

The Development Machinery of Andhra Pradesh

**Reflections on Cultural Change, Discourse and Discourse Ethics
Involving “Tribals” and “Non-Tribals”**

By Paul Henning Rognes

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On the evening of the 19th of January 2005, I was sitting on a government bus taking me from Kowdi Palli mandal to Secunderabad. I had just finished my first visit to the tribal areas of Medak district. As a very fresh trainee, I made my first encounter with something named 'action research' in the small village of Talla Gadda Thanda. Since then I have seen *development* in many different shapes and colours.

On the bus I got into a conversation with a young man. He asked me about where I had been, where I was heading to, and what the purpose of my visit was. I tentatively described the reason for me coming to India and what I had just experienced in Talla Gadda Thanda. After all, I could not be sure that people would not interpret my presence into something quite different than what I felt was my project here, namely social work. I said I had been visiting "the tribals", and his response to this I clearly remember as it took me by surprise: "I am also a tribal!" It may not be surprising that I felt confronted by my own image of tribals, as I was now making friends with the man ("the tribal") that I had read so much about but never had the chance to meet on an equal footing.

With this small introduction I have tried to say something about the premises of development work dealing with the so-called tribal peoples. The implication of my meeting with the man on the bus was an investigation of my own image of the other, and a critical look at the way that "we" usually picture him. These peoples are usually defined by non-tribals, and in comparison to non-tribals. They are shaped in political and journalistic statements, and in the on-going common discourse in which certain characteristics are attached to the tribal. To what degree these descriptions of the tribal are based on reality is probably up to the cultural commuter to answer. Whatever the contents of the culture being *ascribed* to the tribal, she will necessarily be influenced by it, and, in turn, her culture will change in response to external stimulus. In the tribal-non-tribal relation, there can be no doubt that the latter holds the power of shaping the other through various discursive techniques.

This brief report is the outcome of a development traineeship at a Hyderabad-based NGO called CARPED (Centre for Active Research and Peoples' Development), lasting from January till June 2005. Most of the time was spent on research using both primary and secondary sources. The fieldtrips that were made were particularly valuable as we, the trainees, then got to observe life in the tribal areas on our own. These trips were usually made to tribal villages of Medak district, where we usually spent 3-5 hours on each visit. Useful experiences were also made during a visit to Araku Valley and the organisation Nature which

is located there. The most challenging part of the fieldwork was not surprisingly to be found in the communication between interviewer, translator and the interviewees.

In the following I will be focusing on the cultural change that is taking place in the tribal areas, discussing the matter through the diverse expressions that these changes take. Common to them all – be it politically-, ecologically- or development induced changes – is the fact that they bear significance to the people involved. They affect peoples' lives, and they often force them into adopting new livelihood strategies in an environment hitherto unknown to them. Underlying the argument is a view of culture as both a cause and a consequence: The development – seen as something that can be negative as well as positive, or none – taking place is the product of a dialectical process which includes the tribal and the environment surrounding her.

The recognition of external sources of influence, makes it imperative to speak of culture as being constantly exposed to differences and otherness. “Kulturen er aldri den samme to ganger” (a culture is never the same twice), as in the words of Norwegian anthropologist Thomas Hylland Eriksen (2003, pg.56). That is why the analyses of cultural change goes hand in hand with a discourse analysis, which seeks to highlight some of the premises underlying change, and to identify how these premises are laid down through representations of the tribals.

The reader might get confused by the way that this report is presented, as it does not divide the material into headlines of tangible and well-known issues, such as land alienation or forest management. This is intentional, for even though these issues are referred to, I see them here only as the medium through which I seek to display pictures of cultural change and discourse ethics.

