

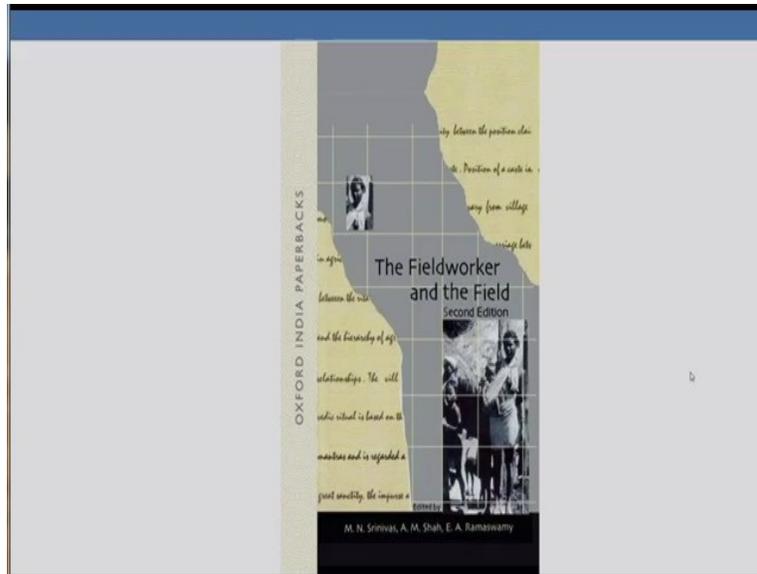
Development Research Methods
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Lecture-8
Week3, Lesson 2: The Fieldworker and the Field

Hello and welcome to the NPTEL MOOC's course on development research methods. In this class we will have a general reading of a very famous and a celebrated book titled "the Fieldworker and the Field". This book was edited by M.N. Srinivas, A.M. Shah and E.A. Ramaswamy. It is a very important book on the relationships between the field worker and the field and can be considered as one of the classics.

One of the reasons for introducing the students to this book is to impress upon the students the importance of going back to some of the classics and getting introduced to these readings before initiating research in the first place. Now there is another important reason why I thought this will be a very good introduction to the students as far as field work and field research is concerned that is primarily because this the authors, the scholars who have authored the papers in this book were largely conducting the research in the 1950s and the 1960s and it gives us a very good snapshot view of what were the challenges that they were facing during the early periods of social science research. The papers come mostly from the disciplines of sociology, social anthropology and economics as these were the disciplines that mostly ventured into field work during those times.

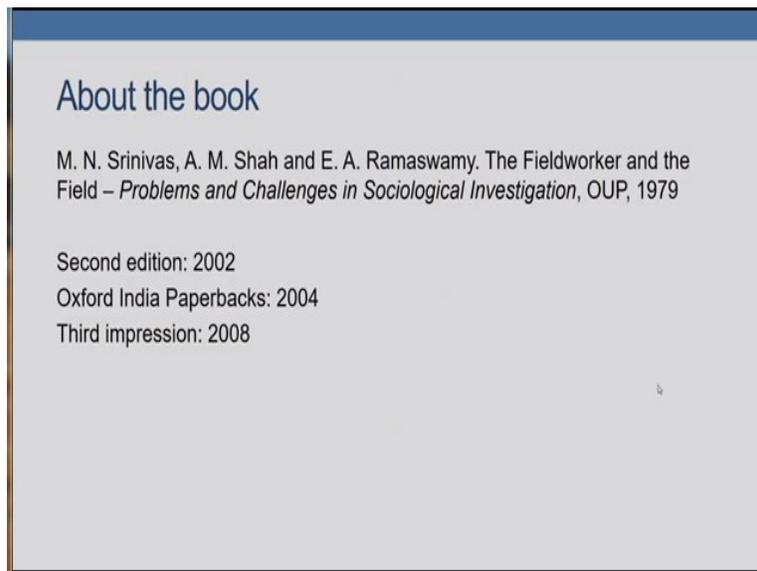
So, what I will do is to give you a very brief introduction to the articles contained in this book. And following which I have taken various sayings from the articles contained in this book particularly the article written by M.N. Srinivas himself who has been a sociologist par excellence, who was a socialist and a social anthropologist. And another article by Professor P.C Joshi who was a professor of economics particularly in the field of institutional economics who is also the director of Institute of Economic Growth in New Delhi. And a third article by Professor Khadija Gupta who was a sociologist. And these 3 articles together I have presented in this lesson exactly as it appears in the papers that they have written.

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So, let us get introduced to this book.

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This book is titled as I said the “Field Worker and the Field- Problems and Challenges in Sociological Investigation” which came out first through Oxford University press in 1979. So, far there are 2 editions of his book, the second edition came out in 2002 and for the purpose of this lesson I have used the second edition of 2002. Oxford India paperbacks came up in 2004 and a third impression of this book came in 2008.

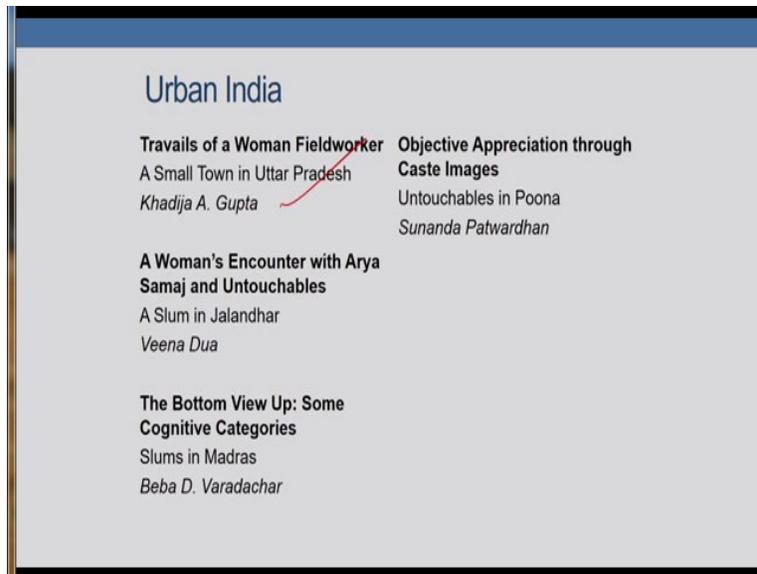
Now for a very serious student of field work, of all those researchers who are planning on taking field work you may consider this lesson some kind of a book reading session. Although all the articles contained in this book are a gem in themselves and it will actually not be possible for me to include all the papers in this lesson. However I have used my judgment in trying to bring some of the most important facets of what these scholars have considered as that should be kept in mind while initiating into field research. Therefore my judgment has a big role to play in introducing you to what I think is important and should be an important takeaway as far as this book is concerned.

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Rural India	
The Fieldworker and the Field A Village in Karnataka <i>M. N. Srinivas</i>	On Tracks and Tracts in my Fieldwork Rural Kerala <i>K. Raman Unni</i>
Studying the Present and the Past A Village in Gujarat <i>A. M. Shah</i>	Fieldwork Experience: Relived and Reconsidered Rural Uttar Pradesh <i>P. C. Joshi</i>
Experiences of an Encapsulated Observer A Village in Rajasthan <i>Anand Chakravarti</i>	

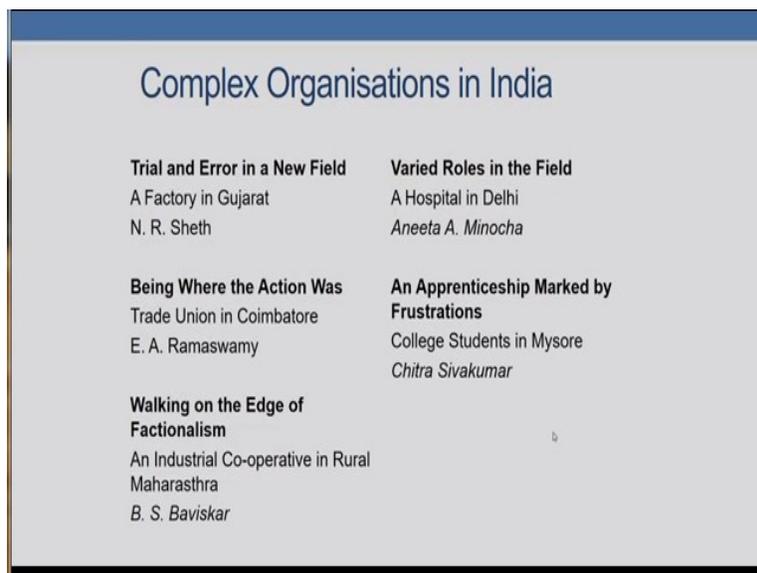
So, this book has been divided into 4 sections. One is on Rural India.

