

Tribal Studies - A Need for Inclusive Development

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This present write up focuses on two interrelated issues concerning tribal studies. The first one relates to the question of giving Tribal Studies as a discipline status or not. The second one relates to the nature and scope of tribal studies as a discipline. These two issues of course contain an answer to what tribal studies is.

Status of Tribal Studies

Contemporary status of tribal studies manifests along academic programmes in educational institutes like colleges and universities and in research interests and action planning of GOs and NGOs. There is a growing interest on tribes with a shifting perspective since colonial need of knowing them for administrative purpose.

Social Anthropology basically began with systematic study of the tribes, but over the years the discipline has been topically diverse and includes gender studies and other issues of contemporary relevance than the tribal studies alone. Surprisingly, disciplines like Economics, Political Science, Sociology, History, Education, Ecology, Law, Botany and Zoology, to mention a few, take interest in tribal studies. While Social Anthropology has expanded, diverging from the study of the tribes, other disciplines have converged discipline interests in the study of tribal life and culture.

Besides academic interest, GOs, NGOs have their increasing interest in tribal development and as such in tribal studies. National and International Funding agencies (ICSSR, UGC, UNESCO, Ford Foundation) in recent years have been funding researches relating to tribal culture and life.

In many Indian universities PG programme in anthropology and sociology began as a single discipline under a Department of Anthropology and Sociology. As both have their respective disciplinary strength the department bifurcated into distinct departments in due course. Bifurcation of two departments instead of competing with each other complements to the expansion of the horizon of knowledge in terms of distinct perspectives. However, there are still instances of Department of Anthropology and Sociology in many universities. The practice of combining two branches of knowledge under one department also continues. In some universities tribal studies is combined with either sociology or anthropology under one department like Department of Anthropology and Tribal Studies, Department of Anthropology and Tribal Development, or Department of Rural and Tribal Sociology. In one or two universities like Central

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University of Orissa, Koraput the initial idea of two departments ended up with one department namely, department of Anthropology but with more focus on tribal studies in the curriculum. In departments with combined nomenclature tribal studies, rather than other areas of knowledge belonging to their respective disciplines have been given weightage. Evidently, the discipline of tribal studies is emerging as a significant branch of knowledge having interdisciplinary characteristics for which it penetrates the boundary of a number of disciplines. Its due place, however, does not fall in its spread across the disciplines, but in its consolidation to form a distinct academic discipline which is yet to happen.

The growing academic and applied interests in tribal studies have increasing institutional support in the form of a National Commission, Tribal Research Institutes in many states, Line Ministry of Tribal Affairs, and Centres, Institutes and Departments in Universities

Obviously knowledge in tribal studies is emerging as an interdisciplinary discipline having both intellectual strength and practical significance. However, the sustainability and promotion of tribal studies like many other emerging disciplines need to be institutionalised in the formal system of education at different levels. In other words, the growth of knowledge in tribal studies requires its introduction at UG and PG levels and at M. Phil and Ph. D levels. Many Universities have started M. Phil, Ph. D and P.G Diploma programmes in tribal studies. But its introduction as PG programme in a very few universities has just started. Needless to say, the emerging discipline of tribal studies has crossed its formative (infant) stage and now it requires expansion and consolidation with the introduction of PG and UG programmes. Then the institutionalisation process to promote a discipline will be effective and rewarding, otherwise it will disappear under the veil of conventional disciplines.

Emerging institutional status

To advocate for the discipline of tribal studies in India is not a wild imagination. It has a base in academics and also an institutional foundation. We outline a few available institutional infrastructure below:

Tribal Universities

- Indira Gandhi National Tribal University, Amarkantak
- Govind Guru Tribal University, Banswara, Udaipur, Rajasthan

Department/Centre/Institute/programme of Tribal Studies

- i. Rani Durgavati Vishwavidyalaya, Jabalpur. M.P. India. PG,M.Phil and Ph.D programme
- ii. Kannada University, Hampi ,M.Phil and Ph.D programme in Tribal Studies

