

# Primitive Tribes

The First Step



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**The First Step**

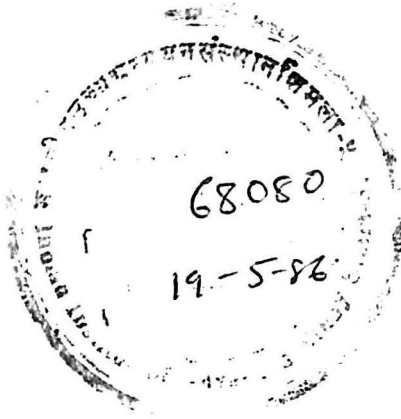
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GOVERNMENT OF INDIA  
MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS  
NEW DELHI



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Price: Inland : Rs. 22.00  
Foreign : £2.56 or \$7.92



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PRINTED BY THE MANAGER, GOVT. OF INDIA PRESS, RING ROAD, NEW DELHI-110064  
AND PUBLISHED BY THE CONTROLLER OF PUBLICATIONS, CIVIL LINES DELHI-110054  
1977

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## INTRODUCTION

When we think of tribal development, it is development of a number of groups which are at different stages of socio-economic development. At one extreme are groups which are indistinguishable from the general agricultural communities in the more backward areas while at the other extreme are the groups which still lead a secluded and archaic mode of life. This situation of large difference in the levels of socio-economic development of various communities has always posed important issues before the planners and administrators. Therefore, there has been an effort to identify the more backward communities and make special programmes for those groups. The Scheduled Areas and Tribes Commission, the Shilu Ao Committee and a number of other reports have listed the more backward groups. In some states, special programmes and special facilities have also been provided for these groups.

### *Backwardness and Poverty*

On the eve of the Fifth Five Year Plan formulation, the entire range of programmes under tribal development was reviewed. The problem of the more backward tribal communities was also discussed in considerable detail. While considering these problems, it was noted that backwardness itself needed a closer scrutiny. Amongst the backward, are those groups

who are at distinctly earlier stages of economic evolution like hunters, food gatherers, and shifting cultivators. These groups have to be distinguished from those more backward communities which are economically worse off, compared to the general tribal population. In earlier discussions, no clear distinction had been attempted between poverty and conditions ascribable to a prior stage of economic development. The groups which are at the pre-agricultural level of technology are not necessarily poor. The food gatherer, who may entirely subsist on the forest, is not poor because his state of economic development is different, where poverty in the conventional sense has no meaning. There may be deprivation and consequent 'want' if his natural resources are being encroached upon. This 'want' has to be differentiated from 'poverty' of the modern context.

### *Defining the Primitive*

In the new strategy of tribal development, therefore, the two concepts, viz, a prior stage of economic development and a lower level in the economic structure have been clearly distinguished. Those groups, which fall in the former category, have been categorised under primitive tribal communities while those in the latter category are termed as the more backward tribal communities.

Agricultural economy has been taken to be the water-shed for identification of primitive tribal communities. The pre-agricultural economic groups generally have been included in the primitive communities. The highest form of technology in the case of these groups can be said to be practised by shifting cultivators. Shifting cultivation is a stage of graduation from food gathering and hunting to settled agriculture. Even here, there are no clear boundaries. It is well known that process of change may not inform all facets of community life simultaneously. In the North East, all shifting cultivators are not entirely dependent on it. They depend on shifting cultivation in varying degrees. There are groups who are entirely dependent on shifting cultivation, while there are groups who are only nominally or partially dependent on this form of cultivation. Many of these groups, however, have advanced educationally and socially as a result of continued effort in social services. In their case, shifting cultivation does not represent a pre-agricultural stage of socio-economic life; it is, more appropriately, one of the means of livelihood in their peculiar situation. It is as good a source of livelihood as agriculture or mechanised agriculture or any other form on which a community may subsist. Therefore, in defining primitive tribal groups, some more distinguishing features have to be identified. It appears that literacy is an important criterion which may reasonably indicate the general level of social development of a community. Therefore, besides the stage of economy criterion, level of literacy has also

been taken as a characteristic to identify the groups which need special attention and could be properly categorised as primitive tribal communities. Five per cent literacy level appears to be a good enough server for this purpose.

### *Problem of Identification*

Before taking up a programme for development of the primitive groups, the first problem is their precise identification. While a number of sociologists and anthropologists have worked on different communities, there is no uniform coverage. The detailed information in relation to most of the groups may be quite old. It has to be appreciated that in a fast changing society, even a decade may be a long enough period to disturb the traditional life pattern and the new situation may be quite distinct from earlier accounts. Therefore, identification of these groups has been taken up in the first instance.

The State Governments were requested to take up reconnoitral survey of the more backward tribal communities from amongst whom it may be possible to pick up the primitive groups. The Anthropological Survey of India has had long experience and close contact with these groups and, therefore, their help would also be required in this task of identification.

### *The Workshop*

When this exercise was started in the field, it was soon realised that the concept of primitive tribal groups put forward could be usefully crystallised if those engaged in the task of identification of these groups could come together and discuss their field experience in relation to these groups. The reconnoitral survey itself requires a focus different from general ethnographic studies. It has to address itself to the specific problems which may be faced by these communities and it should help in evolving a suitable strategy for each of these groups. A workshop on primitive groups was, therefore, convened and all those involved in the survey and formulation of programmes for the primitive groups were invited. A number of papers on selected primitive tribal groups were presented by several scholars. A basic frame for the reconnoitral survey was also presented on behalf of the Ministry of Home Affairs. This literature formed the basis of our discussion in the Workshop. The idea was to clarify concepts in relation to identification the lines on which the reconnoitral and detailed studies are to be undertaken, and the possible direction for the economic development programmes for the concerned groups.



Shri T.C.A. Srinivasavaradan Addl. Secretary, Ministry of Home Affairs, initiated the discussion. He suggested that problems of these small communities should be viewed in a broader perspective than has been done so far. Closer contact with these groups should enable us to gain a proper understanding of the problems which they are facing and devise programmes for their fast economic development so that they can be brought closer to the larger societies as soon as possible.

In the paper entitled "Problems of Diagnostic Research and the Strategy of Development of Pre-Agricultural Primitive Tribal Communities", Dr. Surjit Sinha Director, Anthropological Survey of India, emphasised that the proper understanding of the situation in relation to these communities will require a historical perspective of their problems. The basic question is how to bring the process of science and technology within the social control of the participating groups. Education has an important role in bringing about the process of modernization within their social and cultural outlook. The new world in which they have to participate and live has to be explained to them in commonsense terms. The research studies have to present the essential information both in qualitative and quantitative terms so that they can form the basis for programming development and influencing the process of change.

Dr. B. K. Roy Burman invited attention of the scholars to the fact that although certain communities may be considered to be pre-agricultural in the sense that they are dependent on hunting, food gathering and collecting economy, the entire communities are not at the same stage. For example, the Pardies in Maharashtra are at hunting stage, yet a number of them are now at home in market economy; some of them are cultivators and agricultural labourers and only a small section now depends on hunting. It will, therefore, be necessary that this small group is identified so that its problems of transition are attended. Each tribe should be studied in the context of the micro situation so that specific solutions for its specific problems can be found.

After the above preliminary remarks, the attention of the participants was invited to the first question which we have before us, viz, that of identifying the specific groups and preparing a design for collecting the necessary information so as to enable programme formulation. In a number of cases, the published information is rather old and outdated. In the earlier reports, reliance had often been placed on ethnographic reports on standardised customs and reports of administrators and field workers spread over a long period. It will not be possible either to accept all the backward groups as primitive groups for special attention or to rely on that information for detailed programme formulation. For example, the Chenchus in Andhra Pradesh are a large group spread over a vast area.

Some sections amongst them may have changed under the impact of new developmental processes. It is possible that some of them may have become worse off economically, being drawn into the world of developing societies without adequate preparedness. Thus, although they may be poor, they would have lost their primitive characteristics. They will be, more or less, in the same position as the landless labourers in the rural economy. Therefore, the solution for their problems will be different from the one for those remanent sections who may still be in the pre-agricultural stage, comparatively isolated, dependent on food gathering, hunting, etc. In a sense, various sections in this community will be at different stages in the temporal sequence of development, some of them may be 50 years behind the general rural communities, some may be 100 years behind and some may be 500 years behind them. Each of these sections, therefore, will require to be specifically identified with reference to their stage of economic development.

### *The 'Unwanted' Katkaries*

Shri Palnitkar, Secretary, Social Welfare, Government of Maharashtra emphasised the need for clarity in defining objectives for this exercise. It was now universally accepted that forcing down new technology on a unwilling community, trying to teach them new methods is not desirable. It does not lead us anywhere. A method has to be found which may ensure that the groups do not lose their self-respect and self-confidence during the transition and the process of development is to be brought within their understanding and their control. For this purpose, the native skills of each of these groups have to be identified which have enabled them to survive in a larger hostile world. He invited attention to the problem of Katkaries of Maharashtra. When the primitive people are drawn from their native places into a situation where mechanised processes are being increasingly used in the wake of new scientific and technological advancement, their skills are reduced to the level of redundancy. Their level of education is low and, therefore, in the last four decades they have been denied the benefits of economic development and advantages of the gradual progress in the areas around them. The question is whether it will be possible to treat the skill of their hands as the available raw material and basic resource for the development of these communities and build upon it so that they are brought closer to the other groups as quickly as possible. This calls for a new educational policy which should expose them to the right type of technology. This will help them in adjusting themselves to the new economic situation. Those amongst them, who join new professions, may also be helped to provide the necessary leadership. The most demoralising part of the present situation is the feeling of being unwanted ; this is engulfing these communities and will destroy them. It

will be necessary to take urgent measure to instil amongst them a sense of self-confidence. Once their confidence is restored, a massive response from the people can be expected. Then, a new generation of leaders could emerge who can guide the future of these communities.

### *Onges on the Precipice*

The general discussion started with the presentation of paper "The Onges of Little Andaman" by Shri T. N. Pandit. The Onge life has, since ages, been intimately connected with the virgin tropical forest of Little Andaman. The position has now been disturbed. The area under their command is progressively declining under pressure of other developmental schemes. The Onges population itself is declining and if this trend continues, it will die out in not too distant a future. The new contact is also disturbing the economic base of this small community. They are losing the traditional sources of their food because of new competition for the pig and honey, progressive destruction of forests and temptation of Onges themselves to exchange these very items for tea and tobacco. The Onge has lost the proud bearing, healthy stature and a sense of self-respect which is still observable amongst the Jaravas and Sentenelese who continue to be hostile. There is need for psychological adjustment of the Onges to the changing social scene in the area.

Dr. Roy Burman pointed out that even the small Onge community is not homogenous. It is quite possible that they may be constituting a number of sub-groups, each of which may be having a clear political command area and economic command area. According to him, there is evidence to support that there were at least 3 distinct groups on this Island. He felt that the estimate of population of seven hundred reported for Onges in 1901 may be somewhat exaggerated. The carrying capacity of the Island may not have been more than three to four hundred persons. Even if this figure is taken, the decline is fast and, therefore, the possibility of their biological extinction cannot be ruled out. It appears that sterility has taken over in this area. There is also a question about hygienic habit of living. It is not possible to introduce 'desirable' habits all at once, but it has to be seen whether this adjustment can be made. There is also a reported case of murder out of jealousy. It will be necessary that effective steps for social education are taken up in this area.

The question of hostility also came up for discussion in the context of the Jaravas and the Sentenelese. It appears that in the case of these groups, their hostile attitude has enabled them to preserve themselves while the contact in the case of Great Andamanese, and now in the case of Little Andamanese, has proved to be detrimental. The relevant questions are whether if some tribals want to be left alone and where they think that

it is best for them to be left alone, should they be left alone ? Or what kind of strategy should be adopted for making gradual adjustments? These questions were dealt at considerable length in the paper, "A Strategy of Development for Primitive Tribal Communities" by Dr. B. D. Sharma. No group can be said to be a free agent. Even determining the free choice of a community is an extremely difficult task. A policy of 'non-interference' by the Government may only mean leaving them to the mercy of other adverse forces particularly in those areas where there are no difficult geographical barriers or where there is no natural isolation. Therefore, an approach of cautious and gradual change, ensuring that at every stage, change is within the comprehension of the group and that slowly, it is enabled to understand its new context better, will have to be adopted.

### *Jenu Kurubas between Advancing Civilization and Spaceless Forests*

Shri P. K. Misra presented the paper on 'Jenu Kurubas' in Karnataka. Jenu Kurubas are basically forest dwellers and move from place to place. Their economy is being disturbed because of the shrinking forests and advancing agriculture. They are not able to cultivate more land in the forest and are engaged by contractors as casual labourers. On the margin of the forest, the stronger communities have taken to land and even take away the land which this group cleared once. The Forest Department cultivate 'Kumry' land with the help of the tribals who have no rights on it. The group is essential for the working of forests, since its members know the forest areas, they can work during the night and they can face the wild animals. Therefore, in some cases, they may not be allowed to go out even if they would want to do so. An adverse relationship has developed between the contractors, forest department and the local tribal communities. The level of education amongst this community is minimal, indebtedness is high and the interest charged usurious.

The physical survival of Jenu Kurubas is becoming difficult due to their exposure to the dominant peasant groups and entrepreneurs who are coming in search of new opportunities to the detriment of the tribal communities. The smallness of their size also brings to the fore the political dimension of their development. It was pointed out that in their case, programme of development cannot be in terms of individual schemes. It will have to be based on the concept of social development of the entire community and will need political support. This group, by virtue of its very small numbers, cannot claim such a support in normal course. It is not necessary that the political processes should be viewed in a narrow

context. The political frame-work extends from the local micro situation on the one hand, to the broad national scene on the other. The very fact that the problem of primitive tribal communities is being separately discussed and effective measures for their protection and development are being drawn up is a process in the broader political frame. The task of the research worker and the administrator, therefore, is to put the problem in a proper frame and present it in an appropriate forum. In this way, it will be possible to realign the political processes also in such a fashion that the process of transition for these groups may become smooth.

Another general question, which arises with reference to the situation of Jenu Kurubas, is the valuation of the native skills of the weaker groups. The Jenu Kurubas are highly skilled in forestry operations and in handling wild animals. But a very poor valuation has been fixed in money terms for use of their skills. These are artificial equations. If a proper value is accorded to their native skills, it will help both in restoring the confidence of the people in themselves and helping them economically in a period of transition, till such time as they acquire other skills which are more relevant in the new socio-economic context.

The problem of the primitive groups should not be viewed in static terms where all relationships are taken to be fixed. It will be necessary that a broad perspective for their future development is prepared ; a process of gradual directed change is initiated with the final goal in view. In the new context, the Jenu Kurubas perhaps finally may have to be part agriculturist and part forest worker. Some sections of this community may largely depend on the forest operations while some other may become largely dependent on agricultural resources. They should be provided opportunity to acquire necessary skills as also other necessary equipment for the new life. In the period of transition, the main emphasis should be on fullest utilisation of their traditional skills.

This brings us to the question of education. The Jenu Kurubas are hardly literate. There is the problem of medium of instruction. There is heavy drop out. Therefore, special programmes for education should be drawn up for this community.

In relation to utilisation of forests and its policy, it will be necessary to understand the entire process in terms of the Jenu Kurubas' world view. The experience is that whenever there are any programmes of afforestation, the benefits to the local communities are negligible. The interests of the forest dwellers do not find any place in the programmes as are drawn up by the Forest Department. In these areas, it is necessary that forestry programmes should be so formulated that the tribal economy is also simultaneously strengthened.



### *Kathodias—A Splinter Group*

The case of Kathodias of Rajasthan provided an added dimension to the problem under discussion. Here is a community which was brought from Maharashtra for working in the forests of Rajasthan. It got separated from its original group and is now surrounded by more advanced communities. The task for which they were brought in is over and they are now 'trapped' in an unfamiliar world. They do not know any other trade. This Community does not fall in any of the classical "types" and can be considered to be a splinter group of a community trapped in a different situation. The basic tenets of the developmental model of primitive groups would be applicable in their case also.

### *Baigas of Mandla*

Shri Srivastava presented the case of Baigas of Mandla who are essentially a forest people. He invited attention to some of the points in the administration of forests which is posing some problems to this community. He suggested that there should be separate administrative arrangement for these people. The Baigas are living in the sal wood forest and would not like to go out elsewhere for their livelihood. Even when they are provided labour they would like to reach their homes in the evening. The Forest Department itself could take up certain developmental programmes and report regularly on the steps taken. The developmental benefits could be channelised to this group through the forest administration machinery.

The land management of the Baigas also needs a review. They are given 10 acres of land and a patta is given for 5 years. There are no money lenders in this area. In fact, the area is so inaccessible that the contractors are not willing to go and work the forest. It appears that on an average, a Baiga gets employment for 30 days in a year in various forestry operations. Some loan is provided by the government which is extremely meagre. There are some restrictions on their grazing of cattle although the villagers from outside the forest village area are also allowed to graze their cattle. This has affected their economy. This will need a careful review and a detailed planning for this group.

### *Cholanaickan of Kerala*

Dr. Mathur presented his paper on Cholanaickans of Kerala. In their case, it appears that even the enumeration is not reliable. The group lives in the deep recesses of the forest and are almost 'cave dwellers'. Their only contact with the outside world is through the local forest contractors. Lot of excitement was caused by local reporting of their primitive conditions,

which on detailed inquiry was found not to be accurate. Regular contact with this group is now growing. The group will, however, require very delicate handling to enable them to catch up with the rest of the communities in the area. The forest areas in Kerala are experiencing pressure from the over populated plains and there is a growing competition even for the traditional vocations of the forest dwellers. The more advanced groups are adopting more advanced technology for collecting minor forest produce and even for collecting honey. They are also competing for the traditional non-skilled jobs which, so far, have been the closed preserves of the tribal communities. Thus, the tribals are experiencing tremendous competition in their very habitats from outsiders and their very survival is threatened.

The workshop could not consider in detail some of the papers presented on other tribal communities like Paharias in Bihar, Chenchus in Andhra Pradesh, Kathodias in Rajasthan and Bharas in Madhya Pradesh. It was agreed that the Institutes will review their work and conduct a reconnaissance survey in the course of the next three months.

### *Primitive Groups—A Conceptual Framework*

#### *(i) Classification*

The brief discussion of a few representative cases of primitive economies prepared suitable background for considering the basic issues at conceptual level. A theoretical frame for the development of tribal committees was presented in a paper by Dr. B. D. Sharma. In the first section of this paper, the problem of small tribal communities has been conceptualised. The case of two primitive communities, viz., the Onges and Abujhmarias has been discussed within this frame. In the first instance, the social dynamics of smaller groups has been discussed bringing out the difference in the process of change of a small group compared to bigger groups. A small group has been defined as one having population of less than 15,000. Within these groups, a special class of diminutive group, viz., a group having less than one thousand population, has also been identified. While the 'small' groups are in a state of unstable equilibrium, the 'diminutive' groups are generally found to be declining fast and heading towards extinction.

#### *(ii) A Four Stage Model*

The paper then moves in the next section to define the concept of ecological equilibrium and tries to identify the causes of its disturbance. A model is presented in which the causes of disequilibrium have been categorised as (i) socio-economic and physical, (ii) external and internal, and (iii) individual, group or institutional in their character. The groups are also

categorised according to the extent of their isolation. The model, thereafter, presents a possible strategy for their development. Stage one is identified as the stage of confrontation. In stage two, the model envisages for effectively countering external forces. Institutional forces are easier to tackle. Individual and group forces have to be tackled through institutional measures. In the meantime, it is necessary to recognise their native skills, build economic activity around them and restore the self-confidence of the community. The group should be enabled to understand the nature of the new contact. The new techniques programmes should be so formulated that they 'grow' naturally from their traditional economy. This represents the third stage in the new developmental effort. In this stage, the pace of developmental programmes have to be extremely slow. Communication barriers have to be broken and gradual upgradation of new skills taken up. Education should help these communities in this process. If these programmes are effectively implemented, the state of confrontation will cease to exist. At this stage, the group can be said to have successfully graduated through the critical transition phase in its existence and it will be in a position to take benefit from the normal developmental process of the larger community around it.

An important distinguishing feature of the process of change for small groups is the big impact of instrument of development itself. In a group like Onges, introduction of normal programmes will have much too big an impact which cannot be absorbed by the small community. In the case of small groups also, the instrument of development itself is an important factor in the process of change. Therefore, in their case any decision for introducing change should be taken after a very careful consideration of all possible implications, direct or indirect, to the group. The local community should be enabled to take independent decisions and, for this purpose, it is necessary that the change is slow and the extension agency is extremely small. In the case of small tribal communities, the approach of incrementalism appears to be the best choice.

### *The Rich Abujhmarias*

The paper presents the case of Abujhmarias as an illustration. It is a classical case of a small community in command of a resource-rich region with little contact with the outside world. The technological skills of the people are archaic and their economy is pre-agricultural and pre-monetised. In this context, any big programme based on exploitation of resources of this area is likely to affect the demographic structure of its population. Even a programme for fast opening up of this area through road development, is likely to result in immigration of large number of labourers, many of whom will never go back. Therefore, a reasonable demographic constraint has to be accepted as one of the important conditions in this model. The basic question

is whether the process of change should be such that may be under the conscious control of the local community. It has to be noted that the local community, at the present, has full control on its resources even though they are not exploited except in the traditional ways for subsistence economy. Inaccessibility stands in the way of utilisation of its resources by the local community itself. Therefore, the model suggests neutralization of inaccessibility through a suitable policy measure for purchase and sale of the commodities in this area. In the context of Abujhmar situation, the approach for extensive agriculture, in clear contrast to intensive agriculture in other parts of Bastar, would be most appropriate with some areas specialising in animal husbandry. Education and health services could be an important factor in the new development. Institutionalization will be necessary to enable them to have an effective say in the cause of socio-economic development of the area.

The applicability of the model presented in the paper to some other tribal situations in the country was discussed. It was agreed that the model, in its basic essence, is applicable to a large spectrum of the primitive tribal groups. In each case, the solution will have to be defined in terms of the specific situation. The problem will be more difficult in those areas where the groups are located on the fringe of larger communities like Birhors in Bihar or the Jenu Kurubas in Karnataka. In many a situation, conflicting interests of major tribal groups and smaller tribal groups also becomes important. Even in the case of Abujhmar, the conflicting interests will arise, in due course, between the primitive Abujhmaria and the more advanced tribal communities of the surrounding area. In this case, it is not a question of tribal versus non-tribal or one tribe versus another. The basic issue is to evolve a suitable strategy for development of a group which is far behind its neighbours. A suggestion was made that the problems of these groups for effective solution have to be brought into focus at the political level. As explained earlier, political process has to be viewed at different levels in specific contexts. It is, therefore, necessary that conscious political decisions are taken in each case regarding their development and protection of their interests *vis-a-vis* the stronger groups. The developmental process has to be so moulded that the socio-economic life of their community itself should provide the base for further superstructure; the natural resources and the environment should guide the future course of action and help in designing the developmental programmes.

#### *A Frame for Identification of the Primitive*

The various papers presented on specific communities and the theoretical frame brought into focus some of the issues which may be

faced in identifying the problems and evolving suitable solutions for the primitive groups. The workshop, thereafter, addressed itself to the problem of identification of these groups in the light of experience of each State. The note on 'Preparation of Monographs on Tribal Communities' listed a number of suggestions about this identification. Although some scattered information was available about different communities from varied sources, it was agreed that it may not be adequate for clear identification of communities with reference to specific areas. The Census publications gave a list of statistical material. The village directories provide information about tribal composition for each habitation. It will not be possible to know the precise number of each community or their economic status from these documents. While effort should be made to draw upon whatever information is already available in different sources, it is necessary that each of these groups is urgently studied so that the latest position can be known.

The consensus was that the level of literacy of any group is an important criterion for identifying its level of development, since it represents, in a way, the total effect of various processes on a community. While literacy can be an important indicator for the primitiveness of a community, it cannot be the only indicator. There are a number of poorer sections, for example amongst the Scheduled Castes, who may have no literacy at all because of their social conditions and economic deprivation; but they cannot be considered as a private group. Similarly, some of the tribal communities have lost command of their land and have been caught in the whirl of neighbouring advanced communities. They are mostly landless labourers and sometimes are even bonded labourers as in the case of Jenu Kunubas. Their condition is extremely pitiable. But with their very contact with the processes, they have become a part of a bigger system where they, no doubt, occupy a very low position. While they have lost their earlier bearing, they have also shed their primitive characteristics. Their problems will need urgent attention but their solution will be different from the one which may be necessary for the primitive groups.

The loss of ecological equilibrium invariably tells upon the growth rate of a community. While it cannot be said that all primitive communities should show a declining or near stationary population trend, yet the loss of ecological equilibrium must tell upon the 'health' of a group. Therefore, it is necessary that growth rate of the primitive groups, for whom programmes are to be prepared, should be specifically assessed. The communities with declining trend or near stationary numbers must be assigned the highest priority in undertaking the programmes.

### *Group-Oriented Programmes*

The programmes formulation is a crucial step in the strategy. The



various programmes can be conceptually idealised as area development programmes or group-oriented programmes. Certain Programmes entirely address to the development of the area with no regard whatsoever for the people. The big industrial development programmes fall in this category where the people are expected to adjust to the requirements of the industry. On the other extreme, there are group-oriented programmes where the welfare of a specific group is the primary concern with no element of area development. These are the two extremes. Generally a programme has elements of both these ideal types. In the case of primitive tribal communities, the approach will necessarily have to be group-oriented. Whatever programmes are in the nature of area development will have to be tested with reference to their impact and relevance to the development of the community. In fact this is the central theme of the new approach of tribal development in general. In the case of primitive groups, there should be an added accent to group-oriented aspect.

Since all primitive tribal communities will not fall in the same category in terms of their stage of development, the mix of area elements and group-oriented elements will have to vary from one case to another. In the case of those communities which are located in well-identified exclusive geographical regions, certain minimal area development aspects will also have to be taken care of, since even the provision of basic services may require some infra-structure. However, in no case infra-structural development should be treated as a pre-condition for the solution of their problem. In the case of those communities which are located on the margin of larger groups like Birhors, area development aspects have no significance; the programmes will have to be primarily group-oriented. In their case, the infra-structural development can be presumed to have already taken place in the region. There may be some cases of supplementing the existing infra-structure but such programmes will be essentially marginal.

### *Study Design and Methodology*

The nature of studies will also depend in each case on the size of the primitive group. In case the primitive group is extremely small, universal coverage will be useful. In case the primitive group is comparatively larger, the study may be conducted on a sample basis. It will, however, be necessary that the community life of some villages is understood in its totality so that initial conditions are comprehensively defined. It will help in finding the real problems of ecological disequilibrium and other disrupting elements. Once there is a clear appreciation of the problem of some villages, it may be possible, with some additional field work and giving allowance for local variation, to broadly assess the problem of other villages and plan out a comprehensive programme. In programme

formulation, it will be necessary to work out both short-term and long-term measures with a view to restore the ecological equilibrium and ending the state of confrontation, wherever it may exist between different elements in an area.

In the case of primitive tribal groups, general statistical methods should be applied with great caution. The 'averages' may be an illusory guide to their present condition. The individual frequencies have to be carefully observed to bring out the real condition of the people. In the pre-monetised economy, the per-capita income approach is also not a very safe guide. In fact, the conventional computation of assets may give a completely distorted picture of the reality. For example, in a community where cattle wealth has more prestige value than economic value, computation of income on the basis of net addition to the cattle herd may work out to be a fabulous figure. In the real situation, the cattle may have no other use than for common festivals, thus, the net addition may be shared by the entire community. Such social practices are not amenable to normal economic analysis. Similarly, computation of level of food availability on the basis of agricultural produce may be erroneous. There may be seasonal dependence on local forest produce. A statement that 'an average tribal does not have food for more than four days in a week' will need to be more closely examined. The relevant question needing clear answers is on whether the deprivation is the same in the entire community or there are people who have their food for all the seven days and the condition of some others extremely critical.

### *Conclusion*

The workshop, thus, for the first time gave an opportunity to interdisciplinary groups to apply themselves to the variegated problems of primitive tribal communities scattered throughout the country. The concept of identifying the special groups at pre-agricultural level of technology and also at low levels of literacy found general acceptance as a workable starting point. The frame provided for a preliminary survey also makes a departure from the conventional studies in which emphasis is either on ethnographic aspects or are generally socio-economic in character. The new frame attempts to strike a balance between different approaches and can be said to work backward from the point of evolving a suitable strategy for development of these groups. It is accepted that these groups have to be helped in adjusting themselves to the new socio-economic forces which are informing all aspects of our national life.

With these basic premises, the attempt is to clearly identify their present stage and work out a rough and ready time-table for their guided

development. More backward a community, the longer will be the transitional period ; smaller the group, greater will be the personal attention which have to be bestowed on the group. The instrument of change itself acquires an important role in the process and has to be very delicately handled, particularly, in the case of more backward and smaller groups. The nature of the new contact of the group with other individuals, groups, institutions as also the changing relationship of these communities with the social-economic and physical environment has to be clearly appreciated. The conventional statistical methods will need to be reviewed and every individual, the way he is reacting to the new process, has to be the matter of concern for the developmental workers. While these studies will provide a reliable information base as also a reliable socio-economic dynamic relationship matrix for initiating the process of change or guiding it, it will also add to the fund of scientific knowledge about the primitive groups. Each group may provide basic material for valuable monographs on their present status and the inter-action of forces which has resulted in their present situation. These studies, with a common frame, about numerous communities far removed from each other, living in different socio-economic and ecological environments, may help us in understanding the inter-action of socio-economic forces better and enable us to understand their subtle behaviour.

The work in respect of the primitive groups will have to be more in the nature of an action programme. The existing balance in the case of some communities is so precarious that one wrong step may harm a group irretrievably. Therefore, there will be a need for continuous inter-action between the scholars, administrators and extension workers. The common base data and common frame for implementation of programmes adapted to suit different conditions will provide rich fund of information for further researches and action programmes. These micro-studies and developmental programmes for small groups where some of the constraints can be easily removed, particularly the financial constraint, may prove useful guide for adoption in the case of larger groups on a bigger scale.

We are presenting the papers, as they were considered by the workshop. They provide some valuable data. It may be possible for us to present more exhaustive information on each of these communities at an early date. The present volume will serve more as a guide to the field workers rather than as a reference work on the primitive tribal groups. It attempts to present the history of an idea and the processes which will go into the making of a new programme.

**SURAJIT SINHA**  
**B. D. SHARMA**

## Problems of Diagnostic Research and the Strategy of Development of Pre-agricultural "Primitive" Communities

SURAJIT SINHA

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Friends, you are aware that during the Fifth Five Year Plan a decision has been taken by the Government of India that "pre-agricultural primitive tribal communities" should be taken as a special category for which special development programmes will have to be initiated on an urgent basis.

I am very pleased to find that Dr. B. D. Sharma, Joint Secretary, Tribal Development, Ministry of Home Affairs, has taken the initiative to organize a work-shop seminar for developing the strategy for research-cum-action programme on the basis of detailed discussion of a few diagnostic case studies. A note on the preparation of monographs/reports on primitive tribal communities has already been circulated. We expect that the learned participants will critically review the tentative outline in the light of their specific research experience.

One of our exercises will be to identify ethnic groups or sections of these groups as "primitives" in terms of objective criteria. Obviously,

our diagnostic starting point would be 'the basic subsistence technology'. We can all agree that groups which live primarily or substantially on hunting and gathering should be regarded as 'primitive'. Often they are small in size, their population varying from less than 100 to 10,000. Their population is usually in a state of stagnation or decline and they continue to be basically pre-literates. In most cases the natural resource base for the primitive techno-economy has been encroached upon by the surrounding larger society and, consequently, these groups suffer from chronic malnutrition and hunger. Sometimes the hunters and gatherers combine, or used to combine, hunting and gathering with shifting cultivation. This was the case with the Hill Kharia, the Paharia and the Jaghi Birhor of Purulia, Singhbhum and Ranchi. We may extend the category "primitive" to these groups also.

When we come to groups who live primarily on shifting cultivation, we start facing difficulties in stretching the category "primitive" in their case. There are groups like the Bondo-Poroja, and the Juang and the Hill Maria who are relatively small in size and have a very low rate of literacy. They need a very special treatment as underdeveloped groups and may be included under the category of "primitive" for our purpose. But there are shifting cultivators like the Mizo who have the highest rate of literacy in the nation. There are again tribes like the Garo with a population of 2,00,309 (1961 census). Then there are the Khasies who combine shifting cultivation with extensive horticulture and have a sizable number of entrepreneurs and persons with higher education. Where do we draw the line of "primitiveness"? Again, among a group like the Garo, although the census may provide a large lump figure, the effective field of social interaction may be limited to a small population belonging to a cluster of villages and matri-lineages. There would also be a great difference between the level of modernity of the Garos living in or around district headquarters and those living in interior jungle-cover areas.

I would like to make a clear distinction here between "archaic or original primitives" like the hunters of Andaman and Nicobar Islands who were accustomed to live, until recently, as completely self-sufficient autonomous entities and the secondary "primitive tribes" living in the mainland under symbiotic pressure of Indian Civilization. These latter groups are archaic in their productive technology but have long standing dependent symbiotic socio-economic articulation with the surrounding dominant peasantry. Unlike the archaic primitives, the "secondary primitives tribes" have learned to accommodate the pressures of the encroaching civilization, and, at the same time, to carve out an area of relative autonomy in ecological niches outside the adaptive reaches of the larger society. A proper understanding of these "secondary primitives" will have to be based on rigorous



analysis of the nature of exploitative pressure of the encroaching larger society and an understanding of the adaptive strategy of holding on to an eco-cultural niche of their own. In most of these cases, we find that on account of relatively rapid increase in population among the surrounding peasants, the "primitive" tribes have been on the retreat. The ecological base for an optimal combination between hunting and gathering and shifting cultivation has been depleted and tribes like the Hill Kharia and the Paharia have been forced to give up shifting cultivation and live mainly on hunting and gathering and as poorly paid landless agricultural labourers. In recent years small isolated tribal groups have often been exposed to massive confrontation with the members of the larger society who are moving into their terrain for mineral exploration, setting up of industries, building of large-scale irrigation projects, forest extraction, extensive reclamation of forest lands for settling refugees and other settlers. These encounters demand our urgent attention, for these programmes are often being initiated with little concern for the adaptive social and cultural preparations of the indigenous tribal population. At no point, the policy makers have considered it necessary to take the indigents into serious consultation for evolving a plan for development.

The proposal in this workshop seminar is not to plead a case for romantic "fossilization" of the cultures of the "primitive" tribes but to squarely face the human problem of the "weakest" component of Indian national body politic and to evolve a strategy and perspective for strengthening the adaptive capacity of the tribes for their creative survival in this *modern world*. In the case of both the archaic and the dependent/secondary "primitive" tribes, our main problem is to bring the process of modernization within their social and cultural control. In both the cases, it appears to us that there should be a phasing in terms of :—

- (a) strengthening the adaptive bases in their characteristic habitat along with development of a programme of functional literacy ;
- (b) extending the adaptive capacity beyond the traditional ecological niche into the larger arena of the region and the nation.

We are also assuming that this programme will need a very distinct shift in our accustomed orientation in research as well as development activities. Researchers as well as development administrators will have to accept the tribals as *genuine collaborators* in planning and evolving programmes of development. We will have to come close to the position that in many fundamental issues the Onge, the Jarawa or Jenu Kuruba knows what is best for them. We are also assuming that just as any known language in the world has almost unlimited capacity to express and absorb new experiences, the "primitive" societies that we have been discussing

here have much greater cultural adaptive capacity than has been assumed so far. It should be made clear to the administrators that there is no proven case for racial inferiority in mental capacity for the so-called primitive groups.

Recently I attended a UNESCO Conference on Urgent Ethnology at Ottawa where a number of anthropologists from different parts of the world, North and South Americas, Africa, Australia, Oceania and Lapland reported that there was a movement among the hitherto primitive indigenous groups all over the world that researchers must explain their objectives of research to the indigenous communities and obtain their approval before undertaking a study on their society and culture. They are also insisting that the researchers should come back to the community and discuss their conclusions before publishing them. Sometimes they are also insisting that researches in their communities should be based on genuine partnership between outside researchers and the indigenous. I am indeed pleased that at least the "natives" are striking back and ceasing to be mere objects of enquiry in relation to scientific problems. We would welcome the situation to the extent that it is developing in India and meet the process creatively, so that planning and research may be really based on involvement at the grassroot level.

We feel that a new orientation will have to be given to our research among the "primitives". On the one hand, we shall have to be much more conscious about the "insider's" point of view—an adequate cognitive mapping of his concept of human and natural resources, his concept of space and time; on the other hand, objective information on environmental resources, demography, health and nutrition, technology and economics organisation will have to be recorded precisely and in greater detail.

This endeavour may have to be spearheaded by anthropologists because they alone have the disciplined patience to listen to the "native's" point of view and to observe him in diverse social, cultural and situational contexts. But we need other specialists also to move in the endeavour—demographers, geneticists, ecologists and linguists. Economists who may also be inducted into the programme will have to tone down their rigid input-output model in order to understand the multiplex social and cultural linkages of economic organisation among the "primitive" tribes. I would also expect that some anthropologists will take up the challenge of purposive research and project administration.

I personally feel that Patric Geddes' famous dictum "development through conservation" should guide the programmes of development of the "primitive" tribes and hopefully, the policy makers at the higher levels will continue to maintain a genuine humane ideological stance in this

matter, for a nation will be judged within itself and also outside, in a very important manner, not only by the development of the majority but by the informed tenderness with which we deal with the problems of the weakest elements.

In this workshop we shall carefully listen to the three case studies on the archaic and dwindling Onge, the gatherer Jenu Kuruba and the shifting cultivator Hill Maria—and in the light of these exercises, we will examine the tentative outline for preparing monographs which has been already circulated to the participants.

I hope that in this workshop itself we shall be able to identify a list of primitive tribes which needs urgent attention. A quick reconnoitre programme may be organised for defining and delimiting the minimum ecological base which should be ensured to these groups for effectively implementing the first phase of strengthening their adaptive capacity. I also expect that it should be possible for us to evolve an effective *small unit* for co-ordination at the national level of the proposed action-cum-research programmes, so that experiences are regularly shared by the participants involved in the programme and time-bound results are achieved. While I am much in favour of a flexible mode of co-ordination and communication, optimal rigour in research as well as action programme will have to be assured. I expect that the participants in this workshop will also apply their minds on evolving the appropriate instrument for such co-ordination.



# Development of Small Tribal Communities

## A Theoretical Frame

B. D. SHARMA

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### *Introduction*

Although Sociologists and Anthropologists have been interested in small communities, no special theory of economic development appears to have been evolved for these groups. The general developmental programmes, therefore, have been considered to be adequate to meet their situation as well, particularly because their problems are of smaller dimension. The developmental processes, however, have either bypassed them or have had an indifferent impact. Other socio-economic forces, operating in the larger areas, have been influencing these groups with different results. In the long history of the Indian Nation, some of these groups got fully assimilated as a caste or a sub-caste or as an identifiable distinct group in its expansive social structure. Some groups, however, failed to adjust to the new contact with larger society and a state of maladjustment or confrontation arose. In some cases, individuals got dis-

persed indistinguishably and the groups vanished. Some groups still continue to live in varying degree of isolation.

In this paper, a theoretical frame has been proposed for studying the problem of the development of small tribal communities. In the first instance, the question is 'what is a small tribal community?' In terms of their size, tribal groups less than 15,000 strong are taken to be small. Even in this group a sub-class of 'diminutive' communities has been identified whose strength is generally less than a thousand. All small groups are proposed to be classified according to their size, rate of growth, state of ecological equilibrium, isolation and confrontation with other groups.

The analysis brings out the critical nature of the very instruments of change in these communities. The responsibility of taking some of the crucial decisions threatening their identity are also discussed. A cautious approach of 'incrementalism' is proposed for these groups.

Some of the issues arising in planning development of these groups have been discussed in two concrete situations, viz., a diminutive group and a small tribal community in a resource rich unopened area. Two possible models are examined for a 'small' tribal community—one with regional development approach and another with the people's development approach. Consequences of 'opening up' of the area and 'various paths' for achieving it are discussed in detail. It is found that the traditional road development approach is extremely expensive and does not benefit the people appreciably. The concepts of 'inaccessibility neutralization', 'social service optimisation' and 'road development as an aid to economic development' are spelt out. It is found that in a sparsely populated area demographic constraint is extremely important and has to be one of the important variables in the developmental equations of these regions.

The study shows that the time perspective for the development of small tribal communities has to be longer. Initially 'first-aid' operation with a 'pause' to allow them to regain their confidence is necessary. In case of isolated communities, the target group has to be the next generation which can assimilate the benefit of new knowledge and yet is not alienated from its own society.

### *Social Dynamics in Smaller Groups*

In any attempt for the development of tribal communities special attention to the smaller groups becomes inevitable if the possibility of extinction of any small group by confrontation or maladjustment is to be

avoided. In the first instance, it will be necessary to identify the differences in the social dynamics of a small group and of a larger group so that the processes are clearly understood and valid policy conclusions can be derived.

