other".

2. Substantive Issues.

A survey of this can be made reference to two distinct empirical contexts, the study of ethnicity with reference to the Negro and Black situation and the study of ethnicity with reference to other native situations, which for the main part includes the plural societies in the New States, in Africa and Asia mainly.

There is another consideration with reference to which a survey of substantive issues can be made. This refers to the orientation, more precisely, the conceptual perspective, with which the phenomena has been analysed, (a) in terms of class and social stratification, (b) in terms of power and political authority, and (c) in terms of economic resources and deprivation.
The race/class debate has been one of the most enduring to be found in sociological literature. This has been the confrontation between the Marxist the non-Marxist scholars in which the latter have argued for an independent casual role for 'race' while the latter have insisted that 'race' is merely one manifestation of more fundamental class struggles. (cf. Mason, 1986)

According to another line of orientation, ethnicity is but one of several possible forms of status ascription which may be contrasted to all forms of status achievement. These dissimilar forms of social differentiation give issue to correspondingly dissimilar stratification structures. Accordingly, ethnic phenomena might best be understood from the point of view of stratification theory or perhaps even more general theories of power. (cf. Despres, 1985).

In terms of the third orientation, which perceives the phenomena of ethnicity in terms of access to resources and the behavioural features in terms of this, competition for resources forms the main diacritica for social organization of the ethnic identities. The concept of competition implies that within some social context there are groups for whom membership and internal cohesion are ideally determined by non-economic factors. Competitive relationship with reference to shared resources can exist between groups only if they share a subjective assessment
of the resources for which they are competing and, in addition, if they enjoy a relative amount of access to those domains in which such resources are lodged.

Despres summarizing the substantive issues that have appeared in social science orientations this far, makes some very precise observation. According to him, "The conceptual framework that emerges from the works this far suggests that these phenomena might be understood from the point of view of stratification theory or perhaps more general theories of power. Such conceptual framework is however in need of further discussion and refinement. We may however note that this approach is particularly productive of hypothesis relating various dimensions of ethnic phenomena to a wide range of objective and independent factors affecting the competition for material resources.

Paradigm Shift

It will be interesting to note the direction of change in approaches developed in social anthropology. Initially the social anthropologists in the study of inter-group relations have concentrated typically either on ethnic identity as a social phenomenon or social and cultural pluralism as a distinctive form of social organization. These topics have emerged, each in its own distinctive way, from the combination of an interest in social groups and systematic interrelationship with a concern with social integration.
One of social anthropology's traditional theoretical preoccupations has been a concern with corporate groups and social systems. During the colonial and immediate post-colonial periods, this manifested itself as an orthodox assumption that the subject matter of the discipline - 'primitive' peoples (Firth, 1958) was most commonly organized into tribal groups. The notion of the 'tribe,' as a real social entity was central to both the theoretical and methodological development of social anthropology. This provided the anthropologists with a theoretical model of the nature of the 'non-civilized' social organization which could both serve to organize his ethnographic data and function as a framework for the cross-cultural comparison of 'primitive social organization'. It will however be wrong to understand that this was an explicitly formulated analytical framework, it was not, remaining instead implicitly embedded in most ethnographic studies, never being examined or seriously called to question.

The publication of the volume by Barth (1969), a collection of essays, clearly marked a paradigm shift in social anthropology, from tribal society to ethnic groups. The major thrust of the argument therein is that ethnicity, the boundaries of ethnic groups, and hence their ontological status as social groups, should not be treated as 'hard', or be uncritically accepted as a fixed aspect of social reality. In fact, Barth
insists, ethnic identity, and its production and reproduction in routine social interaction, are to be treated as problematic features of that reality, the ethnographer must examine the practices and processes whereby ethnicity and ethnic boundaries are socially constructed. The starting point for such an examination must be a recognition that 'ethnic groups are categories of ascription and identification by actors themselves.' (cf. Jenkins, 1986)

Next to appear on the scene of social anthropology was the study of plural society, marking the shift from tribe to ethnic groups and now to plural society. Just as the conceptual replaced of the tribe by the ethnic group may be attributed to a post-colonial movement in the moral and philosophical centre of gravity of social anthropology, so the development of the notion of the plural society appears to be another responses to the loss of the empire. It is interesting in fact to note the details of this in some length. We may present here.

The notion of pluralism arose as a response to two separate, if not dissimilar, problems. The first concerned those colonial territories which, like many British possessions in Africa and elsewhere (so also the north-eastern India), were governed by means of a system of indirect rule, through native courts and chiefs, for example. In situations such as this, different groups of people were integrated into the administration framework through different sets of institutions and conflicting bodies of
customs and laws. How was one to conceptualize the convergence of these distinct institutional systems into an integrated social system? The second problem had to do with those colonial states which were, by contrast, basically unitary institutional systems for the purpose of politics and government. In such systems the natives were rarely if at all considered to be jurally adult members of the policy. As the twentieth century drew to its mid-point it appeared that this situation will change, the native people were moving from subjectship to citizenship. What would be the political structure of the new states?

Both of these problems, in fact, were the products of the same historical trend: the creation by the colonial governments of polysthnic colonies and the later emergence of new states, whose boundaries bore no or little resemblance to the real or natural boundaries of ethnic identities. This required the social anthropologists to develop a new analytical model in order to understand the changing situation.

They did not in fact develop a new model, instead they turned to the political science. The notion of pluralism and the concept of the 'plural society' which have their origin with the analysis of colonialisation in East Asian by Furnival found ready currency with the social anthropologists. M.G. Smith, Leo Kuper were some of the social anthropologists who gave serious currency to this. (cf. Jenkins, 1986). When these writers talk
about pluralism, they are talking about the incorporation of different ethnic groups or collectivities into one social or state system. In other words, as opposed to the homogenous nation-state, there is the heterogenous plural society. Even though the model's initial formulation predated the seminal contribution of Barth (1969), the concept of pluralism sit well with the ethnic paradigm, as forwarded by Barth as well as Cohen. As such, even though not many social scientists are these days concerned with the theoretical elaboration of contrasting models of pluralism, it is probably true to say that the notion of pluralism has carelessly passed into the vocabulary of the social anthropologist as a lose and apparently useful descriptive term for labelling all multi-ethnic societies.

A critical review of the available literature on the subject was very helpful in providing the proper opportunity for defining the scope as well as the methodology for the study. The review of literature helped in appreciating the perspectives with which substantive as well as methodological issues relating to the present study could be determined.