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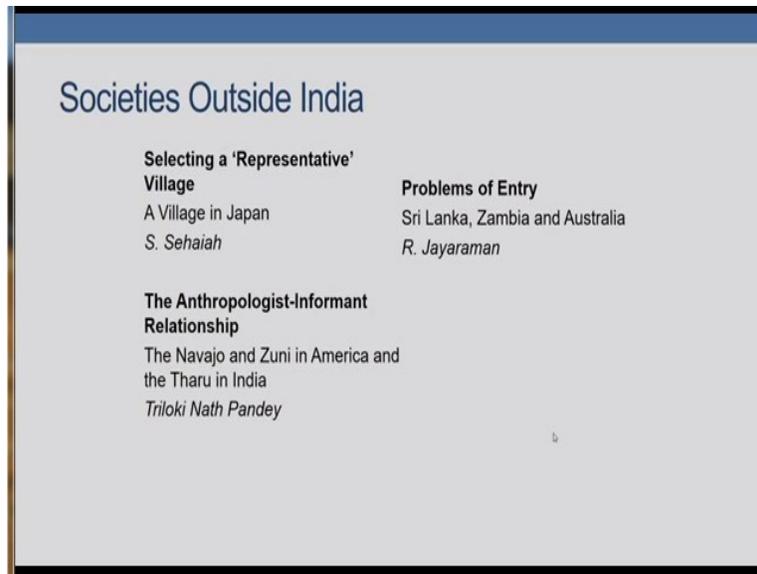
Second is on Urban India.

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Third is on Complex Organizations in India.

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And the fourth one is on Societies Outside India.

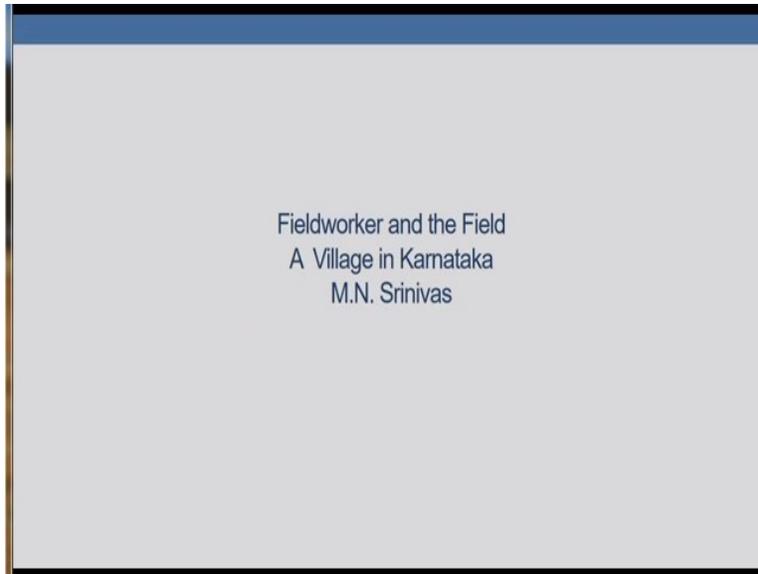
So, the papers that are contained in Rural India- there are 5 very important, very invaluable papers contained in the first part- Rural India. The first one is by M.N. Srinivas and which I will begin with for this lesson 'The Field Worker and the Field- a Village in Karnataka'. There is "Studying the Present and the Past a Village in Gujarat" by A.M. Shah. "Experiences of an Encapsulated Observer, A Village in Rajasthan" by Anand Chakravarti, "On Tracks and Tracts in My Field Work Rural Kerala" by K. Raman Unni and the final one is on "Fieldwork Experience Relived and Reconsidered- Rural Uttar Pradesh" P.C. Joshi. For the purpose of today's lesson I will be focusing on extracts from the "Fieldworker and the Field" by M.N. Srinivas and the "Fieldwork Experience Relived and Reconsidered from Rural Uttar Pradesh" by P.C. Joshi. So, these articles are mostly in the form of experiences that the scholars have come across or have lived while conducting village studies in India. And for anybody who is interested in looking at the different facets of village studies and how to carryout village studies, this is a highly recommended book that must be studied by anybody who is getting initiated to village studies research in India.

The second one is on Urban India. There are again 4 very interesting papers in this section. 'Travails of a Woman Fieldworker', the challenges faced by a woman fieldworker and what it means to be conducting development research in the complex organizations that Indian societies have. And this is an eye opener in terms of an important take away for woman researchers when

studying this paper by Khadija Gupta. Similarly a very interesting paper by Veena Dua on “A Woman’s Encounter with Arya Samaj and Untouchables- a Slum in Jalandhar”. “The Bottom View Up: Some Cognitive Categories Slums in Madras”, “Objective Appreciation Through Caste Images, Untouchables in Poona”. It is a pity I could not introduce all of these articles in this lesson. However keeping in mind the brevity that should be kept in mind given the hazardous of an online course, I have taken into account this very important paper on “Travails of a Woman Fieldworker”, so as to bring out some of the important things that a woman researcher goes through while getting initiated to research and that must be negotiated beforehand.

The last 2 sections which I have not covered in this lesson are “Complex Organizations in India”, there we have “Trial And Error in a New Field- a Factory in Gujarat”, “Being Where The Action Was, Trade Union In Coimbatore”, “Walking On The Edge Of Factionalism, An Industrial Co-Operative In Rural Maharashtra”, “Varied Roles In The Field, A Hospital In Delhi”, “An Apprenticeship Marked By Frustrations College Students In Mysore”. A final one, Societies Outside India, “Selecting a ‘Representative’ Village”. Usually when we are selecting the field of our study the doctoral committees as well as the set of reviewers who are reviewing a project reports or research outputs generally have a question about how representative our field study and these are questions that are very beautifully dealt with in this paper by S. Sehaiah- ‘Selecting A ‘Representative’ Village In A Village In Japan’. A paper by Triloki Nath Pandey on the “Anthropologist-Informant Relationship”, then “Problems of Entry of the Researcher from Sri Lanka, Zambia and Australia”. And I really hope that the students of this course can find this book and get initiated to readings in this book, and particularly those interested in doctoral research in the social sciences and aim to do fieldwork, this is a highly recommended book.

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So, as I have already said what I have planned to do in this lesson is to take the extracts from the 3 papers that I have identified as it is. And I have tried to bring the extracts from the papers as it is, so as to not compromise on what the authors themselves are trying to portray. Because any amount of paraphrasing or summarizing the notable scholars might lead to misconceptions and miscommunication. And therefore this lesson will be mostly in the form of communicating the extracts from the original articles of the very noted scholars of social sciences.

So, let us begin with “Fieldworker and the Field- a Village in Karnataka” by M.N. Srinivas. Students of social sciences would know that M.N. Srinivas was a very famous sociologist and as well as a social anthropologist. Concepts such as westernization, sanskritization, the dominant caste, the patron-client relationships- these are attributed to professor M.N. Srinivas and he devoted his lifetime to working on caste issues in India. So, this is his article on the village named Rampura which is a village 22 miles from Mysore on the Mysore-Malavalli road.

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Year: 1948

Place of stay: Rampura, a village 22 miles from Mysore on the Mysore-Malavalli Road.

This chapter refers to Srinivas' Rampura experience

Physical conditions

The accommodation that was made available to me was the cow-house of the headman situated about forty feet diagonally across the headman's main house. I shared my quarters with the headman's five pairs of plough-bullocks and one solitary bullock which was used for drawing a covered cart in which the headman or his sons occasionally travelled to their fields or to neighbouring villages. The northern portion of the cow-house was separated by a mud wall from the rest of the building and in it lived a Muslim client of the headman and his family....The snoring of the servants and villagers, and byways of the tiled roof provided the backdrop to my sleep at night.

And therefore this article refers to Srinivas's Rampura experiences and he has widely written on his Rampura experiences in various journals and research articles. So, he entered this village in the year 1948 and his fieldwork continued till about the 1950's. I have also already mentioned that the scholars that I have taken for this lesson where conducting their field studies in the 1950s largely, also in the 1960s. And let us understand what were the problems that they faced while conducting their fieldwork and if we have some lessons from their experiences.

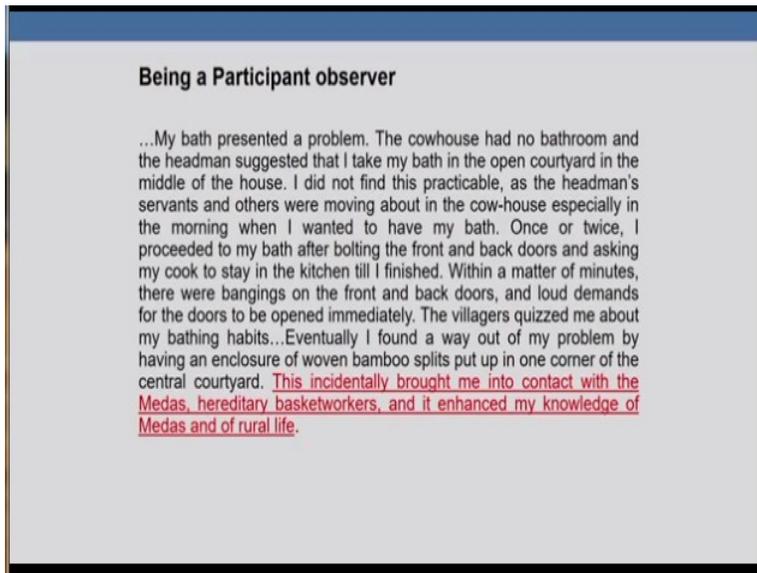
So, in this article on the 'Fieldworker and the Field' Srinivas basically talks about how he zeroed in on his field first that is Rampura village. And one of the first thing he discusses about the physical conditions in which he was put to when he was about to conduct his research. So, this is an extract from his article straightaway. He writes "the accommodation that was made available to me was the cow house of the headman situated about 40 feet diagonally across the headman's main house. I shared my quarters with the headman's 5 pairs plough-bullocks and one solitary bullock which was used for drawing a covered cart in which the headman or his sons occasionally travelled to their fields or to neighboring villages. The northern portion of the cow-house was separated by a mud wall from the rest of the building and in it lived a Muslim client of the headman and his family. The snoring of the servants and villagers and byways of the tiled roof provided the backdrop to my sleep at night."