A larger group is more amenable to change over a period of time for a variety of reasons, which can be broadly classified as external and internal. The number of possible contact points between the total social system and the relevant group is important in relation to external influence. Although the total number of possible contact points, as a proportion of total population size of a group, decreases as the size of the group increases, the absolute number, in the case of a large group as compared to a smaller one, is larger. Once contact gets established at one or more points, the natural processes of acculturation, spread-effect, etc., in its socio-economic structure begin imperceptibly. Internal processes are also influenced by the size of a group. Firstly, in a bigger community likelihood of spontaneous processes of change getting initiated is much higher. In a large group, social and economic differences are likely to exist between the various constituent sub-groups. These differences may arise because of the different physical conditions or the different external influences on the respective sub-groups. A larger group, therefore, has a more agreeable disposition towards behavioural variation. Any difference can be easily ascribed to difference in the sub-group structure. Each sub-group may continue to belong to a larger fraternity notwithstanding the local differences. In this context, change is accepted as a natural phenomenon. Intra-group interaction helps wider assimilation of change. Secondly a potential innovator-dissident has a greater chance of getting out of a disapproving sub-group yet remaining within the larger group. The above analysis is true for any human organization. Examples of such spontaneous changes in the big tribal communities are also quite numerous. A social movement in one section of, say, the Gond community, is soon emulated by a distant sub-group belonging to the same ethnic group.

Finally, on the other hand, smaller the group, lesser is the possibility of accepting change as a natural phenomenon. The very existence of a small group depends on its extreme cohesiveness. Consequently, dissidence is severely punished. Small groups are known to exist in extreme hostile circumstances in a state of continued confrontation. If they lose the nerve, they soon become extinct. But they continue tenaciously as a group by keeping the change to the minimum or accepting the change almost as a mutation when the whole community may accept a new behaviour pattern within a short period.

### *Size of Small Groups*

There is no agreed criteria for defining a small group in terms of its numerical strength. In India, the size of tribal communities varies from as small as a few dozens strong to as large as a few millions. It appears that a certain minimum size is necessary to keep a group going, or else its numerical strength, begins to decline for various reasons and, in due course, it may get extinct. The groups below this minimum size could be termed as 'diminutive' groups. Similarly, above a certain size the groups become viable and can stand the socio-economic pressures from other groups. However, even big groups may be helpless before a highly organized group or institution as happened in the case of American Indians or Australian tribal communities. These are exceptional circumstances where size is not decisive in the survival game. Between the 'diminutive groups' and the large groups a distinct spectrum of intermediate groups can be identified who can be said to be in a state of unstable equilibrium. They may, under favourable circumstances, cross the upper critical limit but under adverse circumstances may join the category of 'diminutive'. This category may be termed as a 'small' group.

Thus, the size-range of the small groups may vary from, say, one thousand to fifteen thousand. The upper limit of fifteen thousand is being suggested as groups upto that size are noted to have declined in number under adverse situation. Groups of a size smaller than a thousand are known to have perished in comparatively short spans of time. These figures are conjectural and are in no way suggestive of a law. The classification of group according to size can be summarised as in the following table.

TABLE I  
Classification of Tribal Groups by Size

	Size
Diminutive Groups . . . . .	Less than 1000
Small Groups . . . . .	1000-15000
Normal Groups . . . . .	More than 15000

### *Eco-system*

Another aspect which needs a clear definition is the eco-system of the group. Every organism is a part of the total ecological system around it. In the early stages of biological development, an organism depends for its sustenance on a very small region in its immediate neighbourhood. Human groups progressively reduced this dependence on the immediate surrounding. A modern urban society draws its sustenance from a very large



eco-system which may be as extensive as the nation or the whole world. The small tribal communities, at pre-agricultural technology, still depend on an eco-system which is not very extensive. The relationship of the community and the eco-system in their case is direct in contrast to the indirect relationship of advanced urban communities. This distinction is not generally appreciated by planners who are themselves a part of the indirect relationship-matrix. Certain programmes, which, to a modern planner, may appear to be neutral or even beneficial to the local group, may tend to disturb its delicate balance with disastrous consequences. For example, sound of explosions on the island inhabited by Onges led to the migration of pigs and men in opposite directions, thus seriously affecting the food sources abundant. The level of the technology is low. These communities levels of technologies and in different conditions is not clearly understood, planning on those presumptions relevant to advanced agriculture communities may not be realistic and the group may be left with insufficient resources at its command, as appears to be the case with the Jarawas of A & N Islands.

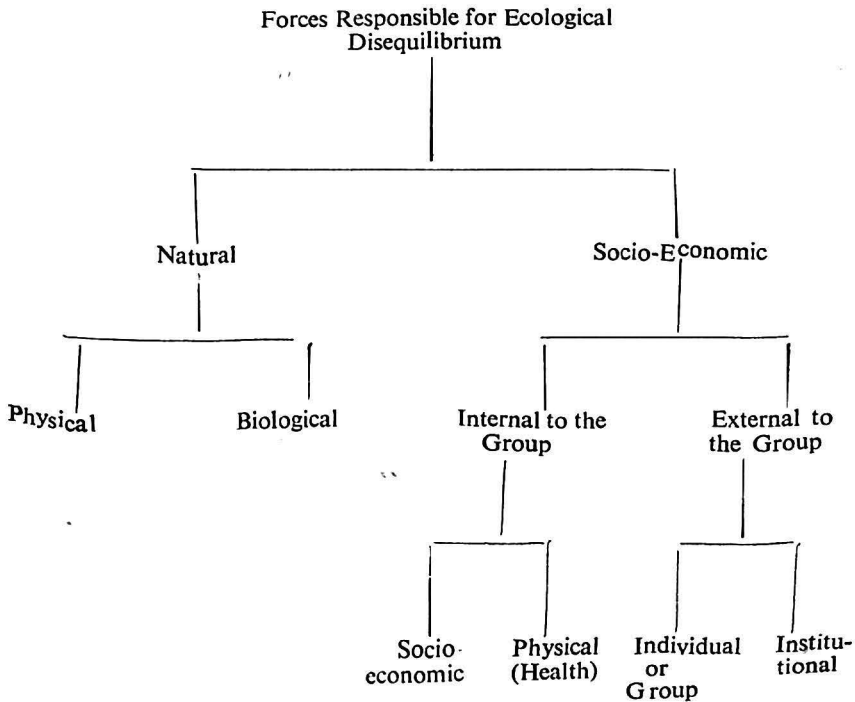
### *Ecological Equilibrium*

In the beginning tribal communities are in a state of ecological equilibrium with their environ. The numbers are small and natural resources abundant. The level of the technology is low. These communities initially sustain themselves as food gatherers and hunters. As the numbers grow, some primitive form of cultivation like, cultivation by burn and slash, is adopted. In the normal course of development, with the growth of population, eventually the group should take to settled cultivation and thus use natural resources more intensively. The stages beyond settled cultivation are well-known.

Some times, in the early stage of development itself ecological equilibrium may get disturbed for some reason. Firstly, the reasons may be purely internal. The group may be outgrowing the natural resource potential without any change in technology. Alternatively, some change in the group's life-style may be leading to either destruction or over-exploitation of resources, thus resulting in disequilibrium. In some cases, the reasons for the disequilibrium may be external. There may be a secular change in the environment which may have adversely affected the fauna and flora; or an epidemic may have dislocated the biological equilibrium. The above external factors are natural. There may be other forces which are man-made. A stronger group may have intruded in the region in search of better lands. With a higher level of technology, it takes control of better resources and the original group may recede and may have to subsist on poorer and scanty natural resources. Some external pressures may be

institutional in origin. A new organisation may be set up in a backward region without honouring the unwritten rights of the local community. It may adversely affect the ecological equilibrium by over-exploitation of the resources. Also, the original group may be denied access to the existing resources by these institutions under the protective umbrella of the written law and they may use the resources for other purposes.

The forces responsible for ecological disequilibrium may be classified as in the diagram below.



### *Confrontation & Isolation*

The intensity of contact of smaller groups with other groups varies considerably. On the one extreme, there are groups which retain their identity and way of life but they do not occupy a well defined area. They may be living on the margins of advanced groups as the Birhors in Bihar. These groups generally subsist on forests which might have been over-exploited. Thus, the ecological equilibrium might have got disturbed and the group may be in a stage of confrontation with other groups or institutions. On the other extreme, some groups may still be in isolation for various reasons. For example, the groups may not have been disturbed so far accidentally as the Bondos of Orissa, or through force of circumstances as in some of the difficult hill regions in the North East, or as

a result of an administrative decision as in the hills of Abujhmar in Bastar. The undisturbed groups may be at different stages of ecological equilibrium.

Thus, the small tribal groups can be classified on the basis of four characteristics, viz., size, isolation, confrontation and ecological equilibrium. On the basis of available information some of these communities can be grouped as in the Annexure.

### *Stages in Remedying Ecological Disequilibrium*

In those cases, where the ecological equilibrium has been disturbed, the first step has naturally to be to identify the precise nature of the ecological imbalance. This analysis should help in evolving a suitable strategy. If the contributing factors for ecological imbalance in relation to community are both external and internal, attention will have to be given first to the external factors. The external factors are superimpositions on the community and the community is legitimately entitled to get relief from those forces. Perhaps these forces are also easier to handle compared to subtle inner processes. Therefore, the right strategy will be to tackle first the external factors and neutralise them.

All external factors are, however, not similar. Broadly, they can be of two varieties, viz., institutional and individual. Those forces which are ascribable to an institutional source should be the easier to influence since personal interests are not involved. For example, if policy of the Forest Department or some other organization is responsible for the mal-adjustment, that policy could be changed after due consideration in the first instance. Where the confrontation is amongst various groups, the problem is more difficult. In this situation, the interests of other groups, whether acquired legitimately or otherwise, become a relevant factor. It is well known that compromises have to be found in these cases even when there are best intentions to help the affected groups. In this case, one cannot depend on individual action alone; institutional methods will be necessary for dealing effectively with situation. For example, if there is large scale immigration and better lands are passing into the hands of the new groups, stringent laws will have to be enacted and their strict enforcement ensured.

While efforts are made to neutralise the external forces responsible for disturbing the ecological equilibrium, it will be necessary that first-aid operations are started to undo the damage which the group may have already sustained. A clear understanding of its health problems will be necessary—some group may have even reached almost a stage of non-recovery as the Great Andamanese. An all out effort on the health front will be necessary. The diet pattern of the group will have to carefully

studied as the disturbance of the ecological balance may have deprived them of certain essential ingredients of their traditional diet. The deficiencies, if any, will need to be corrected. These steps will help in rejuvenating the groups physically.

Besides the physical aspects mentioned above, the small groups are likely to have been affected on the psychological plane. The very confidence of the group may have been shattered. If there is no confidence, material assistance is not likely to be of much advantage. Small communities have a feeling of being friendless in the new context and, therefore, tend to become non-communicative and inward-looking. Effective protective measures by a sympathetic band of workers may help in dispelling the group psychology of being all alone against tremendous adverse forces. External assistance, however, cannot create self-confidence. A social-therapy will need understanding of *their* perception of the socio-economic processes, *their* world view, the sources of *their* strength and their aspirations. A patronising attitude must be avoided. A small group, which is able to derive a reasonable sustenance from a limited ecological system, must be skilled. Lack of skill is comparatively a modern phenomenon and often a function of a specialised social and economic structure. Most of these groups, except those in complete isolation, have been in contact with advanced agricultural communities and have evolved their own adaptive strategies for facing the continued encounter. Their skills may not be of much relevance in the modern context and, therefore, may even escape the notice of planners who are used to a different frame. But this does not reduce the value of the skill *per se*. In the absence of proper appreciation, even rare skills may not be duly remunerated by other groups, for example, the skill in identification of herbs or taming of animals. In these cases, artificial equations could be corrected through state intervention. What is more important if their native skills are well recognised, the group will have a sense of pride and, thus, its confidence in itself can be restored. The future developmental programmes could be planned on a well-understood skill-base and within the assimilative capacity of the community.

The time perspective in the process of directed change is one of the most important element. Ecological disequilibrium arises generally because a community was not able to keep pace with the changing environ, both physical and human. An obvious answer would be to simulate faster pace of change in the community so that it can catch up with the rest of the society by freeing itself from the dependence on a narrow ecological frame and by sharing a higher specialisation and a bigger ecological field with the rest of the community. This has to be the ultimate goal. But while planning for initial phases of development, the fact of the 'loss of nerve' in many cases has to be fully taken into account. These communities are in the same position as an exhausted competitor in a race. They will

require some time for restoration of their balance and for acquiring inner strength which can enable them to go ahead with a renewed vigour. It is on this account that the first stage of planned development has to be devoted to mend the shattered ecological equilibrium as best as possible. In this period, a benevolent outside contact may help them in getting over the 'confrontation complex' and establish new communication channels. The steps for removing the causes of ecological disequilibrium have to be as swift as possible. The pace of other steps, however, should be slow, preferably even imperceptible. A period of almost non-intervention, i.e., when no new changes are induced and the community is allowed to have a look around in a non-hostile atmosphere, would seem to be called for as an essential element of the strategy. It is at this stage that desirable agents of change may be introduced. But they should operate in such a fashion that the community should be able to view the new changes as their own innovations, which in fact may be induced, for meeting the changing situation. A better perception of the new processes and forces by suitable educational programmes will influence their world view. A gradual process of change, which should always be within the commanding capacity of the group, will give them a sense of adventure and enable them in due course to quicken their pace to catch up with the rest of the community.

The stages in development of a small community is a state of ecological disequilibrium can, thus, be envisaged as given in the schematic presentation on the opposite page.

### *Big Impact of Instruments of Development*

One of the important features, which distinguishes the smaller tribal groups from larger communities in respect of planning development, is the comparative strength of the instrument of change itself. As in nuclear physics, the act of observation itself influences the state observed, so also in the development dynamics of smaller groups the very elements introduced for initiating developmental processes may themselves overwhelm the group and its socio-economic structure. This possibility is quite obvious in respect of 'diminutive' groups where the population is a few hundreds, but it is not clearly appreciated in respect of larger 'small' groups which may be dispersed in thinly populated areas. One of the important constraints on the size of the developmental programme and administrative machinery in general developmental programmes of larger communities is financial. But in the case of 'diminutive' groups, because of their extremely small size, financial resources cannot be a constraint for their development. Consequently, the size of the developmental effort can be decided independently of any financial constraint. In this situation, many hard

policy questions may arise in relation to the strategy for their development. In the case of larger small groups, also, particularly in sparsely populated areas, although financial resources may have to be kept in view but they cannot be an important constraint simply because of the almost microscopic size of investment compared to the national or regional developmental outlays. Size of the development effort, thus becomes practically an independent variable. It also determines the size of the administrative apparatus. Thus, the nature of a programme itself may become critical in the case of both the 'diminutive' and the 'small' groups because the very presence of instruments of development in these areas is likely to create a big impact.

### STAGES IN CORRECTING DISEQUILIBRIUM

STAGE I—State of confrontation

STAGE II—(a) Countering external forces—Institutional;

- (b) Institutionalising measure for countering individual or group forces;
- (c) Effective attention to problems of health; and
- (d) Recognition of the native skills, restoration of self-confidence and citizen education.

P a u s e
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STAGE III—(a) First-aid to the traditional economy;

- (b) Breaking the communication barriers and education; and
- (c) Gradual upgradation of native skills and introduction of new elements in longer time-prospective.

Confrontation Ceases
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STAGE IV—The group is free to share the experience of larger communities.

It is neither possible, and also not necessary, to discuss separately the problems of each distinct category of tribal groups in which they have been classified in the preceding paragraphs. We may, however, examine some of the special feature of the 'diminutive' groups and the 'small' groups with reference to specific communities which may bring into relief some of the essential features in the planning process.

### Some 'Diminutive' Groups

Take the case of 'diminutive' groups first. For a small tribal group numbering a few hundreds, the first crucial question is their very survival. From the empirical evidence available it appears that most of the 'diminutive' groups are not able to maintain themselves. Besides those cases, where assimilation in broader groups may be the main reason for the 'nil' growth rate, certain groups are known to be declining because of loss of ecological equilibrium. The well-known cases are Onges, Great Andamanese & Birhors. In the case of Great Andamanese, their area of command got encroached by other groups, ecological equilibrium was lost and their numbers dwindled as they failed to meet the new challenge. Similarly, the Birhors are experiencing encroachment on their area of command. Onges are in a better position as they have remained comparatively isolated so far but some new developments have started encroaching on their command area. Although these general formulations are well-known, deeper analysis of their situation is not available. It has, therefore, to be ascertained as to why a group is not able to maintain itself. Health and food supply are two relevant aspects. Health problems, if any, will have to be tackled to begin with. To the extent, there is deficiency in their diet, it will have to be treated as a part of their health problem.

The second obvious question is their total economic situation. In view of their small size and no serious constraints of plan resources, a number of alternatives can be said to be available. For example, take the case of Onges. The total population is 118, their habitation is one island of about 300 sq. miles. Natural resources are plentiful although external interference is now tending to disturb the equilibrium. One course could be that some *ad hoc* assistance, may be *ex gratia*, could be made available initially. Or, the entire group could be employed on any modern activity which may be taken up in the island. In the meantime, perhaps the entire next generation could be put through a programme of residential school education. It has to be noted that education, in our system, is at present alienating the younger generation from the professions of their parents, particularly, in the traditional sector where physical labour is involved. Such education, in residential schools, in the case of these 'diminutive' groups may also have similar results particularly because their present living conditions are extremely difficult. If the child is not allowed to inculcate necessary habits and get used to rigors of life in the formative age and, on the contrary, is given a different environment in a residential institution, he will be unable to adjust to the group life as he grows. He may join the general national stream of educated groups and get assimilated in the larger society particularly



if he is helped in getting a good job or in entering a new profession through special programmes. In this way individual members of the group will be helped economically but the group will get dissolved.

In the above case, the basic question is that who is to decide about the course of development? What is the concept of the group identity? Has 'group identity' an independent value? Why should alienation which may arise from an educational programme cause a concern for smaller groups only because similar alienation is also arising in bigger tribal groups and other agriculture communities? It has to be clearly understood that in the case of larger communities this alienation is accepted as a normal stage in the process of development. Conceptually, the group can be considered to be voluntarily taking a decision and accepting a new life style. A new leadership may be providing it the necessary sense of direction. However, there is an important difference. In the case of bigger groups, there is no possibility of a sudden structural change in the economic base. Therefore, group identity will remain unaffected for a sufficiently long time, say, at least a few generations, notwithstanding the process of alienation of their educated youth. The change, in their case, therefore, can be only gradual. In the case of very small groups, however, the change may have the character of a mutation for which the decision would have been taken by some one else. And, in the process the group may get dissolved, as in the above hypothetical case, in a single generation.

Similarly, many other alternative courses can be discussed. There are no unique answers to these basic questions. However, one thing is clear. No solution should be 'imposed' which may threaten the group identity all of a sudden. The best way, perhaps, will be to try a gradual process of development and not overwhelm them with a programme which has the effect of sudden change and dissolution of the group itself. In the case of those groups as may have reached a state of confrontation, a phase of 'first-aid' type assistance will have to be envisaged during which the group regains its confidence. Thereafter, suitable programmes of development could be taken up. Education will necessarily have to be an important element so that the communication barrier, if any, between this group and the rest of the community is broken. However, education must be adapted to their own environ with a view to avoid sudden appearance of the process of alienation and possibility of the very first-generation educated group finding its traditional vocation uncongenial. On the economic side, the group could be assisted either in its traditional occupations or some other activity akin to their traditional occupations. Thus, the group can be helped in overcoming initially the hardships arising from an adverse economic situation and lack of communication. Special attention to the problem of its health would help it physically. When the

group reaches stage of non-confrontation it will be in a position to share the fortunes of the rest of the community and partake in the normal developmental programme in the region. No directed change will be necessary thereafter and the group could take its own decision about its identity problem, if any.

General statements made above about the possible course of development for Onges have to be articulated in specific programmes. Here an important question arises because of the small size of the group. For example, will it be possible to carry all the necessary programmes to each habitat of Onges in the island? Cost is not a consideration. But if approach is sectoral, the size of the administrative structure itself will be too big. In this case, whatever may be the formal programme content, the most important element will be the influence of the numerous functionaries who may be inducted in the area. While the programme content is planned, the human element will tend to become an autonomous force, unless effective planning is attempted even on that score. Therefore, the general administrative and planning processes will have to be reversed in the case of such groups. More appropriate course of action would be that having got a clear idea about the objectives and the pace of change, a suitable team of two or three workers could be chosen. The criterion for the selection of such a team should be a clear understanding of, or capacity for understanding, the goals and a sympathy for the group. In such an assignment there is no place for considerations like the level of individuals in the hierarchy, etc. No person, who may wish to take up such a challenge is too high for the assignment. The technical skill endowment of the team should depend on the programme design. Health, education, agriculture (or forestry) appear to be the three important components. But each member need not be a specialist except perhaps the medical man, who himself could be an educator and one who understands the eco-system. In brief, a motivated team, equipped with broad spectrum of advanced skills, has to be conceived as the primary agent of change in these communities, which will influence the process of change more by the very presence of its members rather than through formalised developmental programmes. In fact, this will very much resemble the process of acculturation initiated by torch bearers of new faiths all over the world throughout the human history. How this process is to be simulated in the modern conditions, when other autonomous forces have become too strong, is the central question which will have to be answered while planning development of at least the 'diminutive' groups.

#### *Larger Small Groups*

Some of the basic elements in the developmental process have been brought out in the above analysis with reference to a 'diminutive' group

of extremely small size. These elements will be equally valid for larger primitive groups but may need some adaption in each case. However, there is one important difference. In the case of the extremely small groups discussed above, the validity of the analysis may generally be accepted without any reservation as the special features are so very obvious. But larger small groups, occupying sizeable geographical areas, give a first impression of being amenable to general developmental formulations like tribal development block programme or area development programme. Even when special character of the area may be recognised, planning concepts and techniques developed for advanced areas are sought to be applied which may not answer the need of the special area. These aspects can be better appreciated with reference to a specific area and its problems.

Let us take a type situation of a 'sparsely populated resource-rich region' which has not been generally opened up. Abujhmar in Bastar has a total population of about 13,000. The total geographical area is 1500 sq miles. There are good forests on the periphery. The topography is undulating, yet there are quite a few plain patches to support settle cultivation sufficient for the present population, even allowing for a substantial growth rate for the next few decades. There are some mineral deposits which in due course can be exploited. In some areas, the region is rich in bamboos which can support a paper or pulp factory. There are no roads and even bullock cart economy has not set in. The area can be considered to have good tourist potential. The main economic activity at present is food gathering, shifting cultivation and hunting with sprinkling of settled cultivation generally with hoe.

Abujhmar has been kept outside the ambit of normal administration since about 1930. Even before 1930 inaccessibility had kept this area almost untouched. After independence sporadic efforts have been made for development of this area as and when attention of administrators was attracted to this region either as a result of personal fascination or because of special problems. The programme of tribal development block was started in this area in 1965. Thus, extension agency can be considered to have been given access to this region as a matter of deliberate state policy. However, general tribal development block programme has been applied to this area as well. Therefore, except for a sizeable educational effort with ten ashram schools started in 1970, not much perceptible impact is visible. The benefit of medical facilities has generally not gone beyond the block headquarter. In fact, the P.H.C. is in one corner of the Block and doctor has not been posted to it except for a few months. Even this doctor was posted at the fag end of his career and retired while on this post. A family planning complex has been built which is standing as a big question mark in a most sparsely

populated area with rich resources where population is near static. Agricultural extension is confined to distribution of bullocks or giving vegetable seeds but no strategy as yet is available because the area is under shifting cultivation and there is little demand for settled cultivation. There was some effort to purchase and sell commodities through government stores but implementation has not been very effective and the tribal continues to depend on the weekly markets around the area. There have been some efforts to help the people to bund the fields where paddy is grown but this is limited to a few villages on the periphery. Drinking water wells have been constructed in some areas but their use is limited as yet. In a way, the area can be said to be virgin, both for exploitation of its natural resources and in respect of developmental effort by the State.

In the first instance, it will be necessary to state clearly the developmental objectives for this area. There are two alternatives, *viz.* :

A—Regional development (Development of Abujhmar region);  
and

B—People's development (Development of Abujhmarias).

In alternative 'A', the frame of reference will be provided by the natural endowment of the region in which the Abujhmarias will be but one element in the total resource matrix. In alternative 'B', *i.e.*, people's development, the point of reference is the present group in Abujhmar and the resource endowment is the supporting matrix for its development. We may examine the policy implications of the two approaches separately.

#### A—Regional Development

When we consider the regional development of this area, a number of alternatives can be suggested. The first obvious step appears to be to open up the area. Thereafter, the choice is the exploitation of potential in agriculture, forest, industry or tourism, the relative priority to each of these sectors and the appropriate mix of various programmes.

We may assume that financial resources are not a serious limiting factor. The first thing then we have to examine is whether there are any other constraints in this area. With a view to determining the nature of developmental programmes, it may be noted that (a) the natural resources of the region have largely remained unutilised; (b) the level of technology of the people is primitive; (c) the people have a care-free disposition and not amenable to sustained and disciplined work; and (d) the total manpower locally available is, say, 5000 for the global economy of this whole area. It appears, therefore, that the 'quality' and the size of the local labour force is an important constraint, if we prefer to recognise it as such.

The geographical area of Abujhmar is so big that its full development, even at the level of general non-mechanised agricultural technology alongwith, or even without, a reasonable intensity of forest exploitation, will require a much larger man-power. The concept of area development, therefore, immediately poses an important demographic question for this area. What is the extent of migrant population which can be introduced in this region? There are two extreme possibilities. On the one hand, a decision could be taken that no immigration is to be allowed in this area except for the bare minimal administrative, extension and social services. On the other hand, the decision could be to develop the area, immigration can follow the developmental pattern and demography can be treated as mere corollary of the whole developmental process.

In area development, the second alternative is generally accepted. The labour force is expected to respond to normal market forces. Therefore, in specific programmes, labour force appears in terms of its cost and, if large labour is to be imported, a higher cost is assumed. We, therefore, examine the case of development with unlimited labour supply. We have already assumed that there is no constraint of financial resources.

#### *Regional Development with Unlimited Labour Supply*

Now, when there are no constraints of manpower and financial resources, the central economic activity of Abujhmar will be determined solely by its natural endowment. We have already seen that here the choice is very wide. It may be necessary to work out cost-benefit analysis in each case for a final choice. Here as we are not interested in the impact of each developmental choice on the tribal economy, it is not necessary to go into those details. It is clear if mining and ancillary industry is chosen as the central economic activity of this region, development of a road-net work, establishment of mining and industrial complexes and supporting trade and commerce will have to be planned. The story of such a developmental process in the more backward areas is quite well known as it has been repeated at a number of places in the last two decades. The inevitable end result of such a developmental process so far appears to have been desertion of the original homes by the local tribals and those who are not able to escape, or those who are 'attracted' by the new activity, have been forced to occupy the sub-stratum of the new society. If the same process is allowed in Abujhmar, which is comparatively even more backward than other regions which have had this experience, the results will be the same. The Abujhmarias will become an insignificant minority; most of them will prefer to recede into the backwoods and sustain in a comparatively poorer eco-system; and such of them as do not escape to the more inaccessible and marginal lands will occupy the sub-stratum of the new socio-economic structure.

A valid question may be asked at this stage. A lot of experience is now available of development of backward regions with mining and heavy industry as the core sectors. Will it not be possible to learn from the past and avoid the adverse consequences? In the national context, a tribal group becoming a minority in an area, which at one time happened to be predominantly inhabited by it, is not something unthinkable; but a decisively low position of the original inhabitants in the new socio-economic structure should be a concern of every one. Can this 'degrading' of the original group to a abysmal state not be avoided? It appears that the level of technology and skill requirements for an industrial centre and its hinterland are so different from the existing skills and way of life of the shifting cultivators of Abujhmar that there cannot be an easy transition in a short span of time of a decade or so. As major decisions for industry or mining development are not normally taken with such a long time-perspective, the desirability of any heavy industry-based economy for this region has to be ruled out on sociological considerations unless these considerations are consciously over-ruled and social disruption of Abujhmar is treated, in the national arithmetic, a necessary price which the group must pay for national development.

We may consider some other alternatives within the traditional regional developmental frame. If agriculture and forestry are taken as the central economic activity, the picture may be somewhat as follows :

- (a) Since the area is predominantly agricultural, the bulk of the programmes will be in agriculture and allied sectors like horticulture, plantations and forestry. As the potential for these activities is high, each of them will create sizeable demand for regular labour. The traditional mode of seasonal work of Abujhmar is at a much slower pace; and
- (b) Minimal infra-structure will need to be developed for the programme in the agriculture and allied activities which include construction of roads, godowns and other facilities.

The total labour requirement for the above programmes will far exceed the total labour force available in Abujhmar now or in the near future. Necessary skills for some activities like construction are not available. Also, the local population may not like sustained work even in forestry and allied sectors and may come forward for limited work only. Thus, the total direct employment potential created as a result of new sector will far exceed the total 'usable' labour in this area. This will require large scale immigration. The total immigration will, however, depend on the phasing of developmental programmes. It may be noted here that primary population immigration will soon be followed by



a secondary migration of relatives of primary migrants, fortune seekers, traders and other groups. This may give rise to a state of confrontation in an area which so far has been kept immunised from all outside influence. Perhaps, the original inhabitants of this area will soon be reduced to a minority. The available lands, which could not be put to use so far because of low technological base and lower pressure of population, may be occupied by the new groups. As the capacity of the Abujhmaria to change in the short run is extremely limited and the technological skills of the two groups are widely different, the original group may tend to recede into the more inaccessible areas giving way to the new migrants in the regions which get opened up. With the new developmental inputs, agricultural production in the area will go up; out-turn in forests will increase; there will be considerable trade and transport activity; and all indicators of development will show an upward trend. Yet, the original group may be worse off. It may be said that the substantive developmental programmes in agricultural and allied sectors will strengthen the economy of Abujhmaria as well. But the gestation period of even such programmes, in terms of accrual of actual benefits to a primitive group, is rather long compared to the other influences which may arise because of the sudden high tempo of developmental activity directed from outside.

It appears, therefore, that any model of development which presumes an unlimited supply of manpower will, in the first phase, displace the local population to their great disadvantage. The balance may never be regained since other interests would have appeared on the scene with an equally valid claim which would get strengthened with passage of time. These alternatives, therefore, must be rejected for an area like Abujhmar in the first phase of its development.

We may now consider some possible models on the other extreme of the regional development frame, viz., models with constant labour supply with marginal immigration of administrative and extension personnel.

### *Regional Development with Constant Labour Supply*

The choice of programmes in this case is comparatively limited. Even here with a view to clarify the basic issues involved, we assume that area development is the main objective and development of the people has to be a corollary. A road net-work, therefore, assumes a very high priority. Even a moderate road programme for Abujhmar may itself require deployment of the total available man-power in the area for construction in the earlier phases and for the maintenance of the net-work subsequently. Thus, the area could be visualised a public works department



ment 'camp' in which full time employment of the total population is maintaining the roads net-work, the level of road construction activity being limited by total available manpower. This is an extreme situation which is admittedly absurd. However, it brings into focus one important aspect of area development, viz., a single activity, in the area development frame, is sufficient to keep the entire population engaged. Unless a comprehensive view is taken of the process of development, a single activity, howsoever important it may be, becomes meaningless from the angle of people's development. Often, road-development is over-stressed in area development programmes and the man-power constraint is not kept in view. The result generally is large scale migration and the programme hardly touches the problems of the people.

Let us take another model. Suppose exploitation of forest resources at optimal level is chosen to be the primary activity for this area. In this case, the entire population could be employed as wage-labour for exploitation of the forests and allied activities like maintenance of forest roads, etc. Thus, in this model Abujhmar will become a forest 'estate', the intensity of exploitation of forest resources being determined by the total available manpower.

In what way does this single activity approach for Abujhmar differs from a 'single industry society' of some of the new industrial or urban centres? If there is no objection to a 'steel colony', what is the harm in the possible 'PWD-camp' or 'Forest-estate' status for Abujhmar discussed above? A 'steel colony' or a 'single industry estate' generally grows with the voluntary association of individuals who themselves are a part of a larger socio-economic system which satisfies their other needs. There may be some sort of compulsion or regimentation (implicit) in that situation as well, but for all intents and purposes people join the new group from their own volition. Here we will not discuss the deeper sociological undercurrents against which the *man* is already rebelling. Two important aspects are clear, viz., individual's voluntary association and his participation in a larger system. The difference in the case of smaller and backward societies is that the association is more of a compulsive nature because of the unequal strength of the local community and the modern organised system which operates in these areas. Secondly, the new activity is concerned about one aspect of the community life and is unconcerned with the rest. The imposition of change at one point, without attention to the rest, creates disruption of the community life and unpredictable results. The community may disintegrate. Even otherwise a valid question may be asked whether we would be satisfied with the subservient role of a *whole community* in an economic system where an abstract department or organisation is the overlord and the community provides casual wage labour according to its requirement. An individual

enterprise, as a part of a larger system, cannot become an autonomous force and there are moderating influences. But when it is super-imposed on a whole system the matrix changes. The extreme examples is provided by plantation with indented labour. 'Forest estate' or 'PWD-camp' models will be a moderated version of these with many common features.

It is true that there has to be a central economic activity in a region and, in the case under discussion, it could be as well construction or forestry activity. But as soon as we think in terms of a central economic activity, the entire socio-economic system becomes relevant as it must be central to something bigger. The extreme area development concepts, when applied to these groups, use the tools designed for larger groups. The analysis, therefore, becomes invalid. If the local social system is taken into account, the focus will automatically shift from the activity to the group and a modified programme would emerge.

It is, thus, clear that a programme of economic development even on forestry model is not likely to succeed in Abujhmar as the local population cannot be expected to change its traditional economic pursuits in a short period. Whatever may be the presumptions in the original schemes, unless the development of the local population is kept as the central theme, the programmes tend to acquire an independent identity and may be pursued for their own sake. Goal displacement phenomenon is well known in social sciences. Thus, even forestry programmes may lead to large scale migration and its socio-economic consequences in relation to the Abujhmaria may remain undefined if the question is not posed in the early stage and answered in categorical terms. It will not be possible to discuss at length this model in the present paper. There are some cases like Chandrapur in Maharashtra, which illustrate the strong possibility of intensive forest development adversely affecting the tribal communities, the original inhabitants of the region. In view of the crucial nature of forest economy to tribal development, this aspect may require detailed examination in an independent paper.

### *Demographic Constraints*

In view of the above analysis, a very important policy question about the change in demographic structure arises which has to be answered in categorical terms. Who can take a decision about the demographic structure of an area which is extremely backward, which has been kept aloof in the past for various reasons and where the level of socio-economic development is extremely low and the community is not in a position to take an 'independent' view about the whole situation? Who is to take the decision whether the area should be thrown open even at the risk of

the group identity being threatened ? Perhaps, in the absence of articulate opinion of a group, which is likely to be irretrievably affected by the process of development designed by planners and administrators, whose values may be different, a policy of gradual change appears to be the only answer. The demographic structure of a primitive region must be one of the most important points on which a conscious policy decision at a very high level must be taken. If in the interest of regional development or national development a decision, threatening the very identity of the group, is to be taken, it must be in full face of the facts as they are and the likely course of events in the next few years. What is not pardonable is to initiate a process of change without examining all aspects of critical importance to the local community and when the implicit inevitable begins to unfold itself to say 'this is inevitable price for the development of the area.'

It is, thus, clear that demographic structure must be taken as one of the most important constraints while planning development of the small primitive communities. The following aspects will, therefore, need to be noted in each case :

- (a) The total available manpower in the region;
- (b) The level of technology of the group and the possibility of its adaptation or upgradation in a given time period; and
- (c) The permissible limit of introducing immigration in the area so that a state of confrontation does not arise and the immigrant group does not become dominant in the new socio-economic structure.

### *B—People's Development*

The analysis of regional development approach in the preceding section makes it clear that this approach does not necessarily mean accrual of benefits of development to the community living in a region, particularly when it is small and primitive demographic consideration must be kept in the forefront if the development of the group has a high priority. Thus, the human element inevitably comes into focus. But people's development cannot be conceived in isolation—the eco-system, including the environment in which they live, their effective command over resources and future potential, the resource endowment of the region, etc., have an inter-action with their socio-economic and cultural life and also provide a frame for their development. The new power of science and technology does make the choice of alternative courses of development available to planners very wide. However, the alternatives open to a primitive community, atleast to its contemporary generation, are comparatively limited and are circumscribed by its assimilative power.

In the case of primitive groups, therefore, we will have to start from the peoples' end. Here communication barriers are quite formidable; social systems differ; concept of a group life vary; the new is strange; preference is strong for being left alone. The Jarawas of Andamans or the Bondos of Orissa illustrate an extreme situation. We have discounted, in earlier sections, the case for a fast and forced change for those communities. But it must be acknowledged that the state of comparative isolation even in their case cannot last long. The choice, therefore, is between an orderly and planned action programme of change or leaving these groups to the mercy of wider socio-economic processes which are reaching all corners of the country with a torrential force.

Before planning for development, the nature of various influence on the primitive community will need to be clearly understood. Change is associated with a variety of activities in different planes which may broadly include the following :

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| (i) Manipulation of physical environment of the group habitat | Mining, forest exploitation, large scale dairying, Public Health programmes.  |
| (ii) Influence on the economic activity of the group          | Agricultural extension, crafts and cottage industries.  |
| (iii) Superimposition of new institutions—                    |   |
| (a) Political . . . . .                                       | Panchayats, elections.  |
| (b) Administrative. . . . .                                   | Revenue, forest and police administration.  |
| (c) Economic . . . . .  | Co-operative societies, marketing.  |
| (d) Social . . . . .  | Laws affecting social life and behaviour like marriage by capture.  |
| (e) Pseudo-social . . . . .                                   | Educational and health institutes.  |
| (iv) Interaction with other groups                            | (a) Traditional neighbours;<br>(b) New migrants;<br>(c) Extension agency;<br>(d) General administrative personnel; and<br>(e) Traders, contractors, casual visitors, etc. |
| (v) Induced social customs and personnel behaviour            | Generally spread effect of mores of migrants, extension agency and of 'educated' tribal youth.  |

Each of the above elements interacts with the socio-economic life of the community. However, formal enumeration of these elements for a region will not be sufficient to assess the extent of their influence on and role in the on-going processes in the region. What is the degree of effective inter-action in each case will be relevant for planning purposes. For example, forest regulations or land revenue system may have been formally extended to an area for a long period, yet its effective coverage will start only when an implementing agency is introduced in a local area. Formally,

Abujhmar is subject to the same land and forest laws as the rest of the State, though in practice they have not been extended. Thus, formal and actual situations differ widely. If the process of change is not planned, the pace of effective coverage in the wake of new development effort in different sectors may vary considerably. It is generally found that, unless consciously planned otherwise, regulatory activities of the State are first to appear on the scene and beneficial ones lag far behind. For example, as a result of conscious state policy, the police, revenue and forest administrations were withdrawn from Abujhmar. Extension and education activities were promoted subsequently. On the other hand, in the absence of a clear policy frame, the Bondo hills have a full-fledged police station for a long time now while educational and extension coverage remains weak. A differential and uncoordinated coverage by different elements unsettles the life of the local communities in an unpredictable fashion. In such a situation, vested interests of all varieties—institutional, group and individual—tend to take advance of the new situation.

With a view to develop the model for development of Abujhmar, its special characteristics may be noted, some of which are as follows :

- (a) The community is still in a state of ecological equilibrium. There are, however, some areas where the cycle of shifting cultivation has been reduced and there is moderate pressure of population;
- (b) As a result of conscious state policy, there is no confrontation in this area as yet. However, some pressure points are developing on the north-eastern corner from cultivators from the plains as also along the only forest road cutting across Abujhmar in its northern fringes from communities raising cattle;
- (c) The rate of growth of population is almost nil. Little is known about the precise reason for this. Generally they enjoy good health but wild animals and diseases seem to take a heavy toll of life.

In terms of natural resources and its command of the community, the noteworthy features are :

- (a) the whole territory is supposed to be 'owned' by the community, each village has a well demarcated area;
- (b) there are rich forests particularly on the periphery. Some areas have got denuded yet each village has some forest under its command and also within its reach;
- (c) In one region, there is good cattle wealth which gives them substantial additional income;

- (d) there are vast stretches of plain land in the plateau with possible good irrigation potential; and
- (e) the total available manpower is about 3000; literacy is negligible; the people are used to an extensive form of agriculture.

With reference to the process of change associated with various activities noted above, this area has been kept immune as an administrative measure. However some points are noteworthy.

- (a) There is contact with the neighbouring communities and induced change even in agricultural technology is evident in those areas which are experiencing moderate pressure of population;
- (b) Extension agency and *ashram* schools have introduced government functionaries in this area, some of whom are becoming the new contact points between the Abujhmaria and the outside world;
- (c) There is some reaction to the pressure from outside communities in the northern fringe; and
- (d) Forest on the outskirts of Abhujmar is providing the community in the border villages seasonal employment.

There is no conscious policy direction with reference to development of Abhujmar. The immunisation of the area through administrative tradition is fragile since it has no legal base. The fear of the unknown amongst the outsiders is gradually giving way with greater contact and the weakness of the local community will become a public knowledge with greater contact. The potentiality of the area will also be better known with the passage of time. Even government may be tempted to exploit its potential. It appears, therefore, that this area is fast reaching a stage where it may face large scale changes and considerable pressure from institutions, groups and individuals.

The problem, therefore, is to tame the change-process. It will have two aspects, viz., (i) the dimensions of change may be regulated; and (ii) the recipient group may be prepared for the new change. These two aspects are not mutually exclusive and a number of elements are common. However, it may be possible to deal with them separately.

