

# TRIBAL REHABILITATION IN INDIA

D. N. MAJUMDAR

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## I

The various categories into which the people of India are ethnographically classified, for census purposes and also in sociological literature, are “tribe”, “caste”, “sect”, and “class”. The first two were originally mutually exclusive, while caste, sect and class do not represent rigid “water-tight” compartments. Generally speaking, a tribe is a socio-political organization, territorially integrated, while caste is a social group without political function. In recent years, however, a political complexion can be traced in the various All-India caste *sabhas* or associations in their demand for political rights and their feverish activities to secure them. A sect is often a segment of a caste regrouped on a new religious basis, as represented by the Ramayats, Lingayats, and Vaishnavites, while a class has a political character emerging as it does, as a direct result of industrialization.

The minimum definition of a tribe is an ethnic group speaking a common dialect and inhabiting a common territory. Some anthropologists do not regard a tribe as a territorial unit, as all tribes were originally nomadic, but admit its political character—inter-tribal warfare and vendetta being common methods of settling disputes and satisfying aggressive designs, found even today among the tribes of the north-western frontier of India before partition. Nomadism, particularly in the earlier stages, was certainly a distinct trait of tribal life, but since nomadism has been superseded by settled life, a territorial affiliation can be admitted. Nomadism is also limited by regional ties and ecological considerations. A more plausible definition of a tribe given by the *Imperial Gazetteer* is commonly adopted in ethnographical literature on India. A tribe, according to this definition, is a collection of families bearing a common name, speaking a common dialect, occupying or professing to occupy a common territory and is ordinarily, but not necessarily, endogamous. Here we need to distinguish “caste” from “tribe”. A caste in its simple form, is a collection of families, bearing a common name, following or professing to follow a particular occupation, observing a standard code of rules and taboos regarding marriage, food and ceremonial purification. Although a caste is merely a social group, the territorial affiliations of the castes have placed them in regional groups. When the same caste, speaking different languages, is found in two states or geographical areas, there is no social relationship or inter-marriage, and each caste is a distinct social unit in its own territory. Endogamy is vital to a caste, as for a territorial group, though in the case of the former, endogamy may have been dictated by the desire for ceremonial purity, racial pride, cultural homogeneity, or even isolation. In the case of a tribe, endogamy is probably a consequence of cultural and dialectical differences, beliefs in *mana* and taboos. A caste is split up into smaller sections or sub-castes, the latter also observing endogamy, as for example, among the Kayasthas of Uttar Pradesh, of whom there are 12 divisions, each endogamous

and, for practical purposes, independent castes. Similar is the case among the various sections of the Brahmins, and even the agricultural Kurmis are split up into *Biyahuts* and *Sagahuts*—originally mutually hypergamous, but now endogamous; the former prohibit widow marriage, the latter still practise it. As we pass from the higher to lower castes in an area, the solidarity of the caste increases and is maintained by a caste organization, caste *panchayat*, which is now being replaced in northern India, for the present, by the *Gaan Hukumat*, or village self-government.

The numerical strength of the tribal people in India approximated to 25 millions, according to the census of 1941. Since then, the total population of India has increased by nearly 13 per cent. As the various tribes in India represent many levels of progress and decay, we are not sure whether this increase may be credited to the tribal people as well. Tribal demography in India, today, as before, is characterized by three trends: (1) a progressive decline of many tribal groups; (2) a slow increase among many tribes; and (3) a rapid increase among tribes living in certain parts of the country, specially protected by legislation and catered for by the administration. In the decade 1941-51, there has been a good deal of assimilation of the tribal groups into Hinduism, so that the figures of tribal strength in the different states may not be accurate. The Uttar Pradesh has had to liquidate all tribes, except the criminal groups, owing to rapid change and the claims of the tribes for higher cultural status. In many parts contacts with civilization have undermined tribal solidarity, have invaded tribal security, introduced discomforts, diseases and vices. Many have failed to maintain their tribal structures, and have been partially or wholly assimilated into the lower strata of the Hindu caste system. Some have left their settlements and are scattered over wider areas. Where the tribes live in a compact territory, as do the Santhal Parganas or the Chota Nagpur in Bihar, the tribal cultures have not faced much disorganization and there is not so much detribalization. However, tribes which live in the neighbourhood of organized and more advanced groups have either become assimilated with the castes or have developed a symbiotic relationship, or "acculturated" to the advanced cultures, though in some areas, a process of contra-acculturation is manifest.