Now I find this to be a very interesting passage from Srinivas's 'the Fieldworker and the Field'. First, he make it clear regarding the accommodation that he was put to which was the cow-house

of the headman. He was living in the family of the headman or the village leader and that was entry point to the village. He also mentions this sentence regarding the fact that there was one solitary bullock which was used for drawing a covered cart in which the headman or his sons occasionally travelled to their field or certain neighboring villages, also in a sense shows us the status of communication in the village that he was studying. So, the headman or the village leader himself use a bullock cart, so which means bullock cart was the most important mode of transport which could be afforded by the headman. So, the others in the village might not have the privilege of having access to a bullock cart even.

And other important thing that drew my attention to in this passage was the fact that the headman had a Muslim client which means a patron- client relationship in this village went across religious lines. And if you can read more articles of his Rampura experiences from different sources, you will see that Rampura also had a decent number of Muslim households. And the activities of the Muslim households were also delineated by the caste dynamics of the village. So, these are some of the important things that caught my attention and we could draw some conclusions from these narrations or experiences of the author.

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Being a Participant observer

...My bath presented a problem. The cowhouse had no bathroom and the headman suggested that I take my bath in the open courtyard in the middle of the house. I did not find this practicable, as the headman's servants and others were moving about in the cow-house especially in the morning when I wanted to have my bath. Once or twice, I proceeded to my bath after bolting the front and back doors and asking my cook to stay in the kitchen till I finished. Within a matter of minutes, there were bangings on the front and back doors, and loud demands for the doors to be opened immediately. The villagers quizzed me about my bathing habits...Eventually I found a way out of my problem by having an enclosure of woven bamboo splits put up in one corner of the central courtyard. This incidentally brought me into contact with the Medas, hereditary basketworkers, and it enhanced my knowledge of Medas and of rural life.

In the same paper in this article he goes on about some of his personal conditions while he was a researcher there and we can draw some of the conclusions about what being a participant

observer means. We talk often about participant observation and here the researcher is a participant himself and what can we draw from participant observation is something that I think is of importance in this extract.

So, he writes “my bath presented a problem. The cow-house had no bathroom and the headman suggested that I take my bath in the open courtyard in the middle of the house. I did not find this practicable, as the headman’s servants and others were moving about in the cow-house especially in the morning when I wanted to have my bath. Once or twice, I proceeded to my bath after bolting the front and back doors and asking my cook to stay in the kitchen till I finished. Within a matter of minutes there were bangings on the front and back doors, and loud demands for the doors to be opened immediately. The villagers quizzed me about my bathing habits... Eventually I found a way out of my problem by having an enclosure woven bamboo splits put up in one corner of the central courtyard. This incidentally brought me into contact with the Medas, hereditary basketworkers and it enhanced my knowledge of Medas and of rural life.”

In some of the subsequent classes from here you will also get introduced to field diaries as part of the course on development research methods. And this is an excellent example of how to maintain field diaries which may not form a part of your main research output, whether it is a dissertation or a thesis or a research project. But these fields’ notes can give you insights into how you have come in contact with different people and categorize them once you have come out of the field.

So, this is an example of how Srinivas mentions from which incident that connects he came across the Medas, a caste category who were hereditary basketworkers. And how his communication, his conversations with the Medas enhanced his understanding about the rural life that he was investigating into. So, this I think is a very good example of what participant observation can help us draw from the research.

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Caste and factions in village

On my first and 'scouting' visit to Rampura, I was told that it as a 'united' village unlike neighbouring villages which were faction-ridden. I very soon discovered that this was only an establishment myth. A day or two after I had settled down in the village, I went to a teashop and there a young man from the Peasant caste asked me who I was and what I was doing in the village. (He had already heard about me.) When I had explained to him the reason for my stay in Rampura he admonished me that if I were desirous of presenting a 'true picture' of village life I should not stay in one part of the village meeting and talking with only a few but go all over the village and talk to everyone...

He has gone into detailed description about caste and factions in the village that he was studying with some comic anecdotes also about how he is being single and his single status became a hurdle in his being able to conduct research. In the 1950s of a Karnataka village as an able bodied male researcher, it was looked down upon as being single and not being a married scholar. And how not being married and being in a village conducting research also created hurdles for him in interviewing younger girls. And therefore he could not have a perspective on what the younger woman of the village feel about the rural life. So, these are certain anecdotal narrations that he has in this village and in this paper which can inform us about how to write down our experiences in field diaries.

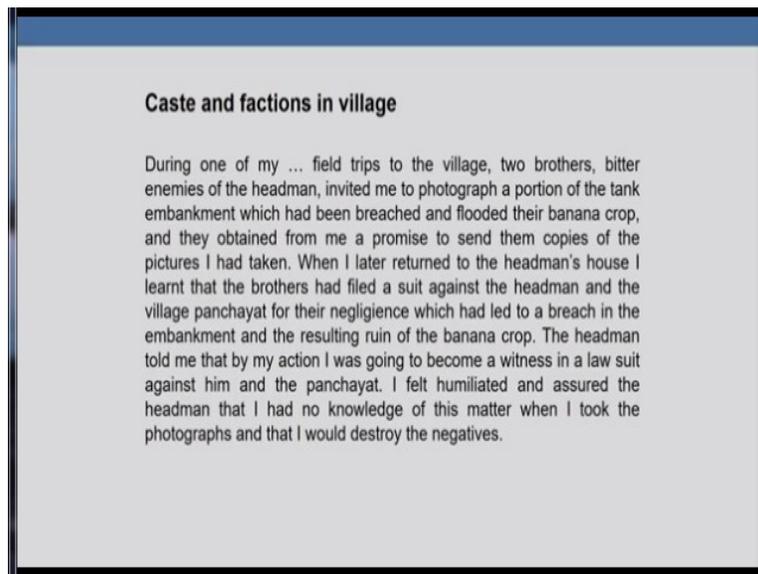
Now this is an example of caste and factions that he talks about in his village Rampura- “on first and ‘scouting’ visit to Rampura, I was told that it is a united village unlike neighboring villages which were faction-ridden. I very soon discovered that this was only an establishment myth. A day or two after I had settled down in the village, I went to a tea shop and there a young man from the peasant caste asked who I was and what I was doing in the village. (He had already heard about me.) When I had explained to him the reason for my stay in Rampura, he admonished me that if I were desirous of presenting a true picture of village life, I should not stay in one part of the village meeting and talking with only a few but go all over the village and talk to everyone...”

Now this is a very important lesson to new researchers who when entering a village or entering a field for their study talk about sample selection. Now before we enter into the issues of choosing a sample or selecting a sample, it is very necessary, it is very important for a researcher to establish contact with different sections of population within a village or the field that we have chosen. Because there might be different worldviews and different perceptions that are coming from different categories and any one category or any one person cannot give a representative view of a certain village. So, if Srinivas went with the initial view that he had about Rampura of being a united village bereft of any factions in the village the perceptions might have been coloured and it would have been a misconception to portray the same in his writings. So, this is an example of how to establish contact with different people within the village, so that we can have a better understanding and come up with better conclusions.

Going on about caste and factions this is another example that I have brought out in the form of an extract. "I soon learnt that there were two main factions in the village, one of them led by the headman and the other by two or three younger men who resented the headman's hegemony over the village." Now remember here that Srinivas is staying for the sake of conducting his fieldwork, his fieldwork in this phase of Rampura continued for over 10 months. And during this period he was staying in the house of the village headman. So, obviously it would have created some kind of a stir within the village among the otherwise subservient castes or subservient groups who might have had notions against Srinivas about staying in the headmans village.

But as a researcher it is researcher's responsibility then to ensure that his or her access to other groups does not get limited because of his or her attachment to a particular group such as in the case of the headman's case in here. So, he writes that the latter group avoided the headman's part of the village. Indeed many others also avoided walking past the cow-house or on the headman's street for fear that the headman or one of his sons would entrust them with the job which would take them away from their main work. The headman had made a fine art of utilizing everyone's time and energy for his work. So, this is an example of how the headman or the village leader used his privilege of being the village leader in making use of others' time and energy for his own benefit. So, in a way he was free riding on others' time and energy and how privilege can create those social networks and which is also some form of economic discrimination, some kind of economic exploitation, if that can be taken as a conclusion from this passage.