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- iii. Telgu University, Hyderabad (Department of Folk Studies and Department of Tribal Studies under School of Folk and Tribal Life, also Department of Folk Arts under School of Final Arts
- iv. Himachal Pradesh University, Shimla, (Institute of Tribal Studies-PGDiploma in Tribal Studies)
- v. North Orissa University, Baripada, Mayurbhanj, Department of Anthropology and Tribal Studies, P.G., M. Phil and Ph. D Programmes
- vi. Guru Ghasidas University, Department of Anthropology and Tribal Development, P.G., M.Phil and Ph.D Programmes
- vii. Central University of Orissa, Started Department of Anthropology and Tribal Studies in its first year, Has got approval for Rajiv Gandhi Chair for Tribal Studies
- viii. The Kannur University, Kerala, Department of Rural and Tribal Sociology, P.G., M.Phil and Ph.D Programmes; There is also Tribal Study Centre
- ix. Nagaland University, Centre for Tribal Studies attached to the Department of Sociology.
- x. Manipur University (under the banner of Centre for Manipuri Studies)
- xi. Jameshedpur, Institute of Tribal Studies
- xii. Anand Agricultural University -Tribal Research cum Training Centre at
- xiii. Devgad Baria
- xiv. Tamil University, now looking after of Tribal Research Centre (it was with University 15 years back but was looked after a Government department for some time)
- xv. Rajiv Gandhi University-Arunachal Institute of Tribal Studies (formerly Department of Tribal Studies), M.Phil and P.G Programme, M.A Programme in pipeline
- xvi. Rajiv Gandhi University UG programme in Tribal Studies in Distance Mode)
- xvii. IGNOU, New Delhi provides Post Graduate Diploma in Social Work among Tribals (PGDSWT) and Tribal Cultural and Development (PGDTCD)
- xviii. TISS Mumbai provides PG Diploma in Social Entrepreneurship among Dalits and Tribes and Dalit and Tribal Social Work: Perspectives and Concepts
- xix. Indira Gandhi National Tribal University, Amarkantak, Department of Tribal Studies; PG Diploma Course in Museology & Conservation.
- xx. Regional Center of Indira Gandhi National Tribal University, Manipur, Department of Tribal Studies
- xxi. Tripura University, Agartala, Tripura- PG Diploma in Tribal Studies
- xxii. Assam University, Diphu campus has Tribal Studies Centre

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- xxiii. Behampur University, Odisha M.Phil/Ph.D in Tribal Studies through Council of Analytical and Tribal Studies, Koraput(COATS)
- xxiv. Ranchi university, Department of Tribal and Regional Languages, Ranchi
- xxv. Sidho- Kanho- Birsa University, Purulia, West Bengal, Department of Anthropology and Tribal Studies, MA programme
- xxvi. Mahatma Gandhi Antarrastriya Hindi Viswavidyalaya, Wardha, Baba Sahab Ambedkar-Sidho-Kanho Center for Dalit and Tribal Studies, M.Phil programme
- xxvii. Sido-Kanhu Murmu University, Dumka, Jharkhand, Sido-Kano Center for Tribal and Regional Studies
- xxviii. Dibrugarh University, Assam, B.A.Programme in Silapathar college
- xxix. Bastar University, Jagdalpur, Chhattishgarh, School of Anthropology & Tribal Studies, M.A. and Research Programme
- xxx. Dravidian University, Chittoor, Andhra Pradesh Department of Folklore and Tribal studies, (M.A., M.Phil. etc. programme)
- xxxi. Vikrama Simhapuri University, Nellore, Andhra Pradesh, Centre for Tribal and Folk Studies (CTFS)
- xxxii. Central University of Jharkhand, Ranchi, Centre for Indigenous Culture Studies, Centre for tribal and Customary Law and Centre for Tribal Folklore, Language and Literature, Integrated course, now shifting to P.G Course
- xxxiii. National Institute of Rural Development Rajendranagar, Hyderabad PG Diploma in Tribal Development Management.

