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Bhupinder Singh

Tribal Development in the Fifth-Plan—Some Political and Administrative Aspects.

(This paper was presented in the symposium on "Approaches to the Development of the Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes in Orissa", organized under the auspices of the Anthropology Department of the Utkal University, on the 23rd April, 1975).

Mr. Chairman, Prof. Mohapatra and Friends,

I deem it a privilege to be invited to the present symposium on "Approaches to the Development of Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes in Orissa" by the Utkal University. In the past there has been a noticeable tendency for practitioners of administration and academicians in anthropological science to build up their separate cocoons, weave their separate webs and imprison themselves therein. From the vantage point of retrospect, one can at times feel amused, but more often one has to grieve at the apartheid which cost us so much in terms of loss of human knowledge. One rejoices, however, that such barriers are now a thing of the past and the practical and theoretical currents are apt to commingle to the enrichment of the fund of human knowledge.

2. Mr. Chairman, you will perhaps allow me the liberty of congratulating Prof. Mohapatra on the selection of the subject. A more apt subject in the present day context could hardly have been chosen. The Fifth Five-Year Plan period from 1974-75 to 1978-79, if I may say so, being dedicated to the cause of welfare of Scheduled Tribes, is a period of voyage and exploration in the realm of conceptualisations for a charter of their development. It is now that we have to lay the foundation of and prepare a blue-print for, perhaps, the next two decades. This makes it imperative that there should be a meeting of the best minds for evolving the best possible strategy for development. Many of you might be aware that with this end in view, the State Department of Tribal & Rural Welfare has organised a series of talks entitled "Strategy for Tribal Development" and eminent thinkers on the subject have been invited to participate in it. The response has been good and I take this opportunity of inviting again the present audience to the lectures being held from time to time.

3. In his letter to me, Prof. Mohapatra had desired me to highlight the problems of development in political field among the Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes. I must confess that I had not been able to under-

stand the full connotation of the phrase "problems in political field". I had subsequently had a discussion with Prof. Mohapatra and what I understood was that he wished that I particularly allude to development of the two backward communities vis-a-vis the other sections of the society. Nevertheless, the area remains rather large and undefined and while this confers certain advantages in as much as one may remble about, it visits some disabilities also in the sense that one may stray far away from the central theme in the mind of the sponsorers. If that happens in my case, I shall crave your indulgence to forgive me.

4. I shall begin by opening a window into the historical past, for I believe that to-day's social and political fabric cannot be understood except by tracing its strands into the past.

5. The so-called 'tribals' of India are the indigenous, autochthonous people of the land in the sense that they had been long settled in different parts of the country before the Aryan speaking people penetrated India to settle down first in the Kabul and Indus valleys and then within a millenium and a half to spread out over large parts of the country along the plains and river valleys. At much later stages of history, there came to this land wave after wave of other foreigners of Greeks, Romans, Sakas, Turks, Arabs, Mongols, etc. origin. The Aryans evolved a relatively developed system of local administration and certain ideas and institutions. They consolidated and organised social and religious system of the Smriti literature. They built an economic structure based essentially on productive system managed and controlled on 'caste system'. With the pressure of a superior social and techno-economic organisation of the Indo-Aryans, the indigenous tribes were obliged to move bit by bit into remoter areas, the relatively more inaccessible regions of forests and hills. Prof. N. R. Ray refers to these regions, on the basis of old records, as Atavika Rajyas, Mahakantras or great forest regions and Pratyanta Deshas or frontier regions on the fringes of agriculturally settled, organised and more developed areas. Alongside this process, the processes of integration and assimilation into the Hindu fold went on simultaneously. At the end product, we find tribes who for centuries lived far away from the main-stream, in the relatively isolated, inaccessible, less fertile and less agriculturally productive regions of forests, hills and mountains.

6. The tribal communities which lived in comparative isolation for long periods of history began to come into contact in later times with non-tribals particularly the Hindu peasants, artisans, traders, money-lenders etc. The establishment of British administration had a profound political and economic effect. The system of land rent was introduced and with it

the landlord-tenant system which was hitherto unknown in hilly areas came to be introduced. Jagirdars and Zamindars were the direct result. Lands began to pass more and more from tribal to non-tribal hands. Some of the intermediaries turned into money-lenders and traders. The immigrant Jagirdars and Zamindars forced many of the tribals to pay high rents or to render unlimited amount of forced labour. When some reluctance was shown, the tribals were ejected out of their free-holds. The tribals lost ownership rights over their lands, were converted into mere tenants and were subjected to serious forms of exploitation. The new class of landlords looked down on the tribals as uncivilised savages. Deep discontent arose among the tribals. There were a series of a rebellions and movements in the 18th and 19th centuries. Rajmahal rebellion of 1772, Tamar rebellion of 1795—1800, Ganganarayan Hangama of 1832 amongst the Bhumij, Kol rebellion of 1832, the Santal rebellion of 1857-58, the Sardar Larai of 1885, the Birsa movement of 1895—1900, Tana Bhagat movement of 1915-16. Following these tribal rebellions or otherwise, there were a series of reform movements emulating the cultural pattern of the higher Hindu castes. As a result, some of the inter-tribal political associations have emerged and movements for separate tribal States like Jharkhand for Chotanagpur and Orissa, hilly-State of Assam, Adisthan movement among Bhihs have been in evidence in recent decades. There were also violent secessionist movements amongst the tribals located on the international frontier ; the Nagaland movement, the Mizo National Front Movement etc.

7. Thus, it would be seen that although during the British times, new channels of communication were opened, mines and industries were established and the volume of non-tribal migration into these regions increased, the illiterate and economically backward tribals lost large portions of their lands to non-tribals. The Britishers were more concerned with maintenance and expansion of their empire and throughout their regime they evolved a policy of keeping the tribals away from the main-stream, perhaps largely for minimising their problems. However, after an initial phase of repression, the British Government initiated a series of protective legislation and administrative devices for tribals. While certain areas like Chota Nagpur, Madhya Pradesh, etc. continued to have interaction with the non-tribal sections of the Indian population, other areas such as NEFA, Naga hill districts were virtually cordoned off from contact with the Indian situation.

8. A look at the economic situation at this stage is necessary. It has been assessed that the drought-prone areas and districts have larger concentration of the weaker and the vulnerable sections of the rural community as the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes and the landless agricultural labour. These backward areas are concentrated in the

States of Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Uttar Pradesh (eastern region), Rajasthan, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh and Mysore. The tribals live in hilly, inaccessible and undeveloped regions. Tribals subsist on agriculture that is carried on primitive lines. The soils are poor and there is shortage of water. Natural calamities have frequently upset their precariously balanced economy. Scarcity of foodgrains and work causes migration and heavy mortality, breaks up families, reduces purchasing power and accelerates the process of social change. In distress the tribals have turned to the solace proffered by the proselytisers in some areas. In the past, the tribals fell back upon the resources of forest produce, roots and tubers. With forest reservation laws, these supplies were restricted and with the destruction of forests they almost disappeared. It has been said that while famine has been an episode in tribal history, scarcity has been a recurring condition. These have stimulated political and revivalistic movements. A succession of severe famine led the homeless and uprooted people to join the Mendicants who after the famine of 1770 made raids into Bengal with the support of starving peasantry, culminating in the Sannyasi Rebellion of 1772. The two famines of 1896-97 and 1897-1900 cast their shadows on the tribal movement led by Birsa Munda ; the peoples' sufferings evoked his prophetic outbursts. The famine of 1960 in the Mizo district witnessed the formation of Mizo National Front.

9. In an illuminating article, Professor S. C. Dube has summed the situation by saying that the tribes are emerging out of their subject "political culture", in which they did not question the validity or usefulness of higher political decisions and visualised their own role as one of compliance. In other words, they concerned themselves largely with the output functions of the political system and were not bothered about its input processes. He has described the emerging political culture as a cross between 'parochial political culture' and 'participants, political culture'. It is oriented more to sub-national tribal identity than to a broader national identity. Where the interests of the smaller unit and the larger unit clash, the tendency is to ignore or sacrifice the latter. According to him, harmonisation of national and tribal interest, thus, emerges as the key issue, though it cannot be attained easily. The issues implicit in the problems touch sensitive areas and mishandling of any aspect of them is likely to evoke violent passion. In other words, the tribes have to find themselves a place in Indian society consistent with their conception of honour but this must be done without detriment to the integrity or strength of India as a nation.

10. The approach towards development of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes during the Fifth Plan period has to be viewed in the context of the historical perspective which has been set forth. If I have dwelt at some length on it, it is only to clarify the issues which have beset the Indian Polity as a whole and the tribal polity vis-a-vis the Indian polity.

11. The Experiment of Community Development led to harvesting of the benefits by those sections of the society which were already fairly advanced. It has been observed that even in the Tribal Development Blocks which were established for particularising the benefits, manipulative politics channeled the fruits away from the weaker sections. Maybe, it was because the mechanism of such siphoning had not been foreseen earlier and no fool-proof method was devised. However, one lives and learns. At least in the Fifth Plan period, the strategy should funnel the benefits towards the sections for whom they are intended.

12. The horizon before us has a few outstanding features. First and foremost, there is the striking fact of economic backwardness among the weaker communities. Depending on land, agriculture is the mainstay for an overwhelming percentage. They had been driven to impoverished, infertile tracts, where productivity is low and irrigation almost absent. Wherever secondary occupations like industry and mining have been established, the role of the original tribal and scheduled caste inhabitant has been reduced to the that of servitor. On the other hand, they have been dispossessed of land and if they got compensation money it has been frittered away. Secondly, the non-tribal who intruded into the tribal land, more often than not assumed the role of an exploiter. Always living on subsistence economy and perpetually in want, the outsider has taken advantage of the tribal's predicament and snatched away his land. The money-lender has been a particularly vicious parasite and has often reduced them to a state of serfdom. Bonded slavery is in evidence in varying degrees as Kamia system in Bihar, Sagri system in Rajasthan, Hali system in Gujarat, Chanamalu system in Andhra Pradesh and Goti system in Orissa. It is interesting to note, however, that the scheduled castes in the Eastern States of India has functioned as go-between the tribal and the non-tribal and sometimes even assumed the role of exploiter himself. The third parameter in the situation is educational. While there has been an increase in the percentage of tribal literacy from 7.4 in 1961 to 9.5 in 1971, they lag behind considerably as compared to the non-scheduled population in the State of Orissa for which the comparable figures are 30.1 in 1961 Census and 35.2 as per 1971 Census. It is interesting to note that there has been a

fall in the percentage of literacy in respect of 14 tribes out of the 62 taken into consideration by the 1961 and 1971 Censuses. This backwardness in education has understandably informed their world view, their attitude to administration and their share of employment in public services. Compared to their numbers, the position they occupy in services is much lower. But it bears emphasis that ignorance has retarded their general progress in all fields whether be it political, economic or social. Fourthly, on the social front, the scheduled castes have suffered agonisingly because of the stigma of untouchability and the scheduled tribes have been placed in the lower rungs of caste hierarchy.

13. The approach to development of the weaker sections has hitherto been too diffused and fragmentary. Except for the Tribal Development Blocks, no notable attempt has been made to undertake an overview of the entire range of the problems of the scheduled tribes or scheduled castes or of the entire areas with concentration of the two communities. The first step, however, was taken with the enactments in the agrarian fields wherein the provision of inalienability of tribals' land was enshrined. The Bengal Tenancy Act, 1885, the Central Province Tenancy Act, 1898 and 1920, the Chota Nagpur Tenancy Act, 1908 and the C. P. Land Alienation Act, 1918, cover a few segments of the Indian tribals. Since 1930, particularly after Independence, a number of legislations have been enacted. Still loopholes in the existing legislations remain and these should be plugged. The Constitution envisages special attention for the promotion of educational and economic interests of the weaker sections, particularly the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes; under the Fifth Schedule thereof. In the State of Orissa, Regulations have been promulgated for bonded labour, land alienation, debt relief and regulation of money lenders as follows :—

- (i) The Orissa Debt Bondage Abolition Regulation, 1948.
- (ii) The Orissa Scheduled Area Transfer of Immovable Property (by Scheduled Tribes) Regulation, 1956.
- (iii) The Orissa Scheduled Areas Debt Relief Regulation, 1967.
- (iv) The Orissa (Scheduled Areas) Money Lenders Regulation, 1967.