Representations of the tribal

The debates on tribal issues in Andhra Pradesh suffer under a simplified and immobile concept of culture. This concept originates partly from the establishment of scheduled tribes (and scheduled castes) as an institution in society, and other government regulations meant to protect tribal rights, like the Scheduled area Land Transfer Regulation 1959 as amended in 1970. The process in which people and places are “scheduled” implicates a move towards a more immobile concept of culture, which does not allow for much cultural change. The role of the government as protector of tribal rights leads to a re-structuring of differences between

tribals and non-tribals in which descriptions of the tribal take form as a list of cultural traits. The paradox is that this trait list makes real development difficult to achieve as it presupposes a limited range of possible developments. The development discourse is thus hampered by the idea of protection of tribal rights and tribal culture. The government of India is in this respect at least partly responsible for the imagery surrounding the tribal and her culture.

In a brilliant article on tribal identity in Northeast India, Lalsangkima Pachuau shows that “tribe” and “tribal” is nothing more than administrative terms dating back to the spread of Hinduism throughout India, and, as such, artificial when it comes to defining peoples and cultures: “If Christianity is to be blamed for the modernising changes that have “civilized” and thereby de-tribalised the tribal people, the same allegation can be levelled against Hinduism”. The process of ‘othering’ has continued ever since, with the government not being willing to give the tribals recognition as anything else than different from, or even, opposite of the non-tribal. Lalsangkima Pachuau points out that “nowhere in the Constitution do we find a definition”, but “to justify the enlistment of communities under the “Scheduled Tribes”, the government of India did make several criteria. This may have been done surreptitiously, for its existence is not widely known. The list of criteria includes “tribal language, animism, primitivity, hunting and gathering, ‘carnivorous in food habits’, ‘naked or semi-naked’, and ‘fond of drinking and dance’”.

Considering the power of government to represent its people, what are the consequences of such stereotyping images being reproduced and spread among both tribals and non-tribals? Can it be that the false picture of tribals in the heads of officials actually may become cause to culture changing processes? This author believes so. Through an oppressing language of representation – exemplified by the addressing of someone as “tribal” on the basis of superficial criteria – a new mentality slowly gains ground among those who are spoken of. Any cultural identity is both imperative and contextual. It is both a matter of choice on behalf of the subject herself, and ascription of qualities from the outside. If outsiders – being part of the dominant culture – learn to adopt a certain image of a culture, this image is bound to have an effect on this particular community as long as it prevails over time and is sufficiently persistent in its ways of communicating it, even though it may not have any foundation in reality. The community members learn to think differently of themselves and others. The imagery may create unity and pride among peoples who were previously divided by socio-cultural barriers. If not, increasing cultural exchange between insiders and outsiders may become the beginning of the splitting up of the community. It may also create new economic opportunities as the recognition by others often leads to attraction

of tourists and businesses. Embracing the ascribed identity is naturally the most profitable way of approaching these opportunities. The same goes for the economic advantages of being part of a scheduled tribe. The Indian case provides an example of what may happen when one identity is made more profitable than the other. It is not only those who have a legal claim to the rights who actually claim them.

Whatever the line of development – and there are many more than those mentioned here – a response is imperative, and a change in relations to outsiders is very likely. The fact remains that government representations of the tribals lead to constraints on identity processes that are continuously taking place.

The identity given by the government to the scheduled tribes of Andhra Pradesh resembles a client status. Through the well-intended project of protecting tribal life, tribals are made dependent upon development initiatives from the outside. As a culture of dependency is allowed to develop among tribals, development programmes are implemented not because of the identification of actual needs, but seemingly as a necessary part of the bureaucratic machinery. The lack of programmes of the self-help kind, and the ignoring of the importance of participation from the receiver, makes the tribals turn into passive objects with no feeling of responsibility for the well-being of their community.