Many Universities have included a paper on Tribal Studies in Social Work programme, both under distance and regular mode. Institutes like Govind Ballabh Pant Social Science Institute, Allahabad; Centre for Translation and Study of Dalit and Tribal Literature, Gachibowli, Hyderabad; GB Pant Institute of Himalayan Environment and Development, Almora; Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrhalaya, Bhopal; Indira Gandhi National Centre for Arts, New Delhi and ICSSR sponsored development institutes like OKD Institute of Social Change and development, Guwahati; NKC Centre for development Studies, Bhubaneswar; A. K. Sinha Institute, Patna also work on tribes and tribal issues. Tribal studies happen to be a significant area of research in Centre for Social Studies, Surat; Council for Social development, New Delhi; Institute for Social and Economic Change, Bangaluru, centre for Rural Development, LBSWAA,

Mussorie and many others. In many Universities most of the research works in Anthropology department pertain to tribes. Departments under social science, environmental science and life science streams in universities situated in tribal areas or in states with tribal population also promote researches in tribal studies.

Other Central Institutes working on Tribes

- i. Central Institute of Indian Languages, Mysore
- ii. Anthropological Survey of India, Kolkata and its field centers
- iii. Indian Statistical Institute, Kolkata and field centers

Government Institutes

- i. Tribal Cultural Research & Training Institute, Hyderabad
- ii. Tribal Research and Development Institute, Bhopal
- iii. Tribal Research and Training Institute, Pune
- iv. Tribal Research Institute, Manipur
- v. SC & ST Research & Training Institute, Bhubaneswar
- vi. Gujarat Vidyapeeth: Tribal Research and Training Institute, Ahmedabad
- vii. Kerala Institute for Research Training & Development Studies of Scheduled Caste & Scheduled Tribes, Kojhikode
- viii. Tribal Research & Cultural Institute, Agartala
- ix. Jharkhand Tribal Welfare and Research Institute, Ranchi
- x. Tribal Research Institute, Guwahati, Assam
- xi. Department of Research, Arunachal Pradesh
- xii. Bihar Tribal Welfare and Research Institute, Patna
- xiii. Chhattisgarh State Tribal Research Institute, Raipur
- xiv. MLV Tribal Research Institute, Udaipur, Rajasthan

Tribal studies: epistemology, praxis and contemporary significance

Why there should be tribal studies? What are the perspectives? These are some issues addressed in following paragraphs:

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- i. In recent years new areas of studies are emerging as these could not be properly dealt with in the broader frame of the discipline in which it was a part. Cultural Studies, Folkloristic were studied in Anthropology but now they have established as separate disciplines.
- ii. Religion was studied in theology and in philosophy. Even anthropology has had the tradition of studying religions. Presently there are many university departments having department of religious studies, study on contemporary religions, etc.
- iii. Dalit studies, studies on exclusion are gaining importance though such studies are not thematically new. Amartya Sen's deprivation and loss of entitlement, and Cernea's Impoverishment Risk reconstruction model very well take care of exclusion studies. Further dalit studies have been taken up as studies of the marginalized.
- iv. Not only social categories but religious and language categories also assert separate treatment. Bodo, Maithili therefore have been introduced at PG level. The Bodo and Maithili language did not grow when its development was linked with Assamese and Hindi languages respectively. So PG programme in these languages have been effective in their conservation and promotion.
- v. Earlier disciplinary boundaries are also expanding. The traditional history on records of kings and rulers has changed to socio-economic interpretation. History no more deals with elites only. There is subaltern history and oral traditions have been studied to reconstruct the history of non-literate people and societies. Even family history also forms the subject matter of history. The earlier discipline of Political Economy has been bifurcated into Political Science and Economics disciplines. The English has been divided into Literature, Linguistics and ELT.
- vi. Sometimes we believe in notions/ideals having spatial or limited connotation. Democracy, the government of people limited the connotation of people to male members only as women were not given political rights for a long time. Similarly, the concept of tribe is linked to a situation of isolation. But in Indian context we have realized its inadequacy in defining a tribe. But we have not come forward to establish this truth at intellectual level in the way we have accepted the idea of isolation. The misconception still pervades thinking of intellectuals of different disciplines and commoners alike. In India, the so called tribes along with so called non-tribals have contributed to the social process in making the civilization. This aspect will get due recognition if given right focus and due treatment it

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deserves. This focus becomes peripheral in the broad frame of a disciplinary boundary which deals with tribal studies and gets diffused and diluted.

