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Administration in Tribal Areas

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The word administration comes from the Latin word *Ad Ministrare* which means to serve. In modern English, it means management of affairs or looking after people. Thus, the modern concept of administration is to look to the well being of the people by way of amelioration of their conditions in every sphere of their life be it social, cultural, educational, religious or recreational. Proper and good administration calls for thorough understanding of the way of life of the people, good knowledge of their customs and traditions, a stock taking of their deficiencies and shortcomings, conversancy with their feelings and sentiments and above all acquaintance with their language.

In the present age, with the laying of emphasis on the upliftment of the poor embracing different facets of their life aiming at raising them above the poverty line, administration in tribal areas where the people live in abject poverty, assumes greater importance.

Though, in the pre-independence era some schemes were launched for development of the tribals with limited success, intensified and sustained efforts are under way since independence for their multi-faceted development. Their plight has been causing grave concern in the higher echelons of the Government and no less a person than the Prime Minister has stressed the need for gearing up the administrative machinery with a view to achieving speedy and better results. Many protective legislations have been enacted to prevent their exploitation by unscrupulous traders and money-lenders and many schemes aiming at their around upliftment have been undertaken. Presently, Intensive Tribal Development Agencies, Modified Area Development Approach and many other agencies and organisations have been working for the tribals in general

and some micro projects started for specific tribes have been looking after their development in particular.

Nobody will perhaps disagree with the fact that the mode and manner of administration of the tribal areas should be different from that of the plain areas due to the backwardness of the former keeping the degree of assimilation of its people at a lower level and their resistance to any sort of change over the status quo at a higher level than their counterparts of the latter. In other words, certain situations which can be handled in a casual and routine manner in the plain areas will need very delicate and careful handling in tribal areas. While the plain dwellers adopt improved methods quickly with less or practically no resistance, the tribals take a very long time to accept any improved technique howsoever beneficial it might be. This is not merely because of their lack of understanding of the benefits but because of some psychological, social and religious factors. They take time to reconcile with all the problems which crop up once a change is contemplated.

In this article an attempt has been made to list out some of the aspects which the officials working in the tribal areas should keep in view while discharging their duties. They are as follows:

(1) *Acquaintance with the language of the people*—Communication gap is a great handicap in administration. If the administered do not understand the language of the administrator and vice versa administration becomes extremely difficult. But at present most of the tribals have knowledge of the language of the State and so this does not pose a problem. However, each and every official working in a tribal area should try to acquire working

knowledge of the language of the tribe he is working for. It is an admitted fact that every human being feels homely when he is conversed in his own mother-tongue and communication in one's own language makes one understand clearly and grasp things quickly. Government of Orissa have been rewarding the officials who acquire proficiency in any tribal language as an incentive.

(2) *Ascertaining the felt need of the people*—Care should be taken to ascertain the felt need of the people before embarking on any scheme whether communal or individual. This should be done with care and intelligence as more often than not a scheme which for all intents and purposes appears to be the need of the people does not happen to be their felt need and fails utterly, if taken up. To an outsider visiting a village which lacks both a school and a well, the latter may appear to be the immediate need as according to his judgement provision of protected drinking water, which sustains life, should have priority over any other thing. But the former, that is, a school might be the felt need of the villagers, who might not be feeling the immediate necessity of a well because of their fondness for the water of the stream or the spring in the vicinity. They may, however, feel its necessity after a school is opened in the village.

(3) *Avoiding multiplicity of programmes*—The tribal is a simple minded person. Bothering him with too many schemes at a time crowds his mind. He gets bewildered and is unable to decide what to do and what not to do. Hence different schemes whether communal or individual should be taken up one by one in a phased manner on priority basis so as to enable the tribal to reap their benefits conscientiously and appreciably.

(4) *Preventing exploitation by unscrupulous traders and money-lenders*—Traders and money-lenders, who are non-tribals and who have infiltrated into the tribal areas since so many years and have manoeuvred to gain their confidence, have been cheating and exploiting the tribals by all possible unlawful means and consequently having amassed land and wealth have gained veneration. To prevent such exploitation, co-operatives functioning in the tribal areas need be revitalised and made efficient and dependable. These co-operatives should not only meet the credit needs of the tribals but also ensure fruitful and proper utilisation of the loans so that the tribals would

not go to the money-lender. The produce of the tribals should also be purchased and their necessities supplied to them at reasonable and fair prices by the co-operatives. Strict vigilance should be kept on the activities of the exploiters.

(5) *Strict enforcement of protective legislations*—Many legislation protecting the rights and properties of the tribals from being infringed and exploited respectively by the non-tribals have been enacted and are under operation. But these are not being enforced strictly. Their strict enforcement should be ensured at any cost.

(6) *Avoiding unweildiness of the unit of administration*—It is an undisputed fact that the smaller the unit of administration the better will be the administration. If officials are put in administrative charge of vast areas it would be difficult for them to keep control over the area and do proper justice to their work. Obviously, the process of administration will also be slow. The unit of administration therefore need be kept within a reasonable and workable size.

(7) *Paying due regard to the customs and traditions*—Every people has its own customs and traditions. The tribals have also their peculiar customs and traditions due regard to which should be paid by the officials in course of discharge of their duties. Schemes should be so designed as not to interfere with their customary practices and traditions. In no case they should be compelled to break their traditions and taboos and go against their customs. Care should also be taken not to disrespect their religious beliefs which are deep rooted, neither should they be dissuaded from observing the religious rites which they have been doing since time immemorial. It may be kept in mind that it will take many years—even generations—to ward off these beliefs. It would rather be advisable for the officials to re-orient and implement the schemes in such a way that they encompass the rituals without affecting the result. The customary laws of the tribals should also be given due reverence inasmuch as they do not pose serious law and order problems and are not found detrimental to the society. How strong and deep rooted the religious beliefs of the tribals are, will be amply clear from the following anecdote.

A tribal was rushed to the Emergency Ward of the hospital for suspected snake bite and was given the best of treatment available there

without loss of time. But he did not respond to the treatment and became desperate and distressed all the time shouting for summoning a Gunia who only, according to him, was capable of curing him by chanting 'mantras'. But no 'Gunia' was available near at hand and the condition of the patient was deteriorating, when a bright idea struck the mind of the attending physician. He declared unequivocally that he knew the 'mantra' and it was not necessary to call any 'Gunia' stating that he had learnt it from one tribal 'Gunia'. With this he asked the Ward Attendant to bring some grains of raw rice. When this order was complied with, he chanted some unintelligible 'mantras' and blew a few times over the injury and dropped the grains of raw rice one by one, all the time successfully acting like a 'Gunia'. This brought back the lost confidence of the patient and he soon showed signs of improvement. It would be anybody's guess that the doctor had no knowledge whatsoever of any 'Mantra'.

(8) *Recognising the traditional leaders*—Every tribal community has its traditional leaders like the village headman, the religious head or the priest etc. They are held in high esteem by all the members of the community living in the village and their words are taken as gospel. Due recognition should be given to these leaders and all schemes intended to be introduced should be pushed through and implemented in consultation with them or wherever possible through them.

(9) *Identifying with the tribals*—The officials specially those who come in frequent contact with the tribals should identify themselves with the tribals so that the latter do not consider the former as aliens. The officials must live with the tribals but not like them. They should become their ideal and set examples for them. They should practise better sanitary habits so that the tribals might gradually learn the habits from them and follow the same themselves.

(10) *Working with a missionary zeal*—The officials working in the tribal areas should work with a missionary zeal to improve the lot of the people who are living in a deplorable condition mostly below subsistence level. They should not get biased or motivated by extraneous factors and try to achieve the goal set before them with the motto 'service to humanity is service to God'.

(11) *Avoiding over exposure of the tribals*—The tribals are generally shy and shrink from

publicity. They do not want to be pestered and disturbed frequently. The following anecdote will confirm this notion.

A demonstration on Japanese method of paddy cultivation was conducted in the field of a tribal cultivator. At that time this method, being an innovation, was being tried to be adopted extensively with a view to stepping up production of paddy considerably. The Government were very keen to increase the area under this method. In this field, the plants had a very luxuriant growth making the demonstration a grand success and a show piece. The cultivator had been supplied with all inputs free of cost and had been constantly guided by the Block officials as it happened to be near the Block office. He had simply put in his labour. Because of its success and proximity to the Block office, the Block officials were taking almost all the officers visiting the Block on inspection, to see this demonstration and on every such occasion the cultivator was being summoned to their presence more for questioning as to how and by whom he was motivated, what fertilisers he used and when etc., than for congratulating him on his success. These occasions were not infrequent but many. As the yield was very high—beyond expectation, the Agricultural Extension Officer of the Block had not a iota of doubt that the cultivator would take up this method of cultivation in more area during the next season. But to the utter consternation of all, he refused to do any such thing—not even to take it up in the same field despite assurances of all possible help. No amount of persuasion could dislodge him from his firm stand. The reason, as he later confided, was that he did not want to be pestered by questions. The tribal dances which attract foreigners, should therefore not be over exposed.