### *Regulation of the Dimensions of Change*

#### *(a) Legal Frame*

A change in the legal frame becomes an important compulsive force, particularly when the two sides are not evenly balanced. Already the



local practice and the formal legal frame in Abhujmar are at variance. The normal administrative structure, therefore, can be extended to this area at the mere wish of the local administration. For example, if the Madhya Pradesh Land Revenue Code is implemented, the community, which has considered itself to be the owner of a certain region, may be reduced to a group of small farmers. Similarly, the provisions of the Indian Forest Act can also be enforced making the community a trespasser in its own traditional abode. It will, therefore, be necessary that administrative practice is consciously formalised which could have elements for change as may be thought best for this area in the context of the developmental programme for the next decade or two. The traditional panchayats at the village or *pargana* level may be brought into picture. There is no panchayat for the Abhujmar as a whole. One institution may be established drawing mainly on the traditional leadership.

#### *(b) Economic Activity*

We have already noted that there is good potential for settled cultivation for horticulture as also for cattle rearing in some areas. In view of the sparseness of population, it will be necessary that extensive agricultural practices requiring comparatively smaller man-power are adopted in this area. Here we will have a clear departure from the strategy of intensive agriculture in the plains having higher density of population. This will mean that this area specialises in cattle rearing and horticulture. These are also nearest to their traditional economic activity and, therefore, can be said to be within the assimilative capacity of the local community. Shifting cultivation may co-exist for some time but as greater income accrues from horticulture and cattle rearing, there will be lesser dependence on shifting cultivation as the primary economy activity. A greater contact with the extension agency in regard to these two areas can be used to slowly induce the community to meet its food requirements from settled cultivation and other needs from horticulture and cattle rearing.

Some of the minor forest produce, which at present is of no economic value because of inaccessibility, can also be brought into the local economy through suitable policy of marketing. We will discuss this aspect in detail in a subsequent section.

We have noted earlier that there are some good plain stretches of land with potential for irrigation. These lands, even at the general peasant technology of Bastar region, will require considerable additional man-power. Here it can be considered whether a modern collective farm or cooperative farm with use of machinery will be feasible. The pace of development of such a farm economy, however, should depend on the pace with which the



concerned village communities can be prepared to participate in it at semi-skilled levels with induction of minimum number in key positions from outside. Such a farm may not be an immediate feasibility but if it is planned to be established, say after five years, it may be possible to train up local youth in the relevant activity who can take up the semi-skilled positions in this cooperative venture.

*(c) Regulation of In-migration*

The economic activity likely to be generated in the programmes outlined above may require larger man-power than what is available in Abujhmar. It is quite clear that even now there is some contact of the Abujhmarias with those in the plains. In fact, the Abujhmarias trace their origin to a number of villages in the plains of Bastar and Narainpur. Although Abujhmarias are an endogamous group, but there is no bar to inter-marriage with the Gonds (but not Halbas) of Narainpur. There is also a local practice that in case a person from outside Abujhmar wishes to settle in Abujhmar, the village community as a whole can take a decision and assigns land to him. It, therefore, appears that the manpower deficiency in this area, to some extent, can be made good through selective in-migration of persons from the neighbourhood which may be in conformity with their present practice. Suitable rules can be made under the regulation suggested earlier. Here a word of caution may be necessary. Migration, which may start as a trickle, may assume larger proportions upsetting the balance. After sometime local community may find itself helpless to stand the new pressures. Hence, it will be useful if an absolute limit to the number that can be allowed for in-migration under this proviso, may be fixed so that the balance does not become unfavourable to the local community. In the next 10 years or so, the total in-migration may be of the order of 20 per cent of the total local population. This number can be easily assimilated by the original group. It may also provide the local community the benefit of greater contact with the outside world without, at the same time, blowing them off their feet.

*(d) Modern Economic Activity*

The programmes of working of forests or taking up other modern activities will need to be planned with reference to its impact on the demographic structure of Abujhmar. In the context of the present socio-economic situation, any intensive economic activity appears to be ruled out for a decade or so. Even for taking up any such activity after 10 years, adequate preparation will have to be initiated right now. Therefore, a comprehensive assessment of resources may be made early to explore the possibilities, if any, of taking up modern activity in this area. If certain clear indications

are available, an element of greater certainty in respect of such programmes may be ensured so that a longer term manpower planning can be taken up right from now.

This brings us to the second aspect of change, viz., the preparation of the recipient group to the new change. The policy of non-extension of normal administration to Abujhmar and keeping it rather closed has helped in maintaining the *status quo*. But, on the other hand, the preparedness of the local community to enter a new stage of socio-economic development also remains, more or less, the same as, say, some two or three decades back. Thus, if a faster change is to come about through other compulsive forces, a good opportunity of making the transition even slower is lost. The developmental programmes taken up in the last ten years have not been tailored to its special needs. Therefore, they have had a very limited and partial impact. So far as the preparedness of the local community is concerned, there has been greater contact with an extension agency which did not carry with it the authority of regulatory administration and, therefore, was not oppressive or unconcerned with the wishes of the local community.

While considering the planned action for preparing the people for the change, two items stand out, viz., (a) communication, and (b) education. In a way, these two are also the necessary infra-structure, to varying degrees, for taking up the economic development programmes. There is one more distinguishing feature of these two inputs. While it may be possible to plan the change-process, to some extent both these elements tend to acquire an autonomous character and behave as independent variables having a big impact on the local community, which may not be all in the desired direction. Therefore, when we are planning for the primitive group, a more careful analysis of these two aspects of development will be useful.

### *Recipient Group and Change*

#### *(i) Communications*

Amongst the material inputs, communication "has been considered critical even for the non-material inputs. The most important question, which is asked before taking up any developmental programme, including education, is the accessibility of an area. A minimum communication network is considered essential. As the communication network and the level of development in the advanced regions appear to be co-related, their 'cause and effect' relationship is taken to be established. Whether a similar network is necessary in the sparsely populated areas with a primitive economy, what is its economics, whether any alternative strategy is also possible and similar other questions are not even examined. The usual

arguments for the communication net-work are how else agricultural inputs, benefits of agricultural extension services, health and educational services, etc., can be reached to these areas. The relationship, on the face of it appears to be so obvious that arguments become convincing. Having once conceded a high priority, nay, a pre-condition for any developmental effort, financial resources are made available on a liberal scale resulting in large capital investments in roads development programmes.

The possible impact of a big construction programme on a sparsely populated area has already been alluded to. Even if demographic considerations are ignored, there are certain economic questions which need to be answered. What is the total economic benefit which is likely to be generated by a roads programme, both to the area as also to the local community? If communication network is essential infra-structure, it must support substantive economic activity and only then substantial outlay on it can be justified. Special cases, as in the border hill areas, where the communication development is necessary on strategic consideration and similar other reasons may be excluded being not relevant for the present discussion.

The economic benefit from a road-net-work may be immediate and/or in the long run and may be directly relatable to the local community and/or to the larger economy. Road construction itself generates employment and a substantial part of investment on it is in the form of wages. Even after the construction phase, a road-net-work requires sizeable manpower for its maintenance. In sparsely populated areas even when there is low coverage, road-length per unit of population is very high. This is an important factor. But, on the other hand, accrual of benefit to the local community in this direct employment is not automatic and depends on a number of other factors in the local economy.

Even when direct employment is substantial, it cannot be an end in itself. Road is essentially an infra-structure which must serve other needs and justify itself. Therefore, we may identify clearly the other socio-economic benefits with the development of this infra-structure. The most immediate benefit in this category can be in the marketing of agricultural and minor forest produce. What was uneconomical on account of a long lead to the market becomes economical since transportation cost get reduced. Thus, there is net addition to the 'production' and there is a direct benefit to the community which gets fuller employment in a traditional activity without any structural change. Another immediate possibility is more intensive exploitation of the forest potential. Here the State also gets some benefit ; the quantum of benefit of the local community will depend on the design of the working programme. On the one extreme, this working could be designed as a complementary activity within the tribal economy. On the

other hand, the programme can also be drawn up independently, the tribal economy being left to adjust for itself. In such an approach, only marginal benefit can accrue to the local community.

The opening up of the area can also be viewed against the possibility of larger regional development. The available agricultural or mineral development potential may be sought to be exploited over a period of time providing employment opportunity locally, regionally or even nationally. In this case the road net-work becomes a necessary economic investment, the returns to the community and to the region from this investment are spread over a period of time. The issues, however, become much more complex. Other forces arising from the main economic activity will be far stronger than can be ascribed to a simple road-construction programme. All these elements put together will have considerable demographic implications in the case of sparsely populated areas. This is a high level policy question. We have earlier ruled out this choice in case of sparsely populated areas unless other considerations outweigh the local constraint. There is no reason for such an exception in Abujhmar.

As already suggested, for the sake of simplicity and clearly understanding the place of communication in local development, we may consider a closed economy with minimum implications on its demographic structure. In this case, the relevant questions are :

- (1) (a) What is the production-mix of the local community ?
- (b) What are the potential activities which can become economical with the opening up of the area ?
- (c) How much extra benefit will accrue to the local community if the road net-work gets established ?
- (2) (a) What essential services depend on the development of road net-work ?
- (b) Whether an alternative strategy can be adopted to achieve the same results ? If so, what is the comparative cost ?
- (3) (a) To what extent and of what standard the road net-work is necessary on non-economic considerations ?
- (b) What is the total economic cost of non-economic goals ?

Since the total investment on road-development in an undulating sparsely populated area is very high, all these aspects have been examined in detail in an independent paper 'Communication and Economic Development of Sparsely Populated Areas—A Theoretical Frame'. The case of

Abujhmar has been used to illustrate the basic issues. The important conclusions are :

- (a) The total cost of road development is very high and, therefore, the pace of opening up of the area will depend on the availability of resources ;
- (b) The wage-earnings of the local community from road construction activity will be very limited compared to the total wage-employment likely to be created. The limiting factors are the seasonal nature of the labour surplus in the area and small population in the effective 'catchment area' of construction programme ;
- (c) There is a dilemma of slow pace of road-construction with demographic constraints and fast pace of construction resulting in induced primary and secondary migration waves ;
- (d) The economic benefits, other than the wage-labour to the local community, is comparatively small because of the small marketable surpluses in its production. Its activation of dormant resources is limited to a very narrow strip along the road net-work which has a comparatively small population. Thus, a very small proportion of the total population gets benefited ;
- (e) Static model for a dynamic situation results in conceptual confusion. In the absence of linkages in the time-dimension, programmes acquire autonomous character. Thus, agriculture extension may be planned presuming the area will be opened up, the only basis for such a presumption being a provision in the Plan for road construction. The problems of transition, which in these cases is unusually long, are not defined with the result that economic benefits are extremely limited during that period compared to the total investments in the area ;
- (f) The geographical spread of economic benefits is very slow and the weakest groups, who are in the more inaccessible areas, may not get any substantial benefit even though total investment in the area may have been sizeable and over a long period. Thus, the weakest group are the last in the queue ;
- (g) As the general strategy for the advanced areas, where road net-work follows a higher level of economic activity, is applied to these areas, the fact that their special characteristics demand a distinctive solution recedes in the background. There is an attempt to rationalise the failure and to seek reasons in the sociological factors which are amenable to many possible interpretations ; and

- (h) In the absence of a total plan perspective for the area, stronger vested interests take advantage of the new facility while the local community is hardly ready to meet the new challenge or the capitalise on the new economic potential.

Our analysis in the paper further shows that in the matter of road-development of these areas, the schemes envisaging quantum jump from a stage of 'no road' to 'class I' are neither beneficial to the area nor are they necessary in the larger national context. In fact, in the situation of overall resource constraint, it is highly wasteful and are usually supported by vague generalisation. What is necessary is to telescope the process of road development, the level of road development and the economic activity moving in unison reinforcing each other. This calls for a higher planning input rather than larger financial investments.

The concepts of 'inaccessibility neutralisation' and 'social service optimisation' are developed in this paper. In this case,

- (a) The cost of inaccessibility neutralisation is considered as an alternative pattern of investment taking the road construction cost also into account ;
- (b) The investment criterion are re-worked taking into account the total added cost of transport, etc., for the commodities produced ; and
- (c) The benefit of social services is extended by suitable personnel policies and other measures rather than depending on road development. The additional cost is considered as an alternative investment choice.

In this alternative approach, the physical distance in Abujhmar can be neutralised through a scheme wherein all agricultural and minor forest produce is notionally purchased at the village of its origin and total transportation cost is borne by the State. Similarly, the items of daily use like salt are notionally sold at market price in the village and transportation is fully subsidised. With a total working population of about 3,000 the total marketable surplus of agricultural and minor forest produce is not likely to be more than worth a few lakhs. If a similar cost is added for its transportation as head-load, the total subsidy will be just a fraction of even the maintenance cost of a road net-work. This subsidy will be in the form of wages for bringing the goods to the nearest collection point. As the roads are not developed, therefore, the subsidy will directly go to the tribal as wages. Also, whereas the roads programme could activate a narrow strip on either side of the road the benefit reducing in direct proportion to the distance from the road, the alternative approach benefits

all ; infact, longer the lead larger the employment opportunity. It has also to be contrasted with general transport subsidies which go towards the cost of petrol, maintenance of vehicles, etc., and get accrued to the modernised sector. The new subsidy will accrue to the traditional sector. The agricultural inputs, essential consumer commodities, etc., could also be similarly subsidised. Thus, not only the existing agricultural potential will be fully activated notwithstanding the distance, but it will also benefit the tribal through wages for carrying the produce as head-loads which he otherwise had also to carry for no return. The total cost of additional incentives to personnel and upgrading the posts, where necessary, for providing higher technical and managerial input will also add to a nominal figure.

The inaccessibility neutralisation model will have the following advantages :

- (a) the total investment is limited ;
- (b) a dormant economy over a large area is activated in a short span of time ;
- (c) the benefit of additional investment largely accrues to the local community in the form of wages ;
- (d) the more inaccessible parts also come within the fold of new economic activity early enough ;
- (e) there is a conscious effort to attend to different facets of socio-economic life of the local community. The social service and administrative frame-work also strengthen as the economy picks up ; and
- (f) there are no built-in advantages in the model which can be exploited by other vested groups.

There is one important drawback in this model. It is a steady-state model and does not provide for the future growth potential of the area. Thus, it is most suited in terms of input-output analysis at any one point of time. But the question is about the time preference of total investment pattern. The various alternatives are examined in the model which include different combinations of

- (a) Inaccessibility neutralisation ;
- (b) Social service optimisation ;
- (c) Road development (quantum jump style) ; and
- (d) Step-by-step road development.



The combination of inaccessibility neutralisation, social service optimisation combined with the approach of step-by-step road development in that order is most beneficial to the local community. Thus,

- (a) the investment is spread over a larger period and, at any one point of time, over a larger geographical area. The additional labour requirement is limited and the accrual of wage-labour to the local community is maximised ;
- (b) the economic benefits of the stage-by-stage road development is more evenly spread and even the most remote areas may get benefit in shorter span of time ;
- (c) the total investment in the early phases is not very high on road construction which enables the Plan to spare resources for other priority sectors ;
- (d) each investment dose being small is likely to be more easily assimilated by the local community; and
- (e) as the model is not very costly, it can be multiplied without seriously facing the financial constraints.

Having neutralised the inaccessibility factors, the road programme can take its own time and can be phased out keeping the constraints of demography, limits to assimilation and finances into consideration. It could be organically linked to and follow the general economic activity in the region.

## *(ii) Education*

The second important, or perhaps the most important, element in harnessing the process of change to the advantage of local community is education. The process of change has two sides, viz., (1) the programme content (instrument of change) and (2) the people (subject of change). We have seen in the preceding section that the programme content should be so planned that all its elements are in unison. The programme content has also to be so designed that it is within the comprehension of the people. The developmental programmes themselves are expected to gradually influence the assimilative capacity of the people. Therefore, programme content itself could be gradually upgraded with the passage of time. There are two limitations in this approach. Firstly, how can the programmes be always tailored, so as to suit the socio-psychological frame of the people ? Secondly, how the programme should become acceptable to the community ? Extension activity does not comprise only a physical programme but it is an educative process as well. Therefore, while the programme aspect will need to be carefully designed,

some educational process will also be a necessary counterpart. Here again, the limits of educational process have to be well defined. Even the educational element has to be within the easy comprehension of the local community.

Educational element will need to be viewed in two different contexts. Each development programme will define its own 'capsule' of educational effort. Each of these 'capsules' will have to be within the comprehension of an average Abujhmara. But all these capsules put together may not be able to give him an unambiguous picture. Therefore, a broader frame will be necessary so that the picture which emerges is meaningful to him. The terms, 'easy comprehension', 'meaning', etc., cannot be taken to have fixed connotation. The content of these terms will change with the passage of time. The change in the beginning in absolute terms, will be small, but, in relative terms, it will be very large because the base line, from which the process is being initiated, is very low. These small changes will have to be carefully taken note of, particularly because the extension agency, which is used to deal with matters of a different dimension, may not be able to appreciate the delicate balance in the primitive tribal situation. Therefore, extension education inputs will need constant review and a well-designed feed-back system.

Another important point may be noted at this stage. Inter-actions of a small group are not limited to certain well-defined programmed activities only. There is an important autonomous sector of inter-actions whose influence may be decisive in some cases. The outside contact itself means bringing to these communities new ideas, new knowledge and new situations. New situations are very important. The group does not have any past experience to go by and its context is entirely different. Its responses, therefore, are not 'rational'. The extension agency by its very presence initiates spread-effect. It is well-known that some information is easily assimilated while aspects completely alien are hard to grasp. Therefore, the community is to be consciously prepared to stand the challenges of the new contact; it should be enabled to understand the nature and processes in the larger society and should be provided the necessary and useful information. Thus, the world view of the group itself will need to be influenced delicately, but decisively.

Perhaps, in the case of small groups the concept of education itself should change. In the general national scene, a common cultural background is presumed and formal education builds upon a common base. Besides attempting to inculcate other desirable social and personal attitudes, education aims at bringing a greater fund of knowledge within the reach of the individual and the community. However, an educational scheme, framed in one specific context, may leave large gaps in a different context.

This problem is being faced generally in the rural-urban context—an urban elite oriented education being super-imposed on the multitude of rural masses. The disharmony becomes much larger in the case of backward tribal groups.

In Abujhmar, literacy is almost negligible. The local dialect is a variant of Gondi and has its special characteristics. It will be necessary that special syllabus both for general education and for the adolescent and adult age groups is prepared. The educational effort will have to be intensive so that in the next 5 years or so the level of literacy is at least 10% and every adult has been brought within the net of *citizen education*. The local institution of youth dormitory, which is the meeting point of all the youngmen every evening and the entire village community occasionally, can be effectively used for this purpose. It is not necessary that a school may be opened in every village but 'Shala Complexes' can be developed which have within their jurisdiction a specified number of villages and who may be given the responsibility of effectively implementing the citizen education and general education programme. It will need to be ensured that the educational programmes do not become stereotype and there is continuous inter-action amongst the educational programmes, the developmental effort and the local milieu.

#### *Power Structure in the Transitional Phase*

Lastly, it will be necessary to consider as to how the whole process of change, which is proposed to be initiated, is under effective control of the local community. We have already discussed the two facets, viz., moderation of the programme content and preparing the local community for the change, which will help in this objective. But still the local community may find itself helpless when it is faced with the other organized groups including the developmental machinery itself. We have already suggested that a net-work of Panchayats drawing upon the traditional leadership may be formally recognised and established, where necessary. We may note here that sense of justice in the traditional communities is deeply ingrained. Therefore, considerable authority can be vested in them without any hesitation. The local community gets perplexed when faced with abstract legal entities and processes which have the authority of the State itself behind them. The various organizations and state departments are physical manifestations of this authority. In effect, an average tribal in the primitive groups finds himself isolated and all other elements including the petty trader, contractor, official hierarchy are on the other side of the line. A meaningful process of development can be initiated only with a confidence relationship developing between the two sides. Such a relationship can be engendered if the head of the administrative unit for

this area has sympathy for the local community and is imbued with the idealism for the new change. But that alone will not be adequate. The local community may be given the authority not only to regulate its own affairs including petty criminal offences and matters relating to land and property of its own members but also should have jurisdiction in certain specified matters in relation to all those including officials when they are within their local jurisdiction. The local Panchayats may be suitably helped in the exercise of this power by selected officers who may be specially empowered and the local Panchayat may serve as assessors or Jurors. This will help in imbibing self-confidence in the community *vis-a-vis* the more powerful elements.

### *Conclusions*

Thus, we have outlined the important stages in the development of Abujhmar in the context of its resource potential, human element, demographic constraint and sociological limitations. The traditional shifting cultivation could be slowly changed into plantation crops and horticulture. Certain areas can specialise in cattle breeding. Simultaneously, the process for the introduction of settled cultivation can also be supported. There are certain areas, where cooperative farms with modern technology, requiring comparatively smaller manpower, can be planned. The training of local youth for all positions upto semi-skilled jobs may be undertaken in advance. The horticulture and plantation schemes need not necessarily be export oriented although marketing may be one of the considerations in formulation of the scheme. Thus, the community may graduate from food gathering stage to a stage where it begins to plant trees and tend them. This is the stage at which the traditional peasant community in India is located. The horticulture and cattle rearing will serve as the points of contact between traditional community and the modern organization which can be increasingly used for introducing new knowledge over a wider area of their economic activity.

Road construction, as an element in the development of Abujhmar, will need to be very carefully planned. Constructing a road network in the usual fashion will be very expensive and will not be in the interest of the local community. An alternative approach of 'inaccessibility neutralization', 'social service optimisation' and 'step-by-step road development' is suggested. The road network may follow the economic activity rather than preceding it. At every stage, the demographic constraint should be considered before initiating any economic activity including road programme which requires large manpower. With effective inaccessibility neutralization, it will be possible to activate such of the dormant economic resources of the region, which are within the technological reach of the

present generation of Abujhmarias. The cost of inaccessibility neutralization is negligible compared to investment in road construction. The benefit accruing to the local community will be substantial and evenly distributed in the region. A step-by-step road development programme could be simultaneously taken up. In the first stage of road development, jeepable roads open for a limited period would be adequate. Slowly, the accessibility of the region could be increased by making the jeepable roads open for a longer period and then throughout the year. At a subsequent stage, all-whether roads capable of carrying heavy traffic can be planned in the course of two or three decades. The higher cost of transportation in the early phase, both as head-loads and on jeeps, has to be viewed as an alternative investment choice for this area.

The intensive economic, educational and health development programmes for a period of 10 to 15 years in this area may create conditions where a larger dose of controlled immigration could be allowed for exploitation of its natural resources. During this period, there will be a better understanding about the course of development in these areas with the process of change ; there will be greater inter-action between the local people and the outsiders ; there will be a greater understanding of processes particularly through the directed programme of education and inter-action through active participation in the developmental process. It may be useful to devise suitable personnel policies for these areas so that the rigid patterns of the more advanced areas are not super-imposed without local considerations. What is important is a linkage with the local community of the outside world. Therefore, in the various levels of administrative structure induction of the local groups will be the most useful link. In the decision-making process, the local communities should be fully involved so that their perspective of the changing situations become clearer.

The ultimate demographic structure of such areas will depend on the intensity of local resources exploitation. A number of alternative paths of development are available. In the initial stages, the employment potential should mainly have local groups as its target. Slowly, those activities may be initiated which may induce immigration from the surrounding areas with whom the local groups are already in contact and in whose case there is no sharp dividing line. A selective programme of settled cultivation may be taken up where lands are settled to persons belonging to the neighbouring areas experiencing higher pressure of population. The ownership pattern and the procedure for induction will, however, have to be suitably designed so as to be in conformity with the traditional practice. This will help in strengthening the local community through induction of a group which is not a complete stranger. This may also help in spread-effect of new agricultural technology.

The economic activities which require a completely different skill-endowment should be the last to arrive. In the course of the next 25 years, the demographic structure of this area may undergo considerable change but it will be necessary if the local communities are not reduced to a level of, say, less than 70% concentration compared to the present level of about 96%. By this time, a new generation would have arrived, the literacy level in the area would be 100%, new linkages would have been developed with modern sectors of economy and the local groups will still be in a commanding position both politically and economically. The area at this stage will be in a position to take its own decisions. The next phase could be concerned with the problems of area development rather than concentrating on the small group with whom we start the programme of directed change.

## ANNEXURE

Sl. No.	Name of the tribe	Location	Size	Degree of Isolation	Extent of Confrontation	Degree of Ecological Equilibrium
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1.	Abujhmaria	Abujhmar Bastar, M.P.	Small (13,000)	Near Full	Insignificant	Full
2.	Bondo	Koraput (Orissa)	Small (3,000)	Near Full	Insignificant.	Full
3.	Onge	A & N Islands	Diminutive (112)	Full	Considerable	Near Full
4.	Great Andamans	A & N Islands	Diminutive (24)	Partial	Protection	Nil
5.	Jarawas	A & N Islands	Diminutive (300)	Full	Nil	Full
6.	Sentinelese	A & N Islands	Diminutive (100)	Full	Nil	Full
7.	Hill Kharia	Singhbhum (Bihar)	Small (9,423)	Near Full	Significant	Little
8.	Paharia	Santhal Parganas (Bihar)	Small (14,651)	Partial	Considerable	Partial
9.	Birhor	Santhal Parganas (Bihar)	Small (3,464)	Little	Considerable.	Little
10.	Asur	Singhbhum (Bihar)	Small (7,026)	Little	Considerable	Little
11.	Chenchu	A.P.	Small (10,448)	Partial	Significant	Partial
12.	Jenu Kuruba	Karnataka	Small	Partial	Considerable.	Partial
13.	Bharia	Chhindwada (M.P.)	Small (1300)	Partial	Insignificant.	Partial
14.	Hill Korbas	Raigarh-Sarguja (M.P.)	Small (4,000)	Little	Considerable	Little
15.	Baiga	Mandla (M.P.)	Small (3,000)	Partial	Significant	Partial
16.	Gadaba	Koraput (Orissa)	Small (5,000)	Partial	Significant.	Partial
17.	Juang	Keonjhar (Orissa)	Small (6,000)	Near Full	Insignificant.	Full



## Abujhmar—Some Aspects of Planning

B. D. SHARMA

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I paid a short visit to Abujhmar on the 28th and 29th of March, 1975. The detailed survey which was planned last year has not been completed so far and it is expected that it will be taken up shortly and will be finished by the end of April or middle of May, *i.e.*, before the onset of monsoon. It may then be possible to analyse the data and put the programme formulation on a firm base.

A closer look at the map of the Abujhmar area showed that the location of the villages has considerably changed since they were mapped last. As such both communication as well as educational planning can be realistically done only after the positions have been clearly fixed. One method for fixing the position would be to take the help of aerial photographs available with the Pre-Investment Survey of Forest Resources. Another method would be to decide the approximate location with the help of local knowledge of the Gram Sevaks and teachers already working in this area. This may be done urgently, in any case before the meeting in Delhi when the advance action for the year 1975-76 will be decided.

A visit to Netwar, which has been an important centre with a residential school and a provision store earlier, brought into focus some important points which may affect the policy frame for the development of this area. There has been a good response from the cultivators in this village and considerable land has been brought under plough in the last 10 years. In other words, the shifting cultivators under the influence of greater contact both with the cultivators down the hill and the extension agency, have shown some interest in the settled cultivation. The bunding programme has been taken up and some fields have been bunded. This programme was taken up, obviously on hundred per cent grant-in-aid basis. However, the labour for this programme had to be brought from outside. This is somewhat surprising in view of the strong community feeling in the Abujhmar area which needs to be preserved and encouraged. The process of development no doubt has to be initiated at some selected points and this fact itself, by definition, will bring about a differential growth rate creating inequality. However, the basic question in the primitive context of Abujhmar is whether in this area, which has plentiful natural resources with no pressure of population, it is possible to simulate the process of change and development without large inequality which may destroy the social fabric of this simple community? It is said the local community is not inclined to undertake hard and sustained physical work. It is accepted. But the question is, whether an attempt has been made to formulate the programme in such a way that it may induce the community into a type of community action. Or, again in a hurry to achieve certain targets, may be financial or physical, we are trying to adopt certain short cuts which may not be in consonance with our ultimate objectives for this area. For example, it is quite possible that since bunding programme was sanctioned it has to be completed within a stipulated time. The extension agency might have found it too cumbersome to wait till such time as the local community can be persuaded to take up this work. Thus, it may have preferred the alternative course of giving the work on contract, formal or informal, wherein outside labour is brought and the task is accomplished. This needs to be very carefully understood.

There is another aspect which needs to be emphasised, *viz.*, educational part of the works programme. It is agreed that the shifting cultivator has to be finally persuaded to become a settled cultivator so that there is optimum utilization of natural resources. But this change would imply that the work habit of the community has to be got transformed from the one suited to the shifting cultivation to the one which is suited to settled cultivation. Settled cultivation means more persistent and continuous labour of a considerably different type than what they are used to in the shifting cultivation. Now we have to explore the possible opportunities for initiating such change in the process of development which we are initiating and we should take advantage of those opportunities. Obviously, any work programme which is

taken up in this area should be one such point. If this objective is clear, it will have to be accepted as a necessary constraint in the very planning process; labour constraint is an important consideration in planning programme for sparsely populated backward regions. 'Labour constraint does not mean only physical labour' but it also includes the level of technological skill of the people. If these two aspects are constantly kept in view, the programmes will automatically get adapted to the local situation. For example, in such a case, buildings with sophisticated brick and wood work cannot be planned; instead building plans will have to be on the basis of what the local community can do, may be, with some addition of skills. It has to be kept in view that the additional skill component should, as far as possible, be such that it can give the local community the benefit of demonstration—effect, that is, it is within the adaptive capability of the local community. Similarly, if the programme of bunding, which appears now to be catching the imagination of the people in this village, is so formulated that the whole community participates in capital formation, it will induce new work-habits among the people. The fully paid labour could be provided by the local community and only such volume of these programmes may be taken for any year in which labour component is exclusively of the local community. Thus, it would provide an opportunity for demonstration in the new venture as well as it will help the local community to earn something extra, though at this stage, the extra income may not be wanted. But, as it is our final aim to induce new working patterns in them so that their earning capacity increases, this approach can be justified.

Programmes, which help in individual capital build up, if undertaken with the help of outside labour force, introduce another dimension. The internal 'power-balance' in the community may get changed. So long as the whole community helps in capital asset formation, it is immaterial whether monetary support is provided by the government. Conceptually, it can still be treated as support of the total community because government after all represents the community at large. This concept can get further reinforced if the extension agency can plan not in terms of individuals but the community as a whole. It may be noted that there are no record of rights in Abujhmar as yet. The average tribal, particularly in Abujhmar, feels completely helpless or overawed by the administrative structure. In such a situation, the almost unlimited government assistance may help certain individuals in creating new rights where none existed earlier. The argument that the government helped in capital formation in the name of certain individual may itself be treated the final word in the favour of that individual. Such a logic is not entirely unknown even in more advanced areas where small governmental assistance is used to create pre-emptive rights in favour of individuals and communities where there is no semblance of such rights.

It is thus clear that in any programme of capital formation in this area, the unit of planning, as far as possible, should not be individual but should be taken to be the community as a whole. It is not the intention here to say that the work programme must start on all fields in a village simultaneously. However, there should be a phased programme for the entire village; it should have the common consent of the village community; the phasing of the programme should be decided by the community itself after fullest consultation; the extension agency should try to play the supportive and background role. It should be our endeavour to help the processes of community action which is already very strong in this area to be further strengthened so that the process of development and change does not shatter their community spirit but re-inforces it.

Another aspect which needs immediate attention is the educational planning for the area. There are eight ashram schools and thirteen primary schools. It is quite obvious that every village cannot be provided by an ashram school or a primary school. Many of the primary schools are without teachers. The primary schools tend to be independent units and controlled from the block headquarters which, in the context of difficult terrain, is almost insignificant. The distribution of the eight ashram schools is also not even. It appears that an ashram school per thousand population could be planned and centrally located in respect of each group of one thousand population. The ashram school should be the focal point of educational activity in the respective sub-region; the primary schools should be its sub-units. In fact in the case of Abujhmar it will be necessary to think in terms of peripetetic schools and some other innovations which I had discussed in considerable detail with the local officer. This whole exercise will need to be done in considerable detail. In any case, the first immediate necessity will be to start three or four ashram schools from the next session. The number of primary schools and other peripetetic teams may be worked in detail in due course.

9. The question of dialect in the education at classes I and II was also discussed in detail. It appears that a maria premer was prepared but it did not address exclusively to the area of Abujhmar. Even within Abujhmar, there are the regional variations. The Indian Institute of Languages, Mysore have deputed an officer to Abujhmar who will be spending a couple of months and will help the Project to finalise the reading material for Classes I and II which can be used from the next season.

The school timing and the vacation of schools will also need to be adjusted to the local situation in Abujhmar. Rainy season is the most difficult period in this area, particularly because grass grows wild and the communication is almost reduced to zero. If rainy season could be declared as annual vacation and the educational session starts from October and

ends by the end of June, it would be useful. The local administration could take suitable action on this suggestion.

The education is just making a beginning in Abujhmar. Some boys have recently passed their class V. One of them is being employed as a peon, and that too, by relaxation of qualifications. In the context of such a primitive economy as that of Abujhmar employing an 'educated Abujhmaria' as a peon is wastage of 'technical skill'. There is general resistance to the acceptance of educational programme. The newly educated boys, even though upto class V, should be appropriately pressed in the service of educational advancement of this area. They could be the group leaders or educational extension workers or they could be given any other office in the broad frame of citizen education programme.

The next important aspect will be communication. In the case of Abujhmar, the concept of pucca P.W.D. roads has to be discounted both on democratic grounds as well as in the overall context of resource constraint. The area is not as yet ready for fast change. It may not be in a position to stand the influx of population which is inevitable with a pucca road net-work being spread in the region. The immediate utility of such a road net-work to the local community will also be insignificant. What is needed is jeepable approach to certain centres, in the first instance pending the finalisation of a detailed project. I had suggested that certain portions in Narainpur-Netwar Road could be taken up during this year, particularly the crossings and the difficult climbs so that village is approachable throughout the year by a jeep. Similar approach as could be also planned for some more centres. But nothing beyond this limited programmes can be taken during the current year as advance action.

Supply of consumer commodities and purchase of minor forest produce in the region is the most important economic activity which can be taken up immediately. There are no traders, there are no money lenders. The ashram schools could be developed into combined institution on the pattern of *ashram shala* complex in Maharashtra. It should have a small provision store where the prices of consumer commodities and minor forest produce are fixed irrespective of the location of the centres. The transportation cost both for the incoming essential consumer commodities and outgoing minor forest produce may be subsidised by the Project indefinitely. In fact, this will conform to the model of alternative investment pattern where the subsidy is really not subsidy but is an alternative investment design to improvement of road net-work in other developed areas.

In the absence of a detailed survey, it is not possible to launch an agricultural programme particularly at this stage in the year since the monsoon will start in this area by the 15th of May and there is only one crop

season for shifting cultivators. Agricultural programme can be planned meaningfully only for the 1976-77 kharif season. However, if the administration can take up plantation of any kind which may be acceptable to the tribal that would be a useful investment even during the current year.

In Netwar itself, there is a proposal for bunding a nala. It cannot be taken up right now since the technical details have to be sorted out. However, preparatory action can be taken up so that work could be taken up soon after the monsoon.

The other advance action programme may include providing reasonable accommodation (using local material) for the institutional frame which already exists in the area or which is necessary for taking up the minimal educational, extension and marketing activity. This should not be heavy on cost and the design should be such that does not destroy the harmony of the area which is so very essential at this stage. It will be necessary that whatever buildings have been constructed in Orchha should be optimally utilised with reference to the developmental requirements of this area. This review may be taken up, in the first instance, before any other construction programme is decided for this village.

The problem of personnel and their special pays has to be sorted out immediately. The special project for Abujhmar could start with a differentiated incentive varying from 25% to 75% (including 10 per cent Bastar allowance which is already there), scales will have to be worked out on the basis of what may be termed as 'difficult area index' on each village which may happen to be the headquarter of individual officer. The determining factor in working out this index may be (i) the distance from the pucca road; (ii) the distance from the jeepable road; (iii) difficult physical features, if any, between the jeep point and the village; (iv) size of the village (smaller the size, higher the compensation); and (v) the availability of medical assistance and educational facilities, etc.

## Baigas of Mandla

R. K. SRIVASTAVA

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Baigas are a little known small tribal community living in Bajag range of South Mandla forest division in Madhya Pradesh. These people have been traditionally shifting cultivators and used to move about in the extensive forest region in this area. They were expert axemen and depended on their axes for their livelihood. When the British began to consolidate their hold on the forest region, they turned to tame the Baigas of this region. It was in 1890 that a specific area was carved out for these people which was known as *Baigachak* with the ostensible objective of converting these axemen into ploughmen. Subsequently with the extension of Indian Forest Act, the *Baigachak* was converted into a group of forest villages. This area is also covered by the Fifth Schedule of the Constitution.

The Baigas continued to enjoy special privilege of shifting cultivation till 1935. It may be noted that the other Gonds were dis-allowed shifting cultivation in the adjoining region much before this date. After 1935 there have been some more restrictions on the Baiga's shifting cultivation as well.



As a forest villager, a Baiga gets 10 acres of land for cultivation. In the earlier days they had enjoyed special privileges and could claim larger area if they so wished. These people have not received so far any benefits of agricultural development programmes since they do not have a title to the land and their entire area is covered in the reserved forest. There have been some in-migration in this area as well and members of other tribal communities and non-tribal communities are also now living the Baigachak. The forest rules now apply equally to the Baigas, other tribals and non-tribals. The Forest Manual, however, recognises Baiga for preferential treatment in the matter of residence in a forest village. It also accepts them as persons better suited to the extraction and handling of forest produce.

The Baigas are still a very simple people. They have not received the benefit of education so far and the rate of literacy amongst them is less than 4%. The average size of Baiga family is 7. The Women has a high status in the family. She is considered loyal to her man and faithful to the tribe.

According to the estimates of the author, the Baigas, on an average, earns about Rs. 700/- per annum from the 10 acres of land which he has been assigned. His main crops are *Kutki, Maize, Kodo, Urhar, paddy, urd* in Kharif and *Ramtilla, Rai*, gram and wheat in Rabi. The Baiga supplements his income by rearing cattle. He is, permitted to graze upto 8 cattles free of cost. The milk yield of the cows, however, in this area is quite low.

The other source of his income is minor forest produce. He works in the collection of *Tendu* leaves, *Hurrah* and other minor forest produce. However, he has to carry these items long distances to the collection centres which generally are located outside the Baigachak. The Baigas are also employed by the Forest Department and contractors as labourers. In fact as forest villagers they have an obligation to provide labour to the Forest Department on demand on payment of wages. The forest nearer their habitations, however, are not exploited and, therefore, the utilisation of labour potential at present is very low. An average Baiga gets employment for about 38 days in a year. He has to supplement this income by working as agricultural labour in the neighbouring villages or has to depend on roots, tubers and fruits available in the forest.

The Baiga is still nostalgic about his earlier status as a free man in the forest who could go about making his living by shifting cultivation. When the simple Baiga accepted the status of a forest villager he never anticipated that he will not even get the tenancy rights over the land which he cultivates. Formerly the Baiga was the lord of the forest, hard working axe man and good archer but today he is a cultivator without rights and has to depend on the mercy of others for providing additional work opportunity. He feels that his status has become inferior even to the Baigas of settled villages

outside the Baigachak. He has only the obligation to work without any right or any privilege. The concessions given to him are insignificant and are losing importance in the new money economy. Even the non-forest villagers are allowed to keep cattle in this area on payment of commercial rights. The *dathan* are a source of much trouble to the forest villagers since these animals destroy their crops and encroach upon their limited resources. The subordinate forest officials are also exempt from payment of grazing fees for cattle kept by them for domestic requirements. This leads to some amount of resentment amongst the forest villagers because the privilege tends to be misused.

The working plan of the Sal forest of Mandla has taken note of the problem of Baigas in this region. The Working Plan had recommended the following welfare measures :

- (i) Economic holding of a Baiga should be larger than that of an ordinary cultivator ;
- (ii) Each village may have a drinking water well ;
- (iii) A dispensary may be set up at Chada ;
- (iv) Poultry farms and pig units may be developed ;
- (v) Multipurpose cooperative societies may be organised, and
- (vi) Baigachak should be looked after by a separate working circle. These provisions, however, remain to be implemented by the Forest Department.

The problem of Baigas will need special consideration and a separate programme for these groups should be prepared. The following suggestions are made in this regard :

- (i) The area comprising 27 forest villages in Gora Kanhari and Chada circles of Bajag forest range should be delineated and constituted a special project area. The total population of this area is 6172 out of whom 5368 are scheduled tribes (87%).
- (ii) The Baigas should be allowed 15 acres of land per family because the lands are sub-marginal and will require substantial investment before they can give good yield.
- (iii) The Baigas should be given pattas for these lands for a period of atleast 25 years. A detailed record may be maintained of their land holdings, cultivation, crops grown, yield, etc.
- (iv) The surplus land in this area may be converted into a State Farm and landless persons may be encouraged to adopt collec-

- tive farming. The tribals may get preference over non-tribals and the Baigas may be accorded the highest priority.
- (v) The establishment of *daihans* in the vicinity of forest villages should be prohibited.
  - (vi) The collection centres for minor forest produce should be established at suitable places within the Baigachak project area.
  - (vii) Programmes under forests should be so designed that atleast one person per house-hold in the project area should get work for atleast 60 days in a year.
  - (viii) Adequate arrangements may be made for advancing taccavi or other forms of loans to the Baigas. The existing maximum limit of Rs. 500/- may be raised to Rs. 1500/-.
  - (ix) The provisions of minimum wages would be effectively implemented in this area. The provisions of Workmen's Compensation Act should also be extended and implemented so that adequate compensation is paid in case of injury or death.
  - (x) Forest labour cooperative societies may be organised which should be assigned work undertaken by Forest Department in this area.
  - (xi) The recommendations made in the Working Plan in relation to the Baiga villages may be implemented.