vii. Arguably, broad disciplinary boundary does not give special focus to specific situations, issues and phenomenon. That is why new branches of studies, new disciplines, etc. are emerging keeping in view contemporary societal needs as perceived intellectually or/and as required for action planning. It is to be mentioned that the newly emerging disciplines get focused attention unlike when they were clubbed with a broader disciplinary frame. The special treatment for preservation and growth of tribal studies however requires that it should be instituted in the formal system of education, which, on the other hand, means opening up of the subject at various levels.

viii. There are centres, institutes where tribal studies are being carried on. But the studies do not have a permanent disciplinary strength in its conspicuous absence at P.G. level.

ix. Tribal Research Institute of Asom Sahitya Sabha, the premier literary and cultural body of Assam, India, has started a Research Journal on Tribal Studies focusing primarily on diverse aspects of tribal life in the North-East and other parts of India and the world. The ethno-museum, i.e Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manava Sangrahalay at Bhopal is an institutional effort to preserve tribal material culture.

x. Individual scholars also have taken up researches on tribal studies across the discipline.

xi. Recent trend of interdisciplinary approaches to knowledge in university system through CBCS pattern of education and the need to enlarge choices for the opportunity of developing full individual potentiality, tribal studies obviously holds the key to a better interactive platform. As sociology and anthropology could be separated to establish distinct discipline so also anthropology and tribal studies or sociology and tribal studies could be separated to enhance frontiers of knowledge. Specialisation is not confined to anthropology and sociology alone. The earlier discipline of political economy has been established as Economics and Political Science departments. When there is the trend of specialisation of knowledge on one hand, there is also instance of convergence of knowledge from different fields. We can cite the example of International Relations which integrates knowledge from history, political science, economics, etc. In other words, there is a trend of inter- and multi-disciplinary approaches to knowledge. The discipline of Commerce and Education could be cited as suitable examples. Emergence of gender studies, peace studies, social work, etc. in recent years also stress on the need of interdisciplinary studies.

xii. Tribal communities are interacting with various external forces. These forces have different dimensions which are not conducive to the preservation of tribal culture. For example, English is linked to the job market. A state language also plays same role for the speakers of minor tribal languages in the state. Language which has a linkage with job market becomes the lingua franca of a larger population. Moreover, the formal system of education promotes knowledge system which is alien to tribal world view. At some level of thinking, speaking of the language of a major population adds to the status of the speaker from a minor community. So it will be difficult to preserve tribal language and thus the culture. This contradicts to the ideology and legality of protection of cultural rights, promotion of language of minor groups and respect to differences. In general it goes against the fundamental spirit of human rights. Cultural rights can not be ensured unless the life/culture is studied within general human rights frame.

xiii. The same contradiction is associated with the concept of inclusive development. It is necessary to enable the tribal people to involve themselves in the process of development without losing their mooring in the culture. This is only possible if development is planned through culture. Development through culture or through their own genius requires an understanding of their culture in a right perspective.

xiv. Medium of instruction in formal system of education was English. Later on mother tongue has been given importance. Its importance is felt more now-a-days. The reason is that students should not be alienated from their culture. Moreover, education through mother tongue is comprehensible. Mother tongue in a state is usually the language of the dominant group. This leads to marginalisation of the already marginalised tribal languages. Arguably, they need support for their development.

xv. But adhoc and need based studies like an M. Phil or Ph. D course or a diploma course are weak enough for the conservation of tribal cultures. What is required is institutionalization of efforts in this regard.

xvi. Tribes in India still uphold the finer aspects of human values which are lacking in contemporary 'non-tribal' life style. But the appeal to such values is still lurking in the mind of people. So when such values are expressed in literary writings, they get appreciation and the literary works get awards. Works of Gopinath Mohanty or Mahasweta Devi is examples in this regard. That people appreciate human

values and the subtlety of human philosophy is also evident from Nobel Prize on Siddhartha, or Jnapitha award on Jagnyaseni.