It is not only officials who have a saying on how to interpret “tribe” and “tribal culture”. Many are concerned about the tribals losing their culture, observing that the traditional way of life no longer appeals to them after the introduction of goods hitherto unknown. Mr. Trinadha Rao exemplifies the longing for the pure and the original in an article called *Tribals in Transition – Folk Songs Give Way to Film Music*: “The transformation of the tribal cultural ceremonies from cohesive group dances, single dances, sacred dances, social dances and group songs to obscene film songs and exhibition of obscene film reflects the changes”. In addressing the different ways of conceptualising the tribals, one can observe the search for the “tribal stuff” that supposedly makes up tribal identity. Mr. Trinadha Rao stresses the importance of cultural ceremonies with singing and dancing. In the same article, he also speaks of the market place as the scene where the change in life style is especially made visible through the intruder called consumerism, which “forces” the tribals into adopting cosmetics and new ways of dressing.

Again we see that tribals are deprived from their right of defining themselves. In addition, they are seemingly not allowed to take part in the global age in which a wider range of products are offered. Development for tribals is seen as something different than development for non-tribals. The former are pictured as passive objects who are not capable

of dealing with a development that integrates them into the bigger unity of state, nation or world society.

Images of development

The increasing tribal – non-tribal contact, which is common to most districts, is also significant to identity processes among the tribals. The issues are the same as when speaking of government policies involving tribal rights: Who has the right and the power to define, directly or indirectly, whom to be called a tribal? What is the “tribal stuff” that separates “us” from “them”? Or, what is the difference that makes a difference?

The cultural relativists express concern about the tribe losing its character as an exogamous unit, which again, it is feared, leads to the “erosion of values and cohesion of tribal community”(2002). The words belong to Mr. Trinadha Rao. This fear is caused by the development in which land alienation is perhaps the most adequate point of departure for doomsday metaphors. Today almost 66 % of total tribal land in Andhra Pradesh is on the hands of non-tribal landlords and cultivators.

It is true that 87,76 % (1991, census) of the scheduled tribe population of Andhra Pradesh are cultivators or agricultural labourers. The importance of land in the livelihood strategies of tribal people, is obvious. What is interesting from an anthropological point of view, is to observe how changes in the economic, political and religious sphere influence on the cultural sphere. Alienation is a process that is going on not merely in connection with land issues, but also in the sense of making “them” (the tribals) part of a distant reality that does not concern “us”. Different types of exploitation of tribals are allowed to continue because of various discursive techniques that normalize the development.

Trafficking, sex tourism and sexually transmitted diseases are problems of increasing intensity. During a visit to tribal villages of Araku Valley in Visakhapatnam District, I witnessed the tradition of a weekly market in Damuku, where people come from up to 30 kilometres away to buy and sell Non Timber Forest Produce and other goods. The ‘sandy day’ leads to new sexual contact between men and women from different villages. According to Mr. Rama Krishna of Nature, the procedure is that men will take their new acquaintances to their village for sexual intercourse. Usually the relationship will not be taken any further than this, even though there are many instances where relationships are formalized after a meeting

at the 'sandy day'. I was told that this was part of the sexual culture in the area, and that it can not be called prostitution as it happens by the consent of the woman and without any payment. At the same time, Araku Valley presents some tourist sites that attract people from far away places, making sexual relations between tribals and non-tribals possible. Combined with seasonal and temporary migrations, the outcome is a very high risk of further spread of HIV and AIDS in the area.

According to Mr. Trinadha Rao, "government officers, contractors and businessmen and other outsiders obtain the company of the tribal young girls for a few rupees" (2002). This development leads to an increasing number of unwed mothers. As non-tribal men continue to take advantage of tribal women (for sexual exploitation per se; or for government benefits, for instance in order to obtain caste certificates in their seeking of employment), the category of single women grows bigger as they are first left behind by the non-tribal man, and then suffer the total ostracism of the local community. A woman who has been cohabiting with a non-tribal man, has broken the marriage rule saying that she should have a spouse from within her tribe, and will face a hard time finding a husband in her own community. This trend might point towards a future in which men will start to search for a wife outside their community, following a deficit of marriageable women, while the exploitation of tribal women is allowed to continue.