Notwithstanding the existence of these Regulations, there has been a trend towards increase of land alienation and indebtedness. This no doubt calls for a stricter enforcement of the Regulations and tightening of the administrative machinery. This is an element to which I shall revert later.

14. Such type of legislation, no matter however foolproof, is no substitute for speedy economic development and it is to this aspect that we have to address ourselves with utmost vigour and earnestness. It is almost elementary to say that a tribal or a scheduled caste family with a strong economic background will be able to resist not only the onslaughts of the human agencies like the money-lender, the trader and the middleman but also that of the natural calamities like droughts, scarcity, floods and famines. Further, an economically advanced scheduled community will have a greater say in the sharing of the communal resources and decision making processes.

15. The key to the transformation of economy of the weaker sections lies in to development of their agriculture which is the main-stay of a bulk of them. Land is the nexus. The landless have to be allotted land after reclamation or from the surplus under the Land Reforms Act. The uneconomic holdings have to be transformed into viable units. The fundamental need is that of land husbandry, that is, in wresting from land the maximum yield through application of scientific and technological methods. For the purpose, improved seeds, improved agricultural implements, right inputs and production loans have to be ensured. In the tribal areas, shifting cultivation has been an age-old practice and it has become a part of a tribals life. It will hardly be wise to abruptly strike at it. The answer may be in controlled Podu. In other words, Podu cultivation may be allowed to continue but with certain precautions with a view to soil and water conservation. Horticulture has to play a significant role in this context. Fruit plantations are expected to thrive in the agro-climatic conditions of tribal areas. Both the tribal and scheduled castes have a fondness for animals dating back to ancient times, which the presentday urbanised man has cast off. An observer of the tribal area will find the Santhals excessively fond of poultry, the Koyas and Konds lover of pigs, Souras having buffaloes in their midst. The three primary occupation namely agriculture, horticulture and animal husbandry, if developed among the weaker sections, can contribute considerably to their economic well-being. In the sub-Plan which has been drafted for the State we have tried to inter-weave them selectively in relation to the tribe and the area. For example, paddy has been discouraged for uplands ; minor millets, maize, oil-seeds, crops which are already grown by the tribals have been earmarked for encouragement. About 15 belts in the State have been identified for horticulture development depending on their altitude, soil and climatic conditions. Small animals like goat, sheep, pig, and poultry which do not cost much by the way of capital investment and little for maintenance but which will multiply fast and whose upgrading is easy and feasible have been chosen. But even among them, those which are taboo for certain tribals, have been omitted for their prescription.

16. With this core economic programme, the sub-Plan envisages a comparable infrastructure which will enable the economic schemes to take off and be sustained. Thus, plans have been made for medium and minor irrigation, lift irrigation, communications, settlement operations, etc. In the field of social welfare, due attention has been paid to drinking water supply, health and education.

17. Earlier, a reference had been made to forest being life-line of the tribals and how a series of restrictive measures have led to some resentment among them. I am glad to say that this matter has attracted attention of the authorities and there is a growing realisation that our policy has to be more enlightened. Apart from the forest usufruct and fuel obtained by the tribal, the minor forest produce is second only to the agriculture produce for the sustenance of the tribal. In the category of minor forest produce fall various items like Kendu leaf, Siali leaf, broomsticks, medicinal herbs, honey, resins, myrobalam, tamarind, arrow-root, sal, Karanj and Kusum seeds. In some parts of the State, they have also taken to sericulture of Asan trees. The Kendu leaves provide them considerable employment from January to June every year. Mohua flower is collected abundantly during February to April and is used for food and liquor. Tamarind is collected for pulp and seeds and sold to the traders. The main problem is organising the collection, processing and in marketing, ensuring a fair deal to the tribals. They are often exploited by private traders and money-lenders, the usual *modus operandi* being advancing of consumption loans against forward contract. It is easy to see that these problems are in common with marketing of agricultural, horticultural and animal produce. Thus, their marketing is the first step towards stabilising the tribal economy. As a second step, production and consumption loans should be guaranteed. While these steps can be thought of for income increase, some heed will have to be paid to tribals' expenditure pattern. His needs are mostly of grain, salt, sugar, kerosine, cloth and liquor. He spends a good deal on religious rites and ceremonies and liquor is an indispensable part of these ceremonies. There has to be, therefore, an agency which can look after his consumption needs.

18. Taking into consideration these factors and with a view to eliminate exploitative practices, it has been proposed that a single agency should be created which will answer the tribal needs. Being of simple and honest temperament, he should not be asked to approach more than one agency. A primary co-operative structure which combines in itself the functions of marketing of agriculture and minor forest produce, sells to him agriculture inputs and consumer necessities at reasonable prices and extends benefit of production and consumption loans at the opportune time has been envis-

ioned. This structure would be linked with the Tribal Development Co-operative Society for marketing and consumer goods purposes, the State Marketing Co-operative Society for agriculture inputs purposes and the Central Co-operative Bank for credit purposes. The concept seems incredibly simple and temptingly refreshing, but heaven knows the apprehensions entertained of it. In our country, co-operatives appear to be both the panacea and the bane. The co-operative movement is indispensably essential and, at the same time, appears unworking. An Herculean effort, however, requires to be made.

19. This brings me to the subject of the role of administration in the entire process of development. One wishes that there were a few genuine voluntary organisations who could take up the tasks. One looks for them in vain. The mantle has, therefore, to fall on the administrative hierarchy of whatever worth it is. It is common knowledge that the machinery fails much more in the tribal areas, where a posting is regarded as punishment. Yet, the task requires most capable, competent and inspired personnel. One hopes it will be possible to discover them and get the best out of them.

20. The sub-Plan for tribal development for the Fifth Plan period covers development Blocks of more than 50 per cent tribal concentration. The area has been constituted into 4 T. D. As. and 19 Integrated Tribal Development Projects. All the elements of the programme which I have briefly outlined earlier have been woven into a system of "synergistic packages" thereby meaning that they will be fully integrated and executed. The field level of execution is the Integrated Tribal Development Project or I. T. D. P. The jurisdiction of the I. T. D. P. is more or less coterminous with a Subdivision and is comprised on average more or less of 4 or 5 Development Blocks. The Development Block is the lowest unit of execution. At the I. T. D. P. level, a Committee has been envisaged with Collector of the district as the Chairman and the S. D. O. as the Member-Secretary. The members of the Committee will be the district level technical officers, M. Ps., M. L. As. and the Chairman of Panchayat Samitis. At the State level, a high level Committee of direction and control has been postulated. There is also a proposal of constituting intermediary Committee at Commissioner's level. Considerable delegation and freedom of action and finance are proposed to be vested in these bodies. The principles of non-divertability and non-lapseability of funds for tribal development are expected to be observed. In addition to the State Plan funds earmarked for these areas, special Central assistance and funds from financial institutions are expected to flow in. If I may say so, the sub-Plan is made modestly ambitious in that the total availability of funds has been put down to Rs. 240 crores for the five-year period. This will be the pool of all the resources combined.

21. You will have noticed that I have mostly been talking of the tribals when the task assigned to me concerned both the scheduled tribes and scheduled castes. The fact is that for the present we have tried to concentrate on tribals. Functionally also, it is easier to do so since they are concentrated in certain regions whereas the scheduled castes are more or less dispersed. The problems of the two are dissimilar, those of the scheduled caste being more linked up with the rest of the general population. It is also generally believed that because of their location, the scheduled castes have not remained as deprived as the tribals. This is not, however, to decry the need for development of scheduled castes nor to underrate their problems. It is only to highlight distinctiveness of the two problems. There is no gain-saying that plans for the scheduled castes will have to be worked out separately and this exercise has already been commenced. In a way, the question of scheduled castes is somewhat more difficult and will have to be tackled on all together different footing.

22. One more aspect needs to be mentioned. Earlier, while talking of educational backwardness, I had occasion to refer to the inadequacy of representation in public services of scheduled caste and scheduled tribes. To rectify the deficiency, reservations have been made in public services in proportion to their respective population. The reservations have been made applicable both to initial recruitment and promotion. In fact, during the session of the Legislative Assembly which has just ended, a non-official bill had been introduced in order to transform the executive provisions into an instrument of legislature.

23. Taken all in all, it is a great adventure which has been launched. The objectives are laudable and the concepts of the plans more or less unexceptionable. The acid test lies in their execution. I believe that as a nation we talk too much and do too little. But here the Stakes are heavy. The bi-facetted political trend visible in tribal community is both conjunctive and disjunctive. On the one hand a new tribal solidarity is being forged and on the other tribes as a category are being alienated from the rest of the country's population. Perhaps in no other period of India's history there had emerged such distinct and strong tribal image. Tribalness is now a powerful political factor and to exploit its full potential tribal groups at different techno-economic levels and representing different cultural ethos and patterns are being linked politically. In so far as this trend minimises inter-tribal friction and rivalries, it is to be welcomed. But where it separates from the rest of the country those whom it has united, it injures the cause of national integration and distorts the perspective of the nation-building. The task is urgent and unless tackled effectively, a "revisionary" movement of Mohapatra's concept is likely to slide into 'revolutionary' movement.

Kulamani Mohapatra
Kiranbala Debi

Shifting Cultivation in Orissa

(This report was prepared in the year, 1974 by Dr. Kulamani Mohapatra, Deputy Director and Kumari Kiran Bala Debi, Research Officer, Tribal and Harijan Research-cum-Training Institute, Bhubaneswar. In this report a macro-view of the problems of shifting cultivation in Orissa, has been presented).

The Primitive tribes generally inhabit the forestclad mountainous tracts where cultivation is wholly dependent on rainfall. The soil, rainfall and climatic conditions in these areas make shifting cultivation the only possible agricultural activity at the present level of tribal technology. It is assumed that shifting cultivation is the most primitive among all types of agriculture. It consists of felling of trees on a hill slope, burning the felled trees and bushes and lastly dibbling or broadcasting seeds in the ash covered soil. After these operations are over the cultivators have to depend on the mercy of nature. The fertility of the freshly cleared soil yields a rich harvest only for a period of two to three years at a diminished rate. After this the fertility is exhausted as the steepland cannot hold either moisture or soil for a longer period. Then the land is abandoned and a new stretch of forest land is brought under cultivation. Thus cultivation is shifted from one patch of land to another after a few years of utilisation for which the practice is known as shifting cultivation.

Shifting cultivation is also called cultivation by rotation or rotating cultivation as several plots are used

for raising crops on rotation basis. Where the area available for cultivation is limited the abandoned land is again cleared after a lapse of time. During the period, it remains abandoned, bushes and weeds are allowed to grow upon it. This natural vegetating process checks the decreasing fertility and works as a preventive against soil erosion. The old plots are again used for cultivation after allowing sufficient time for natural revegetation. It goes without saying that the soil never fully recovers its virgin fertility and soil erosion is never fully recouped. This process is repeated until the soil becomes barren, unsuitable for the natural process of interim vegetation.

Historical Background :

Shifting cultivation, the oldest method of agriculture, is still followed by many a tribe inhabiting tropical and sub-tropical regions all over the world. It seems to be the survival of the crude agriculture practised by the pre-historic man. Dr. UNWIN dates its existence as far back as 3000 B. C. (Ref.—Shifting cultivation in Orissa by D. P. Tripathy P. 8). Pre-historians believe that in neolithic age the Euro-

peans were shifting cultivators. According to Verrier Elwin shifting cultivation is a stage in the evolution of human culture and almost all the races have resorted to this practice in some stage or other (Ref.—Shifting Cultivation in Orissa, by D. P. Tripathy P. 24). At present the Negroes of Africa and the Pacific Islanders are continuing this practice. In India shifting cultivation is in practice among the Baiga of Madhya Pradesh, the Naga of Nagaland, the Khasi of Assam, the Malayalar of Malabar. In Orissa the practice is in vogue among the Kutia Kondh, Dongria Kondh of Koraput and Phulbani, the Koya, Bonda and Gadaba of Koraput, the Lanjia Saora of Ganjam and Koraput, the Kondh and Pengo Kondh of Kalahandi, the Juang and Paudi Bhuyan of Keonjhar. Various scattered groups of tribals also practise this in these areas.