Some of the provisions in the forest regulations are anecronistic. The provisions regulating the conditions of residence for adult forest villagers should be withdrawn. Before evicting a tribal from a forest village the approval of the Collector should be made compulsory. It appears that these provisions are even restricting the choice of Baigas in seeking employment elsewhere. These restrictions should go. In most of the Baiga villages the *Kotwar*s are non-Baigas and some times outsiders. They are instrumental in exploitation of the Baigas. In the predominantly Baiga villages, the *Kotwar* should be selected from amongst the Baigas themselves.

The Annual Forest Administration Report should contain a Chapter exclusively devoted to the conditions and development of forest villages. The Collector should be asked to give his observations on this portion of the report which may be placed before the State Government for their final decision. The Governor's Annual Report on Administration of the Scheduled Areas should also include a paragraph on the management of forest villages in the scheduled area. A Forest Villages Advisory Committee may be constituted at the district level under the Chairmanship of the Collector.

A Project Committee may be appointed for administration of the Special Project Area Baigachak under the Chairmanship of the Collector. An Officer of the Forest Department of the rank of D.F.O. should be appointed Project Administrator with headquarters at Chada. Gram Vikas Samiti may be set up to advise this Committee comprising representatives from the Baiga villages.

## Bharias of Patalkot

SUSHILA SHARMA

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There is a small depression in the hilly tract of district Chhindwara near Tamia which is known as 'Patalkot'. There are almost vertical walls locally known as 'Kanat', the total depth being about 3000 ft. This vertical descent is in three stages and villages are located at different elevations on the small level land available in the surrounding areas. The area is traversed by Doodiya river which starts from one end of this region. In fact, it appears that geologically, this river has caused this depression by denudation of softer rock material over the millennia. The river is very narrow and its depth continues to increase till it emerges from this valley and reaches the plains of the surrounding region.

This area was once rich in forest resources. Even now most of the area is under reserved forests. Patalkot as also its surrounding region, was full of wild life but now the tigers, bears as also 'sambur' have been, more or less, finished. There are some tigers in the downward reaches of Doodiya river in the Patalkot. It is reported that now the number of wild boar, monkeys and other smaller animals has considerably increased.

The people believe that these animals have migrated into the safety of this depression from the surrounding regions.

Patalkot is inhabited by Bharias and Gonds. Both these communities are Scheduled Tribes. The total population, according to 1971 census, is only 1375 compared to 1049 in 1911. In the early part of this century, it recorded a decline and was 1081 in 1951. It recorded a marginal increase in the next decade and was 1149 in 1961. Thus the rate of growth has picked up (Village-wise variation is given in Table I).

The sex-composition of the population shows some interesting features. Tribal communities generally show a higher female ratio, which was also the case in Patalkot in 1911, there being 116 females per thousand males. This number went down to 104 in 1951, to 95 in 1961 and stands at 97 in 1971. Is there a preferential migration of females through marriage, etc., because of the more inhospitable terrain and economic condition, or is there selective immigration of other groups where males come first, needs to be investigated. The fact of increased population in 1961-71 and decreasing female-male ratio may point to the second possibility. Or, both the factors may be working. This will need to be further investigated.

It is said that originally the Bharias were its sole occupants. They practiced shifting cultivation and subsisted on forest produce. There were good grazing grounds and they also reared cattle. Some Gond families came to graze their cattle from the surrounding areas and got settled in some villages. There is now one village which is predominantly populated by Gonds while there are isolated house-holds of the Gonds in other predominantly Bharia villages. It appears that the Bharias in Patalkot led almost an exclusive life till some 25 years back. The earlier reports show that their material culture as also their social customs differed considerably from the surrounding Gond country and they were almost in isolation in this micro-region. There are also Bhariya groups in the surrounding area. There was, however, almost no communication between this group and the other Bharias. It appears that pressure of population in the surrounding area as also the plentiful grazing ground attracted the Gond groups and the social inter-course increased. Now there does not appear to be any isolation between the residents of Patalkot and the other groups in the surrounding region. The material culture has considerably changed and the Bharias cannot be distinguished from the Gonds of the upcountry. They also visit the surrounding *bazaars* and transact their business with some skill. It is reported that earlier, the Muslim traders of Chhindi, a village just adjacent the Patalkot, dominated this area and also monopolised the trade. They had informally divided the area amongst themselves for trade and there was virtual monopoly of one

individual in each village. This monopoly has now been broken and the Muslims traders no longer claim any advantage.

Social exclusiveness has now given way, but there is a sharp distinction between the economic life of those in Patalkot and in the surrounding area. Although shifting cultivation has been banned, the Patalkot villages subsist on shifting cultivation because there is no cultivable land available. Some of the small patches which were earlier under cultivation, with the formalisation of forest boundaries, have gone out of cultivation, thus adversely affecting their economy. Some villages in the lower region of Patalkot have been deserted primarily because shifting cultivation had been banned and they did not have even small patches to subsist. The whereabouts of the villagers of the deserted villages are not known. It is reported that some have got dispersed into the other villages of Patalkot while others have migrated to upland villages.

In the remaining villages, which continue to be inhabited, the forest resources have been over-exploited and the practice of shifting cultivation further results in an adverse economic situation. The pastures are also not as good as in the earlier days with the result that their income from animal resources has also decreased. However, they are using the forest around the villages during summer when the pasture resources of their own surrounding areas are insufficient to support their cattle.

There economy still continues to be almost self-sufficient except for purchase of cloth and salt from the markets. Bulk of their food requirement is drawn either from meagre produce of shifting cultivation or from minor forest produce. They are partially in the food-gathering stage. There is a well defined cycle for their subsistence. Their diet primarily depends on what they collect from the forests during a particular season. In the summer their main sustenance are mangoes and mahurwa. During the rainy season they use a mixture of dried mahurwa and powdered mango-kernel. This is supplemented by a leafy vegetable *Dhoodia* which grows in abundance in this area and is said to be quite nutritive. During the rainy season, they raise crops of 'makka' and minor millets-in their homesteads or the *Dhaya* fields. This takes them through the winter. Their food during this period is supplemented by some of the roots which are found in the forest. By summer, their meagre produce gets exhausted, when mangoes, *jamun* and other fruits begin to provide them alternative source of sustenance.

They fish in Dhoodiya river where some of the stretches are good fishing grounds. They also hunt wild boars but monkeys are considered to be sacred. Cows and buffaloes are also reared and they prepare ghee which is sold in the market. They consume skimmed milk themselves.



They sell their cattle for meeting the cash requirements. They also keep poultry. They consume eggs and sell the poultry birds in the nearby market. Thus, they earn the necessary cash for paying their revenues and forest dues and also for purchase of consumer commodities.

The society is extremely equitarian. There are no rich persons and no destitutes. Indebtedness is not known in this area. They meet their requirements by mutual borrowing and there are no money lenders. They have started using clothes like Gonds in the upland but the durable consumer commodities have not appeared in this area.

This area was part of the first special Multi-Purpose Tribal Development Block of Tamia, taken up during the Second Five Year Plan. However, no development activity has been taken up in this area except for one school which has been opened in Rater. As there are no teachers' quarters in Rater, the teachers do not stay in the village. They climb up and down everyday from the neighbouring upland village. There are two other schools formally opened for this area but are located on the up-land villages in the periphery. For example, the school for Chintipur is located at Kothodia and the school for the village Jad Madal Hara Kachar is at Hara Kachar which is a village on the periphery. It is reported that not a single child so far has passed the primary school examination from this school.

The variation of literacy in the Patalkot region shows some interesting features. The following table gives the relevant figures for 1911, 1951, 1961 and 1971 :

Variation of Literacy in Patalkot

	Population			Literates			%literacy		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
1911	509	595	1164	0	0	0	0	0	0
1951	485	505	958	9	—	9	2.02	0	1.01
1961	580	554	1044	60	24	84	10.23	4.33	8.09
1971	697	678	1375	56	12	60	8.32	1.76	4.43

Thus, the first effort appears to have been made after independence and some 9 persons were made literate. No woman was literate in this year. The decade 1951-61 saw an appreciable increase in the literacy rate which jumped for males from 2.02% to 10.23% and in case of females from zero level to 4.33% in 1951. The decade 1961-71, however, presents a completely different picture. The percentage of literacy not

only declined during this period, but even the absolute number of literates went down from 84 to 60. The literacy rate amongst the males fell marginally but amongst the females it was reduced to half. Thus, it appears that the educational system was not even able to make good the loss to the number of literates through non-use of skills and the neo-literates relapsing into illiteracy. The distribution of literates amongst different villages is also quite uneven. The bulk of the literacy are accounted for by the two villages having the benefit of a school while all other villages report almost zero literacy rate. It is clear that the educational thrust of the first decade after independence lost its force considerably in the second decade.

No scheme for drinking water or agricultural extension has been taken up in this area. People in this area are reported to suffer from skin diseases. This area abounds in medicinal herbs and the local communities know their use. They do not take their sick to any dispensary or hospital but cure themselves. It appears that some parties from Nagpur visit this area for collection of herbs particularly in a region known as Raja Ki Kho.

So far as communication is concerned, steps were constructed in 1950 to negotiate the vertical climb near Rater when the then Governor visited this area. These steps have gone out of use and are in a bad shape. There are 3 or 4 approaches to the Patalkot villages, one near Rater, another near Chintipur, another at Jad and so on. The communication between one village and another located at different heights is also through very difficult and almost vertical slopes. The steps or the footpaths are precarious and a person not used to them will find it extremely difficult to negotiate them. Even the Patalkotias sometimes get into accidents. Some fatal casualties have also occurred in the last few years. The river Dhoodiya is also not negotiable during the rainy season and, therefore, the villages on either sides of Dhoodiya do not have inter-communication. Even during the open season, the villagers prepare make-shift crossings of bamboos over which it is difficult to cross if one is not used to it. Thus, the area is as inaccessible as it ever was and the vertical step-paths are not easily negotiable.

This small group is a classic case of a primitive group caught in a difficult terrain which subsists totally on the local resources. Here the ecological equilibrium appears to have been disturbed because of institutional factors. The command of the local communities over the forest resources has been lost to the forest department with the result that they have to eke out a living surreptitiously. They have lost some fields which they were cultivating; they have to pay illegal gratification for shifting cultivation; they have to pay grazing dues for the cattle

just like those who live in better areas; and they have also to pay for their *Nistar* requirements like bamboos for constructing their houses, etc. While the tigers and bears have disappeared, the number of monkeys and wild boars has increased who are competing with the human beings for the limited natural resources. For example, the monkeys eat anything which a man can use and there is almost a struggle for command between the monkeys and the men in this area. Wild boar is also a problem for a number of crops. In the absence of a scientific approach to their problem, the limited resources also appear to be over exploited. The forest resources of those villages which are now deserted are not fully utilised while the resources now in the reserve forests are also under-utilised. Therefore, the effective area of the actual command of the communities has sharply declined which is resulting in the over exploitation of whatever they can claim to possess.

The institutional pressure and the pressure of adverse natural condition is being felt by the people and they are responsive to suggestions for migration to nearby forest areas. At this stage this willingness is more from the pressure of the Forest Department rather than of paucity of local resources. Left to themselves, they would not think of moving out, but as has happened in the case of some villages whose fate is not known, they may also be forced to go out if they do not continue to get necessary sustenance from their habitat. As they are hardly prepared for any thing better, if they are not provided with alternative lands their migration will mean their joining the rank of landless casual labourers in the other areas.

Although stray suggestions have been made by officials whether they are willing to move out, there are no concrete programmes. A casual glance at the type of land under cultivation in the areas outside Patalkot would show that there cannot be any possibility of their moving out. As one moves from the Tamia to Chhindi, all along the road, extremely marginal land upto the hill tops is under cultivation. There are big stones everywhere; the soil being washed away. The area will be completely denuded very soon, as has already happened in western tribal region of Jhabua. The possibility of settling the Patalkotias outside Patalkot, therefore, has to be ruled out.

Thus the tribal economy of Patalkotias has to be planned with reference to the resources within Patalkot. Bulk of the area, as already stated, is under reserved forests. The group has been subsisting on the forest resources and, therefore, the reserved forest laws are really a super-imposition on their local economy. The first step has to provide escape routes as the people are literally caught within the four walls of Patalkot. Those, who could, have already migrated and deserted the villages. The economy of these villages may, therefore, be planned as a

forest-based economy. Patalkot could be one of the major programmes for this area. Since the people have to draw their sustenance from this source, these plantations should be quick-yielding. Fruit bearing trees, which could give them subsistence, could also be planned. Similarly trees yielding light marketable fruits may also be tried. The people already draw bulk of their sustenance from trees like mangoes and *mahuwa*. There appears to be a good potential for better mangoes and other trees. This needs to be urgently studied and programmes formulated.

The Patalkotias being a primitive group will deserve special dispensation from the State. They should be free from the ordinary forest levies as is the case in Abujhmar in Madhya Pradesh. However, a carefully drawn out plan may be prepared for utilization of forest resources by the people. It appears that the people should be agreeable to such an arrangement because they are themselves quite aware about the detrimental effect of over-exploitation. *Dheiya* cultivation is being done by them surreptitiously which could be allowed as a transitional measure for some time. Alternatively, work programme may be formulated for the entire population within Patalkot so that they get adequate employment for not less than 300 days in a year. Looking to the small population and the plantation programmes which could be taken up in the area, this is not an over ambitious target. In the plantation programme, limited ownership rights could be given to the individuals. This will create interest among the people and they will tend plantations with personal attention. This will also give them a permanent foot-hold in the forest economy. Since the people will not have a right to alienate the trees and will have no right on the land, the basic property structure in the area will continue as it is and the State will have the final say.

The other subsidiary occupation is animal husbandry. The group is used to keeping milch animals and also sells milk products. The breed could be improved and optimum cattle population could be worked out with reference to the pasture resources. The pastures could also be improved by introducing better grass varieties. Besides, milch cattle, there is also good scope for piggery and poultry. Wild boar menace will need to be tackled. If some of the villagers could be given crop protection arms licences, the wild boar could be controlled. So far as the monkey menace is concerned, religious sentiments will stand in the way. Therefore, only time may help them in adopting some rational approach to meet the problems, if they become unbearable.

While there is no problem of communication, as in the case of other small isolated groups, the level of literacy is extremely low. Some voluntary organizations could be associated in educational effort in this

area. One or two ashram schools on either sides of river Dhoodia in the Patalkot may be established. Since the tribal community is small and the distances are not very large, there will not be much resistance to sending the children to residential schools. There may be an intensive 'citizen education' programme with the help of teachers in the ashram school. The ashram school could be the focal point for all educational activities and the teachers may hold some peripatetic classes in all surrounding villages. In the ashram schools, preferably run by voluntary organizations, husband-wife teams could be appointed as teachers. They may take suitable programmes for women's education.

It may be possible to open up this area ultimately for constructing an ordinary road reaching the interior areas, but such a capital intensive investment in the immediate future is not necessary. There is not much agricultural surplus or other marketable surplus in this area. The region is not very big and can be negotiated on foot by those who are used to it. The real difficulty is the almost vertical hill-sides where it is difficult even to walk. The first essential step, therefore, in opening up this area is to facilitate movement on foot by constructing foot-paths or where necessary cart-tracks. The rock is soft and there is danger of its being washed away during heavy rains. It may, however, be necessary that in more difficult reaches *pucca* steps with railings are constructed. The total investments on such steps, if they are well planned and limited to really difficult stretches, will not be very high. Such steps may be constructed near Chintipur, Rater and Jad. Another step to facilitate communication will be to provide suitable crossings on the narrow deep gorge of the river Dhoodiya. Since the river is not very wide, even small suspension bridges at 2 places may serve the purpose. The total cost is not likely to be very heavy. In the first stage, foot-paths with steps at 3 places and 2 suspension bridges may be adequate.

There is no problem of indebtedness as yet. However, with the opening up of the area and, thus, the natural protection being pulled down, leading to greater contact with the outside world, their needs may grow. The story of other tribal areas may repeat where indebtedness increases with the higher degree of accessibility. It will, therefore, be useful if a multi-purpose co-operative society is established for the entire Patalkot area which may provide for requirements of the Patalkotias. This society may also provide technical and management expertise for the plantation and other activities already suggested above. It may, therefore, have representatives of Forest Department, Animal Husbandry Department and the Co-operation Department. Thus, it may cater for credit and marketing and give technical advice on poultry, plantations, etc., for this small area. It may not be heavily staff-oriented.

There has been no appreciable effort on the public health or medical side in this area. Sometime back, a doctor used to visit this area but that practice has been discontinued. As already stated, the people depend on local herbs. It will be useful if their herbal knowledge is utilised and the local medicinal plants are identified. This may also be profitable side-occupation for some people in the area. It is reported that there are springs at a number of points and water is not scarce, yet there is prevalence of skin disease. There is no protected water supply. In those cases where springs are near the village-sites, they could be made *pucca* and the people could be dissuaded from the practice of entering water for filling the pots. In those cases where the water sources are at a distance, it may be possible to give small pipe connections to the village, as is very commonly being done in hill districts of U.P. The outlays on water being brought to the village through the pipes is not likely to be very high. An intensive programme through films and citizen education on cleanliness and health services may be taken up.

Even though the main activity of the Patalkotias may be forestry, plantation and animal husbandry, there will still be some land which they can cultivate. A programme of terracing the available land may be taken up. There is no possibility of tapping any water sources for irrigation since Dhoodiya river is hundreds of feet below the village levels.

TABLE I  
Variation of Village-wise Population in Patalkot (1911-1971)

Name of the Village	1911			1951			1961			1971		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
1. Gudhi Chhatri . . .	47	40	87	39	47	86	54	46	100	63	68	131
2. Ghat Linga . . .	61	64	25	50	45	95	10+	98	202	111	115	226
3. Palani Gail Dubba . . .	36	93	79	28	27	55	40	43	83	55	59	114
4. Ghana Saldhan . . .	80	85	165	77	75	152	80	71	151	81	89	170
5. Dhurm Malaw Domani . . .				21	16	37	8	72	20	23	15	38
6. Jad Madal Harraka Chhari . . .	116	113	229	44	66	110	74	72	146	78	73	151
7. Dorli Khamar Pani . . .				D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D
8. Khamar Pani Sahara Pachgol . . .				81	94	175	79	73	152	88	74	162
9. Jhiran . . .	30	42	72	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D
10. Dhodramow . . .	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D
11. Supdongri . . .	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D
12. Palani Sani . . .	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D
13. Chumtipur Sani . . .	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D
14. Dubak Kundi . . .	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D
15. Chirutipur . . .	46	44	90	43	44	77	35	45	80	29	35	6
16. Sukhbhandar Mow . . .	11	8	19	25	20	45	21	17	38	21	37	58
17. Ghogri Gujja Dondyri . . .	D	D	D	D	D	D	9	5	14	4	2	6
18. Karean Ruted . . .	63	75	138	77	69	146	81	72	153	134	115	249
19. Supli . . .	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D
TOTAL . . .	509	495	1164	485	503	958	585	554	1049	697	678	1375

\*D—Deserted



TABLE II

Variation of Sex-Ratio in Patalkot

								M	F	Female per 100 men
1911	.		.	.	.	.	.	509	595	116
1951	.	.	.		.	.	.	485	505	104
1961	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	585	554	95
1971	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	697	678	97

## The Kathodis : A Tribe in Transition

N. N. VYAS

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The Kathodis are an isolated primitive community in Rajasthan. They are a part of larger Kathodi or Katkari community which is spread over in Gujarat and Maharashtra. Since the Kathodis are not recognised as Scheduled Tribes in Rajasthan their total number is not available. According to 1921 census the total population of Kathodis and Katkaris in India was about 80,000. The number would have been doubled in the last half a century.

Both the names of this group are indicative of their profession, 'Kathodi' means those people who make *Katha* or catechu and katkari means a wood-cutter or a person who by profession is engaged in occupations like bamboo cutting, felling of trees, catechu-making and charcoal-making. According to even early descriptions of Welling and Robert-Heine Geldern, the Katkaris are 'people of the jungles who have no land of their own, no fixed and scanty profession. They are hunters, coal-makers, gatherers and sellers of forest produce, freshwater fishermen, field labourers and agriculturists' (Welling). According to another noted writer John Ferreira, there is little literature on Katkaris with the result that one has to go into wild speculations

about their origin and affinities. However they "still retain the traces of ancient stock from which they originally stemmed but seem today to indicate a considerable inter-mixture."

### *Migration*

The Kathodis were brought into Rajasthan by the Bohra forest contractors more than a century back. They were employed as forest labourers particularly for making catchu from the kher trees. In the beginning some three hundred Kathodis came to the forests of Western Udaipur. They were returning periodically to their native places. However, gradually they began to come with their families. They have worked hard in these forests and were also employed in other forests like those of Kota. They are now found in a few villages in Kota and Jhadol tehsils of Udaipur and Shahabad tehsil of Kota.

Like the Katkaris in Maharashtra, the Kathodis in Rajasthan occupy the lowest position in the social hierarchy. In Maharashtra they are considered lower than the tribal communities like Warlis, Dublas, Konkans and Kolis. In the same way they are treated as inferior to the Mēenas, Bhils and Grasias in Rajasthan. The members of other communities do not dine with the Kathodis although they accept water from them.

### *Village Study*

A detailed study of three villages, viz., Ambavi, Ambasa and Daiya in Udaipur district was taken up. A total number of 77 Kathodi families live in these villages, the highest concentration being in Ambavi. The average family size of Kothadis is quite small as will be clear from the following table; it is slightly more than four :

TABLE

*Average persons per Kathodi family in three villages of Udaipur*

S. No.	Name of village	No. of families	Population	Average Person per family
1.	Ambavi	41	178	4.3
2.	Ambasa	28	130	4.6
3.	Daiya	8	28	3.5

The study of clans amongst the Kathodis in these three villages is also quite interesting. None of the clans found in these three villages are common with the clans amongst Kathodis of Maharashtra. It appears that when they got culturally cut off from their original homes, they forgot their clans and perhaps adopted new clan names. Many of the new clan names are common with the Bhils who are the dominant community in this area. Some of the common clan names are Chauhan, Singada, Vagira, Nanama, Kharadi and Nadgiya.

Originally the Kathodis in Maharashtra spoke a dialect of Marathi. After their migration to Rajasthan they have developed a new dialect which is a combination of Wagali and their original Marathi dialect. In the three villages surveyed, not a single Kathodi was literate. None of them even knew how to sign. As their world view is very narrow, the educational effort amongst them has not been of much avail.

### *Social Organisation*

The Kathodi family is nuclear. The young man soon after he gets married establishes a separate family. Sometimes the young man may join the family of the father-in-law and help him in cultivating his lands. The Kathodi society is patriarchal where the male dominates. A woman in Kathodi family is not an earning member although unmarried girls may take some jobs. The women, however, help their husbands in preparing bundles out of bamboos cut by them and in bringing them down from the top of the hills. She also attends to her house-hold duties, but she never works independently outside the home.

The marriage amongst Kathodis is generally arranged. It is the father of the boy who looks for a girl for his son. The bride price ranges between Rs. 21 to Rs. 80. The marriage is celebrated by a community dance and a feast. Many of the rituals of higher communities have also been adopted by the Kathodis. A *mandap* is prepared and *saptapadi* around the sacred fire solemnises the marriage. Clan exogamy is strictly observed. Marriage with maternal sister is highly preferred. Divorce and widow marriage are allowed. However, in the villages studied not a single case of divorce was reported. This shows that the family bond is quite strong amongst the Kathodis.

### *Dress*

The dress amongst Kathodis has also undergone gradual change in the last one century. Earlier their males used only a *langoti*. Gradually they started putting on a short *dhoti* without covering the upper part of the body. Now they have started using short *dhoties* and shirts. The Kathodi

women earlier went without covering the upper portions of their body. They have a distinctive style of putting on their sarees known as *phadki*, which is very similar to the traditional Maharashtrian style.

### *Housing*

Kathodis live in small huts made of wood, grass and leaves. The hut is generally four to five feet high with a narrow entrance. It is rectangular in shape. In their design, the walls acquire a pentagonal shape. There are no windows in the hut and the entrance is constructed in one of the pentagonal walls. In the front of the hut a platform is raised which is generally square and is used for keeping fodder for animals and other miscellaneous items. There is no separate place for sleeping or cooking. The same room is used for all purposes.

### *Economic Organisation*

The Kathodis were introduced in this area essentially as forest labourers. Forest labour, therefore, continues to be their main stay of their subsistence. They have, however, acquired some land now. Out of the 77 families 40 own some land ranging between 6 to 10 bighas or between 1 to 2 acres. They also work as agricultural labourers particularly in the fields of Gujarati *patidar* agriculturists who need extra labour for weeding operation and harvesting. Kathodis have acquired the agricultural technology from the neighbouring tribes and castes. Many Kathodis follow the *Kunbi* technique of cultivation, namely, cultivation by the village community as a whole. They use ashes as manure in paddy fields. They also utilise the land near the bank of rivers for growing vegetables and pepper.

Forest labour is their main occupation. This includes working of bamboos, coal-making and other odd jobs. All the Kathodi families live at the place of operation making temporary residences within the forest and move to another place when the work is over. The working of bamboos is given to them on contract basis. The piece-wage rate varies from Rs. 12 per hundred bamboos of 15 feet each to Rs. 20 per hundred bamboos of 24 feet. The rates also vary according to the demand in the market. Women and children also help in bamboo work and during peak season, the income per family may be about Rs. 150 per month.

The Kathodis have practically given up their original work of catechu after the *Kher* forests got exhausted. For some time, they had to pass visible extreme form of struggle for existence the imprint of which is visible even now. At one stage, they even attempted to go back to their native place in Maharashtra. In this process they got dispersed and gradually settled in different villages in two districts of Rajasthan.

Minor forest produce, however, continues to be an important source of income for a Kathodi family. It is also a source of subsidiary food. The important minor forest produce for sale are *Pals*, *Mahuwa* and white *Musli*. They eat *Power*, *Surior*, *Mudi*, *Duler*, *Billa*, *Palm-stem* and *Kadwa-Kanda*. White *Musli* and *Mahuwa* are also stored for use during the periods of scarcity. They also come handy when they need cash for purchasing other essential commodities. They also collect herbs and wild fruits from the forest for supplementing their income and diet. While the married women help the Kathodis in their forest work, unmarried girls share the toil of gathering forest produce and then processing them for personal consumption or for sale.

The Kathodis used to hunt hares, monkeys, wild cocks, deer and a variety of birds. With large scale deforestation, however, this is now becoming difficult. The reservation of forests has also come in their way. Consequently, it is not possible for them to supplement their diet from animal food. They are also fond of fishing which they enjoy whenever they can get an opportunity. Kathodis use bows and arrows for hunting purposes. In fact, they are noted for their art of hunting and fishing.

The Kathodi is extremely poor and is barely able to subsist with the meagre income which he gets from different sources. The incomes are not only very low but are extremely fluctuating. This brings a large element of uncertainty in their entire life style. Some times they tend to be extravagant on their drinks which leads to further impoverishment. The estimates show that an average Kathodi family spends Rs. 332 on food, Rs. 56 on clothes, Rs. 56 on miscellaneous items and about Rs. 300 on intoxicants per year. The intoxicants include smoking (Rs. 48), tobacco (Rs. 12) and alcohol (Rs. 240).

### *Conclusion*

The case of Kathodis in Rajasthan represents a unique situation where a small community, through force of circumstances, got detached from the original group. It came to a distant land with reasonable employment opportunity but was left without sustenance when the resource got exhausted. It was not able to dissociate the low social position in its original home and came to be placed at the bottom of the social hierarchy even in its new home. It got into an extreme form of deprivation from which it could not find escape. It tries to take to other vocations but ultimately has now to depend on uncertain labour opportunities locally available. It has not been able to draw its strength from the local power structure and continues to be in the precarious state of existence. Special measures are essential which should address themselves to the problems of this community so that it can get out of this trap and join other groups as equal partners in the economic structure of the area.

## Dongria Kondhs of Koraput

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### *Niyamgiri Hills*

Dongria Kondhs are a shifting cultivator tribal community living in Niyamgiri Hills of Koraput. According to 1971 Census, their total population was 25,236. The Niyamgiri Hills rise steeply from the plains near Bissamcuttack and form the rugged habitat of the Kondhs. The average height of this area is between 1000 to 1500 feet, some of the peaks are much higher, Dwargudi being the highest measuring 4968 feet above the sea level.

If one starts from Bissamcuttack, the first Dongria village, Kurli, is reached at a height of about 3000 feet after 3 kms. of plain and 10 kms. of zig-zag hilly track. The entire Dongria country is divided into 5 *Muthas*, viz., (1) Kakiska Mutha, (2) Wadaka Mutha, (3) Pushika Mutha, (4) Kadraka Mutha and (5) Niska Mutha. The demarcation of *Muthas* by one Peter Saheb, the then *Dewan* of Jipur State, is an important event in Dongria's chronology. The next notable event in the folk memory is the construction of a road by Shri Gopi Nath Mohanty. The pace of development programme otherwise, however, has been rather slow.



The average rainfall in this area is quite high but its periodicity is not certain. Bulk of the rainfall is received from South-West monsoon during the months of June to September. The rainfall is heavier in the *ghat* portion. Nevertheless, drought is also not unknown. There is only one perennial stream, known as Gudgada *Nallah*, which coincides through various hill ranges of Niyamgiri and gets out at Ghatikona. This is the only source of drinking water supply for the inhabitants of these hills.

The climate of the area is cool and pleasant in the high plateau region. Rainy season is extremely unhealthy. The rigour of the cold weather is intense. Evenings during the Summer are pleasant. It is quite cold near extensive ever-green forest regions.

### *Flora & Fauna*

Niyamgiri had good luxuriant forest with a large variety of trees. But as the pressure of population grew, particularly in the north-western region near Bissamcuttack, there has been considerable denudation. However, some areas near Singhpur, Lanjigarh and Muniguda still have dense forests. The more forest important species are salt, teak, *bija*, *Mahuwa*, jack fruit, mango, *annal*, *kendu* and bamboo. Pure sal and bamboo forest, unmixed with any other species, are particularly found near Muniguda and Bhairavgarh. This area has extensive open lands with luxuriant tall grass. The grass is not put to any economic use. Bixa is used locally for thatching purposes. The forest abounds in variety of roots and herbs.

The forest has a large variety of animals and birds. But tiger and elephants are totally absent. With the large scale deforestation and practice of shifting cultivation, the villages are generally free from wild animal menace. However, panthers and leopards sometimes enter villages near the forest. The more important animals in these forests are deer of different variety (*chitar*, *sibda*, *kotra*), wild bores (*garias*), monkeys (*kajan*) and bear (*motibalu*). Amongst the birds fowls (*koyu*), peacocks (*milu*), pigeons (*parua*), parrots (*kiranga*), sparrows (*laipata*), kakoos (*kutru*), etc., are the more important ones. The parrots of this area are notorious for destroying crops. The area is infested with snakes (*ranchu*) and a variety of them like cobra (*onago*). python (*salpakata*) are found. Snake charmers often visit Niyamgiri for catching snakes.

### *Land and Economy*

Soil erosion is an important feature of this area which has left loose stones and petroles spread over large stretches making it unfit for culti-

vation. Stream beds, however, have good soil cover. The hill tops, have black soil (*kaditari bigra*) which is very fertile and is good for paddy cultivation. Stone clay (*kankanda*) and paste clay (*panka birga*) is also found in the hills. In some areas, coloured clay (*guid birga*) is also found which is used as ochre for painting the walls.

The community depends on agriculture to a large extent. There are 3 categories of land, namely *dongar* land on hill slopes (*haru* or *neta*), land adjoining the *dongar* (*gudia* or *penga*) and kitchen garden (*bada*). With the pressure of population, the availability of *bada* land is getting reduced. There is some flat land adjoining the *dongar* lands which is very fertile. The soil is generally black. But it is very limited and only some well-to-do families, who possess plough and know the technique of ploughing, can cultivate these fields. They are generally used for producing *dongar* paddy. The Dongaria Kondhs, by and large, mainly depend on *dongar* land.

The cultivation of the *dongar* plots is an intricate affair. The operation of clearing the *dongar* (*heladi*, *tulipi*, *manatu*) starts some time in the month of February and March (*Chaitra*). The entire family gets engaged in this work. The males fell the bigger trees while the females cut the bushes and shrubs. Each family works generally in the plot assigned to it. When the bushes get dry after a fortnight or so, they are burnt (*Nairundhi Manabu*). During this period, the entire Dongria country is dotted with brightly lit fires. Soon after the burning of bushes and shrubs, the soil is prepared for sowing. They dig the soil with *tahapa* from the bottom of the hill to the top. The ashes are then spread evenly over the entire area and are used as fertilizer. As soon as plants sprout, the Dongaria Kondh gets ready for protecting them. A field hut (*Ladi*) is prepared at the top of the hill which becomes the temporary headquarters of the family. Fire is kept burning throughout the night. They also occasionally hammer an empty tin box for making big sound so as to scare away the wild animals. In the day, they are busy warding off birds with the help of bows and arrows.

The Dongaria Kondh has made some progress in specialisation in shifting cultivation fields. The field is divided into a number of plots. One plot is reserved exclusively for *kandul*. These seeds are planted one by one with a definite gap between the two for allowing good growth. No other crops are sown in this field. In another plot, a number of crops like *mandia*, *kosla*, *jhudang* mixed together are sown. In some cases, they first sow root crops like turmeric and ginger and the mixed crops may also be taken in the same field. They take care to sow *kating* under the shade of trees because its growth is not good if it is exposed to sun. They also sow plantains in one yard where they grow vegetables like gourd, pumpkin, cucumber, etc.

The Dongaria Kondhs have learnt some settled cultivation practices from the Dombs who have settled in these villages with them. Some of them have started ploughing the *gudia* and *bada* lands where they produce *dongar* paddy.

In *badas*, they plant fruit trees like mango (*Amba*) and jack fruit (*Fansa*). There are a number of other plants also which each individual may grow according to his liking.

The members of a family work generally in their own fields. However, if a person does not have adequate manpower, he can seek cooperation from his neighbours. He is expected to pay *bhatia* either in cash or in kind which is determined according to the local custom. There is no strict division of labour between males and females. Males, however, tend to neglect their work particularly under the influence of liquor. The women, therefore, are prone to work harder than the men.

The level of agricultural production is adequate to give the Dongaria Kondh a reasonable level of subsistence. *Kosla*, *mandia*, etc., are the staple food crops which are produced for local consumption only. The root crops like turmeric and ginger and fruits are generally grown for sale. Hill paddy is also kept by the tribal for barter to obtain essential commodities like tobacco, cloth, dry fish and earthen pots. Even though the level of production is appreciable, yet a considerable portion of his produce passes from his hands because there is considerable incidence of indebtedness among them. He has to make payments to the creditors immediately after the harvest. Women peddlers traditionally come to their villages and sell a number of commodities on door-steps. The purchases are made on credit and payment is made annually. This suits both the purchaser and the consumer. He has also to make annual payments for the village services like the messenger (*barik*), cowherd (*goudia*), sweeper (*jhaduaar*) and iron smith (*nuli*). In this way his produce gets exhausted very soon in this payment and repayment. Therefore, he has either to approach again the creditor or depend on other gifts of nature.

The grains and other edibles are preserved very carefully. Seeds of all varieties, excluding roots, are kept in a big earthen pot (*daka*) which is carefully closed from above with clay paste so that it is protected from rats. These pots are kept on the second wooden roof (*attu*) of the house. The grains, other than for seed purposes, are kept in bamboo containers of varying sizes (*dunda*, *hangunja* and *tipuni*). The *siadi* leaves are spread over the containers and stiched. They are also pasted with clay and kept on the second roof. There is no commercial sale of foodgrains except by a few rich families. It is carefully kept for the days of possible scarcity.

### *Forests and Economy*

Collection of minor forest produce is an important subsidiary occupation. The tribals do not like to sell *mandia* and *kosla* which are their staple food. They reserve adequate stock at least for one full year, if they can. The minor forest produce, therefore becomes important for exchange economy. A large variety of edible fruits, flowers, green leaves, roots, mushrooms are collected from the forests which provide them substantial subsistence. They are good at honey collection. There are quite a few varieties which they collect from different areas in the forest. Honey is a greatly valued commodity which they preserve for medicinal purposes. *Salap* tree is also extensively found in this area. Its juice is used both as food and as mild intoxicating drink. Medical herbs also abound in these forests.

The Dongria Kondh is an expert climber. He is also an expert honey collector. Castor oil is anointed over the body before he ventures to approach the bee-hive. The edible roots are dug with crowbar (*sabana*), spade (*kodi*) and knives (*chhuri*).

The Dongrias are good hunters. They make automatic contraptions using ropes, sticks and stones, which may either hit or trap the animal. Different types of traps are used for different animals. They also use country made guns for killing small animals. Fighting dogs (*kasing*) are constant companions of the tribal in his hunting expeditions. This species of dog are caught from the forests and tamed for hunting.

A ceremonial hunting trip (*benta-hana*) is organised in the month of March-April (*Chaitra*) just before their *bihana* festival. It is a communal expedition comprising male members from one or more villages. The entire community is in a festive mood. Tuesdays and Fridays are considered to be auspicious for these expeditions. Hunting group gets divided into three parties. One party with hunting equipment sits at strategic points behind the bushes. The second party comprises younger persons who are more agile and bold. Members of this group conduct beat near the bushes and chase animals so as to bring them within the range of hunters in the first group. The third party comprises the *jani* and other middle aged persons who follow the first two and wait for their return. They perform the necessary *puja* and other rituals for the occasion.

The game is collected by the second party and is put together preferably near a stream close to the village. The *jani* first offers *puja* to the Forest God (*Lada-Penu*). He offers three handfuls of *arua* rice on 3 *bel* leaves. Resin powder is sprinkled over the same to the accompaniment of incantations for purification. An earthen lamp is lit and taken round the *arua* rice. A fowl is sacrificed and its blood is sprinkled over the rice lump and the

collected game. It is a dedication to the Forest God and other deities in token of their gratitude for the plentiful game and their safe return. The game is thereafter divided equally amongst all the participants in the expedition.

*Bihan Parab* is held after 3 days of this expedition. All the people belonging to one *mutha* are forbidden to do any work during this period. Just before the *Bihan puja*, the group bemoans the killing of animals and condoles their death.

The people fish in the only perennial stream of this area. They use fishing nets (*minha-jali*) which they purchase from the nearby market. Since the waters are shallow, they also catch fish with a piece of wrapper or they may hit the fish with axe. Summer and rainy season are good for fishing. There is no ceremony associated with the fishing in the area. It is a largely individual activity particularly with the children. *Magar minka* and *Kambedikandi minka* are two important varieties of fish found in the rivers.

Bird trapping and hunting are also quite popular and the tribals are good at that. The birds (*patan*) are caught through various devices or shot with bows and arrows. They are caught with the help of traps (*pata*) and variety of baits. They also catch them by using gum collected from a variety of trees like *nanyan*, *peepal*, *kera*, jack fruit, etc. They are fond of pigeons (*pandka*), doves (*kugure*), mongoose (*sari*), parrot (*kiranga*) and jungle fowl (*koya*) which are used in preparing special dishes. Bird catching and hunting is generally done by youngsters.

### *Domesticated Animals*

The Dongria Kondh keeps a number of animals including buffalo, cows, goat, and pigs. These animals, however, entirely depend on grazing in the forests and are taken care of by a Goudia. The animals are generally used for as offerings to deities on special festivals which are followed by community feast. The Dongrias are beef eaters.

A cow shed (*hadda*) is specially prepared for cows and buffaloes. It is a part of a Dongria house. Lambs and goats are kept in a second room (*dhapa*) of the house. Hens are kept in a basket specially for them (*Kudda*). Pigs are kept in the rear of the house in a small earthen walled enclosure.

The tribals keep as pets some birds like pigeons, peacock and animals like monkeys and rabbits. A small cell is prepared in the house for pigeons near the back roof. Each family invariably has hunting dog which is specially trained for the purpose.

Sometimes the Dongaria Kondh gives certain weeds (*kanga-papi*), skin of various fruits (*pala*) and straw (*chhana*) to the animals as nutrients. *Kosla* rice and *mandia* are given to the fowls and pigeons. Pigs are not provided any special nutrient. Dog is considered as a member of the family and shares the food in the house.

The animal diseases are cured by the Dongaria himself. He never uses the services available in the Veterinary Dispensary at Bissamcuttack. The concept of selective breeding has also not reached this area.

The domesticated mainly suffer from three diseases namely *pidika*, *baite* and *hoyante*. *Pidika* is a bruise which erupts on the hoof of an animal. The tribals use kerosene oil or powdered roots of *Biksa* on the affected portion. Some times the roots are also worn round the neck of the animal in the belief that the wound will get healed up as the roots dry up. *Baite* is swelling of the throat with cough. A broomstick is heated in fire and put over the swelling as a cure. Some times sugar-cane juice is also fed to the animals as a medicine. *Hoyauate* is another type of bruise which erupts all over the body of the animal. The twigs of *Bheru* tree are dried up and powdered which are applied on these bruises. Gammaxine powder is also now used for heating up.

