

An Ethnographic Study of Slum Life of Tribal Children of Patiala City

Paper Submission: 11/02/2021, Date of Acceptance: 22/02/2021, Date of Publication: 23/02/2021



Narinder Singh

Lecturer,
Department of Sociology,
Government Degree College,
Ramgarh, Jammu & Kashmir,
India

Abstract

Poor people in urban areas have no place to live in as it is unaffordable for them to purchase plots of land. Thus, they are left with no other option but to live in slums. It has also been accepted that poverty cannot be simply understood in terms of income. It is a loss of adequate livelihood which includes people's entitlement to necessary goods and empowerment to exercise some control over their own life. It is a crisis that damage lives and affects people differently and may continue to affect throughout the life. This research paper titled 'An Ethnographic study of Slum Life of Tribal Children of Patiala City' is an effort to get an insight into the slum life of tribal children of Patiala city of Punjab. According to the Census 2011, in India, there are 93, 05, 5983 persons are living in slums and in Punjab, about 27, 98, 256 persons are living in slums. To have an indepth insight into their slum life tribal respondents' statements are recorded in 'verbatim'. These statements will help us to empathise with their routine life struggle to earn bread. Few tribal children inform, '*Kayee bachae sawere uth ke kuda chakan chale jandene.*' (After awakening in the morning, many children move to rag-picking).

Keywords: Slum, Tribal Children, Ethnographic, Routine Life, Verbatim.

Introduction

According to a widely accepted definition, the slum is "A residential area in which the housing is so deteriorated, so substandard and so unwholesome as to be a menace to the health, safety, morality or welfare of the occupants" (Hunter 1968). Today over 880 million people are estimated to be living in slum-like conditions in the developing world's cities (United Nations 2015). According to the Census 2011, in India, there are 93, 05, 5983 persons are living in slums and in Punjab, about 27, 98, 256 persons are living in slums (Census of Punjab 2011).

Poor people in urban areas have no place to live in as it is unaffordable for them to purchase plots of land. Thus, they are left with no other option but to live in slums. It has also been accepted that poverty cannot be simply understood in terms of income. It is a loss of adequate livelihood which includes people's entitlement to necessary goods and empowerment to exercise some control over their own life. It is a crisis that damage lives and affects people differently and may continue to affect throughout the life.

This is also in the case of tribal children whom life is very hard. Children engaged in various type of labour toil 5-6 hours every day. After doing labour their body is exhausted and not able to do study. Tribal settlements are not safe haven for them. They are rampant with the problem of sanitation with blocked sewerage and drainage system. Almost all tribal settlements are enclosed by heap of trash as they are engaged in scrap trading. Thus, tribal settlements have turned into breeding grounds for mosquitoes and many infectious diseases. The whole *basti* is tightly aired with foul smell. Respondents facing troubles in the rainy season are expressed in this way, '*Meenh de dina ch basti bich paani bhar janda hai te asin jaag ke raat katde haan.*' Meaning, 'In rainy season, these *bastis* are flooded with water and they pass nights by remaining awake.

Objectives of the Study

The following are the major objectives of the present study:

1. To socio-economic conditions of tribal children.
2. To study the quotidian life and daily activities of tribal children.
3. To get insight into the socio-economic problems of daily life.
4. To comprehend the hardships and sufferings experienced by tribal children.

Methodology

The present study is conducted in Patiala city of Punjab well known as *shahi-shehar*, the Royal city. Eight tribal settlements have been identified in the Patiala city. It includes Bazigar and Sikligar *bastis* opposite to the PRTC (PEPSU Road Transport Corporation) Workshop, Sikligar *basti* at Rajpura colony (near bus stand), Ghihare *basti* at Kishan Nagar (near Lakad Mandi), Dehe *bastis* at Bhim Nagar, Kailash Nagar, Sanauri Adda and Dhuru di Majri. A total of 366 respondents belonging to 06-15 years age group have been taken for the study.

The research design for the present study is primarily exploratory and descriptive in nature. It is exploratory because at the first stage it involved the provision of insights into the research topic and comprehension of the situation. Some of the popular methods of exploratory research used in the research include literature survey which of course is true for all types of research followed by field observations, depth interviews and group meetings with the respondents and other concerned members of the family and community. (<http://www.differencebetween.com/difference-between-descriptive-and-vs-exploratory-research/ixzz39FANdgzL>).

