

8.Social Transformation, Identity of Indian Tribes in Recent Time: An Anthropological prospective

10.5958/2229-4414.2014.00008.8

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<https://www.academia.edu/9963906/>

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Abstract

Social transformation and ethnicity are interwoven. While ethnic representation acts as a catalyst in social transformation process, social transformation on the other hand can restructure the very catalytic character of ethnicity. Again, in ethnicity politics the dominant culture is prone toward objectification of the Other, forcing it into identity traps that confirm the dominant culture's sense of superiority. Or the marginalized culture in reverse develops its pattern to justify an 'indigenous own' which is actually a reflection and positioning of parallels to the dominant culture. Tribal people in most of the forums have always been identified and tagged as 'savage' and 'uncultured' among all ethnic groups in India, *junglees* (staying in remote forests), always free from lifestyle diseases, heavy drinkers and so on. While politics of development about *dalits* largely revolves around Schedule Castes, Schedule Tribes have long been lacking in their representation. In recent time, modernity has triggered tribal consciousness empathetically. Increasingly available facilities are pushing the educated and informed tribal groups to seek (new) identity among majority in the Indian society.

This paper tries to explain the very aspects of the changing socio-cultural scenario in tribal society and the perception about such changes in these ethnic populations. Qualitative data was collected by participatory observation, individual narratives, personal interview and ethnography. This study also reflects our experience of working among Indian tribes during different periods in recent time in several geographic locations in India.

Our fieldwork experiences and understanding about the socio-cultural changes in these tribal communities largely varies from the traditional wisdom. Understanding the interplay of various

forces, thematic of such changes brings curiosity among anthropologists to go further deep and follow those actors.

Introduction:

In social scientific literature the term social transformation is increasingly used to describe social changes and generally indicates a critical stance towards older notions of the idea of development. The effect of globalising forces upon local communities which are with highly diverse historical experiences, economic and social patterns, political institutions and cultures is explained by social transformation. At the same time the approach of social transformation does not always consider the western model as the one that should be imitated by all other nations (UNESCO) or societies. Rather, social transformation is a shift in terms of human aspiration which is readily available, accessible and easy to get with comfort as its ultimate objective. The process of social transformation may restructure the technological, economic, political and cultural patterns in a society. The societal value-normative system can change, often in a way that allows the emergence and stabilisation of pluralist institutions (Genevo 1999). Social transformation and identity are symbiotic in nature. In anthropology identity is generally perceived in the context of ethnic identity. It is the sameness of self, sharing characters within the group. Social organizations, institutions, relations and interaction patterns are the markers that reflect the transformation process in a society. Similarly, all new engagements with these social markers closely follow the ethnic identity and vice versa. Marx's third thesis on Feuerbac has its classic statement that institutional and identity change are interrelated (Marx). Here it is remarkable that the agencies and their patterns involved in this interplay are situational, unique along with carrying identical characters. Social interactions and relations as core aspects of social life are institutionally and environmentally structured and are mediated through individual perceptions, self-categorizations, interests, and strategic calculation. On the other hand, change in identity categories is itself provoked by and responsive to changes in institutional structure and social practice (Todd, 2005). Todd in her seminal paper explained, ".....it is only when institutional changes are accompanied by changing self-perceptions that new institutions begin to create new dynamics of interaction (Todd, 2005).

(Ethnic) Identity politics in modern time can be seen as revolving around the rhetoric of blame, the illocutionary effects of which are designed to chastise the target (for being unjust, prejudiced,

inhumane, selfish, oppressive, and/or violent) (Gerjen, 1999). This is visible in modern Indian caste politics. Such an approach may explain the pattern of political behavior of the active forces amid equal exposure with unequal power balance. Though this same format of interaction is observable while a non actor seeks a mere primary access into the power-identity foray dominated by major actors but it would not always necessarily be there. Indian tribal communities have large been away from mainstream Indian identity politics. The simple political representation cannot have and has not replaced the vacuum of tribal power identity as it is subjected to continuous manipulation by existing powerful forces.

