



“The Realities Becoming Visible”

KEYWORDS

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I. Introduction

The two philosophical debate on knowledge i.e. 'knowledge originates after experience' and 'knowledge is innate.' The conscious study of our subconscious mind would proof that mind is more complex and it goes beyond so called; experience. We can elaborate further the various modes of experience, one is physical (visual, smell, touch, hearing and taste), and the other mental (our knowledge of language, reasoning capacities, logic, mathematics). Philosophically through Plato's work till the contemporary work, epistemologist tried to define knowledge in terms of justified true belief technically termed as JTB (here knowledge is implied to the knowledge of the external world in the initiative stage which later developed further into knowledge internal knowledge, social epistemology, virtue epistemology etc.). The problem of knowledge lies in the justification for justification again lies in the conjunction of the modes and the medium such as the senses, the objects, and the other external factors. However, Descartes claims that senses cannot be reliable sources of knowledge because senses can deceived and the most critical part is that what we can experience in our waking state we can experience in our dream state also. So, we encounter the paradox of objective reality as it is and how it appears and how we cognitively perceives it (Descartes illustration on distance tower clock that appear round when it is square in shape). So, how do we claim our knowledge of the external world?

Given an effective option, the reliable resources without being skeptical about the existence of the external world, it is the best option we have in our hand. From the work of Sigmund Freud, Bertrand Russell, David Hume's and their contemporaries we came to know that how the social factors plays an important role in the process of forming knowledge. It may seem simplistic way to say that knowledge is culture specific, if we say that we face different forms and loose the center of knowledge. Knowledge becomes a byproduct of geography, language and the external exposure. This take us closer to 'nature'. And it can be studied only through fieldwork.

Fieldwork, a consensus among anthropologist and sociologist, is a distinctive practice. Practiced in a variety of settings, fieldwork has been regarded as an essential marking to the disciplines. Providing a detailed and intimate understanding, fieldwork, encompasses a deep insights into the reality (ies). Acquiring both qualitative and quantitative data from a detailed and lengthy complex observations and building progressive ideas and understandings.

As a practitioner of fieldwork, it is important to be always on the edge, and keep our minds open to all the possible ideas that we are given with. Sticking to what have been conceived or thought might be harmful and might delaminate various possible sides to the answers one have set foot to seek for. The objectives and the methodologies thus follow suit according to the changes you make, though the framework might remain intact, the fieldwork one started might take drastic turns when faced with the 'reality'. So it is important now to question what is 'reality', how do we know what is 'real'? In addition, which is not 'real'? And the challenges of theory versus practice and traditional method versus modern methods

II. Data collected through secondary sources:

The researcher first visited the village for a pilot study in November 2015 for a general transact walk and general village ethnography keeping in mind the information provided by the Indian government census of 2011¹ to find out that the information provided were quite questionable. One, lower number of household and therefore lower population, and two it question the ongoing question of how reliable the government census is.

The village records and church records were found to be quite reliable with multiple crosschecks. But again most of them are written down either during some jubilee of the village or that of the church's jubilee; mostly based on oral history and life histories. The question one is necessary to question is thus, how reliable oral traditions and oral histories are. One of the major sources of any traditional values – be it about life, death, religion, or nature, is the oral tradition. And among the Aos oral tradition plays a major role in any traditional event. It is told that the Aos which have rich oral tradition and no written material account of its past is explained by a belief; this belief is that the written account was taken away by a dog (*shikepnungzülubaazü-ishirao*). Therefore, almost all the folklore which are orally transmitted and passed on have been modified time and again according to the teller as well as by the listener themselves. One of the aspects of oral tradition is the scope of addition and subtraction according to time and the person. So the question still remains on how reliable are oral histories? Maybe the nearest we can get to the actual "reality" is cross checking with different informants or may be employ a group discussion among the elder informants, and make them correct themselves on what and how they represent the "reality" of the past.

III Fieldwork and Modes of Skepticism:

When a researcher involves himself or herself in fieldwork, one encounter numerous complex phenomena and what actually appears to him or her cannot be the reality of what is appeared and portrayed to researcher. Remembering this, it is important for a researcher at certain point to answer certain questions, like-

- Do the ethnographic account we present, represent the reality?
- Is it just mere collection and portrayal of the appearances?