(12) *Involving the local youth*—On account of spread of education in the tribal areas a number of local educated youth have now emerged with a keen desire of uplifting their community. Their help and co-operation should be enlisted in implementing the programmes, if success is desired.

These are only a few of the many aspects of administrative strategy to be borne in mind and are intended for giving an insight into the problems which are required to be tackled with tact, intelligence and delicacy. It is hoped that these will go a long way in helping the officers in formulating their strategy for efficient and peaceful administration of the tribal areas.

Living conditions of the Birhors in Orissa and Strategy for their Development

P. K. Mohanty

The Birhors, a primitive tribe exclusively found in Orissa, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh fall into the category of hunting and gathering group having trade relations and exchange transactions with the local peasants. Instead of settling down at one place permanently, the Birhors move from place to place within a circumscribed area and therefore are known as a nomadic tribe.

The local people in Orissa identify the Birhors in various ways. In the district of Kalahandi and Sundargarh they are called as Mankidi whereas in Mayurbhanj and Sambalpur districts they go by the name Mankirdia. In fact both the Mankirdia and Mankidi are none but the Birhors. The Birhors including the Mankidis and Mankirdias number 1,307 persons in Orissa (1971 census). During the said census period the growth rate was 21.98 per cent and sex ratio was 938 females to 1,000 males.

There are two types of Birhors—the Uthul i. e. nomadic Birhors and the Jagi, i. e. settled Birhors. The Birhors move from place to place in different groups in a specified area. Each group comprises on an average 10 to 15 households.

Living Conditions

The Birhor settlement called Tanda, is temporary and set up in a place close to the forest near some market centre and peasant village. They move from place to place in small bands consisting of five to ten families along with their household belongings in and around the forests. Their abodes are conical leaf huts with small entrances. The leaf roofs keep the huts airtight and warm. The women folk keep the hut very neat and clean and the inside floor of the hut is plastered as often as needed. For water for their daily use the Birhors depend primarily on streams and rivulets. But often the women folk draw water

from the wells in aluminium and earthen vessels and it is their daily routine.

There is no definite pit for throwing away the rubbish and refuse. After sweeping the hut and goat pen the refuges are thrown at a distance from the hut to keep the area clean and healthy. Leaf cups and leaf plates are used for eating cooked food and are thrown away after use.

The staple food of the Birhors is rice. With the sale proceeds of ropes and forest produce they buy their weekly requirements of rice and other things from the market. They also buy corn and other minor millets in the respective seasons and eat the same in addition to cooked rice. They collect various types of green leaves and various types of fruits such as Kendu, Palm and Mango from the forest for their consumption. Whenever time permits during their trips to the forest for collection of barks, they dig out roots and tubers and also collect honey which supplement their principal cereal diet. In many places cocoons are available in the forest and the Birhors are well acquainted with these places. The cocoons add to the income of the Birhors in the form of cash which they use for buying their clothes.

Greens and vegetables are always boiled with a little salt and a little turmeric paste; required amount of chilly is added according to taste. The flesh of different types of animals and birds are taken, of which the flesh of the monkey is very delicious to them. Meat is usually cooked by boiling and adding salt, oil, chilly and turmeric paste and also taken by roasting. The extra meat is stored by baking or drying it in the sun. While preparing curry of the flesh of the monkey, turmeric paste is not added due to religious taboo. Fruits and nuts are taken raw but the roots and tubers before being eaten are either boiled or roasted on fire.

The Birhors are addicted to country liquor (Handia) which is prepared by them or purchased from the local Scheduled Caste people. But on festive occasions and during observance of religious rites, mohua wine is drunk and offered to guests and relatives.

Tobacco is very much popular among the Birhors. It is smoked and chewed by powdering it and mixing with a little lime. Even though the habit of taking tobacco is confined to men and women, the children also are found to be using it.

Although the Birhors tap different sources for their livelihood, they very often than not run deficit of their food supply. During the scarce period they eat mango kernel, which are preserved at home for use during such difficult times.

A Birhor male needs three pieces of clothes annually for his use. Regarding use of clothes they explain like this. One piece is worn, another piece is used for covering the body and in case the cloth which is worn gets wet it is replaced by the third piece of cloth which is kept at home. A piece of cloth costs Rs. 12 to Rs. 15 and a man needs about Rs. 40 annually towards the cost of his clothes. A woman needs only two pieces in a year and a sum of Rs. 60 is required to meet the cost of these two pieces of sarees. The male members have now started wearing shirts and the female folks are using pettycoats and blouses which has increased the expenses of the Birhors on clothing.

A woman wears bangles and hair pins to keep the tassel in position in the hair bun. The Birhors use different types of oil for different purposes. Coconut, Mahua and Kusum oil are used on the body and also for dressing hair. Mustard oil is used for cooking food and Mahua (tola) oil is used for lighting lamps. The Birhors are well conversant with the techniques of extracting oil from kusum and mahua seeds by using wooden oil press. The process of extraction is that they break the seeds into small pieces and boil them. The boiled seeds are kept in small baskets. Two such baskets filled with the boiled seeds are kept one upon the other in between two planks of wood which comprises the oil press. One end of each of these two planks are tied tightly and inserted into the groove made for this purpose in a tree. The other end of the lower plank is rested on a big piece of stone above the ground and the filled in oil seed baskets are pressed tightly by lowering the upper plank until oil comes out. The oil so

extracted is collected in an earthen pot kept below on the ground.

DISEASES AND THEIR TREATMENT

Common diseases—The common ailments found among the Birhors are malaria fever, dysentery, cold and cough, headache and small-pox. In addition to these diseases, they suffer from chronic skin diseases like scabbies, itches and eczema herbal medicines and prescribes the dose.

Causes of diseases—Illness of any kind is believed to be caused largely by malevolent deities and spirits. Any breach of social norms and religious taboos cause ill health. The witches and sorcerers also cause illness through black magic.

Medical Therapy—As soon as one falls ill, the common practice is to consult the traditional medicine man (Raulia, who has experience in herbal medicines and prescribes the dose.

Whenever a person sustains any injury or sore, boiled mohua oil is applied over the wound which heals the injury within two to three days. There are different reasons for headache such as hard oil in the forest, insomnia and cold and cough. For this a paste made out of garlic and mustard is applied to the forehead of the patient which results in stoppage of the ache in no time. Similarly, the barks of the kusum tree are fried and applied to the aching part of the body and kept for hours together that provides relief.

A concoction prepared out of the bark of the Danda tree, the Hatana tree and the Sal tree taken twice daily in an empty stomach continuously for two days cures indigestion.

Though fever (Rua) is a common ailment among the Birhors it is believed to be caused by the evil eye of some spirit or black magic of an enemy. A medicine prepared by the medicine-man by mixing the dust of the roots of the Dorul tree, the Sogal tree, the Raipan tree, the Saram tree and the Hatilutum tree taken by the patient once in a day cures fever. But in chronic cases of fever, the medicine-man is requested to cure the patient through divination process. The person suffering from cold and cough (khu) takes three to four times a day a mixture prepared out of the roots and barks of the Sialia creeper continuously for two days that cures him.

Mental Therapy—If the herbal medicine fails the patient loses patience and seeks help of the diviner. Hence the Raulia is requested to

personify the evil spirit and prescribe the required therapy.

The Birhors have fallen victim to the family planning programmes. The demography of the tribe does not show any appreciable increase in population. Rather, the tribe is very small so far as its population is concerned. In such a situation there appears to be no need for the Birhors to adopt family planning practices. But it is found that lured by the handsome financial assistance many Birhors have undergone sterilisation operation. During our field work, I have come across two such instances in the Kendumundi Birhor Tanda in Mayurbhanj district, Orissa. Some events and drastic consequences took place soon after they were operated upon and the people attributed these mishaps to the vasectomy operation, which these two Birhors were subjected to. In both the cases they lost their wives within a period of three weeks from the date of operation and thereafter one of them lost all the children and the other who had two sons and one daughter lost all his sons. Both of them were young and would have been capable of procreation but for their operation. The Birhors strongly believed that their supreme deity got angry with these two people for undergoing operation and was bent upon taking away the lives of all the people in their families leaving no one to continue their progeny. There was no escape from this divine punishment and as a result the family planning-practices are dreaded in the Birhor community. One of them pathetically expressed during an interview that he is very keen to get married again but no woman is willing to marry him because in the Birhor society barren women are looked down upon.

Strategy of Development

The tribe as a whole has retained a nomadic style of life. As the seasons change they move from place to place in search of livelihood. But in all the seasons they try to put up their Tanda very close to the forest. The Similipal hill ranges around which most of their Tandans are situated are vitally linked with their economic life. They collect Siali creepers from the forest to make various types of ropes which are in great demand in the farming community. The transactions between the Birhors and the local peasants take place at the weekly markets.