It is presumed that in India the tribals were the original inhabitants of the plain tracts where the non-tribals are now living. They were gradually driven to the hills due to the onslaught of alien invaders who were militarily more powerful. At their new abode they were compelled to eke out a precarious existence by adopting the practice of shifting cultivation on hill slopes. As regards their present condition Shri D. P. Tripathy, I. A. S. is of opinion (shifting cultivation in Orissa P. 8) that "their withdrawal into greater wilderness still continues though no more under warlike activities as in the beginning but under the pressure of economic exploitation. It was cer-

tainly true in the immediate past. During the last fifty years this process has gradually reached a saturation point due to growth of population and also because of the fact that the reserve of retreat has been exhausted". In fact, in Orissa most of the wet land in partially inaccessible tribal areas are owned by the non-tribals who have got the lands transferred in their favour by fraudulent means. As a result of this, the primitive tribes are now engaged in the precipitous process of intensive shifting cultivation resulting in the total exhaustion of soil fertility, large scale soil erosion and destruction of forest wealth. The repercussions of this process go much beyond the frontiers of the tribal areas in the shape of silting of the rivers and disastrous floods.

Area and the People

Dr. H. F. Mooney who was the Advisor to ex-States in Orissa and subsequently worked as Conservator of Forests, Orissa had made a survey of Shifting Cultivation in Orissa in 1951. He estimated that about 12,770 square miles or about 1/5th of the total Land surface in the State was affected by shifting cultivation and nearly 935,700 tribal people were dependent on this method of raising crops for their livelihood. This statement is open to doubt. Round about 1963 a list of most primitive tribes was prepared by the Tribal & Rural Welfare Department. One of the criteria for determining their primitive status was the practice of shifting cultivation. The total strength of these tribes was 4.5 lakhs according to the Census of

1961. Roughly this should be the strength of the shifting cultivators in Orissa. During the Inter-census period of 1961—71 the rate of growth of the tribal population has been 20.08%. Calculated on this basis the total strength of the shifting cultivators in Orissa would, in no case, be more than 580,000 in the year 1974. All these calculations are made on the assumption that the entire primitive tribal population is engaged in shifting cultivation. This assumption is far from true. A Benchmark Survey was conducted by the Tribal & Harijan Research-cum-Training Institute in 1972-73, in the Tribal Development Agency Area of Gunupur Rayagada of Koraput district. This study revealed that only 16.05% households were engaged in shifting cultivation as their only occupation, whereas the percentage of the households engaged in—

- (a) cultivation of own land and shifting cultivation ;
- (b) own land, lease land and shifting cultivation, and
- (c) lease land and shifting cultivation was 21.15, 8.41 and

0.68 per cent respectively. Thus the households engaged fully and partially in shifting cultivation can be calculated to be 46.29 per cent. If a projection is made for the tribes, known to be practising shifting cultivation (roughly taking the strength of a household to be 5), the total population engaged in shifting cultivation would not exceed 240,000. This calculation may be treated as somewhat inflated as the area where the study was conducted is also the area of intensive

shifting cultivation. The same survey revealed that the *per capita* land under shifting cultivation in this area is 0.22 acres. Calculated on this basis the total land affected would not be more than 46,500 acres for Orissa. These are rough calculations but the basis on which these calculations have been made is the only one available for quantitatively assessing the extent of shifting cultivation in Orissa.

Shifting cultivation poses a serious problem in the hilly areas of Orissa—the abode of the primitive tribes. In Koraput the practice is as extensive as it is devastating. The common term used for such practice is 'Podu' which is a telugu version by accent of the Oriya term 'Poda' (burning). It is a fact that most of the major tribes in this area practise this method of cultivation. A most backward tribe, the Bonda inhabit, the high hills to the North-West of the river Machkund flowing on the border of Orissa and Andhra Pradesh. In this partially inaccessible region they live undisturbed by alien intruders. Shifting cultivation is their traditional occupation. Due to growth of population and wide devastation of forest land, at present it is no longer possible for the Bonda to depend only on shifting cultivation. They have adopted stable cultivation on terraced fields. The Didayi, a small hill tribe of the same region were, in the past, confined to a high hill of 4000 ft. height. In course of time some of them migrated to the plains at the foot of a plateau. At present those who live on hills thrive on shifting cultivation whereas the plains dwellers have

adapted themselves to settled cultivation. The Niyamgiri hill tract in the Western part of Koraput district covering an area of 250 square miles is inhabited by the Dongria Kondh, a section of the great Kondh tribe. They resort to horticulture along with their age-old practice of shifting cultivation. Another branch of the tribe are found in Bissam-Cuttack and Gunupur tahasil areas bordering the Ganjam district where they are known as Kutia Kondh. They are still in a primitive stage and subsist mainly on shifting cultivation whereas the Desia Kondh of the plain area of Bissam-Cuttack have taken to settled cultivation. Other tribes engaged in shifting cultivation in the district are the Koya, Gadaba, Paroja, Parenga and Lanjia Saora.

The practice of shifting cultivation is also widely prevalent in the agency areas of Ganjam district. The Lanjia Saora, one of the most ancient people in the State live at an high elevation as well as at the hill bases. They have retained much of their traditional culture including the practice of shifting cultivation. However like the Bonda of Koraput district they have terraced fields for raising paddy crops.

The Kondh living in the same area are more destructive than the Lanjia Saora in this respect as they destroy forests indiscriminately. The Lanjia Saora now take to this cultivation as a subsidiary occupation using it only for raising millets and pulses by hoeing and dibbling whereas the Kondh plough the field for growing paddy and other crops.

The Balliguda and Kondhamal subdivisions of Phulbani district are predominantly tribal areas inhabited by the Kondh. The main occupation of the Kondh is agriculture. The hilly terrain of the land entails sustained efforts and makes cultivation an unremunerative occupation. The forests are burnt and destroyed and lands are reclaimed for cultivation purposes. It is significant that the Kondh of Phulbani grow cash crops in the shifting cultivation field. The chief among these crops is turmeric which has a ready market outside. Large scale advance trading is carried on in turmeric and deals are entered in to much ahead of the harvest. Thus even after growing such a valuable cash crop the Kondh shifting cultivator does not get a fair return. This is one of the instances where modern commercial forces have been imposed upon a primitive productive system.

Keonjhar district may broadly be divided into a lower area consisting of fertile and thickly populated plains and the hilly forest area where the primitive Juang and Pauri Bhuiyan live. Both Juang and Pauri Bhuiyan practise shifting cultivation. The Pauri call it *Biringa Chasa*. The term *Biringa* means the land under shifting cultivation during the first year of cultivation. In the second and third years the land is called *Kaman* and *Guda* respectively. The Juang call it *Taila chasa*. However these communities in course of time have learnt the method of plough cultivation from their neighbouring plain dwellers and now they apply this method to shifting as well as wet cultivation.

The Pauri Bhuiyan are also found in the Bonai subdivision of Sundargarh district and its adjoining parts of Pallalahara and Bamara ex-States. These people like their brethren living in Keonjhar area also practise shifting cultivation. In Bonai area those who live in hill villages on convenient flat terrain have constructed terraced plots for paddy cultivation.

In Rairakhola area of Sambalpur district *Rama* or shifting cultivation is practised on a very restricted scale and it is confined to Kondh only. The same tribe in the Kalahandi district also pursue shifting cultivation and designate it as *Donger Chasa* or hill cultivation.

The upland cultivation of Mayurbhanj district may be referred to here although it does not fall in the category of shifting cultivation in the orthodox sense. In this area there is one kind of land known as *Guda* or *Dahi* where mixed crops are raised just as in the case of shifting cultivation. Land is also cultivated in rotation. But the fields are devoid of trees and other vegetation due to deforestation and therefore the felling and burning of trees are not required to be done. However shifting cultivation is not at all a problem in this area as the tribals in this area mainly subsist on stable cultivation. *Guda* land or land on hill slopes is used for raising millets and maize, which only supplement their income from wet cultivation.

Thus a number of tribes in Orissa are still continuing the practice of shifting cultivation. In course of time

the practice has been restricted due to various factors and forces moulding and modifying their ways of life. The Forest Department has made efforts to stop the practice which causes destruction of forest wealth on a wide scale and affects soil and climate of the area. The growth of population has, to an certain extent, imposed occupational mobility on the tribal people as it is not possible for the growing population to depend on Podu land which is limited both in area and output. In certain places, such as Koraput plateau area, shifting cultivation on a wide scale has come to a natural end due to deforestation and soil erosion. Besides most of the primitive tribes now have adopted stable cultivation on a limited scale. Thus shifting cultivation is gradually ceasing to be the only or even the major occupation of the tribal people in the areas where it was so before. This has been amply established during the Benchmark Survey of the primitive tribal areas of the State, undertaken by the Tribal and Harijan Research-cum-Training Institute. A list containing the tribes that resort to shifting cultivation and the areas which they inhabit are given at Annexure 1.

Ownership of Land under Shifting Cultivation :

According to customary rights of the Juang and Pauri Bhuiyan of Keonjhar district the land under Shifting cultivation in a village is the communal property owned by all the villagers in common. Every year in the month of *Magha* (January - February) the village headman and the priest select the land

for cultivation. Generally the patch which has completed its rotation cycle and is over grown with trees and bushes is considered suitable to be cleared for shifting cultivation. After the patch is selected the priest demarcates the boundary lines by putting marks on trees by axe and the land is subdivided into several plots which are allotted to the households. The ownership of land after allotment is transferred to the head of the household for a period of 2 to 3 years till he cultivates it actively.

In Koraput and Ganjam agency the communal ownership of the village over podu land is completely absent. There is no communal gatherings among the tribes in these areas as in case of the Juang and the Pauri Bhyuiyan to decide upon the operation of clearing the forest and felling the trees. Each household owns a number of sites on hill slopes and uses these in rotation. In course of time podu land has become private property which can be owned and inherited by customary right. There is no legal sanction behind it. A Bonda even sells his plots under shifting cultivation to another and mortgages it whenever he is in need. Among the Koya the unreserved forest land, on which the Government allows shifting cultivation, is treated as private property and is also inherited by the legal heirs.

In the past during the rule of the Zamindars and feudatory Kings in the tribal areas the headman of the village was authorised to distribute the village land among the villagers and to dispose

off any part of the individual holdings in favour of newcomers to the village. Assessment of rent from the villagers was the exclusive right of the headman who was to pay a fixed amount in cash or kind to the feudatory rulers. This system continued even after the mergers of the feudatory States and the abolition of the Zamindari system. Finally it came to an end with the abolition of the Muthadari and other intermediary systems. At present the land under shifting cultivation has become Government property. It has not been settled in favour of the concerned cultivators. Though it is Government land, a liberal view is taken when it is utilised for shifting cultivation by the tribal people and encroachment cases are not ordinarily instituted against them.

Method of Cultivation:

Shifting cultivation starts in the month of February or March after selection of a suitable plot for the year's cultivation. The trees are felled and bushes are cleared. A few trees are left standing on the fields to provide fruits and shade in the summer season. In Keonjhar area where forest is thick a number of bigger trees are left standing to support the fruit and vegetable bearing creepers. Only branches of these trees are lopped off. All the felled trees, branches and bushes are left in the field to be dried up during the summer. After one month or so when all these have become completely dry, the cultivators set fire to it. If anything is left unburnt these are collected and piled together around the standing trees and are burnt again. Burning of trees take

about a week or two depending on the size of the plot and the density of vegetation. Generally ashes are not required to be spread over the fields by manual labour if the timber and other inflammable cuttings have already been distributed over the plot. Rain water also helps in the spreading of the ashes. The land is thus cleared for cultivation and the ashes get mixed with the soil to fertilize it. Before the rainy season sets in, the cultivators construct small huts near the plots, sometimes high up on trees, where they stay at the time of harvesting.