Ecological Settings of Tribal *Bastis*

Eight tribal settlements, under study are in the form of hamlets. Before going into the minute detail of each tribal settlement it is important to point out that all these settlements share some common features in terms of ecological setting. Each tribal household has single room where three to four generations may live together including the newly married couple. Ghihare of Kishan Nagar, Dehe of Sanauri Adda, Bhim Nagar and Kailash Nagar deal with scrap. It is for the reason that these *bastis* are flooded with trash, filth and dirt. Worst part is that these settlements have no proper drainage system. Lets delineate the picture of condition prevailing in eight tribal settlements one by one as given below:

1. Bazigar *basti* opposite to the PRTC Workshop is situated on the road from Patiala to Nabha on the state highway. This *basti* is a cluster of houses, situated closely. It has different type of houses. Largely, it has mixed type of houses made with cement, bricks, mud and wood. The compound or *vehra* is mostly smeared with a layer of cow dung. There is usually one public tap. Bazigar household comprises of sleeping quarters, open chullah at compound, and a bathroom. A few Bazigar households have gas stoves and LPG connections too, though they do cooking on a *chulah*. In one corner of each tribal settlement is situated the ancestral shrine or *devasthan* in the form of an altar (*chauntra*).
2. Sikligar *basti* opposite to the PRTC Workshop is also situated on the same road from Patiala to Nabha. This *basti* has similar type of houses made with cement, bricks, mud and wood etc. The *vehra* or the compound is smeared with a layer of cow dung. There is

one public tap and one common bathroom both for males and females. Sikligar households comprise of sleeping quarters, open chullah in the street, and a bathroom in deteriorated condition. Very few Sikligar households have gas stoves. They have no kitchen. Usually three or four households share common *chullah* installed at the corner of a street.

3. Sikligar *basti* at Rajpura Colony is situated near ISBT (Inter State Bus Terminal) Patiala. This *basti* holds *jhuggis* (makeshift shelters or shanties) that are without any *vehra* or compound. There is one common bathroom. It is in deteriorated condition, on the road side enclosed with four inch brick walls on three sides having no door. In order to save their honour ladies wake up early in the morning to take bath when city life is sleeping. For answering the call of nature they go to open fields. In this way one to two hours are wasted.
4. Dehe *bastis* at Sanauri Adda and Kailash Nagar and Ghihare *basti* at Kishan Nagar are having the same ecological setting, housing pattern and living conditions as noticed in Sikligar *basti* at Rajpura Colony. Primarily, the residents of these *bastis* deal with scrap.
5. Dehe *bastis* at Bhim Nagar and Dhuru di Majri are relatively in better conditions in terms of their housing patterns and living conditions. Semi-pucca houses are in overwhelming number followed by pucca and kuchha. Generally, the houses are comprised of one sleeping quarter, kitchen, open chullah in the compound and a bathroom.

Almost in all the tribal settlements proper bathrooms or toilets are missing. In some tribal *bastis* there is one common tap of water while some have no tap at all. Some children do not take bath in morning time; some take bath after two or three days. To fetch water for drinking, bathing, washing, cleaning and other purposes, children wake up early in the morning and stand in a queue. In this way one to two hours are wasted.

Open Defecation

Due to urbanization and development, there is no free space to answer the call of nature. In Ghihare *basti* of Kishan Nagar there is no tap of water and for which they go to a nearby area. In this way one to two hours are wasted. They have no bathroom. They do not have space to make cemented bathrooms. Even makeshift bathrooms are covered with polythene sheets on three sides having no door to bolt from inside. Young girls and women use this type of bathroom. In brief, all tribal *bastis* have deteriorated conditions of living.

Poor Sanitation Facilities

Bazigar of Opposite PRTC workshop, Dehe of Dhuru di Majri and Bhim Nagar households have their private bathrooms with deplorable condition. Sanitation facilities in Deha *basti* of Kailash Nagar and Sanauri Adda are in dismal condition. Drains are blocked. Pits are brimmed with water. In the rainy

season these turn into breeding grounds for mosquitoes and foul smell. Leaving aside Bazigar *basti*, bathrooms in all other tribal settlements are in deteriorated condition with no door to bolt from inside. For urination and call of nature the tribal people go to open fields, nullah, vacant plots or on roadside. Domestic animals like goats and dogs share the same courtyard along with human beings. They use *chulah* for cooking.

