

THE MODERNIZATION ORIENTATION OF THE TRIBAL AREAS- ASPIRATIONS AND APPREHENSIONS

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ABSTRACT

The developmental agenda of the Millennium Developmental Goals (MDGs) has been the development and modernization of all the sections of the society formats, be it Mainstream, Traditional or Tribal sects. All these are to be focused with the determined approach towards the developmental agenda. This study has clarified the modernization process of the tribal areas. This has laid a structural approach to development and its implementation by the pro-development agencies and individuals.

Keywords: Tribal Areas, India, Aspirations & Apprehensions, Modernization.

INTRODUCTION

Tribal modernization is a process denoting a change in the traditional or quasi-traditional role-structure of the tribal communities and consequently promoting a dual system of values for self and societal transformation, towards a certain desired form of social structure, values and norms. Here, categorization of social structures, values or norms into modern or traditional should not raise a host of theoretical problem. Since, it is assumed that structures and allied forms, values and norms associated with modern, developed or advanced societies are modern and those associated with underdeveloped or tribal societies are traditional. Another question which one may raise is of priority at individual and social levels in the realm of modernization. This problem has been summed up by Myron Weiner, in his observation that some scholars suggest that starting point of any definition of modernization is not in the character of the society but in the character of individuals.

In the broad sphere of Indian society, the representation of tribes is although numerically small but culturally, it is

significant and effective. The tribal heritage consists of many valuable ingredients of Indian culture. Hence, a proper identification of these ingredients is essential to explore the real nature of Indian social system and cultural heritage. This may provide a sound base for the study of modernization of Indian society. The caste dominance is a unique characteristic and accelerates the modernization. In fact, these marked changes in the tribal communities can be broadly categorized into three stages, from the transformative view point: Some tribes have sufficiently changed (modernization stage), some are in transition (adoption stage), and some still remain fogged down within the frame of traditionality. (latency state).

Anthropological attempts to study change and applied processes do not specify the structural formation of modernization, especially at the social system level. So far such an analysis at cultural system level is concerned; Roy-Burman's notable work (1970) provides substantial material for derivations. Roy Burman has studied the process of modernization among the hill tribes of North-East India with reference to two categories of factors-endogenous and exogenous. He found that the endogenous forces of modernization are related to two discrete phenomenons. One is associated with the increasing growth of a society through the synthesis of its inherent contradictions and the other is related differentiation of its cultural traits and social organizations. The exogenous force of modernization has been observed as related to advance technology and complex political and social organization introduced in an area or among a group of people.

As regards the study of structural prerequisites, such as bureaucracy, money and market complex, attachment to democratic norms and universalistic values; the most commonly investigated factor in

anthropological studies has been the impact of social legislations on values and preferences of the tribals. The underlying basis of such investigation is the evaluation of structural arrangements in tribal society, pre-supposing that many values are embodied in legislations itself. Studies of economic growth and development among tribals in terms of plan or project evaluation have been another popular field of anthropological exploration. But these studies do not establish an input output relationship between the investments.

The role of technology is generating and accelerating the socio-cultural changes in primitive and modern societies has largely been recognized by social scientists. Anthropologists have also often pointed out the importance of technology in primitive society a human setting in which the influence of science is almost absent. Anthropological literature does not help directly to elucidate the impact of technology on tribal people and their community settings. This can only be narrated by drawing some inference from studies on urbanization, industrialization and similar processes. In this reference technology has been recognized as an urban stimulus and treated innovative in nature for tribal settings. Related studies have mainly concentrated on changes in the family structure, migration and occupational mobility adoption and use of chemical fertilizers, role of cottage industries and co-operatives in tribal development. Analyzing modernization from socio-psychological viewpoint there have been two main lines of thought and investigation that bear on modernization problem and also assign an important role to processes operating at the psychological level. The first of these has been culture and personality, an off shoot or branch of American anthropology with a history going back to some fifty years. The second, more recently formulated, represents a direct attempt to look at modernization from a psychological perspective.

The concentration of anthropological research on details of recurrent behaviour and their social structural determinants without benefit of a satisfactory explanation of interaction have fostered a rather general neglect of micro-analytic investigations of modernization capable taking psychological level into account.

