



PROTECTION OF TRIBAL TRADITIONS AND CULTURAL EXPRESSIONS

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PANEL DISCUSSION
ON
PROTECTION OF TRIBAL TRADITIONS AND CULTURAL
EXPRESSIONS

INTRODUCTION

Prof. Anand Kumar retired from Jawaharlal Nehru University chaired the session conducted on 12th March 2019 around 02:00 pm. Prof. Savyasaachi from Jamia Miliia Islamia spoke on the topic. He addressed the scholars and briefed the history of the red corridor. He also noted how modern education and development have deprived the tribals in accessing their constitutional powers and developing traditions and culture. The chair of the session, Prof. Anand Kumar dealt with the tribal culture. He also explained there are certain possibilities of sustenance for the people of the red corridor like Migration to the other areas. The government needs to find the solutions at the ground level to deal with the situation and to promote social integrity.



PROCEEDINGS



DR. NUPUR TIWARY: We can start the session on ‘Protection of Tribal Traditions and Cultural Expressions. We know how sensitive this whole area is. We have Prof. Anand Kumar from Jawaharlal Nehru University and also we have Prof. Savyasaachi who is from Jamia Millia Islamia. Prof. Anand Kumar is a retired Prof. of Sociology from Jawaharlal Nehru University. Professor received an MA in Sociology at the Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi in 1972; an M Phil. in Sociology at the Jawaharlal Nehru University New Delhi in 1975; and a PhD in Sociology at the University of Chicago in 1986. He was a Lecturer in Sociology at BHU from 1979 to 1989, an Associate Professor of Sociology at JNU from 1990 to 1998, and has been a Professor of Sociology at JNU since 1998. Also taught as India Chair in Germany at the Albert Ludwig University located in Freiburg, GSP Scholar at Humboldt University situated in Berlin, Germany. He was Fulbright Visiting Scholar at Tufts University from January to May 2013. International Faculty at Innsbruck University (Austria), GSP faculty at FLACSO (Buenos Aires, Argentina), Visiting professor at NEHU (Shillong) and Kashmir University

(Srinagar). We are here to hear the Professor's views on this particular area. This is a very brief profile that I have given.

Prof. Savyasaachi at present is working as Professor, Sociology, at Jamia Millia Islamia. The main important area of his specialization is he has been dealing with tribal-related issues like tribals and forest dwellers. He has also worked on PESA, Society in India its structure, agency and change, Research Methodology-Theory and Practice, Anthropology – Theory and Practice, Sociological Theory and Indian Sociology, Indigenous Perspectives and Global Ecology.

Prof. Anand and Prof. Savyasaachi have vast experience on the whole cultural aspects and other areas that we are going to get their expertise on, as they have an intense understanding of these issues. I request the Chair to conduct the whole proceedings.



PROF. ANAND KUMAR: Friends, I am very thankful to Prof. Nupur Tiwary and IIPA for giving me this opportunity of joining all of you, to engage with many of the experts who understand the impact of violence in the Red Corridor, particularly in the context of tribal development and traditions. I am very happy to preside over this session where Prof. Savyasaachi, my dear friend and colleague

and a well-known name in the field of tribal studies and a major resource person is present. Sometimes in a seminar, there is a crowd of experts and you have to make all your points in a very compact timeframe, and you always feel that oh, there was this question or this statement which I could have clarified but the tyranny of time did not permit you to do that. Luckily, this session has been spared because we have a little more time than usually it would have been because there are only four or five experts to deal with the issue in 45 minutes. So, I would first invite Prof. Savyasaachi to make his presentation on traditions and culture of tribals, a task which is commanded by his heart. He is a man who is passionately involved and it is reflected in his publications and he has been teaching at Jamia Millia Islamia for so many years. I hope you will have enough understanding to ask questions. You can also ask questions from the previous sessions because he is not confined only to traditions and culture, he has a good grip over the political economy as well as political sociology and political anthropology of this part of the country which is generally, for convenience sake, called tribal India.

Prof. Savyasaachi.



PROF. SAVYASAACHI: Thank you very much, Prof. Anand Kumar. It is really a great opportunity to have so much time to speak on this topic because it is a topic which is very complex. By complexity I mean that there are multiple sub-texts to the issues involved here and what I would like to do is to try and open up as many sub-texts as possible in order that you may understand the complexity of this issue.

First and foremost, I want to say that when we talk of the Red Corridor and when we talk of spiraling violence, we need to understand how much deep into time is this question with us and correspondingly the depth of time will also indicate to us the depth of its impact on the culture as well. Things that are peripheral, which have not been there for long durations seem to be impacting us peripherally but issues that have been with us for more than two generations, correspondingly the

The British Government actually made the excluded and partially-excluded areas as a separate constituency where tribal people would be isolated in order that they may be given the necessary education, the necessary inputs so that they are prepared to benefit from fruits of modernity and development.

impact is going to be deeper. So, a brief history of what I think is the layers that have got into creating the Red Corridor, are, I think, in place.

I think the history of the Red Corridor goes back to 1935 when, for the first time, the British Government actually made the excluded and partially-excluded areas as a separate constituency where tribal people would be isolated in order that they may be given the necessary education, the necessary inputs so that they are prepared to benefit from fruits of modernity and development. An important thing to remember here is that when these two legislations were made by the British, prior to that - this is on record - 119 peasant/tribal rebellions have taken place – one per year. This is on record by Ranjit Guha in his very good book called *Elementary Structures of Peasant Insurgency in India*. So, 119 tribal protests prompted the British Government to create these areas so that they could be quietened. So, there are two different faces of this legislation that we need to understand. First is that which the colonial rule actually said what its purpose was, and the said purpose was that these people are backward, these people are primitive, these people are illiterate, and these people are not ready to take the goods and services of what modernity has to offer. This is the discourse on the surface. The under-text of the discourse is that they were quite sick and fed up of tribal rebellions for 100 years, one rebellion every year on an

average, 119 rebellions on record, which prompted them to put them into this pocket. If you look at the sub-text, then this legislation is meant for countering insurgency only, and the surface text is that we want to bring them up in order that they may develop. So, there are already two different texts, two different layers of understanding that are there at the very beginning when the Red corridor begins to start to form.