The tribal returns as recorded in the census, decade to decade, reveal a heterogeneous category including Moslem tribes of Pathans, Baluchis, Brahuis, Afghans, Mapillas, comparatively primitive tribes like the Todas and the Kotas who still worship their own tribal deities, those who have become partially Hinduized—like most of the Bhils and Gonds among whom the tribal name is on the way to becoming a caste name; those largely Christianized, like the Oraons, the Mundas, and the Khasis; and others who are wholly Hinduized, like the Bhumij of Bihar, the Rajhwar of Sarguja, the Patela of the Panchmahals, or the Manipuris of Assam. All these tribes can be territorially grouped into: (1) tribes of the north-western frontier; (2) those of the north-eastern frontier; and (3) of interior India; the last can be subdivided into: (i) Munda group; (ii) Dravidian speaking. The former speak dialects of the Munda group of the Austro-Asiatic sub-family of the Austric family of languages, the latter, i.e. the peninsular tribes, speak the various Dravidian languages or their patois. The Mongoloid tribes speak Tibeto-Burmese, though the Indo-Aryan languages have influenced the vocabulary and pattern of all tribal languages.

## II

Racially, the tribal population of India, both of interior India and of the north-eastern frontier, belongs either to the Indo-Australoid (Pre-Dravidian) or the Mongoloid stock. The Nagas and the Kukis of Assam are of Mongoloid origin, and other tribes, like the Garo and the Rajbanshi, have a mixed Mongoloid-Australoid descent. The Mongolian strain has entered Assam and outlying parts of eastern Bengal (eastern Pakistan), and even high-caste people in these parts show unmistakable Mongolian traits. The Indo-Australoids are scattered over the whole country. In peninsular India they have mixed with the Mediterranean type, and in central India they have been assimilated here and there by an Alpine element which forms the apex of the racial structure in Gujarat and Bengal. In one or two tribes of the south there is evidence of a "negrito" strain, which some anthropologists claim to be the "basic racial stratum" in the Indian population, but the "negrito" has never been indigenous to India, though the woolly hair, short stature and a mesocephalic head (not broad) among the Kadirs may be due to "negroid" mixture. In fact there is ample evidence of infiltration in coastal parts of India of western "negroids", and some anthropologists think that the Mediterranean race has had a "negroid" association before they spread out. Even if there was a "negrito" element in the Indian population, its contribution to the making of Indian ethnic types must have been negligible. The Mongolian race has not influenced the population of interior India, though the Scythian branch of this race has left its impression on the Kathis of cultural Gujarat and probably among the Mehars, Rajputs and Oswal Jains of Cutch. From the evidence of blood-groups, it appears that the Indo-Australoids show more of O and A than B, the A percentage, 60 per cent, among the Paniyans of Malabar being the highest.

Briefly, the majority of the tribes belong to the Indo-Australoid ethnic type, which probably represents the substratum of the Indian population today. There is plenty of support for this view, as the Austric language has had a very wide distribution in India. Even the tribes of the south, who speak the dialects of the Dravidian family of languages, were once speakers of the Austric family of languages. The general features of the Indo-Australoids are a dark skin, a longish head, a broad flat nose, coarse features and short stature. These tribes were probably assimilated by a race who must have spoken Dravidian languages, and the Indus Valley civilisation was probably Dravidian in origin, according to competent prehistorians. Of course, waves of immigration have disturbed the ethnic structure of the Indian population and it is difficult to say with any degree of certainty what constitutes the race elements in any particular type, tribe or caste.

In a racial and serological survey of the Uttar Pradesh which was undertaken in 1941 in connexion with the census operations, a gradual transition was found of ethnic types among the 22 castes and tribes measured. They could be divided into three basic *groups*: (1) the Brahmins, both of the eastern and western districts; (2) the artisan castes; and (3) the tribal group—with many intermediate types. The tribal groups of the U.P., both Mongoloid and Indo-Australoid, can be readily differentiated from the Brahmins and the artisans on anthropometric evidence, while the serological status of the castes and tribes follow more or less the accepted social precedence. This is significant, indicating ethnic differences; the Brahmins are at the apex of the ethnic pyramid of the province, then follow the Chattriyas and the Khatris, then the Artisans, ending with the Kahars, a menial caste whose affiliation with the