The tribal ethnic identity in modern India was constantly there in back position till 20th century. During this time, the representation of Indian tribal groups stood largely polarized just on the reverse end with respect to modern Indian society in terms of identity politics. At the same time, the advocacy for tribal rights by non tribal forces has faced the challenge of implicit racism. Henry Louis Gates (1994) proposes Race is only a sociopolitical category, nothing more." As this sociopolitical category is applied to individuals it also acts as a reductive agent, circumscribing one's identity, and reducing one's potential to be otherwise. In his Reflections of an Affirmative Action Baby, Stephen Carter proposes that such labels operate as problematic stereotypes, covering over complexities and generating misleading social policies. This same view was expressed by others also. (Calhoun, 1994)

Tribes and tribal societies in contemporary India are heading towards a paradigm shift with respect to their increasing exposure to the arena of development and related changes; leading towards a substantial transition in their socio-cultural, economic and life style like patterns. Tribal youth, being the protagonist of this soap, is experiencing the maximum intensity of this change. S/he is carrying the reflections of such changing order in various ways in his/r personal and family life, social relationships, health behavior, life style and so on. It has been the experience of the anthropologists during fieldworks among these indigenous people that the worldviews of most of these tribal groups believe in social solidarity (Orans, 1965), maximum freedom, almost absence of social burden and a solid and open relationship between parents and children. The genre of youth in tribal society, both male and female lives a life in a reasonable and modest way. So it is very important for anthropologists and other social scientists in contemporary world to study understand and explain the status of tribal youth with respect to its

participation and acceptance to the wave of development and modernization and further related changes. As this unstoppable force of development and further change, already experienced by the nontribal societies and modern world, has and is being realized with many positive as well as devastating effects in personal as well as social fronts of individuals it is important to understand that how the tribal youth is dealing or tends to deal with it. Does s/he have his/r own indigenous pursuit to adjust with this change or it is just heading towards another *The Waste Land* in its own sense? What is the status of emotional and moral conflicts among these young people which is a major reflection of modern man in contemporary industrialized society?

Background:

In social science, understanding, significance, and meaning are developed not separately within the individual, but in coordination with other human beings. Individuals and groups participate in the construction of their perceived social reality which is defined as social constructivism. The significant elements of this Social constructivism theory are (a) the assumption that human beings rationalize their experience by creating a model of the social world and how it functions and, (b) that language is the most essential system through which humans construct reality (Leeds-Hurwitz, 2009). The social constructivism thoughts demonstrate the social, linguistic, rhetorical, ideological, cultural, and historical forces largely responsible for changes, challenging the claims to authority, truth, rationality, and moral superiority. On the other hand the relational aspects of the human society that how is interpersonal understanding achieved - how do we comprehend others' meanings (or fail to do so) is also an important aspect of study in contemporary studies. Considering the changing scenario in the present context, two formal emerging sides come out from preliminary understanding. The elderly generation along with its acceptance to the changes, defines it as the need of the altered scenario. But at the same time, it explains the aspiration of modern tribal youth as distancing from the age old community values and morale. On the other hand, the sublime youth is silently and gracefully adopting such new avenues. Fading importance of various social structures and institutions are few of the different dimensions of understanding among elderly sections in different tribal communities about the new aspiration of tribal youth. Again, the alternative and income generative livelihood facilities, attraction towards luxury of industrial society, issue of identity are the leading perceptions behind the obligations that are acting pivotally with the tribal youth for adopting the changes.