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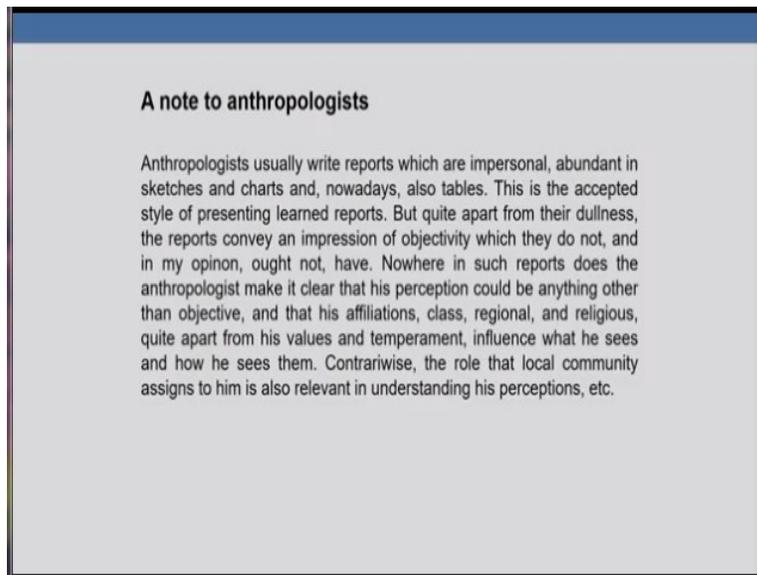


He has another interesting thing to say about caste and factions in his village, he writes that “during one of my field trips to the village, two brothers, bitter enemies of the headman, invited me to photograph a portion of the tank embankment which had been breached and flooded their banana crop. And they obtained from me a promise to send them copies of the pictures I had taken. When I later returned to the headman’s house I learnt that the brothers had filed a suit against the headman and the village panchayat for their negligence which had let to a breach in the embankment and the resulting ruin of the banana crop. The headman told me that by my action I was going to become a witness in a law suit against him and the panchayat. I felt humiliated and assured the headman that I had no knowledge of this matter when I took the photographs and that I would destroy the negatives.”

Now I think this is a very important description of events as far as the researcher coming in between, getting sandwiched in the politics of the village is concerned. And this is an important thing to keep in mind for researchers who are planning to stay for a longer duration in their field. Because one of the things to keep in mind here is that the researcher here has approached a field to investigate a certain question or a set questions. Now in the process of investigation in social science as development research, development research it is but natural for you communicate to various groups within a locality or a region. However it is always important to maintain a safe distance from various factions within the field. Often it becomes impossible to take to maintain a

safe distance because the researchers' own worldview also comes in conflict with the worldviews of the participants within the village also. And this is a tricky situation to be in. However this is where the presence of mind and the theoretical background of what we have studied in our literature, there is a reason to keep going back to the questions that we have asked in our research project which will enable us to decide what distance to keep with the participants.

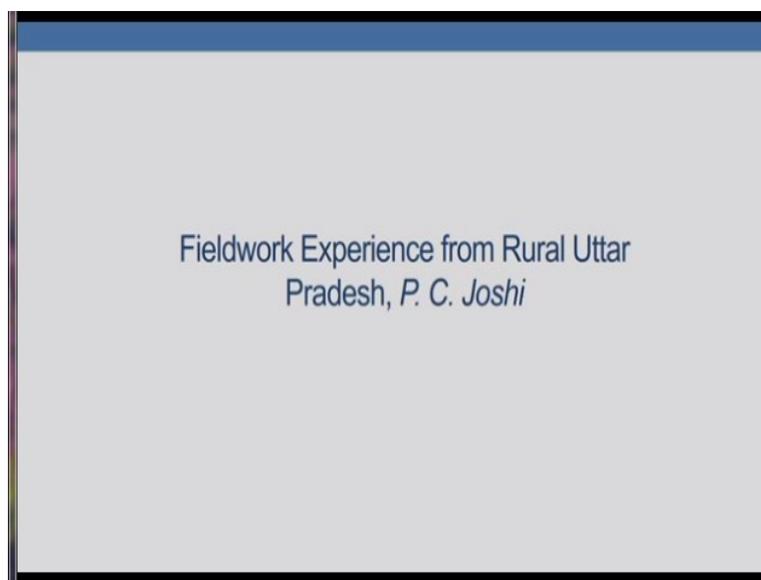
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Now among the various things that he write in his article on ‘the Fieldworker and the Field’, there is a final note to anthropologists which I will end with as far as Srinivas’s article is concerned. He writes that “anthropologists usually write reports which are impersonal, abundant in sketches and charts and nowadays also tables. This is the accepted style of presenting learned reports. But quite apart from their dullness, the reports convey an impression of objectivity which they do not and in my opinion ought not have.” So, this is this issue of objectivity of a researcher and this is something that haunts every social science researcher whether you are coming from sociology or anthropology or economics. When you have gone to the field, about how much objectivity you are maintaining, particularly in the field of economics often there is a question of how objective is your data. And this is something which has been a matter of serious debate across disciplines about how to maintain objectivity. And in response to that we can consider Srinivas’s thoughts about whether objectivity should be maintained or not.

He goes on “nowhere in such reports does the anthropologist make it clear that his perception could be anything other than objective and that his affiliations, class, regional and religious, quite apart from his values and temperament influence what he sees and how he sees them. Contrariwise the role that local community assigns to him is also relevant in understanding his perceptions etc.” So, I will end M.N. Srinivas’s ‘Fieldworker and the Field’ with this final note to anthropologist. However I would urge the students to take up his articles on these issues in more detail if possible.

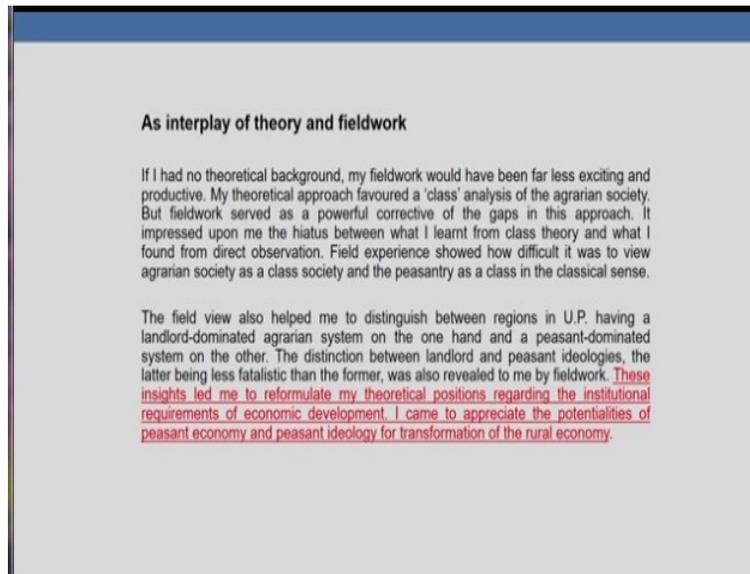
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Now let us move to the second scholar P.C. Joshi, who was conducting his research in Uttar Pradesh in the 1950s and P.C. Joshi was an economist particularly in the field of institutional economics. He worked under the supervision of the very noted scholar Radhakamal Mukerjee and he always add this conflict between in fact in his paper on the “Fieldwork Experiences from Rural Uttar Pradesh” he is focusing on this conflict between theory and practice, and this is something that we have discussed in the beginning of our course. And about the conflicts that arises between theory and empiricism, when to focus on theory, how theoretical considerations breakdown when we are in the field and how the researcher needs to come back and juxtapose the findings from the field with the theoretical training that the researcher might have had. So, again in this article based upon P.C. Joshi’s article also I have taken some of the important

extracts from his article and in no way can I claim that I have covered his article completely. However I have taken extracts which I think are relevant for the audience of this course.

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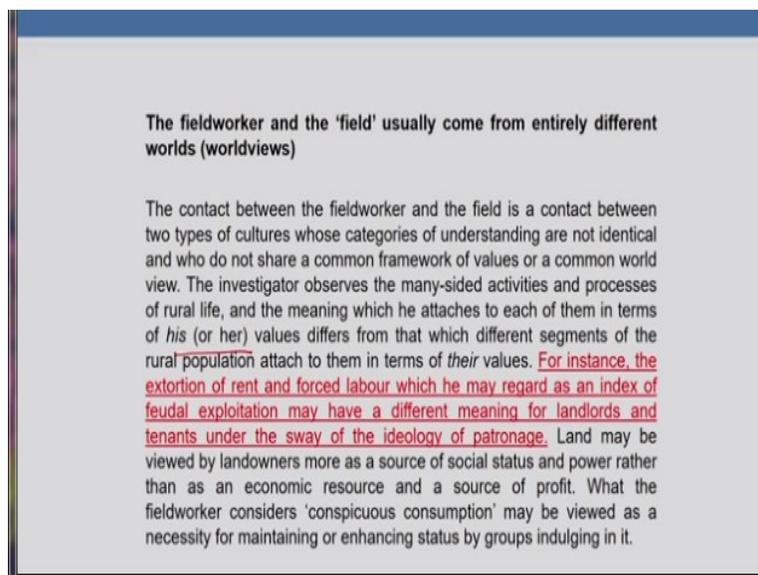
So, among the various things I think he begins with this question about interplay of theory and fieldwork about there are certain theoretical considerations that a researcher has to bear in mind because of the literature review that the researcher has done. And the questions that the researcher has asked before beginning the study and then there are a separate set of issues that crop up in the field work. So, there is an interplay of theory and fieldwork and how to balance between the two.