It is for this reason that they set up their Tandans near the market places for conveniently disposing of their finished goods and forest products for cash income.

Having come in close contact with the peasant who carron agricultural practices, they have observed various agricultural operations and most of them have acquired knowledge in ploughing the land, sowing the seeds, transplanting the plants and other agricultural activities such as weeding, manuring, harvesting, etc.

The following occupations feature prominently as substantial sources of income for the Birhors. One is rope making which is their primary source of income and the other is goat rearing. The Birhors buy young she-goats from the weekly market at a nominal cost of Rs. 40 to Rs. 50 and raise them properly to bear kids. They sell them when they attain full growth. These grown up goats are in great demand in the rural areas and therefore fetch substantial amounts to the Birhors. Some times they also buy goats of one year old at Rs.60 to Rs. 80. After rearing them for a year or so they take them to the market place for sale. These goats also fetch them a substantial income which varies from Rs. 140 to Rs. 160.

A group of Birhors in a Tanda at Kendumundi in Mayurbhanj district of Orissa were asked about different occupations to find out their attitudes towards them. All of them invariably answered that they no longer want to move from place to place. Instead, they are eager enough to settle down permanently at some place and carry on cultivation and goatery. They expressed that they need land, plough, bullocks and seeds for carrying on cultivation of paddy along with goatery which need no recurring expenditure. From the interview it was also found out that they were interested in having tile roofed permanent houses in place of leaf thatched huts.

The Birhors are excellent rope makers. If they would settle down in a colony permanently they may not get siali bark in sufficient quantity throughout the year. In that case jute may be supplied to them on a regular basis for making ropes. Goat rearing is another avocation in which they have gained vast experience. Each household should be provided with required units of goats for rearing. These two subsidiary occupations will not only fetch them sufficient cash to meet their expenses on clothes and daily necessities but also will help effectively in stabilizing their new sedentary mode of living in the colony on a permanent basis.

Planning process vrs. poorest among the poor—A review of planning for Tribal Development

Shamlal Sharma

PART I

The word 'Tribe' gives a shabby picture of a ravine society, non-literate, arrested in development, non-industrialised and living at an extremely backward stage of civilisation. They are societies in which social relations are based purely on kinship with all pervasive religions in which co-operation for common goals is frequent. Tribals like non-tribals are not homogeneous groups, rather they are stratified socially and economically. They are also divided into several ethnic or caste groups. They use certain indicators like norms of occupation, wealth and political status to rank their own groups as haves and have nots among themselves. No doubt the process of social differentiation has been active long ago: a stage of social formation has been set in an evolutionary scheme of development of technology leading to the acquisition of perception of man's relation with man and with the nature and scale of organisation of social groups. They are generally landless agricultural labourers. Some of them are engaged in hunting or shifting cultivation. Dr. Hutton's classification is applicable in case of Indian Tribals, but Thurnwald's classification from an angle of economic occupation is not applicable.¹

1: This article has been divided into four parts. Part I deals with the socio-economic status of Tribals in India. Part II deals with the process of tribal development since independence. Part III presents a critical review of the development process and Part IV includes conclusion and suggestions for future course of tribal development.

The Scheduled Tribes numbered 30.1 millions in 1961 census of whom 29.4 millions lived in rural areas. It increased to 38.01 millions in a decade. It comprises of 7 per cent of the total population of the country divided into 212 sub-tribes scattered throughout the country. To augment the process of tribal development, the North-East Council (hereafter called NEC) was set up on 7th November, 1972. The then Prime Minister of India inaugurating NEC had observed, "The purpose of this Council is the development of the region for greater human welfare." According to the 1981 census Tribal population has exceeded 5 crores, out of which only Madhya Pradesh has a balky share of about 1.5 crore. Six States and Union Territories, mainly the NEC region, have tribal population above 94 per cent. In Arunachal Pradesh it is 80 per cent and in Nagaland more than 90 per cent. Manipur's tribal population accounts for mere 32 per cent and that of Tripura and Assam a little more than 30 per cent and 12 per cent respectively. Meghalay's share is above 81 per cent and that of Mizoram above 95 per cent. Union Territories of Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Lakshdeep have a tribal population of 87 per cent and 94 per cent respectively. Orissa, Bihar, Maharashtra, Gujrat, Rajasthan, Kerala, West Bengal, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh have also a sizeable amount of tribal population each. They are all depressed and exploited throughout the country, though the degree of poverty or exploitation varies. The tribal economy is

forest based. Looking at the cultural side, they have a unique cultural identity and they try their best to preserve their cultural hierarchy.

Present condition of the Tribals

India is having the largest tribal population in the world. Major part of its population is cut off from the civilized world. Vital problems like need for land and freedom of use of the forests have remained far from being solved. They are exploited and cheated by those who are supposed to be their pain relievers. Kamla Devi Chattopadhyaya in her book "Tribalism in India" has remarked :

"The very people who talked morals to them were often the one's who duped and cheated them taking advantage of their helplessness and ignorance, making themselves an easy prey to exploitation. Ultimately unrelieved social neglect and prolonged frustration must have made several of them lawless"

Besides this they are caught in the clutches of money-lenders who charge exorbitant rate of interest. They are not in a position to furnish Securities for loans in the form of land.³ N. C. A. E. R. has found hundred (100%) per cent indebtedness among them. M. L. Dantawala observed that a major portion of the borrowed funds is spent on family expenses. The low income of tribal cultivators spares no surplus for investment adversely affecting the agricultural productivity, reducing the income and enhancing the reliance again on borrowings. Small size of holdings mixture of crops, low capital investment, ignorance of technical know-how, inability to use and unavailability of modern inputs and low crop yield are the characteristics of tribal agriculture. They practise dry farming and harvest only one crop in the rainfed area. Agricultural produce does not meet the local requirements, so they are compelled to act as contractual labourers or forest labourers. Lack of diversification of tribal economy is an important factor attributable to the backwardness of the tribal agricultural economy.

PART II

Pre-independence

The tribals were oppressed in the British Rule and termed as Criminals. There were sporadic revolts against the then oppressive systems. The Kol Rebellion, the Santhal Rebellion and Birsa Movement are worth mentioning. These revolts were directed against the landlord as

well as the Government, but they were ruthlessly suppressed by the foreigners, segregating the tribal communities from the rest of the Indian population, though the christian missionaries provided some educational and medical facility to the tribals to intensify the policy of segregating them from their non tribal neighbours. "The British policy was largely a negative one and its main aim was to isolate and alienate the tribal communities from the rest of the Indian population."⁴

Post-independence

The various objectives set by the Planning Commission from time to time can be declared fit as the objectives for tribal development. They may be listed as :—

- (a) Reduction in un-employment
- (b) Growth in *per capita* income
- (c) Reducing in the degree of inequality in the distribution of income.
- (d) Improvement in the nutritional standard of the people.

Tribal development has received considerable priority since independence. 43 Special Multipurpose Tribal Project were started in the second plan in selected areas. In 1956, starting of Tribal Development Blocks covering a wider area was a successful experiment. These Blocks worked for a period of 10 years with an investment of lakhs. It was reviewed and modified in the fourth plan to cover about 2/3 of the tribal population. Shilu Ao Committee set up by the Government reviewed the previous progress and suggested complete overhauling of the programme. A new approach to tribal development was evolved in the beginning of the 5th Five Year Plan comprising four main elements:—

- (i) Outlays from State Plans
- (ii) Investment by the Central Ministry
- (iii) Institutional Finance
- (iv) Special Central Assistance

This plan's strategy laid stress on administrative structure to affect purposeful implementation. The tribal development was accelerated but could not succeed due to its limited absorption capacity. The Ministry of Home Affairs in February, 1978 formed a working group to examine the various aspects

of development and suggested better remedial procedures. National Committee on the Development of backward areas was set up by the Planning Commission on the recommendation of the above working group. All the agencies like SFDA, DPAP, CADP, NREP, MNP were merged in IRDP launched on 2nd October, 1980. Previous programmes were attempts to help raise the families of the weaker sections. The poorest among the poor are not given the kind of attention it really required.⁵

The major objective of the sixth plan has been declared as "to wage an all out war against poverty and mobilise all our latent energies for the creation of a more dynamic and more equitable society." This will be achieved if and only if the poorest among the poor receive a due share of the cake. A total sum of Rs. 4,000 crores was earmarked for the tribal development. In spite of the continued efforts the programmes have not proved beneficial to the actual desirable persons.

PART III

A Critical Review

Besides other objectives laid down in the various plans, the depressed classes should be provided with social and economic justice. But the observation tells a different story. The planning led to an un-equal distribution of wealth and income, further deteriorating the already decayed quality of life for the majority and growing social and communal conflicts. Who is to be blamed for the widening of economic and social distance between the rich and the poor and a steady erosion in the quality of life? The reason is to be located from within the capitalist set up owned, governed and controlled by the bourgeoisie. Since the dawn of Independence the Government has failed miserably to manage and co-ordinate the country's economic affairs in a typical manner safeguarding the interests of the ruling class as a whole.