Discussion:

In recent times, the effect of economic renaissance among developing countries like India has brought substantial alterations in socio-cultural patterns of all forms of social structure including that of tribal societies. In this process, different types of approaches are observable among tribal communities. Firstly, it is the groups of enlightened indigenous people, mostly the genre of youth. They along with a very brief and elementary understanding about their traditional beliefs, practices and with the remains of the lost, age old indigenous knowledge are actively pursuing for the establishment and recognition of their own language, culture, tradition and religion in a formal way among the mainstream societies. This movement for socio-cultural and political identity is being patronized by respective community leaders many a times. Here, the fundamental goal is to arise and stand with own identity along with the power, rights and duties. But it is further apparent that the method and path of pursuance of such goal is mostly borrowed and it is from those non-tribal and 'modern' societies (the 'others' in a sense to the particular tribal society) among whom the tribal society is pursuing for an identity of its own. The concept of the autonomous agent is a myth; each of us is constituted by the other; we cannot deliberate or decide without implicate otherness. So, the individual is conceptualized as inseparable from ongoing social process (Garjen 1990). In this social process, on the other hand, either the age old patterns are pushed with revived and renovated forms or new forms and structures are given to such cultural etiquettes, which can match and stand at par with those 'modern' and non-tribal societies. It is interesting to observe that this revival, renovation and re-formation of (new) identity is built on the similar foundation, against which this new identity is being created. The pursuit of new and own identity is being built similar to the existing structure. The very moral of this struggle stands on the structure of the same odd against which it wants to make a stance. So, a natural query arises that if this new identity will lead to real preservation and promotion of the true indigenous culture or it would lead towards a pseudo/shadow form.

Here few instances can be considered. Santal which is one of the populous tribe in India is at the forefront in this formulation process of new identity. It is a fact that Santal do not identify themselves as a part of any modern religions. The act of religious conversion in recent days is exception though it has become a new phenomenon in tribal areas. It is observable that recently the movement for an own religion (named 'Sernaa') is at its high among young Santalis.

Santals and Ol chiki movment

Similarly language though is the vehicle of communication, in many circumstances acts in building a sense of ethnocentric identity. Contemporary tribal culture is in a great state of flux from this point of view. Industrial development and its resultant modernization is deep penetrating with vigor and intensity into these once isolated groups. It is observed that the spoken language of Santals i.e. Santali like all other tribal languages did not have structured alphabets. In recent past Mr. Raghunath Murmu (who is also referred as 'Pandit') created alphabets for Santali language as 'Ol chiki' (picture 1). It was being demanded that Santali be considered as an accepted official language of India. In the year 2003, Santali became the only tribal language from non-north east region to be placed as an official language in the constitution of India by 92nd amendment in the 8th Schedule of the Indian constitution. The local political movement has made it possible to make Santali language either the mode of education or a compulsorily taught language at school level in tribal dominated areas in certain states like West Bengal, Orissa and Jharkhand. Similarly, University Grants Commission (UGC) has accepted Santali language as a subject for its research and teaching eligibility test (NET) paving a way for the language's expansion at university level in the states, at least dominated by Santals. All such aspects are definitely going to boost the position of Santals among rest of the tribes in India. Here it is also to be pointed out that such developments could influence the language, culture and other socio-cognitive patterns of other tribes living in Santal dominated areas. This aspect needs an intense research for further information.

In a sense, it leads or will tend to lead to socio-cultural and political dominance of Santal among other tribes. In long term, Santals either have been or will be able to establish themselves as the leading tribal group from socio-cultural and political points of view among other tribes in different states. Further from field experience, it was observed that to create and to strengthen the community feelings, the Santal tribal councils are instructing the people empathetically to maintain traditions like wearing the traditional ethnic clothes of their own, during public as well as private ceremonies, festivals and rituals (picture 2). Adherence to own socio-cultural values and morals has been the conventional wisdom of the tribal men and women. Prescriptive moral governance of society is rarely witnessed among tribes which mostly believed in individual freedom with a liberal stance, until recent time. Again, metaphors of unity are the means of suturing the social realm.