Agricultural operations actually start with the breaking of the monsoon. After the first heavy showers, the cultivator prepares the land with a hoe when the field slope is steep or apply the plough when the slope is moderate. In some places like Keonjhar the clods of earth are broken by manual labour on steep land. When the land is ready seeds are sown by dibbling or broadcasting over the field. The method depends on the type of seed to be sown. In most cases more than one kind of seed are sown together resulting in a mixed cropping pattern. The crops generally grown are ragi, rice, small millet, niger, mustard, pulses, gourd and other vegetables.

After monsoon rains the seeds start germinating and the field is covered with green seedlings. Then weeding is undertaken in the month of August-September. The women and children are more extensively engaged in the weeding operations. Harvesting starts from the month of October and continues till December, because different crops become mature at different times. The tribes like the Bonda reap small millets

even from the beginning of September. They usually reap a small quantity every day according to their daily requirements. Reaping and harvesting are done by both the sexes.

Generally the podu land is situated at a distance from the human habitations. When the crops are ripe the people keep watch over the fields day and night to prevent ravage by the wild animals. Temporary camps are set up for this purpose on the corn fields. Food is either cooked on the spot or brought in by the women from the village once or twice a day.

It has been stated earlier that shifting cultivation is resorted to on a particular land for a period of 2 to 3 years. In the second and third year felling of trees is not required to be carried out. Hence pressure of work progressively diminishes after the first year. Generally crops are grown in the second year are of a different variety from those of the previous year. The change in the cropping pattern is due to the declining fertility in successive years. After the third year the field is abandoned till adequate vegetation takes place. In Orissa the time span allowed to the land to recoup vegetation is from 8 to 12 years. In Koraput and Kalahandi where pressure of population is high, the shifting cultivator allows only a time span of 4 to 6 years.

Cropping pattern in different areas varies in accordance with the nature of the soil and food habits of the people. A list of crops raised by shifting cultivation in different areas and in different years of cultivation has been given at Annexure II.

Economic Condition of the Shifting Cultivators.

In Orissa there are 11 tribal communities who are partly or wholly dependent on shifting cultivation. All these tribes have a very low economic status. It is estimated that the approximate yield of corn per acre including the creeper grains is 4 *puttis* (240 K. G.) whereas it comes to 8 to 10 *puttis* (480 to 600 K. G.) in case of low land on the plains. (Reference : H. K. Ghosh, Economic Condition of the Tribals in the district of Ganjam. Adibasi Vol. III, No. 1). A survey was conducted by the State Tribal and Harijan Research-cum-Training Institute in the Kudmulgumma area of Malkangiri subdivision of Koraput district in the year 1969-70. The findings of the report revealed that the average annual income per household of the Hill Didayi who practise shifting cultivation was Rs. 468 whereas the average annual income per household of the plain Didayi depending on wet cultivation was Rs. 852. All these go to show that the output rate of shifting cultivation is very low. One of the main reasons of economic backwardness of the primitive tribes in Orissa is their practice of shifting cultivation. They are still at the subsistence level, that is at the level where each family can only produce the bare requirements for its direct consumption. It is also found that the *per capita* income of some of the tribes practising shifting cultivation in Orissa was as low as Rs. 158.40 in the year 1967-68 at current prices as against the State average of Rs. 324.83 for the same year. The Benchmark Survey of Gunupur-Rayagada, referred to earlier, reveals that 100 per cent of the Scheduled Tribes of the area are below poverty

line. This is just a sample area where shifting cultivation is under current practice.

Reasons of pursuing Shifting Cultivation as an occupation.

In spite of various disadvantages as stated above the primitive tribes in Orissa are continuing the practice of shifting cultivation for various reasons ; the chief among which are as follows :--

- (1) Shifting cultivation forms a part and parcel of their culture. It is a way of their life. The rituals, social organization and the recreational activities are so much interwined with the practice of shifting cultivation that it is very difficult to isolate it from the total culture complex. This is one of the main reasons why the efforts to wean away the tribals from the practice of shifting cultivation donot meet with success.
- (2) Extensive fertile lands are not available in the areas where the primitive tribes live. They generally inhabit the hill tops or slopes and exploit the surrounding area for cultivation. Besides in certain areas where they live at the foot of the hills or plains they have lost their wet land to the non-tribals. As a result they have no other alternative but to cultivate hill slopes.
- (3) The tribals living in partially inaccessible areas have little contact with the outsiders.

They are ignorant of more profitable or gainful employments.

- (4) It is a long standing habit with certain tribes like Kandh, Juang, Lanjia Saora to abandon their old villages and settle in new ones. This habit is partially responsible for the persistence of shifting cultivation as it prevents the people from being attached to permanent settlements.
- (5) In the tribal societies the family is the economic unit where all members participate in the productive activities. Shifting cultivation provides work to all family members. Women take active part in clearing podu land, breaking clods of earth, hoeing, dibbling, weeding and reaping. The children, right from a tender age help their parents in all these activities. Plough cultivation in wet land involves clear division of labour which does not fit in with the traditional work pattern of these people. It also calls for employment of wage labour which the tribal can neither afford nor be familiar with.
- (6) Shifting cultivation can be undertaken with extremely simple implements like hoe, digging stick and axe. All these are manufactured by the shifting cultivators

themselves from the locally available materials excluding the iron parts which are purchased from the market. This technological self sufficiency is further supported by the lack of the use of manure.

- (7) Plough cultivation requires more of investment in form of bullocks, seeds, fertilizer, and labour charges which are beyond the means of an average tribal. For shifting cultivation the tribals do not take the trouble of preparing manure for their field. Ashes of natural vegetations provide adequate manure. This is one of the reasons why the tribal people prefer shifting cultivation in spite of its low return.
- (8) Among certain tribes shifting cultivation has a deep religious significance. The Juang religious belief is associated with the selection of forest for clearings, first felling of trees and distribution of land. The religious rituals have also integral association with the shifting cultivation among Kutia Kondh, Pauri Bhuiyan and also to some extent among the Koya. Their economic and religious life is interwoven to such an extent with this practice that it is difficult to isolate the economic factors for separate treatment.

Thus several socio-economic and religious motivations may be ascribed to the practice of shifting cultivation by the tribal people of Orissa. These also explain why it is not easy to wean away them from the practice of shifting cultivation.

Problems :

Shifting cultivation has been characterised by many critics as an uneconomic and wasteful method of cultivation. It causes deforestation on a large scale which is followed by soil erosion, flood and decrease in the fertility of land. The burning operations sometimes cause the spread of forest fires much beyond the shifting fields causing considerable harm to forest wealth.

As a rule shifting cultivation is practised on several plots of land on rotation basis. The cycle of operation continues till the soil gets eroded and no further forest growth is possible except bushes, thorns, creepers and grass. Thus the character of vegetation undergoes a drastic change. Due to practice of extensive shifting cultivation in Koraput plateau the sal forests have completely gone out of existence from the Sadar subdivision. In the vicinity of the Koraput town no regrowth exists except fruit trees. The forest as a physical obstruction helps to diminish the velocity of wind and thereby checks its eroding effects on land. Lack of forest in Koraput area causes intensity of dust storm leading to widespread soil erosion.

Not only in Koraput district but in all the areas of Orissa, where shifting cultivation is in practice, there are frequent

incidents of bush clearings that have accelerated soil erosion. As per statement of the Soil Conservation Department "the hill slopes have been fully denuded and are completely barren due to impermanent land husbandry".

Deforestation of the area not only causes soil erosion but also affects the climate of the area. In Orissa it has adversely affected the ratio between rainfall and the flow of water. That is why the devastation effects of the floods are gradually on the increase.

Decrease in rainfall is also caused due to large-scale destruction of forests. This leads to drying up of hill streams and big rivers in the summer season. As a further result of this the rivers get silted up rapidly. It is apprehended that the rate of silting now inflowing into Machkund river will affect the life span of Machkund Hydro-Electric Project. The rich coastal lands of Orissa and Andhra may also lose their fertility.

The practice of shifting cultivation may not present a problem in Assam, Nagaland, Meghalaya and other parts in India where rapid growth of vegetation is possible due to heavy rainfall. In Madhya Pradesh also the soil structure is intact despite the century old practice of shifting cultivation. There the forests are dense and the quantum of exploitation is not large enough to cause deforestation. Orissa is not so fortunate with her average annual rainfall of 60 inches. The soil condition here is not conducive to rapid growth of thick vegetations. Moreover the density of forest population in Orissa

is high in comparison with the Assam region. Due to pressure of population the rotation cycle in Orissa is short and this has resulted in a low crop yield.

Thus shifting cultivation poses a problem of vast magnitude in Orissa affecting climate, soil, rainfall and ultimately the life of the people in the tribal areas. In spite of all these the normal practice of shifting cultivation does not help the tribals in getting adequate return from land. It has been shown earlier that annual income per household among the shifting cultivators is very low in comparison with that of the settled agriculturists. Considered in this context shifting cultivation should be regarded as a harmful practice for those who are directly involved as well as for the State of Orissa as a whole.

Earlier Attempts at Solution

In view of the extent of the area and population affected by shifting cultivation the State Government have attempted to tackle the problem by controlling or rationalizing the practice. The colonisation programme was introduced in the problem areas to divert the primitive tribes to settled agriculture by providing cultivable land, necessary inputs and residential accommodation. During the last four plans a number of colonies have been established in the tribal areas. However in most of the areas the scheme has not achieved its desired results. In this connection a study was taken up by the State Tribal & Harijan Research-cum- Training Institute in the year 1960. This study revealed that in cer-

tain colonies the tribals are engaged as agricultural and hired labourers although the purpose of the colonisation scheme was to rehabilitate them as owner-cultivators. The main reason of failure of the scheme was the administrative inability to make available irrigational facilities and other inputs in time. Agricultural extension programmes were also not organised to orient the tribal farmer towards the agricultural practice with which he was not acquainted.

Besides the colonisation scheme, the programme of rational land use on watershed basis has been taken up by the State Government through Soil Conservation Department. The programme includes :—

- (1) Providing land to the tribal who is willing to give up cultivation on steep slopes.
- (2) Plantation of economic species useful for tribal community.
- (3) Introduction of conservation farming to allow tribal people to obtain higher production from crop land.
- (4) Utilisation of steep slopes for production of timber.

Under the above scheme a suitable watershed in the shifting cultivation area is selected and rational land use programme is executed on the existing catchment. A schematic land classification of watershed management units together with land use programme as recommended for watershed areas for rationalisation of shifting cultivation has been given at Annexure III.

The above programme was first started in selected catchments of Koraput district on a pilot scale and then it was extended to other problem area in Phulbani, Kalahandi, and Keonjhar districts. However these programmes are inadequate in view of the vast population and the area affected by shifting cultivation.

CONCLUSION

Summary of the Report

Shifting cultivation, the most primitive form of agriculture is still continued in the tribal areas of Orissa. The primitive tribes who practise this method are the Bonda, Didayi, Koya and Gadaba of Koraput district the Lanjia Saora of Ganjam and Koraput district, the Kondh of Phulbani, Sambalpur, Kalahandi and Koraput districts, the Juang of Keonjhar district and the Pauri Bhuiyan of Sundargarh and Keonjhar districts. Shifting cultivation is their traditional occupation. At present reservation of forests and afforestation by the Forest Department have restricted them from practising this cultivation on a large scale. All these tribes now also have learnt the method of plough cultivation to a certain extent. The Bhuiyan, Juang and Koya are partly engaged in shifting cultivation and partly in stable cultivation. The Lanjia Saora own terraced fields where plough cultivation is undertaken. However shifting cultivation is still resorted to by these primitive communities as their most important productive occupation. But the practice does not help them to attain a standard of life, beyond the subsistence level. Due to hilly and undulating nature of soil in tribal

areas, lack of irrigation and rapid decline in fertility of the soil, the yield from land is low in comparison with the wet land cultivation. This yield is also progressively decreasing. Again shifting cultivation causes soil erosion, destruction of forest growth leading to drastic adverse change in climate, rainfall and vegetation. Thus it is a complex problem of tribal economy as of soil erosion and forest protection. To tackle the problem attempts have been made by the State Government through soil-conservation measures and colonisation scheme. But these are not adequate in view of the vast magnitude of the problem.