Schemes for tribal development are made by the people not knowing or caring to know what the tribals really require. In spite of huge amounts spent by the Government and voluntary agencies, the tribal community has gone much below the poverty line as the requisite

amount does not percolate, but if it does, it does not enter the empty mouth. The mid term appraisal of the 6th Plan⁶ has admitted that 20 per cent of the outlay goes to support the administrative staff and that a sizeable number of beneficiaries selected did not belong to the poorest among the poor category. In a bureaucracy ridden society everything flows vertically and no follow up action is taken after launching any project. As the tribals are not clustered at a point but scattered regionally, the full exploitation of the resources for maximising the benefits for the people of any area becomes difficult and planning for such areas becomes a mere arithmetic total of some schemes on *ad hoc* basis without taking the aggregate economy of the area into consideration⁷. There are a number of dark spots in our country side and unless we have the whole picture of poverty before us and see the inter-connection between various social and economic forces, we shall not be in a position to plan and provide social and economic equality at par with other segments of the society. Renuka Roy Committee observed that multiplicity and perplexity of the schemes perplex the tribals who in intricacy are unable to assimilate all the advice offered to them⁸. Tribal life is facing a serious stagnation, maximum exploitation and criminal negligence today.

PART IV

To accelerate the path of development and to exploit the resources to the fullest extent a few considerations can be kept in mind. They are :

The rate of fund allocation should be enhanced keeping in view the gravity of the problem. The rise of 3.01 per cent and 4.37 per cent in the Fifth and Sixth Plan cannot meet the requirement as laid down in the objectives. Development experience, however, shows that even if ample funds are available the requisite share has not trickled down for want of reorientation of the strategy and due to the bulky expenditure on administrative jobs. Keeping the Rath Dantawala debate aside, all resources, organisations and skills be directed towards the creation of massive wage employment opportunities in tribal areas. Uplifting of the tribals must be given due importance and priority in further planning efforts. Planning has failed miserably due to

lack of co-ordination among various agencies at Micro level. There should be village plans for tribal development pin pointing the areas of actual need (as Russians did in case of Chyanovian Type) dovetailed in an overall plan for the tribals. Education should be given the utmost priority in solving the tribal problem. Education can attack the problem in two ways :

1. It can break the rigid food habits by enlightening them about the other world, the civilized one (so called).

2. Wrong superstitious beliefs and dogmas can be abolished to keep them away from mere dependency upon luck.

Tribal economy is land and forest based, so the restoration of the land to the tribals will serve to compensate them for stopping the Jhum cultivation and offer ageater stability and security. To save them from the clutches of the money lenders they should be provided loans through the Commercial banks. To counter the shifting cultivation system prevailing in the tribal belt, suitable agricultural programmes could be an effective measure for their upliftment. The policy should be so designed as to ensure five 'F's namely Food, Fodder, Fuel, Fruits and Fair returns for the farmers. Government, the Extension agencies, the Voluntary Organisations and other Financial Institutions should act in co-ordination for providing necessary agricultural know-how, modern inputs and credit facilities to bring about changes in the existing pattern. Agriculture should be improved gradually, systematically and sympathetically adopting the intermediate technology advocated by Schumacher.⁹

There exists a vast scope for manufacturing paper namely hardboard, newsprint, particle board, viscose rayon, grade pulp and wood and distillation plants. Emphasis can be given on lac and allied industries to exploit the resources fully. The tribals on account of one factor or the other are most susceptible to fast rate of industrial development. Keeping their capacity, resources and awareness in mind and integrating the programmes specially designed for them, the Khadi and Village Industries Commission can provide numerous ventures for their emancipation. The planning should not be

handed over to the traditional Oxford or MIT trained persons whose only quality is the western logic to back them and Indian hierarchy to protect them. They have been brought up to believe that what has been proved for the first and second world stands proved for the third world countries—why not India? If moral prosperity trickles downwards and economic prosperity ascends upwards then and only then the dream of Aurobindo can be fulfilled.

Our dynamic Prime Minister has taken the lead in feeling the pulse of the actual miseries of Tribals. During the first six months of his tenure he has visited the Tribal areas of Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and Kerala to study the problems on the spot and provide guidelines to the administrative machinery to heal the wounds. It is to be seen whether the bureaucracy performs its duties or leaves them in the darkness.

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A Tribal Dassarah in Orissa

B. B. Moharana

Introduction

This paper is the product of my empirical field data collected through interview and participant observation. In spite of the chances of socio-cultural mobility due to direct influence of Hindu and Christian religious life in its neighbourhood, the people of Balaskupa which constitutes predominantly the Kondhs, in the Phulbani P.-S. of Boudh-Kondhmal district, have still preserved their traditional religious life unaffected by such external forces. In the present discussion, it is intended to touch upon the socio-religious significance of the deity Barala Devi in connection with the welfare of these people during crises and natural calamities through animal sacrifice during dassarah each year.

Alike civilized people, these Kondhs also realise that there is a superior power which always directs human life and course of nature. It is supernatural and beyond human control. So a submission, devotion and reverence is made towards such power. All such beliefs, faiths and practices relating to this absolute power on which humans depend constitute their religion. The propitiation of the deity Barala Devi, an incarnation of Durga, by sacrificing animals during dassarah each year, is a Hindu rite which aims at restoring peace and good social life. This deity was first installed by the then king of Boudh, but the Kondhs, in course of time, started propitiating. Her as their local deity, following their traditional religious practices and procedures on the ninth lunar day in the bright fortnight of Ashwin (Sept.—Oct.) each year.

Its history provides interesting and curious information regarding the placement of this deity.

History

This deity was brought by Gandhamardan Deb, the then king of Boudh Feudatory State who, according to Completion Report of the Boudh Settlement of 1907, continued on throne from 403 to 470 sakabā, i.e. about 481 to 548 A. D. The whole of present Boudh-Kondhmal district excepting the Balliguda subdivision, and some parts of Puri, Ganjam, and Dhenkanal districts were under the direct control of the Boudh State. The king Gandhamardan Deb. wanted to place the deity, which was originally placed in Khemundi State at present in Ganjam district, in his own State. So he declared war against the king of Khemundi but was defeated. It was a great shock to him and so he ultimately prayed to that deity for days together to favour him when his resources failed him. Finally he dreamt that the deity would accompany him on condition that human sacrifice would be provided every year. Out of joy and pleasure, the king solemnly accepted the demand of the deity. Thus he declared another war and this time the king of Khemundi was defeated. The king of Boudh then returned with the deity. On the way in order to satisfy himself that the supernatural power was following him he halted at Bandhiguda village and made an experiment.

He prepared frame work of a sheep by means of iron rods and sacrificed that sheep by a piece of straw. But he was surprised to see that

natural blood flowed down as if a live-sheep was sacrificed. Now he satisfied himself and developed belief in the said power. While returning to his State, the deity was first kept in the village Baikumpa, 4 to 5 miles from Balaskupa. One day the king made a hunting expedition with his faithful dog. On the threshold of the village Balaskupa there was a small hill from which a rabbit came forward and attacked the dog. This incident discouraged the king to proceed further on hunting and ultimately an impression came to his mind that probably this soil was more fertile and it might have some supernatural effect. So he made a shrine for the deity at Balaskupa and the duty of worshipping was assigned to a Brahman. But the deity was not satisfied with the Brahman priest's worship and so the king appointed a Mali from Dasapalla who also fled away with the sacred sword of the king kept by the side of the deity and handed it over to the king of Dasapalla. However, that sword was not brought back and the duty of worshipping was then assigned to the Dehury, a local Kondh with allocation of some land towards his services. This post of Dehury became a hereditary one.

In each year human sacrifices, at least one head, were made before the deity, arranged by the successive kings. In 1845, the Act for Suppression of Meriah Sacrifices in the hill tracts of Orissa being Act XI of 1845 was passed whereby Boudh, Dasapalla, and some other feudatory States were placed under the direct charge of the agency appointed by the Governor-General-in-Council for the suppression of human sacrifices prevailing at the time. In spite of enforcement of the Act in 1845, this inhuman practice continued to prevail till 1852 and in 1853 or 1854, while the above agency was still at work, one, Chakra Besoi raised a rebellion in Ghumsur (Ganjam) in the interest of the deposed Raj family there, and upon its suppression he took shelter with Kondhs in the southern hill tracts of Boudh. From his safe and inaccessible retreat in the Kondhmals, he continued to commit depredation in the adjoining Ghumsur State and also in some parts of Dasapalla and Nayagarh. However in the year 1855, the Boudh State was replaced in charge of the Tributary Mahals of Orissa and Mr. Samuells was appointed as the first Superintendent. During that period, the practice of human sacrifice was completely abandoned, and instead, the practice of sacrifice of animals

like buffaloes, pigs, goats, fowls, etc., has been continued till the present date.

