

DEVELOPMENT AND DILEMMAS OF MARGINALITY

Pradeep.B. Kadun*
Saibanna**
K M Vinay***

ABSTRACT

Contemporary Indian intellectuals engages and attempts to notice the difference of the excluded Social groups registering difference as it focusses on the excluded power relations aiming for the empowerment of the voiceless resisting the dominant tone of the 'pedagogy of the powerful'. Power and Politics have remained vital categories even in the research processes, especially working with the marginalised and powerless groups like the core Dalits, Adivasis, and Tribal suffering from all kinds of Social exclusion for Development and Social change. This paper focuses on the issues of the Developing Sociology of Citizenship and Marginality discourses in India. The paper has noted the efforts of the poor and the marginalized groups redefining the claims of their legitimated natural rights in the Contemporary Indian democracy for making the claims of Citizenship relevant to the Civil society in a developing society, for ensuring the role of Citizenship in resolving the crisis of the marginalized groups in a developing Social world.

Keywords: Marginality, Development , and Democracy

*Research Scholar, Dept. of Social Work, Kuvempu University, Shankaraghatta, Shimoga

**Research Scholar, Dept. of Sociology, Kuvempu University, Shankaraghatta, Shimoga.

***Assistant Professor, Deptt. Of English, Kuvempu University, Shankaraghatta, Shimoga

INTRODUCTION

Contemporary Indian intellectuals engages and attempts to notice the difference of the excluded Social groups registering difference as it focusses on the excluded power relations aiming for the empowerment of the voiceless resisting the dominant tone of the ‘pedagogy of the powerful’. Power and Politics have remained vital categories even in the research processes, especially working with the marginalised and powerless groups like the core Dalits, Adivasis, and Tribal suffering from all kinds of Social exclusion for Development and Social change. This paper focuses on the issues of the Developing Sociology of Citizenship and Marginality discourses in India.

Such a kind of research orientation provides relevant social methodology for studying the position of ethics, positionality and reflexivity of Power and the modules of Citizenship and Development for social change in India. The paper attempts to rethink the core question of the policy initiatives change at the local and the global level indicating the interconnection between the expanded role of the contemporary citizenship, politics of development and the crucial question of emancipation and empowerment of marginality attached along with the notion of social change.

Power/knowledge interfaces in a developmental society includes the role of the right ecological perspectives for the social change, with the careful focus on the natural resources administered for growth and development. Marginal groups have been affected with the globalized environment for trade and politics, as such, where natural resource governance and rights and access to resources (addressed through the case of water and sanitation); gender and development-induced-displacement; and rights and forced migration has seriously affected and influenced the variety of displacement factors increasing the social mobility of the marginalized groups, rethinking the conventional ethics of development of the political awareness of Citizenship at the core village level for social change.

Indian development influences the plight of the dispossessed, the marginal, the excluded, on power relations and aims at the empowerment of the voiceless and increasingly on the ‘pedagogy of the powerful’ (Mehta et al. 2006). Research methods for the proper conduction of the participatory gap in incorporating the margianls while conducting the

research on the Citizenship includes many ethical dimensions for the knowledge generation, developmental practices, social consequences in Indian social democracy. Combinatives of research on contemporary society have to retain the theoretical and policy relevant reflections around questions of citizenship, participation and accountability with a concrete engagement with the politics of research and praxis.

The paper has noted the efforts of the poor and the marginalized groups redefining the claims of their legitimated natural rights in the Contemporary Indian democracy for making the claims of Citizenship relevant to the Civil society in a developing society, for ensuring the role of Citizenship in resolving the crisis of the marginalized groups in a developing Social world. Research initiatives and reflection on the ethical dilemmas for situating the researcher in the research process are an intrinsic part of several anthropological and sociological studies and participatory research, but they have not been covered under the category of the development research.

It shows that there has been an influence from critical anthropology and the sociology of development (Escobar 1995; Crush 1995) which is not clearly the mainstream influence. Social and economic change concerns with the improving of the human condition inviting the development community to engage with how the research process is influenced by power relations and how researchers have the power to influence the research product through their own ideological and moral commitments and personal backgrounds. New themes relating to deepening of the democracy in the Indian states and localities, local-global citizen engagements, violence and citizenship education is challenging the mode of Indian democracy and society. Citizenship is resultant out of the universal and the natural but in reality gets characterised by a history of exclusion and struggle (Kabeer 2005; Lister 1997). Citizenship is experienced differently by different actors; how theoretical debates on citizenship are often very idealised and are not shared by ordinary 'citizens' who may not share the same degree of belonging. We have thus largely been interested in the perspectives of the excluded: the non-persons or non-citizens who lack access to the most basic rights such as land, health, water; those whose voice rarely gets to count in expert framings of science or knowledge (Leach et al. 2005); and those whose very existence is denied because they are different from the dominant culture (such as the Nayakas, Bedas, Heluvas, Gondas etc.,). Both the notion of 'Citizens' and 'Citizenship' are highly contested both in theory and practice (Fairclough et al.). Undoing of the problematic discourses of citizenship that exclude

large groups of disenfranchised and marginalised groups; and examine the performative aspects of citizenship (to see how people position themselves as citizens and are treated by others as citizens (Bora and Hausendorf 2001; Fairclough et al.) indicates the relevance of the critical social research at various levels for the resistance against human misery (Baumann 2005: 1097). Critical social research provides the possibility to develop a critical perspective on existing power relations, particularly those that reproduce social exclusion. Conducting research with social groups seek social and political change. Such research generates both academic knowledge and knowledge at the local level that can lead to some kind of action. Such research however does not necessarily privilege local action over analytical rigour. Instead, it recognises that objectivity is relative. Freire advocates the transformation of society through the transforming of the power relations.