tribes is more intimate than that of the other artisan castes, while the tribes behave as distinct units with varying degrees of relationship among them. When we compare the somatology and serology of specific castes like the Chamar or the Dom we find a good deal of intermixture, so that, in some anthropometric characters, the Dom resemble the higher castes, in others, they affiliate themselves with the tribes, indicating the extent of miscegenation among the lower castes, all or most of them having had originally tribal, particularly Indo-Australoid, origin. The results of the U.P. anthropometric survey which have been put forward in a joint publication by P. C. Mahalanobis, D. N. Majumdar and C. R. Rao (*Sankhya*, Vol. IX, parts 2 and 3, 1949), throw light on the question of tribal dynamics and cultural change. The same kind of results were obtained in the Gujarat anthropometric survey,<sup>1</sup> in which we found a grouping of tribes and a hierarchy based on ethnic considerations, with the Brahmins at one end of the racial scale and the tribal Kolis and the Bhils at the other. It is, therefore, a fact that the tribes of a particular region are more intimate ethnically to the lower castes of the region, and in one province, viz., the Uttar Pradesh, the differences are such as to support the view of their ethnic homogeneity, the basis on which earlier ethnographers have treated the castes of the U.P. as racially similar but functionally distinct. Thus the functional theory of caste is a plausible and minimum explanation of caste origins in the province.

The kaleidoscopic account of race origins given above indicates, very superficially, the extent of fusion and fission of races in India, and everywhere in tribal India we find institutions and practices which have resulted from culture contacts. It is not possible to map out the zonal distribution of a specific culture or cultures—as may still be possible in Africa and the Oceanic areas inhabited by “native peoples”—except perhaps in the outlying parts, for example, in the Naga hills in Assam or in the Agency tracts of Orissa and Madras, in Bastar, Hyderabad, and in tribal Mysore. From the tribe to caste, social distance has followed the order of racial precedence.

### III

Culturally, the tribes have distinct patterns of life; some matriarchal, like the Garos and the Khasis of Assam, others patriarchal, while many show signs of transition or have a matriarchal matrix. A tribe is ordinarily split up into sections, septs or clans—these clans in some cases were organized on the basis of a dual structure, divided into two distinct moieties or marriage-classes, as among the Gonds of the Satpura hills and the Garos of Assam. A tribe may have a number of clans, which are named after animals, plants or material objects found within the common area owned by the tribe. Totemic ties, territorial contiguity, or mythical origin from a common ancestor, determine inter-group and intra-group affiliations, every clan being a kinship group, though the political role exercised by the clan, as evidenced in the *Parha* organization of the Mundas, may be a function of common residence within a territorial limit. In the majority of cases, clans and tribes recognize both territorial and kinship ties. Where political ties are more important, as among the Naga *khels*, exogamy is patterned on the territorial frame. Where totemic beliefs and practices underlie bonds of kinship, as among the Munda-speaking tribes, exogamy is determined on the totemic principle. Where

<sup>1</sup> *Race Realities in Moha Gujarat* (Genj., Rec. Soc. Publication, 1950).

feudal ties exist, they may also ban intra-clan or even intra-village marriages, as among the Indo-Aryan Khasis of the Cis-Himalayan region.

The tribal people of India are both aristocratically and democratically organized. The Naga chiefs represent a predominantly aristocratic organization, the *Parha* system of the Munda tribes, a democratic organization where annual *yatras* or festivals cement bonds of territorial kinship. Each tribe or section of it, besides its hereditary or elected chief, has a council of elders who assist the headman or the chief in the maintenance of the tribal code, law and morality, and there is a spontaneous conformity to traditional ways of life with only occasional lapses, owing to contacts with civilization or disintegration forced either from within or without.

Of all the factors that impinge on and influence cultural progress, economy is probably the major one, and in any scheme of tribal rehabilitation, an emphasis on tribal economy is natural. The various methods by which the primitive people of India eke out their subsistence can be understood only in the context of their environment, for it is the natural resources of their habitat that provide the bulwark of defence against starvation, squalor, and destitution, particularly so as technological aids are so limited and crude, if available. The economic activities of the primitive tribes are the collection of edible fruits and roots, herbs, and plants from the forests; hunting; fishing; bird-catching; honey-gathering; domestication of sheep and cattle; crude cultivation, such as shifting, terraced, or semi-permanent agriculture; spinning; weaving; basket-making and minor arts and crafts. Even today, the primitive tribes spend the major part of their working hours in the procurement of food, and they are constantly faced with the food problem. The scope for their food supply has been considerably narrowed owing to non-availability of fruits and roots, restriction on the use of forests, lack of knowledge about efficient agriculture, and changed ideas about their diet, the last resulting entirely from their cultural contacts with the plains' people.