Then came the Constituent Assembly debates. In the Constituent Assembly debates, we take both these legislations lock, stock and barrel with some modifications and convert them into the Fifth and Sixth Schedule Areas, and then we say that these legislations are now meant for tribal development. The original intention of the Excluded and Partially-excluded Areas Act was not modified. The reason is because they took all the legislations lock, stock and barrel, absolutely everything with some modifications, and this is all documented in the Constituent Assembly debates. So, the original intention

continues and
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development
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- Then came the Constituent Assembly debates

in the Constituent Assembly debates and India begins to launch these two Schedules as the way in which *Adivasis* and tribals can be made a part of the larger society. What do these Schedules actually do? What is the notion of development and what is the notion of tradition that these Schedules actually put forward? Development means going to school, very simply put, getting water by the tap, getting medical facilities in order that mortality rates might be reduced, and with good medical facilities and good education, you participate in

Development means going to school, very simply put, getting water by the tap, getting medical facilities in order that mortality rates might be reduced, and with good medical facilities and good education, you participate in the job market and avail of all the goods and services that you think you should have in order to become the citizens of modern India.

the job market and avail of all the goods and services that you think you should have in order to become the citizens of modern India. This is what we know of

development. So, when we talk of education, right from the beginning, the language of the people was never an important component in imparting education. So, *when a young Adivasis goes to school, the first thing that he is taught is to forget the language that he speaks at home.* That is the first thing that he is taught. And then, when he goes to school, by the end of his school tenure, he has forgotten his language in public discourse; his language is now confined only to domestic domain and to that particular sphere of life

and the entire new fields of life that have been opened for him, which is, the job market, interaction with Government officials, interaction with outsiders. There he uses a completely different language. *This is the first aggression on the culture of the people and this was the basis of development and this continues till today. The first and the most traumatic event in the life of a people is when you are denied the language that you are most comfortable with to express yourself.* So, this was the first trauma that was inflicted on the tribals through what we know of as modern education and modern development.

For many years this continued until PESA came in 1996 when they were given a constitutional power to govern themselves – until then they had

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no constitutional power – which meant that the *gram sabha* became very important. *Gram sabha* was constitutionally empowered in order that tribals could access their own traditions that they may develop. 1996, 1947 and 1935, over these many years. The tribals have been systematically deprived of their own language. Now that does not mean that they cannot speak the language. All that it means is that culture is now divided into two parts. Culture is now that part of their life which is in their domestic domain and it has nothing to do with what they do in the public domain, which is to say, if I am speaking a

language at home, it is of no value to me when I go to do a job, when I go to do a market transaction. It is completely irrelevant for me in the livelihood that I do. This is the first important dualism that is promoted by the agencies.

Coupled with that is an entire campaign to say that their modes of livelihood are absolutely destructive of the forest. This shifting cultivation was defined as a destructive practice of the forest and the logic by which shifting cultivation was defined as destructive was a very economic, political logic and had nothing to do with the study of the system. The logic was that the carrying capacity of shifting cultivation reduces as the land available for shifting cultivation reduces. But nobody answers the question how did the land for shifting cultivation get reduced. It was reduced because the Forest Department started to encroach on the land and, therefore, the time cycle required for fallow land was reduced and, therefore, shifting cultivation became an unviable proposition. Now, this is the other sub-text to it. So, first are you deny them the language, and then you deny them the mode of livelihood. Then you say you forget the language, you forget your mode of livelihood, you learn what we are telling you, which is, you learn a language which you cannot express yourself in, you become part of the job market and you become now part of the modern citizen. So, what is the logic? You have to forego who you are and become someone else that you are not, in order to

become part of modernity. So, this is the aggression, this is the pre-history of the making of the Red Corridor.

Now, what happens after this? You are exposed to an outside world, of which you know nothing. Lot of *Adivasis* became tribal people, they got jobs, they made better living for life, they have started industries, they became shopkeepers, and they got blue-collar jobs. All these people went up and actually they had no way to remember because their language was not related to their livelihood and the forest, which was very important part of the language, had been taken away because shifting cultivation was declared an unhealthy practice. So, you lose the raw material which makes your language rich. So, what is left of *Adivasis* culture? Dance, music, clothes and festivals. And this is what is left of *Adivasis* culture.

You have to forego who you are and become someone else that you are not, in order to become part of modernity. So, this is the aggression, this is the pre-history of the making of the Red Corridor.

PROF. ANAND KUMAR: Can you come again on those five things?

PROF. SAVYASAACHI: Dance, clothes, music and festivals.

PROF. ANAND KUMAR: And food also?

PROF. SAVYASAACHI: And a little bit of food. Because that food you cannot get because you are not in the forest anymore, so, you have to make do with whatever is available in the market. Now, this culture has nothing to do with the language that they speak. The language and this culture are actually deeply embedded in the way they understand the forest. So, you take the forest away, you have a very ceremonial idea of a culture in the way you want to do things.

Now comes this whole idea of using tribal traditions to empower them by the Forest Rights Act, 2006. My curiosity is, what has remained of these traditions, what has become of these traditions because of more than 100 years of aggression and violence and the aggression and violence I will enumerate: No language available to them, the forest has been taken away from them and they are supposed to have a tradition left from this onslaught which will then be incorporated in Forest Act, 2006. So, my worry is that yes, tribal traditions are very important but what is it that is left of these traditions that the FRA, 2006 will actually be learned. You study the FRA, 2006 very carefully and you find that FRA, 2006 does not recognize a very important component of that tradition, which

No language available to them, the forest has been taken away from them and they are supposed to have a tradition left from this onslaught which will then be incorporated in Forest Act, 2006.

is, the respect for fallow land. I think everybody understands what fallow land is. Fallow land is, after cultivating one crop, when you leave the land to recuperate. When Mother Earth is regenerating and regaining its fertility, you don't do anything there until the recuperation is done to move on and on and on. Now, these fallow lands are to the tune of two generations. I cultivated a plot, say, in 2000. It will be cultivated again in 2016 because it takes so much of time for the land to regenerate, and in the meanwhile, I will move from one plot to the other, until I come back to this plot. Now, 16 years is not recognized by the 2006 legislation. It puts a ceiling of a particular year – I do not remember the year.

