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RESEARCH PURSUIT IN SOCIAL SCIENCES WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO ANTHROPOLOGY: SOME BASIC CONCEPTS AND BROAD GUIDELINES

Introduction

Social Sciences deal with human societies, social behaviour and social processes. By and large, these deal, simultaneously with two intellectual traditions, namely; (i) Historical and (ii) Scientific.

The focus of our discussion is however, on the scientific tradition, Humanistic and Scientific studies are, of course, not in conflict with each other. The search for understanding and ideas is essentially a humanistic act, no matter who does it. And testing the ideas against empirical data is the province of science. But as a matter of fact, it is however, apparent that no one could probably do any science if there did not exist some relevant ideas.

To illustrate this point, let us recollect the abduction episode of the Goddess Sita in the Holy Ramayana by Ravana with the help of a Baiyu Ratha (Flying Charriot). At a much later date, only in the 20th century Wright Brothers probably used this idea to invent aeroplane.

Similarly, Newton's discovery of the Gravitational Force is rooted in his observation of the fact that the fruits, leaves, detached from the stalk always fall on the ground; and do not go up. The idea developed was that there must be some force that pulls the fruits or anything else down on the ground. Testing the idea, in fact resulted in the discovery.

The term Research in its simplest form refers to the act of seeking answer to some meaningful questions by taking resource to a systematic study. It can also be conceptualized as an endeavour to discover new fact or collate an old fact, etc., by taking recourse to a scientific study of the subject. The two definitions as a matter of fact, are illustrative of the Deductive and Inductive researches respectively.

It may relevantly be noted here that with more and more modernization and globalization, human problems of varied nature have been multiplying in

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cumulative progression day-by-day; and as such, the use, relevance and applicability of research in social sciences in human welfare is steadily increasing with time. The need of the hour is thus to turn our skills in the generation of productive knowledge – the knowledge for controlling and solving human problems of various types, for example, Disease and Deprivation; Domestic and Ethnic Violences; Environmental Degradation; and Human Rights Violation, etc., to name a few as an illustration.

The Nature of Research and Some Relevant Concepts

While dwelling some more on the concept and nature of research, it may be noted that there are different types of research that may call for different types of approaches in keeping with the nature and purpose of the problem at hand. Thus, for example, on operational basis (purpose in mind), we may have the following broad categories:

(i) Descriptive (Exploratory)

(ii) Explanatory (Experimental) and

(iii) Evaluative research

Similarly, on the basis of the overall approach (Framework of reasoning), we may have two categories, namely, (i) Deductive and (ii) Inductive researches.

Deductive reasoning (that includes Explanatory and Evaluative researches) moves from General (Theory / Macro) to the Specific (Data / Micro).

Inductive one (that includes Descriptive category of research) moves from the Specific (Data / Micro) to General (Theory / Macro).

The Research sequence will be more clear from the figures (No. 1.1 and 1.2).

Evaluation (Evaluative) research, as a matter of fact, comes under Deductive category, even though it may not begin with a hypothesis (explicitly). In reality, of course, the fact remains that there is an Implicit expectation (a kind of hypothesis).

While acquiring a better understanding of the concept of Research, we have now come across at least two more concepts namely; Theory and Hypothesis. These need to be understood.

A Theory refers to a logically inter-related set of propositions about empirical reality. It is generally developed on the basis of scientifically generated empirical data. Thus, for example,

(i) Culture evolves from simpler to complex form in different stages in a unilinear fashion (Anthropology).

(ii) Punishment reduces the propensity to commit crimes (Sociology).

(iii) Emotional rejection in the early childhood results in adult neurosis (Psychology).

Hypothesis refers to a specific implication, deduced from a theory. A hypothesis, as a matter of fact, is a tentative statement about an empirical reality, involving a relation between two or more variables. One variable is proposed to cause or is instrumental in leading to variation in the other variable.

The proposed cause is the Independent Variable; and its effect or consequence is the Dependent Variable.

A Variable refers to an element, a concept or a process that influences some other element, concept or process.

As an illustration of hypothesis, a few examples are recorded below:

(i) Foster caring in the Early childhood results in the formation of an Aggressive personality.

(ii) Boarding education in the Early childhood results in the development of an Individualistic personality.