The impact of urbanization on economic conditions and socio-cultural values of tribal society and has also made an assessment of the bearings of variant socio-cultural backgrounds on the process of adaptation and change. Roy Burman has revealed that the economic forces generated by urbanization work against the

survival of the minority culture of tribes. An inevitable side-effect of urbanization-industrialization, the key to economic growth is the genesis of the process of cultural liquidation.

In essence, the transformation and the interaction of tribal culture with it, offers fascinating field of enquiry for social scientists. It is therefore suggested that a comparative study of socio-cultural transformation of tribal and non-tribal societies with identical environmental conditions and under similar urban impact, may provide a key to ascertain the role differential cultural back-ground of the modernization process.

Political Modernization can be studied with the help of some models namely liberal, democratic, communistic and authoritarian. In this article an attempt has been made to study both modernization and Political Modernization of Kondhs of Odisha in a liberal and democratic model. In this model certain processes like political and administrative efficiency, identification of the individual with the political system, involvement and participation of the people in the political processes, emergence of the people as holders of potential political power, emergence of new political institutions, including political parties and pressure groups, and integration between national and international systems are some of the processes of political modernization. Other processes include industrialization, the extent to which authorities have succeeded in the weakening and traditional authority structure. The extent of growth of network of specialized political and bureaucratic institutions to meet the new challenges to the political system etc is other processes of political modernization. Thus, an attempt has been made to discuss the political modernization of Kondhs of Odisha in two ways: (a) identification of the Kondh community with the political system, involvement and participation of the people in the political processes, emergence of the people as holders of potential political power, emergence of new political institutions, including political parties and pressure groups, and integration between national and international systems. (b) How industrialization, have succeeded in the weakening and traditional authority structure. It also studies how the political modernization weakens the role of traditional structures of the Kondhs of Odisha. How far the traditional authorities of the Kondhs are replaced by a single secular, national, national political authority and old values give place to the new ones.

Kondhs constitute the weakest section of Orissa's population, from the ecological, economic and educational angles. They constitute the matrix of India's poverty.

Though the Kondhs are the sons of the same soil and the citizens of the same country, they born and grow as the children of the nature. From the historical point of view, they have been subjected to the worst type of social exploitation. They are practically deprived of many civic facilities and isolated from modern and civilized way of living since so many centuries. However, after independence, this policy was abandoned and a new policy of tribal development and integration was initiated.

KONDHS OF ODISHA: SUPPORTER OF PRESENT TRIBAL MOVEMENT

The isolated areas inhabited by tribals presently converted to the hub of various struggles, particularly in the context of various development projects like dams and industries. This has in turn brought in the old, but relevant debate vis-à-vis mainstreaming tribal people. The Ghurye-Elwin debate has been continuing with regard to tribal way of life. The integrationists and the isolationists are still divided on the question of modernization of tribal people. Ghurye (1963) argued that the tribal people are 'backward Hindus' and hence, they need to be merged into the mainstream society. Elwin (1955), on the other hand, argued for maintaining what he called as a 'tribal way of life'. In the light of the above literature, this paper looks at the anti-development movement of tribals of Orissa, where the tribal movement argues on the lines of Elwin's notion of isolation and freedom for the tribal people.

ASPECTS OF TRADITION

To a greater extent the Kondhs of Odisha are driven by traditional way of life. Though Odisha has not been subject to any new projects, dams or minings they are the active supporter of this movement and some of them have been engaged in other parts of Orissa where the tribals are opposing for development. Some Kondhs have been actively engaged in the operational setup of the Naxal movement in Orissa. Furthermore, attacks of this class can stem the inflow of FDI (Foreign Direct Investment) in future. Given the predilection of the Maoists towards foreign capital and POSCO's venture at Paradip, a port barely 120 km by road from Bhubaneswar; such a hypothesis cannot be ruled out. Apart from these, it is regarded as a retaliatory action against the Kalinga Nagar incidence where more than 11 tribals were killed opposing to industrialization by the Tata group of companies. Also, it is natural that a closer contact with the masses would help the Maoists to engineer the economy of the area. The sugarcane cultivation in the region may be the focal point of attraction for the Maoists.