Suggestions

The Fifth Five-Year Plan envisages ambitious developmental programmes for the tribal areas. A sub-plan has been prepared for the areas of tribal concentration in some of the States including Orissa. It is envisaged that a larger flow of funds from different sectors of development will be diverted to meet the requirements of each specific area based on carefully drawn up area plans. These programmes will include the measures for economic development, education, health, rural electrification and other relevant items for local developments. The major part of the programme will be in the field of economic development relating to agriculture, irrigation, land shaping and development, small scale industries and co-operation. It is expected that the intensification of these developmental activities would wean away the tribal people from shifting cultivation.

It is suggested that more Adibasi colonies should be established in the tribal areas to resettle the shifting cultivators. These people may be provided with land, inputs such as bullock, seed, fertilizer, insecticides and houses for accommodation. Agriculture is the focus of tribal economy and they are not unexposed to the technique of plough cultivation. It would not therefore be difficult to divert them from shifting to stable cultivation. It is a fact that the hills and undulating plains constitute the bulk of the tribal area. In certain places like Koraput subdivision there are slopes above 10 per cent. Therefore the lands which will be allotted to the tribals will have to be developed by way of terracing, contour bunding. Gully control may also be taken up simultaneously. Besides adequate attention has to be paid for irrigation facilities which are required for the success of the scheme.

It is however not practicable to resettle all the shifting cultivators or the majority of them through the land colonization scheme as the scheme requires huge amount of money for implementation. The tribes therefore may be allowed to continue the practice of shifting cultivation on a limited scale in the village forests. The reserved forests, having no valuable forest products may be declared as unreserved for this purpose. Generally the tribals do not exploit the virgin forest now-a-days due to restrictions. They have definite programmes of rotation. The forests where they would be allowed to cultivate should

cover a sufficient area so as to permit the necessary cycle of rotation. It is found that if the rest period for land is prolonged it develops sufficient vegetation and thus becomes suitable for cultivation when its term comes. Ten acres of land may be allotted to each family for shifting cultivation and this will be sufficient for 4 rotations at the rate of $2\frac{1}{2}$ acres per family for cultivation for 3 successive years. Thus each plot will get a rest period of ten years. During this period sufficient vegetation will grow in these plots to increase its fertility and prevent soil erosion.

In order to check soil erosion and to grow fresh forests in deforested areas afforestation and plantation of commercial crops may be useful programmes. In the past such schemes sponsored by the Forest and Soil Conservation Department of the State Government have proved to be a success. In Koraput district certain areas which were subject to soil erosion have been protected. As such these schemes are apt to achieve success. These will not only control soil erosion but will also provide alternate employment to the tribal people as labourers in planting operations.

Apart from afforestation and plantation of commercial crops schemes, horticulture schemes may be introduced in the tribal areas where climate and soil are suitable for such programme. In Ganjam agency area and Niyamgiri area of Rayagada subdivision of Koraput district the tribal people

grow various fruits such as bananas, jack fruit and orange in a primitive manner. They have some basic idea about agro-horticulture. Therefore horticulture scheme may be introduced in these areas and in other areas where the climate and soil are suitable for growing orchards.

Coffee plantation scheme may also be taken up in the tribal areas as a measure against soil erosion. Coffee can only be cultivated at an

elevation of 1,500 feet to 3,000 feet with an average rainfall of sixty inches. It requires well drained soil and forest area to provide shade for a healthy growth of coffee. Certain parts of Koraput district are suitable for growing coffee and a scheme has already been taken up there by the Soil Conservation Department. It is suggested that the area of coffee plantation may be extended in the district and if possible to other districts where climatic conditions and soil type are suitable for it.

ANNEXURE I

A list of Scheduled Tribes practising shifting cultivation

Sl. No.	Tribe	District	Area	Remarks
1.	Bonda	Koraput	Khairput area of Malkangiri Subdivision	
2.	Didayi	Do.	Kudumulgumma area of Malkangiri Subdivision	
3.	Koya	Do.	Malkangiri Subdivision	
4.	Gadaba	Do.	Semiliguda and Pattangi areas of Koraput Sub-division.	
5.	Paroja	Do.	Dasamantapur area of Koraput Subdivision	
6.	Langia Saora	Do.	Puttasingi area of Gunupur Subdivision	
		Ganjam	Paralakhemundi Subdivision	
7.	(i) Kondh	Koraput	Koraput Subdivision	
			Raygada Subdivision	
		Phulbani	Kondhmal Subdivision	
		Kalahandi	Thuamul-Rampur and Lanjigarh area of Bhanipatna Subdivision.	
		Sambalpur	Bamara area of Deogarh Subdivision and Rairakhol Subdivision.	
	(ii) Kutia kondh.	Koraput	Guddari, Ramnaguda, Muniguda, Chandrapur area of Gunupur Subdivision.	
		Phulbani	Balliguda Subdivision	
	(iii) Dongaria kondh.	Koraput	Bissam-Cuttack area of Gunupur Subdivision	
8.	Juang	Keonjhar	Telkoi, Harichandrapur areas of Keonjhar Sub-division.	
9.	Pauri Bhuiyan	Keonjhar	Telkoi, Bansapal areas of Keonjhar Subdivision	
		Sundargarh.	Banai Subdivision	
		Dhenkanal	Pallalahara Subdivision	
		Sambalpur	Bamara area of Deogarh Subdivision	
10.	Erenga kolha	Sundargarh.	Banai Subdivision	
11.	Parenga	Koraput	Pattangi area of Koraput Subdivision	

ANNEXURE II
CROPPING PATTERN

Tribe	Area	Local name for land under shifting cultivation	Crops Grown			Remarks
			First Year	Second Year	Third Year	
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Pa u r i Bhuiyan.	Sadar Subdi v i- sion of Keonjhar district, Bonai Subdivision of Sundar g a r h district.	1st Year- <i>Biringa</i> 2nd Year- <i>Kaman</i> 3rd Year- <i>Guda</i> .	<i>Biri</i> (Blackgram) <i>Rasi</i> (Niger) <i>Dunka</i> , <i>Beans</i> <i>Pumpkins</i> .	Paddy, Ragi, Maize, <i>Gangei</i> , <i>Kangy</i> , <i>Tisida</i> , Arhar, Cucum- ber, <i>Ruma</i> .	Jali, <i>Guldi</i>	
Juang	Sadar subd i v i- sion of Keonjhar district	1st Year- <i>Taila</i> 2nd Year- <i>Ekan</i> 3rd Year- <i>Nala</i> .	Rasi (Niger) or <i>Alasi Biri</i> (blackgram) or <i>K o l a t h a</i> , <i>Senai</i> .	Paddy, <i>Saru</i> , <i>Kalart</i> , <i>Kosalak</i> Pumpkin, Gour Gourd, Cucm- ber.	Paddy o r <i>Rasi</i> (Niger) repeated.	If land is found fertilized it can be cultivated for the 4th year paddy or niger are repeated.
Bonda	Malkangiri Sub- division of Koraput dist- rict.	..	Ragi, <i>Sama</i> (Pan- cium Miliate) <i>Jawar</i> , Cucum- ber-g r o u d Caster.	Small millets	Whatever they like if sown at all.	
Koya	Ditto	1st Year- <i>Puna</i> <i>Elka</i> , 2nd Year- <i>P a n t a</i> <i>Elka</i> .	(<i>Gora</i> Ragi), Arhar, <i>Permi</i> , <i>Nohla</i> (millet), <i>Junuk</i> (vingatypa s a) <i>Jani</i> (bean), <i>Nunk</i> (Sesa- mum).	Same as in the 1st year.	..	
La n j i a Soara.	Gunapur Sub- division of Koraput dist., Parlakhemundi of Ganjam district.	<i>Bagad</i>	<i>Mandia</i> , <i>Kandula</i> , <i>Jhudanga</i> .	Turmeric, Gin- ger.	..	
Ku t i a- Kondh.	Balliguda Sub- division of Phulbani dist- rict.	<i>Dongar</i>	<i>Biri</i> , <i>Kandula</i> , <i>Jhudaga</i> .	<i>Kosala</i> (Millet) Turmeric.	..	
Ditto	Gunapur Sub- division of Koraput dist- rict.	<i>Dongar</i>	<i>Kandula</i> , <i>Jhudanga</i> <i>Biri</i> .	<i>Suan</i> , <i>Mandia</i> , Turmeric.	..	

ANNEXURE III

Land classification and recommended land use under watershed management unit

Land class and description	Distribution in 10,000 Acs. of watershed (Generalised estimate)	Recommended use
(1)	(2)	(3)
Land Class 'A' Land above 20° slope (36 per cent).	2,000 Acres	.. Suitable for tree plantation or natural vegetation.
Land class 'B'		
Land below 20° or 36 per cent slope and above 5° or 10 per cent slope.	1,000 Acres	.. (a) In areas where sufficient land is available for cultivation the land under class 'B' receives the same treatment as under Class 'A'. It is kept under permanent vegetation by growing of Cashewnut, agave and other trees of economic importance to the tribal people. (b) In areas where pressure on land is more the land under this class is used for dry cultivation with stone terraces.
Land Class 'C'		
Land below 5° or 10 per cent slope excluding 'D' and 'E' land classes.	4,000 Acres	.. Cultivation with contour bunds or graded terraces and conservation farming are introduced.
Land Class 'D'		
Land already reclaimed for agriculture in Nala beds (Bottom land and bench terraced field).	1,000 Acres	No special soil conservation measures except good seeds, manure and suitable crop rotation is necessary. A sound system of crop husbandry is adequate to keep the land productive.
Land Class 'E'		
Village roads Nalas, etc. ..	2,000 Acres	.. Anti-erosion measures are undertaken in order to protect stream banks and road sides from erosion.

SOURCE—Soil Conservation Organisation, Agriculture Department

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N. Bohidar

**Problem of Shifting Cultivation
with Special reference to Balli-
guda Division.**

"Conservation is not just the concern of a small band of single-minded enthusiasts; it affects all of us; it is the business of all of us; it is a subject that we and our organisations and our Government must take seriously".

DR. LEETALBOT

Introduction

In the history of civilisation when man passed through the stage of pastoral nomadism to permanent agriculture, during this course of metamorphosis, shifting cultivation seems to have been practised in some form or other, more or less, all over the world. Of course, the genesis of shifting cultivation seems to have been lost in the antiquity of the history of man's civilisation but it is well known that it began accidentally when man discovered that the grains of grass that had fallen on the burnt ground sent forth green stalks and produced edible grains. Man imitated the conditions by burning vegetable materials near his camping ground during his nomadic itinerary by throwing grains on burning vegetable materials. In course of time, he discovered that if fresher grounds are burnt and seeds thrown on it he would get a bumper crop. This was the first method of growing grains ever known to the primitive man and this was the beginning of a long process of shifting cultivation. These processes have not been recorded by history on its ephemeral

pages of cellulose (i. e. paper) but in the ever lasting and enduring pages of rock, sand and stone. Shifting cultivation is the world's oldest and simplest form of agriculture. Shifting cultivation can be defined as any agricultural system in which forests are cleared by felling and subsequent burning and are cropped discontinuously by employing a period of fallow which is always longer than the period of cropping. Frequently it implied an aimless, unplanned, nomadic movement or an abrupt change in location either of the cropping area or the cultivator or both. Shifting cultivation has brought in its wake miseries to mankind creating large scale desert conditions as can be seen in the Middle East. In these countries, excessive practice of shifting cultivation, excessive grazing, indiscriminate felling of forest growth, led to desert conditions resulting in disappearance of progress and prosperity under great civilisations, the archeological remains of which can now be found under hundreds of feet of sand. Nearer home, the great civilisations of Mahenjo-Daro and Harappa lie buried under sand bearing testimony to the fact that deserts marched into

this civilisation which was the direct cause of shifting cultivation, excessive hecking of trees and mismanagement of its forest wealth by the successive generations. It has been held by the experts that the deserts of Rajastan and west Pakistan are man-made and not a feature of any geographical latitude. To day the Rajastan deserts are marching towards Delhi at a fast rate but thanks to the genius of our experts, wide green belts of trees and vegetation are being laid up to hold up this march. These are some of the gravest warnings that the nature is holding before our generation to solve, with its knowledge and competence in science and technology so that man may make his planet a fertile and livable place and not turn it in to a lunar surface of treeless and crater-oriented landscape. In various countries and in various States of our country they have already taken strong and effective measures to stop this practice of shifting cultivation and making full scale attempt to recoup what has been lost for centuries. It has not been an easy task with them but the foundations have been well laid. In many States of India, shifting cultivation has already become a thing of the past and fully abolished.