The fowls and pigeons mainly suffer from *Jirate*. It is a type of cholera for them which may some times assume epidemic form. Fried mustard is fed to the fowls with water as a medicine. *Mahua* liquor (*Irpi kalu*) and paddy husk is also fed to the fowls. This disease is considered incurable when it affects the pig.

### *Food and Nutrition*

The staple food of Dongaria Khond is *mandia-gruel*. Sometimes the better-off persons also add *kosla* rice. Curry is also prepared from roots, green leaves and vegetable which are either brought from the forests or grown in the kitchen-garden. Cooking is very simple. Generally it is boiling and adding salt and turmeric. Oil is rarely used. Sometimes they use little til (*kala*) oil but mustard and groundnut oil are not used at all. Meat of various animals is also prepared simply by boiling and adding salt and turmeric. Now they are also sometimes using onion, garlic, and spices like chilly and ginger. This is the influence of their Doms neighbours. Frying and roasting is not in vogue as yet.

There is a variety of pots which are used for different purposes in kitchen. Now some metal utensils are also coming into use, though very rarely, and that too generally on ceremonial occasions. Food is taken in leaf-cups and leaf-plates.

Western corner in the sleeping room is used as a kitchen room. Under this corner, a wooden pot (*munda*) is buried which is supposed to represent the ancestral spirits. This corner is separated from the rest of the room with a half-wall. The kitchen is considered as a sacred place which nobody, except the members of the family, are allowed to enter.

In the family the custom is to feed the children first after which the males are given their food, the women are the last to eat. The males and females do not dine together in their homes but when in the field they sit together in a group and take food together. The male members, before starting their eating, put small offerings on the ground in the honour of their ancestors. They generally face westwards while taking their food. However, there is lack of hygienic sense as they are not particular in washing their hands before they start eating. Nor do they care to clean their hands and mouth after finishing their food.

While the ladies cook ordinarily, the males do the cooking on the ceremonial occasions. Foodgrains are highly valued commodities and they are never wasted. Even when cooked food is in excess, it is kept for future consumption although it may get stale in the process. The poorer Dongarias have to fall back upon mango stones, jackfruit seeds, roots and leaves from forests for a considerable period in a year. Oranges, *mahua*, ripe mangoes, pineapple, etc., also supplement their diet during their respective seasons.

Before the people start consuming any of the seasonal crops or forest produce, they give the first offering to *Jhankri*. None will touch a fruit or a vegetable before propitiating the deity even if it may be found lying on the ground. If a person falls from a fruit-bearing tree accidentally, people do not eat fruit from that tree. It is believed that the spirit of the dead man (*dumba*) dwells on that tree. Such a tree is generally given as a gift to a member of the *Domb* community.

The Dongarias of Nisha clan do not eat beef. They are supposed to be the real worshippers of *Niyam Raja*. The Dongaria community is divided into a hierarchy of clans. The higher clans do not eat from the lower clans but the persons belonging to the lower clans eat from the hands of persons belonging to higher clans.

The only source of drinking water is the *Gadgada Nallah*. Water is taken from the bathing ghats for drinking purposes also without any hesitation. Earthen pitchers are used for carrying and keeping it in their houses. They are generally kept uncovered in the corner of a room. There are no strict rules of cleanliness while drinking and stocking of water.



### *Drinking*

The Dongaria Kondh is found of drinking. He prepares a variety of a liquor beverages from fruits locally available like *Irpi Kalu* (mahua-liquor), *Durikal* (beer) *Pansa-kalu* (Jackfruit-liquor), *Amba Kalu* (Mango liquor), *Kadili-kalu* (Plantain liquor), *Gudkalu* (Molasses-liquor), *Mada-Kalu* (Salpa-juice) and *Kajur-Kalu* (Toddy). They also know how to add to the strength of the liquor by using roots and other indigenous elements.

Irpi liquor is taken throughout the year. Fruit liquors are seasonal which an average person may not be able to afford. Rice beer is also somewhat seasonal. *Salpa* juice is in abundance during the months of October to March. It is greatly enjoyed and has ample food value. There is no taboo about drinking either in terms of sex or age groups. The males, however, consume larger quantity compared to females. Excessive drinking is often a cause of quarrels, disputes and brawls in the family and in the village ceremonial drinking is resorted to during festivals like *Mandia-Pani* and *Macha-Parab*.

There is no sale of liquor in this area in an organised fashion. However, since the domestic preparation is banned, individuals prepare liquor stealthily and sometimes with the cooperation of the Dombs, particularly when larger quantities are required. Dombs are paid, according to the tradition, nominal charges and a share in the liquor. Sometimes, the Dombs also bring liquor from the liquor shops outside this area and sell it to Kondh either for cash or for credit. This practice has led to a higher demand, particularly during the winter season. People go to the extent of pawning their property including fruit yielding trees and turmeric orchards, etc., to get liquor. This practice has led to considerable exploitation of the Kondh.

Liquor is believed to be the sweet of *Niyam Raja*. It is, therefore, used in every ritual. It is also important form of gift. It has a high prestige value amongst the Kondh and indispensable for entertaining guests.

### *Conclusion*

The Dongariya Konds continue to live in comparative seclusion depending for their subsistence on shifting cultivation and the forest. The only contact of this community with the outside world is through the few markets located on the periphery of the Niyamgiri hills. The Dombs, who have been living with them now for a long period, have a greater touch with change and development. Although the present habitat is able to provide the community necessary subsistence, yet scarcity is not unknown. These unfortunate bad spells have been used by the Domb to convert their subsistent

economy into a deficit economy through credit operations charging high interest rates. The Dongariya is a proud descendent of the *Niyam Raja* and would shun professions like grazing of cattle although he does not hesitate in dirtying his hands. He enjoys drinking. But he is caught in the trap of insidious commercialization with their home preparation of drinks. being prohibited. A small beginning was made some time back to eliminate exploitation in marketing but it did not have a lasting impact. It will be necessary gradually to wean away the community from shifting cultivation. The potential of agriculture is comparatively small. His talent can be better utilised in plantation, crops, horticulture, etc., on the extensive land resources with good climate available in the area.

## The Chenchus

A. JOSEPH

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Concentrated in a small pocket situated right in the heart of Andhra Pradesh, about 9,000 of the 17,609 Chenchus live on either side of the major perennial river Krishna with the famous Nallamalai forests on the southern side and the rugged and densely wooded plateau country on the northern side. It is interesting that Chenchus, though surrounded on all sides by the most civilised and technologically advanced groups, still persist as food gatherers, digging roots and tubers and collecting minor forest produce. The Chenchu pocket, which is distributed in three districts of Mahaboobnagar, Kurnool, and Prakasham has the following details :

1. Tribal Area	552.98 Sq. Miles.
2. Population	9,129
3. No. of villages	74

The remaining Chenchus numbering about 8,500 live in peripheral villages and amidst plains population of these districts. They constitute a distinct socio-economic entity as they are mostly settled cultivators who

adopted the dress pattern and the ways of life of the neighbouring plains people. However, they are also backward in comparison to the plains people as their per capita income is as low as Rs. 198 and steeped in indebtedness with per family indebtedness of Rs. 117 and average land holding size of 4.1 acres. These Chenchus are mostly confined to the foot hill and low lying areas of Amarabad plateau and Nallamalai hills in Mahaboobnagar and Kurnool Districts respectively.

The primitive Chenchus are confined to the thick forests and steep mountain ranges whose altitude varies from 800 ft. to 2,500 ft. They belong to the pre-agricultural level of living exclusively depending upon wild roots, tubers, fruits, honey, yam and small game, with the digging stick and bow and arrow as equipment for eking out a hand-to-mouth existence. The male wears a piece of loin cloth while his female counterpart goes half-naked with piece of saree around her waist which usually hangs upto the knees.

They live in small conical thatched huts with the leaves touching the ground with a small opening which permits a man to enter in a stoop. In contrast to other tribal groups, the small settlements of Chenchus with five to six individual family huts are usually located away from the water source for fear of wild animals that frequently come for drinking water in the water source. Generally, the settlements are situated on hill slopes or high ridges or in jungle clearings. In consonance with their nomadic way of life, the Chenchus shift their settlements in search of livelihood either as bamboo cutters between December and May or in search of game, roots and tubers throughout the year. One often comes across a lone hut under-neath a cliff with a number of honey combs hanging from the cliff, as they are treated as hereditary property of the particular family. The primitive Chenchu has a tendency to live in isolated groups completely cut off from the outside world and seldom lives with alien groups. It is very rarely that non-tribal families are found living among these primitives. In certain settlements like Pecheruvu, Pulichelama, etc., the Lambada or Sugali pastorals who are not a scheduled tribe in Telangana area, live in close proximity of the primitive Chenchus.

The topography of Chenchu area falls under two distinct categories separated by the river Krishna. The southern formation, lying in Kurnool and Prakasam districts, consists of a range of unbroken rugged and fairly steep hills with an average elevation of about 2000 feet, running a north-south direction over a length of about 128 kms. and width of 32 kms. In these parts, alluvial and black cotton soils are predominantly found. The red and brown sandy soils occur along the base of Nallamalai hills in Kurnool district. Lead, copper and china clay are found in the forest of Nallamalai between Modugumanisala and Dongabavi. A part of Nallamalai forest experiences less climatic variations owing to its elevation

and dense vegetation. The rainfall is heavier in the western face of Nallamalais than anywhere else. The average annual rainfall of the Nallamalai region is 42 inches.

The northern formation, lying in Mahabubnagar District, consists of the plateau which is popularly known as Amarabad plateau. The plateau falls into two parts, the lower edge to the noreast, with an elevation of about 2000 ft., which slopes eastward to the Dindi river and the higher ranges to the south-east averaging 2,500 ft. On the lower edge, there are large cultivated areas in Amarabad, Mannanur and other villages, inhabited by populations of the plains with Chenchus living here and there in small hamlets. The forest-clad higher ranges are almost exclusively inhabited by Chenchus. The plateau is like the rest of the Nallamalai hills, a geological formation belonging to the Archean age and is made up of the nearly horizontal srisailam or iralakonda and stone-quartzite. The climate of the plateau is essentially the same as that of the central Deccan. The rains start early in June and lasts with interruptions until the end of September. The average rainfall is 713 mm.

A characteristic feature of the forests of the higher region is the great profusion of climbers such as *bauhina vahlii*, *vitis latifolia*, *pterocarpus-marsupium*, *terminalia tomentosa*, *hardwickia binata*, *abony*, teak, *acacia arabica*, mango and tamarind, etc. In sheltered places and particularly near the course of streams, bamboo, frequently intermixed with trees, grow in abundance. *Dendracalamous-strictus* is the most frequent species but *Bambosa Arendinacia* also occurs. Wild animals like tiger, leopard, bear, antelope and spotted deer, *nilgai*, *sambar*, *porcupines*, several species of monkeys, large red-squirrels and wild dogs are found in these forest areas. Besides these, pea-fowls, jungle-fowls, red-parrots, red minas and many other birds are also found in these parts.

The Chenchus are economically in the lowest strata. And their economic system is essentially that of a tribe of hunters and food gatherers. The Chenchu depends mostly on that which nature provides him. Indeed, saving for the future is alien to the Chenchu mentality. The Chenchu, devoid of any foresight, naturally prefers care-free and hand-to-mouth existence. To wake up in the morning with no food in the house, does not disturb him at all. He proceeds leisurely with his spouse to the jungle to collect roots and fruits satisfying his hunger, as occasion offers and returns to the village in the evening to share with his family all that he could bring home. There is neither storing of food for the rainy day nor any thought given for tomorrow as almost all food is instantly consumed. The wife and husband go with their traditional digging stick and collect roots and tubers like "*nulagadda*, *adavitamalapakulagadda*, *chamagadda*, *chenchugadda*, *korinthagadda*, *chedagadda*, *tungagadda*, *dondagadda*", etc., during the seasons in which

they are available. However, they have to practically starve during rainy season due to scarcity of forest produce. But his ingrained marksmanship come to his rescue. The Chenchu goes out with his bow and arrow in hand to hunt the birds, small game like hare, squirrel, black monkey, etc. When the Chenchus find any small animal like squirrel or monkey, high in the branches of trees or out of range in dense thickets, they chase it into the open by hurling sticks and stones until it comes within range of their arrows. When they score a hit, they make a fire in the forest, singe off the animal's fur and roast it without skinning, directly in the glowing embers or impaled on a short bamboo stick. If a man is alone, he may finish the whole animal himself or eat only head and legs and take the rest home. Chenchus also get fish by the use of bow and arrow. Stones are used as missiles to kill birds and squirrels and sticks to break the back of the Indian Monitor locally known as "Udumu" which is hunted mainly in the rainy season when it comes out of its hole.

The Chenchu diet is nutritionally very inadequate. It is ill-balanced throughout the year and lacks several essential nutrients. Only the intake of cereals during the summer season and leaves during the rainy season is satisfactory. The consumption of oil, sugar, jaggery, vegetables and milk products is very negligible. Three varieties of roots namely *chenchugadda*, *elavaragadda* and *mulugadda* are extensively consumed. The *mohuva* flower and seeds of *bauhinia vanhilii* are consumed in large quantities in their seasons.

Deficiency of Vitamin 'A', fat and calcium are a common feature, while protein and calories are deficient in the rainy season. Malnutrition is a rule rather than an exception.

The present day situation reveals that they could neither obtain their food completely from the forest, due to depletion, increase in the density of population, competition from outsiders and commercialisation of forest products, nor completely switch over to modern foods by taking up agriculture, animals husbandry or household industries.

The Chenchu social organisation is characterised by exogamous clans with animal totems whose killing or eating are taboo for the members of the clan. Family is mostly nuclear and unstable due to frequent divorce. A woman is free to choose her partner with whom she lives at her will. Marriage by negotiation, exchange and elopement are common types of marriages among the Chenchus. One peculiar feature of their social relations is the ingrained suspicion of blood relatives, especially brothers. Either on a hunting expedition or on honey collection expedition, the Chenchu invariably prefers his affinal relatives like brothers-in-law for lending him a helping hand. Authority and succession are patriarchal. Though residence

is patrilocal, matrilocat residence for a specified period is essential, especially immediately after marriage.

*Bhairaov* is the local deity to whom a small part of the hunted animal is invariably offered. According to the tradition they consider Lord *Vishnu* as their brother-in-law, since his consort in *Narasimhavatar*, *Chenchu Laxmi* belongs to their tribe. Their religion is conspicuous by the absence of festivals and elaborate rituals.

*Peddamanishi* (Elderman) is the traditional leader of the Chenchu settlement, but his hold on the community is very loose as no disputes are brought to him and his role is restricted to arrange marital alliances.

In view of the small size of population, scattered nature of settlements and their habitation in reserve forests, no tribal development block could be started nor any development activity could be evolved except the Chenchu schools managed by the forest department and the almost defunct forest co-operative societies. However, Girijan Co-operative Corporation could extend its area of operation in the Telangana area of the Chenchu country, while in Nallamalai forests of Andhra area, Chenchu Co-operative Society managed by the forest department still exists.

The Chenchus are yet to grow out of their food gathering stage, but in view of their forest habitation and labour needs of the forest department, some of the Chenchus are employed in forest coupe cutting operations.

Even earlier attempts to introduce them to settled cultivation and dairying did not succeed. As far back as 1945, the Chenchu reserve was created in Telangana area and lands assigned to Chenchus, besides distributing necessary agricultural implements, seeds, and milch cattle under the guidance of Prof. Heimendroff, the then Adviser on "Tribes and Backward groups" to the Nizam's Government. But the Chenchu lost almost all the lands assigned to them through alienation and once again returned back to his traditional livelihood of food gathering and hunting. Even in the Andhra area of the Chenchu country, which was also declared as a Chenchu reserve in the last quarter of the 19th century, attempts were made to introduce them to settled cultivation and dairying and land colonisation schemes were organised in 1956 at Bairluty and Nagalooty Chenchu *gudems*. Co-operative farming was introduced with an agricultural field man for technical guidance and a co-operative officer-incharge of the scheme. Even this experiment failed in view of their incapacity to adapt themselves to the complex agricultural operations. This shows the need for careful planning from grass-root level and evolving of a programme of development suited to the workways and thoughtways of these primitive people.



## The Jenu Kurubas

P. K. MISRA

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I took a quick survey of some of the settlements of the Jenu Kuruba in Heggadadevana Kote taluk of Mysore district. This taluk is located on the south western side of Mysore. It is the second largest taluk in terms of area in the district. Heggadadevana Kote taluk is considered to be one of the most backward taluks of Karnataka State. Transportation and communication within the taluk and outside are poorly developed. The density of population of this taluk is 88.45 per square kilometre which is almost the lowest in the district. The highest density of population in Mysore district is of Mysore taluk, being 610.00 per square kilometre. The tribal population in this taluk is the highest being 6686. Though this taluk is largest in size, the land put under plough is the lowest in the district. Of the total area cultivated, only 13 per cent of the land is under wet cultivation which again is the lowest in the district. 38.41 per cent of the land lies fallow. No major industry is located within the taluk.

The taluk is rich in forests. About 14.3 per cent of the total geographical area is under forest, yielding timber, sandalwood, etc. In addition, there are

a number of items of minor forest produce which earn a good revenue to the Forest Department. In all, according to the Forest Department, the forests in this taluk earn a revenue of Rs. 20 to 25 lakhs per annum.

For administrative purposes, the Heggadadevana Kote taluk is divided into five *hoblis*, namely Heggadadevana Kote, Hampapura, Antarsanthe, Kandalike and Sargur. The latter three are the southern *hoblis*, rich in forest wealth and containing the maximum tribal population. In this report we will be mainly concerned with the area covered by the latter three *hoblis*. Of these, Antarsanthe is the biggest. 23.8 per cent of its area is covered by forests and only 12.8 per cent is utilised for cultivation. In Kandalike *hobli* 8 per cent of the area is under forest, and 15 per cent under cultivation. In Sargur *hobli*, 12 per cent of the area is under forest and 36 per cent is under cultivation. All these statistics about the area have been considerably affected by the raising of an irrigation dam across the river Kabini at Bichanahalli, which has led to the submersion of a large area. About 25 villages had to be shifted to new colonies. A certain amount of land has been reclaimed from the forests to rehabilitate those people who were affected by the submersion. This is an additional factor to be taken into account in understanding the problems of the tribal people in this area. The full impact of the Kabini dam project on the tribal people is difficult to assess at this stage, as many of the villages have yet not shifted to the new colonies, and the full details of how many tribal people lost their lands and what they got in return are not available. But it can be safely stated that the tribals who were on the fringe of the forests previously, have now come much nearer to the peasants. The peasants are powerful on all counts ; the tribals being weak, they are bound to suffer from this exposure. There is a scramble for land in this area. The new forest land released for cultivation has yet not been reclaimed fully. There is some amount of confusion in the area. A situation of this type is certainly not very congenial for the tribals.

In this report I will be mainly concerned with the Jenu Kuruba. The population of the Jenu Kuruba in Karnataka, according to the census of 1961 was 3623. But according to a survey which was conducted by the Social Welfare Department, the population of the Jenu Kuruba in Heggadadevana Kote taluk alone is estimated to be about 6000. The census figures of the population of the Jenu Kuruba do not seem to be correct. But it is hard to comment on the estimate of the Social Welfare Department.

The Jenu Kuruba settlements I visited are Maldhadi,\* Nandirehadi, Machur, Karapurhadi and Udboor. Maldhadi is on the right bank of the

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\*The Jenu Kuruba use the term "nadi" for their settlements. Usually it is suffixed to the name of the settlements, but sometimes it is dropped, as in the case of Maener and Udboor.

river Kabini and is on the fringe of the Begur forest about 18 km from the Kabini dam site. About 3 km away, on the western side is the old Begur village. The Begur village will be under submersion owing to the Kabini dam and therefore a new village has been formed which is just adjacent to Maldhadi. In the neighbourhood of Maldhadi there are a few Betta Kuruba settlements and a new settlement of Jenu Kuruba has been formed called Jakkahalli. The Jenu Kuruba of Jakkahalli were living further south by the side of the river Kabini in a place called Gundre which has already gone under submersion. Maldhadi was a small settlement till 1967 when there were only 21 households. Now there are 46 households. The members of two settlements, namely Ametehadi and Mutikehadi, have joined this settlement and also a few others from other settlements.

### *Nandirehadi*

Nandirehadi is about 9 km south of Maldhani, deep inside the Begur forest near the Kerala border. There is a forest outpost located at Banurgadde. For maintaining lines of communication with this forest outpost and for the trucks to transport forest produce, a forest path has been formed by the Forest Department, joining the Begur-Sargur road to Banurgadde. These forests are rich in timber of the highest quality and various other forest materials. The forests are rich in animal life too, particularly elephants. Tigers are also found. This area is covered by the six crore national project for tiger preservation. One of the peculiar features of this area is that, as one proceeds from Maldhadi towards Banurgadde, one soon gets into dense forests, but as one reaches Banurgadde, the forest suddenly thins out and one finds agricultural fields in the low lying areas. From three directions the forests surround the fields; the southern side however, which merges with Kerala, continues to have agricultural fields. These agricultural fields are owned by the people who are called Chattamar and Chettiars. They have their houses on their fields. The households of these people are almost self-sufficient. The Jenu Kuruba and a few families of the Betta Kuruba live near about these fields, but in the forest. The location and the houses of the Jenu Kuruba and the Betta Kurubas, and those of the Chattamar and the Chettiar depict the areas of weakness and of power respectively. The story as to how the Chattamar and Chettiar have come to acquire reserve forest lands for private cultivation may not be difficult to unearth, but the fact which concerns us here is that good, fertile, lowlying forest lands have been in their hands and this has been the main cause of their prosperity. I was told by the Forest Department officials that these lands were acquired by these people long ago, and the Forest Department, by allowing them to cultivate the lands over the years, has *de*

*facto* conceded to them the right to their continued use. This is not an isolated case. On the other side of the river Kabini, towards Machur, the same phenomenon was noticed. At the time of my visit to Banur, in September and later in October, a lush green crop of paddy was standing on these fields. A number of Jenu Kuruba work as labourers in the fields of the Chattamar and the Chettiyar cannot successfully cultivate the fields and maintain their herds of cattle without the services of the Jenu Kuruba, the Betta Kuruba and the Paniyan. Further, their agricultural enterprise would not have been successful and their existence in these parts would not have been possible without the help of the Forest Department. This will be discussed in more detail later.

### *Machurhadi*

Machurhadi is situated on the left of the river Kabini in the Kakankote forest area, near the Kerala border, about 15 km from Karapur. One of the hamlets of this settlement is situated by the side of the Manantoddy—Heggadadevana Kote road. Crossing this hamlet and entering the forest, one meets two more Jenu Kuruba hamlets. Going further up towards the east there is a gradual ascent until one reaches on the top of a small hillock, and then there is a slow descent towards the river Kabini. Both banks of the river Kabini are flat lands, utilised for agricultural purposes. Standing on the hillock one can see these agricultural lands stretching irregularly into the forest lands. These lands are generally owned by the local peasantry. But how they have come to acquire these lands and what is the agreement between the owners and the forest department are questions which may throw interesting light on power and economic relations. Here again these lands are rich and owners appear prosperous. The tribals live in the jungles surrounding these lands. The owners of these lands live on their plots. Their agricultural performance, as stated earlier, depends upon the services they get from the tribals and the support from the Forest Department.

### *Karapurhadi*

Karapurhadi is situated on the left bank of the river Kabini, near the old Manantoddy and Heggadadevana Kote road. Most of this road has gone under submersion. The back waters of the river Kabini form the boundary of Karapurhadi on one side; on the other three sides are the agricultural fields of the people of the new Nisana village which has been formed to rehabilitate the inhabitants of the old Nisana village which has now gone under submersion. The most amazing part is that all the land surrounding the Jenu Kuruba settlement of Karapurhadi has been allotted to people who

were later settled in the vicinity. The Jenu Kuruba have not been given even a passage to their settlement. This settlement of the Jenu Kuruba appears to be pretty old, yet no consideration to the requirements of the Jenu Kuruba has been given. All the available land has been allotted to others. It was said that some of the Jenu Kuruba owned some land around their settlement, but all these lands were auctioned because they were not able to pay land revenue for several years. Before the submersion, this village was not very far from the Kakankote forest, but now it is far removed from the forest.

### *Udboor*

Previously Udboor was situated further south of Karapur on the Manantoddy-Heggadadevana Kote road. But this Jenu Kuruba settlement has now been shifted westwards. Udboor now is a composite settlement having several other caste groups. The land allotted to the various people is still in the process of being reclaimed. The area round is mostly covered by shrub jungles, and is being rapidly converted into agricultural land. When most of the land is reclaimed, the Jenu Kuruba living in Udboor will have little to do with the forest.

Thus in our sample here, two Jenu Kuruba settlements are located deep inside the forests on either side of the river Kabini near the Kerala border, namely Nandirehadi and Machur. Maldhadi is still on the fringe of the forests but peasant villages have moved near to it. Karapur and Udboor have been removed from the forest areas and now their location is in agricultural areas.

### *Nandirehadi*

As I have discussed elsewhere (Misra 1969\*) the Jenu Kuruba settlements are always divided into a number of hamlets, each hamlet consisting of close agnatic and affinal kin. Nandirehadi in Banurgadde comprises four clear cut hamlets. The first hamlet contains 8 households, the second 4, the third 11, and the fourth 3 households. The second settlement is about 2 furlongs away from first, the second and third are near to each other, the fourth is slightly away from these two, and about 3 furlongs away from the first.

### *Demography and Economy*

In Nandirehadi, there are 26 households of the Jenu Kuruba with a

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\*Misra P. K. 1969, The Jenu Kuruba: A study of the society and economy of a food gathering tribe. (unpublished monograph).

total population of 93 persons. Of these 43 are male and 50 female (Table 1). In the age group 0—10, there are 14 male children and 24 female children. There are 116 females per 100 males. Of the 93 people, 46 are actual workers. That is, there are 47 dependents which include 2 nursing mothers and 5 old people who are not in a physical condition to do work (Table 2). Almost all the children in the age group of 11—15 work to earn. The workers in this age group generally receive lower wages than the adults. Of the 46 workers, one is employed as a forest guard in the Forest Department. The father of the same person is a retired elephant *Mahut*; he is receiving a pension of Rs. 60 per month from the Forest Department. Of the remaining 44 workers, 11 have somewhat regular employment with the local agriculturists, the Chattamar and the Chettiyar. These people have employed 4 Jenu Kuruba boys for grazing their cattle for which they are paid at the rate of one seer\* (local measure) of paddy per day, and are also given snacks in the morning (a glass of coffee with *pule genasu*) and one meal daily. One of the boys is receiving 2 seers of paddy per day, morning snacks and one meal daily. On enquiry as to why the rates of payment differ, I was told that some agriculturists pay better than others.

As regards those who do not have regular employment, they have to really struggle for existence. They are mainly dependent upon the different works undertaken by the Forest Department such as making and repairing forest roads, clearing the forests, cutting of timber, and plantation work. When the Forest Department stops these works, the Jenu Kuruba have to face a grim situation. For instance at the time of the present enquiry, the Jenu Kuruba informed me that a certain work in the forest had been completed a couple of days earlier, and that the next one month the Forest Department did not intend to take any major work. This meant that most of the Jenu Kuruba would have to remain without work and they would have to depend solely on the forest during this period for their food. This is clearly indicated in the data I collected on their employment for two days, viz. the day of enquiry (30th October, 1974) and the day previous. Of the 33 workers without regular employment on the first day, only 11 could get work; that is the number of people working on that day was merely 52.2 per cent. On the second day, only 3 persons could get work; that is the number of people working on that day was just 34.8 per cent (Table 3). The Forest Department pays Rs. 3/- per day to a male worker, and Rs. 2/- per day to a female worker. Even when work is continuously available, the Forest Department usually does not employ persons for more than 4 days in a week; that is at the maximum a Jenu Kuruba can expect work from the Forest Department for about 16 days in a month. That is the maximum

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\*One local seer of ragi is approximately equivalent to one kilogram. 100 seers make one palla which is equivalent to 100 kilogrammes.

a Jenu Kuruba male can expect to earn from the Forest Department in a month is Rs. 48; in the case of a female it is Rs. 32.

I asked the Jenu Kuruba with whom they would like to work—the local Chattamar and the Chettiyar or the Forest Department. I could not get a straight answer because it was difficult for them to exercise their choice freely in choosing work. The Forest Department people can summon the services of any Jenu Kuruba at any time. The Forest Department would like most of the Jenu Kuruba living in this settlement and in the neighbourhood to report for work when there is work in the forest. At that time they would not like them to work with the local agriculturists. The Jenu Kuruba dare not disregard their instructions, as they are threatened to be thrown out of the forest. They say, 'if we do not listen to them they bring elephants and threaten to run over our houses'. A Jenu Kuruba is also not free to leave the forest and go away; the local forest authorities do not allow this. In other words the relationship of the local Forest Department people with the Jenu Kuruba is feudalistic. But the Jenu Kuruba do not have assured work round the year from the Forest Department. The wages paid to them for the days they are given work are exceedingly low, considering the present rise in prices. *Ragi* which is their staple food is sold at the rate of Rs. 1.50 per *seer*. That is with the wages of a day a man can get about 2 *seers* of *ragi*. An average household of 5 persons requires about one and three fourth *seers* of *ragi* per meal. If a Jenu Kuruba is assured employment for all the 30 days in a month, then with the wages he gets, he and his family will be able to have about one meal a day which will mainly consist of *ragi* and very little of anything else to go with it. But even this is not possible as their principal employers do not employ them for more than 16 days or so in a month. The Jenu Kuruba are supposed to fend for themselves when they fall sick or get injured or become incapacitated from old age. The Forest Department does not shoulder any responsibility towards them, nor does it provide any security to them. This is particularly amazing in the context that the Forest Department summon the services of the Jenu Kuruba as and when they require. The efficiency of the Jenu Kuruba in forest work is an accepted fact, and without the skilful and courageous help of the Jenu Kuruba, the life of most of the Forest Department personnel in the forest would be difficult.

Similarly, the local Chattamar and the Chettiyar cannot achieve much in the forest without the services of the Jenu Kuruba. The only difference between them and the Forest Department is that they pay the Jenu Kuruba slightly better and in times of crises the Jenu Kuruba can take some advance against work from the Chattamar and the Chettiyar. For these reasons, left to themselves they would like to work with the local agriculturists. But as said earlier, the Forest Department does not leave the choice of work



entirely to the Jenu Kuruba. Further, the tie-up between the Forest Department and the local agriculturists—the two power blocks in the area—is close. The local agriculturists cannot grow anything without help from the Forest Department. They cannot graze their cattle in the forest unless allowed by the Forest Department. The local agriculturists cannot take out the grains they grow out of the forest without the help of the Forest Department personnel. The Forest Department personnel in turn derive benefits from these agriculturists in terms of a share in what they produce. The burden of this tie-up falls on the Jenu Kuruba, the traditional jungle dweller who has been denied any claim on the forest and whose rights have been usurped by more powerful people. And the irony is that the same people who have usurped the rights of the Jenu Kuruba cannot exist in the forest without their expert services. Forest contractors and their agents are other sources through whom the skills of the Jenu Kuruba are thoroughly exploited, but that I will discuss later.

I have already shown, how much under existing conditions the Jenu Kuruba can earn. What they can earn is not sufficient to meet their food requirements and hence they have to supplement their food requirements from the forests. The forests can provide animals, birds, tubers, honey, fruits, etc. but the Jenu Kuruba are neither expert hunters or trappers nor are these activities permitted within the forests. Normally therefore protein food is beyond their reach. The only item which they can freely use is *genasu* (an inferior variety of tuber). Being an inferior variety of tuber, there is no demand for *genasu* and hence it is not commercially exploited. So fortunately for them, *genasu* is available in abundance round the year except the rainy season. They supplement their diet with *genasy*, and when nothing else is available they mainly depend upon it. But they say that one cannot live on *genasu* alone; after two or three days one is fed up eating only that. Other items which they extract from the forest and consume are bamboo shoots, called *Karle*, and honey. Honey is available only in certain seasons. Honey is commercially exploited and is one of the items under minor forest produce; the rights of extraction of honey are leased out by auction to private contractors by the Forest Department. I will discuss this aspect of forest economy later but suffice it to state here that one of the consequences of this is that the Jenu Kuruba are not able to consume much honey, though they love it. Besides, they are constantly under the threat of being punished by the contractors or his agents when discovered consuming honey or if a rumour about it reaches the latter. The contractor pays the Forest Department in advance for the extraction of minor forest produce and is 'naturally' interested in maximising his profits. All the minor forest produce literally belongs to him. Thus, most of the items available in the forest are beyond the consumption reach of the Jenu Kuruba though

they themselves extract them. *Genasu* is the only item, available to them and that is because none considers it fit to consume. As the Jenu Kuruba are hardly able to meet their food requirements through the wages they earn and as they cannot freely extract other items from the forests, they remain heavily dependent upon *genasu* and when *genasu* is also not available they have no alternative but to starve. Due to continuous exploitation of *genasu*, it is not all that easily available. The data I collected on their food intake shows that, on the first day out of 93 persons belonging to 26 households, 64 persons belonging to 16 households managed to get some cereals for their food; of them 20 members belonging to 7 households managed to take 2 cereal meals twice, and 44 persons had to content themselves with only one cereal meal. 29 persons belonging to 10 households had to mainly depend upon *genasu*. On the second day 49 persons belonging to 16 households took cereal meals; of them 18 people belonging to 6 households managed two cereal meals, 42 persons had to depend upon *genasu* and 2 persons had to go without food (Table 4).

Lack of enough food has led to severe malnutrition among them. Their stature seems to have shrunk. There is hardly an adult male or female who looks healthy. Those who should have been in the prime of their youth look old and consumed. Mortality among children and old people appears to be high. The data I collected from 18 households in this settlement on mortality among children shows that, on an average every household has lost one child. In one case, a woman delivered 10 children, of whom 7 died at different ages. Prenatal mortality is 5.17 per 100 pregnancies, but postnatal mortality is high, being 21.81 per 100 births. The total mortality works out to be 25.86 per 100 pregnancies (Table 5).

Members of two households were allowed to cultivate some lands in the forest. They said that last year they had grown *ragi* but the crops were destroyed by elephants. This year they had sown some *ragi* but the crops did not come up. One of the Jenu Kuruba in this *hadi* keeps goats. He has about 25 goats. Two other Jenu Kuruba in this *hadi* are keeping the goats of the local Chettiyar for which they are given one *seer* of paddy and one meal per day.

The Jenu Kuruba living in this *hadi* and in the neighbourhood are not covered under any development programme; there is no school, no feeding centre, no primary health centre, etc. in or around the settlement.

### *Machur*

From the experience of Nandirehadi it will be worthwhile to examine the conditions of the Jenu Kuruba living in another forest area. By road,

Machur is about 80 km. now from Nandirehadi; by using a short cut through the jungle and crossing the river the distance is only about 10 km. The Jenu Kuruba of Nandirehadi have relatives in Machur.

### *Demography and Economy*

Machur has 16 households divided into three clusters. The first two clusters are separated by a distance of at least 2 furlongs from the third. The population in this settlement is 63. As in Nandirehadi, here also there are more females than males, 35 and 28 respectively. There are 125 females for every 100 males (Table 1). In the age group of 0—10, there are 9 male children and 8 female children but there is a sudden drop in the number of male children in the age group of 11—15. There is only one male in that age group to 8 female children. Of the 63 people, 38 are actual workers, of whom 5 are between the ages of 11—15. Dependents are 25 (Table 2). 4 persons have regular employment with the local agriculturists. Of these, one is *Jeetha* (bonded labourer) with a local agriculturist from whom gets meals daily and one *palla* of paddy and one set of clothes annually. He has been working there for the last two years. The other 3 persons graze the cattle of the local agriculturists for which they also get paid almost at the same rate without having to stay in their employer's houses. The Forest Department does not allow them to choose work as they like. As in the case of Nandirehadi, they are always under the threat of being thrown out of the forest. The Jenu Kuruba say that their relationship with the Forest Department is bad. They say "the forest people tell us not to do this or not to do that but they do not tell us how to live when they do not give us work". The Jenu Kuruba also say that they are often beaten and harassed by the Forest Department people.

The Forest Department employs the Jenu Kuruba on daily wages, whenever they have work in the forest, and pays them at the rate of Rs. 2.50 per male worker and Rs. 2.00 per female worker. It is difficult to understand why the rates of payment for similar work varies from one area to another. In Nandirehadi it is Rs. 3.00 and Rs. 2.00 for male and female workers respectively.

Of the remaining workers (that is, 34) on the first day, only 5 managed to get work; that is in all 23.7 per cent people got work that day. On the second day, 6 persons could manage to get work; that is in all 26.7 per cent got work (Table 3). Some of the people complained that they had been sitting idle for the past fortnight or so. Fortunately, the situation is not so bad this year for them as they were allowed *khumri* cultivation near their settlement. I will discuss *khumri* cultivation a little later.

## Food

On the first day, of the 16 households, 34 members belonging to 9 households took one cereal meal, and 20 members belonging to 6 households took two cereal meals. All these people had done *khumri* cultivation; ever, in spite of *khumri* cultivation, 9 members belonging to one household had to manage with *genasu* only. On the second day, 21 members belonging to 5 households took cereal meals once and 20 members belonging to 6 households, as on the first day took cereal meals twice. 22 persons belonging to 5 households had to manage the day with *genasu* only (Table 4). As in the case of Nandirehadi *genasu* and *karle* are easily available to the Jenu Kuruba here also.

The people in Machur, as in the case of Nandirehadi, acutely suffer with malnutrition which appears to be mainly because they do not get enough to eat. Prenatal mortality is 5.66 per hundred pregnancies. Postnatal mortality is high, being 26 per hundred live births. The total mortality works out to be 30.18 per hundred pregnancies (Table 5).

## *Khumri Cultivation*

The Forest Department allows those lands to be cultivated from which timber has been removed and new plantation work is being undertaken. Such lands are allowed to be cultivated for about two years. It appears that the Forest Department does not have a clear cut policy as to who will cultivate such lands. In any case, it appears that the lower echelons of the Forest Department not only decide who will cultivate how much land, but also get some or most of the *khumri* land cultivated for themselves. This is undoubtedly surprising, but seems to be a convention 'to make the life of the personnel at lower levels of the Forest Department a little more worthwhile'. This concession in itself is wrong, but its concomitants are highly dangerous. First, the Forest Department personnel, by cultivating some land, deny the natural right of the forest dwellers to make use of the land; it is usurping their rights. Secondly, by cultivating land, the Forest Department personnel develop vested interests, and their other actions in the area immediately become suspect. Thirdly, as the Forest Department personnel do not personally cultivate the *khumri* lands, they have to seek the cooperation of forest contractors and the neighbouring agriculturists, and have to employ the tribals as labourers to work on their *khumri* lands. All these are beset with problems. Seeking cooperation from the forest contractors and neighbouring agriculturists means giving some concessions to them in return. Employing the tribals as labourers on the land (which should be cultivated by the tribals themselves) puts the Forest Department personnel in the

position of landlords and the tribals as their serfs. The tribals have no voice; if they wish to live in the forest, they had better abide by the orders they get from their 'bosses'. Considering these structural aspects of the social situation, who pays the Jenu Kuruba for the work they do for the employees of the Forest Department, whether the Forest Department pays on some pretext or the payment comes from the pockets of the employees, are relatively minor points.

Last year a certain portion of land was cleared near Machur, and plantation work was undertaken. That land was released for *khumri* cultivation. Of the 16 households of the Jenu Kuruba living in Machur, the heads of 9 households were given *khumri* lands for cultivation by the Forest Department. Of these, six heads got 2 *mekhs* each, two got 3 *mekhs* and one got 4 *mekhs*. A *mekh* is a small plot of land which is about 12' wide and 60' long. The rest of the land, which was about 10 times of the total land given to the Jenu Kuruba, was cultivated by the employees of the Forest Department. On one *mekh*, one can roughly grow 50 *seers* of *ragi*, if not destroyed by elephants or other wild animals. In all, the Jenu Kuruba get 22 *mekhs* that is roughly  $1\frac{1}{3}$  of an acre, from which they got about 11 *pallas* of *ragi*. One *palla* of *ragi* lasts for about 2 months for an average Jenu Kuruba family. The Forest Department employees cultivated about 3 acres more, from which they got about 100 *pallas* of *ragi*. Further, an idea of how much land was cultivated by the employees of the Forest Department can be formed by the fact that for harvesting their *ragi* crop, on one day they had employed 40 Jenu Kuruba. They were paid at the same rate as the Forest Department pays to its labourers. The local agriculturists pay Rs. 4.00 per labourer per day for similar kind of work in their fields.

The forest officials state that they try to give lands to the Jenu Kuruba but they do not cultivate properly and sometimes give away *khumri* lands to the local agriculturists, and that is why the land is cultivated by the employees of the Forest Department or else it is given to some of the local agriculturists. I asked the Jenu Kuruba harvesting the *khumri* land of the Forest Department whether it was true that they were not interested in cultivation and that they give away their lands to the local agriculturists. They said that it was not true; instead they would like to have more lands than a mere 2 *mekhs*. But to make it possible for them to cultivate their lands successfully and enjoy its fruits they would require some support in the shape of seeds, bullocks, ploughs; and they should get some work so that they can earn something during the period of cultivation. Some cases of people who had given up their lands to the local agriculturists was cited by them. They said that those people could not retain their *khumri* lands because they had taken money from the local agriculturists during the period they had nothing to eat. When the crop was about to mature, the local

agriculturists demanded their money back, which those people could not do. Perhaps they were given some more money, a trifle, and the standing crops were taken by the local agriculturists.