He writes “if I had no theoretical background, my fieldwork could have been far less exciting and productive. My theoretical approach favored a ‘class’ analysis of the agrarian society. But fieldwork served as a powerful corrective of the gaps in this approach. It impressed upon me the hiatus between what I learnt from class theory and what I found from direct observation. Field experiences showed how difficult it was to view agrarian society as a class society and the peasantry as a class in the classical sense.” All those students who are introduced to agrarian studies or to development economics, who have keen interest in class analysis will find these extracts more interesting as far as how to think in terms of conceptual frameworks, theoretical considerations and how to reconcile them when we are getting to fieldwork. "

“The field view also helped me to distinguish between regions in Uttar Pradesh having a landlord dominated agrarian system on the one hand and a peasant-dominated system on the other. The distinction between landlord and peasant ideologies, the latter being less fatalistic than the former was also revealed to me by fieldwork.” This is a very interesting finding that is coming from his fieldwork and in fact these findings later forms theories that we consider as takeaways from a study of rural society or rural economy.

Often while studying the rural economy, one of the characteristics that is mentioned of the Indian rural economy is that of farmers being fatalistic in nature. And I think in that context this is a very important finding that Joshi is talking about where the distinction between the landlord and peasant ideologies. The worldviews that these two different sets of or categories or classes of people come from- landlords and the peasants, these two different ideologies, the latter or the peasant ideologies being less fatalistic than the former was also reveal to me by my field work. And this is a very important contribution the theory as far as agrarian studies or research in agrarian studies is concerned. He writes that “these insights let me to reformulate my theoretical positions regarding the institutional requirements of economic development. And I came to appreciate the potentialities of peasant economy and peasant ideology for transformation of the rural economy.”

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The fieldworker and the 'field' usually come from entirely different worlds (worldviews)

The contact between the fieldworker and the field is a contact between two types of cultures whose categories of understanding are not identical and who do not share a common framework of values or a common world view. The investigator observes the many-sided activities and processes of rural life, and the meaning which he attaches to each of them in terms of *his* (or her) values differs from that which different segments of the rural population attach to them in terms of *their* values. For instance, the extortion of rent and forced labour which he may regard as an index of feudal exploitation may have a different meaning for landlords and tenants under the sway of the ideology of patronage. Land may be viewed by landowners more as a source of social status and power rather than as an economic resource and a source of profit. What the fieldworker considers 'conspicuous consumption' may be viewed as a necessity for maintaining or enhancing status by groups indulging in it.

He also has very important points to talk about the fieldworker and the field or the different worldviews of the fieldworker and the field. So, the fieldworker here is basically the research investigator, the researcher and the field is not just the geographical location but the whole gamut of participants, the complex categories, social categories or social class and caste categories of people who comprise what we refer to as the participants.

So, in that context he writes about the following, “the contact between the fieldworker and the field is a contact between two types of cultures whose categories of understanding are not identical and who do not share a common framework of values or a common worldview.” In the subsequent classes that are coming up, I will be taking examples of complementary feeding practices in certain community. And when you are approaching the field as research investigator, you have certain prior information about how things are, how things should be, what is the ideal state that we are trying to achieve. Whereas the community that you are studying is living in their realities where they may or may not have notions of what the ideal standard is, but they also have a standard. Now how do we reconcile with these kinds of issues because we are coming from two different worldviews. The researcher/investigator has a certain worldview about how things should be, the community may have a separate worldview about how things should be. So, how does one reconcile between these issues. I think we can have takeaways on this from P.C. Joshi’s article on when he conducted his fieldwork in the 1950s.

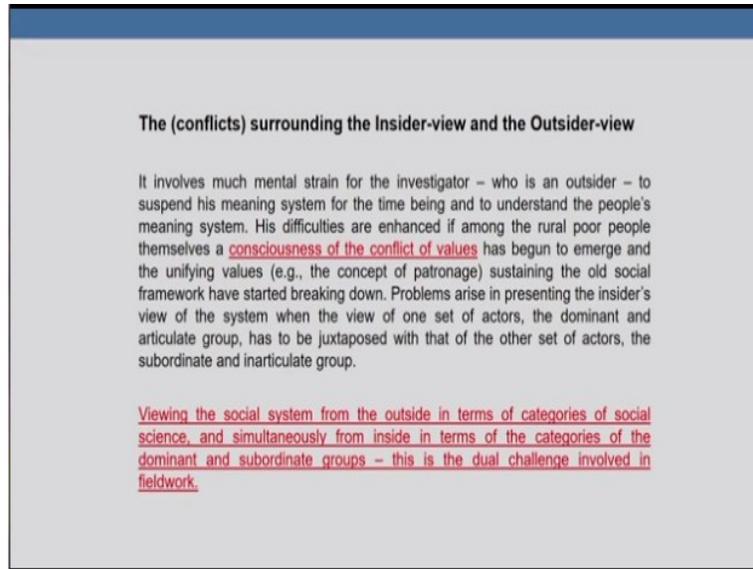
So, he writes that “the investigator observes the many sided activities and processes of rural life and the meaning which he attaches to each of them in terms of his values differs from that which different segments of the rural population attach to them in terms of their values.” Note that these scholars were writing largely in the 50s, and the 60s and the language of writing then mostly focused on the masculine haze rather than on her. But we can safely assume that what they meant here is researchers including both genders. So, I have added ‘her’ in here. Joshi does not refer to her in his article.

So, I will repeat this “the investigator observes the many sided activities and processes of rural life and the meaning which he attaches to each of them in terms of his values differs from that which different segments of the rural population attach to them in terms of their values. For instance the extortion of rent and forced labour which he may regard as an index of feudal

exploitation” which he regard as in the researcher may regard as an index of feudal exploitation “may have a different meaning for landlords and tenants under the sway of the ideology of patronage.” So, in the case of if there is an ideology of patronage which prevails, the landlord and the peasant who is under the domination of the landlord might seemingly have a very harmonious relationship. Although to the researcher it might not seem as being in sync or being in a very harmonious relationship.

“Land maybe viewed by land owners more as a source of social status and power rather than as an economic resource and a source of profit. What the fieldworker considers conspicuous consumption maybe viewed as necessity for maintaining or enhancing status by groups indulging in it.” Now it is also important how we can bring out these questions of conflict as far as the researcher and the field, the fieldworker and the field is concerned. Because being able come out with these conflicts will also inform how we can interpret our results and the findings emanating from the field.

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The (conflicts) surrounding the Insider-view and the Outsider-view

It involves much mental strain for the investigator – who is an outsider – to suspend his meaning system for the time being and to understand the people's meaning system. His difficulties are enhanced if among the rural poor people themselves a consciousness of the conflict of values has begun to emerge and the unifying values (e.g., the concept of patronage) sustaining the old social framework have started breaking down. Problems arise in presenting the insider's view of the system when the view of one set of actors, the dominant and articulate group, has to be juxtaposed with that of the other set of actors, the subordinate and inarticulate group.

Viewing the social system from the outside in terms of categories of social science, and simultaneously from inside in terms of the categories of the dominant and subordinate groups – this is the dual challenge involved in fieldwork.

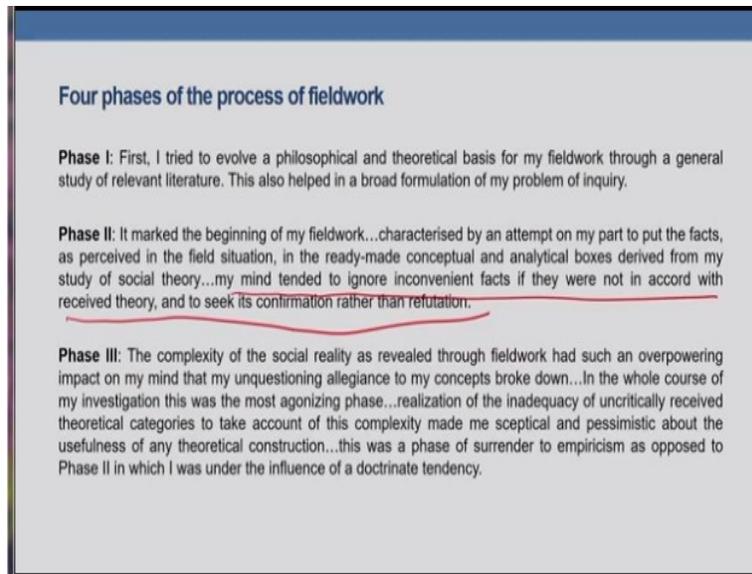
Moving on. Following from the last extract. P.C. Joshi also excellently brings out the conflicts surrounding the insider view and the outsider view. The insider view is mostly coming from the field, the participants, and the people who are living in the field. In our case in the rural areas it is the households, the families, the peasant families, the landlord families. So, there is an insider

view. And the outsider view is coming from the researcher or the investigator. So, there he writes “it involves much mental strain for the investigator who is an outsider to suspend his meaning system for the time being and to understand the people’s meaning system. His difficulties are enhanced if among the rural poor people themselves a consciousness of the conflict of values has begun to emerge and the unifying values (example the concept of patronage) sustaining the old social framework has started breaking down. Problems arising in presenting the insiders’ view of the system when the view of one set of actors, the dominant and articulate group, has to be juxtaposed with that of the other set of actors the subordinate and inarticulate group.” Now this is a very complex situation that he is trying to portray here.

Now in the last passage we saw about the investigator view regarding extortion, when we talked about extortion of rent and forced labour as an index of feudal exploitation being considered by the research investigator. But there might be seemingly harmonious relationship between the landlord and the peasants because of the ideology of patronage. But what if this idea of ideology of patronage has started breaking down and there are subservient groups that have started questioning these ideas of patronage. And therefore there are multiple views within the field, the views of the subservient groups and the views of the dominant groups. Then it becomes a very difficult task for the outsider who in this case the research investigator to be able to juxtapose both of these views in the form of the insider view and bring out in the form of research.