In Orissa the problem of shifting cultivation is one of sumpreme importance involving over 12,000 sq. miles, affecting the lives of about one million people. Shifting cultivation is practised by hill tribes namely Kondh, Sabara, Paraja, Gadaba, Bonda, Koya, Bhuinya, Kol, Junga and host of other tribes and sub-tribes. These tribal population belong to different cultural

level depicting various patterns of existence.

Problem of Shifting Cultivation in Bailiguda Division.

In this district of Phulbani, specially in Balliguda Subdivision, shifting cultivation is being practised by Kondh and Kutia Kondh. The ravages that has been brought to this one time rich fertile land of this district is well known and I need not describe in detail this tale of woe. With axe, live-stock and fire, the shifting cultivator has reduced forests and soils to ruin. Today, although still beautiful, this region is but a shadow of its former-self, providing only, here and there, specially a places where forest conservancy has been made by forest reservations, wistful, glimpses of its once-rich plant and animal life. It may be mentioned here that Forests of this subdivision needfull- and complete protection as it forms the upper catchment and sources of severar-rivers of Orissa. The Rusikulya has its source near Kattingia in the Rushimal forest block. The Loherakhandi and Bada Nadi respectively drain Ranaba and Karada Forests and the rich forests- of Chakapad Khondam. The river Tel which carries much water in to the Mahanadi has also its upper source, in the Dharampur block of this division and its chief tributaries such as the river Raul, Jhiripani, Khadga and Kalapani have their origin in this sub-division. The river Raul originates- from Subarnagiri area. Jharipani and Uttei respectively come from Jharipani and Guma blocks of Belgarh Range and after they meet pass through Lankagarh and fall into the Tel. Kala-

pani river starts from the upper reaches of Raikia and meets the river Gomadi at Mahasingi where they are known as Khadga. The river Khadga which passes north-west of Balliguda flows down to Khamanakhol and lastly falls into the Tel, in the Balangir district. The Salki river originates from the uplands of G. Udayagiri and meets Mahanadi in Boudh subdivision. The Paburia river which starts from the hills near Lingagarh passes through Bakingia and Sarangagad blocks and falls in to the Salki. The river Bag originates from the Khondmals, a little north of this division, and falls in to Mahanadi. So it may be seen that some of the most important river systems of the affluent Ganjam district and some of the chief feeders of Mahanadi e. g., Salki, Bag and Tel owe their origin to the forest clad hills of this district. In view of the fact that catchments of several rivers and rivulets lie in this district, it is extremely necessary that the forests of this district should be scientifically preserved to ensure perennial flow in the river system that flows down to the affluent neighbouring districts. In other words the economic prosperity of the agriculture population of the neighbouring districts directly depends upon the scientific preservation and management of the forest which forms the upper catchment of this district's river system.

Evil Effects of Shifting Cultivation —

The evils of shifting cultivation are as follows:—

- (i) It causes the top soil to be washed away and impoverishes the land. The land

which is one of the nature's greatest gift to man is usually covered by a layer of top soil. Fertility of land for agriculture purposes depends on how far this top soil, which may extend from a few inches to a few feet is retained and conserved against the natural processes of erosion, one of the main effects of shifting cultivation. It may be of interest to know that it takes from 300 to 1,000 years for a single inch of top soil to form under natural conditions. But the process of depletion can be far more rapid such as a heavy downpour in one single night.

- (ii) It causes springs below the hills to dry up and ruins valuable timbers for the sake of much less valuable crop. It may be mentioned here that some of the sal forests which are now being hecked by podu cultivators are the pride of this district and in some forest blocks sal trees have attended all-India class I height. The value of some of these sal trees which have reached a girth of 6 to 7 feet with a height of 100 ft. have been sold at the rate of nearly thousand rupees per tree in the Simanbadi Range in the last auction sale.

- (iii) It causes heavy flood in the rivers below and endangers life and property.
- (iv) It causes nalas and rivulets to dry up and makes the water level to go down. It is seen that some of the wells which never dried up before, are now becoming completely dry during the summer months. This is because of lowering of the water level due to the barrenness of the hills all over and the loss of vegetative cover which generally conserves moisture in its soil formation under the root system.
- (v) It brings down heavy silt, chokes up minor irrigation projects and tanks. The decrease in the water level of Bhanjanagar Ghai and Soroda Ghai are the direct cause of this.
- (vi) It affects the ecological balance due to repeated burning when retorgression sets in, bringing about xerophytic conditions in the vegetation.
- (vii) The aesthetic beauty of land is lost for ever and the podu areas look like leper patches on the green faces of the hill side.

Remedial Measures:

Shifting cultivation is a socio-economic problem. It is closely interwoven into the coarse fabric of

the economy of the tribal population of this district. The Kondh who practise this primitive cultivation are more or less forced to take up this pernicious system of agriculture by the events of history and due to the apathy of the more enlightened neighbouring population. The British conquest of Orissa started in the year 1803 but the Balliguda Taluk seems to be taken over in the year 1880. During this period of nearly 70 years, the Kondh of this area fought some of the fiercest battles in history at Tikaballi, Andharikote (On Kalingia Ghat), Kattingia and Chakapada Kohondam. But the hill Kondh were unable to resist the invasion of the highly equipped British army. The Kondh were a brave people as can be seen from the encounters they had with the British, but when they were subjugated their economy gradually deteriorated and they fell far behind the people of the plains districts occupied by the British. They had an effective social organization which they still have, but due to economic backwardness they had to resort to the pernicious practice of podu cultivation. With the advancement of communication and other facilities, the valleys were occupied by the Oriya castes, especially pano. The Kondh of the land had to go up the hill to eke out a precarious living.

Today, we will have to suggest remedial measures keeping this background in mind. The remedial measures can be broadly outlined as follows:

(1) To-day the foremost need for preventing the practice of shifting cultivation is to have an intensive programme of education for the tribal people of the area. Without education no economic programme can be successful in this area. It is through education that they can learn about the evil effects of this practice and they would voluntarily give up this practice in favour of stable cultivation and other gainful employment. Compulsory education up to the matric stage should be introduced in this district. Public schools of a suitable type should be started at various centres like Phulbani, Balliguda, Daringibadi and Phiringia with 100 per cent subsidy from the Government of India. These schools are necessary in order to discipline the minds of the tribal children rapidly. A Sainik school should be started at a convenient place in the district in order to revive the martial tradition of the tribal people. All the tribal children should be induced to get into these institutions without being charged any fees up to the matriculation stage. A programme of adult education should also be started so that the adivasis may be able to recognise the evil effects of primitive agriculture and they will be tempted towards permanent agricultural settlements. Proper education and educative propaganda are the prime needs of this area at the moment.

(2) The tribal people of this area should be settled on permanent agricultural settlements at various suitable places in the district after getting land prepared for them and after

providing for perennial irrigation. With the provision of agricultural land and availability of water, the tribals should be lured into the area for settling there. The settlement should be done with the same initial expenditure and in the same manner as is being done for East Pakistan refugees, in Dandakaranya and the Tibetan refugees in Chandragiri. Settlement of tribal families on such cultivable irrigated land is the most important step for eradication of podu. Hundreds of such settlement units should be started all over the district vigorously.

(3) Plenty of raw materials are available in the district. After making a thorough survey of the raw materials several small-scale industries should be started and preference in employment should be given to the tribal people of this district. This will supplement their income from agriculture and reduce the pressure on land.

(4) Steps should be taken to gradually prohibit shifting cultivation by effective legislation. By stages this legislation should be made more and more stringent with the ultimate objective of totally prohibiting this practice.

These four factors as enumerated above will go a long way to change the pattern of life of the tribal people and bring them on a par with the people of the developed areas.

Besides above, the following remedies are specifically suggested for the Phulbani district.

(1) All efforts should be made to quicken the process of reservation of forests so that these forests can be put under proper scientific management. Out of the total number of 105 forest blocks in this division so far only 19 blocks have been reserved under section 16 of the Madras Forest Act. 18 blocks have been declared as reserved under section 4 of the Madras Forest Act and pending with Government for final notification. Nearly 23 blocks have been sent to the Collector for notification under section 4 of the Madras Forest Act and they are pending at this or higher level. 17 blocks have been demarcated and surveyed and proposals are going to be submitted to the Collector this year. Decision on seven blocks are pending in the Zilla Parishad since last one year. 21 blocks are going to be demarcated and surveyed this year so that complete programme of demarcation and survey which started when this division was under Madras prior to 1936, would be completed this year.

(2) Strong measures should be taken by the Collector against the offenders who are practising podu in the reserved forest areas and the proposed reserve forest areas. Effective punishment against the offenders

can go a longway in eradicating podu.

(3) As this practice of shifting cultivation has become a habit with the tribal people here, it is suggested that a scheme of rationalisation of podu may be introduced in this district. For this scheme, a block of about 100 to 150 acres of land should be taken. These blocks should be divided into 10 coupes. In coupe No. 1 the tribals should be allowed to grow their crop under the supervision of the Forest Department. Along with the crop they may be asked to plant up short rotation species. If the tribals will not be willing to plant up the species at the outset, then the planting will be done by department itself. The tribals should be allowed to harvest their crop in the first coupe and they may repeat this in the second year when they will move to the second coupe and repeat the same in the third coupe. After 10th year when they come to the 1st coupe again, the short rotation forest crop would have been ready for harvesting. This crop which may be just a fuel species may be felled. Main produce may be taken out and the lops and tops may be burnt by the tribals and they may plant up their cereals again along with the forest species. By this method of rotation they will be able to practise shifting cultivation without harming the

soil and spoiling valuable produce. The area may be chosen on the slopes of hills in the unreserved forest areas or in the plains unreserved forests which do not contain valuable trees. A trial may be given to this scheme and if this is found popular with the tribal people it will go a long way to solve the problem of shifting cultivation that is being practised now.

- (4) All the denuded and derelict hills and slopes should be brought under reservation for taking up rehabilitated plantations. As this would mean large scale afforestation programme. This scheme should be subsidised and should be met from the Tribal Welfare Funds.
- (5) Small villages inside reserved forest enclosures should be shifted to form bigger villages where the tribals should be settled and land and irrigation facilities should be provided for them. Human settlement inside the reserved forests will entail only increase of the enclosures by concentric circles and will be detrimental to scientific management of forest. I had an opportunity of submitting a scheme on this line to the Collector, Phulbani, for grouping small villages inside the Guma reserved forest in the Guma or Kranja enclosure. In fact grouping up small villages into the large units

have already been undertaken by the Government of India in the Naga land area both for security and economic reasons.

- (6) Wherever shifting cultivation is going to take place in the unreserved forest there taungya system of plantation should be introduced immediately. That is to say along with the agriculture crop, forest plantations will be planned which will protect the soil and other physical resources. A trial of this scheme has already been made near Belgarh at Munditi where Gamar plantation has been raised with 'Sowan' (Millet) as agricultural crop. This seems to have been proved to be a success. If this programme is carried out all over district this will involve establishment of big nurseries and expenditure on plantation labour. The cost should be fully met from the Tribal Welfare Funds.
- (7) Hill slopes should be planted with mango, jack fruit, mahul and tamarind trees on a large scale and in the interspaces of these trees the tribals may be allowed to grow their annual crops.
- (8) Sanctuaries and National Park should be created in this area by giving full protection to the Flora and Fauna of this district which will be a great source of revenue from the tourists. This district having been situated on

a picturesque site of hills and dales will attract hundreds of tourists from all over the world and that will yield handsome revenue to the state exchequer. This revenue can be ploughed back into the district for meeting the cost of settlement of the tribals and its vast afforestation programme.