Structure

The structure of this area, because of its significance, precedes a study of its organisation. The site is marked by a thatched hall opening in three sides and stationed a little above the ground at the centre of the village, completely encircled by a number of mango and jackfruit trees. Inside the house, in one corner, the deity is seated on a plain, rectangular, cemented altar. At the foot of the house and in front of the deity is a small square platform bounded by a cemented compound wall which encloses a sacred wooden pole, called Chhatakhunta, that suspends from out of the soil. This pole represents the image of the deity and its function is more significant during dassarah. Attached to this bounded platform, towards its right, another space of about 1,000 square feet is protected by concrete fencing in which the ceremonial sacrifices are made during dassarah. A number of wooden poles also stand on this area where the to be sacrificed animals are kept tied down till the sacrifices are over.

Organisation

Animal sacrifice is the usual practice that makes the temple conspicuous by its frequency and the long term process which is undertaken in order to render the animals worthy of sacrifices. Such a sacrifice can be made any day, but the buffalo sacrifice is made on the day before dassarah, i.e., the ninth lunar day in the bright fortnight of Ashwin (Sept.—Oct.). This is observed once in a year when 3 to 10 buffaloes are sacrificed at a time. The various stages of religious practices in honour of the deity Barala Devi that precede the actual performance of sacrifice are curious.

The persons who desire to offer buffaloes, purchase young and immature buffaloes and domesticate them for 3 to 4 years. At the outset the buffaloes are made to drink a drop of holy water from the deity so that they would be tamed and shorn off their aggressiveness and ferociousness. Thus these buffaloes are being treated not as ordinary buffaloes but as the representative of the deity, and so the supply of food and shelter is provided without any kind of torture either by the master or by the fellow villagers. Besides, these buffaloes are

also considered to be aware of being destined to be sacrificed by the said supernatural power.

The year in which the buffaloes are to be sacrificed is decided by their masters and accordingly the masters from different villages intimate the religious priest, i.e. Dehury, on the day of first eating ceremony, i.e. nuakhia. Now a list of such persons with their villages is prepared by the priest and instructions are given to the Goudas (local milkmen who are assigned the duty of bringing the buffaloes from the intending persons to the spot) to fetch the buffaloes to the spot before the day of sacrifice. There are eight such Goudas in the village whose posts are hereditary.

Religious procedure

The religious procedures, associated with the performance of the sacrifices, are very extended and it is painful to witness the occasion.

The buffaloes are placed before the deity on the morning of Navami with their masters. Each buffalo is decorated with a piece of red cloth at its trunk region and a garland around its neck. Soon after the buffaloes reach the spot, the priest starts worshipping the deity in order to make Her aware of the fact. In the evening, at about 6 P.M. another Puja starts at the Chhatakhunta in presence of the persons assigned with the duty of slaughtering the animals, who are called Bahuka. They belong to one family the members of which associate together to perform the duty, and their posts are hereditary. When the Puja starts, the Bahukas stand attentively raising their right hands up with their axes. This Puja continues for thirty minutes and the Puja materials are mainly vermilion and incense sticks. All these are completed by 7 P.M. and then the final part of the ritual, buffalo sacrifice, starts.

All the buffaloes are tied down by ropes to separate wooden poles inside the enclosed space meant for them. Then the two Bahukas with their axes, the priest the masters of the buffaloes, two village elites who carry the petromax light to make the area lighted, four local musicians and two or three policemen enter into the space. The spectators stand outside the space and witness the scene. The area is enchanted by the melodious and shivering sounds produced by the beating of drums and changu. When a buffalo is ready to be sacrificed, the music gathers momentum

and the priest utters some religious mantras. Now the rope of the buffalo is tied down tightly and the buffalo is kept in such a position that the fore-limbs and hind-limbs are in a half-bent position. Then a red cotton thread is joined between the horn of the buffalo and the Chhatakhunta. The Bahukas stand on opposite sides of the animal's head with their axes raised. When the duty of the priest is over, the two Bahukas start slaughtering the head and within no time the head of the animal is sliced off the body. The use of the cotton thread has some religious significance in the sense that the thread acts as a medium through which the deity receives the blood of the sacrificed animal. In this manner all the buffaloes are sacrificed one after another.

Socio-religious significance

After the abolition of the practice of human sacrifice, these sacrifices are arranged voluntarily according to the choice of the people who desire to offer sacrifices. Usually offers in the name of the deity are declared when anybody suffers from crises and calamities, with a view to getting relief from them by the grace of the deity. When a person realises the divine power of the deity in the dream, then only he comes forward and informs the priest to offer an animal to be sacrificed.

This socio-religious occasion also introduces an element of social-tie, the people link together not only within the same village but also between one village and another, and moreover social solidarity is enhanced as a result of such ritual activities. As a vast number of people gather from different villages, it serves as a get-together in which people meet and exchange words with one another. No doubt, it is an inter-ethnic function but the tribal influence is more active and the tribal visitors are more in number. Even though the religious part ends by 9 P.M., the ceremony continues till morning. Males and females of different villages get chance to spend a free and pleasant night, and moreover, it sometimes serves as a centre of selection of marriage partners.

Conclusion

Animal sacrifice, as a common practice of offering to Durga during dassarah, is found everywhere in the Hindu temples. This tradition has also been continuing among these Kondhs. That whether the tribals have

borrowed the practice of animal sacrifice from the Hindus or *vice versa* is not the point of relevance for this paper. But what is significant is that it is a practice which is common to both tribal and non-tribal communities

and it is through such commonalities an intimate understanding among various diverse groups of people is established for mutual benefit and emotional integration with one another.

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Rituals associated with child-birth among Kondhs

Manoranjan Acharya

It is a common phenomenon that marriage, family and kinship are linked together centering round child-birth, child care and rearing up children. Therefore, fertility and conception are regarded as important events not only in advanced societies but in primitive societies as well. The study of child rearing in recent times has brought epoch-making revolution in the field of social anthropology. It has challenged the traditional ideas and opened up new vistas in the realm of psychological investigation. The purpose of this article is to highlight the rituals associated with child-birth among the Kondhs of Phulbani district in Orissa in particular.

Ritual at the first conception

As soon as the first conception is realised the 'TLAMBA' (priest) of the daughter-in-law's village is invited to the son-in-law's village for the ritual to sacrifice a goat (Boda). The message is usually sent by the husband or by any of his relatives after three months of the conception, to his affinal kins. This sacrificial offering is known as 'SIRUKI BAKADA'. All members of both the families remain present in this Puja. It can be held on any day excepting the Saturday and the Thursday. Usually it is held outside the village. They seem to make this offering only to bring about harmony and amity between the deities of both the families. The belief is that if these family deities are not propitiated, they may bring some harm to the unborn child.

Ritual for being blessed with a child

In Kondh society, the women without children usually pray to the God Saru Penu (Hill God)

for being blessed with children. The author saw such a woman in the village Rajghara in Nua-gaon Block of Phulbani district. After seven years of marriage she had no issue. When the author asked her about it, she told in despair that 'Dangaru Devta' (Hill God) was not kind enough to bless her with a child.

The barren woman sometimes seeks the help of the 'Kuta Katanju' (magician) with a hope to become fertile. The magician gives her a thread to tie around her neck. If it is found futile and ineffective, the magician is further consulted to ascertain the reason and depth of her barrenness. This time he somehow gets at the root cause of the barrenness and discloses the name of the God who is to be appeased by a goat-sacrifice to tide over the barrenness.

Ritual associated with frequent abortions

Abortion is known as 'PITATUSTE'. If it occurs after every conception, the cases are reported to the 'Tlamba' seeking his advice on an auspicious day. The Tlamba performs rituals with sacrificial offering to the Hill Gods (Danga Dangi) to overcome such danger. If it produces no result, the Kondhs immediately approach the magician again. The magician usually forecasts that Rahu (Patu) is on the forehead of that woman. If the woman has abortion for two times then the 'Rahu' is said to be branched off into two branches on the forehead. The magician then tries to dispel 'Rahu' by his teeth from the forehead of the woman by means of a ritual. He sprinkles the blood of a sacrificed cock on the forehead of the woman and thereafter she is believed to regain the power to conceive.

Ritual associated with abnormal delivery

In the Kōndh society all types of misfortunes and harms that come are believed to be due to the annoyance of various Gods and spirits. When severe pain is felt during delivery, it is believed that certain Gods only can extricate the woman from the pain and so they sacrifice either cocks or goats or pigs in favour of the respective Gods and spirits. But it is only the Kutakatanju who can tell the names of these malevolent deities. On such occasions, he is invited and entertained with 'SALAP' (liquor) before obtaining a thread from him for tying round the waist of the parturient women. If it still creates inconvenience, they take further steps for smooth delivery.