Later on, I cross checked these cases and not only found that they were true, but that fearing repression from the Forest Department, these Jenu Kuruba had to run away from their settlement. It was also revealed that one of the persons who gave up his standing crops on 2 *mekhs*, had actually taken an advance of Rs. 5.00 or so, and as he was not able to return this advance, he was asked to vacate his *mekhs*. For doing so he was given some coffee and snacks. This person after vacating his *mekhs*, left Machur also.

I have given these cases in some detail to show that the Jenu Kuruba have hardly any choice in the situation. Of the 16 households, only the heads of 9 households got *khumri* lands to cultivate. The others were also eager to get *khumri* lands but they were denied, because giving lands to all of them would have meant cutting the benefits of the employees of the Forest Department. As stated earlier, 2 heads of household got 3 *mekhs* each and one got 4 *mekhs*. One of the persons who had received 3 *mekhs*, on enquiry said that he fought to get more *khumri* land. He is a young man and to some extent is able to articulate his ideas. So he got one *mekh* extra and he got one *mekh* for his brother too. The person who got 4 *mekhs* is the leader of the Jenu Kuruba and father-in-law of the young man referred to. Not only did this man get, more, but his close relatives were also able to obtain more land than others, while some were totally denied. One of the effects of this is that it creates inequality and interest groups within the community which so far did not have such groupings. On the day the harvesting was done, this man was acting as supervisor of the work of his fellow Jenu Kuruba. He was seen moving with a small stick from one place to another.

### *Maldhadi*

#### *Demography and Economy*

There are 46 households in Maldhadi, with 189 people. As usual, in this settlement also there are more females than males,—100 and 89 respectively; that is, for every 100 males there are 112 females (Table 1). There are 21 male children upto the age of 10 ; the number of female children in that age group is 41. There is a significant difference in the sex-ratio in that age group.

Of the 46 households, members of 13 live in tiled houses. These houses have been made out of the grant provided by the Social Welfare Department.



The rest of the houses are situated around the colony formed by the Social Welfare Department. The houses in Maldhadi are distributed in 4 hamlets.

This is one of those settlements which has come under the intensive care of the Social Welfare Department and hence is of special interest to us. The Department gave house sites, and grants to construct houses. As stated earlier, only 13 heads of household were lucky to get this grant. Apart from this, the members of this settlement have been given lands, bullocks etc., for cultivation. There is a school and a tribal hostel, functioning for about the last 15 years. The hostel is also running a women's welfare centre for the last several years. There is a well dug by the Department which is the only source of supply of water for all the members of the settlement.

### *Agriculture*

In Maldhadi out of 46 heads of household, only 20 own lands. That is, more than 50 per cent are landless; and there is no hope that the rest of the people will be provided with lands. Of the 20 landowners, 17 have draught bullocks, 15 have a pair each and 2 have one bullock each. Those who do not have bullocks and those who have only one each were not able to cultivate their lands.

Last year out of the 20 households, the members of 12 households actually cultivated the lands. Of these, all except one got some yield. 7 of them grew *ragi* only, 2 grew *ragi* and paddy, one grew paddy only and one *ragi* and horsegram. Excepting for 3 households, the rest of the people got marginal yields in the range of 2 to 3 *pallas* of *ragi* or paddy. Three cultivators seem to be doing well. One of them was able to grow 6 *pallas* of *ragi* and 15 *pallas* of paddy. This Jen'u Kuruba has taken the land of his brother too and he is devoting his full attention only to agriculture.

As regards cultivation this year (1975) the picture is dismal. Of the 20 people who own land, only 7 actually cultivated the lands. Of these, only 4 expect to get some yields. In the case of the other 3, their crops were destroyed, either owing to lack of rains or by wild animals. The heads of two households said that they were not able to cultivate their lands because they did not have anything to eat. In another case, the owner of the land was restrained from cultivating his land by the Forest Department because it was claimed that that piece of land belonged to the Reserved Forest.

It is evident that the agricultural programme among the Jen'u Kuruba in Maldhadi has not met with any success. In the first place, the majority of the people have been left without any lands. Land is not expandable and it is unthinkable that the rest of the people can be given lands, particularly now when a large amount of land has gone under submersion and many



of the peasants who lost their lands owing to submersion have to be provided for. Those Jenu Kuruba who have lands and bullocks have not been able to make full use of them. Excepting the members of 3 households, the rest of the people divide their attention between whatever agricultural activities they can do and procuring their daily food requirements by working as labourers. The result is that most of them are able to give only marginal attention to agriculture (Misra 1970)\*.

Here, it will be worth pointing out that the approach of one of the persons who had taken agriculture seriously, and who could be considered as a substantial cultivator, is exactly that of any person in formal economy. Now he is out to maximise his interests. The people around him, that is his fellow Jenu Kuruba, are extremely weak and have no surplus resources to cultivate their lands and hence they are his first prey. He has already been able to grab the land of his brother. I understand that the land of some other people is also virtually under his possession as he had advanced some loan to them. His action seems to be a logical one because he is under similar pressure from the powerful landlords of the neighbouring Begur village. He has already lost some land to them. He cannot redeem the lost land as those who have taken it from him are more powerful, and they also are out to maximise their interests. In this rush for maximisation it is only logical that the weak, in all senses of the terms, will have to suffer. The logic of maximisation of an individual's interests has to be broken in favour of maximisation for the community for ensuring equitable growth.

Besides, after the Begur village was shifted near the settlement of the Jenu Kuruba, there has been a general scramble for land, and the land of the tribals is not out of bounds. In some cases, with the willy nilly collaboration of the tribal people themselves and in some cases by force, the tribal land is being actually cultivated by non-tribals. Such cases are difficult to document for obvious reasons.

### *Work*

Of the 192 people in the settlement, 90 are workers. Of these, five are workers between the age group of 11 to 15. The dependents in this settlement number 102 (Table 2). This is more than in the forest settlements. One of the reasons is that the tribal school is located near the settlement. Most of the children of school going age attend school where, apart from education, children are given food twice a day. The work situation in this *hadi* is bad. Out of 90 workers only 4 have assured employment. On the first day, of the remaining 86 workers, 6 persons could get work ; that is in all

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\*Misra P. K. 1970 "Economic Development among the Jenu Kuruba" *Man in India*, Vol. 50 No. 1.

11.1 per cent could find work. On the second day 11 persons got work ; that is, in all 16.7 per cent managed to secure work (Table 3). Most of the persons in this *hadi* would have been starving but for the fact that the tribal hostel provides food to all children in Maldhadi, and the women welfare centre provides food to all infants, nursing and expectant mothers.

### *Food*

On first day, of the 192 people belonging to 46 households, 133 belonging to 29 households could manage to get cereal food. Of these, 119 people could manage to get only one cereal meal and 4 could get 2 cereal meals. 39 people had to content themselves with *genasu* only and 20 people went without food. On the second day, 109 people managed one cereal meal, 14 two cereals meals. 48 people could manage *genasu* only while 21 people went without food (Table 4).

The Maldhadi tribal school has classes upto IV standard and has been running since 1962. But so far, none from Maldhadi has passed the middle school examination. So far 10 children have passed IV standard. Of these, 2 gave up their studies and 8 got themselves admitted in V standard at Sargur, Heggadadevana Kote and Begur middle schools. Only 4 are continuing their education. Most of the boys who gave up studies, said that they had to do so because of difficult economic situation at home. All of them are now earning their livelihood. At present there are only 3 boys studying in 3rd standard ; 7 boys who were studying IV standard have already dropped out. The educational programme has been a total failure. It has not aroused any interest among them. But for meals, the school would have had poor attendance.

### *Karapur*

#### *Demography and Economy*

Karapur was once on the fringe of the forest but now it has been locked up by agricultural lands from three sides. It has 21 households, all in one hamlet, an unusual pattern of settlement for the Jenu Kuruba. There are 93 people of whom 42 are male and 51 female ; that is, there are 121 females per 100 males (Table 1). There are 24 male children up to the age of 10 as against 30 female children.

They have no lands and they are mainly dependent upon the wages they earn. Of the 93 people 51 earn, of whom 16 are in the age range of 11 to 15. The dependents are 42 (Table 2). The Jenu Kuruba living in this *hadi* go to no school and hence, whosoever is in a position to earn, earns.

### *Work*

On the first day, of the 51 workers 17 could get some work ; that is 33.3 per cent could find work. The second day also the same number of people got work. None of the Jenu Kuruba in Karapur have assured employment (Table 3). In the figures given above are included those people who had gone to Penjahally for channel work and to Gundre for forest work. Eight persons went to Penjanhally and 2 to Gundre. In Penjanhally, channel construction is going on ; one of the contractors in this project is from the village Karapur and he has taken these tribal people for this work.

### *Food*

The situation regarding food for the people in Karapur is bad. On the first day, of the 93 people in the *hadi*, only 37 could manage one cereal meal, 21 got two cereal meals, 28 had to depend upon *genasu* and 8 had to go without food. On the second day, 29 people could manage one cereal meal, 21 got two cereal meals, 18 managed the day with *genasu* and 25 people had to go without food. (Table 4). For the people living in this settlement, procurement of *genasu* is not an easy task, because they have to travel quite a distance to collect them. They said that it takes them the whole day to collect one bag of *genasu*. They said that to get that much too has become difficult, because the soil has become hard owing to dry weather.

### *Mortality*

The people as elsewhere appear very weak, but comparatively the situation appears to be less severe than in the case of those Jenu Kurubas who are living in the forests. Pre-natal mortality is nil while post-natal mortality is 11.76 per 100 live births.

### *Udboor*

#### *Demography and Economy*

Udboor is another settlement which has been shifted and settled by the Government. It has two hamlets. It has 32 households. Members of 14 households here have tiled houses constructed out of the subsidy given by the Social Welfare Department.

There are 147 people, of whom 70 are males and 77 females; that is, there are 110 females for every 100 males (Table 1). There are 42 male children in the age group of 0-11 as against 46 female children.

## Agriculture

Udboorhadi people have received land for cultivation. Of the 32 house holds, 21 households have received 3 acres of land each. About 30 per cent of the people have not been able to get land, and there is no possibility of their getting it in the near future. Of 21 households, only 6 had a pair of bullocks for cultivation; but last year of 21 households, 19 cultivated their lands. Two people stated categorically that they could not cultivate their lands as they did not have draught animals. The people who cultivated their lands mainly grew *ragi*, and some also had tried horsegram. They got *ragi* yield in the range of 1 *palla* to 4 *pallas*. This year (1975) it has been rather bad; only members of 5 households have cultivated their lands. Many of the people did not try at all because the rains did not come in time. Some tried but their crops totally failed. Failure of this year's crop has caused a considerable problem to them because the Jenu Kuruba living here have very little access to forests.

## Work

Of the 147 people in Udboor, there are 78 workers of whom 16 are less than 16 years old. The dependents are 68 (Table 2). None in this settlement has an assured employment. On the first day, of the 79 workers only 24 could get work; that is, in all 30.4 per cent managed to get work. On the second day the condition was worse for only 14 could get work; that is, in all 17.7 per cent could find work (Table 3). Some of the people reported that they had not been able to get work for the past one week or so.

## Food

If the crops were successful, even though work might not have been there, they could have pulled on for some time; but now starvation is looking straight into their faces. On the first day, out of 147 people only 104 could managed one cereal meal, 14 got two cereal meals, 20 had to depend upon *genasu* and some leafy vegetables, and 9 had to go without food. On the second day, 68 got one cereal meal, 14 managed two cereal meals, 23 had to get along with *genasu* and 42 went without food (Table 4).

Lack of food has affected their health badly. Pre-natal mortality is nil but post-natal mortality is 24.44 per 100 live births.

## Education

There is a school in Udboor. It started in 1962-63. From this school no Jenu Kuruba boy or girl has passed middle school examination. The

attendance of the Jenu Kuruba children in school is poor. The teacher says that she has been doing her utmost to get the children to school but they do not attend regularly. This is somewhat surprising because as in Maldhadi, if for nothing else, the children should come to school at least for food. Food is scarce in the homes of the Jenu Kuruba. Some of the older Jenu Kuruba reported that there is hardly any teaching done in the school; so much so that one Jenu Kuruba said 'though my child has been attending the school for the last several years he is not able to write his name'. They said that the food given in the school was meagre. The sanctioned strength of the school is 75 ; but the day I visited this school there were only about 42 students in the school. The most surprising thing was that the students in the one row school were not sitting according to their classes but communitywise. The Jenu Kuruba children were in one row, Yerawa children in another row and Odiga children in yet another.

### *Skills of the Jenu Kuruba*

The neighbouring population, including the next door tribals, the Betta Kuruba, consider the Jenu Kuruba as expert forestmen. They are known to be expert in honey and *genasu* collection. Their skill in cutting timber and clearing forests are widely recognised. They are clever tree climbers. This ability helps them to collect honey and also saves them from wild animals. For example, they said that if one is chased by an elephant one should climb a big tree, because small trees are uprooted by elephants. But while one is chased by a bear, one should climb a thin tree because bears cannot climb up a thin tree. They are good in trapping and training elephants. The Jenu Kuruba say that elephant work is their tribe's profession. While talking to an old Jenu Kuruba man, when the talk veered on to elephants, there was joy on his face as he spoke of the many ways elephants can be trapped. When I asked him whether this could be done by the Betta Kuruba, he said with a certain amount of pride, that merely on seeing an elephant the Betta Kuruba run away. I asked him whether, since the elephants are so big and powerful and the Jenu Kuruba so small, they are afraid of the elephants; he replied that elephants may have power but the Jenu Kuruba have *budhi* (wisdom). He said that elephant's eyes are converging whereas the eyes of men are wide angled and so men can see widely. Men should take the advantage of this difference. It was pointed out by the Jenu Kuruba that elephants run straight very well but they have no sight in their left eyes. So, to escape a chasing elephant, they turn left and can go almost to the back of the elephant. Repetition of this trick twice or thrice exasperates the elephant and it usually runs away.

The Jenu Kuruba know the forests well. They are fearless and go about in the forest without any arms. They are excellent guides and have consider-

able knowledge of the animals which abound in the forests. They have good knowledge of the habits of animals, their strong and weak points, and use their knowledge for their survival in the forests. In a nutshell, they like the forest and like to do forest work such as honey collection, timber cutting, tracking in forests, trapping and training elephants. It was pointed out by one of the Jenu Kuruba that one of the reasons the Jenu Kuruba are not successful in agriculture is that both sowing and harvesting time coincides with the honey season. It is difficult for the Jenu Kuruba if the agricultural work at such crucial times is neglected. Honey collection work is hazardous. It requires strong guts, expertise in climbing trees, quick and intelligent reflexes, supple body and invention of new techniques. Very few people other than the Jenu Kuruba, will dare to collect honey in dense forests. For it is to be collected in the rainy season, and *hejjenu* a particular variety of honey which is available in large quantity, has to be collected in total darkness. Under these conditions it is not easy to go inside the forests, particularly because animals like elephants, bears etc. are also fond of honey. The danger of poisonous snakes is no less. The task becomes still more hazardous because *hejjenu* is collected from the combs which are formed on tall trees. Climbing trees in total darkness inside the forests in the rainy season is no easy task.

In spite of all this, the Jenu Kuruba take honey collection as a sport; they know the behaviour of the bees and have developed many techniques for collecting honey as efficiently as possible. They have a gradation of different varieties of honey, according to its taste, density and its effect on the body. They know when to go into the forests to collect honey. They prepare plans before going into the jungles to collect honey and they have division of labour among themselves. It is not always possible to climb tall trees or reach honeycombs in a tree; at such times they either make scaffoldings or climb the neighbouring trees and from there, with the help of bamboos, reach to the required spot. Once the honeycomb has been collected, it has to be brought down safely without much loss of honey. This they are able to do with remarkable success, by taking the help of bamboos, ropes etc., and by making pulleys out of them.

Because of all these abilities, the Jenu Kuruba are indispensable to the Forest Department and to the forest contractors. The latter in particular make huge profits through the skills of Jenu Kuruba while the Jenu Kuruba themselves are left to starve.

### *Minor Forest Produce*

There are about 15 different items which are considered as minor forest produce (MFP), the rights of extraction of which are leased out for every

two years by the Forest Department. For 1974-75, the lease for extraction of MFP was given to a private contractor for Rs. 23,000 in an open bidding. A conservative estimate is that the contractor will make at least a profit of Rs. 50,000 each year. These contractors employ a number of agents who are strategically placed so that the produce for which he has taken the contract is not taken out of the forests by anyone else. The Jenu Kuruba collect the various MFP and hand it over to the agents. Most of the time, the agents pay in advance or when the Jenu Kuruba bring the these agents is rock bottom. For example, a Jenu Kuruba is paid Rs. 2.00 perbottle of honey; for a bag of turmeric Rs. 8.00; for a bag of tamarind Rs. 12; for a bag of silk cotton Rs. 8.00; for a pair of deer horns 50 p. etc. The Jenu Kuruba have never any surplus, and they are always badly in need of money to buy food for themselves and so they sell MFP at whatever price the agents offer them.

It is the agents who keep the accounts of the advances the Jenu Kuruba take from them, and all this accounting is beyond their comprehension, with the result they are always the loser. Sometimes when the Jenu Kuruba demand more from the agent they get angry and they also beat them. One of the Jenu Kuruba said that all the contractors 'whether this or that are cheats'. He said that some other people in the area pay better if MFP is sold to them but that is possible only if the goods are stealthily supplied to them. He said that some Jenu Kuruba do this underhand trade and he emphasised that they should do it if they can manage it.

The Forest Department say that some of the Jenu Kuruba are in league with sandalwood smugglers, elephant poachers etc. It is quite possible that they are, because without their help nothing can be achieved inside the forests. The smugglers must be luring them with better payments etc., to exploit them as well as the forest wealth. From the point of view of the Jenu Kuruba, the contractors and their agents, Forest Department personnel, the local agriculturists and the smugglers of forest wealth all stand at the same level. Some are bad and others are very bad. The forest, which they think is theirs, is in reality not so.

Before this section is concluded, it will be worthwhile to relate a case of money lending which will throw some light on the relationship of the Jenu Kuruba with the peasants. While I was doing field work in Udboor settlement, I noticed a middle aged peasant woman sitting in front of the house of a Jenu Kuruba. She was sitting in an rather aggressive mood and once in a while she was shouting. On enquiry, she told me that some five or six years earlier she had advanced a sum of Rs. 12 to one Bomma, Yajaman of Udboor settlement. This advance was for the work which Bomma was asked to do in her agricultural fields. According to her, Bomma did not complete the work, and therefore, she has been demanding



back the advance paid to him which he had not returned. According to Bomma this account was 15 to 20 years old. He had done work in her fields several times. He had taken advances from her for which he had performed the work but she always claimed that some balance was remaining. The woman was threatening that if he did not return the advance she would get her menfolk and they would teach him a lesson. Possibly they may do it, and Bomma and his son may have to go again to do the work against some mythical or actual advance which he might or might not have taken. If an account of Rs. 12 could not be cleared over several years, it will be no surprise if Bomma and his son are never able to straighten the accounts. Some balances would always remain. The issue of balances, is not important in itself, but it is a reflection of the social relationship between the Jenu Kuruba and the peasants. The Jenu Kuruba themselves are not in a position to change this kind of social relationship and as long as that does not happen, there always will remain some balance which they will have to pay through their sweat.

### *Conclusion*

The Jenu Kuruba whether living inside or outside the forests are facing a pretty grim situation. The tribals who are living inside the forests have not been covered by any welfare programme. It is a tragedy and an irony that in the same forest there is a multi crore programme for the preservation of tigers called 'Project Tiger', but there is no comparable project for the Jenu Kuruba who have been living there for ages.

The Jenu Kuruba living in Maldhadi, Karapur and Udboor have now been totally exposed to neighbouring peasant villages. This is a new situation. Hitherto, their interaction with the peasants was minimal and they were heavily depending upon forests; but now the Jenu Kuruba of the settlements like Karapur and Udboor are completely cut off from the forests. Having no anchorage and being the weakest, this situation is bound to weaken them further. They have no spokesman of their own, and there has been no effort from any quarter to mobilize them.

The assistance which the government has given to them has been so limited that they are nowhere near take-off point. The assistance being limited, half-hearted, rather unplanned and devoid of any ideology, it has made them only depend more on it. For instance, there has been some effort on the part of the government to promote agriculture among the Jenu Kuruba. But all the Jenu Kuruba have not been given lands. Those who have received land have not been able to make full use of it for various reasons, the major one being that they do not have enough resources to cultivate, apart from the fact that they are not skilled in agricultural work

and have values which are not compatible with settled agriculture. If most of them had been successful in agricultural activity they would have wanted more land. A few of them who have been successful in agriculture are now acting in a way which may help them individually, but not the community of the Jenu Kuruba. They are grabbing the lands of their own people and are mainly interested in maximising their own interests. It would have been idle to expect that they would have acted otherwise. The social situation around them on one side is feudalistic and on the other is based on inequality and self aggrandisement. This is very well illustrated by the following classic example.

A Jenu Kuruba in one of the settlements had received Rs. 5,000 as compensation from the government because his land had gone under submersion in the back waters of the river Kabini. With this amount, he cleared some of his previous loans, bought clothes for himself and his family etc., and the remaining Rs. 3000 he deposited in a bank. Meanwhile he got married again. He now has two wives, four children by his first wife and one child by his second. The day I visited the *hadi*, this man was relaxing in his house while four Jenu Kuruba were clearing a plot of land nearby. It turned out that these four Jenu Kuruba were working for this man, and he was paying them wages at the same rate as the local landlords pay their agricultural labourers. He said that it was better to employ his own fellowmen, because they do not work simply according to scheduled hours of work. They start work early and go late, and it was easy to control them. He made it very clear that he himself does not work any more. This is a kind of development which raises several basic questions. It will make some people substantially rich but increase poverty for most of the people for one simple reason—apart from several others—that resources are extremely limited in the area.

The question then is why public money and energy should be spent for enhancing the self-interest of a few individuals, and that too at the cost of the majority of the people. This brings us to comment on the philosophy behind the development programme undertaken by the government. The government distributes lands to the tribals, gives them bullocks, seeds etc., runs educational institutions, provides food to the children etc., but there is no effort to emphasize the perspective for these development programmes. More than this there is neither any thinking nor any effort to visualize what should be the role of the Jenu Kuruba in the whole scheme of development, how best they can be made conscious of their rights and obligations, and how they can be mobilized. All these issues have been shown beneath the carpet. Each development programme runs in isolation from the others. Without an ideology, perspective or thrust, the programmes soon degenerate into departmental activity where it is important to keep the show running rather than care about the effect of show. That is the teacher may

be present in a school; whether he teaches or not is a different matter, not to speak of what he teaches. Similarly land is given without caring to know whether the same can be utilised or not. This, I consider, is not merely due to lack of systematic planning but something deeper, and that is the premise on which development planning is based. The premise, as one can discern, is economic development, and it is assumed that rest of the things will take care of themselves. It ought to be known by this time that poverty is not merely the lack of certain amount of goods; it is basically the relation between people. One has to realize what kind of social relations the agriculture development programme as being pursued will promote. It is obvious that it will promote the kind of social relations as are evident in the case which has been just cited. The Jenu Kuruba so far did not have the problem of inequality and interest groups among themselves but now, owing to the development programmes, social relations based on inequality and interest groups are emerging among them. Emergence of such relationship, in a context of scarcity of resources, may benefit a few individuals but certainly it would accentuate the problems of the majority of the Jenu Kuruba.

It has been seen that in spite of all the programmes initiated by the government the Jenu Kuruba are in no better position than before excepting a few individuals. As in these programmes there has been no stress on the skills of the Jenu Kuruba a rich resource which has been left untapped—they are systematically becoming more and more dependent upon the few morsels which are thrown into their mouths. They are fast losing their sense of initiative—exactly the opposite of what a development programme should achieve.

There has not been any programme to run any small scale industry. There are enough resources in the forests. Those Jenu Kuruba who live in the forest or on the fringe of it are exploited by the local agriculturists, the Forest Department and private contractors. Each one of them is critically dependent upon the specialised knowledge of the Jenu Kuruba but it is the latter who get the least in return. It is as if possession of these skills disqualifies the Jenu Kuruba from crossing the threshold of the position in which they are. They have lived in these forests since time immemorial. It is they who have preserved the forest up till now by their 'rational' approach in exploiting the forests and it is only they who think that forests are their home. An old Jenu Kuruba in a forest settlement was asked whether he would like to settle in a village outside the forests. He looked up towards the tall trees in front of him and said that he had grown up with those trees; how could he leave them and go elsewhere. As for the rest of the people, none likes to live there; they come to forests to perform certain jobs and to exploit the forest resources to maximise their individual interests;

then they get lost in cities or elsewhere with the wealth they had earned from the forests.

It is surprising that the right of extraction of minor forest produce is leased out to private contractors. It is against the interests of the Jenu Kuruba and is also depleting the resources of the forests in many ways. Extraction of minor forest produce at best can be a cooperative venture and its benefits should be shared by the forest dwellers. It is also surprising that the forest department which earns a revenue of Rs. 20 to 25 lakhs annually does not make any investment on the welfare of their principal workers. Their wage policy is irregular and is against many principles which the government itself has laid down from time to time. The Forest Department employs the forest dwellers as and when they need their services, but gives them no security of employment. Those who are the most skilled foresters are the most insecure. The employment survey shows that the overwhelming majority of the Jenu Kuruba remain unemployed on any day. The Jenu Kuruba have no surplus. The day they do not get work they do not get cereal food, and a large number of people go without meals. They depend upon *genasu* or starve. Some who get work can manage only one cereal meal; there are only a few who can afford to have two cereal meals a day. Under these circumstances the conditions of the sick and the old are difficult indeed. They manage their days with *genasu* and leafy vegetables. For some, even collection of *genasu* is not possible. During harvesting time they pick up left over ragi grains one by one from the fields. The government has launched a scheme of old age pensions for the tribals, but the fate of this scheme is the same as that of most of the government programmes.

Frequent starvation and insufficient food has affected their health. As pointed out earlier, most of them appear consumed. Juvenile mortality is higher, and it is highest in one of the forest settlements. Juvenile mortality, taking all the settlements together, is 22.93 per cent which does not show any significant difference between the settlements located in the forest and outside the forest. A systematic health survey would reveal the consequences of continued malnutrition. An extensive genetic study is required to go into the question as to why the sex ratio is becoming disbalanced in their case; there are consistently more female than males in all the five settlements studied in the present sample.

The education programme is the most crucial for their development. But this programme, as it has been carried out, has been an utter failure. It appears no serious thought has been given to the content of education. Even if the present education were to be successful, it would have made the Jenu Kuruba learn those things which would hardly have any relevance in the context in which they live. In spite of the education programme running

for last 15 years or so, there is hardly any educated Jenu Kuruba. The educational institutions called Ashram Schools have become seats of corruption. Lethargy and care-not is the order of the day. Supplies of stationery etc., which ought to be received in the beginning of the session are received at the end. These schools fortunately supply meals to the children. This programme somehow is continuing and has saved many of the children from complete starvation.

TABLE I  
Population

	Male	Female	Females per 100 Males
1. Nandirehadi . . . . .	43	50	116
2. Machur . . . . .	28	35	125
3. Maldhadi . . . . .	89	100	112
4. Karapur . . . . .	42	51	121
5. Udboor . . . . .	70	77	110

TABLE 2  
Workers and Non-Workers

Name of settlement	Total No. of persons	Total No. of workers (10—years)	No. of dependents per 100 workers
1. Nandirehadi . . . . .	93	46	102
2. Machur . . . . .	63	38	66
3. Maldhadi . . . . .	192	90	113
4. Karapur . . . . .	93	51	82
5. Udboor . . . . .	147	79	86

TABLE 3  
Employment Position of the Jenu Kuruba

Name of the settlement	Total No. of house- holds	Total No. of persons	Total No. of workers (10+ years)	Percent- age	Total No. of workers having assured employ- ment	Total No. of workers employed on first day	Percent- age of workers who got work on first day (Cols. 6+7)	Total No. of workers employed on second day	Percent- age of workers who got work on second day (Cols. 6+9)
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Nandirehadi . . . . .	26	93	46	(49.5)	13 (28.2)	11	52.2	3	34.8
2. Machur . . . . .	16	63	38	(60.3)	4 (10.5)	5	23.7	6	26.3
3. Maldhadi . . . . .	46	192	98	(46.9)	4 (4.4)	6	11.1	11	16.7
4. Karapur* . . . . .	21	93	51	(54.8)	Nil	17	33.3	17	33.3
5. Udboor . . . . .	32	147	79	(53.7)	Nil	24	30.4	14	17.7

\*Percentage of those who got work in Karapur is slightly higher because 10 people from this settlement had been taken out by contractors to work as labourers outside.

TABLE 4

## Actual Food Consumption of the Jenu Kurubas for Two Days

Name of the settlement	Total No. of households	Total No. of persons	First Day				Second Day			
			No. of persons who took cereal food		No. of persons who took genasu	No. of persons who went without food	No. of persons who took cereal food		No. of persons who took genasu	No. of persons who went without food
			Once	Twice			Once	Twice		
1. Nandirehadi . . .	26	93	44 (47.3%)	20 (21.5%)	29 (31.2%)	Nil	31 (33.3%)	18 (19.3%)	42 (45.1%)	2 (2.3%)
2. Machur . . .	16	63	34 (54.0%)	30 (31.7%)	9 (14.3%)	Nil	21 (33.4%)	20 (31.7%)	22 (34.9%)	Nil
3. Maldhadi . . .	46	192	119 (62.0%)	14 (7.3%)	39 (20.3%)	20 (10.4%)	109 (56.8%)	14 (7.3%)	48 (25.0%)	21 (10.9%)
4. Karapur . . .	21	93	37 (39.8%)	21 (22.6%)	27 (29.0%)	8 (8.6%)	29 (31.2%)	21 (22.6%)	18 (19.3%)	25 (26.9%)
5. Udboor . . .	32	147	104 (70.7%)	14 (9.5%)	20 (163.%)	9 (6.2%)	68 (46.3%)	14 (9.5%)	23 (15.6%)	42 (28.6%)



TABLE 5  
Juvenile Mortality

Name of the settlement	No. of households covered	Total No. of pregnancies	No. of live births	No. of abortions	Juvenile mortality (before 15 years)	Prenatal mortality per hundred	Post-natal mortality per hundred	Total mortality per-hundred
1. Nandirehadi . . . .	18	58	55	3	12	5.17	21.81	25.86
2. Machur . . . .	16	53	50	3	13	5.66	26.00	30.18
3. Karapur . . . .	21	68	63	Nil	8	Nil	11.76	11.76
4. Udboor . . . .	32	135	315	Nil	33	Nil	24.44	24.44

## Onges of Little Andaman

T. N. PANDIT & D. K. BOSE

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### *Negrito Tribes :*

The Negritos (to be distinguished from the Negroids) are among the relatively rarer human populations and are found today in Africa, Malaysia and the Andaman Islands. The Negritos of the Andaman Islands are the best representatives of the Asian Negritos. They are highly interesting not only as a racial group but also as a linguistic and a cultural group. They live by hunting and food gathering and this pattern of living is sometimes compared to that of the old-stone-age people. But more than all this they are the sort of "Primitive People" who have proved to be very vulnerable to uncontrolled contact with civilisation so much so that their very existence as biological and cultural entities is gravely threatened today. And they are not in a position even to murmur a protest. Much damage has been done already, but the point is whether further damage can be stopped or at least slowed down so that they find some relief in their deep

predicament. Only then a stage will be set for any further development. There are, in the Andamans, four Negrito tribes namely :—

- |                        |   |                             |
|------------------------|---|-----------------------------|
| 1. Great Andamanese    | } | Friendly since 19th Century |
| 2. Onge                |   |                             |
| 3. Jarawa . . . .      |   | Partly friendly since 1973  |
| 4. Sentinelese . . . . |   | Hostile                     |

In 1958 when the Penal Settlement was established at Port Blair, the total population of the four groups was estimated to be between 5000 to 8000. But in barely 100 years this population has been reduced to only a few hundred. The Great Andamanese (24 souls) driven out from the main Islands (North, Middle & South Andaman) have been settled a few years back in a tiny Island named Strait Island (area 1 sq. mile). The Onge (112—1971 census), once the sole inhabitants of Little Andaman (area 290 sq. miles) are under considerable pressure there today because of the opening of the Island for resettlement and other kinds of developmental work. By a generous estimate, the number of Jarawas today may not exceed 300. They occupy the western forest and coastal areas of Middle and South Andaman (area 250 square miles). The Sentinelese are estimated to be around 100 on North Sentinel Island (area 23 square miles). The latter two tribes have escaped much of the damage that close contact with civilisation has done to the Great Andamanese and the Onge, because of their isolation and hostility. The greatest damage to these tribes has been done by warfare with the settlers, all kinds of diseases brought by the settlers to these Islands, the destruction of the forest and the misconceived development programmes put into operation. Such was the case mainly during the British occupation of these Islands, from 1858 to 1947. After 1947 too, whatever planning has been done has generally lacked imagination and it has suffered from poor execution. The greatest sufferers have been the Great Andamanese being the longest in contact with the outsiders (since 1858). The next are the Onge who have been in close contact with the Port-Blair settlement for the last 80 and odd years.

### *Little Andaman Today & Tomorrow*

Until 1967, the Onge were the sole inhabitants of Little Andaman. Later, the programmes for general development of this large island were put into operation. In the first few months a thousand and odd workers (mostly South Indians and Ranchites) were introduced for construction

of the break—water and the harbour facilities at Hut Bay, and for clearing the forest etc. With this, the seasonal movements of the Onge (Dugong creek group) to the Hut Bay area (one of their traditional camps) as part of the annual cycle were stopped for good. A series of huts usually to be seen there, are no longer there.

Hut Bay has been declared the Headquarter area and within a radius of about 20 kms. from the jetty, nearly 300 Bengali families have been resettled here since early 1970 in three villages. There are, besides, nearly 1000 labourers doing various jobs around the settlement and inside the forest. In the nearby South Bay area, some 50 Nicobarese families have already been settled and another 200 Nicobarese families are proposed to be settled by the end of Fifth Plan in this area.

The present planning is to settle a total of 2200 families by the end of the 5th Plan in this Island. For this purpose alone, 1200 acres of forest land will be cleared. Besides an area of 7000 acres of forest land is being cleared for red-palm plantation by the Forest Department for commercial purposes.

All this has to be seen in the context of the wider frame work of development for this Island as envisaged by the Inter-departmental Team for Accelerated Development. Their recommendations are :

1. Clearance of 60,000 acres of forest land.
2. Settlement of 12,000 families on agriculture.
3. Establishment of integrated industrial complex based on timber resources.
4. Establishment of a sugar factory with a capacity of about 70,000 tons.

Little Andaman will thus grow into a bustling industrial-agricultural complex in the next two decades or so. Where do the Onge stand in this kind of set-up?

### *Onge Population*

The Onge life has since ages been intimately connected with the virgin tropical forests of Little Andaman but this position cannot be sustained for long. It will be possible only to leave a small area of the land for their exclusive use, not more than 30 square miles, we suppose, though we would have liked that about half or one third of the island to be left to them. The area still open to them will progressively decline in direct proportion to the areas brought under phased development schemes.

Since their contact with the outsiders the Onge population has declined at a fast rate as will be evident from table 1:—

TABLE 1

Census year	1901	1911	1921	1931	1951	1961	1971
Population of Onge	672	631	346	250	150	129	112

Since 1951 the rate of decline has varied from 14 to 13 per cent per decade. This means that, all conditions remaining the same, there will be hardly any Onge left in about a 100 years from now. But since the conditions have deteriorated for them in so many ways, the situation can reach a dangerous level very much earlier. The contact has not brought them the benefits of science and civilisation that could have helped them tide over this situation, benefits in the shape of medical help to which they have not been at all averse. The age-wise breakdown of the Onge population in early 1974 was reported by D. K. Bose as in the following table :

TABLE 2

Age Group	Male	Female	Total
0-4	2	3	5
5-14	5	8	13
17-44	32	31	63
44 and above	14	15	29
Total	53	57	110

It is obviously a highly vulnerable population and indicates low fertility and relatively high rates of mortality. In the child bearing age-group of 15 to 44 there are 31 females, but the number of children below 4 is only 5. Even keeping room for considerable error in recording ages (as would be natural in such a society), this is an alarming situation.

### *Major Problems*

#### *(a) Biological Survival*

The decline in Onge population has to be checked to the extent it is possible within the resources of the medical profession, the administrators and the anthropologists. The problem needs to be tackled at various

levels. Compared to the Jarawa and the Sentinelese (the hostile groups) the Onge do not look equally healthy and strong. In 1969, on the suggestion of the senior author, a health survey of the Onge was conducted by an I.C.M.R. team of doctors. No major diseases were discovered after checking up about 60 Onges. But it was felt by the team that further investigation would be required. This has not been done so far. Lack of proper nutrition could be cause for comparatively weaker health.

### (b) *Social and Psychological Adjustment*

In a vast Island, where they were once the sole masters, their small population of 110 souls now exists face to face with a permanent population of about 3,000 people. And this situation will continue to grow unfavourably for the Onge as more settlers of various varieties are progressively brought here. And this is not only a question of numbers, the settlers are cleverer and dominant people and outdo the Onge in so many ways. *The psychological effect of being totally overwhelmed* in a homeland which they can no longer consider entirely their own must be great and of far reaching consequences for them.

The senior author has met the Jarawa and also observed the Sentinelese from a near distance; the contrast with the Onge (as also the Great Andamanese) is tremendous. The Jarawa and the Sentinelese are men and women of proud bearing, healthy bodies and a sense of self-respect pervades their faces. Nothing of this sort can be observed on the Onge and the Andamanese faces.

The need for psychological adjustment of the Onge to the changing social scene is overwhelming. But, in this, a scientific programme of educating the settlers as well as the Onge must be put into operation after due thought.

### (c) *Economic Adjustments*

The pig and honey are two of the most important items of food for the Onge. But they are going to face considerable difficulty on account of partial loss of these traditional sources because of :

- (i) Settlers' taste for both these items;
- (ii) Decline in production due to progressive destruction of the forest ;
- (iii) Temptation of the Onge to exchange these very items for tea leaves and tobacco.

Against this loss, there will be hardly any compensations for decline in the quality of their food. Pig is a great source of proteins and fat and honey is the best kind of sugar available to them. During particular seasons there is heavy dependence on these two items.

During the last two years, under the supervisions of a social worker from B.A.S.S. (who was stationed at Little Andaman) the Onge were encouraged to collect a local resin from the forest (a substance of commercial value) and also to carry this and the coconuts from their plantation at Dugong Creek (plantation was started there about 20 years back on the suggestion of the Survey) to Hut Bay for sale to the co-operative Society at officially fixed rates. The social worker maintained the accounts and spent the cash to supply the Onge with flour and rice etc. The Onge have developed a taste for these things. But there would be some difficulty in maintaining a year-round supply to them when resin and coconuts would not be available. Then the Government would either have to subsidise the programme or let the Onge fend for themselves after including them to take to new items of food.

The experiments of inducing the Onge to take to cultivation of rice and some gardening have proved total failures. But there might have been some fault in the manner in which these ideas were introduced to the Onge. In any case, cultivation is a revolutionary idea for a hunting people and it is no use building false hopes on this score. As it is, the Onge take little interest in the coconut plantation that has existed at Dugong Creek (one of their important camps) for the last 20 years.

Changeover from one set of economic activity to a totally new set, involves far reaching economic, social, psychological and cultural adjustments. It will take a long time for a community to do so. Initial efforts should only aim at improvements in the traditional methods and cautious and progressive introduction of new techniques.

### *Some Suggestions*

#### *Health and Survival*

It is the great responsibility of the Government of India, the Andaman Administration and the Anthropological Survey to save these rather helpless Negrito populations from total decline. Every thing that is possible to do within the present limits of human knowledge and resources should be done to help them.

One thing that could have been made available to them is good medical help but this has not come to them in any measure. There is a small dispensary at Hut Bay that has a qualified doctor but this is not being of



much use to the Onge. What is needed is a mobile medical team that will take care of their normal health problems, maternity and child care and jointly with Anthropologists research their health and population problems. May be their decline is also due to genetic factors due to inbreeding. This also needs to be investigated properly.

### *Social and Psychological Adjustments*

This is the trickiest of all the problems as it involves all the impordereblea of culture; things that touch upon the most intimate and subtle aspect of human life; things that are very vital at the same time. Even the experts can only be guided by experience of the actual situation and broad principles of human psychology and behaviour. The only thing is to keep this aspect constantly in view and develop a sensitivity to various nuances of Onge behaviour and utilise them for implementation of developmental measures to the extent possible.

### *Economic Adjustment*

I think any revolutionary ideas of change must be ruled out for the present. A certain amount of trial and error approach may bring useful results. As suggested by Dr. S. C. Sinha, there has to be considerable emphasis on "optimising the adaptive utilisation within the eco-system with only minor changes in their basic economic activities." Of course, in case of the Onge their ecosystem is likely to undergo drastic change in the next 10—20 years. But even under such conditions, it would be no use attempting the impossible and trying to rush through things. At best, we may try to keep pace, as far as it would be possible with the surrounding changes. There is also the likelihood of the major developmental plans being somewhat delayed so we would get some more breathing time for doing our work.

The Onge have in recent years taken to eating coconut readily available in one of their camps (the Jarawa and Sentinelse also like them very much). They have also taken a liking to coconut oil which they use in making 'roti' for greater taste. Coconut oil can also replenish the losses in fats that they are likely to suffer, due to the expected decline in the wild pig population.