Hence the state and the Union administration have started to act in unison to weed out the menace before it assumes cyclopean proportions. Indeed they have to, before it becomes too late. But to only consider the Maoist problem as an administrative hindrance would be myopic. Unless the tribals and peasants are properly empowered, the Naxalite problem would persist.

The land of Kondhs, for instance, in Odisha is owned through customary right. Ownership documents exist mainly for the plain lands and only customary rights are there for the land in the hill slopes, which means they do not have 'legally' defined ownership. Thus, even in the wake of proper compensatory, measures many of the tribal people would be left out from the compensation, as they do not have 'legal' ownership. On the other hand, land is seen as inalienable resource for the livelihoods of the tribal people. Apart from providing them with sustainable livelihood, the land also provides them with freedom to work independently according to their needs. This dependence on land and forest produce has relatively isolated the tribal people from the mainstream economy. In other words the absence of modern legal system denotes the weak penetration of modernisation in this region. In recognition of this tradition, the Indian state provides statutory guarantees under V Schedule of the Constitution; where in tribal land cannot be sold or bought by a non-tribal. However, in UAIL case the rule was bent to suit the needs of industrialization and development.

The tribal people generally cultivate both plain and hill lands to enable them to different crops. Land forms a very important and crucial aspect of tribal life – land is the basis for the formation of their culture, economy, society and their polity. To quote:

“our life, culture, and employment everything revolves around the soil. In the month of Asadha (signifying the rainy season) we have Kulimaruparba, we get the root of the crop home and worship it. In the month of Bhoda (the following month) we worship maize. From making the plough to agriculture work, we do everything together. So there is peace in our village. But once industrialization starts, our festivals will vanish and our region will be destroyed.... We will get jobs, but who will do the cultivation? People will eat money or what? We cultivate; therefore we eat.” (Buka Miniaka says,)

The tribal people believe that they can be free and independent as long as they own the land. Dangar is the widely practised mode of cultivation. They grow different varieties of paddy, maize, and various types of pulses and

oil seeds like, *kandul, masur, mung, chana, alsi*, castor, mustard, etc. As most of the villages are surrounded by perennial springs on all the four sides, water is available throughout the year. Their food habits are in tune with the crops that they cultivate. In the morning, generally, they have *mandia paej* (gruel prepared out of *ragi*), which is also their staple food. Rice with some cereal forms is another major part of their food. However, since the last one decade, there is also increase in the cultivation of various vegetables. As a result something or the other is available around the year. Apart from this, they also grow various roots and tubers in their kitchen gardens, which also form their staple food. Whatever is available through agriculture activity is not accumulated in the modern sense, but exchanged in return for other goods.

WEEKLY FAIR: AGENT OF MODERNIZATION OF KONDHS

A weekly fair (market) serves the purpose of bartering goods, wherein people from different villages meet to exchange their excess produce. These weekly fairs are not only crucial from the economic point of view, but also from the cultural point. The barter system still continues to rule the economy largely, in spite of the slow and steady in roads being made by monetary exchange. This weekly fair also acts as a cultural space for the Kondh communities, where apart from economic activities many other activities are also being carried on. The tribal people are dependent upon natural resources like land, water, and forest for their livelihood, which to a large extent kept them away from the mainstream economy. The community life of tribal people is not in tune with individual-consumerist culture. They are self-sufficient as a community, and hence, their interaction with the main stream economy is very less. Moreover, since their mode of cultivation is through hard physical labour, they cannot afford to produce much in the form of surplus. Also, producing or using anything in surplus is against the cultural norm.

PROCESS OF MODERNIZATION THROUGH GOVERNMENT PROGRAMMES

The movement and the region are not entirely free of modern aspects. There are various agents of modernization that operate in this region. The major agents of the change are state and the market, while the little modernization that made inroads has transformed the idea of traditional community to a certain extent. State Government implemented many programmes to develop the Odisha region. Some of the programmes

are Tribal Sub-Plan approach (TSP), development of tribals through Integrated Tribal Development Agency (ITDA), Micro-Projects for the Development of Primitive Tribes (MPDPT), Modified Areas Development Approach (MADA) for smaller areas having a population of 10,000 or more with 50 per cent tribal concentration. All these programmes were in addition to the International Fund for Agricultural Development along with Orissa Tribal Development Project (OTDP), Large Area Multi-Purpose Cooperative Society (LAMPS) for the overall development of Kondh living areas of Odisha and anti poverty programmes. Along with the above programmes many non-governmental organizations (NGOs) also have been working in this region for the upliftment of the tribal people. The state-led infrastructure projects like roads, rail, special funds, helped the state to make inroads into this region.