The consequences of non-adherence to traditional marriage rules are still to be seen, as the phenomenon has intensified over the last years following non-tribal immigration and influence. In Araku Valley, inter-village differences were found in the degree of impact of the church on marriage rules.

People here generally marry within their tribe, they are virilocal (the newly wed couple settle down in the residency of husband or husband's father) and exogamous (people marry outside their community, in this case their village) on a village level. In a village called Sisemunda, five households out of a total number of 20 had more or less formally converted to Christianity. Being a village consisting of one tribe only, there were no examples of Christians marrying outside their community. This is considered against the rules and unlikely to happen.

Valasi, which is located approximately 25 kilometres away from Sisemunda, is a bigger village, both in the sense of number of households (83) and in the number of tribes, which here counts four. 18 households were found to have converted into Christianity, being represented by all tribes except one (the Bagatas). Only five years back did the people of

Valasi hear of Jesus Christ from a priest who visited them there. In spite of the short presence of the church, it has influenced on marriage rules to such extent that there have already taken place marriage alliances involving Christians representing different tribal communities.

The adoption of Christianity implicates a move away from traditional beliefs, according to findings in both the two villages. A native representative of CARE-STEP in Sisemunda, Mr. Sanyasi Rao – himself a Christian – spoke of ambitions of changing the attitudes of the villagers; away from consultations of animistic spirits to prosperity through the receiving of Jesus. In Valasi, the newly converted Christians' way of relating to the village totem, illustrates similar attitudes. The totem, which is also the centre of the village, and which used to be sacred to all (including the Hindus, who make up 60 households; the remaining five households were said to occupy traditional beliefs), has for the Christians no longer anything sacred attached to it. They do not participate in the yearly festival anymore, in which the totem is the ceremonial centre.

These observations from Araku Valley show that religious sentiments are not static but very flexible when confronted with new ideologies. Even though the villagers were said to fear any change which questioned their traditional beliefs, as many as 25 % of the inhabitants of Sisemunda now see themselves as Christians. In addition, with the presence of the church it seems like the rest of the villagers will have to relate to the new ideas in one way or another. This gives a future prospect with an increasing number of Christian converts. Most of the churches have popped up during the last decade, with the help of funds from the Roman Catholic church and other institutions in Europe, and the Christian religion certainly has both the intention and the characteristics needed for a rapid expansion. In this respect Christianity seems to be a more aggressive religion than for instance Islam, which in spite of its long presence in Andhra Pradesh has not seen many converts.

Does this mean that traditional belief systems are dismissed once and for all with the introduction of Christianity? Certainly not. The religious affiliations of the Christians in Sisemunda has changed even after the conversion, to the extent that they do no longer go to church, as they did regularly in the beginning. But at the same time they reject the religious festivals that centres around the village totem, and choose to celebrate Christmas and other Christian festivals instead. It should be clear from this that the response of the people of Sisemunda to influences in the religious sphere, are difficult, if not impossible, to predict.

It should be accepted and taken as a matter of fact that people define their own reality and beliefs in unpredictable ways. The world religions have always been introduced in more or less enforced and unnatural ways in remote areas, Hinduism being no exception. Different

ideas and beliefs have during the years been adopted and defined on the background of local premises and realities. The belief systems that exist among tribals of today are more often than not melting-pot products; they are the results of choices made by people trying to make sense of a changing environment. The Hindus in Valasi may be expected to refer to their attending of the traditional festivals in reasonable fashions, the same way as the Christians have their reasons not to attend. Both choices may be well founded in a common cultural and religious heritage. One can certainly ask whether it is still relevant and correct to maintain the strict classification of people into claimants of Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, animistic beliefs etc.