The Onge have readily taken to the collection of resin for sale purposes and also to sale of coconuts. This can continue but the finances and their expenditure must be managed properly and to the best advantage of the Onge.

Another aspect would be to encourage them to make baskets, bows and arrows etc. The extra items could bring them money through sale to tourists at Port Blair (foreigners too are now allowed to come), museums and to Emporias.

The Onge could be taught more efficient methods of fishing, for instance. That way, their dependence on vast sea food resources could increase and extra-catch, if any, could find a ready market among the settlers. Similarly, with the partial destruction of the forests, wild honey would not be available as before. So the art of bee-keeping and maintaining apiaries could be taught and encouraged. The response from the Onge to such steps is likely to be far better than to rice-cultivation and gardening.

*When economic adjustments are made by a community in a fairly satisfactory manner, it will find it much easier to make social and psychological adjustments to its changing natural and human environment.*

### *Social Education*

The Onge have so far shown very little interest in formal education. One or two boys who used to attend the Government primary school at Hut Bay did so mainly for the mid-day meal. Then this school is far away from any major Onge camp. Besides, for an Onge child to remain at one place for long hours doing "nothing practical or useful" is rather difficult. The one boy who attended school for a while has become some kind of a loafer at Hut Bay.

The Programme for Onge education will have to be devised on a totally different footing to be popular and useful. Experience in other parts of India can be utilised.

However, immediately some effort could be made to impart informal education to adults. But for this and primary education it would help greatly if some people involved with them in this work learn their language to cut the communication barrier. That would also be a window to them to the Onge culture, ethos and value system. When their trust and the understanding are thus gained, it will be easier to get the Onge interested in the process of self-development.

The second phase of development, where growth of an *elite* may be expected to provide leadership to the tribals and evolve some equation in social relationship with dominant populations, will take quite sometime yet among the Negrito population. This has happened for instance among the Nicobarese, decades back.

*Conclusion :*

A programme however well conceived is ultimately only as good as its execution in the field. Selection of personnel for shouldering the various responsibilities will have to be carefully done and the machinery for co-ordinating work of various agencies must be truly effective. Besides, the minimum facilities and incentives for work in difficult areas should be available. Only then could we hope for some concrete results from our efforts.

Only if we are able to achieve some good results among the Onge in the near future, shall we have the right to extend our yet flimsy contact with the Jarawa and the Sentinelese in due time.

## Cholanaickans of Kerala

DR. R. P. G. MATHUR

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There are few tribal communities today which may be subsisting entirely on hunting and food-gathering. Such an economy can exist only in a generous natural habitat which may have been protected by accident or design, from inroads of outside influence. Cholanaickans of Nilambur valley in Ernad taluk of Malappuram district provide a striking example of this earlier form of human existence.

### *The Nilambur Valley*

The Nilambur valley in Malappuram lies south of South Wynad of Kozhikode district and to the West of Nilgiris District of Tamil Nadu. It has an average height of 4080 ft. above the sea level; the rainfall ranges from 100" in the east to 300" in the west; the daily temperature ranges between 80° to 90°F.

The entire valley is covered by good forests which is evergreen in the ghats and semi-deciduous in the foot-hills. The trees grow to immense

size. They are evergreen with a variety of foliage and colour. Gales sweep this area throughout the monsoon season. This valley is famous for its teak plantation which was started as early as 1892. Bamboos are extensively found in the valley which are also commercially valuable. The valley abounds in a variety of forest produce including ginger, dammer, cardamom, honey, arrowroot, pepper, etc. In the foot hills, tapioca and paddy have also been recently introduced by Christian and Muslim planters.

A number of streams criss-cross the valley. Two major rivers of the valley are Chaliyar and Karimpuzha, the former starting from Elambiler Hills at an altitude of 6780 ft. There are a number of tributaries, namely, Kariapuzha, Cherupuzha, Talipuzha, Panapuzha, Kerampuzha, Karipuzha, etc., on whose banks the Cholanaickan settlements are found.

### *The Cholanaickans*

The first reference to Cholanaickans is found in the writings of Thurston (1909) when he referred to a letter from F.W.F. Fletcher. According to this letter, 'it may be that in some parts of Wynad there are people known indifferently as Kurumbas and Sholnayakans. But I have no hesitation in saying that the Nayakas are entirely distinct from the Kurumbas. The two classes do not intermarry. There is a marked variation in their mode of life. The Kurumbas of this part live in comparatively open country, in the belt of deciduous forests lying between the Ghats proper and foot of the Niligiri plateau. Here he has been brought into contact with European planters, and is, comparatively speaking, civilised. The Nayaka has his habitat in the dense jungle of the Ghat, and is essentially a forest nomad, living on honey, jungle fruits and tuborous roots of certain jungle creepers.' Thus, while Fletcher made distinction between Cholanaickans and Kurumbas, the gazetteer of Malabar, which was also quoted by Thurston, makes this position somewhat unclear. According to this Gazetteer, the Kurumbas of Wynad, Calicut and Ernad taluks of Malabar are 'subdivided into Mullu (bamboo), Kurumbas, Jen or Ten (honey). Kurumbas are also called Kadu or Shole Nayakans (or Jenu Koyyo Sholanaickans, honey cutting lords of the woods) and Uali or Bettu Kurumbas of which the first named class, who consider themselves superior to others, are cultivators and hunters, and the third make baskets and implements of agriculture.'

It appears that Cholanaickans is a corrupt version of Shola Nayakans. The Cholanaickans call themselves as Malanaickans. One of the informants told the author that "we have been levelled by others as Cholakkar. In fact we do not call ourselves as Cholakkar. The non-tribals only call us as Cholanaickans. It only means as those persons who live in the interior

forest of the valley." Shola or Chola has the same meaning as Kadu or forest. The Cholanaickans call the Kadunayakans who live in the foot hills (*Pathi*) as Pathikker. The Pathickers call themselves as Pathinaickans. It appears that at some point of time the Kadunayakans of Nilambur got sub-divided into two groups, namely Pathinaickans and Cholanaickans. Both the groups consider themselves as Kadunayakans. The different is that those who migrated deep into the forests began to be called as Cholanaickans. One of the informants told that his father was a Kandunayakan hailing from the Mysore forests. While the Pathinaickans had been in greater touch with the outside people, therefore, they have advanced. The Cholanaickans cling to the former forests and continue to be in comparative seclusion. They prefer to depend on food-gathering and hunting rather than taking to domestication of animals and agriculture.

### *Cave-Dwellings*

The settlement of the Cholanaickans is called *Kallu Ali* (Rock cave). There are in all 12 such caves (*alais*) scattered in the most inaccessible dense forests situated generally on the bank of streams. Each *alai* is a separate kin group unit. The number of house-holds in an *alai* varies from 3 to 5, the total number of house-holds being 35 in all the *alais*. The total population of Cholanaickans is 152.

The present study covers Makki Berai Alia in Karimpuzha and Manna Alia in Talipuzha. These two *alais* are comparatively advanced because their inhabitants have visited Nilambur a number of times and they have a greater contact with the non-tribals than those in the more interior areas. The Makki Berai Alia has been visited by researchers and press correspondents as well. The details of Cholanaickan population in the 12 *alais* is given in the Tables I & II.

The *alais* on the banks of the rivers are the fixed abodes of the Cholanaickans. The rivers are the only source of drinking water for them. They are confined to these caves during the monsoon when the rivers are in flood and they need protection from heavy rains as well as from flood. In other seasons they wander from one place to another in search of roots, tubers, seeds, honey and other minor forest produce. They also some times construct temporary huts for their stay as was observed by the author in Talipuzha. In winter and in summer they sleep on spacious rocks on the banks of the rivers.

### *Social Organisation*

The Cholanaickans trace their descent to each *alai*. Therefore, the house-holds belonging to one lineage tend to congregate to the respective

*alais*. Each *alai* has a Chief known as Janmakkaran who deals with the socio-religious aspects of the *alai*. In one of the *alais*, however, the Cholanaickans and Pathinaickans are reported to be living together.

The Janmakkaran assigns space for each family in the *alai*. Thus, the interior of an *alai* is divided into as many hearths as the number of families. Generally the hearths are always kept warm with fire. Apart from these hearths fire is also kept burning always in the front of the cave. The members of a family sleep around their respective hearths in the caves. Unmarried sons, however, sleep around the fire in the front of the *alai*. The caves and the hearths keep the entire community warm and comfortable. The Cholanaickans consider their *alais* as sacred and maintain its sanctity.

The Janmakkaran is responsible for managing the affairs of the group in an *alai*. He officiates as the priest during death ceremonies, marriages and other magical practices. His permission is required for marriages and burying the dead. The post is hereditary. The Cholanaickans, however, do not have a common authority for the entire community.

The family among the Cholanaickans is nuclear. A son after getting married separates from his parents and establishes a new hearth within the cave. The Cholanaickans are monogamous but there may be cases of polygamous marriages as well. They are patrilineal and partilocal; the father wields full authority in the family. Although generally the girl joins the husband's *alai* but there are cases where the husband may join the wife's *alai*. 10 cases have been reported in the study. In these cases succession and inheritance passes through female line.

The Cholanaickans are an endogamous group but they have relations with Pathinaickans whom they consider as a part of their own community. Each *alai* is treated as an exogamous unit (*Kudmba*) and members living there are treated as blood relations. Matrilateral cross-cousin marriages are preferred. However, patrilineal and parallel cousin marriages are forbidden. A man can marry his deceased brother's wife or his wife's younger sister but not the elder sister. Bride price (*Kana Ana*) is prevalent amongst the Cholanaickans and is almost compulsory.

### *Religion*

The presiding deity of Cholanaickans is *Mala Daivam* (Jungle God). They believe that *Mala Daivam* protects them from all hazards in food gathering, from dangerous floods and other natural calamities. He is considered to be the supreme authority controlling their entire ecosystem and the entire universe. They generally take vows for worshiping *Mala Daivam*.



if their crops are good or if they are cured from some illness or if they are saved from some dangers.

The *Mala Daivum* is symbolised by a bell-metal idol of an elephant with mahout on its back. This idol is kept in an unknown cave deep in the forests. In the beginning of the monsoon, Janmakkaran has to bring the deity from the cave and instal it in a separate corner of the cave. In 1974, the Janmakkaran brought this idol from about 20 Kms in the forests. Special poojas are conducted during this period and after the monsoon the idol is taken back to its original place. Women are prohibited from entering the side of the cave where the idol is kept.

The Cholanaickans also propitiate their ancestral spirits. They believe that the dead ancestors can protect them from evil influence of lesser spirits. On the occasion of illness in the family prayers are offered and special vows are taken. Boiled rice, tobacco, betel leaves, arecanut are the simple offerings of the simple people to their God.

### *Rituals*

The rites accompanying different stages in the life cycle amongst the Cholanaickans are quite simple. There is no special puberty rite. However, the menstruating girls are secluded for 4 days in one corner of the cave. During this period Woman (*Thinlea*) is considered to be unclean and she is purified on the 5th day after a bath (Necratal). A temporary shed of bamboos and leaves is constructed for confinement where the woman is secluded for 40 days after the child birth. The wife of the tribal chief herself acts as a midwife. There is no special name giving ceremony amongst the Cholanaickans. The Janmakkaran selects name for the child from the mother's line generally between the age of 8 or 10.

The Cholanaickans bury their dead with head pointing towards the west. All the belongings of the deceased are also buried with the dead. The members of the family, including the wife of the deceased, accompany the funeral procession. The members of the family do not go for food gathering for 3 days after the death. The final death rites are performed after a month or so depending on the availability of necessary resources. The Janmakkaran officiates as the priest. Tuesday and Wednesday are the auspicious days for this purpose. The family members supply rice, roots and tubers for the occasion. There is a community feast in the evening and cooked rice is placed on a leaf for the dead. The Janmakkaran and members of the family dance throughout the night around this leaf. The Janmakkaran eats this rice on the following morning when another leaf full of rice is placed for the dead. On this occasion other dead ancestors are also worshipped by giving offerings of rice, dried fish and pepper.

### *Dress and Ornaments*

The Cholanaickans used to put on tree bark (*Aranhithelu*) as late as early forties. Now they have started wearing cotton clothes. The men use a small bit of white cloth reaching up to the knees. They do not have any ceremonial dress. They, however, wear new clothes when they attend the Nilambur Kevilakam Pattu in the honour of Vettakarumakan deity. The women also put on a short cloth (*Selai*) covering the lower part of their body ; they use only a scanty cloth to cover the upper part of their body only when they go out of their *alais*. One of the informants told the author that she used to put on bark before her marriage some 25 years back. Now the young girls, however, also put on lion cloth.

The neck ornaments (*Gattilakka Sangalai*) of various shapes and colours, nose ornament, ear rings and armlet, etc., have found their way into these deep forests as well. Some men also wear neck ornaments. The ornaments are generally made of a aluminium but silver is not unknown. There is no practice of tatooing. The Cholanaickans are not particular about their hair. Since the women folk do not care about their hair, the hair get matted. They seldom use oil. They cut their hair with reed splits (*otha*) which are now being replaced by blades and knives.

### *Economy*

The Cholanaickans are food gatherers, hunters and collectors of minor forest produce. They are also fond of fish. Their main occupation is food gathering which they do throughout the year. Honey collection is confined to the months of February and March. They go out for fishing, particularly in the months of December and January. Hunting is practised in all months except during the monsoon. They have excellent knowledge about different areas of the forest where different kinds of roots, tubers and fruits can be found in different seasons. Some of the main roots and tubers which they collect are *Narai*, *Kavala*, *Venni*, *Noorai*, *Quaynu*, *Mayyalu*, *Iranai*, *Mothakka*, *Gasvenni*, *Patheinni*, *Savalu*, etc. Certain roots and tubers are available throughout the year while certain others are available only in a particular season. For example, *Kavala* and *Narai* are collected in the months of July and August while *Noorai* and *Mothakka* are gathered in August and September. For *Gas Venni* they dig once a year in the month of October. *Savalu* is gathered in all months.

It is thus clear that the Cholanaickan economy is closely linked with the local eco-system. They seldom go alone for food gathering because it is too dangerous. They generally go in a group. The men enter the forests first

followed by women. They have domesticated dog who is a good companion in the forests.

The Cholanaickans hunt all the year round except during the rainy season. They hunt in groups with dogs and nets. Small nets made of rope are used for small deer, rabbits, hares and monkeys. These nets are spread between carefully selected trees and poles specially erected for the purpose. Thereafter they organise a beat towards this net. Animals caught in the net are killed with the axe (*Kodali*). Cholanaickans have well trained dogs to chase wild bear, big deer. It can also catch small deer and rabbits. The prey is distributed amongst the kin of the *alai*, the owner of the hunting dog also gets a share.

The Cholanaickans use concoction of the bark of the Ingal tree for fishing. This 'poison' is put in the water which stupefies the fish. When the fish begin to float on the surface of the water, they are caught by hand. The tribes also fish with rod and line.

The minor forest produce is also their most important item for exchange economy for purchasing the necessities of life. A variety of minor forest produce is collected by them in different months (Table 4). *Pandani* (dammer) is their most important commodity which is collected throughout the year while other commodities have only seasonal importance.

*Kodeli* (axe) is the constant companion of Cholanaickans. He never feels at ease if he leaves behind his *Kodeli*. It is his weapon of attack and defence and an implement to eke out his livelihood. It has an iron blade about 6" long with a wooden handle. Another important tool for food gathering is *Porai*, an iron blade hafted on a long wood. This is a new introduction. Earlier a wooden tool was used for digging roots and tubers.

Cholanaickan's household utensils are simple and few. Hitherto they have been using utensils made of bamboo even for kitchen like *Kotta Andai* and *Kolambai*, the former for cooking and the latter for eating. Now they are being replaced by earthen pots and aluminium utensils. Laddles made of coconut shells are also now being used increasingly.

The Cholanaickans are expert basket makers. Different types of baskets are made for different purposes. For example, *poonikettai* is made of reeds and cane in different sizes which are used for carrying minor forest produce. *Chooral kottai* is made entirely out of cane and used for storing purposes.

Although the Cholanaickan is not an agriculturist, yet now rice has become his staple food. This is supplemented by wild roots, tubers, seeds, fruits and meat. There are 3 principal meals. Breakfast (*ottara*) consists of

rice or baked roots or tubers. The midday meal (*uchyara*) comprises baked fruits and tubers. The evening meal (*sanyara*) consists of boiled rice and dry fish. They eat meat of a variety of animals but snake, deer and tiger are taboo. Gradually, they are learning the use of spices and salt which they now purchase from the nearby market. Coffee is also gradually finding its way. Intoxicating drinks are seldom taken. They are, however, passionate smokers and tobacco is the centre of their social life. Besides smoking pipes rolled from fresh leaves, chewing of tobacco is also popular. Both men and women eat betels with lime and arecanuts.

The Cholanaickans believe that fire lies hidden in bamboos. They make fire by rubbing two bamboo sticks. They still depend on their traditional technique of firemaking.

The habitat of the Cholanaickan at the first sight, as described above, would give an appearance of their economy being completely self-sufficient and completely insulated from the neighbouring groups. However, there has been perceptible change in numerous spheres of their life notwithstanding the fact that they continue to live in the caves. A number of items like rice, tobacco, chilly, salt, dry fish, betel leaves, arecanuts have now entered their need schedule and they depend for these items on outsiders. Minor forest produce is their cash for this exchange economy. Their contact, however, is only with the Muslim contractors who operate in these areas. Some of them have also started small trade with these groups, purchasing the minor forest produce which they bring and supplying them the essential commodities. The basis of this trade, however, is mostly barter. Dammer is the most important commodity bartered with a large number of items which they need. The barter transactions between the Cholanaickans and the Muslim contractors have also acquired certain ceremonial overtones including offering of Coffee or a meal at the expense of the buyer.

Although barter is the main form of commercial activity, the Cholanaickans also purchase some articles from Karulai and Nilambur in the plains of Malappuram. Here they purchase their ornaments, aluminium vessels and iron axe. This communication, however, is limited to the open season when the rivers are not in flood and trekking through precipitious hills is safe. Their area is not open for at least 6 months every year from June to October and they store necessary items like rice, tobacco, etc., in sufficient quantity for this period.

### *Conclusion*

The Cholanaickans have fully adapted themselves to the echo-system. Their rockcave dwellings are safe particularly during the monsoon when the

rivers are in spate. They also provide protection against wild animals. They continue to depend on food gathering and hunting because they live in a sparsely populated forest area which is still quite rich. Their points of contact with the outside world are the Pathinaickans who are a sub-group of the bigger community to which they belong. The Muslim contractors working in the forest, however, have provided a new link with the modern economy. Some of the groups, living in more accessible caves, are also visiting the nearby markets. The community is still pre-literate and their social organization is strong.

It is doubtful if the community can take to settled cultivation in one step. Their economy has to be planned keeping in view the resource potential of this area. They can take to plantations which could form the nucleus of their new economic life. Gradually their dependence on food gathering and hunting may *decrease* and they will become a part of the broader economic structure of the region.

TABLE I

## Distribution of Population of each Cave

Name of the Alai (cave)	No. of House-holds	Estimated Population		Total
		Male	Female	
1. Makki berai Alai . . . . .	4	7	5	12
2. Enicel Alai . . . . .	2	3	2	5
3. Poochapara Alai . . . . .	4	10	8	18
4. Puvatte Alai . . . . .	6	12	9	21
5. Valukete Alai . . . . .	1	6	3	9
6. Manna Alai . . . . .	4	15	15	30
7. Valakkannaumala Alai . . . . .	1	3	2	5
8. Panalole Alai . . . . .	2	6	6	12
9. Korampuzha Alai . . . . .	6	11	9	20
10. Padikamanai Alai . . . . .	3	7	6	13
11. Ashanalai . . . . .	1	2	1	3
12. Kottapuzha Alai . . . . .	1	2	2	4
Total . . . . .	35	84	68	152

TABLE 2

## Age Group Wise Population of the Cholanaickans

Age group	Number of persons		Total	Percent
	Males	Females		
0-4 . . . . .	12	14	26	17.11
5-9 . . . . .	18	11	29	19.08
10-14 . . . . .	9	3	12	7.89
15-19 . . . . .	7	5	12	7.89
20-24 . . . . .	4	8	12	7.89
25-29 . . . . .	7	6	13	8.55
30-34 . . . . .	2	5	7	4.61
35-39 . . . . .	5	5	10	6.58
40-44 . . . . .	4	2	6	3.95
45-49 . . . . .	6	4	10	6.58
50-up . . . . .	10	5	15	9.87
Total . . . . .	84	68	152	100.00

## The Kurumbas of Attappady

DR. P. R. G. MATHUR

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A small tribal community of Kurumbas lives in the Attappady valley of Mannarghat Taluk of Palghat district. This area has undergone a fast demographic change since 1961 when the tribals constituted 63 per cent of the total population of this area. In 1971, they had been reduced to about 40 per cent of the total population. The opening up of the valley has resulted in a big influx during this decade increasing the non-tribal population by more than 150 per cent. The Kurumbas are a small community numbering about 1000. Irrulas and Mudkas are the two major tribal communities of this area, who are comparatively more advanced.

### *Attappady Valley*

The Attappady Valley extends over an area of about 765 sq. kms.; the elevation of the valley ranges from 1200 ft. to 3000 ft. above the sea level. The valley lies just south of Nilgiris and is flanked by thick forests of Perintalmanna Taluk of Malappuram District in the west and Coimbatore of Tamil Nadu in the East. The annual rainfall varies from about 200" in



the west to barely 40" in the east. Bhavani and Sirupani are two important rivers draining this valley.

The advanced tribal communities and the non-tribals live in areas outside the reserve forests while the Kurumbas are confined to reserve forests in this region. The entire Attappady valley, except the reserve forests, were owned by the erstwhile Nair Chieftain families. The tribals in this valley, except Kurumbas, were tenants of these Chieftains. They were paying a nominal rent of 50 paise per year per head to the Chieftains. However, their local agents (*Kariastan*) extracted much larger amounts, particularly as the pressure of population grew. With the in-migration of settlers from Coimbatore and Nilgiris district of Tamil Nadu, the agents began to lease out the lands at higher rates for which money receipts were also given. This established their rights over those lands, which earlier were effectively controlled and owned by the tribal communities. The alienation of land under the cover of these leases continues to be unabated. Considerable land has also been given on lease for plantation to private individuals and companies in early 70s. This has also adversely affected the tribal communities.

### *Social Organisation*

The Kurumbas are confined to 10 hamlets of Pudur revenue village within the government reserve forests. There are about 200 Kurumbas house-holds with an average size of 5 heads per family (Table I). The Kurumbas have their own socio-political system. Each hamlet (*Uru*) has a leader known as *Moppan*. The *Moppan* presides over all socio-cultural and religious ceremonies. He also settles any disputes which may arise within the group. These may cover cases of elopement, adultery, divorce, dispute over property, etc.

*Moppan's* office is hereditary. He was also the connecting link between the Kurumbas and government officials. Therefore, in the earlier days he wielded greater influence amongst the people. *Moppan* is assisted by two officials, viz., *Kuruthali* (Peon) and *Bandari* (Cashier) who generally help him in discharging his duties. Another important office is that of *Mannankkaran* (knower of the soil), who is responsible for agricultural operations of the *Uru*. He is supposed to have good knowledge of the fertility of soil and advises the people about the seeds to be sown in different seasons. He is also the first to sow the seeds and perform certain rites for propitiating the deities for a good crop. This socio-political structure is also prevalent amongst the Irrulas and Mudkas of Attappady.

### *Economy*

The main sustenance of Kurumbas is shifting cultivation and food

gathering. Shifting cultivation is known locally as *Kothukadu*, which is similar to the term *Podu*, which is used in Koraput district of Orissa. In the earlier days when the forest area under their command was much larger, they could fell big trees whose ashes served as good manure for their cultivation. Their only instruments for this cultivation have been the axe (*Kunthali*) for cutting trees and hoe for sowing the seeds. The shifting cultivation is now regulated by the Forest Department. In Anavayi hamlet with 25 households, the Forest Department has set apart an area of 60 acres for shifting cultivation. Each household has a piece of land assigned which comprises six *Kothu Katus*. Each one of these plots (*Kothu Katu*) is cultivated at a time for 3 years at a stretch. The tribal moves to the next plot when the soil fertility of the earlier plot is exhausted. In this way the total cycle in the assigned land is 18 years. The hamlets are as near the *Kothu Katu* as possible so that it is easier for them to protect the crops from the wild animals.

Each plot requires considerable preparation. Much before the first plot gets exhausted, men and women come together for clearing the next plot for harvesting. The trees are cut one season in advance and are left in the field or piled up in a corner. When they dry up they are burnt and their ash is evenly distributed in the field.

Numerous items including *Ragi*, *Chama*, *Tuvarai* (Red Gram), *Kirai* (Jawar), Mustard, Black Gram and Chillies are all sown together. After the crops are harvested, the plot is prepared for the next season. As the rains are quite heavy and the soil fertile, there is considerable shrub and bush growth in the harvested fields. These over-growths are cleared for the second year, which is comparatively an easier task than the first clearing. All wood from this clearance is spread over the field. When it is sufficiently dry, it is burnt. In this way, the soil regains its fertility though partially. Some clearing is done in the third year as well. However, by this time, the soils get completely exhausted and the tribal prepares the next plot for cultivation.

### *Forest Produce*

Roots and tubers in the forests provide the Kurumbas substantial subsistence besides what they produce from shifting cultivation. The season for collecting roots and tubers starts in the month of December and continues till month of April. In summer, soil become too hard for digging and it is too muddy and sticky during the monsoon. The Kurumbas go deep into the forest in search of edibles in small groups of 3 to 6 persons. It is the girls and women who generally collect the roots but men also help them in digging in case the roots are too deep. The important roots and tubers are *Naru*, *Nooru*, *Kavalu*, which are collected

in the month of *Kanni* (September to October), and *Perukku*, which is collected in the month of *Kumbham* and *Meenam* (January to March). Sometimes even larger groups, comprising persons from more than one hamlet may go in search of roots and tubers to long distances.

The Kurumbas are also expert honey collectors. It is also a joint activity where a number of persons go to collect bee-hive as soon as it is detected on a tree. The honey is either instantly consumed or the hive may be taken to the village where it is consumed with family. *Kumbham* and *Meenam* are the good months for honey collection. The Kurumbas are also good trappers. They trap small birds, deers and rabbits. Rabbits are also hunted at night. Sometimes they may be killed by stones only. The wild pigs generally destroy their crops. Kurumbas have trained dogs which they use for chasing wild pigs during their hunt. Dhavani and Siruvani rivers are good fishing grounds for the Kurumba. Soon after the first heavy rain, the fish swim up these streams when the Kurumbas go out fishing which provides them a welcome change from their monotonous meagre diet. Kurumbas also keep poultry birds and goats. Now they have also started keeping cows and use milk occasionally.

Kurumbas are also good basket makers. They can prepare baskets of every possible shape and size for their personal use as also for local sale. The nearby forest provide them raw material for preparing of baskets which are variously named as *Kottai*, *Kurukkai*, *Valla*, etc., depending on their size and shape.

### *Food*

The staple food of Kurumbas is *Ragi* which is locally grown. They also use rice if they can get money from their minor forest produce, etc., for purchase. They supplement their diet with *Chama*, edible fruits, tubers, etc. Jack fruits and mangoes are also consumed in plenty during the season. Sometimes they also take meat of pig, domesticated and wild fould, deer, etc. Liquor is also frequently consumed but there is no practice of home brewing. They have also taken to drinking of tea and coffee when they visit the nearby market place. Mal-nutrition and vitamin deficiency are quite common. Most of the children suffer from skin diseases. Veneral diseases are also reported to be prevalent amongst the Kurumbas of Annavai.

### *Halritat*

The Kurumba hamlets are small and not very clean always. Their houses are small which are known as *Alai* or *Salai*. Their houses are constructed in rows and are seldom isolated. In Annavai and Tadikundu, there are 3 rows each of houses.

The huts are erected on a raised mud platform. The houses have a

front verandah (*Tavara*) which leads into an inner verandah (*Denai*). There is a central room (*Veethu*) behind the inner verandah, which has a back door opening into another low verandah (*Melai Tavara*). The inner verandah is enclosed by low mud walls and utilised as a lumbar room and sometimes has a sleeping room as well. The central room is the main sleeping room, a part of which is used as a kitchen. In the central room there are two layers of ceilings. In the first layer items like *Ragi* and *Chama* are dried. The next layer of the ceiling is used for storing house-hold articles and grains. The Kurumba huts are very dingy and dark. The cattle sheds however are away from the huts and the goat-sheds are also at one end of courtyard. The group helps the individual members in the construction of these houses.

### *Dress and Ornaments*

The dress of the Kurumbas is very simple and scanty. The men traditionally wear a lion cloth around their waist to cover the lower part of their body. Now-a-days Kurumbas have started wearing shirts also. Kurumba women wear a long piece of cloth called *Chela* round the waist. A part of *Chela* is taken round their torso upto the armpits covering their breast. Saffron, deep blue, deep green and red are some of their favourite colours.

The Kurumbas tattoo their girls for ornaments. The forehead, arms, hands and feet are heavily tattooed. Older Kurumba men also wear a few tattoo marks on their upper arms. Tattooing, however, is getting less popular. Young women are also fond of wearing rings, chains, ear ornaments and bangles, made of brass and beads. Tin, aluminium, plastic, glass and coins are also used for making ornaments. Earlier the Kurumbas used ear ornaments made of palmyra leaf coloured with red ink which can still be seen being used by elder women. The Kurumbas specially take care of their long hair.

The Kurumbas do not have any furniture whatsoever except for a few mats made of grass in their house. They use big bamboo baskets for storing cereals and household goods.

They cook their meals in earthen pots which they get from the potters in the plain villages. Now some of the families have also started using brass, copper and aluminium utensils. Every Kurumba household has a mortar and pestle. It is an item of daily use to them for husking or pulverising *ragi*, *chana*, *kirai* etc. Metal utensils are also used for storing water.

### *Family*

The Kurumbas are a patrilocal and patrilineal community. They generally have nuclear family. The son after marriage separates from his parents

and establishes a new household. The old parents, however, may again join their sons.

The authority of the head of the family is hardly ever questioned. The succession is through male lineage and the sons share the property equally. Polygomy is not unknown in this community. A larger number of wives is a status symbol.

Amongst the Kurumbas, marriage with maternal sister is preferred since it helps in strengthening the bondage between the two families. Marriage with father's sister's daughter is also allowed. Marriage within the same clan, however, is prohibited. Divorce is simple and widow marriage is allowed. There is no obligation to pay back the bride price unless the divorce is a result of the charge of adultery by the woman. The widow can marry her late husband's brother.

### *Religion*

The Kurumbas believe in ancestral worship. They believe in ghosts and spirits and give offerings periodically to them. The spirits of dead are believed to appear to them in dreams for giving directions regarding worship, etc.

*Banjama Tayi* is universally respected by the Kurumbas. This deity was brought from Coimbatore by one of the Moppans of Anavayi. The other important deities are *Kakkilinga* or *Karadeivam* who is specially worshipped during sowing and harvesting. They also observe most of the Hindu festivals like *Sivarathri* and *Puthiri*.

The Kurumbas dispose of the dead body either by burial or burning on the third day. The pollution lasts for three days. Women also participate in the funeral procession. These processions are generally accompanied by beating of drums and ritual dancing. Memorial stones are erected in the names of the dead. Eldest son is the chief mourner.

### *The Change*

The Kurumbas have been essentially a forest people. The tightening of the forest administration, assignment of lands for plantation, etc., have affected their economy and pushed them further. Yet they have been protected from the in-roads by the non-tribals and they continue to enjoy small benefits of shifting cultivation, collection of minor forest produce, etc. There is no question of land alienation in this area which has been rampant in the rest of the valley. This situation, however, has also hindered their development because the benefits of developmental programmes have not been extended to the reserved forest region. As they do not own

any land formally they are not credit worthy. Therefore the question of improvement of agriculture has not been considered.

Even the protective shield of the reserved forests has not prevented the money lender from entering these areas. He has to undergo deprivation during the lean season when he is forced to take loans from the traders of Mukkali, sometimes against his crops. He has also to borrow occasionally for meeting his social obligations. Since they are forest labourers, they sometimes may get loans from the forest contractors who, however, may charge high rates of interest.

The Kurumbas continue to enjoy the benefit of a strong social organization. They have communal ownership in land and can take to co-operative farming ventures. The present state of shifting cultivation has to come to an end and they have to be converted into agriculturists within the forest area for which permanent cultivation plots could be provided. Agriculture, however, need not be the principal activity of this group. They could also be provided larger areas for horticulture and plantations. This community will continue to be the back bone of forestry operations in this area. The working conditions, therefore, will need to be suitably regulated to provide a firm foundation to their economy in the long run.

TABLE 1

## Distribution of Population of Kurumbas

Hamlet	No. of house-holds	Estimated population
Tadikundu . . . . .	13	63 (1)
Anavayi . . . . .	25	131 (1)
Murukala . . . . .	30	79
Kadulamannu . . . . .	30	144
Lirillatjolla . . . . .	25	173
Gottika . . . . .	6	78
Galasi . . . . .	10	65
Tudukki . . . . .	25	128
Yedavani . . . . .	25	79
Pazhayur . . . . .	10	60
<b>TOTAL</b> . . . . .	<b>199</b>	<b>1000</b>



# A Note on Preparation of Monographs on Primitive Tribal Communities

B. D. SHARMA

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## *Introduction*

Those tribal communities which are still at pre-agricultural level of technology and primitive have been identified as a special group needing attention of the State. Such groups are scattered all over the country and their conditions are widely different. However, in most cases the ecological equilibrium appears to have been lost. Therefore, the first problem is of restoring the equilibrium of these groups with their eco-system. Consequently, a programme of development for these groups will have the following distinctive features :

1. There will be a unique development plan for each group ;
2. The developmental plan will have specially to take the eco-system into consideration ;

3. Primary education of the people will need to be organized imaginatively emphasising the distinct character of their environment and the natural capabilities of the group. Suitable citizen education programme may also be needed for persons in the higher age groups;
4. In the first phase development should be attempted through conservation and re-organization of the native skills of the group ; and
5. There should be a whole-time project officer with proper orientation for looking after the development programme of each of these people.

### *Research Programme*

For preparing an action plan for achieving the above objective, each group will have to be studied systematically. It may not always be necessary to await the research findings for initiating action. Research and action programmes could be launched concurrently where possible. A design for long term planning will, however, need carefully collected scientific data for which suitable studies may be initiated urgently.

### *Identification of the Group*

In the first instance, it will be necessary to identify the group and its habitat. It may be noted here that a group cannot be termed as primitive simply because of its small size or because it may happen to be at pre-agricultural level of technology. A small group, particularly in statistical returns, may just happen to represent an overflow of bigger groups in a neighbouring district or State. In fact a very small number may be indicative of complete assimilation of the group in the larger society, unless the contrary is established. In such cases clan name may be continuing to be used in the same fashion as caste names in advanced communities. Similarly, although shifting cultivation represents a pre-agricultural level of technology all shifting cultivators are not primitive. A group, which may have been subsisting on food gathering in an earlier stage may, with the passage of time, have changed into a group of full-time forest labourers and, thus, may have become a part in an organized economic activity. Therefore, in the new context, that group cannot be considered to be primitive. A clan name by itself should not be taken to represent a primitive group unless it is clearly demonstrated otherwise. The socio-economic situation in many of the tribal areas has been undergoing fast change in the past two or three decades. Therefore, what may have been described as a more backward group, say, two decades ago may have changed considerably.

Only a part of that group might have been left behind while the rest may have advanced. Therefore, careful identification of each primitive group and its precise habitat will have to be undertaken with reference to its present level of socio-economic development. Each group selected for special programme must, by and large, still continue to depend on food gathering, hunting or shifting cultivation. Another important criterion for determining primitiveness would be the literacy rate; none of the primitive groups can be expected to be above 1-2 cent literacy level.

### *Demographic Structure*

The study should bring out essential demographic features of each community including the total number of its members, sex ratio, age composition, rate of growth in the last 2 or 3 decades etc. For this purpose, the village data in respect of the area of study during the successive Censuses may be compiled. In those cases, where a tribal group as a whole may be identified as primitive group and if that group may have been enumerated as a distinct ethnic group in the Census, it will be possible to have a good statistical base for the group as a whole. Even when such information is available, it may still be useful to compile village by village Census data which will give indication of the variation of the size of each habitat of the group. These variations, which will need careful interpretation, may give useful clues to the process of change being experienced by the group. No change or decline in number may be indicative of physical disability or out migration arising because of lack of resources or other reasons.

### *Eco-System*

Having identified a primitive group and its habitat, attempt should be made to understand its eco-system in general. There are two alternative approaches possible. An attempt could be made to describe the entire eco-system of the community in its habitat on the basis of a comprehensive survey of the area. This may comprise a survey of natural resources including understanding its climatic variation, fauna, flora, geology, soil types etc. On the other hand, an attempt could be made to start from the people's side, keeping the man as the centre and understanding his relationship with the eco-system. A few habitats, representative of the region, may be chosen for intensive study. An attempt may be made to have a cognitive mapping of the 'area of command' of each of the habitat chosen for intensive study. Taking the group as the central point of reference, it should be studied as to from which area does the group draw its sustenance like food grains from 'podu' fields, roots, leaves and flowers from the forest etc. The region of his hunting and fishing in different seasons again both in normal

and abnormal years, may be delineated. The region on which the group depends for its building materials, raw material for making his tools etc. in normal years and in abnormal years may be identified. In other words, an attempt should be made to have an understanding of the total eco-system from the point of view of the group which is using it for its sustenance.

Having done the cognitive mapping of the existing eco-system from the point of view of the group, it will be necessary to appreciate the change in the eco-system in the past decade or two as is perceived by the concerned group. Some of the resources which were plentiful earlier may have got depleted; or the population size may have increased; or some individuals, other groups or organization may have, legally or illegally, encroached upon the 'command area' of the community. An attempt may be made to quantify precisely the extent of the present sharing of the resources in the traditional 'command area' of the community by other groups and/or organisation. The variation in the share of the other groups in the last decade or two should be very carefully understood. Here, an attempt should be made to spell out the new relationship amongst different groups both as they may be perceived by the tribal community and as they may be perceived by other ethnic groups or organization. For example, the forest department may have been notionally the owner of the resources in the command area ever since the declaration of the forest as reserved. But the forest administration may not have been effective with the result that the local community might have been an undisputed and defacto owner of the resources. Some other ethnic groups, individuals or organizations may have acquired new rights through legal processes in the past years and so on. In this way, the cognitive mapping of the physical resources both from the angle of the local group and from that of the other ethnic groups and organizations in the command area may be clearly brought out.

The eco-system has a dynamic aspect which will need to be identified for determining the broad parameters of the economic development and change. The analysis of the encroachment by the other groups discussed above may indicate that there is no direct conflict between the two competing groups over the command of resources. However there may still be indirect clash of interests. For example, intensive exploitation of forests for timber extraction in principle merely activates the dormant natural resources. But this activity may disturb the wild life of the area which may result in depletion of and of the direct sources of subsistence of the local community. These factors, therefore, will need to be carefully analysed.

Identification of the potential of the eco-system in the context of better tools and systems and a comparatively advanced economy will also

be necessary. Such a base data will be useful in deciding upon the available choices and finalising an action programme.

### *Group Relations*

The next step will be to understand the relationship of each of these groups with other individuals, ethnic groups, institutions and Government. In short a cognitive mapping of their human relationships may be attempted. This may include a number of aspects, viz., economic, social and administrative relationships. How these relationships have changed in the past decade or so will need to be clearly understood.

One of the important aspects of the study will be marketing of the commodities which these groups may be gathering from forest or producing in their fields and the prevalent practices in the communities for the procurement of essential commodities from outside. The change in the extent of their dependence on the other groups and in their market relationships in the last decade or so may be clearly brought out.

Similarly, how the process of development has brought these groups in contact with different ethnic groups and organizations including the Government will need to be identified. In some cases the administration may have appeared on the scene in practice only in the last few years. How does the group perceive the new relationship? Here each ethnic group and functionary in contact with the primitive group will have to be studied separately. Administration at the field level is represented by the interaction of the last functionary with the community. Therefore, while the formal relationships may be usefully documented, a better understanding will be needed of the informal interaction. The nature of these interactions differs considerably with changing incumbent. A study of such changes will help in exploring the possibility of establishing better relations with an appropriate personnel policy.

The picture will remain incomplete unless the perception of the other groups about the socio-economic conditions of the primitive groups is also not clearly brought out. These elements include the other ethnic groups, new migrant groups, extension agencies, government functionaries, voluntary organisations each of whom should be separately studied.

### *Community Life*

Many of these communities are facing a crisis of confidence. They have a feeling of having been over-whelmed by other forces. For restoring a sense of self-confidence, a very careful understanding of their community life will be necessary. The organisation and structure of the family and

the groups, their social life and religion, traditional institution and ethos, their world view, traditional leadership and formation of modern contact points etc. may be studied. These studies should always be with reference to the changing situation and relationship with other groups. Attention will need to be paid specially to their group tradition. What is that by which they have been living or what is that central theme in their cultural life which has helped them to survive as a group and similar other points will have to be carefully understood. The pride in the tradition of one's community is the moving spirit in any human society. Unless that theme is appreciated by the extension agency and the group is very delicately handled, no common points may emerge between the two.