Hunting is no longer a major occupation of the tribes, and *jhum* cultivation and terraced farming are no longer efficient substitutes for hunting. The fertility of the fields was in the past believed to be secured by sacrifices and prayers based on the belief in "soul-substance" and the observance of fertility cults. Today, however, there is a disintegration of tribal life, and beliefs and practices which aided the struggle for adaptation and secured the food supply have been dropped, while the phenomenal increase of population among certain tribes has made heavy inroads into their primitive economy. Where the tribes live near the plains' people, they have learnt permanent agriculture—the Khond, the Munda, the Santhal, the Garo, the Khasi, and the Angami Naga cultivate their lands in the same way as the plains' people, and irrigation and use of manure as a fertilizer have become essential aids to agriculture. The use of the plough has become popular, if not universal, and cattle have replaced human labour, which often used to be yoked to the plough to make the field yield a bumper harvest; artificial irrigation is now resorted to by most of the tribes mentioned above, but the vagaries of rainfall, the inefficient and crude tools and equipment, lack of foresight and lazy habits impede their economic efforts. Some of the tribes have little artistic taste; their arts and crafts are crude, and in no way serve to help them to earn a living, while there are tribes like the Angami Naga and the Lushai whose artistic enterprises can yield a rich dividend if properly handled.

On the basis of tribal economy, the tribes can be grouped into several clusters or categories. There are tribes who live in the hills and fastnesses and cling to their simple collection or hunting economy. In some parts,

they live by shifting or *jhum* cultivation, supplementing the meagre produce from their fields by lumbering, simple barter of forest products, and occasional or permanent labour in mines, factories and plantations. Some settled tribes live on permanent agriculture, but with only rudimentary knowledge of the farming practices that give security to the agricultural communities of the plains; they keep poultry and cattle, know weaving, spinning and pottery. Terraced farming, associated with *jhum* or independent of it, is practised by various tribes, such as the Khasi, the Khond and the Saora, who use every available slope whose declivity is not too steep for agriculture, and sow seeds broadcast, sacrifice animals, raise menhirs or stone structures in their fields (perhaps as the source of "soul-substance"), and even drench themselves in the monsoon rains to make a bargain with nature for their food; their needs can be met only if all dances are danced, all rites performed and none omitted, and if the gods are satisfied by the prayers and sacrifices traditionally prescribed.<sup>1</sup>

#### IV

From time to time, the primitive and backward conditions of the aboriginal population of India had received some attention from the British administration, but they followed, as far as practicable, a policy of *laissez faire* with regard to these people, with the result that occasional but violent revolts were reported from tribal areas, caused by expropriation of the tribes from their tribal lands, exploitation of tribal labour, and exactions of the money-lenders and the alien vendors of toys and trinkets. It is not possible here to deal at any length with the various efforts of the administration to give relief and work out schemes for the rehabilitation of the primitive hill and jungle tribes, but a few instances might be put forward to illustrate the solicitude of the administration for tribal welfare. It must be pointed out, however, that the absence of a definite policy with regard to the tribal people left them at the mercy of the advanced cultural groups, economically more organized. Missionary activities received the full approval and active support of the then administration of the country, and the Government was lulled to a sense of security on the assumption that what was necessary was being done through missionary activities. It was thought that the long-range policy of converting the tribes to Christianity should be viewed with tolerance on the part of the administration.

Yet, some legislation had to be passed to reduce the discomforts of the aboriginal people. The Paharia came into conflict with the Hindu zemindars quite early, and British interference took the form of attempts at pacification and military operations, while the leaders of the revolt were granted land and *sanads*. To neutralize such violent outbursts the Paharia were surrounded by a ring of disabled and retired soldiers, who were encouraged to settle in and