Claiming ethnic identity

During field research in Mayurbhanj a Santal dominated district of Orissa, it was also witnessed that the only local train running between Mayurbhanj and state capital Bhubaneswar has been identified in Santali language (*al chiki*) along with Oriya (the state language) and English. Similarly, Santal forums, associations and conferences are being arranged at regional, national and international level (Picture 3). Promotion and felicitation of community achievers, highlighting the talents etc like activities are increasingly taking place among Santals. The authors personally witnessed such a felicitation programme of a Santal youth who made it to go to a foreign country for higher studies. It is also observable in most of the community meetings, both political and nonpolitical, that cultural and social promotion issues are the predominant topics of discussion and speeches. An important finding came out while observing political rallies during a general election. Most of the candidates were emphasizing on mainstreaming of Santal identity (though development is an obvious issue). Recently films have been made in Santali language with the plots from Santali society. Similarly music albums are also being created.

The continued trend

The increasing mainstreaming of Santal society has influenced the other nearby tribes to a great extent. Individuals from other tribes like Bhumij which is another major tribe and cohabit with Santals are also striving in this front. Particularly development in social media has taken root as the primary way of expressing identity. The hoardings of music albums and films in Bhumij language can be witnessed in local bazaars of interior areas with broad tags like 'first film in Mundari language' or 'Mundari music album' (Picture. 4).

This process of identity politics has also taken root in other tribes like Kondh with Kui as the language, Oraons, Ho tribes with Warang Chiti script, etc in Odisha and central India region. But here, another aspect needs to be looked into that the non-Santali tribes motivated by Santali movement but without having such exposure in educational, linguistics and political like fronts may fail miserably to project their personal identities by finally adopting the imitative forms of either Santali or the most influential or closely living caste population. Such current is already flowing there and it will definitely bring unparalleled loss of indigenous treasure of life style, both material and non material culture and practices.

Deculturation to enculturation

While working among Bhumij tribe, we were interested in collecting the traditional music instruments and utensils made from natural sources like wood, grass etc. One of the authors during his fieldwork tried to collect few of the musical instruments which are typical of Bhumij. After his hard labor and a lot of search, the author found only few numbers of two to three types of traditional instruments kept unused or in broken condition. Later on, he found very simple reason to such abandoned conditions of these instruments. Modern musical systems are now available for use in festivals which looks more portentous and gracious. Again, as it is being used by nontribal societies extensively, it is increasingly being considered mostly by the young tribal generation either out of curiosity or as a status symbol. One very important observation came in the process of our search for instruments and utensils. That, few elderly parents told that they either disposed off or put them in seclusion as their educated children wished so. From elaborate discussion with such children, we understood that the way of projection of tribal culture, artifacts etc at present higher education systems particularly at college and university level are creating a prejudice among tribal students about themselves while they are comparing themselves with non tribal students. The identity of a tribal with such traditional practices is perceived as a cultural stigma by educated tribal youth while dealing with modernity. Only few passionate older persons have kept such instruments in functional state and play in private.

Similarly another observation shows a new trend i.e. dominant practice of video show replacing traditional community dancing and singing. It is a favorite choice of younger generation while elder people show serious reservations against it. Among Pauri bhuyans it was observed that all most all interviewed persons belong to *Nagasya* clan. Clan system with such a name is only observable in caste societies in Odisha. As it has been observed by many anthropologists, Pauri Bhuyans do not have a clan organization, rather a lineage system. The groups within the tribe are identified by their ancestral inhabited place. For example a Pauri Bhuyan carrying the lineage name *Jharnia* (one who belongs to stream) means that the forefathers of the family belong to the group which once stayed at a place near the Jharnaa (Stream). Every Pauri has such an identity but to reach this answer one has to make an intense question answer session. Most importantly, most of them have forgotten such identity. As Sukadev Dehuri, an elderly Pauri man says, all

such changes are due to the influence of the Brahman priests who are for past few decades are being consulted by the tribesmen during different ritual and ceremonies.

During the stay among Bathudis, another major tribe of Odisha, we were interested on their myths and legends. We attended their evening singing session before the village deity. We observed them of singing modern prayers or the prayer songs sung in non-tribal communities. While we enquired about, it was revealed that there were only four to five elder people in the village who remembered the traditional songs. Three of them have died and the rest two are unable to perform. Sons of two of these five people knew those songs and were singing during village singing sessions. But for last five years they have left for Tamilnadu in search of livelihood.