Fallow land is, after cultivating one crop, when you leave the land to recuperate. When Mother Earth is regenerating and regaining its fertility, you don't do anything there until the recuperation is done to move on and on and on.

A PARTICIPANT: 2005.

PROF. SAVYASAACHI: 2005. The Act is passed in 2006 and the ceiling is on 2005, only one year. What does it mean? It means that you are forcing them again, wherever there is an association in the forest, to cut out that association and become settled cultivators in the forest. So, this legislation is actually a ploy to take forward the agenda of Green Revolution. And what is the agenda of Green

Revolution? It is to destroy fallow periods in agriculture absolutely. What does it mean? It means that you will take harvest back to back. There is no way in which land is given time to recuperate. So, what happens is the fertility of the land decreases every time you go to it. It is like saying, if I am making you exercise 20 hours a day and giving you only one hour of rest, then what will happen to you? You will be sapped of your energy. You will have no time to rest. Any living



organism needs time to rest in order that it may become healthy again to go back to work. So, what happens? 2005 is designed in such a

way that cultivation patterns become in the model of Green Revolution. Green Revolution does not only mean fertilizers, Green Revolution means that you do not allow fallow land at all. Green Revolution's great achievement was that it destroyed and annihilated fallow periods in agriculture once and for all. 2006 FRA is doing that exactly. In that one year, from where you will start to document what part of the tradition are you going to access, what part of the tradition is getting left, what part of the traditions are you incorporating in the

act of giving them traditional rights over land? That is the first assault. The second assault is, in three generations' time you have prepared the ground for migration outside the tribal areas. When land is going to be divided among siblings, what is going to be left of land for every member of the family? Some will get it; some will have to go out. So, this is a plan for migration and shifting the entire population of the countryside into the cities. My concern, therefore, is that what is left of this tradition, we want to know, and that is being given so much of importance in the FRA, 2006? This is a brief sketch of the Red Corridor.

My last point - and I think there are many more things to say which I will discuss as and when the questions come – is that the Red Corridor is also created because of a stalemate between two sets of people who cannot find a way to dialogue. And I think it is important to understand what is the condition because of which the dialogue is not taking place. Both the parties are of the view that they know better than the tribal what is good for them. The fight is not for listening to what the tribals say, the fight is about whose agenda is better than the others, and both of them say that my agenda is better than yours. This is a big issue because what they are missing out is that there is a

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possibility of a third agenda. No dialogue is possible between two people. We want a third party for any dialogue to be healthy. For a good dialogue we need a minimal of three participants. I will give you a small story and with this, I will end my presentation. I think everybody knows Abujhmad. Abujhmad is that area where there is a civil war between the Maoists and the State. You know what Abujhmad actually is? It is Srinagar Bhum. The people living in Abujhmad call themselves as Koitors and they describe this land as Srinagar Bhum, not Abujhmad. And why it is Srinagar Bhum is because every little corner has a story, every little stone has a story, and it is Srinagar Bhum which is the land of Talurmuttee. Talurmuttee is the Mother Earth and the entire population does not own the land. The entire population is the custodians of the land on behalf of Talurmuttee. Their job is to protect the land, to ensure that fallow periods happen because that is what Talurmuttee represents. Talurmuttee represents a very important principle of labour, which is what *Adivasis* live by, which is to say, that which is not the product of your labour, does not belong to you. The reverse side is the entire realm of nature is not a product of human labour. So, they will not touch the entire nature. The entire landscape is not a product of human labour at all. On that understanding, they are only the custodians. But if they labour something which is a product like this, then it belongs to you. If you go to an *Adivasis* area, especially if you go to Srinagar

Bhum, you may leave a diamond glittering in the middle of a road, you go there after six years, and nobody would have picked it up. This was the tradition. And this honesty comes not from being innocent and not knowing what diamond is, this honesty comes from recognition of only one principle, which is that it is not a product of my labour, so, I will not touch it. Now, in this Red Corridor business, I do not see what is the obligation for people who subscribe to

Srinagar Bhum to be on the side of either of the parties. Today, they are compelled. If they are not with the police, then they have to be with the Maoists, and if they are not with the Maoists, they



have to be with the police because if they belong to neither, they will be mauled and beaten to death. You have to take a position. But this is not right. There is a third position and the third position is the position of Srinagar Bhum. I think Srinagar Bhum has enough potential and it can teach many things to us. One thing that they teach us; in brief I will tell you the principle. Total memory is madness. If you remember everything in life, you cannot live. If you forget everything in life, you cannot live. The problematic of the civilization

is what is worthy of remembering and what is worthy of forgetting? This is how the Koitor lives his life and this is a principle that they have learnt by living in the forest. This is very important for us in this society because our history does not want us to forget. The entire discipline of history is geared towards remembering everything that has happened in the past. History does not tell us certain things that are to be forgotten. The entire business of heritage is to not forget. We suffer because we do not have the skill to let go of certain things.

I do not mean let go in a mystical religious sense, there are certain issues in society that have to be kept aside if you want to have a sane good society in which what

Our social dispensation today is such that what is good for the individual is bound to be bad for the collective and what is good for the collective is bound to be bad for the individual.

is good for the collective is also good for the individual and what is good for the individual is also good for the collective. Our social dispensation today is such that what is good for the individual is bound to be bad for the collective and what is good for the collective is bound to be bad for the individual. This is the social dispensation that we want to live in and this is not good. There is much to learn from *Adivasis*, specially Srinagar Bhum that I know of, and I think if we do similar research with other *Adivasis*, I think there is much that

the civilization has to learn from them and, therefore, we must create space for the third possibility that why do you have to follow either of the two lines of interest. Thank you very much.