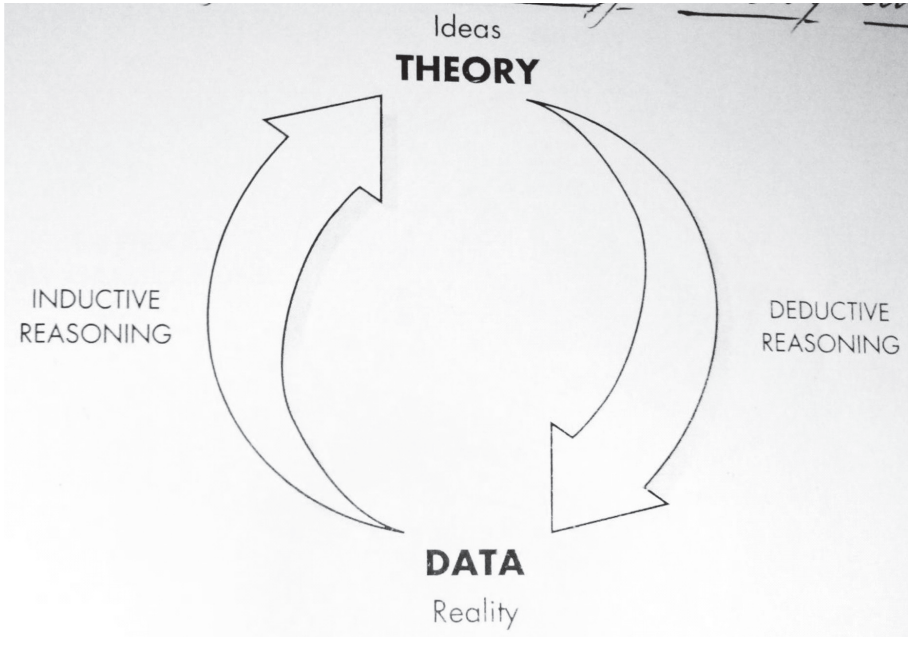

Figure 1.1: The Research Circle

Source: Schutt, 1996: 46

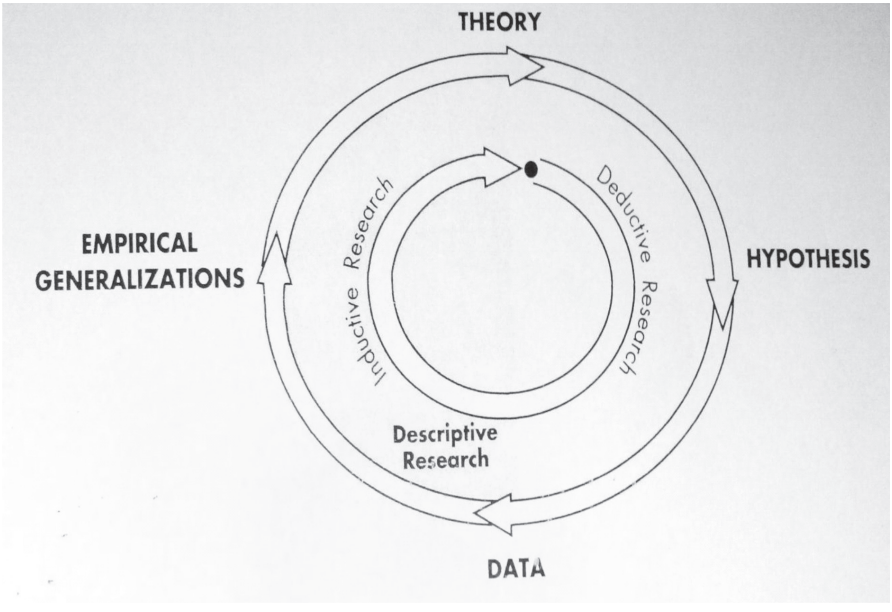

Figure 1.2: The Research Circle

Source: Schutt, 1996: 46

(iii) Punishment for violence against women reduces the risk of repeat offences.

(iv) The Higher the Income, the Greater is the risk of Tax fraud.

The relationship between a hypothesis and theory, it may be noted here, is very close. A theory as a matter of fact, is an elaborate, hypothesis that deals with more types of facts than does the simple hypothesis (George W.H 1936).

It may also be noted here that while generating data the researcher should keep null-hypothesis (a hypothesis of no difference) and some operational concepts in mind. Operational concepts however, may sometimes be needed to be constructed at a later stage.