Ritual practice

The husband takes some rice on his hand and touches it on the hands of the wife who is going to deliver the child. Then he comes to the magician who then applies the power of magic for knowing the identity of the spirit creating the difficulty. He would bring some rice out of that by means of two fingers and count the number. If the number is odd it would mean that no God or spirit is angry with the patient. If, on the other hand, it is an even number then he comes to the conclusion that some God or spirit is definitely angry with the patient. He would then blow the rice for three times and bring some more rice with two fingers again as before by conceiving the name of one of the Gods. If there is even number of grains in the rice picked, that particular God would be believed to be responsible for it. If there is odd number of grains in the name of all Gods, then it would be thought that the ancestral spirits are responsible.

If it is 'Linga Penu' (Household Deity) then the kitchen is smeared with a paste of cow-dung and water. The magician then keeps a handful of rice before a cock to eat. The belief is that if the cock eats the rice, the family deity is pleased and so there would be no difficulty for an easy delivery. Then the magician cuts one new thread and dips it in turmeric water. The nail of the cock is tied to that string and the patient's head is got touched with it. Then the string is tied around her neck. The cock is then set free and is reared up in the name of the house-God. Later, on being sacrificed, its blood is given in offering to the family God. They prepare curry out of the flesh which is shared by them and their relatives as well. The Kuta-

katanju gets half Tarnbi (2½kg) of rice and Rs. 2/- as remuneration for his services.

If, on the other hand, the cock eats no rice, then it is believed that the God is not satisfied with the animal for being small in size. They would then offer a bigger animal, usually a goat or a pig. Kutakatanju takes that pig or goat to the kitchen and beheads the animal with a knife and then offers the blood before Linga Penu. The flesh is thereafter cooked for the family members and their relatives including the Kutakatanju. He is customarily given Re. 1/-, a small piece of cloth and some quantity of rice for rendering the ritual service.

If the God is Dharma Penu (Sun God), a different ritual practice is followed. The Kutakatanju would take one small goat and promise before the God Dharma Penu that if the patient is relieved soon, he would offer that animal to Him after it is sufficiently grown up. When it is fully grown up, the Kutakatanju is called very early in the morning to offer the blood to the Sun God. Further more in a plate, cooked rice and meat are kept for offering to the very same Sun God. Then all eat in the family and some of these are distributed among the relatives and the neighbours of their tribal origin.

If it is Dangaru Penu (Mountain God) then the father and brother of the parturient woman are called for. Alongwith the Kutakatanju, her husband, father, brother and several old men of the village go to the mountain. They sit near the place where the Dangaru Penu resides. They carry some powdered items like turmeric, rice, charcoal, etc., in leaf plates. With the powdered items, the magician draws a circle in the middle. He draws another circle around that circle and makes a ring and keeps some rice grains inside the space in between the two circles. Then he invokes the God (mountain God) to appear by means of his excellent magical power. When Dangaru Penu's appearance is felt, the Kutakatanju offers the blood and the head of the goat which had been earlier beheaded as a sacrificial offering. Then he keeps a big earthen pot near that circle. The God is believed to have remained inside that pot. After performing the ritual, they all come back with the sacrificial flesh. It is cooked and eaten at a holy place by the members attending the ritual.

If the god's name is composed of odd number of letters it is believed to be the ancestral spirits, i.e. PIDERIPITA, who cause difficulties in

delivering the child. In each and every household there is one big wooden pillar, which is believed to be the abode of ancestral spirits. They are believed to protect the house from any danger. In every seventh year a buffalo is sacrificed before it to please the ancestors. If they know from the magician that difficulty in delivery arises due to the displeasure of the ancestors, they promise before them to offer a buffalo when they would be economically better off. The reason is that the buffalo sacrifice is not an easy thing for a poor Kondh as it involves a lot of money. The Kutakatanju comes and gives a thread dipped in turmeric powder to the woman to tie around her neck. The other domestic ritual chores are attended to by the family members. One of the family members takes an aluminium pot and covers its mouth by leaves. The said pot is kept hanging for the ancestors. The headman of the family takes a vow to offer a buffalo to the ancestors on a later date when his financial condition improves. But he never plays false to his pledge. On a suitable day later, the pledge is redeemed and the buffalo sacrifice is made. Then again for this offering there are so many formalities to be observed. All the rooms of the house are to be washed with cowdung and water first. All the used clothes of the family members are to be washed in the stream. Then the young boys of the village would go to bring a log of wood. Then the old pillar would be removed and replaced by the new one. Then they would keep on it seven Shiali leaves. They would bring some hair from the tail of the buffalo and give these to the magician who would keep the same on the

leaves. Then the buffalo would be tied to the pillar by means of a rope and the magician would perform Puja. After the termination of the Puja, the buffalo would be released from the pillar and killed elsewhere. A piece of flesh would be kept on the leaves over the pillar. The horns would be tied on the pillar. Half of that flesh would be cooked by the grown up girls of the village in his house and the other half would be distributed among the villagers. All the villagers are to be invited to take rice and cooked meat. Those who do not take the meat would be given rice and dal. The magician would take Rs. 3/- and one Tambi of rice as remuneration for his service.

From the above discussions, the following conclusions can be made :

- (i) A lot of social and religious importance is given to fertility rites and the rites connected with child-birth by the Kondhs.
- (ii) Some amount of divine link is sought to be established in the observance of these rites. Good or bad results follow from the pleasure or displeasure of the Gods.
- (iii) There is a feeling of communality in observance of these rites. Not only the family members but also the other kinsmen, neighbours, etc. partake of the offerings.
- (iv) With paramount and unflinching faith in the gods, the Kondhs never go back on the pledges made before them.

Untouchability and its eradication for Social Development

A. K. Moharana

Stratification of human society started with the adoption of agriculture in place of other forms of subsistence like food gathering and hunting. In the long run this stratification led to creation of castes and sub-castes entitling the members of the same caste or sub-caste to eat and drink together and prohibiting them from co-dining with the members of other castes or sub-castes associated with occupations considered ritually unclean. The views of different communities towards clean and unclean habits and practices ushered in untouchability.

Various measures—legal and others—are being taken since independence to eradicate the custom of untouchability. This social malady is more acute in areas lacking social mobility through social, cultural and economic contact. Based on the findings of a study undertaken by the Tribal and Harijan Research-cum-Training Institute, Bhubaneswar in two Scheduled Caste dominated areas—one in the district of Phulbani and the other in the district of Balasore, an attempt has been made in this essay to know to what extent untouchability is prevailing in the villages.

Extent of untouchability

The social stratification has divided the human society into three broad categories namely the superior caste, the service caste and the polluting caste. The members of the former are ritually clean and are revered by the members of the latter two. The service castes—the 'anirbasita sudras' are not defiling but are economically weak. The polluting castes—the 'nirbasita sudras' are associated with unclean occupation, social restrictions, poverty and exploitation.

The extent of untouchability prevailing among these three strata of society can easily be understood through inter-caste interaction or through patron—client relationship. After 1955 another yard stick in the form of Protection of Civil Rights Act, is made available to assess the extent of untouchability prevailing among different castes and sub-castes.

The service castes are very much identifiable by their traditional occupation. The higher castes require their traditional services during the festivals and to meet their ritual orgies. Thus the barber cuts hair and nail of a Brahmin, a Khandayat or a Karan. The Gauda carry the palanquin for the said communities. These clean castes can also get the services of the Gudias. On special occasions all the communities belonging to service castes can be summoned to the court-yard of the higher castes and given orders, to supply goods and render services at their (the latter's) premises. However, these service castes do not render their services to one another because some castes consider themselves superior to others. The Brahmins perform pooja and attend all the ceremonies—purification or others—of the higher castes of the locality. They also render their services to Vaishyas and service castes but not to the untouchables. Thus, it is observed that the traditional services of performing some rituals are available to the clean castes only. The polluting castes who are at the lowest rung of the social ladder give their services which may either be traditional or otherwise to both high castes and clean service castes. They are also looked down upon by the unstratified

tribal communities. These untouchables do not get the services of the clean castes.

Social stratification has made it impossible for the clean castes to render services to and receive certain kind of goods—foods in particular—from the polluting castes. The untouchables themselves also make it a point not to accept cooked food from some one belonging to a community which is lower in social status. Despite culture change and a greater socio-economic manoeuvrability very little has been achieved in social contact through food and drink. The higher castes like Brahmin, Khandayat and Karan have a greater contact among themselves through water, fruits, vegetables, dry food, katcha food and even through cooked food. They too have certain contact with service castes through all sorts of food except water and cooked food. The higher caste communities accept from the untouchables those food items which can be purified and cooked before consumption. The untouchables too find it difficult to establish contact with 'service castes' through water and cooked food.