xvii. Preservation of culture: In recent years we emphasize on the protection of cultural diversities. A culture not used by its members dies out. With greater exposure to the global process, which has a tendency of homogenization, the tribes are linked to the market culture through the language and the cultural behaviours of the dominant groups in the neighbourhood, or beyond. In Odisha, the tribes study Odiya and get familiar with the greater Odiya culture through literature. As a matter of fact, Odiya under the garment of MIL, is a subject up to UG level. Moreover, through formal system of education, students study economics, political science, history (mostly of others), philosophy, English literature, Commerce and Science subjects. No where there is a window/curriculum for the study of tribal culture by the tribal students. Then how will the culture be preserved when the tradition of oral transmission is fading away in the face of market linked life style? When students stay in hostels they are alienated from the atmosphere that facilitates oral transmission. Moreover, the informal system of education does not seem to be linked to livelihood security. The tribal atmosphere that facilitated oral transmission, preservation through performances, beliefs and practices does not seem to provide a strong foundation due to religious conversion, occupational diversity, and participation of people in development schemes and so on. Perhaps, the people may not need the cultural tradition for the livelihood but need it as an identity marker and the humankind needs it to understand the social process. It cannot be denied that tribal culture and cultural artifacts could be marketed through tourism development and to satisfy the artistic sense of the modern elites. But how it can be done when tribal culture and research are not linked to formal educational system? Herein lies the importance of introducing tribal studies as a course in UG and PG level as a mechanism to fulfil the gap that arises in preserving tribal culture in the absence of their written tradition.

xviii. We usually appreciate others when we know about them. Knowledge in one another's culture will promote a sense of appreciation and respect to the diversity. Exclusiveness in the thought process will give way to the understanding of live and let live. The rich cultural heritage, the subtlety and universality of human feelings, once appreciated, will change the mindset of the so called non-tribal to the stereo type idea of backwardness attributed to the tribes. Undoubtedly, we live in an era where interaction and appreciation provides the foundation of mutual progress. Tribal studies will be a right step towards this direction.

xix. The frontiers of knowledge will be more comprehensive and inclusive. As we know, the subject matter of conventional disciplines owes their origin to the new social order that emerged after industrial revolution. Naturally, the old social order designated as preliterate, pre agricultural and pre industrial societies mostly do not figure at the core area of these disciplines. It is to be mentioned as an example that what we study in economics today is the development of the knowledge system in the discipline precisely after industrial revolution. The economic aspects of life and economic relations in and among industrial societies are different from those of non-industrial and preliterate, precisely, the tribal communities. So the knowledge in conventional economics will not help us understanding the economics of tribal societies which present a picture of embeddedness unlike to the economics of industrial societies. Tribal economics are instituted in the culture. Certainly understanding of tribal economics will not only have policy implications but will add to the frontiers of economics as a discipline and present it as study of humanity in totality. So is also the case with other branches of knowledge in social science.

The frontiers of knowledge in literature and culture will also expand from its existing status. The Odiya literature, for example, will be enriched with the addition of tribal literature and culture.

Tribal studies will add to the existing knowledge in the field and expand the frontier of knowledge in general, will have policy implications and clarify the wrong notion attached to the concept of tribe in Indian situation. In fact many western scholars have studied Indian tribes and popularized the finer aspects of human values. Perhaps it also becomes our responsibility to know, understand and help in the development and preservation of the culture of these people who have been working hand in glove in making the Indian civilization.

Societal needs: Education attends to societal needs. That is why new branches of knowledge are emerging. Social works, Rural Development, Tourism, Computer Science, Environmental Studies, Bio-Informatics, Physiotherapy, Bio-technology, ICT, Communicative English, Journalism, Mass Communication, MBA etc. are examples.

In Sikkim University, a new department, Department of Border Trade, was created. In fact this is the first department of its kind. But its importance lies in the growing demand for border trade in recent years. Education also should look into the contemporary immediate societal needs. Tribal Studies has a social context on following grounds:

- i. Maintaining diversity
- ii. Preservation of Culture
- iii. Rethinking development through culture
- iv. Inter- and Multidisciplinary approaches to knowledge
- v. Voices of tribal and indigenous people and formation of independent platforms
- vi. Recognition to human rights in general and indigenous rights in particular
- vii. Emerging trend of specialized studies like exclusion studies, cultural studies
- viii. Requirements of inclusive and cohesive development
- ix. Reversals in approach-putting the last first- shift in emphasis from centre to periphery, so folklores an subaltern studies

Tribal Studies as a Discipline

As infrastructure is available and knowledge on tribal studies exists in different contexts, it is now imperative to think of its status as a discipline. The syllabus structure therefore would not limit itself to conventional way of studying tribal culture or social system, but extend across various disciplines in humanities, environmental science and life science.