Now, while executing (carrying out) a research project, the researcher needs to follow some standardized guidelines to make the entire exercise a real success.

These may be discussed under two broad categories:

(i) Scientific Context (Methodological Perspective) and

(ii) Social Context (Ethical and Political Perspectives)

Scientific Context

The concept of Research Methodology refers to the total range of action concerning the research proposition: conception of research proposal, problem formulation, drawing up a research design, formulation of hypotheses that are aimed to be tested, selection of a community through purposive choice or appropriate sampling technique, data collection (through intensive / extensive field work and using appropriate technique/s), organization and analysis of data and writing the report.

The concepts of Method and Technique, though loosely used synonymously, as a matter of fact, should be understood in their proper perspectives. The term technique actually refers to the ways of dealing with minor day-to-day problems which confront the researcher in carrying out his / her research work. In other words techniques refer to the tactics used in the collection and analysis of data; and method refers to the overall strategy.

While dwelling on the scientific broad guidelines with regard to a Research exercise, it may be emphasized at the outset that there is no short-cut in this pursuit. A good and systematic preparation, done out of volition leads to quality research.

Before settling down on a project, a few questions, the researcher should ask himself / herself in soliloquy. The illustrative sample of questions may be as follows:

(i) Is the topic as a whole, of the researcher's own interest ?

(ii) Is the problem amenable to scientific enquiry (i.e. whether standardized techniques are available or not) ?

(iii) Whether sufficient resources (both primary and secondary) will be available?

(iv) Is the topic only of theoretical interest or has some applied relevance too?

If the researcher has satisfactory answers at least to himself / herself, chances are that it will be a good research.

The Steps

The preliminaries being satisfactorily completed, the researcher needs to proceed systematically and step-by-step. An overall idea as to the different tasks one needs to undertake is provided below:

A. Literature Search: A thorough search of literature is vital to the success of any research project. There are four ways to gather information on what has already been written on a particular topic. These are:

[i] Asking people who have worked on the same or allied themes;

[ii] Reading review articles;

[iii] Consulting relevant journals for a bibliographical search, and

[iv] Surfing the internet

While exploring literatures, the researcher should put due weightage to both published and unpublished sources.

To prolong the discussion little bit more in this regard, especially for the students of anthropology, it may be noted that Anthropological Index is the index to the periodicals in the Museum of Mankind Library in the British Museum. It appears quarterly from the Royal Anthropological Institute (RAI) in London; and is up-to-date. It covers a lot of journals and papers, especially publications from the Third World Nations.

Besides, the overwhelming majority of the research works in any Social Science discipline, particularly in one, as large and as international as anthropology, are published in hundreds upon hundreds of independent journals.

But, not all researches of interest to anthropologists are published in journals or books. Much of the descriptive data on anthropological issues and people of the world are published in a variety of reports from Government, Industry and Private Research Foundations. No research project should be launched until one has thoroughly searched these potential sources for published research materials on the topic one is interested in.

B. Formulation of Objectives: In order to make the exercise relatively more defined and less diffused one, the researcher then needs to formulate some objectives within the broad theme of the research in specific terms. By spelling out the specific objectives, the researcher, in fact outlines the limitations of the project which is very necessary to make the exercise healthy and enjoyable; and not a tiresome and endless one.

C. Formulation of Working Hypothesis: Formulation of hypothesis is a central step of any good research (particularly an experimental one); and it is important to give a good deal of thought on the same. It sets and keeps the track of a sound research. It focuses the objectives of the study and serves as a guideline. Otherwise, the research becomes unfocussed and a random empirical wandering. .

D. Preparation of Research Design (Research Plan): The research needs to be designed in such a way that on the basis of the resulting data, the proposed hypothesis will either be accepted or rejected. This requires control of the observations in order to eliminate other possible relationships. The basic aspect of research design, thus is setting up the research so as to allow logical conclusions to be drawn.

A Research Design, as a matter of fact, is the arrangement of conditions for collection and analysis of data in a manner that aims to combine relevance to the research purpose with economy and procedure. It follows that the research designs will differ depending on the research purposes.