The first group includes tribes like the Rajis of Ascot, Almora district, U.P., the jungle Birhor and the Kharia of the Ranchi district of Bihar, the Darlung Kuki of Tripura state, the hill Maria of Bastar, Madhya Pradesh, the Koya, the Kadar, the hill Pantanam of Hyderabad and Mysore states, and probably the Juang of Orissa state. The second group includes the Korwa of Mirzapur in U.P., the Garo, and the Malpaharia of Assam and Bengal, respectively, the Naga tribes, the Mura and the Dandami Maria of Bastar, the Khond and the Saora of the Ganjam Agency tracts in Orissa, and the Kamar of Chhattisgarh. The advanced tribes who can be ill-distinguished from the lower agricultural castes of the plains, except in the social structure and tribal beliefs and practices, are the Tharus of Tarai, U.P., the Munda-speaking tribes of Bihar, the Oraon of the Ranchi district, the Khasi of Assam, the Parja, the Bhatra and the Gond tribes of Madhya Pradesh and Orissa, the Badaga, and probably the Kota of Madras, the Bhils and the Kolf of Gujarat.

around the Paharia tract to keep the peace. Gradually the leaders of the tribe had to be vested with civil and criminal jurisdiction in the villages, till the improved state of law and order earned for them special treatment and the withdrawal in 1782 of the Rajmahal hills from the jurisdiction of the ordinary courts. In 1796, the code drafted for the administration of the Daman-i-Koh, the new name for the Paharia tract, became Regulation I, and the tract was thenceforth administered by the collector without regard to any of the laws in force in British India, according to his own rules.

Chota Nagpur and the Santhal Parganas were seething with tribal discontent, and armed intervention by the Government was frequently sought by the *zemindars* to restore peace. The 1855 Santhal revolt made necessary the creation of Daman-i-Koh, and the Santhal Parganas, as a separate district, was declared a non-regulated area by Regulation XXXVII of 1855. All this was done on the ground that the complicated machinery of "civilized" laws was unsuited to the genius of the aboriginals, a subject on which S. C. Roy, the pioneer anthropologist of India, had made pertinent observations. Several bits of legislation were passed under the authority of the Executive Council of Fort William, Fort St. George, and Bombay. By the Indian Councils Act of 1861, the British Parliament validated rules and regulations made by the Governor-General-in-Council and by certain local authorities for non-regulated tracts. The Government of India Act of 1870 further empowered the Governor-General-in-Council to issue laws and regulations for the administration of areas where the operation of the civil and criminal Procedure Acts in force in British India was restricted. In 1874, the Indian Legislature passed the Scheduled Districts Act or Act XIV of 1874, whereby the "local" government was empowered to declare in respect of the tracts specified in the Act what enactments were or were not in force, and to notify the extension, with modifications or restrictions if necessary, of any enactments in force at that time in any part of British India.

(The scheduled tracts which were created to give effect to the Government of India Act of 1870 were as follows: in Assam—Ajmer-Merwara, Coorg, Andaman Islands; in Bengal—Jalpaiguri, Darjeeling, and Chittagong Hill tracts, the Santhal Parganas, Chota Nagpur division, and Angul Mahal; in Bombay—Aden, Sindh, Panchmahal and estates of Mewasi chiefs in West Khandesh; in the C.P.—Chanda Zamindaris, Chindwara Jagirdaris; in Madras—14 Mallhas in Vizagapatam, some areas in Godawari district, and Laccadive including Minicoy; in the Punjab—Hazara, Peshawar, Kohat, Bannu, Dera Ismail-Khan, Dera Ghazi-Khan, Lahaul and Spiti; in the U.P.—Jhansi division, Kumaon and Gardhwal, Tarai Pargana, few areas in the Mirzapur district, family domains of the Maharaja of Benaras, Jaunsar-Bawar in Dehradun district, and Manpur Pargana of the Central India Agency. The last was removed from the list in 1938. Most of these areas were exempt in revenue and civil matters from the ordinary laws, except where operation was extended to their territories by special notification.)

Despite the protective measures for these areas, many hardships had been felt by the primitive and aboriginal inhabitants of the tracts, particularly as a result of the alienation of their tribal lands and the exactions and exploitation of the people by the *mahajans* and alien landlords. In 1917, Madras enacted a law by which it sought to regulate the rate of interest that could be charged on loans advanced to members of hill tribes, and to check expropriation from their lands by the Uriyas, and other money-lending classes, in the Agency tracts in Ganjam, Vizagapatam and Godawari. As early as 1876, in the Santhal Parganas, the Government had prohibited the