- (9) Every tribal should be asked to plant up coffee and pepper in their homestead lands. Experiments in Kalinga and Belgarh have proved quite successful in this regard.

- (10) There should be a very close co-ordination among the different departments of the district for prevention of podu cultivation.

- (11) Collection of produce and their marketing should be made through co-operatives where in tribals should have the majority of membership so that they will have a sense of belonging to the society. Departmental collection of some of the minor forest produce may be made on an experimental basis. The produces are honey, wax, arrow-root, jungle jute, gums and resins.

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Historical background of Goti system

The Goti system prevailing in the district of Koraput has drawn the attention of the administration from the nineteenth century when it was a part of the erstwhile Madras Presidency. The plight of the debtors who suffered under the heavy burden of debt in lieu of which they pledged their services to creditors popularly known as 'Sahukar' and reduced themselves to the status of slaves, startled even the British administrators. The relative ignorance of the hill people and the craftiness of unscrupulous money-lenders made the former to accept this lot since a long time. The hills of Jeypore were opened to large scale settlement by the plains-men for nearly three centuries firstly by the then ruler of Jeypore settling a few families for personal services which was followed by prospectors. The condition in the Agency prevailing in the 18th or 19th century as could be seen from old records and memories showed a closed society with barter and exchange economy and static life. Except dry fish, tobacco and salt, very few other articles were taken to the hills and even those were fraught with considerable

hazards. With very little contact with outsiders the hill people had a close cultural base permitting few innovations. The ruling chief of Jeypore had more of indirect administration through the headmen of the villages who used to collect the land revenue in kind and paid those to the Raja keeping a portion for themselves. Plough tax came later which for the first time gave quantitative assessment of revenue on Jeypore hills.

In the meantime quite a number of plains-men apart from those who came at the instance of the Maharaja for his services made inroads into the hills and their main occupation was liquor vending and trading in various articles. The hill people prior to the coming in of distillery liquor were satisfied with their home brewed stuff from the grains. But when the strong spirit was introduced, addiction to it became extensive. This opportunity was seized by willy distillers and venders to supply liquor to the tribals on credit and ultimately got executed pronotes for very high values in their favour. By and by through mortgage and sale the non-tribals took possession of most of the

fertile land belonging to the tribals. The law prohibiting the transfer of land from the hill tribes to non-tribals came much later when the A. T. I. L. T. Act came into force by the erstwhile Madras Government. Before that the mischief had already been done.

After parting with their land the tribals had very little opportunity left for gainful employment in their home land. Shifting cultivation on the hill slopes was then the main occupation for the tribals which again was dependent on the mercy of the forest authorities. Addition to liquor encouraged illicit distillation which left the tribals entirely at the mercy of the excise staff. The Bethi system prevailing in those days together with the tyranny of the petty forest excise staff, had let loose a reign of terror on the hills. The tribals distracted by illness, heavy expenses on account of marriages and funerals, and to pay the fines imposed by the forest and excise authorities made them to fall prey in the hands of the money-lenders who advanced cash at a very high rate of interest which the tribals could never repay. These perpetuated the practice of debt bondage which is the Goti system.

Goti defined—

A Goti is a person who after taking an advance from a creditor makes an agreement, mostly oral, or partly written and partly oral to bind himself to the creditor till the debt is satisfied. Goti means a person who depends on another for food and maintenance. The religious sentiment of the tribals that they should not die indebted made them

serve the Shukars all their life and even their sons and the grandsons pledged their services to satisfy the same debt incurred by their fathers or grandfathers. The only avenue for escape was through migration to tea gardens which from the 19th century was vigorous in these areas, through T. D. L. A. activities. The Partially Excluded Areas Enquiry Committee set up by Orissa Government in 1939 in their report discussed the evil of the system and advised the Government to enact legislation to prohibit the Goti system. Accordingly the then Provincial Government promulgated a regulation "The Debt Bondage Abolition Regulation" "to stop this practice in Koraput and certain other areas of the Province. In many areas the practice came to an end due to various factors, the principal being relative advancement of the people along with prospects of suitable employment. Even in certain parts of Koraput like Nowrangpur due to local agitation the practice has come to an end. But in other parts of the district particularly in the central high lands it is still prevailing in its original form. The Dhebar Commission in 1961 found the system in vogue and described it as a slur on the modern Indian Society. The leaders of the State Government considered its prevalence as a challenge to modern society and are keen to eradicate the system completely. Its roots being very deep and more than one factor being responsible for its continuance it becomes a very difficult and knotty problem to tackle. The non-official agencies like Akhil Bharat Sarva Seva Sangh and Nava Jiban Mandal are trying to eradicate this evil since 1955, but have not succe-

eded. The State Government directed the Tribal Research Bureau in September 1962 to make a study as to the extent of the Goti system in Koraput, to find out the cause and *modus operandi* of the system and to report as to how best the problem should be tackled. The time was limited and the report was prepared on the basis of nearly three months' study by the research staff of the Tribal Research Bureau.

Salient features of Goti system

The reports of the Junior Research Officers reveal the following :—

The salient features of Goti system comprises of —

1. Landless tribal and semitribal groups without remunerative occupation, seeking credit quickly to meet expense on marriage, funeral, for procuring cattle and agricultural implements, to pay fines, or to pay off bad creditors.
2. Seeking credit without any security.
3. Credit is repayable mostly in kind, without security. Any money-lender, readily advancing the required money taking the risk on the basis of age old tradition gets the benefit of the services of the debtor or members of his family in addition to the monetary transaction.
4. After a loan is advanced the creditor makes some oral agreement to get the services of

the debtor to satisfy the debt adjusting towards capital and interest or interest only. To avoid legal procedure an oral agreement is made for Goti service, and a pro-note is mostly drawn up to cover the debt without any mention of the corresponding agreement. The creditor thus derives double benefit.

5. The agreement once entered lasts for quite some time and the Goti or the debtor continues to render services for years together or sometimes for generations. The ignorance of the Gotis and their vulnerable position without any alternative makes them subjugated to the Sahukars.

Extent of Goti System

This practice is most widespread throughout the central plateau of Koraput in Sadar Sub-division. In areas where specific study was made. Elsewhere from general experience, it could be said that other avenues of employment for the people has been responsible for improving the situation. Research staff of the Tribal Research Bureau worked in Narayanpatna, Kakiriguma, Semliguda and Pot-tangi areas from which they collected data on Gotis, the amount of 'chidni' (contract rate) the method of contracting debts, and the necessity for the same. Those are included in their

report. It is now clear that in spite of the promulgation of Orissa Debt Bondage Abolition Regulation, 1948, which made the Goti agreement conditional, and unless registered before a Competent authority void, the practice is continuing in the central plateau in its virulent form. The reason for that is the non-availability of suitable cultivable land on the central plateau and other subsidiary occupations. The area is full of hill ranges and ravines the only suitable wet land available being along river courses. Hence, hill cultivation is practised large scale which is uncertain and fraught with hazards. Without adequate occupation the legislation could not divert the Gotis from the Sahukars. Even those Gotis who were released after completing certain period of services are found to be recontracting fresh loans and binding themselves as Gotis either to the same or other Sahukars. Ignorance and conservatism play their role in making them to cling to the area instead of seeking avenues of employment elsewhere.

Within these years social workers and officials have been visiting the area and trying to spread knowledge among the Gotis. But without any substantial alternative it becomes difficult for them to think of other ways of life. Credit facilities through official channels are either lacking, or, wherever available cumbersome procedure required in transacting an advance from the latter source, compels the tribals

to look to the Sahukars only. Particularly the mortgage of land required for getting a loan from graingola or co-operative stand on the way of getting an advance.

The following may be considered by Government for eradication of Goti system.

Legal Provision

New Regulation—A new Regulation by the Governor, according to the Fifth Schedule, or an Act, of Legislature banning the Goti system in place of the present Debt Bondage Abolition Regulation should be enacted. As the practice is prevalent in a Scheduled area the Governor by virtue of the special powers conferred on him in Fifth Schedule of Constitution can issue a regulation to end this system. In this context the recent Sagri Abolition Act, of the Rajasthan Government may be taken into view. An identical system of Debt Bondage was prevailing in Banswada area of that State. The salient features of the Rajasthan Act, and our regulation are given below.

Goti and Sagri System—The Rajasthan Government in an Act, "The Rajasthan Sagri System Abolition Act, 1961", which received the assent of the President of India on the 21st day of November, 1961 abolished the system in the State.

Orissa

1. It extends to the Ganjam Agency tracts, the district of Koraput and Nawapada Subdivision of the district of Sambalpur (now in district of Kalahandi).

2. (i) Goti is defined as an agreement written or oral or partly written and partly oral, wherein the consideration for the performance of labour by any person is a debt due by that person and the interests, if any on such debt and includes any transaction which is substantially such as agreement ;

(ii) 'labour' means agricultural labour and includes domestic service or labour whether indoor or out-door ;

(iii) 'labour agreement' means—

(a) an agreement written or oral wherein the consideration for the performance of labour by any person is or includes an advance exceeding the equivalent of one month's fair and equitable remuneration made or to be made to such person or at his request to some one else and the interest of any, on such advance ; and

(b) an agreement by which a person in consideration of performance of labour by a minor receives money or its equivalent in kind from another person ;

Rajasthan

1. It extends to the whole of the Rajasthan.

2. The Sagri system consists of the advance of a loan by one person (hereinafter called the creditor) to another person (hereinafter called the debtor) whether evidence by a writing or otherwise on any one or more of the following terms, namely :—

(a) that the principal amount of such loan whether with or without interest accrued due thereon at the stipulated rate, shall be treated as repaid in full by the debtor rendering to or for the benefit of any person named in this behalf by the creditor, labour or personal services by himself or by any member or members of his family or by his hired servant or labourer or by any of his relations for a specific period of time either without wage or on payment of merely nominal wages ;

(b) that, upon expiration of such period, the security, if any furnished for the repayment of the loan shall automatically stand discharged ;

Orissa

(iv) 'Labourer' means a person who under the terms of an agreement is bound to perform labour.

3. Goti agreement is declared wholly void.

4. There are various conditions on which such agreements could be enforced by a creditor to get back his dues.

5. The Special Assistant Agents and the Subdivisional Officers are empowered to settle all disputes on the advances according to this system.

6. Penalty for obtaining labour in pursuance of a void agreement whoever obtains labour from a person in pursuance of an agreement which is void under this regulation shall be punishable with fine which may extend to two hundred rupees or in default with imprisonment which may extend to six months.

Rajasthan

(c) that only the interest on such loan shall be treated as paid up by such labour or service and the principal amount of the loan shall be repaid in addition before such security is discharged ;

(d) that the wages for such labour or service, whether substantial or nominal shall not be actually paid to the person rendering the same but shall be credited to the debtor in his loan account, appropriating the same towards interest till then due on the loan and the surplus towards the principal amount of the loan.

(ii) The Sagri system, as defined above, includes any other like system of advance of loans prevailing in any part of the State, by whatsoever name it may, locally be called, of which the rendering of labour for personal service is an ingredient.

3. Sagri system is abolished from the date of the commencement of the Act.

4. All such agreements of loans advanced on Sagri system would be dealt according to the provision of the Rajasthan Relief of Agricultural Indebtedness Act, 1957.

Orissa

Other Penalties—Any employer who (i) fails to file in the office of the Special Assistant Agent or the S. D. O., as the case may be, or any authority appointed under clause (i) of section 4 a copy of labour agreement entered into after the commencement of this Regulation or of a Goti or labour agreement, the terms of which have been settled under sub-section (2) of section 9 or (ii) fails to pay the labourer his remuneration, or fails to feed him when according to the terms of the agreement he is bound to feed the labourer, shall be punishable with fine, which may extend to two hundred rupees or in default with imprisonment which may extend to six months.