The working out of the research design (plan) in reality consists of making certain decisions with regard to: (i) What the study is about, and the types of data that are needed; (ii) Why the study is being made; (iii) Where the needed data can be found; (iv) Where or in which areas the study will be carried out; (v) What period/s of time, the study will require; (vi) How much materials or how many cases will be needed; (vii) What bases of selection will be used; (viii) What techniques will be adopted for generating the required data; (ix) What techniques will be used for analyzing the data; and (x) The tentative framework for the presentation of the analyzed data.

E. Collection of Data (Field Work): A field in the context of research in anthropology in particular; and Social Sciences in general refers to the unit/units of a cluster of human beings, involved in an organized and sustained social-cultural interaction. The contour and the contents of a field however, may vary depending on the nature and purpose of the study. It is therefore, advisable to have an operational definition/description of the Field/Micro-field.

Field work refers to the act of generating the desired data observing the field and interacting with the people.

It may contextually be noted here that the tradition of intensive field investigation in a particular culture setting was first introduced in anthropology by B. Malinowski when he worked among the Trobriand Islanders in the Western Pacific by living with them for a couple of years in the beginning of the 20th Century (cf. Malinowski, B. 1967) Earlier, the scholars were by and large, arm-chair anthropologists; and depended mainly on the secondary data, provided by the travellers, traders, missionaries, migrant workers, soldiers, settlers and others.

While dwelling back on field work, it may be noted that generating data in the field ultimately boils down to two broad kinds of activities: Watching and Listening. There are however, a good number of alternative standardized tools (techniques) to carry out the exercise. The researcher needs to decide beforehand the relevant technique/s for the particular project. All efforts, however need to be made to have a holistic understanding of the problem, covering etic and emic perspectives.

A good field-based research needs to be characterized by: (i) Intensive field work; (ii) Participant observation and (iii) Holism. The other significant characteristics include (i) Relating micro-view to macro-view (ii) Comparative perspective and (iii) The perspective of cultural relativism.

Participant observation should be considered, not only as a technique, but also as an overall strategy for a successful qualitative field work. It facilitates the entry and establishment of a rapport in the field to an extent that the researcher is accepted by the community as an insider; and as such the members share more authentic and intimate information to him/her. As such this approach has been followed even in the urban studies in Western countries. W.F. Whyte's study (1943), dealing with the street corner gangs, racketeers and politicians in the United States is a good example.

With regard to the techniques of data collection, the researcher, depending on the level of education of the people under investigation; and also on the nature of the data, needed for the project at hand, may choose one or more (in combination) of the following ones: (i) Observation (both participant and non-participant); (ii) Interview (both structured and unstructured; and Individual and Group); (iii) Schedule; (iv) Questionnaire ; and collection of (a) Concrete cases; (b) Life histories; and (c) Genealogies.

In order to have a detailed knowledge about the different techniques, one may consult some standard literatures on methods in social research. As an illustration, mention may be made of the books authored by Goode and Hatt (1981), Kirk and Miller (1986), Weller and Romney (1990) and Young (1992).

Cognitive Data and Some Additional Techniques

Cognitive understanding in reality refers to the study of how peoples of different cultures acquire information about the world (cultural transmission); how they process that information and reach decisions; and how they act on the information in ways that other members of their culture consider appropriate.

It may contextually be noted here that the application of the emic and etic principles from linguistics to other areas of culture was first made by Ward Goodenough (1959). The general research strategy that grew from this insight was dubbed as Ethnoscience - the search for the grammars of behaviour in the cultures of the world and the underlying principles that govern how those grammars differ.

The most common techniques used for gathering cognitive data are Free listing, Triad test, Pile sorting and Rank order test.

Free Listing: It is commonly used as the first step in the studies of native taxonomy as well as comprehension. In other words, it is useful in research on how different cultures categorise the types of kin, animal, plant, disease, food and other things that constitute discrete domains with listable contents.

Getting the list of items, things, causes and outcomes, etc., is a major preliminary step in exploration of any cultural domain. Various relevant dimensions may however, be added while asking for the list on certain domains.

Triad Test: It was originally used in psychology. Romney and D'Andrade first used it in culture studies in 1964. It involves giving the informants three things and asking them to choose one that does not fit, or choose the two that are identical. The things can be photographs, actual plants, cards with name of people on them, concepts or the likes. Informants may often ask, "What do you mean by things being identical or fitting together"? The researcher should tell them that he/she is interested in what they think, that means. By doing this for all the triples from a list of things or concepts, one can explore differences in cognition among cultures and sub-cultures.