sale and transfer of land, either privately or by the orders of the Court. The Montague-Chelmsford Reforms accepted the position with regard to the backward tribes, and these areas, the list of which was occasionally revised, were to be administered by the Governors of Provinces. But the Government of India, in their proposals under section 52-A of the Act of 1919, proposed a division of the backward and scheduled areas into areas (1) wholly excluded, and (2) partially excluded, though "opinions were not unanimous with regard to the demarcation of areas under the latter category", and the advisability of treating areas as partially excluded. The tracts declared backward for the purpose of the Government of India Act of 1919 were as follows: (1) Laccadive Islands and Minicoy; (2) Chittagong Hill tracts; (3) Spitti; (4) Angul district; (5) Darjeeling district; (6) Lahaul; (7) Ganjam Agency; (8) Vizagapatam Agency; (9) Godawari Agency; (10) Chota Nagpur division; (11) Sambalpur district; (12) Santhal Parganas district; (13) Garo Hills district; (14) British Pulia of Khasi and Jaintia Hills, excluding Shillong municipality and cantonment; (15) Mikir Hills; (16) North Cachher Hills; (17) Naga Hills; (18) Lushai Hills and Sadiya, Balupari and Lakhimpur frontier tracts.

Protective measures were also adopted in 1935 when the list of areas to be considered as excluded and partially excluded was revised and regulations were drawn up to give relief to the aboriginal population and save them from exploitation and alienation of their lands. The reports submitted by the various provincial governments on the subject of tribal welfare and rehabilitation leave the impression that even if the desire to ameliorate the condition of the tribals existed, nothing significant could be done by the administration because the resources at its disposal were not sufficient. The missionary activities, the only real rehabilitation measures in many parts of tribal India, became suspect as the contacts of the tribal people with the plains increased owing to a phenomenal increase of population in the plains and the need for opening up the areas inhabited by backward and primitive peoples. At the same time expanded communications and the need to exploit the natural resources of the tribal areas brought the problems of the tribal peoples to the fore, and anthropological studies of the remote, inaccessible people described the woes of tribal life. As the demographic facts of tribal areas came to be known, as the knowledge of tribal depopulation and distress increased, opinions began to be crystallized on the need for a new policy with regard to the tribal areas. Nevertheless a policy of segregation was still the watchword of some missionaries and British administrative officers.

With the transfer of power and the formation of the Indian Republic, a greater awareness of tribal distress forced the tribal problems into the open and the avowed policy of the Indian Government has become one of contact and understanding rather than *laissez faire* and segregation. The Constitution of the Indian Union, therefore, has adopted articles expressing the solicitude of the people for the tribal elements and, if the provisions are observed, this will constitute a great step forward for the tribes. In the short period of to years, it has been proposed to bring the tribal peoples into line with the rural population of the countryside, and to make them feel that they belong to the land they live in, with common goals, common ideologies and national aspirations. To effect this transition of tribes, the Constitution of India has specifically provided safeguards and directions for tribal rehabilitation. Article 46 of the Constitution, for example, lays down that states shall promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections

of the people, and shall protect them from social injustice and exploitation. Schemes of development are to be financed out of the Consolidated Fund of India, by grants-in-aid from the revenues of the state, for promoting the welfare of the scheduled tribes (a. 275-i). Under articles 330 and 332, seats for scheduled castes and tribes have been reserved both in the House of the People, and on the Legislative Assembly of the state in which the tribes live. Article 335 provides for special consideration of members of the scheduled castes and tribes for appointment to posts in the Union and the states. Article 338 provides for appointment of a special officer for scheduled castes and tribes, and article 340 envisages the appointment of a Commission for the welfare of the backward section of the people. The fifth and sixth schedules specifically refer to the administration of tribal areas in Parts A and B states and in Assam, respectively. In view of the fact that the special treatment of the backward peoples has been contested in the courts as "discrimination", it has been found necessary to incorporate some amendments to the Constitution validating such treatment, which are now on the legislative anvil.

## V

The various states with tribal and backward population have recognized the urgent need of social service and welfare activities, but most of the measures so far adopted have been on the economic plane, and are therefore in a sense half-measures. The need for a total approach has not yet been fully recognized and much effort is being wasted on publicity and propaganda which have a limited function and are of doubtful expediency. A brief résumé of the activities of the various states is given below.