So, viewing the social system from the outside in terms of categories of social science and simultaneously from inside in terms of the categories of the dominant and subordinate groups- this is the dual challenge involved in fieldwork. I think this is a very important challenge that we can highlight as a generic challenge when they are initiating research in development studies or any form of social science.

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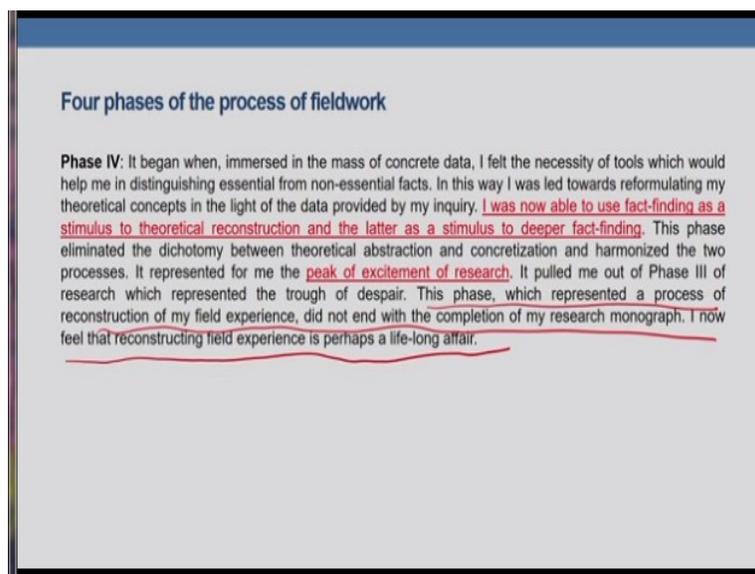
Now based upon P.C. Joshi's article on rural Uttar Pradesh his experiences on rural Uttar Pradesh, he has come up with the narratives of the 4 phases that he went through from the initiation of field research till the completion of it. Now I am presenting this as some kind of a general phases that researchers go through while conducting fieldwork although these phases are entirely taken from P.C. Joshi's experience from U.P verbatim, as he has mentioned in his article. So, what are the 4 phases that he thinks are important?

So, the phase 1 he writes, "First I try to evolve a philosophical and theoretical basis for my fieldwork through a general study of relevant literature. This also helped in a broad formulation of my problem of inquiry." So, this is a very generic phase 1, in which most researchers, through which all researchers have to go through. Phase 2 he writes "it marked the beginning of my fieldwork characterized by an attempt on my part to put the facts as perceived in the field situation, in the readymade conceptual and analytical boxes derived from my study of social theory.... my mind tended to ignore inconvenient facts if they were not in accord with received theory and to seek its confirmation rather than refutation." Now this I think is important which most researchers conducting fieldwork go through where when we come across with facts which are not in tandem with the theoretical construct that we have come across or we have studied, we are trying to adhere to, then we simply try to reject those inconvenient findings rather than probing deeper into it. And this is something that P.C. Joshi is also highlighting as one of the phases of his research work while he was conducting fieldwork.

Of phase 3 he writes “the complexity of the social reality as revealed through fieldwork had such an overpowering impact on my mind that my unquestioning allegiance to my concepts broke down.” Remember that he begins with his theoretical tendency of trying to do a class analysis of rural economy that he is studying. So, he writes that the findings of the fieldwork had such an overpowering impact on his mind that his unquestioning allegiance to his concepts broke down. “In the whole course of my investigation this was the most agonizing phase.... realization of the inadequacy of uncritically received theoretical categories to take a count of this complexity made me skeptical and pessimistic about the usefulness of any theoretical construction.”

And this is another very important familiar phase of researchers where we begin with the theoretical construct and the complex social realities of field research particularly in the field of development studies or development research is such that it becomes increasingly difficult for the researcher to adhere to the social construct that we have began with. So, “this was a phase of surrender to empiricism as opposed to phase 2 in which I was under the influence of a doctrinate tendency.” So, in phase 2 the researcher’s mind tended to ignore inconvenient facts because he wants to adhere to the theoretical construct that he has begun with. Whereas in phase 3 the complexity of social reality is so overwhelming that he is bound to give up the social construct that he began with and focus only on empiricism. So, these are the contradictions the researcher faces while being able to interpret the research findings coming from the field.

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Four phases of the process of fieldwork

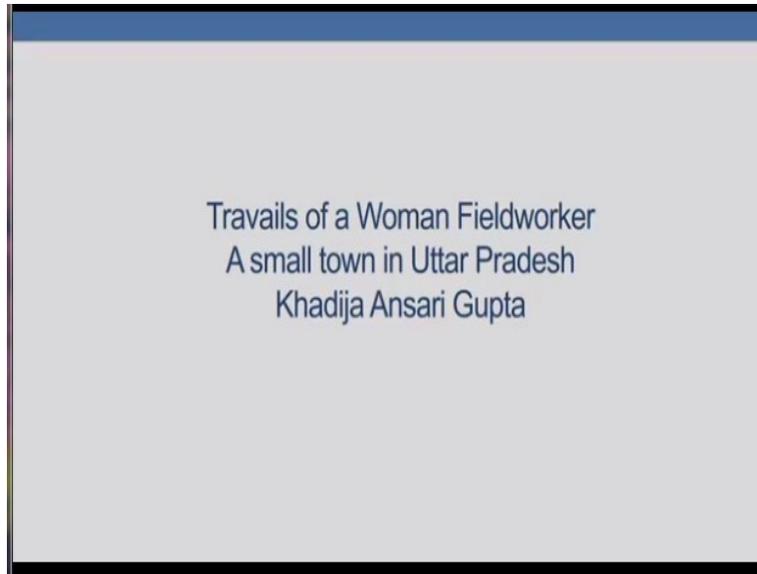
Phase IV: It began when, immersed in the mass of concrete data, I felt the necessity of tools which would help me in distinguishing essential from non-essential facts. In this way I was led towards reformulating my theoretical concepts in the light of the data provided by my inquiry. I was now able to use fact-finding as a stimulus to theoretical reconstruction and the latter as a stimulus to deeper fact-finding. This phase eliminated the dichotomy between theoretical abstraction and concretization and harmonized the two processes. It represented for me the peak of excitement of research. It pulled me out of Phase III of research which represented the trough of despair. This phase, which represented a process of reconstruction of my field experience, did not end with the completion of my research monograph. I now feel that reconstructing field experience is perhaps a life-long affair.

The phase 4 is very interesting that he highlights and I think he is one of the important takeaways as far as the mental process of the researcher undergoing research is concerned. He writes “it began when, immersed in the mass of concrete data I felt the necessity of tools which would help me in distinguishing essential from non-essential facts. In this way I was led towards reformulating my theoretical concepts in light of the data provided by my inquiry.” I think this is something very important which informs research methods, we have talked about research processes and how it is best to go back and forth as far as formulating a research question is concerned, moving towards research findings and then coming back to the research questions that we have formulated. And this is an important example of this back and forth process of the different stages of research that we are initiating.

“I was now able to use fact finding as a stimulus to theoretical reconstruction and the latter as a stimulus to deeper fact finding.” So, this is the back and forth process that we have been talking about. “This phase eliminated the dichotomy between theoretical abstraction and concretization and harmonized the two processes. It represented for me the peak of excitement of research. It pulled me out of phase 3 of research which represented the trough of despair. This phase which represented a process of reconstruction of my field experience did not end with a completion of my research monograph.” This is important. “This phase which represented a process of reconstruction of my field experience did not end with a completion of my research monograph. I now feel that reconstructing field experience is perhaps a lifelong affair.”

Often when we talk about expertise or experts in the fields of social science is experts in the field of development studies, this is exactly what we are talking about. When you are introduced to a field. When you are introduced to your area of study or a problem of study, essentially we are trying to bring out a research monograph or research output. But the experience take with you for a very longtime and it is a lifelong affair. And the expertise mostly comes from these experiences that we have endured or we have had while investigating the research problem.

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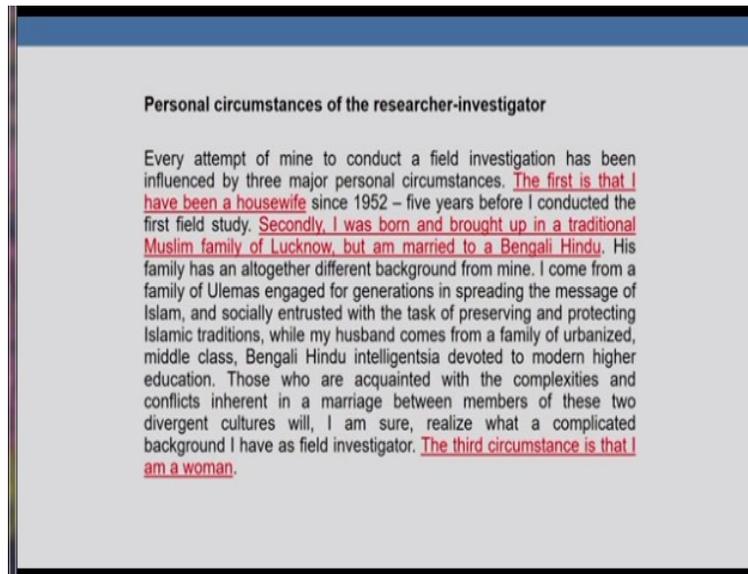


So, I will end P.C Joshi, although P.C. Joshi's article on his experience in Uttar Pradesh has many more important components. He talks about his experiences of where he began his class analysis, how he came about this form of research. He is also talking about the influences that his teachers in his college, in his university had on his research and how the contradictions in his research also came from the contradictory and often the debated styles of supervision that was coming from his teachers. He also talks about how he was informed about the research that he is undertaking from the writings of various communist leaders and scholars. Because he was primarily a communist and his training has come from that philosophical worldview. And then ultimately he goes on about how he came to balance this idea of empiricism and theoretical considerations. And therefore I would highly recommend this article for anybody who wants to enter into these kinds of research.