Tribal households do not have toilet rooms. In this regard respondents inform in the manner, '*Jinan de ghar latrine nahin hai oh bath room karan leyi bahar khetan bich jande ne*'. Meaning, 'Those respondents households are not having toilet room facility they go to open fields for answering the call of nature.' '*Bathroom karan leyi asin nale kol jande haan. Kayeebari nala pani nal bhar janda hai. Sade na ethe nale bich ik janani da bachha dubh ke chala geya si*'. (For answering the call of nature we go at nullah. At many occasions, it overflows with water. In our colony one baby was drowned into it.) Due to non-availability of proper bathrooms and toilet facility tribal students reach their school late. In many instances they go to school without having a bath. For these activities they are punished by their teachers. In such filthy conditions of living there are probabilities of spreading epidemic in the area. Above prevailing conditions disturbs their study.

A few family members sleep on ground and others on *rehris* (handcart) or cots. It is obvious that in rainy nights some family members cannot sleep by lying on ground. In windy or stormy nights their *jhuggis* (shanties) covered with polythene sheets are swept away. They pass freezing cold nights without

blankets and quilts to protect them from the cold. They pass winter season by burning wood, tyres or plastic scrap material.

Power Cuts

All tribal settlements face problem of power cuts. Many a time, due to electricity cut they awake all the nights because they do not have inverters. In summer nights owing to power cuts they awake all the nights and passed the time by sitting and lying down on the roadside. It is because *bastis* are very congested and not airy. In addition to it, they are breeding ground for mosquitoes. In case of power cuts in the summer nights, they stated '*Jadon bijli nahin hundi pakhhi chol ke raat kad-de haan*'. Meaning, 'When there are power cuts, we pass nights by waving hand-fans'. During summer days, children go for swimming in *Bhakhra* canal. Many a times there are night long power cuts. In the absence of electricity we awake all night or spend the night by sitting in the open. Some even sleep on roadside. '*Jadon light nahin hundi te gali bich manjhe daa lende haan*'. Meaning, 'In the event of power cuts (in the colony), cots are placed outside in streets for bedding.' Dehe respondents of Sanauri Adda stated, '*Garmiyen de dina bich light nahin hon te asin sadak de kande so jande haan*' Meaning, 'We lie on roadside in the event of power cuts in summer season.'

Table 1.1 is made to know about the daily routine activities of non-school going children which include dropouts and child labourer. The responses of the non- school going respondents are highlighted as:

Table 1.1
Break up of daily activities of non-school going respondents

Daily Activities	Non School going Children					
	6:30A.M-7:00 A.M	7:00 A.M - 8:30AM	8:30A.M-9:00 A.M	9:00AM-5:00 PM	5:30 P.M	5:30 P.M – 9:00 P.M
Activities	Get up	Brushing, toilet, bathing and breakfast	Move to work	Remain at work	Come back to home	Play, watch television, take dinner

Table 1.1 depicts that non-school going respondents wake up between 6:30-7:00 A.M. By 8:30 A.M they complete all daily routine activities like brushing, toilet, bathing and breakfast. By 9 O'clock they move to their work place and remain there 5 O'clock depending upon the nature of job. Generally, by 5:30 P.M, they come back to their homes.

Rag Picking- their Social World

Generally, non-school going tribal children wake up early in the morning. They go for rag-picking. It includes Gihare and Dehe children of Sanauri Adda, Kailash Nagar and Bhim Nagar. After one to two hours they come back to their respective residences. As per the daily routine activities they go for answering the call of nature, brushing the teeth and bathing. Later on, they move to their work places. On an average, children upto 09 years age remain at homes. Either they go for playing, rag-picking or simply loiter in the streets. Children help their parents in the occupation of rag-picking. Few tribal children

inform, '*Kayee bachae sawere uth ke kuda chakan chale jandene*.' After awakening in the morning, many children move to rag-picking).