A five-year plan of tribal welfare work for nearly 50 lakhs of tribal population in Madhya Pradesh (C.P.) was drawn up by the late A. V. Thakkar as early as 1946, and the state government has initiated a number of welfare schemes. Stress has been laid on education, economic improvement, medical relief, water supply and extension of communications, and both state and private enterprises are taking part in the work. Some of the state-aided welfare societies own vans, cinema and radio equipment, and popular lectures and entertainments figure prominently in their rehabilitation efforts. An equal number of the tribal population in Bihar, concentrated in Chota Nagpur and Santhal Parganas, are being catered for by the state and private organizations. The initiative that was in the hands of the missionaries seems to have passed into those of the administration, and a number of benefit schemes with regard to education, sanitation, health, irrigation, cottage industries, co-operative societies of the multi-purpose type, have been launched. The system of indirect rule is being slowly replaced by direct administration, for example by the *Thana* system which has as its ostensible object welfare work, but which is gradually being vested with other responsibilities. The tribal attitude to the *Thana* system has, however, been more misinformed than hostile, for suspicion and distrust of aliens are on the increase among the tribal peoples, and tribal leadership appears to have passed to the Christians among them whose education and awareness have put them in the vanguard of tribal movements. In Orissa tribal welfare is under a Minister, in view of the political unrest of the tribal elements and the need for a positive approach to tribal problems.

Bombay has a record of tribal welfare work initiated by the former

government. A Backward Classes Department had introduced a number of measures for relief among the Bhils, the Katkaris and the Warlis. Madras had a large tribal population, at various levels of progress, a large section of which has already been assimilated into the caste structure of the Province. A Backward Classes Advisory Committee is now looking after the interests of the tribes, and state and private organization are working to rehabilitate them. In Andhra, Kerala and Tamilnad, a good deal of activity is reported and the Malabar centre of the Servants of India Society has put forward a scheme to help the dying Todas to recover lost ground. The state of Hyderabad has had a long start in tribal welfare activities, thanks to numerous sympathetic and competent administrative officers, mostly British, and today a Social Service Department is initiating large and costly schemes to ameliorate the conditions of the tribals with particular emphasis on educational, medical and economic benefits. Tribal lands have been protected, money lending has been controlled, agricultural loans are provided free of interest, co-operative societies function for multi-purpose benefits, irrigation works have brought large acreage under the plough, and tribal dialects have found a place in the educational curricula.

Assam has a unique status, with 28 lakhs of tribal people fringing the north-eastern frontier of India. The tribal people were allies of the British army in the war, and their sufferings as a result of the Japanese invasion have earned them a priority in matters of redress and relocation. Assam's problems being different and the tribal population of strategic importance, the responsibility for rehabilitation is being shared by the central government, and a three-crore plan has been drawn up by the Central Planning Commission, with particular reference to Assam's specific needs.

The Rajasthan government which has a strong tribal element, there being eight lakhs of Bhils alone, has organized a Backward Class Welfare Department, and tribal problems have received adequate attention as indicated by provisions already announced. The Bhil Seva Mandal, founded by Shri A. V. Thakkar, has done much valuable work among the Bhils and is now a key organization for social welfare in the Bombay state and other parts of the country. A significant achievement of the Mandal has been the successful reorientation of the Bhil's attitude to his tribal culture. In spite of contacts with civilization and the forces impinging on the Bhil culture, there is hardly any detribalization, and even educated boys and girls take to their indigenous culture pattern without misgivings or suspicion. In this way the Bhil dances and songs have been preserved and are inspiring the Bhils to greater activity. Western Bengal, which even after partition has a significant tribal population—nearly two millions—has created a separate ministry for aboriginal and backward classes, and a cadre of special officers has been trained to tackle tribal problems on the administrative level. From a recent report of a speech by I. I. Chundrigar, Governor of North West Frontier province in Pakistan (W), it appears that a scheme to make the tribal areas self-sufficient is being worked out. The Assistant Director of Public Instruction of the State and the Inspector General of Civil Hospitals, North West Frontier province, have, in fact, been asked to give a detailed report on the educational and medical facilities to be provided for the tribal people.