Stereotypes are maintained also in the work of NGOs. In Kanchan Palli, a relatively big village of Medak district, I witnessed some quite impressive plays performed by representatives of CARPED. The occasion was an awareness programme taking place in Kowdi Palli mandal, stretching over 17 days. The songs and plays performed had obvious and very practical intentions in motivating the villagers to adopt methods and life styles recommended by the NGO. The advice given concerned a wide variety of daily activities, such as the encouraged use of natural fertilizers, separation of drinking water from water for other purposes, in addition to more value-laden arguments against child labour and child marriages. The instruments used – songs, dances, music and drama – represent a most suitable way of reaching out to the entire population of any village, including children and illiterates of all ages. I have observed also in other villages how the learning of song texts can be used to put useful lessons in the minds of those who learn it and later repeat and perform it for others. The problem of illiteracy should not be underestimated when it comes to its limiting of learning and remembering. The method is thus a good example of how to make education relevant for life.

Still, objections can be made to these educational methods. In addition to the purely practical function of educating the people in skills relevant to life, it can be argued that the pieces performed in Kanchan Palli in different ways confirmed and re-instituted certain values. In some cases the characters made an image of the ideal situation. This is exemplified by the children (played by grown-ups) who refused to go to work and encouraged their parents to send them to school instead. On the other hand there was a play showcasing a ridiculing image of the women and their domestic tasks – without any mention of gender equality or a fair division of labour. The play was an illustration of dos and don'ts in relation to water and water-born diseases, and pictures a family in which the mother is a hard-working

and self-sacrificing woman who gets up early in the morning to cook and clean for her husband and son, who, in contrast, are pictured as both lazy and unwilling to work and study. In general, in order to show who is who in the plays, the roles were stereotyped; they were “over-communicating” in terms of personal characteristics. It should be added that the people in the village found this last play very amusing.

While there is nothing wrong about making information available to the people, there is a thin line between communicating something in the language of the audience, and to impose perspectives, morals and values in ways that are originally not intended. The play would probably not make much sense if the roles were to be switched; if the father was to be the one doing the cooking and cleaning, while the mother is asleep. The audience would then be misled into focusing on the actors, who are only the medium, and not on the information offered. Making people recognize the issues is therefore naturally the first priority, but it is problematic if this is accomplished at the expense of cultural sensitivity.

Speaking of the problem of communicating something without un-intentionally adding something else, leads me to an experience from an exhibition on the World Water Day 2005. One of the NGOs represented in the exhibition presented two model villages, one illustrating “a good village”, the other “a bad village”. I spent some time studying the models as I was curious about what made one village better than the other. The occasion being an exhibition on water-related issues, I realised that the “good village” had a better and more hygienic water distribution system. Each household had its own water tank and irrigation water was clearly separated from drinking water, while the “bad village” displayed a bore well as the only water source.

But the differences in water distribution was not the first thing that came to my mind as I saw the models. I was at first struck by other differences in the infrastructure. The “bad village” consisted of a few dispersed houses that seemed to be more or less accidentally dropped from above; there was no obvious plan or structure. The “good village” was, in contrast, organised with extraordinary regularity. Here, the nine houses were organised in rows of three, the rows separated by two straight roads. Lines were drawn separating the roads from the houses, and the houses themselves were separated from public buildings and from the paddy fields with a similar green line. There were three of these public buildings, one of them being a temple. There were no green lines and no public buildings in the “bad village”.

As few, if any, of these elements may be said to have any direct significance for water-born diseases or any other water-related problems, there is reason to ask why they were made

part of the “good village” and not of the “bad village”. In this case, depending on the interpretation, it may be said that the left-over information consists of a demand to organise households in a manner wherein private property is appreciated as something to be kept apart from the public sphere. The presence of the public buildings may further strengthen the view of a good village as a place where people intermingle only outside their private houses. A temple is one of the “good” things. It seemingly encourages people to perform their poojas in public temples instead of in connection to private shrines. No matter the interpretation, most of the symbols chosen to represent a good village are culture specific and should, in the name of cultural relativism, not be allowed to be presented as tokens of village development.