Diversification of economic activities coupled with spread of education has made a few individuals of clean castes eat and drink with a few persons belonging to the polluting castes but such social contact between clean castes and polluting castes as a whole is unfortunately lacking. The women folk as well as the older people of the clean castes even consider the service castes as untouchables. The reason is lesser social contact and lack of education. These two groups of people prevent the other members of the family having good education and socio-economic manoeuvrability to invite their untouchable friends to the house, send or accept cooked foods—delicacies prepared on festive occasions. It is interesting to note that clean castes of various social and economic strata never hesitate to borrow money and grains from the economically well off untouchables. A case history of Sri Anam Charan Nayak of village Urumunda of Phulbani district shows how despite education and wealth he is looked down upon because of his caste. He is a Pana by birth.

Sri Nayak is a man of clean and active habits. His house is very neat and clean. His children are well placed in life. He helps the neighbouring Brahmins by lending money. Occasionally

he visits the house of the clean castes, sits, drinks tea if offered and talks with the male folk who are educated, widely travelled and benefited by Sri Nayak at the time of need. The clean caste males also pay visits to his house and sometimes drink tea, if offered. But things turn different when Sri Nayak sends sweetmeats or other delicacies to his clean caste neighbours. The delicacies are either returned or thrown into the backyard pit. Even the male folk do not dare to accept the food items sent by Sri Nayak, their Surya Bandhu, because of stiff resistance from the inner circle of the family. The untouchables themselves also observe some sort of untouchability among themselves. The Panas do not accept cooked food from the Hadis or Doms and the latter two from the Kandaras.

The study reveals that the seller and buyer relationship is quite in harmony with the changed socio-economic condition of the country. Untouchables are employed as labourers in the fields of the clean castes and are given wages at par with their clean caste counterparts. The clean caste shop owners do not mind untouchable consumers in their shops. But the craving of the untouchables for higher social status through higher income generating schemes like starting of pan-shops and eateries have nose dived in localities where they are identifiable and are in minority. The higher castes do not patronise these shops for fear of being identified in the owner's caste. The case of Shri Sudam Charan Mahalik is a burning example to show how education and affluence gives way to untouchability. He is a Kandara and lives in the village Andrei of Balasore district. Educationally and financially he is better off than most of the clean castes of his village. Banking upon his greater social contact he started a pan-shop in his village. To his surprise he found very few people belonging to higher castes patronising him. Due to lack of business he at last closed his shop.

The spread of education and greater social contact helps not only the untouchables but also the unstratified tribal communities to ascend the social ladder through behaviour and practices. The tribals have picked up what is clean and what is not, from their Hindu neighbours and now they exhibit their feeling towards untouchability in public places and in social gatherings. Educated and salaried people of these communities some times object,

if the untouchables sit near them in eateries and eat the delicacies. The tribal communities guard their beliefs and practices securely and have maintained their separate identity by following some kind of limited untouchability. They think that the plains people or people who have emigrated to their home land are fortune seekers and do not establish link with the latter through water and food. But now-a-days they have singled out only the untouchable communities as infidel and try to settle a score with them when provoked. A case study of Sri Antaryami Mallik shows that he looks down upon the Panas. Another case study of Sri Bidesi Sethi shows how he is looked down upon by the Kondhs.

Sri Antaryami Mallik is a Kondh and works as a teacher in a primary school of village Khajuripada in the district of Phulbani. One day he went to the tea shop of Sri Dhruva Sahoo to eat some "Pakara" when he was about to munch the item he found a labourer, a Pana by caste, seated beside him with a cup of tea. Engulfed by superiority complex Sri Mallik got angry and sublimed his anger by manhandling that labourer. He also told the small gathering and the shop owner that the Panas are inferior by birth and should not by any means pollute the Kondhs by touch or even coming near them. This act of Sri Mallik manifests the extent of hatred of an educated tribal towards the untouchables and impedes the efforts made by the untouchables for achieving social equality. The attitude of passive resignation shown by the untouchables to this hatred is the only means of maintaining communal harmony.

Sri Bidesi Sethi is a Harijan teacher of the primary school at Somepadar in the district of Phulbani. He is both educationally and economically better off than the rest of the people of the village. In order to ascend the social ladder he has changed his surname from 'Behera' to 'Sethi' because 'Behera' is one of the common surnames of the Panas of the locality. Once he was invited to a marriage feast of a girl belonging to one of the only two Kondh families in the village. In the feast an altercation arose over serving the food to the Panas. The Kondh boys of the neighbouring villages insisted upon serving the Panas separately after all others were fed satisfactorily. This insistence of the Kondh boys enraged the Pana boys and there was a heavy exchange of blows. Sri Sethi, in order to save himself and his community from further humiliation advised the Panas to walk out from the feast.

Untouchability in true sense is prevention of coming in contact with a person or accepting any such items which are considered as vehicles of pollution from him. Untouchability in the form of denying the polluted castes of certain privileges or curbing their desires for novel things is rampant everywhere irrespective of geophysical and demographic considerations. The polluting castes can use the water of the same tank but at a separate ghat; they cremate the dead at a separate cremation ground; can attend a village meeting as silent spectators; attend a village function or social festival as duty bound menials. They are free to wear costly, trendy and fancy clothes or other body adornations. But in practice they think twice before going in for such things where they are in minority because of the caustic remarks thrown to them by the clean castes. More resistance in the form of words and in the form of clandestine actions from the clean castes are observed in remote areas or in areas where Jajamani system is strictly adhered to.

Interaction in the midst of sub-cultural differences and social separation leads to a code of conduct which envisages the duties of different castes and specifies to whom they are to render their services. The Jajamani system, as it is known, is not in vogue in unstratified society and is on wane among the others due to social awareness.

At present this system is strictly adhered to by the aristocratic higher caste communities of coastal areas and the untouchables of the hilly belt now think twice before rendering their services through Jajamani system leading to clash of ideologies. In areas where the untouchables are in majority the clean castes just accept it as a sign of change in socio-cultural behaviour. At least Shri Bhagaban Nayak of Nuagaon, a village near Khajuripada, thinks so. Shri Nayak is a Magda Gauda by caste and is a 'Patabhakta' of Dandapuja being held at Nuagaon. In 1978 in the capacity of a Patabhakta, he ordered a group of Panas to beat drums during the pooja. On getting the order, one Kashi Behera got angry and interpreted the Bhakta's order as an insult to the caste. He also told that Panas are no more poor and no more in a position to carry out orders. The Panas not only showered Shri Nayak with abusive words, but also gave him a good thrashing. The crest fallen Bhagaban decided not to jump from the frying pan into the fire by lodging a complaint against the erring Panas at the local police-station. On probe, he told

that the rules and regulations are made for the untouchables. The Government is siding them and an untouchable is now the loving son of the Government.

In the hill terrain of Phulbani the Kondhs are the autochthons and the rest are emigrants from other areas. Some of them were the fortune seekers and others were invited by the Kings and the Kondh chiefs to come over, live in the locality, supply goods and render services of social and cultural importance. In this tract the untouchables are either served by Vaishnavas or by 'Halua' or 'Sarua' brahmins as priest. The said sects of Brahmins are the low caste Brahmins.

How untouchability originated in the society

The answer given by different communities—high and low—to the question are strange and as varied as the consumer items in a departmental store. However, the Table-1 reveals that the higher castes irrespective of geographical regions opined that the Vedas approve the practice of untouchability. The service castes on the other hand opened that the 'Theory of Karma' and sanction of Vedas gave birth to the untouchability. The untouchables universally said that tradition demands the continuance of untouchability and the scriptures do not have any contribution for it. The Kondhs of high terrain opined that the untouchables are the subjects of Kondhs and the untouchability is but the relationship between the masters and the subjects.

TABLE 1
Reasons for origin of untouchability in the society

Name of the district (1)	Communities interviewed (2)	Reasons (3)
Phulbani	.. Brahmin	.. (1) Sanction of Veda, (2) Theory of Karma
	Khandayat	.. (1) Sanction of Veda, (2) Theory of Karma
	Karan	.. (1) Sanction of Veda, (2) Theory of Karma
	Gudia ¹	.. (1) Theory of Karma
	Bodhei ¹	.. (1) Theory of Karma
	Sundhi ¹	.. (1) Theory of Karma
	Kondha ²	.. (1) Master—servant relationship
	Pana ³	.. (1) Tradition
Balasore	.. Brahmin	.. (1) Sanction of Veda, (2) Theory of Karma
	Khandayat	.. (1) Sanction of Veda, (2) Theory of Karma
	Karan	.. (1) Sanction of Veda, (2) Theory of Karma
	Rangini Hansi ¹	.. (1) Theory of Karma
	Gokha ³	.. (1) Tradition, (2) Occupation
	Pana ³	.. (1) Tradition, (2) Occupation
	Dom ³	.. (1) Occupation
	Kandara ³	.. (1) Occupation

(1) Service caste, (2) Tribal Community, (3) Untouchable Community.