Pile sorting (or Card sorting) is generally used with literate informants as a way to generate taxonomic trees (Werner and Fenton, 1973). It may relevantly be noted here that mere lists or inventories are simply the building blocks which make up more or less complex patterns. These patterns are discoverable through systematic unstructured and structured interviewing.

While administering the technique the informants are simply handed over a pack of cards, each of which contains some term in the native language of the informants. The terms can be generated by free listing or any other technique.

The informants sort the cards into piles, according to whatever criterion makes sense to them. Piles are again get divided and sub-divided till they cannot further be sub-divided. At each sorting level, informants are asked if there is a word or phrase that describes each pile.

This is a way of getting the local cultural cognitive maps – the perceptions of similarities and differences in the sets of items in cultural domain. When informants place the items in groups, for example, groups of people, groups of illness or groups of treatments, questions can be asked as to the reasons for, or explanation of the groups and categories. Similarly, the sorting of illness (and symptoms) can be used to elicit statements about causes, prognosis, treatment and many other characteristics.

The common domains studied by the researchers by this technique are things like diseases, plants, occupations and animals, etc. It can be extended to other areas also.

Ranking: It produces ordinal data, and is easy to administer, combined with pile sorting and unstructured interviews. It is considered to be a powerful data generator in cognitive research.

Thus, for example, in health research, very often, we wish to have information concerning the degree of seriousness (e.g. illness), level of nutrition

(food) and other data, related to the rank ordering of the cultural elements. If we have a series of around say 15 illnesses written on cards, we can simply ask the respondents to arrange them in rank order from the least serious to the most serious ones. In case of any difficulty with the respondents, we may change our tactic. We may start with the most serious and the least serious ones; and then can fill up the space in-between gradually.

All these techniques produce a wealth of information that can be compared across informants and across cultures.

The researchers who intend to have some more information in this domain may consult Werner and Scheepfle (1987) and Weller and Romney (1990).

Analysis of Data: We need to undertake the task of analysis to make the data speak. When we talk of analysis of research data, we actually have two implications in mind: (i) Making complicated things understandable by reducing them to their component parts; and (ii) making complicated things understandable by showing how their component parts fit together according to some rules.

Both the tasks are accomplished by systematically looking for patterns in the recorded observations; and formulating ideas that account for those patterns.

Further depending on the thrust, a research may be (i) Qualitative or (ii) Quantitative.

Qualitative research is a particular tradition in social science that fundamentally depends on watching the people in their own territory and interacting with them in their own language; and on their own terms. The most venerable tradition in the Qualitative research methods, unquestionably is the participant observation that has been referred to earlier.

Technically, a Qualitative observation identifies the presence or absence of something in contrast to a Quantitative observation which involves measuring the degree to which some feature is present.

Qualitative analysis, in fact, refers to a holistic type of analysis where we search for patterns in the data; and for ideas that help in explaining the existence of those patterns. Here, the researcher has to oscillate between the etic and emic observations and ideas; and is to make a synthesis. In a Qualitative research, it should always be kept in mind that as the researcher becomes less and less conspicuous in the culture, he is expected to get more and more dependable data.

While presenting the data, one should heavily depend on anecdotes and comments; and quotes and concrete cases, etc. These enhance the quality of a Qualitative research. All these however should be used only to substantiate

the analyses done by the researcher. Further, a Qualitative analysis should also be suitably associated with visual display, maps, flow chart, folk taxonomy and cognitive mapping, etc.

In short, a Qualitative analysis is dominated by (i) Participant observation, (ii) Case studies, (iii) Anecdotes, (iv) Cognitive understanding; (v) Dispassionate observation throughout the field work and (vi) Absence or least presence of statistics etc.

In a Quantitative analysis where statistics dominate, observations are generally transferred into numbers and are treated statistically to find pattern. Statistical tables and tests, as a matter of fact, form an inseparable part of Quantitative analysis.

In brief, Quantitative analysis is dominated by (i) Survey schedule, (ii) Sampling, (iii) Coding, (iv) Formulation of testable hypotheses, and (v) use of statistics.

While dwelling little bit more on Data analysis, it may however, be emphasized that though we make an academic distinction between Qualitative and Quantitative analyses, it very often breaks down on close scrutiny. The best approach therefore, is to have a synthesis between the two.