Water Shortage

In the morning, water runs from the tap for two hours. Tribal children (both boys and girls) stand in a queue to store water for drinking, washing and other domestic purposes. In summer season, water supply is not regular. This creates the problem of water crisis before them which they handle in the manner, '*Jadon pani nahin aunda hai te asin door-door ton pani bhar ke leyaida hai*'. Meaning, 'When there is a problem of water crisis we bring water from far off places.'

Consumption of Stale Food

Generally, in the breakfast, they take *basi roti* (stale food) or double *roti* (bread), rusks etc. with tea. This is quite clear in the statement, '*Sawere wele chaa naal roti kha lende haan yaan phir raat di bachi hoi roti nu garam karke khandehaan. Kayee baar*

bhukhe bi school chale jandehaan. Meaning, 'In the breakfast, we take *roti* and tea or stale food. Often we go to school without having a breakfast.' Above facts have revealed and substantiated that tribals living in Patiala are living in a very deplorable condition. They are still neglected and marginalised part of the society. Their routine life is fraught with hardships and sufferings.

Conclusions

Economic disparities germinate social disabilities and deprivations in terms of education, health, power, prestige, shelter, food, clothing etc. This is quite visible in the presence of several social groups which are ranked one above the other in terms of power, prestige, education and wealth. Tribal groups fall in the lowest rung of the society in many respects like education, income, standard of living, permanent shelter, property, power and more so like. Their socio-economic handicaps transmit from one generation to the next. Despite their efforts they are unable to come out of the vicious circle of poverty as depicted in the statement, '*Asin taan garibi ch paida howe haan, garibi bich hi mar jana hai, eh saadi takdeer hai*' (We are destined to remain destitute throughout our life till death).

It is not because of their *takdeer* (destiny) they are poor. They seem to be poor on account of uneven process of development. Their socio-economic disabilities are structurally designed in the uneven process of development'. It is observed that some areas develop and other remains backward, some communities become rich, prosperous and educated and other remains otherwise. This is also true in the case of tribes of India in general and of Patiala specific.

References

1. *Census of India (Punjab) 2001 and 2011*. Chandigarh: Government of Punjab.
2. Ibbetson, D. and H.A. Rose .1970(1883). *A Glossary of the Tribes and Castes of the Punjab and North –West Frontier Province* (vol. II).Patiala: Languages, Department Punjab.

4. Kaur, Balwinder.2015. '*The Study on Slum Population and Improvement Programs of Slums in Punjab*,' *International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications*, Vol. 5, Issue 5, May, ISSN 2250-3153
5. Kaur, Harinder. 2012. *Socio-Cultural Factors Related to Environmental Degradation: A Study of Patiala District of Punjab*. Ph.D. Thesis (unpublished). Patiala: Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology, Punjabi University.
6. Sharma, Suman.1996.*Educational Opportunities and Tribal Children: Urban-Rural-Tribal*. Udaipur:Shiva Publishers Distributers.
7. Singh, Birinder Pal.2010.'*Criminal*' Tribes of Punjab: A Social- Anthropological Inquiry. New Delhi: Routledge.
8. Singh, K.S. 1998. *People of India- India's Communities (A-G), National Series (vol. IV)*. Anthropological Survey of India. Delhi, Calcutta, Chennai, Mumbai: Oxford University Press.
9. Sujatha, K. 1998. *Evaluation of Quality Improvement Programmes in Education: A Study in Tribal Areas of Vishakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh*. New Delhi: NIEPA.
10. Vadhera, Namarta.2012. *Rise and Fall of Hockey in Punjab: A Sociological Analysis*.
11. Ph.D. Thesis (unpublished). Patiala: Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology, Punjabi University.

Websites

12. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Everyday_life#cite_ref-1
13. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kho_kho
14. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Patiala>
15. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Poverty_in_India
16. <http://hdrc.undp.org.in/childrenandpoverty>
17. <http://www.differencebetween.com/difference-between- descriptive-and-vs- exploratory-research/#ixzz39FANdgzL>
18. http://www.economics.illinois.edu/people/candidates/documents/Rahul_Sirohi-Jmp-ph
19. http://mhrd.gov.in/rtehttp://nac.nic.in/pdf/final_dnt_recommendations.pdf