Embracement of new culture and structural changes

With respect to recent changes in social structure and cultural patterns of tribal societies in the process of mainstreaming is formation of a new identity or in a sense, acceptance to loss of indigenous identity. It is a more complex process. In this process of mainstreaming, many tribal people both men and women are coming across the non-tribal influence. The cultural discontent is heading them towards a total cultural diffusion like situation rather than a balanced reciprocity of cultural exchanges. In this process various observations are coming to the fore. Few examples can be taken here. In all most every tribal society, village council used to play an active role in maintenance of the village society to problem solving activities. In recent time, it is significantly observable among most tribes that the importance of village council is fast fading. In certain cases, the village council is almost invisible. It has been replaced by new panchayatiraj system with a gaining root of dynamic mainstream politics. In earlier pattern while social welfare was taking place on a community basis- a democratic way of ensuring equal participation, the new political environment tends to divide the village community on the basis of affiliation to political groups leading to discrepancy. Though such process seems to be a normal social condition, it brings many unusual repercussions to the community members. All such changes are taking place in a pace, faster than adoptable at ease. Individual, once living a simple life, is confused with such rapid alternation. It is becoming difficult for him or her to cope with such a high pace. This is leading to health issues like hypertension out of secondary causes, stress etc. This needs further investigation.

Tribal society which is known for its family solidarity is experiencing a flux due to growing urban patterned nuclear family system. Increasing desertion of parents, early family separation particularly children after getting married like issues are leading to serious mental health situations among elderly populations. It can be considered as a phenomenal change in attributes of tribal societies. Here it is noteworthy that various tribal communities have the social norm for the newly married couples to build their own house and stay separately or in association with kins, in different residential patterns like neo-local, avuncu-local, viro-local and so on. But such practices are strongly embedded with kinship essence. Visiting a tribal village in recent time brings findings like older parents complaining of being neglected by the married children which, as they say, was never witnessed by their parents. Such changes are also evident with considerable bearings on the kinship system. Though the concern about aging and its related issues is only considered with respect to modern or urban societies, it emerged during the field research that such aspects also needs to be explored in tribal and rural communities. Again when working among Choudhary tribes, an elderly lady was asked about the differences she realizes between previous days when she was young and present time. She interpreted, "Previously there was not livelihood burden so that people were working less. In other sense there was very less aspiration and it was only to fulfill the common minimum needs of the family. There was also less physical labor as well as less mental and physical stress. People at family or community level were getting time to spare, sing, dance and relax. Now a day, most of my family members including me feel body ache in most of the evening. Peoples' aspiration for more income has gone manifolds so they do heavy labor.

Previously money was hardly a form of income and the whole output of the labor was mostly to fulfill the need of consumption and immediate requirements of the family and relations. Now it is individualistic. Generating money is now the highest aspiration. It is even for me." This, as per her, is a big cause of growing diseases. She added, "Once again it shrinks the community life. In festival season, people not only from the village but the relations from distance villages were visiting the festival place. Such practices are fast disappearing day by day. Most of the leisure time of my family members passes by watching television. Though I loved dancing in village festival, I hardly get a chance." At the same time she also says that, this new age has brought many comforts. Then there were no facilities for betterment in most of the aspects of life and life

was very much confined. Now a day her daughter in law is educated, doing a job. Dependency on male counterpart has reduced drastically.

Coming to traditional structures, it was observed that youth dormitories are either non-existing or have lost their functions in many tribal villages. Rather, such structure has been converted into youth club or rest room of the village as well as for the visitors from outside. Dormitories, in tribal societies play important roles by developing a close relationship and further community bonding among the members of the community from the very young age. Certain recent findings of studies on dormitory practices are disturbing. As it shows dormitory in certain tribes have turned into brothels (Patanaik 2002). Our interpretation is different than calling it a brothel, a place of prostitution, it can more be a place from where tribal women are being lured to the practice of sexual exploitation, a side effect of unchecked tribal tourism.