PROF. ANAND KUMAR: Thank you Prof. Savyasaachi for such a comprehensive and, at the same time, provoking input for the group to discuss with you further. He gives us a chronological view and he makes us look at the roots of the concept of Red Corridor going to 1930s, which is a culmination of continuity of resistance, rebellion and protest against colonization, and then he brings us to Constituent Assembly which was supposed to open a new chapter in our civilization journey. But then he underlines that unfortunately the Constituent Assembly had little contribution for making a new paradigm. There were people like Jaipal Singh of Jharkhand fame. He was also one of the most educated Members of the Constituent Assembly but he became one of the marginal voices and so, there was a continuity of colonial pattern to exclusion and semi-developmental engagement in the form of reservation of seats and reservation in education and jobs for recruitment of elite, and finally he makes us a little disappointed about this forest. PESA he is happy with but he is very unhappy with Forest Rights Act of 2006. So, these are four dates for all of us to engage for further research – 1930s, 1946-49 Constituent Assembly, 1996 PESA and 2005-06 Forest Rights Act. But he is not ending with a disappointing kind of

conclusion that nothing can be done. There is no-win situation because he is talking about the space available for a third approach or a third party engagement which is the primary condition for any meaningful dialogue, and as you may see in this book of extracts, there are a number of Papers by some of you who have critiqued the Government policy or the Naxals approach to solve the issues which are on the table.

Now, I will be very happy with some of your questions for Prof. Savyasaachi. So, manage the time because it is already 3 o'clock and we close by 3.30. So, we can safely allot ten minutes for questions-answers.

QUESTION HOUR

QUESTION: Thank you, Savyasaachi Sir, for your informative lecture. I am a PhD student from Indian Agriculture Research Institute, Pusa. I would like to know if schools would take away their languages and if forest development would take away their mode of livelihood, where else the Government would invest the money that it gets in Tribal Sub-plan?

QUESTION BY MS. BINITA: Sir, I am a research scholar and doing PhD from Magadh University, Bihar. My question is that who are we to decide that they should preserve their culture and

tradition? Is it because we enjoy seeing them, because it is a source of entertainment for us? So, we should leave it to them and we should just give them the opportunities and open the doors so that they can come out from the confined areas they are living in, and see what is the world around them, and they should decide that in the name of culture and tradition, what they should preserve and what new things they can add to their existing or practicing tradition and culture.

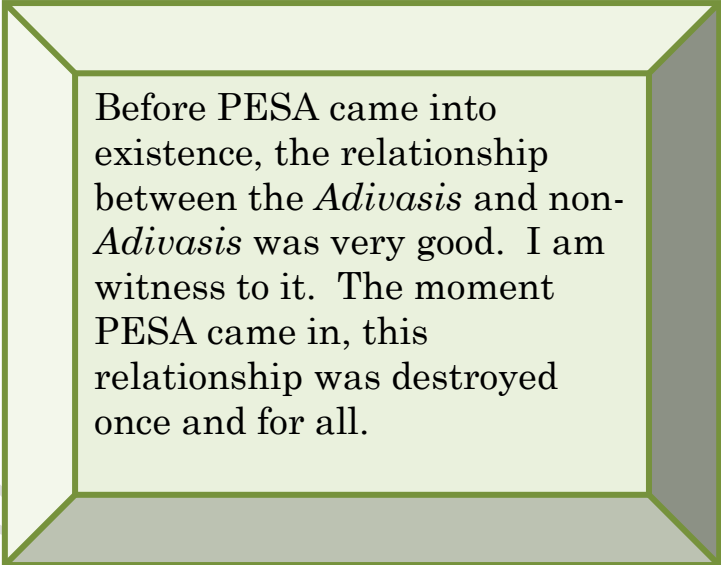
QUESTION: Sir, I am Assistant Professor. My question is, is there any positive impact of violence in Red Corridor on tribal development? Everybody talks about negative development.

QUESTION BY MR. NISHANT GOKHALE: Sir, I am associated with the Bhasha Research and Publication Centre, Baroda. My question is Prof. Savyasaachi used the term 'the depth of time'. I am wondering if there is any special meaning or emphasis to that.

PROF. SAVYASAACHI: Let me answer the first question. I was in the North-East and I was engaging with *Khasi* people there. The issue was that the Government wanted to take away land to set up an atomic energy plant and there was a big debate among the *Khasis* whether or not to let the plant are set up. They asked me. What do you think I should have said? They wanted to set up the plant, should I have let them go to set up the nuclear power plant? No. So,

somewhere you have to take a decision when other people do not understand the full implications of what they do. The question is who am I to decide? I do not mean me, I mean anybody else. Who are we to decide on somebody else's behalf on what is good or what is bad for them? Nobody has a right to do that in any case. But for people who know better, it is their moral responsibility to tell them what they are in for and not pretend that they do not know what is

happening in the world. So, if I am sitting on the roadside and *Adivasis* are wanting to join the mainstream and they come and ask me whether they



Before PESA came into existence, the relationship between the *Adivasis* and non-*Adivasis* was very good. I am witness to it. The moment PESA came in, this relationship was destroyed once and for all.

should go there or not, what do you think I should say? Should I not say, 'If you go there, you will not get water to drink'? Should I not tell them that? Or should I not tell them that there is pollution in that land? I will tell them that. Then I will say, 'If you want to go, you go'. Now, I want to also draw your attention to one fact that the knowledge of *Adivasis* about medicinal plants is amazing. We do not recognize the fact that they have done this without physics,

chemistry, biology and mathematics. So, if I want to go and become an apprentice to a *Shaman*, should I be allowed to do it or not? I should be allowed to do it. But I am not allowed to do it. Then people will say, ‘You are wanting them to live in isolation by wanting them to become a disciple of the Shaman, and I want to refute that argument by saying that isolation is from a particular standpoint. The Red Corridor has isolated them also. They were not isolated before this. Before PESA came into existence, the relationship between the *Adivasis* and non-*Adivasis* was very good. I am witness to it. The moment PESA came in, this relationship was destroyed once and for all.

MS. BINITA: Sir, Hansda Sowvendra is a writer from Jharkhand and he has written short stories *Adivasis will not Dance*. He is talking about a particular group over there that their dance and drum beating is very popular and whenever there is a government function or event, they are called upon to perform on behalf of *Adivasis* tradition and culture to show off them and one of the performers in the story claims that we are often called and remembered during these events, otherwise we are left over with our so-called tradition and culture and this is not giving us the basic needs that we need, and the Government is not looking after us after the event is over. Even in one of the events in Jharkhand – I do not remember the event – the President was also present.