All these measures are good so far as they go, but a total approach to tribal problems is perhaps the greatest present need. After centuries of apathy and neglect, a *malaise* has set in among many tribes and backward groups, and mere economic improvement may not be the solution for tribal ills today. The Munda tribes are passing through a difficult period of change, and their

contacts with civilization have introduced problems. The bride-price, which formerly was paid in kind—particularly cattle—is now demanded in cash and—the cost of marriage has increased so much that it has become impossible for an average man to secure a wife. With an excess of female population and a social etiquette that forbids parents to settle the marriage of their daughters without being approached by the parents of the bridegroom or by the latter himself, marriage is a distant prospect for the young women. Marriage by capture, celibacy, late marriage, pre-marital and extra-marital licence have brought the Munda tribes to the verge of a major cultural crisis. The conflict of ideologies brought about by missionary activities has put the matriarchal Garos in a desperate position in which all the tribal values are being challenged. The potato cultivation among the Khasis has precipitated an economic crisis; the self-sufficient social economy of the Khasis is being replaced by a dependent economy, in which the Khasis are subject to the whims and caprices of alien traders and their neighbours, while the contacts with soldiers have disorganized family life. The shifting or *Podu* cultivation of the Saoras and the Khonds of the Agency tracts, Orissa, no longer secure them against starvation and squalor; sexual promiscuity and disease are on the increase and are hastening the complete cultural collapse of the Bhotiyas. Contacts with aliens have affected the culture-pattern of the polyandrous Khasis of the Cis-Himalayas, and the traditional ways of life are no longer sacrosanct. The status of joint marriage is on the decline, divorce is on the increase, and wealthy families indulge in polygamy so that the acute shortage of women is widening the gulf between the rich and the poor. These problems which the tribal societies are facing today cannot be solved by mere economic rehabilitation.

The problems of tribal rehabilitation must be viewed in the context of tribal dynamics. Under the prevailing economic conditions, disintegration of tribal life is as real today as the lack of social solidarity in community life in the villages. The war brought the tribes in many parts of the country into close contact with the fighting forces, and war economy forced the tribes into the arms of alien agencies so suddenly that there was no time for adjustment. The process of disintegration has set in and, often, the material conditions of tribal life have rapidly changed without corresponding changes in the cultural life. The pattern of tribal life everywhere has been disturbed, and unless tribal cultures can be readapted to tribal dynamics, the future of the tribal people cannot be assured.

Vigilant administration has at no time been more needed than it is today, for the very centres of tribal life have been infected and, in some cases, even atrophied. The lack of patience on the part of tribal leaders has contributed to upsetting the balance of tribal life. However, planned rehabilitation must take into account the hopes and aspirations of the people, misconceived though they may be. The two axioms of cultural rehabilitation should be: (1) we cannot be civilized unless everyone of us is civilized, and (2) every people, however primitive or civilized, has a right to its own way of life, and to the development of its traditional culture. To reconcile these two requires a complete grasp of the details, and a sympathetic understanding of the realities of tribal aims and aspirations.

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## THE ECONOMICS OF THE INDIAN VILLAGE AND ITS IMPLICATIONS IN SOCIAL STRUCTURE

B. K. MADAN

The converse of the above, "The social structure of the Indian village and its economic implications", might form an equally appropriate theme of discussion in studying the role and significance of the Indian village in the developing economic pattern of the country. But perhaps the social structure of the village represents the static element, and its economics—or broadly speaking the amalgam of influences that go to make modern material development, viz. the spirit of change—represents dynamics of village economy, and is at present the more instructive subject to pursue. Indeed, the interaction of economic and social factors in the complex and varied life of the Indian village is everywhere evident.

### THE TYPICAL VILLAGE

The village is the pivot of the old economic order, the unit of the economy, and it is to the village that we must go to study the conditions in which the vast majority of Indians live and work. Six out of seven Indians live in villages, and they had acquired at an early stage a fullness of life, a vitality and continuity which have helped their survival through the ages. The persistence of the village organization in the face of successive political vicissitudes has time and again attracted notice by foreign observers, and the following passage from Sir Charles Malcafe's minute of 1830 is often recalled: "The village communities are little republics having nearly everything they want within themselves; and almost independent of foreign relations. They seem to last where nothing else lasts. Dynasty after dynasty tumbles down; revolution succeeds revolution . . . but the village communities remain the same."

The typical Indian village is an aggregate of cultivated holdings, without fence or enclosure, with or without some waste area attached to it, and usually there is a central site where the dwelling houses are clustered together; in some cases small homesteads and farm buildings are found separately located on the holdings. It is this characteristic of a common dwelling area centrally located amidst the open village lands which gives the Indian rural landscape a somewhat unique physical appearance.

The village was traditionally a predominantly self-sufficient economic unit containing within its bounds all the labour, capital and skill necessary