Marriage is considered as the ultimate aim in life of a boy as well as a girl in tribal society which is a strong social indicator of any stabilized society from various prospective. All most every act in the life of a tribal youth does have such inherent intention. But changes in marriage and its related practices are observable in recent times. Cases of marriages by eloping with out-group and restricted tribes are increasingly happening which was previously not there and which is a strong taboo among many of the tribal society. With reference to Pauri Bhuyans, a primitive tribal group (now called as PVTG), elderly people consider this trend as a devaluation of social morals, an outcome of development and economic empowerment. "Now, if someone faces restrictions in the village for such a deed, he or she leaves the village, earns his livelihood outside and does not need to pay a heed to the community. But previously there were neither availability of so much livelihood avenues nor social security for which all had to stay together and be abided by the tribe's rules" is the opinion of the senior members of a village council.

Again by being exposed to modern and outer world, social bonding among people is weakening. The community living which is indispensable for elders is increasing becoming expendable option for youth. Altruistic behavior towards the community members and upholding individual dignity are the two striking characters of the members among most of the tribal societies in India. Such characters have important roles to play in human relationships like love and marriage. As it was observed during the present fieldwork that social vagaries that affect characters like human trafficking, prostitution, beggary and such other social evils of industrial

man were almost absent among the tribal society until recent times.

Further findings from Paudi Bhuyans show that by eloping with out-tribe groups like Juangs, Kolhs leads the boy to permanently social castration from his community. The father of the girl or boy who has gone for a marital relationship with restricted tribe observes rituals equivalent to death of the child. In such situations, the Bhuyan council is called for. The Patta Pradhan (religious head) prepares a ritual water by touching the feet of all the members of the council which is drunk by the father to become a part of the *Jati* with reentry to the tribe. Similarly while a Bhuiyan boy marries a girl from other permitted tribes like Bathudi, Gand, Chasa, Gopal etc. the girl is ritualized and made Bhuyani, a woman of Bhuyan tribe. This facility is not given in case of marriage to prohibited tribes or castes. This tradition in tribal Bhuyan community has roots in their recent imitation from caste communities. Pauri Bhuyans in recent past have started engaging priests from caste communities. As caste communities have such cultural practices, it can be believed that these priests have got the tribal societies influenced in terms of taboo and ritual practices.

Among other socio-cultural practices the trend of dowry is very much evident among tribal people in recent days. Demand for high amount of cash, household goods and luxury items like motor bike and television etc increasingly taking place during marriage negotiations in the studied tribes. In many cases, unmarried over-aged women came to the fore during the fieldwork among Santal, Bhumij, Bathudi and Bhuyan like tribes due to the incapability of parents to pay the dowry demand.

Similarly, with the increased availability of communication and information facilities, both by government as well as non-governmental agencies, the knowledge and use of modern technologies like mobile, internet facility etc are fast available among tribal societies, mostly among youths. As the usage of such modern technology has revolutionized the life in urban society, it is worth understanding that how such technology influences the everyday life of a tribal man for whom it is a cultural shock before recent years.

Changing health scenario

Again issues with respect to health, particularly lifestyle diseases are other serious concerns among tribal groups of India. It is evident from anthropological researches that all most all tribal groups consume culturally prepared liquor. But in recent times the effects and prospects of modernization, industrialization like activities are fast putting their heels among the ST

populations in all most every part of India. Large scale migration of ST people both male and female is taking place to different places and mostly to industrial sites in different cities. This transition, no doubt, is helping them to overcome their poverty by leading to financial prosperity. But such changes in livelihood as well as habitat pattern also bring significant alternation in their lifestyle. The age old practice of consumption of cultural liquor is being replaced by foreign made liquors. Similarly, substantive changes can be marked in their food pattern and intake practices. The risk of health hazards like AIDS, TB, Cancer, Cardiovascular diseases etc. has grown many fold (ICMR bulletin 2003). Studies among tribal population have shown a trend of rising venereal diseases like reproductive tract infection (RTI)/ sexually transmitted infection (STI) among them (Saradhi et al. 2008). Similarly researches among the tribal populations in Rajasthan have highlighted the growing infection of HIV/AIDS. Issues like diabetes, obesity are now potential health problems among tribal settlements. Leprosy was also observed of having potential presence among different tribes.