PROF. SAVYASAACHI: Do you agree with that? I want to ask you. Are you in agreement with what the author is saying? What is your opinion on the matter?

MS. BINITA: Yes, Sir, I agree.

PROF. SAVYASAACHI: So, that is the answer to your question also. Therefore, you have answered your own question. I do not have to answer your question.

MS. BINITA: That tradition and culture is not supporting them anymore because it also depends on the history and what are the conditions and situations during which that tradition or culture came into practice.

PROF. SAVYASAACHI: True. I want to add a little more depth to that by saying that this tradition and culture is meaningful in the forest because this tradition and culture is actually the way of reading the forest. Just as we are reading books, they are reading the jungle in the form of dance and music. Here there is nothing like that. Neither they read us nor did we read them. When they go to dance, what does everybody understand from this dance? Nothing, except for some nice music, some swing. Nothing more. Nobody is taking anything home. But when you listen to Kishore Kumar, you are taking the song home. You are murmuring it all the time. What are

you taking from them? Nothing. So, this is what I mean. This is what is left of culture - dance, music, songs and clothes. That is all that is left of culture. Nothing more than that. Okay, more later on.

Then, there was a question; is there any positive impact of violence? If you understand violence only in one way, I do not think there can be any positive impact of violence. But *Adivasis* have a very

Certain pains are very good for your mind, for your body and spirit. So, you should be able to differentiate between pain that is good for the mind, body and spirit, and pains that are bad for the mind, body and spirit. That which is good for the mind, body and spirit, you should nurture. You should not get rid of it because it is important for your own constitution

fine understanding of these things also. For example, they think pain. If inflicting pain is an example of violence, they will say there are certain kinds of pains that are good pains, not every pain is bad. In our medical

system, every pain is bad. The moment you have a pain, you take a pill and that is the end of it. Certain pains are very good for your mind, for your body and spirit. So, you should be able to differentiate between pain that is good for the mind, body and spirit, and pains that are bad for the mind, body and spirit. That which is good for the mind, body and spirit, you should nurture. You should not get rid of it because it is important for your own constitution. This is an

understanding that we do not have at all. For us, any pain is bad, for them, no, there are different kinds of pains. I hope that answers your question.

Then, what should you invest in? What I am going to tell you is not possible but what you should invest in is to keep the contractors away from the *Adivasis*. What you should invest in is to say, if I want to get a scholarship to go and be an apprentice to a Shaman, you should give me the scholarship to go and do that. This will be the true respect to an *Adivasis*. I want to learn from a Shaman about medicinal plants. I want to know how he identifies these plants; I want to know how they found out that certain plants have medicinal properties. Modern science cannot do it. Modern science needs a huge laboratory to do this research. *Adivasis* do it very well. I want apprenticeship to a particular Shaman in Srinagar Bhum. Will the Sub-plan give me that scholarship to go and stay there for five

years? This is *Adivasis* development.

How so? I am begging the knowledge mainstream. Do



you know 19 out of 20 plants are not known to modern botany? Modern botany is so bankrupt in its knowledge that it does not know at least 98 per cent of the forest universe and those who have the capacity to know it, you have pushed them out. *Adivasis* knows it because he is walking in the jungle every day. You say that he is walking in search of cultivation. No. He is actually experimenting and studying the plants. Every *Adivasis* is walking in the forest at least for ten hours a day and when he comes back home, he is telling the entire group of people around the fire the stories of what he has heard. This is generation of knowledge. This collective enterprise of generating knowledge is what generates the medicinal knowledge of a plant. Do you know that *Adivasis* can talk to plants? Plants tell them which part of them they should take and at what point of time in order to get the medicine. I want to know how they do it. In Europe, people are now following this method to make plants grow better. They play good music to the plants so that they grow better. You should read this book called *The Secret Life of Plants*. This is a whole book which is beginning from the experiments of Jagdish Chandra Bose, an Indian scientist who actually recorded that plants can cry. This is called plant intelligence. There is a huge amount of research going on, on plant intelligence where they want to know how plants respond to human beings. And one important research is that they brought two different human beings into the room with a

plant and they put an encephalograph to document the response of the plant. One human being was absolutely annoyed, angry and the graph was very sharp, another human being was very calm and the graph was very soft. And this memory the plant retained even after six months. Now, this is very important for us to survive because your food industry and your pharmaceutical industry and your seed industry are dependent on understanding of bio principles. Otherwise we will not get so many varieties of seeds that we get. Our seeds do not reproduce the second time.

Your question about depth of time. Imagine your unit of time was 24 months and not 12 months, what would that do to your understanding of the world? Imagine you had to finish a task in 24 years, not in two years. You will have that much of depth in your thought because your depth of time would mean that you are able to see many more things the time has to unfold and show to you. So, in *Adivasis* life, this is a very important learning for me. Ideas grow at the rate at which plants grow. You cannot make ideas work at the rate at which computers work. Some ideas are biennial, some ideas are annual, and some ideas are six-monthly, some ideas are six-yearly, some ideas are generational, like plants. Ideas also mature at the rate of plants. This is what *Adivasis* believe. That is the depth of plants. If you are not able to differentiate between ideas that grow in one generation and ideas that grow in two months, you will never be able

to do your thesis. If you have taken an idea that will mature in ten years and you want to finish it in five years, you will never do it. So, ideas have a life of their own. This is learning from *Adivasis*. This is the depth of time.

I think I have answered all the four questions.

PROF. ANAND KUMAR: Yes. Maybe, you can take some more questions, two or three.

QUESTION BY MR. RACHIT: My question is you mentioned that the *Adivasis* were denied livelihood and then they had to forego who they were and became part of modernity. It is obvious that when they become competitive in job market, they may not like to go back to the same dance, the same clothes and the same food that they eat. So, what is more important? Preserving their traditions and culture is more important or bringing them towards development is more important? If preserving their culture is more important, even then it should not be imposed on them but it should be left to them whether they select it or not.

PROF. SAVYASAACHI: Can I change your question a bit?

MR. RACHIT: Yes.

