

Problems and Prospects of Sociological Research in North-East India

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Sociological Research is basically social research in society taking scientific methodology to solve the social problems in its utilitarian view; to venture into new fields of knowledge regarding society in its academic view. As a scientific method, it is based upon its vital characteristics as empiricism, experimentation, rationality, objectivity, systematic and specific approach, universality etc. and although it may be an individual or group effort, it always relates with human society and wants to find out those natural laws and facts acting behind the social phenomena. It accelerates social progress by giving knowledge to a society which is the basis of a civilization as well as helps to solve the social problems that stand on the way of a healthy and peaceful living, by giving us knowledge about the root causes of the problems and hence giving us the right direction of our effort to eradicate these problems.

In this context the problems and prospects of Sociological as well as Social Research in N.E. India is tried to be discussed here.

Problems: There are so many problems standing as obstacles on the path of Sociological Research. Some major ones of these are tried to be discussed in the following ways,-

- i) The North East India is comprising of eight states as Assam, Arunachal, Meghalaya, Manipur, Nagaland, Mizoram, Tripura and lastly Sikkim. As the states of a Developing country, all the states are Underdeveloped and hence covered with innumerable social problems. Except Assam, all other states are of tribal majority as more than 80% people in these states belong to aborigine tribes. As it is a sociological fact that the tribal people, as a whole are at a prior stage of civilization and modernization, hence evidently they are less empirical, rational, objective and universal in their attitudes and outlook, which is the very basis of a scientific thinking and social

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research. So, this abstract aspect of social outlook and attitude stands primarily as a major obstacle on the path of Sociological as well as Social Research.

- ii) Out of their super natural believes and prejudices owing to lack of scientific knowledge, living mainly in Theological as well as Metaphysical stage, often they do not co-operate with the scientific social research and sometimes bring obstruction to such research activities on the plea that such type of activities are breaking their theological as well as metaphysical social values. So, an obstacle in doing scientific research comes from this direction also.
- iii) Except the plains of Brahmaputra and Barak Valley, the whole North-East region is covered with hills and forests which make these places ill communicable and hence inconvenient for a social researcher to do his research. Still roads are insufficient and most of the existing ones are narrowed, muddy as well as stiff giving obstruction to have proper transport and communication system. So there comes another obstacle to do social research upon the people and their societies of these places.
- iv) The often occurred agitations, conflicts, riots and violent activities of the terrorists also affect the calm and serene atmosphere that is conducive to do academic exercises like social research in this North-East Region.
- v) The lack of proper consciousness among even the educated elites of these areas regarding the importance of Social and Sociological Research in eradicating social problems, taking the role of physicians of society, as sociologists are regarded to be, also comes on the way of popularizing Sociological as well as Social Research in the North-East Region.
- vi) There comes another obstacle in Sociological Research from the Sociologists' own flaws also when out of not having sufficient knowledge in research methodology, they fail to do research upon complicated social phenomena. Many a time, one's weaker economic condition, unavailability of opportunity and time etc. may also come in the way of such research.
- vii) Lastly but not the least, the negligence of the State Govts. of the states of the North-East India and Central Govt. in the spreading of the subject Sociology as a discipline in all the Universities and Colleges of this region and hence lack of proper support and initiative in doing Sociological as well as Social Research in this region poses one big problem on the path of Sociological Research in North-East India.

Prospects:

Regarding the prospects of Sociological Research in North-East India, we find that there are lot of scopes of doing Sociological Research in this region. Some such important scopes are discussed as below:-

- i) As we have already said that the North-East states are mostly tribal populated, hence this evidently signifies us that the people are still socially backward and under privileged which need a great deal of proper effort to uplift their social position. Not only tribal, but also all the people of these areas are suffering from lots of social problems. Some of these are terrorism, communal conflict and violence, superstition and religious orthodoxy, poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, sex disparity and violence, social backwardness etc. etc. We know that to eradicate these problems fully, rather than to take checking and controlling measures of them, we need to know the root causes behind these, which instantly direct us to do Sociological and Social Research upon those.
- ii) The often occurred communal conflicts among the different communities of this region basing upon religion, language, ethnic culture etc. often arise due to misunderstanding and wrong interpretations about each other. This points us towards the need of Sociological as well as Social Research into this field, to remove those and establish a healthy communal harmony, to bloom like the various flowers of the same garden, adding the beauty through its heterogeneity.
- iii) Many superstitions, prejudices, evil customs etc. are still prevalent among the different tribal and non-tribal communities of this region, which hinder their economic and social progress. One example of it is 'Daini Pratha (witch craft)' taking the lives of so many innocent people, under the conspiracy of some vested interests of anti-social elements. Unless these are removed, it is not possible to make any developmental measures, either from Govt. or Non Govt. source, successful. So, this also gives us another field of doing Sociological and Social Research.
- iv) The North-East Region is fully covered with hundreds of ethnic and aborigine communities having their own social systems. The different institutions of these communities like family, marriage, kinship system, religion, economy etc. with their own peculiarities and particularities give us avenues of doing Sociological Research upon those. As for example, one field for such research study is the kinship system of the Ahom community of Assam which stands

- for its own peculiarity, where respect comes not according to age, but according to elderly relations and marriage either among consanguineal kins up to ninth generations or even among the sub-community members of the same clan, bearing a common sub-title as Borgohain, Borpatragohain, Borchetia etc. wherever they live to be, is prohibited.
- v) Sanskritization process, which was initially discussed in details by eminent sociologist M.N. Srinivas, while studying upon the Smiths, Coorgs, Lingayats of Southern India is not studied in detail regarding the ethnic communities of this North-East India. So, this also points out to another field of Sociological Research.
 - vi) Recently many ethnic conflicts and movements have been rising up in this region, which are sometimes against the national integrity and at defiance of the Indian Constitution. The whole North-East Region is now covered with many terrorist and subversive activities in the name of region, religion, language, ethnicity etc. Often these are getting support from foreign countries also who want to make India fragile and weak. So, this directs us to another field of doing Sociological as well as Social Research upon these to bring out the real scientific knowledge about those, so that people as well as the State and Central Governments may take right measures in solving those problems. Unless, only through the way of force and punishment, these can be checked and suppressed temporarily only.
 - vii) At last but not the least, we wish to point out to another field of Sociological Research Recently, due to the blind following of Westernization and its mass culture which is mostly nudity and sex based, by most of the younger generation, with the help of its wide spreading through electronic and print media, the ethnic cultures of the communities of this North-East India are at stake. So, to stand against this challenge from Westernization we have to do Sociological and Social Research, sometimes with the help of Cultural Anthropology also upon our cultures and customs. In these ways, we can make those more refined, rational, humanitarian as well as progressive, to be able to cope with the advancement of science and technology and Modernization. This will help the ethnic communities to keep up their own ethnicity and integrity against the challenges that are coming from the engulfing Western based Cultural Globalization coming on the wake of present worldwide Globalization process, under the custody of Developed and Capitalist countries.

In conclusion, we may say that against these ample scopes, only with conscious and sincere effort from the enlightened ones of our society in doing Sociological Research, it will be renovated with new experiences and knowledge. Thus, Sociological as well as social research will be more resourceful to face all the challenges and complications of this modern civilization of 21st Century with its emphasis on science and technology.

Strengthened with the gifts of modern science e.g. computer, internet, Fax, mobile, E-mail etc. certainly today's Sociological Research will be able to bring a calm and serene atmosphere to the human society of not only this North-East India but also of the entire world with full of progress and prosperity; devoid of exploitation and subjugation by anyone to anybody.

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