To answer this questions, one need to address on the modes of skepticism which are supposed to force you to suspend judgment because you cannot know or cannot be certain.

The usual tradition amongst older skeptics is that the "modes" by which "suspension" is supposed to be brought about are ten in number; and they also given them synonymous names of "arguments" and "positions". That are these: the first, based on the variety of animals; the second, on the differences in human beings; the third, on the different structures of the organs of sense; the fourth, on the circumstantial conditions; the fifth, on positions and intervals and locations; the sixth, on intermixtures; the seventh, on the quantities and formations of the underlying objects; the eight, on the fact of relativity; the ninth, on the frequency or rarity of occurrence; the tenth, on the disciplines and customs and laws, the legendary beliefs and the dogmatic convictions. This order, however,

we adopt without prejudice.

As superordinate to these there stand three modes—based on the subject who judges, that on the object judged, and that based on both² (also see)³.

In the postmodern world, we are aided with modern technologies, the important question to ask is why jhum cultivation still survive? Talking in line with the above paragraph of Pyrrhonism, attempt is being made to relate these modes (if not all) and tried to illustrate with data from the field.

First, **the circumstantial condition**(Including positions, intervals and locations). The Ao tribe, is one of the major Tribe of the Naga family. Tradition says that the Aos sprung up from “*Longtrok*” which means “six stones”. They then founded the “*Jungliyimti*” village where they settled for a considerable period of time. In course of time, they crossed the *Dikhu* River by a cane bridge leaving other people behind. These people who went ahead leaving others behind came to be known as “*Aor*” or “*Ao*”, which means “going” or “gone”.

The Aos then settled in “*Soyim*” which is known as *Ungma* village today, and then moved again to another place called “*Koridang*”. From *Koridang*, groups of people scattered to different directions and founded new villages. Gradually, as population grew they eventually spread over the six ranges of the land and founded as many new villages⁴. Among the Aos the villages are organized into units according to their proximity to the various ranges, namely: *Langpangkong*, *Tsurangkong*, *Asetkong*, *Changkikong*, *Japukong* and *Ongpangkong* range.

The soils found in Mokochung district is mostly alluvial soil, non-laterite red soil and forest soil. The cultivated area of the district is 18,433 Hectares and the irrigated area is 4,003 Hectares⁵.

Secondly, **Intermixtures**(Including quantities and formations of the underlying objects).

A. Sustainability and Jhum Cultivation:

“Sustainability” is a word which has been very popular as well as controversial not only in the academic domain but also in everyday practices and policies of human surrounding. Basically, the term “sustainability” is understood in the context of “sustainability development” which endures social, political and economic systems and processes. The concept of “sustainable development” emerges when the globe was confronting severe environmental threats due to the consequences of human factors. This sustainable development is sought to address the problem of conflicts between environment and development (Harris 2003) thereby preserving and thinking for future needs.

In this context of sustainable future, the issues is not only at global levels but the local levels should be deals more seriously where local knowledge and indigenous practices plays vital role in sustainable development. Local knowledge (informal knowledge) “cover a wide range of its immediate environment and practices on every aspect of social, economic and cultural activities...it is the product of centuries of experiences acquired and developed in a spectrum of information, skills and technology” (Changkija cited in Sengupta 2012). This knowledge plays important role in developing self-sufficiency and self-determination, and thereby, strengthening the people’s participation in sustainability.