PROF. SAVYASAACHI: I do not buy this terminology of preserving cultures. It is a terminology that has come because economic development is unmindfully destroying everything. So, it is some way to tell us that look, certain things we need to preserve because we cannot stop economic development from going at the speed that it does. But look at it differently. Why should there be a choice between doing a ten-to-five job and doing agriculture? I can do both. Now, this choice is not available. The manner in which capitalist systems work, this choice is not available to you and the reason is very simple that the timescale at which agriculture works and the time scale at which capital works are not the same. Therefore, what does capital do? It changes agriculture to its time scale. How does it do that? By hybridizing seeds so that they can grow faster and faster and faster and faster. It is not as if you continue to do shifting cultivation, you will not be able to feed millions of people; you will still be able to feed them. Shifting cultivation produces enough of millet to be sold and circulated and eaten. But the politics is you have to substitute rice with millet because you think rice is superior food and millet is not. Today, this millet revolution is happening across the world. People are advocating the use of millet if you want good carbohydrates. Millet is complex carbohydrates. It is a better source of energy. It does not take you to diabetes. Now, what is it that gives this cultural privilege

to rice over millet? It is association with the people. If the Queen of England was to have millets, millets would be the most privileged food you will ever have. Unfortunately, it is the *Adivasis*. What is so difficult about *Adivasis* for you to understand is because they are bare-bodied and our culture thinks of a bare body to be very dirty. Our whole understanding of body is that it is a dirty thing; it is not a good thing to have a bare body. We do not respect our bodies. Therefore, anybody who is nude, anybody who is bare-bodied, is an abhorrent sight. Well, they have a lot of respect for their body. They are very handsome people. They are very beautiful people. See, it is a cultural question. Do we have understanding of a body other than the physiology of it? No, we do not have any understanding of a bare body. These values interfere in the way you will give the option that livelihood in the forest is as good as livelihood in the cities. But this capital will not allow, and we know this very clearly. They will give all kinds of explanations. One is population growth. What is population growth? I will tell you what population growth is. We are very nice. There are about 50 people here. They are very sparsely distributed. You reduce the size of the room to half. Population has grown, whereas not a single person has been added to the group. So, populations grow because we squeeze the size of the space. There is so much of congestion in Delhi

because people live in one room with ten people. I hope that sufficiently answers your question.

PROF. ANAND KUMAR: I am so happy that Prof. Savyasaachi has created more hunger for ideas, more thirst for knowledge and more confusion in your mind. Some people were clear enough to ask questions and others got so confused that they had their pen and pencil ready but they did not know how to articulate and whether it will look intelligent enough for the group. But I thank Prof. Savyasaachi that he has opened our minds to receive more information. He made a historical frame, first of all, and then he created a cultural critique and then he ended with alternative analysis or alternative meaning of the dominant views. My job becomes easier and I have to tell you a few things about the questions as student of political sociology and culture, about a situation which is in form primarily by violence in the context of tradition and culture. First, we look at culture. Culture, whether culture of a city, culture of a village, culture of forest-based communities, has two qualities. It has territoriality like a tree. Culture is like a tree. It has roots, it has the flavor of the soil, taste of the soil upon which the tree is growing, and culture is also like a river. It has a flow and with the flow, it creates tributaries and it receives water from them and it also has distributaries. So, it goes beyond the main course of the river to many directions. Look at the

journey of any river. And when you look at culture as tree, like a tree, it grows, it has flowers, it has fragrance, it has fruits, it crease new seeds and then there is multiplier effect of that particular tree. But like a tree, it may decay, it may die. So, there is nothing perennial if you look at culture as a tree. At the same time, when

you look at culture as a river, then there is a flow of time and space. Like a river, you cannot take a bath in river twice because that



river where you took the bath has gone to Gangasagar. Yesterday it was at Rishikesh, today at Kashi and tomorrow at Gangasagar. So, there is a role of memory there. There is a context for understanding cultures. And I am very happy to be moving at this point because there is a historical dimension to the question of understanding, exploring the tribal culture, there is a territorial dimension to it. We have an envelope-like category or a hold-on-like category called 'tribal'. But there is great difference between the so-called tribals of North-East, Central India, North-West, Southern India and Eastern India. So, we have to have patience to have grip over the diversity

contained in the idea called tribes or tribals. Similarly, the Naxals question or the violence question, Red Corridor, it starts from Tirupatinath, Andhra, and goes up to Pashupatinath. Red Corridor is not a straight corridor, it is quite a zigzag and it goes through several States of India, starting from Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Bihar, touches Uttar Pradesh and enters Nepal. It is also suggested that Red Corridor is dominated and created by Maoists. It is a Chinese virus or Chinese implant or Chinese contribution, depending upon your perspective. You may call it a disease and you may call it a revolutionary turn of most marginalized people. But, in any case, there is need to have a temporal understanding of regional politics, regional economy, ranging from *tendu patta* to mines and minerals. I suggest that this question has to be approached with both, overall a macro view but also a case study approach, to capture the specificities, and I bring you three stories before I conclude my presentation. One is coming from southern U.P. – Mirzapur, Sonbhadra, Robertsganj, a place of perennial problems and a place which was one of the top in the first twenty years of post-colonial nation building in terms of power generation, cement and aluminum factories. You name it and they were all there. But it created not a sense of development but a sense of deprivation with three Ds among the tribals who were the original people who were displaced to create dams for water reservoirs, for

hydroelectric plants, who were displaced to create factories of aluminum and cement and gradually, first they were considered to be protest people, not following the hegemonic appeal of Indian National Congress because they were voting communists and socialists, and after 1967-68, they were declared Naxals. The whole area, the three districts, Chandauli, Robertsganj and Sonbhadra are supposed to be the Naxals pocket of Uttar Pradesh, bordering Madhya Pradesh on the one side and Bihar on the other side. So, from Bhojpur to Jabalpur, there was a triangle, but the story was very pathetic. In our resources - in the definition of us, they are also included as citizens of India - there was a combination of 3 Ds – deprivation, destitution and destruction. The whole ecological system, their water bodies, their forests were nearly decimated and it was not the Naxals period, it was not non-Congress period, and it became the hotbed of insurgency. First they were into petty crimes and then they became a little more organized because they got some political volunteers working there and it is a very interesting case. One of my students did a PhD on how very passive people became politically involved. They were not involved in national movement because they were in the shadow of places like Banaras and Allahabad and Rewa. Then they became engaged in small peasant organizations, and when they became militants, because there was protest in which a few policemen were involved and a few were

killed also and they killed the local people. Later on the same community becomes available for Bahujan Samaj Party and Samajwadi Party as solid vote bank and they enter into democratic process. So, there were channels beyond Congress and they were involved and absorbed by Samajwadi Party and Bahujan Samaj Party. In between they had a transitional phase with CPI (ML) Liberation Group and till today, it is shown as part of the Red Corridor. But there have been many ups and downs from marginality to mainstreaming.