In our contemporary world, tribes exist as community and also as broad social category. Moreover, they exist in an interactive mode through interaction with national goals and international agenda. These emerging dynamics would define the nature and scope of tribal studies along with the convergence of disciplinary perspectives.

Objectives

The following broad objectives need to be considered while framing syllabus;

- i. to understand the tribal culture and communities and their contribution to the making of Indian civilization in an interactive model;
- ii. to instil in youngsters a sense of appreciation and respect to diversities;
- iii. to develop a holistic thinking and humanistic feeling through exposure to the finer aspects of tribal culture;
- iv. to understand the development needs for action plan for an inclusive development;
- v. to act as a platform for policy advocacy;
- vi. to produce literature on various aspects of life and culture of tribal people;

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- vii. to contribute to the making of a new branch of knowledge;
- viii. to facilitate its introduction as a course in undergraduate level; and
- ix. to prepare the students for advance researches at M.Phil and Ph.D level by introducing UG and PG programmes.

In recent years departments/centres/institutes have come up in the name of tribal studies in a number of universities in India. Even few initial departments in the name of tribal studies have been re-designated later, to take an example, as Department of Anthropology and Tribal Studies/Development. This shift has resulted from the fact that the disciplinary boundary between tribal studies and anthropology looks very hazy when perceived in conventional sense. More often, the perspective tilts towards the disciplinary background of the scholars who design curriculum and eventually it looks as a part of such disciplines.

Under such a situation two interrelated issues clearly emerge demanding consideration. First, scholars working on tribes have a natural bias towards respective disciplines which could not be kept aside. It is a known fact that every scholar is conditioned by own disciplinary outlook when his/her studies are carried over a long period as a student and researcher within the disciplinary perspective frame. Second, there are scholars who work on tribes per se for a long period without committing to perspectives of any particular discipline. Arguably, the scholars of the second category would prove useful to design a comprehensive curriculum thereby defining a distinct disciplinary perspective of tribal studies.

Noticeably, departments/centres/institutes showing interest in tribal studies are growing. The interest not only has spread across the disciplines in academics, but also reflects in the concerns of GO and NGO for the tribes. But the irony is that tribal studies as a distinct branch of knowledge still remains at the periphery, and not built up and recognised as an academic discipline. With the given institutional set up in many universities designing a proper curriculum is necessarily the first step towards developing tribal studies as an academic discipline. Once a proper curriculum is designed then subsequent researches would provide conceptual and theoretical perspectives and forward distinct approaches to establish it as a discipline/ interdisciplinary discipline like commerce, education, etc.

Curriculum design and subsequent studies are just like a baby newly born. Its survival and growth, however, would need special care and planning so that the new discipline opens up the new vista of knowledge in the field and become practically useful through its link to job markets.

The curriculum needs to focus on two aspects: general and regional/local.

The general aspect of the curriculum should consider an introduction to the discipline, locate it in global, national and regional context and penetrate the boundary of conventional disciplines like history, economics, political science, archaeology, cultures, psychology, philosophy, language, literature, folklores, education and so on. Moreover, emerging interdisciplinary perspectives in the field of such studies as gender, human rights, human development, resource management, social work, environment, law, etc. shall also be linked to the curriculum in tribal studies. The general curriculum shall also focus on theoretical and methodological perspectives in tribal studies. In addition to class room design of the curriculum, laboratory work is also proposed to be a component in it. Laboratory work will help in recognition, validation and authentication of indigenous knowledge, particularly in ethno-medicine. It will also help preserving and promoting indigenous technology, and subsequently making user friendly in the present context and ensuring marketability.

The regional/local aspect, however, would suggest the study of individual tribes of the region/locality in class room and investigation in the field to understand the contemporary dynamics.