It is not the snatching away of the power from the dominant but instead reinventing it, demystifying power and therefore creating a more just society. According to Freire, ‘if I perceive the reality as the dialectical relationship between subject and object, then I have to use methods for investigation which involved the people of the area being studied as researchers; they should take part in the investigation themselves and not serve as the passive objects of the study’ (Freire quoted in Gaventa 1993). Similarly, John Gaventa argues that, ‘research is seen not only as a process of creating knowledge, but simultaneously as education and development of consciousness, and of mobilization for action.’

Marginality is often the tricky applied situation for the researcher, where fair, compassionate and honest conduction of the research with marginalised groups, overt and covert disparities and discrepancies prevail where the researcher has to notice the burdens and legacies of oppression and sociocultural realities. Research representing and documenting the other also has to deal with the sordid legacies of colonialism and the societal response to the evolving nature of citizenship and modern state with its specificities attached to Indian society. Twentieth century legacy of interpretive sociologists, feminist scholars and postmodern anthropologists has largely indicated the acceptable view that there remains no solo-single, universal gaze or explanation for what makes an individual/society/culture work. Every gaze is filtered through the lens of gender, language, class, race and so on. Similarly, since all knowledge is situated and shaped by its locality, cultural, historical and social specificity, there is no one objective observation.

It is based on the assumption that objectivity is: an impossibility, since each of us, of necessity, must encounter the world from some perspective or other (from where we stand) and the questions we come to ask about that world, our theories and hypotheses, must also of necessity arise from the assumptions that are embedded in our perspective [...] The task of researchers therefore becomes to acknowledge and even to work with their own intrinsic involvement in the research process and the part this plays in the results that are produced. Researchers must view the research process as necessarily a co-production between themselves and the people they are researching (Burr 1995: 160 cited in Colombo 2003).

Methodologically no single method can really grasp all the reality or its complexities where there has to be deployment of a range of methods to make sense of the world and unravel all its taken-for-granted characteristics (Denzin & Lincoln 2005: 20) in order to as Wittgenstein says, ‘get hold of the difficulty deep down. Twentyfirst century researchers have to understand the multiple perspectives and meanings. Research in sociology must recall social action and change for social advantages. According to Steve and Jenks, research must have a practical outcome but key is the role of legitimacy. They had to work hard to gain it but once it was established it was possible to work at the community level with community leaders. Research must always lead to practical action at the community level, and there is need for the Nayaka community to be understood as the community also expects them.

‘Collaborative interactions’ can be used to dismantle the so-called boundaries between traditional and scientific knowledge to not only understand the problem but also to link up with the proposed action for social change. Thus, the focus remains on interaction through dialogue rather than conventional surveys; interviews which could facilitate open reflections; focus group discussions that allow for creating and recreating agendas that the women and students could follow up on in their own regions. Still, of course, the researcher faces several ethical dilemmas on documenting the painful testimonies of the Nayaka communities of a socially economic and backward district in the Karnataka state (Surpur).

Action research results in the confluence of different actors with different worries, perspectives and even ideas of time holding immense value for the research directly involving the specificities of the communities on the verge of destruction or the modernism that counter-pulls the identities ignoring their specific social and historical legacies. A research space if required to examine the challenges, between different knowledges

(‘popular’ and ‘scientific’ knowledges) but also the scope to develop different actions for the responsible subjectivities facing and distorted under the pressure of globalization. Learning from the processes and to develop the capacity to act, including the social capacity of acting to change some relations (from socio-cultural to political) could explain the risk of narrating the experiences of the marginalized communities facing the brim of contemporary regional crisis in Modern Karnataka.

Research on the Nayakas of Surpur discovered the local processes of mobilisation creating participatory management of the social, cultural and the political increasing the accountability of the masses on the rich legacy of the Nayaka communities facing threat of preserving and conserving their shared history and social values. Such an action research observes the livelihood alternatives by the indigenous people in the communities. This requires a sensitivity and respect for existing and often fragile process of mobilisation at the local level. the identification of the key players in the socialized process as identified by Bishop and Glynn (1999: 129) or the research area on the marginalized includes: initiation, benefits, representation, legitimacy and accountability. Although we may make sincere efforts to be respectful and sensitive. An ethical research responsibility can be developed that is more fluid and creates new forms of agency for those (marginalized) participating in the research.

Researchers often have to balance out competing interests at all levels, from dealing with their host institutions to village stakeholders and the local/state governments. Ranjita Mohanty has described how conducting action research has also been a learning experience at a very personal level. The research on the marginalized groups seeks to serve the communities on which it is carried rather than just policymakers, financiers and educators. A ‘delicate equilibrium’ is required to balance out the competing needs and interest. But it is also highly enabling since it helps engage with a range of people, build research capacity across different solidarities (activist, academic and students) and learn from other similar-regional experiences through visits and field trips.

Development research can also transform researchers, in turn affecting them as development actors. In so doing, citizenship research in certain circumstances and using particular approaches is a process of engagement that also changes relationships between researchers and citizens, and which can contribute to how both see and act upon the world

and the policies within them. Policy research is not only about evidence and outcomes but also about the process through which these are constructed, dominant framings more powerfully, to redefine what one means by influence and research impacts by integrating the local level and more long-term perspectives. It is also important to be more process-oriented and reflexive, bolder in how we want to make ‘another world possible’ and engage more strongly of the pedagogy of the powerful.

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