These examples are only meant as illustrations of the sensitivity of the issues discussed in this report. Being part of the development machinery, also NGOs have a responsibility to make sure that their activities do not violate against the principle of allowing development to happen on the premises of the people concerned. In the concern about the survival of tribal culture, there is a tendency of picturing the tribals as helpless against external forces. The internal colonisation, wherein non-tribals are gaining tribal land, may be said to be accompanied by a less visible, but just as real, colonisation of the tribal mind. Through presenting the tribal as exotic and different in all possible respects, a discourse is shaped in which the tribal is seen as a passive client, surviving merely because of the mercy of others. In the same process, the *real* challenges and responsibilities in development work are pushed aside, and poverty and helplessness is consequently internalised in the tribal. The only one left to blame for misfortunes is the tribal himself, or, more correctly, the nature and the culture of which he is a product. It is, after all, easier to blame the “noble savage” who knows nothing of the world, than to face the many failures of development policies.

In this process of “othering”, the media plays the role of the messenger, confirming to people the realities drawn in the constitution and other documents by reproducing the same artificial vocabulary.

Finally, I present some paragraphs on Joint Forest Management, as I believe that the failures of this government programme underlines some of the points I have stressed above. Being successful on some, it proves hopelessly careless on other, and typically less quantifiable areas of concern.

JFM in Andhra Pradesh – whose responsibility and whose participation?

In a study on Joint Forest Management (JFM) in the Telangana Region of Andhra Pradesh, the areas of concern are found to be “in terms of transparency, equity, gender, livelihood of the forest dependent community” (2004, pg.45).

JFM was launched in 1994-95 as a response to the demand for a more pro-people National Forest Policy. During colonial rule, large tracts of forests were declared as “Reserved Forest” under protection of the Forest Department FD, and this led to the deprivation of the basic source of livelihood of forest dwellers who were alienated and reduced to encroachers on their own land. The policy of exclusion was continued and further strengthened through the Forest Conservation Act 1980. The establishment of institutions like the Vana Samrakshana Samithi (VSS), to be a partner of the Forest Department on grassroots level, aims at transferring part of the responsibility of forest management to the people. In the long run, JFM aims at protecting and developing the forests, securing the livelihood of forest dwelling communities, and reducing any destructive dependence on the forest. The existence of VSSs calls for a participatory approach to these challenges.

Today, after seeing the alliance between FD and VSS work for about 10 years, it is criticised for lack of transparency and inability to include women in forestry related issues. It is presented as being unsuccessful in creating participation, motivation and feeling of responsibility among the people.

The lack of transparency is combined with the inability of the FD to communicate with the micro-level. The study states that “the FD did not treat capacity building as a priority issue” (pg.23). The basic document of the VSS is the micro-plan, which gives a total description of the forests entrusted to it. In seven out of ten case studies it is observed that the micro-plans were prepared without the participation of the people, in spite of the official guidelines stating that this should be a participatory process involving the VSS members, the FD staff, an NGO, and others such as the local school teacher. The lack of training offered to the local community leaves them without the confidence to handle the affairs of the VSS. As a consequence, the responsibility is left with a higher level of organisation, and the participatory approach disappears together with the transparency in a process that repeats itself.

Inequity is identified on many different levels in the JFM programme: In the work opportunities created by JFM, skilled labour is preferred rather than local labour, and it is also

appreciated with wages three to four times higher than the daily wages of Rs. 40-50 that the local people make. "Where machines were employed, there was very little scope of employment for the local people" (pg.27). When it comes to other benefits following from JFM, access to these was higher for the upper castes and the larger landholders.

Still, the most outstanding example of inequity is seen in the way women are kept out of decision making processes. "All decisions about the management of the forests were taken without consulting the women" (pg.28).

"Even if a certain degree of transparency exists and people are aware of the transactions, this information is essentially restricted to the men and the women's knowledge of the plans or financial transactions is comparatively less. The attendance of meetings was also largely by men and only one case study mentions attendance by women" (pg.25).