In conventional approaches to knowledge, tribes are studied in a community specific frame and in recent academic discourse these conventional disciplines study tribes in an interdisciplinary perspective. Obviously, community specific study of tribes no more holds strong ground in a changing context. What is required is an interaction perspective of tribal situation. This perspective will also be useful even to study tribes particularly in India, for most of them did not live in isolation as is believed while conceptualising the 'tribe'.

All these issues need to be considered while designing the syllabus of tribal studies at different levels of academic programmes in order to give the subject the strength of a discipline.

Some issues

What is the extent of job opportunity for the students with degree in tribal studies?

The objective of higher education should not be considered in terms of its job potentiality. Philosophy, for example could be taken as an example. Higher education expands the basis of knowledge and human mental horizon for appreciating values and diversities.

But this is not to state that education should not be linked to job market. Except teaching job in colleges and universities, researches, etc. graduation is the maximum qualification for eligibility to any post. Moreover, there are many job avenues in banks, railways, etc. which do not require subject specific qualification. At graduation level, one opts for two subjects, and the subject other than tribal studies could be a teaching subject in schools after the training of teacher's education.

The government also has a role to play to create job market by introducing tribal studies subject in union and state public service commissions. Masters in tribal studies may opt for specialisation in rural development, social work, law, human rights, etc. So, the government has to make provision for equivalence of a few interdisciplinary degrees and introduce NET on the subject. The trend has already set. There is the provision of NET for the students of Tribal and Regional Language, the degree which is provided only in one University of India, i.e. Ranchi University.

What is required is clarity of thought, strong will and a positive attitude to initiate the process at the level of the government.

Will the term tribe exist? If not then what will happen to the nomenclature of Tribal Studies?

The classificatory word tribe may be dropped to designate the people. But the people will continue to exist and will have a classificatory term for designation. The people may club with another group people or a part of the people may form a separate identity. As long as we are in the habit of classifying people the present tribal people will have a name. Moreover, with the changing time the names of earlier departments are changing.

To cite an example, history was a mere record of achievement of kings and nobles. Later it became a socio-economic interpretation of events of the past. Historiography became the important frame of discussion. Now the scope of history has expanded to include subaltern studies and history of non-literate societies. Accordingly, the name of the Department of History has changed in many Universities and the in some the Department has been bifurcated to focus on an earlier branch of History. So we have Department of Epigraphy, Department of Archaeology & Ancient History, Department of History, Culture and Ethnography, etc. Even the names of journals are changing to accommodate new ideas. For example, MAN changed to the Journal of Royal Anthropological Society.

Cannot sociology or social anthropology do the job of tribal studies?

Both the subjects have their own approach to knowledge. In it tribal studies will not get the due it deserves. Sociology has expanded its scope to the study of cyber society; gender, technology and development; technology and social relations; ICTs, deviance; and crime; governance and new technology; knowledge/information society, human rights; inter culturality, etc with the changing characteristics of society. Basically it studies contemporary social issues. There are many areas like finer aspects of human creativity that would not fit into the disciplinary frame of Sociology. Tribal studies will be a peripheral in its domain. Moreover, the approach to sociology will be the approach to study tribes. Hence tribal studies will not get a focused treatment. So will be the case with social anthropology.

How will the department benefit the tribals?

This will be a concerted effort to document tribal cultures and preserve the heritage of people. Further, their development needs will be appreciated in a better perspective. More so, the tribal people who consider themselves low in social status as compared to their non-tribal neighbours will have a sense of pride in them and in their culture. This will add dignity to their life. Dalits express their feelings through dalit studies. There is a sense of assertion of identity and pride in the group identity. Tribes require such a feeling. Perhaps one day they will organize for that. In fact there are such ventures and studies in other countries. Many foreign universities have introduced tribal/indigenous studies and established departments. By doing so we shall redeem our sins of keeping them in the periphery of social process so far though they have their part of contribution in it. The non-tribals will be aware of the rich cultural heritage in a sense of appreciation when it will be presented to them. Over all there will be an atmosphere of mutual recognition to each group's virtue. This is the need of the time for a conflict free and peaceful existence by appreciating the diversities and rejecting the idea of superior and inferior.