The socio-economic measures which were taken up extensively by the voluntary organisations as well as **Government after independence**, have diluted the form of untouchability but have not still been able to wipe out the social evil. Different communities of the two districts as mentioned in the Table 2 gave different reasons for the continuance of the untouchability. Majority of the communities interviewed said that untouchability is birth ascribed and for that

it still exists. Pursuance of unclean occupation and consumption of ritually unclean food are the other reasons given by a majority of the polluted castes in Phulbani and clean castes in coastal areas. The Kondhs relate the continuance of untouchability not to unclean occupation but to consumption of unclean food. The responds of the communities to the question of continuance of untouchability is given in Table 2.

TABLE 2
Reasons for continuance of untouchability in the society

Name of the district	Name of the community	Reasons
(1)	(2)	(3)
Phulbani	Brahmin	.. (1) Birth, (2) consumption of unclean food, (3) conversion to christianity.
	Khandayat	.. (1) Birth, (2) consumption of unclean food, (3) adherence to scriptures.
	Karan	.. (1) Birth, (2) consumption of unclean food
	Gudia ¹	.. (1) Birth, (2) unclean occupation
	Badhei ¹	.. (1) Birth
	Sundhi ¹	.. (1) Birth, (2) consumption of unclean food, (3) adherence to scriptures.
	Kondha ²	.. (1) Birth, (2) consumption of unclean food
	Pana ³	.. (1) Birth, (2) consumption of unclean food, (3) unclean occupation, (4) conversion to christianity.
Balasore	Brahmin	.. (1) Birth, (2) consumption of unclean food, (3) unclean occupation.
	Khandayat	.. (1) Birth, (2) consumption of unclean food, (3) unclean occupation.
	Karan	.. (1) Birth, (2) unclean occupation
	Rangini Hansi ¹	.. (1) Birth, (2) unclean occupation
	Gokha ³	.. (1) Birth, (2) consumption of unclean food
	Pana ³	.. (1) Birth, (2) unclean occupation
	Dom ³	.. (1) Unclean occupation, (2) consumption of unclean food.
Kandara ³	.. (1) Birth, (2) unclean occupation	

(1) Service castes, (2) Tribal community, (3) Untouchable community

Is Protection of Civil Rights Act a social remedy ?

In a traditional sacred society the ways of life are prescribed by customs and endorsed by religion. Since independence there has been a great deal of status emulation. Government programmes in terms of social, cultural and economic development, rules and regulations as well as reforms have loosened the presence of scriptural sanctions over customs and practices. The Union Government has made a direct hit on untouchability by enforcing Protection of Civil Rights Act in 1955. The study in two Scheduled Caste areas of Phulbani and Balasore districts reveals that it is a right antidote to public violation of civil rights but is quite ineffective in private premises or in areas where the clean castes live in significant number. The polluting castes can use a public road without objection by the clean castes. They can use their own costumes and jewellery and put on the costumes and jewellery of higher castes.

The Act has assured the untouchables free access to the Government institutions or Government aided institutions. They actually use the schools, health centres and other such institutions along with the higher castes. The polluting castes of the study area in particular and of the country in general are using freely the public places for charitable use and enjoy the benefits under charitable trusts. There is no bar for them to use the utensils kept for the use of general public. But in practice it is seen that the business in the eateries of the coastal areas is low due to patronage of the defiling castes. In tribal areas the Kondhs verbally object to the use of utensils by untouchables but never withdraw themselves from the eating houses.

The Act has paved the way for the polluting castes to gain entry into the temples. In practice however, an untouchable, wherever he is identifiable, cannot enter into a temple. It is not apprehension of physical obstruction by the clean castes which prevents the untouchables from entering into the temples but the language of the eyes of the former and their whispering at the back is sufficient to dissuade the untouchables to offer prayer inside the temple. The untouchables in some places have imposed a ban on themselves in the matter of entering into the temple, the reasons being inviting of wrath of deities or fear of creation of cleavages in communal harmony. How the fear of wrath of deity prevents the untouchables from entering into the sanctum sanctorum of a temple is evident from the following incidents.

Shri Kashi Mahananda is an affluent Pana of village Sidingi in the district of Phulbani. He is a village politician and has some link with the congress party. In 1981, he made a forced entry into the temple of the village deity along with his children. The higher castes objected to this but remained quiet for fear of being arrested by the police. Now to the ill luck of Shri Mahananda it so happened that his daughter aged 17 slipped into a well and died. After it every body began to say that Shri Mahananda was punished by God. Fear of being punished by God now stands as a barrier before the untouchables for their entry into temples.

During the Chief-ministership of Shri Nilamani Routray the untouchables of Kanchanpur in the district of Balasore wanted to enter into the temple of Biranchi Narayan at Patrabindha. The clean castes led by the Brahmins of the locality opposed to the move in a clever way. They knew the weakness of the Panas, Kandaras and other untouchables towards beef and other unclean foods and put forth the condition that the untouchables should abhor consumption of unclean food and should be clean in habits and practices before entering into the temple. The Gokhas, Panas and Kandaras present during the occasion vowed not to touch unclean food like carrion and beef and entered into the temple. After three years a strong thunder storm struck the temple damaging its flag stand and the 'Dadhinauti'. The incident frightened the Scheduled Caste communities. They thought that some one from their community must have violated the vow made before entering into the temple of Biranchi Narayan for which such a calamity befell on the temple. They also thought that perhaps their entry into the temple angered the deity. Consequently many untouchables stopped going to the temple.

Needless to say that individuals belonging to the untouchable communities with good educational background, yielding much political clout and the so-called 'neo-urbanites' enter into the temples, offer prayers and pujas. No story regarding wrath of the deity or any other unusual happening is circulated by the clean castes as a consequence of their entering into the temples. But for the general mass of the community who are mostly illiterate, poor and innocent, such strange stories are being circulated by the orthodox Hindus.

The Act guarantees the polluting communities access into drinking water sources and

bathing ghats. In villages where the clean castes are in majority the untouchables retire from the spot when the members of higher castes come to take water or have their bath. In tribal belts like Phulbani, the Kondhs strictly guard against use by the untouchables of the public wells or tube-wells of their locality. Some service castes also think that tube-wells dug by the Government in their locality are exclusively for their own use and untouchables have nothing to do with the same.

One of the major contributions of the P. C. R. Act to the untouchable communities is the right to purchase or sale of land—agricultural or homsted; construction of houses and hiring premises for residential use and for the purpose of business. If any one objects to it he can be punished in the court of law. But in actual practice, the untouchables belonging to the coastal areas or hilly terrains are discouraged to purchase land, construct or hire houses in clean caste localities. This phenomenon is more acute in remote areas. It is quite evident from the case history of Shri Anam Charan Nayak of Urumunda. He wanted to purchase a piece of land in his village to accommodate his growing family. As land was not available in the Pana ward of the village, he tried to purchase a piece of vacant land in the clean caste locality. The vendor of the land, though was in need of money, did not sell the same to Shri Nayak. The clean castes did not want that an untouchable should live near them and prosper. So they threatened the seller of dire consequences. However, he managed to purchase another piece of land in the heart of the bazar of Khajuripada with clean caste neighbours.

It is evident from the study that the P. C. R. Act has failed to curb untouchability. Rather it has helped untouchability to go underground and to show its fangs at the slightest provocation. The atrocity on the untouchables is not done overtly but covertly. Its eradication at the earliest possible time is necessary for the development of the country. A three pronged attack through educational, economic and social development only can destroy the demon of untouchability.

Educational development

The schools can be used as a clinic for removal of untouchability. The educational institutions particularly primary schools should

be established inside or near the Scheduled Caste villages and manned by teachers belonging to both clean and polluting castes. This will encourage the local children to attend the school and mix with clean caste children. In the schools the small children should be exposed to physical labour and should be told the stories from epics highlighting the exemplary roles played by the so-called untouchables. High school standard model schools should be opened in Scheduled Caste pockets. Supplementary education, a concept as adopted in Bidisha for the Lodha boys by Prof. P. K. Bhowmik, should be introduced in these schools. Keeping the model high schools as cultural centres, efforts should be made to form cultural troupes. These troupes can include students and non-students of the locality as its members and stage plays from the epics based on the themes of untouchability. All these things will have positive effect on the minds of the people who want to maintain the status-quo. Apart from the above, some sort of vocational training should be given to the untouchables to improve their trade through modernisation. These things should be tackled in such a way that the so-called 'caste occupation' can be turned to 'chaste occupation'.

Economic development

Economic development to some extent can help the eradication of untouchability. The first step to that end can be had by encouraging the poorer section of both the communities to go in for non-traditional economic pursuits. Sufficient incentives in easy terms should be given to the untouchables to eke out their living from trade, communication and business.

Social development

For a greater social contact intercaste marriages should be encouraged. Incentives not in the monetary form but in the form of social security should be provided more by voluntary social organisations than by the Government directly. These organisations should act like cushions to absorb the social shocks of the families linked by intercaste marriage.

Last but not the least the untouchables should be looked after by the Government in such a way that the higher castes should not think themselves deprived of the benefits of the developmental programmes of the Government. Deprivation may lead to alienation of clean castes from the national main stream.

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