A second case comes from Niyamgiri. Some of you are from Odisha. Is there anyone from Odisha present here? Where have they all gone? They will have to be called next time.

DR. NUPUR TIWARY: They were there in the morning.

PROF. ANAND KUMAR: They were there in the morning. Niyamgiri is a mountain which is inhabited by a tribe called Kondh tribe. They are of two types. Those who are closer to water resources are called Jharnias and the others who are a little above are Dongrias. One of the top companies of an NRI, Vedanta company of Anil Agarwal, based in London comes with a proposal of a multinational engagement to dig out bauxite and other precious minerals from the belly of this mountain, Niyamgiri, and the Government of Odisha is happy because billions of rupees are going to flow in, and the

Government of India is happier because it is going to create a flagship project in Odisha, of liberalization, privatization and globalization. But the tribes are not happy and they start resistance movement. Backward tribes! Foolish people! They do not understand the power of modernity. It goes on and on and on, till the PESA provisions are used by the social activists there and they come up to the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court listens to their plea. They say, this is our father; this mountain is not a mountain, it is not a repository of minerals. How can we allow our father to be killed before we are killed? And the Supreme Court is quite baffled. Of course, the Government of India bureaucrats, Planning Commission people, we, the development experts, are all very unhappy with this backward understanding. But law is law and the Supreme Court tells them and Vedanta both to go for respecting the PESA provisions and there is referendum. There are 12 village Panchayats in the whole mountain area. Each one of them had to hold a public hearing and then a referendum. They were not to be attended by media or NGOs or political parties. And you can imagine what was the result of the referendum! Twelve village *Panchayats* hearings and 12 voting, and all 12 voting were clear 'no' and Supreme Court asked Vedanta to go away. The Odisha Government could not do much and the Central Government failed to convince the local people. Niyamgiri movement had attracted global attention. Felix Padel, grandson of

Charles Darwin has written a book about the global aluminum cartel. This is not only Indian developmental model but the global cartel is pitted against tribals of India in search of these reserved places of gold and diamond in a way because these minerals are so valuable. They are only eight per cent of the population of our country - 7-1/2 per cent to 8 per cent – but they are living in 25 per cent of the territorial India and they are facing a number of challenges. There is another book written by a friend of my friend Savyasaachi, Aseem Shrivastava *Churning the Earth*. I want you to read this book, buy this book and if you do not have money, steal it from somewhere. It is so important to make sense of radicalization of simple, innocent, illiterate, ill-informed tribals because it is trial by fire. You know physics of heat and energy and you will tell about the heat. That is one way of learning about heat. The other is, you are thrown into boiling water and then you jump out of it and you say, my God, it is really horrible! So, tribal India is learning about the pathology of progress by fire. This book of Aseem Shrivastava is called *Churning the Earth: Making India Global*. It is 2003 book; it is not a very recent book. So, you can assume that things are change after that but things are changed for the worse, not for the better because now biodiversity and cultural diversity, which are inter-dependent, both are under attack because of this corporatization of the global system.

We have three patterns in analyzing cultural change and I suggest that you try to look at these three lenses in your own particular research programme. I am very happy that Nupur Ji has gathered the future experts

You can assume that things have changed after that but things are changed for the worse, not for the better because now biodiversity and cultural diversity, which are inter-dependent, both are under attack because of this corporatization of the global system.

of our society. Most of you are engaged as research scholars or as faculty members. You have 20 to 40 years to go. One is, **in any**

culture, there is a situation of crisis and there is capacity of resilience.

All cultures do not have uniform resilience capacity. Similarly, in tribal India, different tribes have different kinds of crises and different kinds of resilience. If you go to North-East, for example, their political resilience was more significant than their linguistic resilience. Much of Nagaland is now English speaking whereas there were 28 – Mr. Gokhale will tell you - known Naga languages because there are 28 tribes. But all of them have now become homogenized through this invasive impact of English language. They are all most educated among the tribes and that is why they qualify most for the reserved positions in civil services etc. But their internal resilience on linguistic front is not very satisfactory. But their linguistic

homogenization created a larger category called Nagas and the demand for Nagaland. So, you have challenge and response as the second lens that there is challenge before a community and there may be many responses. As Prof. Savyasaachi told us, there were 119 rebellions led by people of the kind of Birsa Munda. So, that was the militant response. But there are other responses also. All challenges do not create resistance. Sometimes there is subordination. You have compromise; you have co-option, so you have to look at that.

The third point is challenge and opportunity, which relates to questions raised in the session in response to Prof. Savyasaachi's presentation. Every challenge is an opportunity. When I was in school and now when you have been out of your exam period recently, if you failed, then there were two kinds of responses. Some people said, 'Oh, you are not fit for doing this. Forget about mathematics. Go and learn sociology like Anand Kumar'. And the other response will be, 'Oh, this is your chance to do it better next time'. So, a failure is the stepping stone for success. A challenge is taken as an opportunity for revisiting your own roots, your own cultural capital. We argue in sociology and anthropology about cultural studies. There is continuity and change. There is hardly any culture in the world worth the name which does not have a history of continuity, but also there is hardly any culture in the world which has not changed over a period of time. So, in studying the cultural

If You Failed, Some people said, 'Oh, you are not fit for doing this. Forget about mathematics. Go and learn sociology like Anand Kumar'. And the other response will be, 'Oh, this is your chance to do it better next time'. So, a failure is the stepping stone for success.