### *Skill Identification*

No group which has been drawing its sustenance from its environment can be unskilled. Lack of skill is comparatively a modern phenomenon and often a function of a specialised social and economic structure. It must be remembered that most of these groups have been in contact with advanced agricultural communities and have evolved their own adaptive strategies for meeting the continuing encounter. These strategies will need to be carefully understood. What skills does an average member of the community possess is a very important question. These skills may not be on all fours with the skill concept in the modern society. But for that reason they cannot be ignored. It may be that the skills which they may be possessing may not have been duly remunerated or even properly valued. There is no reason why such artificial equations should not be systematically corrected. Not only will such a step give the group due economic returns, but, what is crucial, it will give the community a sense of self-confidence. If the group's own skills are properly valued, it will be in a position to appreciate the State efforts in terms of its own value system. This will help in relieving the state of confrontation between the small group and the community at large.

### *Time and Motion Study*

It has been generally agreed that most of the primitive tribes today are in a state of precarious existence. It is, therefore, essential to find out in greater detail as to how they manage to survive. For this purpose, an ordinary description of their economic activities will not be adequate. A time and motion study of some selected individuals belonging to different age groups and sexes will be necessary. How an individual spends his daily time in different season, what is the distribution of economic and other functions amongst the members of the family or the group etc.,

will need to be carefully outlined. The study should aim at identifying the resource utilization and the resource gaps that are emerging in the new context. Once the gaps are identified it will be helpful in deciding upon a course of action which may help these groups either to acquire necessary skills or to narrow these gaps through outside assistance. The change will have to be gradual and must follow the first phase of their economic and socio-cultural consolidation in their natural habitat.

### *Health Survey*

As the basic problem of these groups in many cases is apparently of their survival, a quick medical survey should be organized. The medical survey may attempt to find their present state of health, infant mortality, fertility, the hygienic nature of their environment including that of sources of drinking water. The sample in this survey should not be less than 1000 or 20 per cent, whichever is higher. Thus, smaller groups, i.e., groups less than 1000 strong, should be covered on 100 per cent basis.

### *Food Habits*

Special attention should be given to the diet of the group. The group economy in most of the cases centres around a raw struggle for mere subsistence; the other requirements are almost negligible. What are the various elements in their diet, how they procure the various items of their food and how they process those items, etc., may be clearly documented. It will be useful if some expert dieticians are associated in this work.

### *The Two Phases of Development*

At this stage it may be necessary even at the risk of some repetition, to state that there have to be two clearly identifiable and distinct phases in the process of the development of a primitive group. In the first phase, the causes which may have resulted in the mal-adjustment and disturbance of its economic and cultural frame have to be attended to. In this regard, our strategy will be mainly that of development through conservation. However, within this phase itself, those forces and processes should be identified which will be helpful in launching the second phase of development at a proper time. It has to be appreciated that these groups have been innovative and adaptive throughout the history of their contact with the outside world. As such there is no scope of assuming a primitive naivete in the groups. However, basic changes are now being brought about through a deliberate policy of planned development. The pace of change is fast. How this pace of change should be regulated on the one hand and how the



assimilative capacity of the local community should be increased on the other, are the two aspects of the problem for which a solution is being sought, so that the process of change can be brought within the social and cultural control of the group. Here, it is being assumed that it will be possible for the Project Officer to have a creative and intelligent dialogue with the tribal leadership about evolving a suitable strategy of development.

### *Education*

Education is another aspect which will need very careful understanding. In the first instance, distinction should be made between literacy and education. In some of the smaller groups the influence of one or two enlightened persons having higher education, who may happen to have acquired education just by chance, can be considerable. On the other hand higher literacy level, if the general level of education continues to be extremely low, may be hardly significant. Therefore, a detailed profile of education and literacy in the case of each group will be useful.

Educational programme should be carefully planned. It is presumed that these groups are at a very low level of literacy. Even if a crash programme of general elementary education is taken up, it will take considerable time before the child of today becomes the man of tomorrow who will be able to take decisions in the community life. Therefore, complementary programme for elder groups of adolescent and the youth, i.e., for the age groups, say, between 10 to 35, will be necessary. In this educational effort, the basic objective has to be to make the group appreciate the new change and understand the nature of new forces. An average tribal should become generally aware of the broader socio-cultural and ecological system, of which the group is destined to become a part in due course. Unless there is a clear understanding in the group in this regard, crucial group decisions will continue to be made in a narrow frame without appreciating the other processes which are almost irreversible. A supplementary instructional programme designed for achieving these objectives may be termed as 'citizen education'.

Even primary education will have to be carefully planned out with its distinctive features for this group. Many efforts may have already been made in the field of elementary education. The impact of these educational efforts may be carefully analysed. The syllabus may need to be suitably adapted so that it becomes relevant to the immediate surroundings of the child. Education in most of the tribal communities continues to be treated as something which prepares an individual for a job outside. It is generally accepted that an educated child is a loss to the community. This loss is likely to be felt more acutely by a smaller group. The group may not

explicitly state this fear. However, as a careful observer of the processes affecting the bigger communities, the group may accept the apparent cause and effect relationship as a law and may hesitate to send the children to a school on that ground. Therefore, educational programme will need to be carefully planned so that these apprehensions can be effectively met.

The question of tribal dialect is also important. There may be two types of situations. Some of the primitive communities are living on the fringe of larger communities and are in close contact with them. Therefore, language is not a problem. In case a tribal group is comparatively isolated, language may be an effective barrier to communication. Reading material in local dialect in such cases will be necessary.

### *Diagnostic Studies*

Some efforts would have already been made after Independence for development of these communities. Roads may have been built, agricultural extension, educational programmes, cottage industries programmes, colonization, etc., may have been tried. It will be necessary to take up diagnostic studies of some of the important programmes. These should include programmes specifically meant for these communities as also those which may have been taken up in peripheral areas. The objective should be to understand the accrual of benefits in real terms to these groups. These studies should specially throw light on the issue whether the very developmental programmes may have strengthened some of those elements which may be competing for command over the socio-economic and ecological system of the community.

### *Data Base*

As is clear from the above discussion the condition of each individual group is likely to be unique. Therefore, it will not be possible or desirable to prescribe a uniform pattern for these studies at the all India level or even at the State level. Much will depend on the understanding of the research team which is assigned the task of survey. The leader of the team should particularly be properly oriented so that he is able to guide the field work to the desired end. However, it may be useful if some basic frame for the study is given as a guide so that some of the essential points are not missed by chance. This frame may be elaborated by the research team and pre-tested in the field conditions. If more than one group is being studied in a State, it will be useful if the team leaders discuss jointly the results of individual team before finalising their format. Some regional discussions involving more than one State may also be useful.

## **ANNEXURE**

### **OUTLINE OF INFORMATION-BASE FOR MONOGRAPH ON PRIMITATIVE TRIBAL COMMUNITIES**

#### **1. Identification**

- (a) Tribe
- (b) Area (identification of the habitat)

#### **2. Nature of settlement**

Whether the settlement pattern of the group is scattered houses or village form; whether the group is in a compact area or is located on the margin of other groups; whether the villages are stationary or shifting; if shifting, the nature of shifting.

#### **3. Physical contact with other groups**

##### *(i) Primitive Groups in a Compact Area*

Composition of the population of the villages in the areas in terms of (a) the primitive group; (b) other tribal communities; and (c) non-tribal communities; the area from which the other groups, i.e., (b) and (c) have migrated and the duration of their stay in this area.

##### *(ii) Primitive Groups Located on the Margin of Other Groups*

The physical proximity of their settlement to the central villages of other communities; the community composition of the central villages.

##### *(iii) Physical Inaccessibility of the Area*

Accessibility of each hamlet in terms of distance from jeepable road, all-whether *kuchha* road, *pucca* road, district road; the level of inaccessibility during different seasons; vehicular traffic, if any.

#### **4. Demographic Structure**

Numerical strength of the group; the sex ratio; an analysis of the age-group composition with a view to understand the viability of the group;

growth rate of the primitive group during the last two or three decades (village-wise data, if possible) ; if the group is interspersed with other communities, a comparative study of demographic structure, the growth rate etc., of the other groups.

## 5. Habitat & Eco-system

### (a) *Habitat*

General description of the area, its topography, fauna, flora, rainfall, climate, weather, seasons, rivulets and rivers, mountains; the location of the villages and house sites; preferences and considerations for selection of sites, local beliefs; earlier habitations; reasons for change.

### (b) *Drinking Water*

Source, distance from the habitation in different seasons, adequacy, quality of water as seen by the group.

### (c) *Houses & Building Material*

Type of houses, adaptation to the climatic conditions of the area, material used for houses and cattlesheds, source of house building materials, time of construction of houses, frequency of new construction activity, change in residence and reasons therefor.

### (d) *Climate and General Surroundings*

Rainfall, general climatic conditions and locally recognised season; way of living during different seasons, protection of person (in different age-groups and sex-wise), cattle and property against elements of nature ; use of clothes, fire, etc.

Healthiness of the area, prevalence of malaria and other mass killers, seasonal diseases, the way the diseases and unhealthy condition are tackled by the group.

### (e) *Other Enemies of Man*

Menace of wild animals as against crops, domesticated animals and men; method adopted for meeting the menace, pests of crops and method of tackling; menace of serpents, soorpions, rats, etc., and the methods of tackling.

*(f) Sources of Food and Their Diet*

Items of food in different seasons; any difference in diet according to age or sex; taboos if any; sources of food articles and technique of collection and procurement; Identification and knowledge of possible sources of food articles, or other items which may be used in period of scarcity; the concept of group about the nutritive values of different articles of food.

Preparation of food in different seasons, techniques used, beliefs about nutritional content of different articles; quality of different articles consumed normally; frequency of eating in different age-groups, any restrictions; special food for expectant mothers or for mothers after child-birth, young children and sick.

*(g) Change in the Eco-system in the Living Memory of the Group*

Depletion of forest resources in general or any species of trees, vegetation, wild animals, domesticated animals, pasture areas, fishing areas, food articles, productivity of land; change in climate, rainfall and the response of the group; depletion or pollution of source of drinking water, irrigation sources; control of diseases prevalent relating to man, animals, crops or forests; appearance of any new diseases.

## **6. Economy**

The general impression whether the economy is hunting/food gathering/shifting cultivation. (This will need be confirmed, with reference to detailed analysis suggested below to understand their dependence on different forms of economic activity.)

### *Economy Activity*

The extent of different economic activities pursued by the groups, viz., (1) Food gathering; (2) Hunting and fishing; (3) Domesticated animals, poultry etc.; (4) Shifting cultivation; (5) Settled cultivation; (6) Casual labour; and (7) Other modern activity (to be specified).

(NOTE : As the groups are at pre-agricultural level of technology, the scope of modern activities will be extremely limited. Settled cultivation may also not be very important. Therefore, the quantification for (5) and (7) may be done on a universal basis particularly with reference to the modern economic activity. With reference to the remaining items, the study may be on a sample basis and the extent of dependence of the families

selected for special study should be taken as indicative of group dependence.)

Identification of area of command of the group under study with reference to each of the above activities; identification of the region in each case, supporting the food gathering, hunting, fishing, grazing and shifting cultivation activity of the group; the extent of use of resources in each of these activities on a 5-point scale, i.e., whether, with reference to the present use the resources are (i) almost inexhaustible, or (ii) more than adequate; or (iii) just adequate, or (iv) not adequate, or (v) extremely inadequate. (This will show the extent of inequilibrium between the need of the group and the resources in its command area.)

The nature of rights in the command area as understood by the group; the way rights are exercised and shared by different villages and within the same village by individuals; mutual help in each activity; sharing of the gains from each activity.

### *Transport*

Mode of transport of commodities as head loads, on shoulders, by bullock carts, other methods; extent of use of different modes for specific commodities.

### *Marketable Surplus in the Economy*

Commodities usually sold out by the group, total quantities sold, any commodities not exported or sold because of difficulties of transport, possible addition to exportable surplus of different agricultural and minor forest produce, if purchase arranged at the village level.

### *Market Places*

Location of market with reference to each habitat, size of the market, day and frequency of markets, commodities sold, preference of group for certain markets, annual fairs and articles usually purchased in the fairs.

## **7. Traditional Social and Economic Institutions**

Social organisation, family, status of women, leadership pattern; marriage, customs, divorce, adoption.

Concept of property and its ownership, land ownership, forms of transfers of land, if any, inheritance pattern of land, housing and other property, communal ownership of property, if any.

Composition of traditional panchayats or other social institutions, the choice of leadership, qualities of traditional leadership, the normative jurisdiction of the institution on social, economic and criminal matters, overlap, if any, with other legal institutions and the process of reconciliation between the two; effectiveness of the jurisdiction, any effective encroachments by other formal institutions, any dissidence or disobedience within the group of the traditional authority.

Economic relationship within the community, borrowing and lending in cash or kind in normal and abnormal circumstances, regulation of economic transactions, any institutionalised form of mutual help, cooperation in cultivation, hunting, fishing and other economic activity, distribution of economic benefits from different sources to different members of the community.

Social organisations of educational or recreational character, if any.

Viability of the existing institutions in the changing socio-economic situations, any innovation, adaptation in the social and economic institutions in the living memory, birth of new institutions, if any, in response to a new situation or challenge, any borrowed institutions from neighbouring communities.

## 8. Native Skills

Native skills with reference to :

- (a) various economic activities including
  - (i) food gathering ;
  - (ii) hunting ;
  - (iii) shifting cultivation; and
  - (iv) settled cultivation ;
- (b) skill in identifying the flora and fauna and their use for development purposes including medicines ;
- (c) the skills in making nets, traps, agricultural implements and other tools ;
- (d) skill of making the houses and putting to use the local raw materials;
- (e) skills as shown in the use of new materials ;
- (f) other professional skills like that of hair cutting, shoe-making, oil-pressing, wood-work, etc.;



- (g) skills in processing of raw materials for final consumption ;
- (h) skills as exemplified in the handicrafts, art work, etc ;
- (i) artistic skills including that of making musical instruments, playing on them, dancing, etc.;
- (j) the skills in weather forecasting ;
- (k) understanding of the eco-system ;
- (l) medicinal skills ;
- (m) arithmetical skills ;
- (n) skill in handling money, barter or cash exchange ; and
- (o) skill in keeping count of days, dates important events.

Changes.—Both upgradation and deterioration in the skills of the group as whole or any part thereof in the living memory ; identification of innovative adaptation, rejection after adoption, etc.

## 9. Communication Barriers

Dialect or subdialects of the group, whether the dialect is distinctive for the group or shared by other groups also; affinity of the group dialect with/ or extent of its distinction from dialects of other tribal groups, other dialects and regional languages; extent of bilingualism (i.e., ability to understand or speak in another dialect or regional language) in different age groups ; how transactions accomplished in the village or markets ; interpreters in case of contact with officials ; extent of proficiency of local governmental functionaries in the tribal dialect separately for teachers, revenue, police, forest and regulatory officials, developmental functionaries including medical personnel ; any problems in elementary school education.

Any psychological or sociological barriers to free contact with other groups and communities.

## 10. Contact with other groups

### (a) *Peasantry*

Extent of and areas of contact; level of awareness and knowledge about the difference in economic activity and social structure of other groups; any attempts for adopting some of their practices by individuals or the group with results; any change in social, ritual or other practices;

Immigration and outmigration on a seasonal, temporary or permanent basis; the level of contacts in case of immigration or outmigration; social relationship with other groups, occasions for group or individual visitations, exchange of gifts, participation in religious or social functions; any cases of inter-group marriages, elopements or other marital relationship; the comparative social or economic rating of the peasant communities by the group.

(b) *Other Individuals*

This group will include casual visitors like research scholars, *shikaries*, organised groups like gangs of labourers, traders, contractors, etc.

The level of contact with each of the above groups; the impressions left behind on the primitive group by casual visitors, any change ascribable to these groups, its original form and the ultimate shape;

The type of relationship with labour groups—the place of origin of labour groups visiting the area, any identifiable impressions about the group, their way of life, their place of origin etc; relationship with contractors, the extent of contact, whether limited to village leaders or higher degree of contact; the rating of the contractor's position and his influence; any mentionable impressions.

Special relationship with traders and money lenders; the extent of dependence and confidence relationship; whether relationship limited to the economic aspect or extended to social and personal level—the extent of personal and social inter-course.

(c) *Functionaries of the State*

The public personnel may belong to :

- (i) traditional administration like revenue, police, forest ;
- (ii) developmental administration like gram-sevak, medical personnel; and
- (iii) Cooperatives, Banks, other semi-government organisations.

Extent and intensity of contact with those functionaries living in the area and those who may be visiting the area occasionally; the level of relationship, official, group or personal; the perception of dependence relationship if any; one sided benefit or mutual benefit with reference to each of these groups; any changes ascribable to any of these groups.

Any special contact points with the court, viz., *vakils*, attorneys.

Any special relationships entered with any individual according to some local practice.

## 11. Perception of other groups

(a) Other peasant communities—their view about their economic structure, reasons for the difference, adaptative skills; views about their social organisations reasons for the difference; views about their personal qualities like intelligence, diligence, carefree nature, concern for the future etc.; their place in the social and economic hierarchy.

(b) Other individuals and groups—Recorded view of sociologists, administrators, if any, at different points of time in different contexts; the perception of the other groups like traders, contractors etc. about the economic, social life of the group and their personal characters etc.; the perception of personnel belonging to (i) the traditional departments and (ii) developmental departments about their economic life, social organisation, personal character etc.

## 12. Modern Economic Activity

Modern economic developmental programmes in and around the area of the primitive group and their impact on the group and its participation. Details of various developmental programmes including (a) agricultural extension; (b) Animal husbandry; (c) Irrigation; (d) Education; (e) Cottage and village industries; (f) Communication; and (g) Housing Programmes etc.; Diagnostic studies of selected programmes;

The extent of participation and benefit to the local community; extent of participation and benefit to the other groups in the area; reasons for differential assimilation of benefits; any adverse impact of the programmes on the primitive group economy, social structure or otherwise; any attempt by the group to get away or keep away from the new activity as shifting of village with construction of a road.

## 13. Groups adaptability and natural developmental capacity

Group response in adverse conditions of famine, scarcity, other natural calamities, forest fires; change in local habitat for meeting situations beyond their control; group response in the wake of slow processes of change like increase in population, depletion of natural resources of various descriptions; group response to the intrusion by other groups, initial resistance if any, the mode of resistance, the process and the stage at which the resistance gave way, psychological escapes, if any; group response to new information and contacts like new agricultural technology of other groups or carried by extension agency; group response to new centres of power resulting from tightening or extension of administration; group response to imposition of new laws in forming their social economic and religious life; influence

of literacy and educational inputs ; influence of new medicine ; group response to new economic opportunities like organised labour, skilled work, any change in their work habits, any change in distribution of work, any change in family relationships, any change in the social customs, any change in the internal organisation and social structure of the group.

NOTE.—In each case it will be useful if initial response, adverse or favourable, and the ultimate outcome is given.

#### **14. Rate of literacy and level of education**

Literates and illiterates sex-wise and age-wise ; level of education, viz. (i) just literate, (ii) pre-primary, (iii) primary, (iv) middle, (v) high school, (vi) graduate, (vii) technically qualified ; greater details with regard to matriculates and above preferably with individual cases.

#### **15. Educational Facilities**

Physical facilities available in and around the areas; extent of benefit programmes available ; present enrolment in different age-groups.

#### **16. State of Health and Nutrition**

Physical stature; general condition of health as exemplified by their weight, development of muscles, stamina, etc.; the growth rate of children, in early stages, any symptoms of malnutrition amongst the children ; healthiness of eyes, ears, other organs ; diseases if any.

Nutritional content of the average diet, deficiencies, if any.

Fertility, spacing of children, reproductive age of women, family planning practices—traditional or modern.

(NOTE.—This section will be based on an intensive medical check-up and scientific analysis of their diet.)

#### **17. Health Services and Family Planning**

A brief resume of health services, any special campaigns, etc., from the earliest days of the contact of the group with outside world including the problems sought to be tackled, intensity of effort and the results; group recollection of earlier efforts ; any special health survey undertaken recently to understand the problem; efforts and campaigns for eradication of mass killers like malaria, smallpox, etc., both views, viz., as shown in official records and as actually found in the field in different regions of the area; regular health services—the level of health services available, the geographical

dispersal with reference to natural barriers particularly in rainy season, the extent of utilisation of health services, indoor and outdoor, by members of the primitive groups located at different distances from the health centre, extent of utilisation of health services, indoor and outdoor, by member of communication, the time of response from health authorities at different levels, any serious epidemic or sudden appearance of diseases resulting in abnormal death and disability in the last ten years, whether it has been recorded by the district health authorities, the response and measures taken.

Family Planning effort—any special drives numbers of vasectomy, tubectomy and use of other methods both as recorded by medical institutions and as revealed in the survey.

### **18. Cognitive Mapping of the Eco-system and World View**

The total understanding of the group of the eco-system as a whole. its own relationship with the eco-system in the eyes of the primitive group, the relationship of the group with other tribal communities, other non-tribal groups, local administration; the depth of understanding of the modern administrative, social economic and political processes and the group's own grading of the group and other communities in the total scheme of things.

Group perception of its own community with reference to the larger society ; attachment and sanctity of group identity ; sources of pride; historical sense of the group, in terms of its own origin, relationship with other communities, living beings and the universe as a whole ; mythological figures, tribal heroes, either belonging to the primitive group or other groups; the depth of the group preception in relation to administrative and economic relationships; group perception of the place of the community with reference to forces of nature and the depth of their perception in the mysteries of nature ; the group view about their destiny, particularly with reference to the new contact ; signs of diffidence or hope if any.

### **19. Tribal Elite**

Tradition leaders—their selection and role.

Leaders in contact with the outside world, the qualities responsible for the individual assuming the new leadership role, the place of contact leaders in traditional structure and vis-a-vis traditional leaders, demarcation of areas of informal authority of the traditional leaders and contact leaders; overlap of the traditional and contact leadership; new leadership

in formal or legal institutions, reasons for the individual assuming the new leadership, area of authority of the formal leadership and its overlap, if any, with traditional leadership or contact leadership.

Education and new leadership, leadership in the younger age-group, the role of educated youth and their area of influence.

Some noted leaders of the group ; leaders from other groups including influence in the community.

## **20. Identification of the Primitive Groups**

Identification of the primitive groups will be the most important exercise which will have to be taken up with great caution. No single criteria can be applied in all cases. A combination of number of factors will have to be taken to decide whether a group or a part of a group can qualify as a primitive tribal community for the purposes of special programmes. Even a tribal community which may have been extremely backward and primitive, say two decades back, may have had a differential rate of growth in the intervening period and now only a part of the erstwhile primitive group may have remained at the level. Therefore, the latest information with reference to the entire community or a section thereof indicating clearly the habitat may be given. The following are some of the criteria which could be taken as an indicator for determining the primitive status of the tribal communities. Information in respect of the tribal community or a section thereof which is proposed to be treated as a primitive tribal group, therefore, will be necessary with reference to the facets noted below.

1. Technology—The primitive group should be at pre-agricultural level of technology i.e. their main source of livelihood may be food gathering, hunting or shifting cultivation. Some of the groups may be graduated from a pre-agricultural level of technology to full time wage labourers in organised sector of the economy. The extent of their dependence on traditional sources of livelihood will need to be indicated to determine their status on the technology scale.

2. Number—The total number of the groups as also their distribution in clusters of settlements, if these clusters are physically separated from each other, may be given. A primitive tribal group will generally be a small group not more than a few thousand as an outer limit.

3. Level of literacy—The primitive group should be at an extremely low level in the literacy scale tending towards zero.

4. Degree of socio-economic articulation with settled peasantry and urban centres—Generally, the group should be in comparative isolation or

should be on the fringe of one or more settled tribal communities. The number of ethnic groups with whom they are associated in the village may be indicated.

5. Distinctive linguistic and cultural traits.

6. Biological implications of primitive existence—The number is either generally declining or near steady. There is low fertility and fecundity and high infant mortality. The age structure is also imbalanced.

7. Level of Nutrition—Those primitive groups who have as yet not come in close contact with outside groups may have a satisfactory level of nutrition. However, in some cases where the eco-system has been disturbed, for various reason, this level may be low.



## Epilogue

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The Developmental programmes for primitive tribal communities have picked up, though slowly, after the Workshop in early 1975. The subject has evinced considerable interest in different States and has also continued to engage attention in the Government of India at the highest level. However, one of the most important difficulties has been the continued lack of clear understanding of the problems of each of the groups. The programme proposals, in many cases, proved nothing better than compilation of well-known sectoral schemes which are known to have by-passed these groups. The problem of getting persons sensitive to the problem of these groups and prepared to work amongst them continues to evade a satisfactory solution.

The details about a number of isolated small communities are, however, becoming available in greater measure. So far, references have been received in relation to thirty groups from different States. Advance action has been authorised in all these cases so that the most urgent problems do not await the results of either a detailed study or the formalities of project preparation and finalisation.

A Regional Workshop was organised under the aegis of Anthropology Department, Ranchi University, at Ranchi, in July, 1976. It helped in bringing into focus the problems of the primitive groups in Bihar, Orissa and West Bengal. Considerable data has been generated in the process which will be a help in preparation of realistic programmes.

It is becoming clear with experience that the development of these groups will require an extremely flexible administrative frame. General consensus now is in favour of constituting registered societies for the development of each group so that programmes can be taken up swiftly and suitable personnel can be appointed without getting involved in procedural complexities. Such societies have already been constituted in A & N Islands, Orissa and Bihar. Other States are also actively considering the suggestions.

An important land mark in the solution of the problem of primitive groups has been the decision to actively associate the All-India Institute of Medical Sciences for tackling the medical aspects of the declining primitive communities. The Government of India have taken a formal decision in this regard so that continued attention can be given to this problem. The Institute is already seized with the problem of the primitive tribal communities in Andaman and Kotas and Paniyans in Tamil Nadu. Some of the State Governments have also undertaken special health surveys as a preparatory step for effective health for them.

### *Abujhmarias*

Abujhmarias are a part of the larger Gond tribe inhabiting the territory of Abhujmar in the tehsils of Narainpur, Birajpur and Dantewada in Bastar, M.P. and Sironcha tehsil of Chandrapur, Maharashtra. Their total number was about 14,000 in 1971. The Abujhmar area in Bastar has not been opened up as a matter of policy. The normal administration was withdrawn from this area in the early 30s. There has, however, been some influx of outsiders in this area in the recent years. A team of doctors has recently visited this area and a programme for this community is being formulated. The natural resources in this area are plentiful and population sparse. The approach of development for this area is to develop plantation crops so that a large area can be under command with a comparatively small work force. It is proposed to allow controlled in-migration ensuring that demographic balance is not unduely disturbed.

### *Ariya Goundans*

Ariya Goundans are a small tribal group numbering about 24,000 who live in Kalrayan Hills in South Arcot district of Tamil Nadu. These hills were covered under three Jagirs with 153 villages. The Jagirs have been abolished only recently in August, 1976. The community subsists entirely on food gathering and hunting in the forest area. They also collect minor forest produce which they exchange for other necessities. They were highly indebted and were in the condition of semiserfdom. Urgent measures have already been taken to give them immediate relief and special programmes are being prepared by the Government of Tamil Nadu.

### *Asurs*

Asurs are a small tribal community numbering about 6,600. They live in Ranchi and Palamau districts of Bihar. They consider themselves to be the original inhabitants of this area who have been pushed back by the more advanced communities. Many of them have taken to settled cultivation but their economic condition is precarious because of the pressure from other groups and dwindling forest resources. There is considerable incidence of mal-nutrition amongst them. A special programme for this group is being prepared by the State Government.

### *Baigas*

Baigas are a part of larger Gond Tribe. A small area of *Baigachak* in the district of Mandla with 27 forest villages, has been identified as a primitive pocket with about 3,000 Baigas. They depend largely on forests. They have now taken to agriculture although socially and economically they are still extremely backward. The literacy rate amongst them is near zero. A programme for their development is being planned around agriculture and animal husbandry.

### *Bharias*

Bharias are one of the smaller tribal groups of M.P. and are found in Chhindwara, Seoni, Mandla and Sarguja. A small section of this community, about 300 strong, live in an area known as Patalkot in Chhindwara district, Madhya Pradesh. This area is a deep depression in the hilly region, the

approach being extremely difficult as the '*kanats*' are almost vertical. This group has been by-passed by modern development because of the physical situation of their habitat. They practise shifting cultivation and also rear cattle. Indebtedness is unknown in this area. The level of literacy is less than 2 per cent. Medical facilities are non-existent. A programme of providing social services and an economic base with forestry oriented programmes is being prepared.

### *Birhor*

Birhors are a small tribal community mainly located in Ranchi and Hazaribagh in Bihar and Purulia in West Bengal. The total population of Birhors is 2,534 out of whom only 100 live in West Bengal. They are interspersed with other communities and generally live in groups of 3 to 4 families. Some of their '*tandas*' may also be larger. These people live on the fringe of forests and outskirts of larger villages. They move from one place to another depending on the availability of raw materials in the forests for their traditional occupation. Their main occupation is chehor fibre. They also do some cultivation, work as agricultural labourer or collect honey, bee-wax, etc. Literacy amongst them is comparatively high being 20% for males and 6.9% for females. An action-research programme for this group has been taken up by the Anthropology Department of Ranchi University.

### *Birjias*

Birjias are a small community in Palamau district of Bihar. They generally subsist on forests and also work as forest labourers. They are, however, in a prevarious condition and level of nutrition is very low. They are at a pre-literate stage. A special programme is being taken up for this group.

### *Bondos*

Bondos are one of the most backward tribal communities, who number about 5,300, and live in Koraput district of Orissa. They are divided into two groups. About 4,350 Bondos live in Bondo hills of Mudlipara. The remaining Bondos are now living in the plains of Andrachal Grampanchayat. The Bondos practice shifting cultivation and also cultivate paddy along the streams in the narrow strips. The Bondos have been a ferocious group who have not liked outside contact. Educational effort has not yielded much result so far. The Hill Bondos have been recognised as a primitive community and special programmes are being prepared for them.

### *Chenchus*

Chenchus numbering 10,448 are the most backward tribal community in Andhra Pradesh. They live in forest areas on the borders of Mehboobnagar district of Andhra Pradesh. They generally depend on food gathering and hunting. They also collect minor forest produce and work as labourers in forests.

Special programmes have been taken up for Chenchus even before independence but there has not been much impact on them. The opening up of the areas has adversely affected this community since its command over resources has declined. The level of literacy amongst them is about 2%. A special programme is now being prepared for them.

### *Cholanaikayan*

Cholanaikayans are a small community, numbering about 160, who live in Nilambur Valley in Ernad Taluk of Malappuram district, Kerala. They live deep in the forests in cave-dwellings. They depend largely on food gathering and hunting. They also collect minor forest produce which they exchange for meeting small necessities of life. Their only contact with the outside world is through contractors working in the forest area. They are a pre-literate community. Special programmes have been taken up for them by the Government of Kerala.

### *Great Andamanese*

The Great Andamanese are a remnant group of 10 tribal communities of Andaman Islands which together once numbered about 10,000. These communities include Charier or Chari, Kora, Tabo or Bo, Yere, Kede, Bea, Balawa, Bojigiyab, Juwai and Kol. Their total number now is 23. They have lost their command of the forests, but have not been able to join modern economy. They were living as destitutes in the periphery of Port Blair when they were shifted to strait Island. The most important problem of this group is health and sterility. The group is pre-literate. Personalised attention is now being given to each individual member of the community so that they may regain confidence and could have some faith in their future. Their health problem is being tackled under the aegis of All India Institute of Medical Sciences.

### *Hill Korbas*

The Hill Korbas, about 4,000 in numbers, are scattered in the hilly region on the border of Sarguja and Raigarh, Madhya Pradesh. They are extremely backward and are caught amongst more advanced tribal groups. They have no land and depend entirely on the dwindling forest resources. The literacy rate amongst this community is near zero. A forest based programme is being prepared for the Korbas.

### *Jarvas*

Jarva is the last of the hostile groups amongst the original twelve tribal communities of Andaman Islands. They had a brief contact with the British more than a century back after which they have continued to be hostile. Some contact has been established with the Jarvas in the past few years. Now it is proposed to establish greater contact with them from the sea side under the leadership of a senior civil officer with an anthropologist and a doctor as a part of team. The land boundary with the Jarvas is being made inviolable so that a confidence relationship can be established. Gradual contact may help in ending hostility and in developing the Jarva.

### *Juangs*

Juangs are one of the most backward tribal communities, numbering about 24,400, who live in Juangpirh of Keonjhar district, Orissa. The Juangpirh was delineated exclusively for this group in the pre-independence days because of their primitive conditions. There has been some influx from outside in the Juag area and the economic condition of the Juagans has deteriorated. They still continue to subsist on shifting cultivation, food gathering, hunting and minor forest produce. In some of the areas with heavy pressure of population some of the Juangs are taking to settled cultivation as well. The Juangs shift their habitations when the resources in the local area get depleted. The developmental programmes have not touched this community in any significant manner. Special programmes are being prepared by the Government of Orissa for the Juangs.

### *Katkarias*

Katkarias, who number about 1,40,672, are found in the districts of Thana, Poona, Ratnagiri, Satara and Nasik in the State of Maharashtra. The Kat-

karia are also over flown in Gujarat & Rajasthan where they are known as Kathodia Kathodias are not included in the Schedule. The hereditary occupation of Katkaria is catechue making. Some of them are now engaged in preparation of charcoal. The literacy rate among Katkaria is about 2 per cent. Katkarias are the poorest among all the scheduled tribes in Maharashtra. The precise groups, which continue to be in pre-agricultural stage, are being identified for whom separate projects will be prepared.

### *Kharias*

The Kharias are a small tribal group, numbering about 11,000 who live in Singhbhum district of Bihar and Mayurbhanj district of Orissa. They are confined generally to thick forests and have been isolated from other communities. They practice shifting cultivation and depend on collection of honey, cacoons and other minor forest produce. The level of literacy is very low. Special programmes are being prepared for them by the two State Governments.

### *Kolam*

Kolams who number 52,615, live in the districts of Yeotmal, Nanded and Chanderpore in Maharashtra and in Andhra Pradesh. They were traditionally shifting cultivators but now many of them have taken up settled agriculture. The literacy rate amongst Kolams was 2.62% in 1961. The groups, which may still continue at pre-agricultural technology, are being identified.

### *Konda Reddies*

Konda Reddies are a small community, numbering about 1,800, in a small pocket of West Godavari district, Andhra Pradesh. They largely depend on forests and practice shifting cultivation. They also occasionally work as forest labour. The level of literacy is very low. A special programme is being prepared for them as a part of the Integrated Tribal Development Project.

### *Kondh*

Kondh is a small tribal community, who live in Niyamgiri Hills of Bisamcuttack in Koraput district of Orissa. They largely depend on shifting cultivation, food gathering and hunting. Their contact with the outside world



is almost nil. Panos, a Scheduled Caste community, are the exclusive intermediary. The pressure of population is now being felt in some areas where the forest resources are getting depleted. Some of the Kondhs, therefore, are taking to settled cultivation as well. The level of literacy is extremely low. Many of the Kondhs are indebted to the Panoes. A special programme is being prepared for them by the Government of Orissa.

#### *Kotas*

Kotas are a small tribal community, numbering about 1,200, who are dispersed in 7 villages in the Nilgiri district, Tamil Nadu. Their social status is the lowest amongst the tribals in this area. Their number is declining because of sickle-cell disease. The Nilgiri Adivasi Welfare Association has been doing good work in this area. The health problem of this group is now engaging the attention of the All-India Institute of Medical Sciences. Special programmes are being prepared for them.

#### *Kotwalias*

Kotwalias are a small tribal community numbering about 13000, in Surat and Bharuch districts of Gujarat. They have been traditionally bamboo workers. They also depend on food gathering in the forest areas. Their economic condition has deteriorated with the depletion of forest resources. They are almost pre-literate. A special programme is being prepared for them by the Government of Gujarat.

#### *Kurumbas*

Kurumbas are a small tribal community who live in Palghat district of Kerala and in the adjoining area in Tamil Nadu. They are confined to reserved forests. They practice shifting cultivation and depend on collection of minor forest produce. They also change their habitat when the local resources get exhausted. The level of literacy is very low. Special programmes have been initiated in Kerala and Tamil Nadu for this group.

#### *Mankarias*

Mankarias are a small community, numbering about 2000, who live in Mayurbhanj district of Orissa. As their name signifies they have been

traditionally dependent on monkeys for their subsistence. They are nomadic in character and move from one forest to another in search of monkeys. They also work as casual labourers. They are almost in the pre-literate stage. Special programmes are being prepared for them by the Government of Orissa.

### *Onges*

This is a small tribal community inhabiting the Little Andaman Islands. Its total strength was about 500 in the beginning of the century but they have now been reduced to barely 112 in 1971. They are at the food-gathering and hunting stage of economy. The establishment of resettlement colonies in the Island and working of forests has posed fresh problems for the survival of this group. The groups pre-literate. It has now been decided not to extend the re-settlement area. Forestry programmes will also be taken keeping in view the full requirements of this community. A team comprising three or four persons is being organised for working in these Islands. Two centres of operation will be organised one at Dugongcreek and another in the south-western part of the Island. Health and sterility are the biggest problems. The All India Institute of Medical Sciences have been associated in the programme for this group.

### *Paharias*

Paharias are comparatively a larger tribal group, numbering about one lakh, who live in Santhal Parganaes district of Bihar. They are confined to the hills of Sunderpahari, Litipara, Amrapara and Barhait. Some of them are also scattered in the Damini region in the district.

The Paharias generally subsist on shifting cultivation. They also collect minor forest produce and exchange it for meeting their basic needs. The economic condition of this community has considerably deteriorated with the depletion of natural resources. Their number is also declining. Some of them, who live in the areas adjoining the plains, have also taken to agriculture. Those who have got dispersed have turned into agricultural labourers. The bulk of the community, however, continues to live on the top of the hills where there is little economic or social service infra-structure. The level of literacy amongst the Paharias is barely 2%.

Those sections of the Paharia community who are still in primitive conditions are being delineated for taking up special programmes. Six pilot projects for a group of villages in each of the hills where they are found

in concentration are being taken up by the Government of Bihar in the current year.

### *Paniyans*

Paniyans are one of the most backward tribals in Tamil Nadu. They are scattered on the western slopes of Nilgiris. Their main concentration is in Gudalur Taluk, Nilgiri. Their total population is about 5800. The incident of bonded labour was sizeable amongst them. Special programmes have been taken up for their development after termination of debt bondage. This community is also facing some special health problems and All-India Institute of Medical Sciences has been associated in evolving a suitable health programme for them.

### *Parahaiyas*

Parahaiyas are a small tribal community in the Palamau district of Bihar. They live deep in the forest. They were treated as criminal tribes during the British days and that legacy continues to haunt them. Their economy, therefore, has deteriorated and they have turned into casual labourers. Many of them were in debt bondage. The level of literacy is almost nil. Special programme is being prepared for this community.

### *Rajis*

Rajis are a small community numbering about 300. They live in forests of Pithoragarh, U.P. They were extremely shy of any contact with the outsiders till very recently. They were entirely dependent on food gathering and hunting. They exchanged minor forest produce for meeting other needs. They are now gradually taking to cultivation but have not been able to establish as cultivators. The new contact has converted them into casual labourers and they are highly indebted. The level of literacy amongst the Rajis is almost nil. Special programmes are being prepared by the Government of Uttar Pradesh for them.

### *Reangs*

Reangs are the most backward tribal community in Tripura. Their total population is about 90,000. Most of them are shifting cultivators. They also collect minor forest produce. The level of literacy amongst Reangs

is very low. Some of the Reangs, however, have also taken to settled cultivation. Those sections of the community which still are in primitive conditions are being identified and special programmes are being prepared for them by the Government of Tribpura.

### *Saharias*

The Saharias are located on the border of Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan in the districts of Morena in M.P. and Kota in Rajasthan. Their total number is more than a lakh. They have been generally confined to forest region in this area. They are known to shift their villages in no time whenever they experience any pressure from any other group. This is one of the communities which are said to have lost their nerve. With the opening up of this area there has been large scale alienation of land by the stronger communities. The level of literacy is less than 5%. A programme has been recently started in Kota, Rajasthan with effective measures for restoration of land as the central point. They have to be rehabilitated as viable agriculturists. Comprehensive programmes identifying the group to be covered under the primitive community is being prepared by these two states.

### *Soura*

Soura are a small community numbering about 2500 who live in Ganjam district of Orissa. Soura practice shifting cultivation and depend largely on forests for their livelihood. The level of literacy is extremely low. A Soura Development Agency has been constituted which is working for their development for the last two years.

### *Sentenelese*

Sentenelese are members of one of the negreto tribal community inhabiting the North Sentineal Island in Andamans. There is no contact with this group. Their total number is about 100. A policy of establishing gradual contact is being planned for this group.

### *Shompens*

Shompens are a small tribal community of Great Nicobar Island numbering about inhabiting the urged forest areas. They subsist at pre-agricultural economy. Their biggest problem appears to be health. A team comprising

a doctor and an administrator is being constituted to go into this area and study their problem so that effective developmental programmes can be taken up for them.

### *Todas*

Todas are a small pastoral tribal community numbering about 800 who live in Nilgiris district, Tamil Nadu. This is one of the much studied community amongst the Scheduled Tribes in the South. They have been declining in numbers due to various reasons including prevalence of certain diseases. The decline in their number has been checked by work of various organizations including the Nilgiris Adivasi Welfare Association. Efforts have also been made to wean them away from pastoral economy and settle them as agriculturists. But this effort has had a limited success and only a few families have been able to take to agriculture. Even here they depend on labour from outside. Special programmes are being prepared for the Todas.