Report Writing: The broad guidelines as to the major items, a report should ideally contain, may be outlined as follows:

A. INTRODUCTION: It should generally contain (i) A concise and clear-cut statement as to the nature of the study; (ii) Aims and relevance of the study; (iii) Review of literature; (iv) Scope and objective/s of the study and (v) Working hypothesis/es (if any) that guided the study.

B. THE METHODOLOGY: It should contain a detailed discussion on (i) The technique/s and method/s used in the data collection; (ii) Sources of both primary and secondary data; (iii) Sampling procedure (if the study is conducted in a representative sample); (iv) Duration of the field work; (v) Operational definition of unit/s of study and also the concepts used in the study (if applicable); (vi) An idea about the overall scheme of presentation of the analysed and interpreted data in the report.

C. THE FIELD: This may be organized in two parts, namely; (i) the Land and (ii) the People.

   The Land should contain a detailed information on the history and geography of the micro-field. Similarly, the People should have detailed information on the origin, history, demography, ethnography, migration and distribution of the people under investigation.

D. MAJOR FINDINGS (RESULTS): The results may conveniently be distributed in a number of chapters; and the relevant analytical

discussion may also follow the presentation of the findings on different spheres of life.

E. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

F. REFERENCES / BIBLIOGRAPHY

G. APPENDIX: It may contain the following materials (Illustrative only): (i) Problems encountered in the collection of data, classifying and analyzing them; (ii) Possible discrepancies (if any) in the generated mass of data; (iii) Sample schedule / questionnaire, transcription sheets and sample interviews etc., and (iv) Suggestions (if any) to the subsequent investigators on similar topic in identical context.

This is but only a broad and general outline for writing a research report. In case of a particular project, however, it should be moulded (including the possible reorganization of the contents) according to the specific context.

Social Context

The two relevant corollaries of the social milleu, in which a particular research is proposed to be conducted, are Ethics and Politics. Ethical and Political considerations need to be taken into account alongside the scientific ones in the design and execution of a research.

In the present exercise, it is intended to discuss the ethical issues in little bit details. A brief reference however, will also be made on the political dimension.

Ethics in Social Science Research

The problem in Social research; and probably also in social life is that ethical considerations are not always apparent to us. We often plunge into things without seeing ethical issues that may be apparent to others; and may even be obvious to us when these are pointed out.

Before dwelling in some more details on the issue of ethical constraints, let's first understand what exactly is meant by the terms Ethics or Ethical.

In most dictionaries and in common usage, ethics, is typically associated with morality; and both deal with matters that are right or wrong. But, what is the source of this distinction? The sources, as a matter of fact vary from culture to culture; from group to group; and also from issue to issue. These may be religion, political ideology, social tradition or the pragmatic observation of what seems to work and what does not.

Webster's New World Dictionary, however, is typical in defining ethical as "Conforming to the standards of conduct of a given profession or Group".

What we regard as morality and ethics in day-to-day life, in fact, is a matter of agreement among the members of a group. It may not be a static one for all time to come. In other words, the codes of conduct vary, not only from society to society, but also in the same society from time to time.

The Norway episode (2011-12) of separating the two Indian Children from their biological parents on the plea of "unacceptable" practice (cultural) of feeding and up-bringing that generated a sensation in both the countries, may be cited as an illustration of the inter-cultural variation in deciding what is "right" and what is "wrong". For these "wrong-doings" of the parents in the context of Norwegian ethics, the authorities imposed their ruling of taking away the two children to place them under foster care by the Child Welfare Services Department; and as per their system, it would have continued till the children attained adulthood.

The changing scenario in ethics in the same culture can be observed in our own society in various beliefs and practices. Thus, for example, we may mention the following few ones: (i) Physical punishment to school children vis-à-vis the prospect of a healthy adulthood, (ii) Practice of Sati, (iii) Child marriage, (iv) Widow remarriage, (v) State of celibacy for a widow in Hindu society, (vi) Inter-group marriage vis-à-vis honour killing, (vii) Living together as an alternative arrangement to marital union, (viii) To consider the birth of twin babies as a bad omen; and to kill them immediately (e.g. among the Noctes of Arunachal Pradesh) and (ix) the practice of witch hunting.

Notwithstanding the acceptance of the principle of cultural and ethical relativism, it may be noted here that no social scientist can defend the acts of human rights violation by community just as an expression of the so called diversity, uniqueness and richness of the particular culture.