Of historical reasons, women do not usually possess the knowledge and skills needed in forestry works. While this is the justification used for excluding them from involvement in forestry related issues, nothing is done to build their capacities in order to incorporate them at a later stage. Work opportunities are less for the women, on account of their not being skilled enough, and in the majority of cases they are paid less than men for the same work. "What essentially emerges is that the traditional roles and position of women in the larger society have been reinforced within the VSSs also. Forestry has essentially been treated as a man's issue" (pg.28). The study considers the addressing of equity issues as being crucial for the survival of the VSS as an institution.

It is clear from this that gender equality is not treated as significant in the implementation phase of the JFM schemes. But as seen above, Joint Forest Management *does* have a general influence on social life, while more specifically, it plays a role in the moulding of gender identities. Again we see that certain social structures and cultural traits are mistakenly seen as part of an imperative and God given social order. For the good cause of creating a visible change, many social characteristics, such as gender, caste, class and landholdings, are ignored and treated as irrelevant. This leads to unequal distribution of newly acquired resources, and to strengthening of traditional gender roles. As far as the participatory approach is concerned, participation in and benefits from the JFM programme are reserved for men and already skilled labourers.

Part of the explanation of the failure of creating participation and feeling of responsibility, may be that "the recognition of the VSS as an institution does not seem to exist

either for the FD or the VSS members” (pg.44). There is a vague connection between the VSS and other institutions involved, such as the Gram Panchayat, and conflicts are seen to arise between VSS members and non-members, VSSs and the FD, and between the FD and NGOs. The communities do not seem to have internalised the concept of VSS, at least not in the sense given by the FD. This is illustrated by the observation showing that most people see it merely as a source of employment.

The sustainability of JFM depends first of all on a mutual understanding of the aims. This is still to be achieved, and it cannot be obtained without real participation from the local communities. This demands training activities to be taken seriously, and a long term perspective to be applied. For the same purpose of sustainability, the study recommends JFM to be integrated with other developmental activities of the government, and intra-VSS issues to be addressed.

Concluding remarks

All the examples above are selected in order to put focus on a topic that seems to have been neglected in development debates of Andhra Pradesh. To allow for tribal communities to be part of the process and to set the premises for their own development, must be made an axiom in policy making not only at the government level, but also in the work of NGOs, donor agencies, research institutes, and others who are concerned about the development of tribal communities. Hitherto, they have been given the role as a speechless, motionless and homogeneous mass of people. Their integration into the bigger society has been delayed by the wish to keep them apart from national economy and legislation. The isolationist policy is at least in part intentional, as it makes issues such as poverty alleviation and tribal rights less urgent and less demanding.

There should be room for accepting changes in the cultural sphere as there is in the political and economic sphere. Tribals today are born into a reality where the boundaries between inside and outside are artificially maintained through government protection of tribal rights and culture. That this policy more often than not fails, makes little difference to the tribals' search for identity, as years of promises and promotion of 'development' have taught them who they really are. The dependency culture did not appear over night, but is the result of a mentality which has long been nurtured by the ethnocentrism of Indian politics. To allow for tribals to take part in processes like nationalisation and globalisation, is to respect the

cultural autonomy and the undisputable rights of these people. The alternative is to continue the policy of “clientification”, making dependence and inferiority the defining criteria. The fear of acculturation, that the increased contact with non-tribals eventually will lead to the eradication of tribal culture, is exaggerated and irrational. Nurturing the image of the “noble savage” is not an alternative to integration.

Handing over representational power to the people themselves, necessitates a strong emphasis on education. Participation from women must be guaranteed; they must be given a saying in matters concerning cultural change and development in general.

But what comes first, and what is really pressing, is a debate on the discourse ethics. In this debate, the core issue would consist of the question of whether or not change in life styles should be treated as a good or a bad thing. It is about time that identity processes are discussed with a more considerate thought of the tribals themselves.

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