Their sudden transitional exposure from a simple societal pattern and lifestyle in natural environment to a more complex industrial society and modern living habits shows serious adverse bearings on their health. Due to lack of proper education, tribal migrant workers mostly work in low end jobs like laborers. It increases their exposure to health risks at higher rate. And at the same time, their affordability to modern health care facilities is also very low as the wages is comparatively very less in most cases. Again it was observed in many cases that the health care professionals both at government and private level look down on these people. Serious negligence with respect to patient consultations is widely persistent. So the lack of connectedness, distance from basic privileges at essential ends and the increasing vulnerability towards various odds are the contrasting and continuing issues of modern time for these population groups.

Prospective of further exploration:

Approaches in Cultural anthropology in recent times boost researchers to understand the effects of culture - especially the effects of technologically advanced modern culture on the human inherent capacities and limitations. Understanding the process and pattern of transition from simple societies to complex modern, from one particular type to a largely different one, gives opportunity to plan for the better future of mankind. Stanley Crouch in Notes of a Hanging Judge, argues that politics must involve the marginalised "not as outsiders" - a distinct group

unto itself - but as participants in broad-ranging enclaves of society, for example as "voters, taxpayers, and sober thinkers" (Crouch, 1990). Issues like adopting to a cultural environment through competition over cooperation; the increasing rate of growth with respect to cultural environment as a bigger challenge than the natural environment for the survival of humankind; the effect of cultural processes in degrading human biological potential; the cultural processes with serious effects on the biological capacities, particularly for the economically disadvantaged due to the growing gap between wealthy and poor, have come to the fore as serious challenges to be understood with reference to tribal societies. At the same time, another fact that we encountered during the field interviews comes to the fore. It is the demand by the educated tribal intellectuals for redefining and rewriting their ethno-history, present and future prospective which, as they say, should be done by the people themselves. And this, as they opine, can only represent the reality rather than the account of someone else who does not carry or understand their worldviews. But as it is understood, this perspective is equally vulnerable to biasness. So, the age old comprehensive and holistic perceptiveness need to be emphasized.

Many a time people in academics take either of the stances. Some oppose the inflow of influence from non tribal societies to tribes which might lead to 'disintegration and degeneration' (S.C. Roy) 'rapid disappearance' (D.N. Majumdar), further proposing for establishment of national park as refuge centre for tribes (Verrier Elwin; Saraswati 1991). On the other hand, advocacy for such socio-cultural transaction between tribal and non-tribal communities also came from eminent social activists like A.V. Thakkar Bapa. But in true sense they can have options to accept or reject, which will provide them necessary space to get adopted both socially and culturally. What an anthropologist in recent days sees is that the tribes or adivasis or janajatis must be understood and be treated as just another culture. They have their respective social systems and world views like any other culture. The understanding that every tribal culture is just another culture with own moral values should replace the prejudice against them i.e. of being savage. Further we are now participating in the generation of a new vocabulary, a new consciousness, and a new range of practices - a relational politics that will be incorporative, pervasive, collaborative, and unceasing (Gergen, 1999). As Lesbian feminist, Shane Phelan (1989), proposes, "identity politics must be based not only on identity, but on an appreciation for politics as the art of living together."(p.170). Relational politics is precisely the attempt to realize

this art (Gergen, 1999). This will definitely open up an unbiased stance during studying these societies and their culture as well as planning their development.

Acknowledgements:

The authors are thankful to the people interviewed and participants involved in this study. The thoughtful inputs of Miss Siuli Mitra, Dept. of Anthropology, University of Delhi is also duly acknowledged.

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