I will end today's lesson with this third article by Khadija Ansari Gupta because it talks about the challenges that a woman fieldworker faces when trying to pursue a development question particularly in the field of social sciences. And it is important because here the researcher is not working within a lab environment. With a researcher moves out to the fields, whether it is in the rural areas or in the urban areas or different kinds of setups and the researcher meets people from different walks and sections of life. And what are the challenges that come when a women researcher is negotiating her space for research. And therefore my judgment inform me that I

should include some extracts from Khadija Ansari Gupta's papers on "Travails of a Woman Fieldworker a Small Town in Uttar Pradesh".

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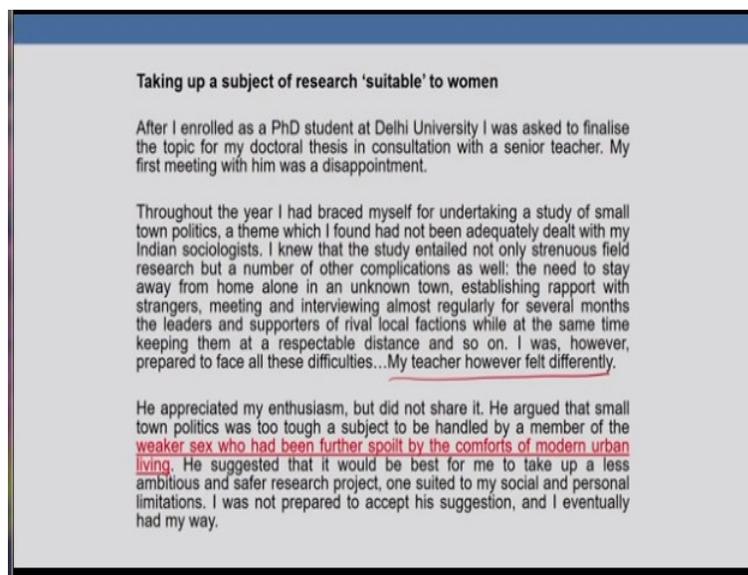
She begins her write up explaining her personal circumstances of the researcher, her personal circumstances, which I have titled as 'personal circumstances of the researcher/investigator' in trying to make it sound as one of the generic things that all researchers should think about. Note that P.C. Joshi and M.N. Srinivas's papers in the same book does not have any reflections on the personal circumstances of being a researcher. They have no considerations. They might have had considerations, but they are not focused much about how whether or not they have negotiated their space of being able to conduct research in the first place. Because this is something that male researchers do not have to battle a lot with. And therefore I think this is something that to be kept in mind, the gender notions of what research a male researcher or a female researcher can or cannot do. Therefore it is appropriate that she began writing this article explaining a personal circumstances of being a researcher.

So, she writes "every attempt of mine to conduct a field investigation has been influenced by three major personal circumstances. The first is that I have been a housewife since 1952- five years before I conducted the first field study." So, which means she has been in a marital relationship before conducting a field study. "Secondly I was born and brought up in a traditional

Muslim family of Lucknow but am married to a Bengali Hindu. His family has an altogether different background from mine. I come from a family of Ulemas, engaged for generations in spreading the message of Islam and socially entrusted with the task of preserving and protecting Islamic traditions while my husband comes from a family of urbanized middle class Bengali Hindu intelligentsia devoted to modern higher education. Those who are acquainted with the complexities and conflicts inherent in a marriage between members of these two divergent cultures will, I am sure, realize with a complicated background I have as field investigator. And the third circumstance is that I am a woman.” So, this extract, this passage is self-explanatory.

Khadija Gupta is here trying to bring out her personal circumstances, the complexities of her personal situation in being able to conduct the research in the first place. And that is not something that can be discounted as far as the researcher being able to interpret the research findings also is concerned. Because when the researcher is negotiating with negotiating space for being able to conduct research that also has a lot of implications as far as the final outcome of research is concerned, also the process of research is concerned. And you will presently see how the personal circumstances of the researcher here informed the field or the selection of field for the research is concerned and that is what I am trying to drive at through these extracts that I have selected.

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Taking up a subject of research 'suitable' to women

After I enrolled as a PhD student at Delhi University I was asked to finalise the topic for my doctoral thesis in consultation with a senior teacher. My first meeting with him was a disappointment.

Throughout the year I had braced myself for undertaking a study of small town politics, a theme which I found had not been adequately dealt with by Indian sociologists. I knew that the study entailed not only strenuous field research but a number of other complications as well: the need to stay away from home alone in an unknown town, establishing rapport with strangers, meeting and interviewing almost regularly for several months the leaders and supporters of rival local factions while at the same time keeping them at a respectable distance and so on. I was, however, prepared to face all these difficulties...My teacher however felt differently.

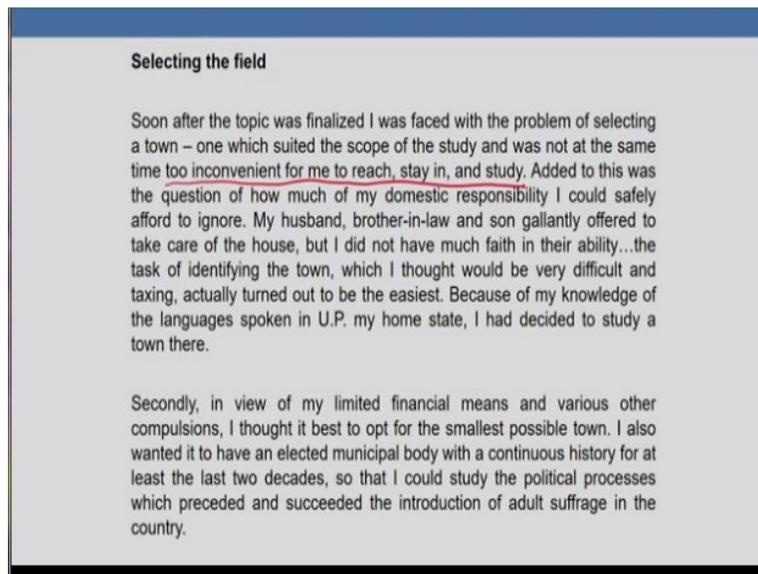
He appreciated my enthusiasm, but did not share it. He argued that small town politics was too tough a subject to be handled by a member of the weaker sex who had been further spoilt by the comforts of modern urban living. He suggested that it would be best for me to take up a less ambitious and safer research project, one suited to my social and personal limitations. I was not prepared to accept his suggestion, and I eventually had my way.

Second thing she writes about is taking up a subject of research suitable to woman. I have titled it as such although she has not titled it as such in her paper. But she writes “after I enrolled as a PhD student at Delhi University, I was asked to finalize the topic for my doctoral thesis in consultation with a senior teacher. My first meeting with him was a disappointment. Throughout the year I had braced myself for undertaking a study of small town politics. A theme which I found had not been adequately dealt with by Indian sociologists. I knew that the study entailed not only strenuous field research but a number of other complications as well. The need to stay away from home alone in an unknown town, establishing rapport with strangers, meeting and interviewing almost regularly for several months- the leaders and supporters of rival local factions while at the same time keeping them at a respectable distance and so on. I was however prepared to face all these difficulties... my teacher however felt differently. So, he appreciated my enthusiasm but did not share it, he argued that small town politics was too tough a subject to be handled by a member of the weaker sex, who had been further spoilt by the comforts of modern urban living. He suggested that it would be best for me take up a less ambitious and safer research project, one suited to my social and personal limitations. I was not prepared to accept his suggestion and I eventually had my way.”

So, this passage gives as an insight into the preconceived notions that people generally have about who should conduct what kind of research. And what are the best ways of going about doing research, M.N. Srinivas in his paper on the ‘Fieldworker and the Field’ also make some mention about couple- husband and wife anthropologists conducting research together in a village vis-a-vis single unmarried scholars conducting research in a rural society. He also talks about the problems that he faced as being unmarried and how he could not bring out the perceptions of the unmarried younger woman of the village primarily because of he himself being unmarried. So, his marital status had a big role to play as far as he is not being able to bring out the perceptions of the younger woman in the village that he was studying. Although not similar but similar notions of gender play a very important role in researchers being able to identify a research question that can be investigated.

So, this is a prime example what we see from Khadija Gupta’s extract of her supervisor or her teacher not being encouraging of her to conduct study on small town politics as it was not becoming of a woman, it was not possible for a woman to go ahead and do it.