While looking at the sustainability of Jhum cultivation among the AoNagas, it acts as a two - fold tool:

B. Geo-ecological sustainable practices:

a. Crop rotation: The stable food of the Aosis rice, and its cultivation is accompanied by various other crops. These crops are rotated in between the two years of cultivation.

b. Nitrogen Fixation: Use of leguminous plants not only helps in re-acclimatization of the soil but it helps in fixing the atmospheric nitrogen in the soil thus maintaining and enriching the soil fertility.

c. In-situ manuring: The crop residues of the first year after harvest is spread in the field and is burnt to abstract the ash which acts as manure for the crops to be cultivated in the second year.

d. Construction of diversion ditches: Conversion ditches of water through the cultivated land helps in the soil erosion. The tillage thus retains the soil and conservation is maintained.

e. Construction of step like structures : Constructions of step like structures in the hilly cultivated land helps in retaining the soil from washing down towards the downhill of the filed thus maintaining an equal amount of soil fertility throughout the cultivated land and thus soil conservation is again maintained.

f. Tree-Green-Hedge cropping: A recent practice, where on the second year of the cultivation certain trees are planted for various purposes, be it commercial or self-utilization purposes. This practice of tree plantation along with the crops maintains the soil from erosion and thus the newly planted trees are also given required nurturing required for its growth.

g. Mixed cropping: Mixed cropping maintains the required equilibrium in the land and thus the required yield is achieved along with sustainability of the land.

h. Retaining of crop diversity: Certain indigenous plants or crops species are sustained as a result of shifting cultivation; without which those species would be long forgotten. Thus maintaining and sustaining those endangered species in the plant/ species pool.

C. Strengthening of Socio-cultural/Economic institutions:

Jhum cultivation requires a lot of labour, and thence, socio-economic group called *yangyu* or *pangpu* is formed. *Yangyu* or *pangpu* is a labour set formed by members of different age-set or by members of the same age-set system. It is generally formed by members of the society who trust each other (*mulungtok*) or those who have a similar mind set with a similar consent and accord (*shisa-ajemer*). The members of which goes to each other’s fields taking equal turns; these groups are mostly labour oriented (economic in motive); the members of the group help each other in terms of needs apart from the relationships shared in the fields.

Traditionally, labourers (both sexes) belonging to the same age-set went to the same field and returned home together. But such a practice is seen in declining fashion today though not totally absent. Thus, Jhum cultivation strengthens various socio-cultural institutions like the labour set (*yangyu/pangpu*) and also the age-set system. Jhum cultivation also acts as a tool that reminds the people about the land ownership pattern among the kin members of each clan and lineage.

Thirdly, the differences in human beings.

A. The changing pattern: With advancement in technology and with a growing trend of attraction of the rural poor towards towns and cities, the practitioners of the jhum cultivation shows a considerable curve downwards. This declining form is attributed because of the choices one is offered in today’s world. Some of the changing practices in terms of livelihood dependency come from the farm cultivation alone or from the hand-to-hand cultivation of farm along with the jhum cultivation. The table below shows this shift towards other occupational dependency in a village.

Table 1: Changing occupations (Longkong Village: Source- Field Data)

Occupation	Clan			Total (%)
	<i>Jamir</i>	<i>Longkumer</i>	<i>Imsong</i>	
Cattle-rearing	0	0	1	1 (0.58%)
Rubber Cultivation	11	7	6	24 (14.12%)
Orange Farm owners	6	4	4	14 (8.23%)
Shop-keeper	1	2	4	7 (4.11%)
Beekeeping	10	2	5	17 (10%)

The table above (data collected from Longkong village, Jamir 2013) shows that out of the total one hundred and seventy households (170) 37.04% of household is involved in secondary occupations. This analysis goes to prove that the situational analysis of a given village reflect a changing trend, a growing shift in the occupational pattern. Such patterns or such secondary occupations should be encouraged further and supported by the governing bodies like the village council and the government; and should be incorporated in the policy making processes.

B. Human beings are nostalgic. Despite of all the available patterns (mode of access to various products), the Aos still prefers the traditional Jhum cultivation and its products. Reasons being on the taste of the products and the goods produced in Jhum cultivation are organic (though at present salted water are used as weedicide which kind of bring little doubt on its being believed to be organic).

IV. Concluding remarks: The theoretical work which began with hypothetical assumptions obtain through secondary sources and also through oral traditional knowledge needs further questionings and refinements, which can be done only through a detailed skeptical analysis through fieldwork. Thus as fieldworker we are merely bringing to the surface the hidden reality that is already real and being skeptical can be a way out to portray and represent the reality; or else one will be just mere collector of the appearances.

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