These projects also acted as key agents for social transformation of tribal people to bring them into the main stream society by integrating them with the nearby towns. Meanwhile, the Government of Orissa saw mining as one of the key industries that can help in alleviating poverty in the state. For instance, according to Government of Orissa's Economic Survey, 2004, Though Orissa is rich in minerals; exploitation is still not commensurate with the potential. Enhanced rate of exploitation of different mineral reserves will not only improve the financial position of the State but also will be helpful in generating sizeable direct and indirect employment.

Ever since the hunger deaths of 1980s and early 1990s, the State Government aimed at building infrastructure facilities in order to undertake development projects in this tribal region. Provisions for mobile health camps, ambulance services, kindergarten, primary adult education, forestation work, training for income generation skills, women awareness camps, village sanitation systems, are all some of its stated programmes^[12] Further, the movement believes that approaching the judiciary would shrink the space for democratic struggle. Thus, the movement has a complex relation with the state given the fact that state is not a monolithic actor. At one level, the movement appeals to the state for more schools, hospitals, and to implement the constitutional provisions related to tribal areas. On the other hand, the same movement invokes constitutionally guaranteed rights against the state.

EDUCATION AND NGOS

The people of Kondh region of Odisha feel that the state-given education is fast transforming

their society. Primary schools act as the immediate agents of change through imparting mainstream education to the children. This education is seen differently, to quote one Kondh leader: education in schools is of not much use to us. The teachers of coastal area employed in the schools teach the standardized Oriya language, which we don't speak. They teach science and other subjects which say our way of life is wrong. This education is not needed for us. It should be according to our needs. On the one hand, while the tribal movement fights against the industrial and state led-development, it demands more schools and hospitals in their region, instead of industries. To quote: What the area really needs is schools but the government hasn't provided these ...the area will develop by building schools, and hospitals, not through this project. Thus, the movement, at one level, looks at the modernization process with suspicion and, at another level, favours it but it is limited to the basic requirement of education and health. The NGOs made inroads into this region through teaching farmers about horticulture and other forms of cultivation. The NGOs acts as agents of State-led development. The Kondh people traditionally need to interact with the mainstream economy for various reasons. As the forest cannot give them everything, they need to participate and interact with the mainstream economy. For instance, it is a known fact that salt is not available in the forest, but salt is a major ingredient of the Kondh food culture; in order to procure salt, Kondh people need to trade with outsiders. But the question remains as to whether the tribal community interacts with the market at the equal level or does any inbuilt hierarchy operates within their relation.^[15] Pathy (1992) argues that the geographical isolation of tribal people is a myth. He argues that the tribal movements are against the material and cultural domination of the mainstream society and, in that sense, all tribal societies are class societies and are inter twined with the Indian political economy. He further adds that these societies are in the lowest ebb of the capitalist hierarchy which has given rise to the gross exploitation of the tribal people which is essentially due to their unequal status within the market economy. In other words, tribal people form the periphery of the mainstream economy.

The non-surplus production process and non-accumulation culture of the tribal people goes against the basis of the mainstream economy. As a result, the tribal people continue to be at the lowest order of the mainstream economy or the periphery, where the exploitation of the tribal people continues. Some scholars argue that the tribal people need not participate in the mainstream economy as their limited

needs are satisfied by their hard work and forest. But others allege that the state government facilitates the Multinational companies to make entry in order to inculcate a consumerist culture among the tribal people. While it is true that the needs of the people are limited, there are other aspects that induce tribal people into markets, rather than the state. For instance, the bus-service that runs 4-5 packed trips daily to district headquarters Odisha and State Capital Bhubaneswar and Southern Orissa's market hub, Brahmapur have definitely a role to play in the bringing the market into Kondh villages of Odisha. People only buy things like salt, kerosene and cloth in the nearby market. The usage of cloth has increased since past two decades and among the younger generation one can find wide use of cloth in general and particularly the latest fashion clothes. Almost every village has a small shop that sells soaps, bidis, cigarettes, tobacco, etc, and these shops are owned by other caste people. However, usage of commodities like soaps and hair oils is still not very popular among the Kondh people. One can occasionally find items like cycle, transistor, and torchlight, and very rarely a black and white portable television. Many of the young people travel at least once in a week to nearby town, which shows that the relative isolation is slowly breaking. It is also observed that many of the tribal people have latest music systems with speakers, and they play latest Bollywood songs. Generally they buy the pirated music CDs that are sold at a throw away price. This limited participation and interaction is due to the low and subsistence income of the tribal people. Thus, on the whole, the interaction between tribal people and market is very limited and yet is slowly expanding.