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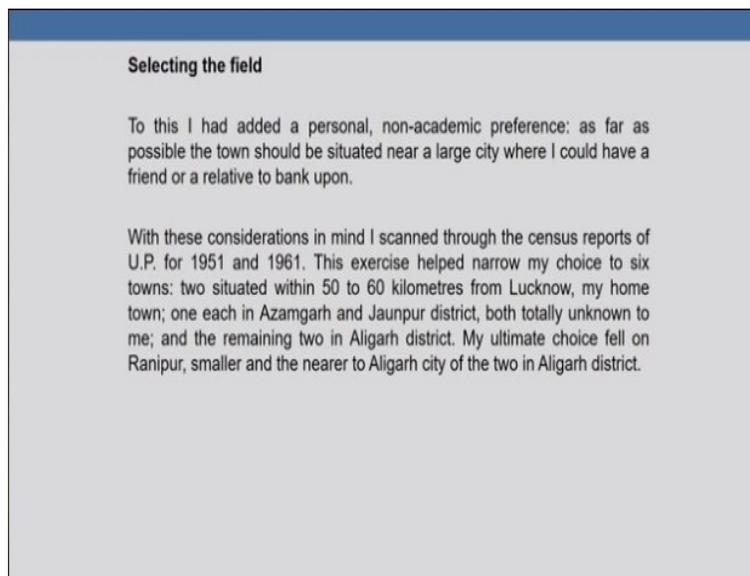
Selecting the field, and I think this is the most important part as far as research methods is concerned that we can take from Khadija Gupta's paper. She writes, "Soon after the topic was finalized I was faced with the problem of selecting a town- one which suited the scope of a study and was not at the same time too inconvenient for me reach, stay in, and study." So, this is something that I tell my students also. And as researchers we have continuous discussions about purposive sampling and random sampling, about how to choose a locality- whether doctoral committees and research reviewers usually have these questions about whether the sample has been conveniently chosen, purposively chosen or whether you have had a proper scientific analysis and then come up with a study area. There are debates surrounding all of these issues and the thing to keep in mind when these debates come up is what is the question that we are investigating and if the question that we are investigating is being answered by a purposive sample, then we must go ahead and go and do a purposive sample also. However the methods of inquiry must be kept in mind and we must try to reduce biases as much as possible.

Moving on, she writes "added to this was the question of how much of my domestic responsibility I could safely afford to ignore. My husband, brother-in-law, and son gallantly offered to take care of the house but I did not have much faith in their ability. The task of identifying the town which I thought would be very difficult and taxing actually turned out to be the easiest. Because of my knowledge of a languages spoken in U.P my home state, I had

decided to study a town there.” Now, for the research committees this is clearly a convenient sample, a purposive sample.

“Secondly in view of my limited financial means and various other compulsions I thought it best to opt for the smallest possible town.” This is which what is informing research methods. “I also wanted it to have an elected municipal body with a continuous history for at least the last decades. So that I could study the political processes which preceded and succeeded the introduction of adult suffrage in the country.” She is talking about the 1950s remember and therefore which preceded and succeeded the introduction of adult suffrage in the country. Often we talk about data availability when we are approaching the field, will we be able to collect enough data so that it can pass the test of interpretation. So this is something that we can take from here.

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She writes “to this I had added a personal non-academic preference: as far as possible the town should be situated near a large city where I could have a friend or a relative to bank upon. With these considerations in mind I scanned through the census reports of U.P for 1951 and 1961. This exercise helped narrow my choice to 6 towns; two situated within 50 to 60 kilometers from Lucknow, my home town; one each in Azamgarh and Jaunpur district both totally unknown to

me; and the remaining two in Aligarh district. My ultimate choice fell on Ranipur, smaller and the nearer to Aligarh city of the two in Aligarh district.”

In the next extract we will see what were the problems she faced of having decide to focus her study in Aligarh.

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Negotiating (gendered space, freedom to research)

I met my brother in Aligarh to tell him about the study I was hoping to make with his assistance. He was shocked, perturbed, and annoyed in turn. Shocked because I, belonging to such a respectable family, had thought it fit to move among the uncultured, rustic townsmen, and that too to study their petty politicking. Perturbed because he was genuinely worried about the safety of his sister in a strange town which he felt must be populated by a gang of hoodlums. And annoyed at the prospect of what people would think of him if his sister went ahead with her crazy research. I had earlier rebelled against the family by marrying a Bengali Hindu, and he must have thought that I was up to my old ways again. The upshot was a family get-together attended, among others, by my husband who was summoned from Delhi specifically for this purpose. Other participants included my brother, his wife, my sister, and her husband. I attended the meeting more as an 'accused' than as a participant. A heated discussion ensued which soon degenerated into a brawl. Eventually my husband persuaded my kith and kin to let me proceed with my study.

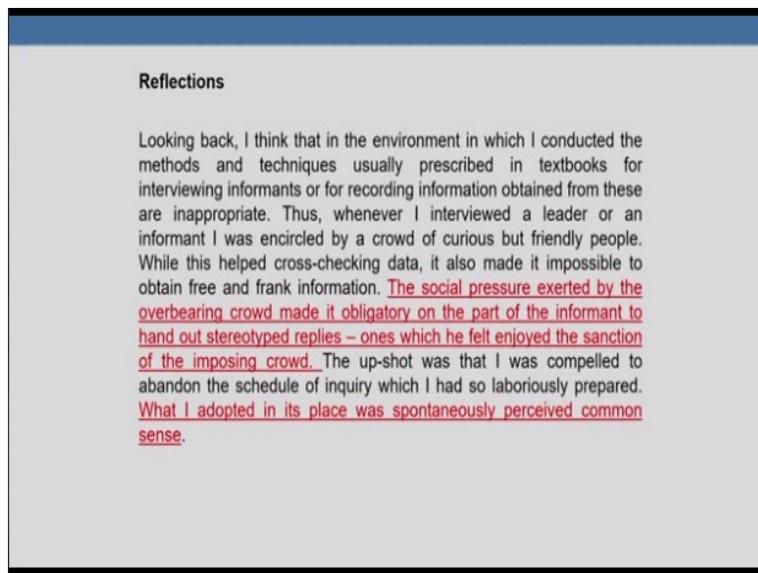
And this is where I title it as 'negotiating gender space in the freedom to research' and this is something that most woman researchers will identify with, woman researchers in the field of development studies and development practice will identify with. "I met my brother in Aligarh." Now Khadija Gupta's brother was a medical practitioner in Aligarh and that was also one of the reasons why she decided on conducting her study in the district of Aligarh.

So, in that context she writes "I met my brother in Aligarh to tell him about the study I was hoping to make with his assistance. He was shocked, perturbed and annoyed in turn. Shocked because I, belonging to such a respectable family had thought it fit to move among the uncultured rustic townsmen and that too to study their petty politicking. Perturbed because he was genuinely worried about the safety of his sister in a strange town which he felt must be populated by a gang of hoodlums. And annoyed at the prospect of what people would think of

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So, this is an agonizing process as far as the woman researcher is concerned when one is negotiating with the space and freedom to be able to conduct research. Ultimately it required a lot of support from her husband for being able to carry out the research in the first place.

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Let me end today’s lesson with Khadija Ansari’s final reflections on her research. Her research is also very important in the sense that there are some publications out of it in which she talks about the petty politicking of small towns in Uttar Pradesh with Ranipur as one of the prime examples. But I found the reflections for this article to be of very of much interest and I think that can be the final takeaway for our course on development research methods as far as sticking to a research question is concerned.

So, she writes “looking back I think that in the environment in which I conducted the methods and techniques usually prescribed in textbooks for interviewing informants or for recording information obtained from these are inappropriate. Thus, whenever I interviewed a leader or an informant I was encircled by a crowd of curious but friendly people. While this helped cross-checking data, it also made it impossible to obtain free and frank information. The social pressure exerted by the overbearing crowd made it obligatory on the part of the informant to hand out stereotyped replies- ones which he felt enjoyed the sanction of the imposing crowd.” In survey methods when we are conducting field services this is one of the reductions that goes out of the field investigators that the place of research should be identified very carefully. And the survey schedules or the survey questionnaire should never be canvassed in places where it is accessible to by the public. If you are interviewing a particular family, a particular key informant, it should be in a place where it is not accessed by the public. And this is precisely the reason why it is not allowed because usually the respondents might want to respond to a question in a manner which receive sanction from those others present for fear of being prejudiced against.

“The up-shot was that I was compelled to abandon the schedule of inquiry which I had so laboriously prepared. What I adopted in its place was spontaneously perceived common sense.” And I will end today’s lesson with this takeaway regarding the perception of common sense of the researchers, of the research investigators themselves while we are interviewing a key informant or investigating the research question that we have identified.

So, this is a highly recommended book as I keep saying, and all the papers in this book have a variety and richness of information that can become stepping stone to being able to conduct research. Although this is a dated book in the sense that some of the articles are very old which was written primarily the 1950s, 60s- the fieldwork was conducted in the 50s and the 60s. The book as I said first came out in 1979. So, in that sense some of the articles are dated but nevertheless this is an important book in terms of informing research methods and could be taken as one of the guides and introductory books for all those interested in conducting serious fieldwork and field research.

I will end today’s class with this and see you in the next class, thank you.