It is thus apparent that Social Science can play an important role in social change by predicting the consequences of ethically mandated programmes; and by refuting false notions such as various forms of casteism and racism that are inherent in most popular ethical systems.

In any case, notwithstanding the changing scenario in terms of time and space, the fact remains that the members of a particular society should know what that society at a particular point of time considers ethical and un-ethical.

The same expectation, as a matter of fact, holds true for the social researchers too. A researcher in Social Science should be aware of the general agreements, shared by the fraternity, as to what is proper and what is improper while conducting a scientific enquiry. A researcher should look for the ethical component whenever a study is planned.

Some broadly agreed upon norms describing what is ethical and what is not, are recorded below.

A. Voluntary Participation: A social research, by and large, represents an intrusion into the people's lives. Participation in a social experiment generally causes a disruption in the scheduled daily activities of the people. Besides, a social research very often demands the revealation of some personal information that are otherwise generally not made public.

   In this backdrop, as far as practicable, it is desirable that the people's participation and co-operation should be out of volition; and not under compulsion. A good researcher is expected to establish a dependable rapport with the respondents that generally facilitates the spontaneous generation of elaborate and authentic data in the field.

B. No Harm to the Participant: In many cases, a research project may demand revealing of information that, if made public, may embarrass the respondent in different ways (e.g. income, personal views on some social issues and practices, etc., and receipts of some special benefits).

   The researcher needs to be sensitive to this possibility and try to minimize the same as far as possible.

C. Anonymity and Confidentiality: The researcher should properly protect the identity of a respondent. A respondent is considered to be anonymous when the researcher cannot identify a given response with a particular respondent. Thus, for example, it happens so when we decide to have a questionnaire approach in a project like drug abuse survey or the like one.

   In a confidential survey, when the researcher is able to identify the respondent/s, it should be promised that the same would never be made public.

D. The Researcher's Identity: It is desirable that the researcher should divulge his/her identity to the people under investigation. Sometimes, however, for the sake of scientific quality of the study, it may become necessary, not to divulge the real identity. As an illustration mention may be made of projects like living standards study by a welfare agency, country liquor consumption study by the Excise Department and the likes. It may then be concealed to tell that the study is a part of an academic (research) programme.

   Apparently though not ethical, the purpose of this deviation is noble; and it is believed to be a lesser evil approach. For any unavoidable deviation in the approach, this cost-benefit calculation should always be done beforehand.

E. Analysing and Reporting: Alongside the subjects of study, a researcher has some ethical obligations also to one's colleagues and the posterity in the scientific fraternity.

The research findings as well as other relevant information need to be shared with the colleagues as well as made available (be published) to the posterity for academic benefit of the fraternity as a whole. The reporting should be objective and holistic to the maximum extent.

By conforming to this ethics, one actually helps the science to develop. The future researchers in allied projects become aware beforehand of the possible problems and prospects of such exercises.

Politics in Social Science Research

Social Science, as we all know, deals with the details of social life of which politics is part and parcel. We also know that although science is neutral on political matters, the scientists are not. The role of politics and related ideologies on Social Science research is therefore quite obvious.

Although the two are very often closely intertwined, the ethics of social research deal more with the methods and techniques, employed, whereas political issues are relatively more concerned with the substance and use of a particular research.

Thus, for example, an experimental research on television exposure of children to violence vis-à-vis personality formation in terms of obedience and individualistic self-assertion, even though ethically is not approved by the society, the political objection might be that obedience is not a worthy topic for such a study. Similarly, research topics like tribal welfare vis-à-vis Isolation / Assimilation / Integration of the People; Statehood Demand vis-à-vis the overall welfare prospects of the people; and the likes may be encouraged / discouraged on the basis of the political ideology/attitude of the prevalent Government towards the issue in question.

It may however, be noted that like the codes of ethical conduct, till date, we do not have any set of formal codes of accepted political conduct in the practice of social science research. The only partial exception is that there is a generally accepted view that a researcher's personal political orientation should not interfere with or unduly influence one's scientific research.

Science, as a matter of fact, should always be idealized as apolitical, amoral and objective. In this context, we may recollect Max Weber's (1949) phrase, Value Free Sociology, which in fact, is a classic expression as to his emphasis on Objectivity and Neutrality in Social Science Research.

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