COMMUNICATION & MEDIA

The electronic media of communication such as radio, television, computer networks via satellites, paging services, telephony, electronic mail and Internet web, etc., are modes of communication which are revolutionizing the banking, trade and management practices, uses of culture and leisure, and most other modes of inter-cultural and inter-group communicative actions. It is possible to have individual to individual, group to individual and group to group communication contacts globally. Most of these media transcend the territorial national cultural boundaries. Moreover, these changes play a strategic role in the process of social, economic and technological development of Kondh society. Besides the major telecommunication means, viz., radio, television and films, the role of telephones, mobile phones, email, fax, Internet, etc., is also expanding. The radio, even today, continues to be the most accessible mass-based medium among the Kondhs. Dish

antennas have played a very important role, and even today remain the most popular form of entertainment and recreation in the Kondh houses. They have also played a crucial part from time to time in promoting educational and reformative values. They have proved to be a major source of linguistic and cultural integration. The new means of communication also augment and empower the Kondh communities, local cultures and minority sects by extending the reach of their interactions.

POLITY, INTEGRATION AND IDENTITY

The process of modernization has triggered off forces of change which have set people rethinking about the political institutions such as the state, the democracy and the civil society. In their functioning, the role of cultural pluralism and protection of the local cultures is now particularly recognized both in terms of institutional mechanism and as an element of political morality or value system. New thinking is taking place about the changing role of nation-state, its sovereignty and the role of political party, etc., under the growing forces of globalization. The changing relationship between the state and the civil society, following globalization of economy and pluralization of cultures, now poses a major problem in most societies, both developed and the developing. The tribal policy of the government has consistently aimed at encouraging their autonomous growth with protection to their local culture. To protect their rights inland and forest resources, etc., the law prohibits outsiders from purchasing their property or to settle down on their land by purchasing estate which is their preserve. There is an inner line protection policy pursued by the government which protects tribals from intrusion by outsiders from other states or the foreigners.

The tribals are also protected by law. They enjoy privileges in running their own educational, cultural and social institutions. These measures have, however, been less successful in maintaining the autonomy of the tribal local cultures. There is evidence that outside entrepreneurs, traders and influential people have succeeded in alienating the land and natural resources meant for the tribals by surreptitious means. The educational standard, economic status and political empowerment of the tribal communities has, therefore, remained low in most regions of the country. The second source of resilience to local cultures is the institution of democracy. A backward state, Orissa faces a number of difficulties in implementing the welfare programmes for the tribals. Though the political institutions set on democratic model are not working as well as expected by the tribals because they have not been able to

develop the appropriate political culture. Social institutions in form of kinship system, patterns of families, class divisions and traditional outlook of the life of Kondhs do not favour smooth functioning of this modern political system.

CONCLUSION

But despite the above challenges all conventional measurements of modernization and development - from education and communication to bureaucracy and urbanization - tribal societies have been undergoing an impressive socio-economic transformation. However, there's a gap between this transformation and the political consequences of modernization. In other words, the tribals exhibit a sharp contrast between its societal and political progress.

The Kondhs are still in transition. They are witnessing a deeper change since Independence. To conclude, the Kondhs are facing numerous challenges to political modernization. Their experience in nation building and modernization is very limited. Even the pace and direction is not clear. Much more would depend on their attitude towards political system of the country. Tribals' political, economic, and socio-cultural modernization faces revolts and resistance by the Naxal movement, because they are opposing the industrialization and modernization policy of the government in the tribal pockets. However, one can not differ with the view that the Kondh community is passing through a 'transitional' phase till now and this phenomenon is bound to accelerate the speed of change.

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