The distinction between these two are in case of Orissa Regulation of Goti agreement though void permits in certain exceptional cases an agreement between a creditor and a debtor for service, while Rajasthan Act makes the entire system illegal. Various details have been provided in Orissa regulation for arbitration and disposal such cases. In Rajasthan a preceding Act (Rajasthan Act 19 of 1957) is made applicable in its term for disposal of any such dispute after the enactment commences. Both are non-cognisable offences. The Rajasthan Act provides for stricter penalty than Orissa Regulation.

Rajasthan

5. The debt relief court of the area according to the section of that Act, shall proceed in accordance with the provision contained in sections 6 to 11 of that Act.

6. Penalties—Whoever—

(i) advances a loan on the Sagri system on or after the date of commencement of this Act, or (ii) compel his debtor to render labour or personal service in fulfilment of the terms on which a loan was advanced to him, shall on conviction before a Magistrate of of the first class, be punishable, for every such imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to one year or with fine which may extend to five hundred rupees or with both.

It is evident that while the Goti agreement in our State was made permissible with certain conditions, the Rajasthan Act completely abolished the practice. It should be considered to make all Goti contracts cognisable offence with stricter penalties and enforced vigorously. For one year there should be posted a special Magistrate under the District Magistrate, Koraput for the purpose to enforce the regulation or Act with adequate powers. The first requirement should be to strike terror in the minds of the Sahukars who want to evade the provisions of the legislation. The Special Magistrate should take full help of the district police administration. Without the District Magistrate and the District Police Authorities vigorously enforcing the legislation other efforts will not meet the end. The experts in Law Department may examine to prepare a full-proof legislation for this purpose.

The legislation may include the following aspects:—

Goti system should be banned in all its form and practice. All Goti agreements oral or written should be declared illegal, with effect from the 1st April 1963. All persons who would be working as Gotis from that date should be automatically released from Bondage. All the outstanding debts would stand liquidated. The Magistrate enforcing this legislation should be delegated powers according to 190, Cr. P. C. to take cognisance from police reports and private reports.

The penalty should be rigorous imprisonment up to one year and fine up to Rs. 1,000 or both for employing Gotis.

Goti in its definition should include similar agreements in whatever name it is called or in whatever form it exists like Khamarai, Holia, etc., provided that there is pledge of service in satisfaction of a debt by the debtor to the creditor.

Measures to abolish Goti system

The legal provision alone will not be adequate until and unless the socio-economic aspects of the people are not taken into view. As has been found the economic life in the area centres around the well-to-do Sahukars who are also land owners and the poor tribals or semi-tribal royats who are landless, constantly in need of credit in cash and in kind to meet their expenses. The geography of the area permits little social mobility and the in groups of Sahukars and others continue to remain constant.

To improve the situation the following measures will be essential:—

1. Settlement of tribals in Government waste land. The settlers should be provided with house, livestock, agricultural implements on payment basis which they should return in easy instalments free of interests. Only thing given free will be land with irrigation facilities. This is necessary to inculcate their attachment for the settlement as experiences have shown that anything given free is not

taken seriously by tribals. However, it is to be seen that the land given to the settlers should be capable of producing adequate crops to enable them to be self-sufficient.

2. As regards the proposal to take these people to the land reclaimed by the D. D. A. in Umerkote and Malkangiri, it will not be attractive at the outset. There will be aversion on the part of the people to go to a long distance, this should be however be experimented by taking a group of elders from the area to those sites to let them see the position first hand. An Anthropologist from the Tribal Research Bureau may assist the District Administration in this programme. Here it is noteworthy that a colony of ex-Gotis started at Koraput has been successful due to the fact that the non-official social worker in charge runs it with personal touch and works with the settlers mingling with them. Therefore, while attempting settlement the first pre-requisite will be the selection of suitable workers with natural interest for the work who may be given extra allowances to encourage them.

Shifting Cultivation

Shifting cultivation is widely practised in all the hill ranges except between Pottangi and Koraput where the hills

are already barren and eroded. A very interesting point is that the Sahukars exploit the situation by employing Gotis to do shifting cultivation for them wherever possible. Shifting cultivation yield millets and ragi which are not grown in wet land. Therefore tribal Gotis are encouraged to reclaim forests and make hill clearings, the produce from which is taken by Sahukars. If caught by the forest authority the Gotis bear the penalties which if in cash are paid by the Sahukars. If it is imprisonment the Gotis suffer it. Apart from that the Sahukars also encourage their debtors to cut more and more forests from which they recover their debt. Thus, the vicious circle is formed in which the Sahukars get all the benefits from the destruction of national forest wealth while the tribals bear the brunt of it. This should be checked with a strong hand, according to the existing laws.

Credit and Co-operative

The pilot report of the Akhil Bharat Sarva Seva Sangh on resumption of their activities in Koraput district led by Shri A. W. Sahasrabudhe showed that the pre-requisite of an average man in Koraput for maintenance is not great. The credit facilities are limited although demand for it is high. The All-India Rural Credit Survey has shown that in Backward areas in the country the entire economic growth and social advancement is retarded due to the constant cycle of seeking credit at one hand and in procuring it on easy terms or due to lack of credit worthiness. The rural people in India are affected. For this reason most of the people being agriculturists,

the investment in land is rather poor, which automatically hampers production. The picture in tribal areas may be worse. Before a few decades the pressure of population on land or on hill clearings was not high. With increase of population there is continuous deterioration of the condition. It is known that shifting cultivation if phased with rotation of at least 10 years for each clearing does not affect, so much the soil condition and production. But lesser period of rotation is bound to intensify its bad effects.

The picture in Kakiriguma and in other parts of Central plateau of Koraput reveal the position of this imbalance. On the one hand the tribals or semi-tribal groups seeking credit for social and religious observances are not able to produce sufficiently to maintain a uniform economic life. Pressure on land and hill clearings being high and yield getting poorer day by day, credit on easy terms, free of security not being available, they have to depend on the Sahukars. The later advance credit without security and then exploit the situation to their full advantage.

Along with settlement the most vital aspect should be organisation of grain-gola co-operatives and credit co-operatives which could advance the credit required. Unfortunately, it could not be passed off without a word of criticism on the existing co-operative and credit societies. (1) Firstly, they seek security of immovable

property which the tribals do not possess. (2) Secondly, they follow elaborate procedure which frustrates the man seeking quick advance. It needs reorientation of the rules and procedures, if the tribals are to be released from the clutches of the Sahukars. (3) Thirdly, the debtors may return the advance in kind instead of cash, which may include millets, maize and pulses.

Labour Co-operative

Koraput is having several large scale development projects with considerable employment facilities for unskilled workers.

Unfortunately the local tribal people do not avail this opportunity for employment in large number. The D. D. A. operations since 1959 has helped in increasing wage rate. In Balimela area nearly 5,000 persons are required for earthwork. The Railway Project has engaged quite a large number of people. The MIG Factory will need a large labour force. It is, therefore, suggested that a standing labour corps should be organised from among the poorest tribals through co-operatives in the age-group of 20—40. In Goti predominant areas there should be special drive to recruit Gotis and ex-Gotis into labour co-operatives. Due to the ignorance of the people this could be achieved only through the official agency. Some money has to be sanctioned from the Tribal Welfare Funds for this purpose. The expenditure will be incurred in appointing special staff, for transportation of labourers

to the Project sites, advancing some money to them at the time of recruitment which they can leave for their family members to meet their household expenditure till they earn sufficient wages. The methods practised by T. D. L. A. can be usefully employed for this purpose. If this drive can be effectively organised, it will solve the problem of unemployment and Debt Bondage.

Publicity and propaganda

These will play a vital role both in enforcing legislation and also in spreading knowledge. The Gotis have become self-centred and dangerously tradition-directed due to poverty and ignorance. Interview with the Gotis have shown that their mental framework show complete helplessness. They do not imagine any better way of life and even cannot think that there are other modes of living. The role of Sahukars has been to stimulate the perpetuation of helplessness. To counteract these, official publicity

measures should be both psychological and sociological. The drive also should be continuous, not causal. The publicity measures will be helpful for organising Labour Co-operatives and resettlement programmes. The help of non-official social workers may also be taken for this purpose. Visits by high officials and other dignitaries and local leaders of the district may also help the situation. The School teachers in the area may also be deployed for the purpose. This special drive may be taken up for one year. The Goti legislation should be printed in Oriya and translated in Kui (Kondh) for free distribution. Small features and documentary films, taken for the purpose, will be useful.

A summary of the distribution of Gotis and Sahukars, number of Gotis and Sahukars and their castewise distribution are given in the tables below from the areas studied by the Tribal Research Bureau.

Total population in different areas and No. of Gotis & Sahukars

Sl. No.	Area of investigation	Villages studied	Number of families	Total population	Number of Gotis	Number of Sahukars
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
1	Kumbhikota	3	111	398	19	6
2	Laximipur	2	418	1,374	26	15
3	Kakiriguma	4	829	3,282	176	83
	Total	9	1,358	5,054	221	104
1	Potangi	2	..	685 +225	39+8	20
2	Pokali	2	..	670	31	15
3	Chandaka	2	..	616	25	13
4	Sunki	2	..	496	10	7
5	Ampasali	2	..	382	16	9
6	Kunduli	1	..	590	37	11
7	Nandapur	1	..	2,000	40	23
8	Padua	3	..	1,395	18	12
	Total	15	..	7,059	224	109
1	Sembliguda	3	..	1,233	31	15
2	Koraput	6	..	2,419	55	31
3	Dasmantapur	5	..	1,410	31	21
	Total	14	..	5,062	117	67
1	Narayanpatan	5	604	2,268	79	23
2	Bandhagaon	5	564	2,422	88	29
3	Almanda	2	297	1,361	35	16
4	Kumbariput	2	158	625	36	6
	Total	14	1,623	6,656	237	74

Distribution of Gotis and Sahukars

Sl. No.	Area	Number of villages	Gotis		Sahukars	
			Tribal	Non-Tribal	Tribal	Non-Tribal
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
1	Kumbhikota	3	19	..	3	3
2	Laxmipur	2	21	5	7	8
3	Kakirguma	4	157	19	3	47
	Total	9	197	24	13	58
1	Pottangi	2	36	11	2	19
2	Pokali	2	18	13	..	14
3	Chandaka	2	16	9	2	11
4	Sunki	2	6	4	..	7
5	Ampasali	2	13	3	2	7
6	Kunduli	1	34	3	2	9
7	Nandapur	1	30	10	..	23
8	Padua	3	11	7	2	10
	Total	15	164	60	10	100
1	Sembliguda	3	28	3	2	13
2	Koraput	6	55	..	4	27
3	Dasmantpur	5	25	6	7	14
	Total	14	108	9	13	54
1	Narayanpatna	5	76	3	2	21
2	Bandhagaon	5	88	..	..	29
3	Kumbhariput	2	35	1	2	4
4	Almanda	2	35	..	..	16
	Total	14	254	4	4	70

Castewise/Tribewise break-up of the Sahukars with No. of Gotis, No. of Sahukars employing

	One Goti	Two Gotis	Three Gotis	Four Gotis	Five Gotis	Six Gotis	Seven to ten	Eleven and more
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
Godba ..	11	1	..	..	..	..	..	..
Poroja ..	13	8	1	1	..	..	..	..
Kondh ..	9	4	..	1	1	..	..	..
Kondadora	3	..	1	..	..	..	1	..
Rana ..	15	6	1	2	..	..	..	..
Paika ..	2	2	..	..	..	..	..	..
Gauda ..	11	8	..	3	..	..	1	3
Kumti ..	19	8	9	2	2	1	4	..
Sundhi ..	30	17	10	6	9	7	6	..
Ghasi ..	2	1	1	..	..	..	..	..
Dom ..	19	10	2	1	..	..	1	..
Branmin ..	4	3	..	4	2	..	1	..
Raju ..	1	1	2	1
Mali ..	4	2	1	1
Karan ..	1	1	1
Washerman	..	1	2
Others ..	4	7	1	1	1	1
Total ..	148	80	31	23	16	9	14	3

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