question in response to the politics of governance in the realm of Red Corridor - and I am happy that you have confined it to Red Corridor, otherwise it will become too big a canvas to color it properly - Red Corridor

is a zone of protest, waking up, and it has been brutalized. Today, culturally speaking, there are three possibilities for people in the Red Corridor. One is migration - why to get caught in this crossfire - and migration in many ways, for many reasons. The other is, becoming part of one of the two options or choices, Salwa Judum or a variety of formations with *Lal Jhanda* (red flag). The third option is to give up and leave it to *Mahakal* (the dynamics of time), 'what can I do', 'I cannot make a difference', 'I hunt with the hounds and run with the hare' - opportunism. But this all together creates a situation of decay, not a situation of evolution. It looks that the cultural meaning of the role of State in the Red Corridor is more and more demonizing, mutilating. There are Papers in this book of abstracts about resettlement policy, there are studies here in this book of abstracts

about gender question, and of course, there are other studies which others have done about the problems of poor and resource less in this whole large part of India. Around 140 districts are supposed to be there in this Red Corridor. So, if your country has around 670 or so districts – I am not very sure because when a new government comes, if they cannot do much, then they create a new district out of an old district; so, it is very difficult to catch up or keep up with the exact number – or assuming that on the outer side there are 700 districts, then out of the 700, what is the ratio if there are 140 districts declared officially as the districts affected by Left Wing extremism? One-sixth! And if it is a part of a great continuum which involves a variety of States, ranging from Telangana and Andhra Pradesh to Jharkhand and Bihar, then there are different implications for political economy. Politically speaking, the cultural question is now reflection of failed democracy. We talk about Pakistan as a failed State but in our case, use of arms and weapons to deal with your own citizens and civilians is an internal failure and we have to catch up with it. As Prof. Savyasaachi has told you, these constitutional exercises from PESA to FRA are efforts to create new solutions of an old problem.

We have three patterns in analyzing cultural change and I suggest that you try to look at these three lenses in your own particular research program.

- One is, in any culture, there is a situation of crisis and there is capacity of resilience.
- You have challenge and response as the second lens
- The third point is challenge and opportunity

Let me conclude by suggesting that there are four questions for studying the implications of Left Wing extremism as well as State violence in the context of culture and tradition. The first question is a popular question for any research: What is it? What are you looking at? Is it a snake or a rope? Is there any issue or you are doing research just for the sake of doing research? What is the question, continuity and change or crisis and collapse, alienation or integration? Second is why it is happening? Is it a discourse or is it a narrative coming from the top? Next time when Savyasaachi Ji comes, he may tell you that it did not begin with Mao Tse Tung's Naxalbari impact. Pravir Bhanj Deo, a very popular leader of the Bastar area was killed in his own palace along with a few thousand – number is still now known – and the story remains very confusing

and demoralizing. It happened during democratic days; it was not happening in emergency time. People of Jharkhand felt betrayed again and again by the elite in Bihar and, of course, Uttarakhand people by elite in Lucknow. So, why, and 'why' has many dimensions. It is not a simple national, anti-national, Naxals, anti-Naxals story? And third, what has been the architecture of this whole process, what were the turning points, right and wrong? Then, the final question which will make your study relevant is the emerging trajectories. What are the possibilities? Do we need more arms and weapons so that they clear the situation, like more antibiotics to kill the virus infection, an internal surgical operation or a democratic solution, and if democratic solution, decentralization or centralization, co-option of the elite or proliferation of the elite formation process? I am very happy with some of the Papers that you also have a lens called gender lens. This gender dimension is mostly missing in much of the discourse of media and policy makers.

So, to sum up, I will suggest that when you look at the cultural aspect of Left Wing extremist activities-affected areas or the Red Corridor, try to look at the metaphor of culture in terms of both river and tree, territoriality and flow, tributaries and distributaries because it is not like a binary, it was studied by people like N.K. Bose when they talked about Hinduisation of tribes of Odisha, Nirmal Kumar Bose, and it is also studied by a few people in North-East with

reference to Christianization. So, it is not that it is only single window system; there are many windows and many doors to understand the tribal question and its cultural and traditional dynamics. Thank you.

I hand over to Nupur Ji. We overshot by twenty minutes, I am sorry. But I think Savyasaachi Ji needed a little more time because of the depth of his knowledge and expertise.

DR. NUPUR TIWARY: Thank you Chair, Prof. Anand Kumar, and thank you Prof. Savyasaachi Ji. After such an enlightening lecture and so many inside and deep roots of the issue that we are here to discuss, there is very little for me to say except that the doors which were talked about, I am sure, this Centre for Tribal Research and Exploration will be taking up in depth under their guidance and there are others also who are taking deep interest in these areas, and many areas which are still unexplored, which are still a big question, will be taken care of. So, I thank both of you and also the participants who were very interactive, I would say, to some extent, and also having all the patience since morning. Some of them I think have really gone. I have to find out who have gone because you have to take your certificates from us; you cannot go like this.

So, I thank all of you. Tea is waiting for you. After that you join us back for taking the certificates.

PROF. ANAND KUMAR: Sorry, I had said that I will tell you three stories. One I told you about Sonbhadra-Robertsganj, one I told you about Niyamgiri, and third is about Kashipur. Kashipur is another piece of very interesting story in Odisha where they said with folded hands that “Even after sixty years of independence, there is neither a post office nor a hospital nor a school. The sand which is there in our area is very rich and perhaps you want to make uranium or thorium out of it and you want to displace 30,000 of us. We catch fish from the sea, pluck coconuts from the trees, we remain with our bodies half covered, half-naked, for God’s sake, leave us as we are.” But they did not leave them because Kashipur had very rich deposits in its sand. So, how and where does the demon of development reach and how people resist that, for that, a very interesting catalogue can be prepared. I suggest you to go for deep case studies, as much as possible. Then you will see the diversity as well as uniqueness of the situation.

DR. NUPUR TIWARY: We have some mementos also for the respected dignitaries on the dais.



(Mementos Were Presented To Prof. Anand Kumar And Prof. Savyasaachi)

(END OF THE PANEL DISCUSSION)

NOTES

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