

C.von.Furer-Haimendorf : Half a Century of his Imprint

on Tribal Welfare in Andhra Pradesh

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Introduction

What was to be a brief reconnaissance in the Hyderabad State turned out for Furer-Haimendorf and Betty, his newly wedded wife, a life long commitment to the welfare of the tribes. They arrived in Hyderabad on August 1939, at the invitation of Sir Theodore Tasker, the Revenue member of the H.E.H. the Nizam's government. Sir Tasker informed the young couple that the War had just been declared and that Furer-Haimendorf was to be interned as an enemy alien (his Austrian nationality was converted into a German one) and had to cancel his plans to go to the Naga Hills as earlier planned. The bright side to this disaster was that instead of Furer-Haimendorf languishing in the internment camp till the end of the War, the Nizam of Hyderabad was wise enough to offer him the opportunity to work among the tribal people of his dominions. Thus for the next nine years from 1940-49 Furer-Haimendorf devoted himself to the meticulous study and evolution of development policies for the different tribal cultures he studied. This forced internment gave him a unique opportunity to not only do concentrated research on the tribes but to gain the confidence of the Nizam's government and become an official adviser on Tribal matters and policies in 1945. After four years of directing tribal welfare work, Furer-Haimendorf left Hyderabad to take up an academic position at the School of Oriental and African studies(SOAS), University of London. Thereafter he returned to Hyderabad for short intervals to direct the handing over of the work he had initiated. Retirement from SOAS in 1976 would release him again to revisit the tribes of Andhra Pradesh and undertake a series of restudies on the changes occurring among these tribal communities(

Furer-Haimendorf,1982). From 1978 to 1988, he participated in active field work. The results of this work were published as a series of monographs.

Ethnographic studies of the Tribes,1940-49

Furer-Haimendorf consulted with various officials familiar with the geography of the state and this helped him to choose in an evolutionary way to first study the Chenchus, food-gatherers (1943), then the Hill Reddis who were shifting cultivators(1945) and finally completing his ethnographic work among the more complex Raj Gonds who were settled agriculturists (1948). In all these three monographs he used a multidisciplinary approach to the holistic understanding of the tribes. The detailed observations of the geography and ecology of the areas the tribes inhabited coupled with their agricultural and forest activities enriched the studies and made it useful for administrators to make important decisions in the welfare of these communities. The meticulous study of the traditional customs of land ownership and usage in these tribes as varied as food-gatherers to shifting cultivators to settled cultivators helped administrators in prioritising the important economic issues to be tackled in each one of these tribes. Most important, his sensitive perception of the early signs of the troubles to come in the tribal areas and the appropriate steps taken to stabilise the economy of the tribal societies helped strengthen tribal cohesion for more than a decade.

1. The Chenchus- Jungle folk of the Deccan(1943)

The Chenchus lived along both banks of the Krishna, the river forming the border between Hyderabad State and the British administered Madras Presidency. The Chenchus that Furer-Haimendorf studied lived on the high plateau atop the Nallamallai Hills. Furer-Haimendorf and Betty settled down in an abandoned forest bungalow in the village of Farahabad as their

main camp for the next 9 months of their anthropological stay. As Furer-Haimendorf noted in his autobiography (1990), "Compared with the splendid Nagas with their colourful ornaments these Chenchus were a poor lot, and I felt sorry for Betty who had expected to live among Nagas in the magnificent scenery of the Assam hills." So their honeymoon was spent in the most difficult of terrain, under war time conditions of rationing of food and medicines and the summer heat with very little shade that the deciduous forest had to offer. Their resilience helped them adapt to the seasonal vagaries and they began to forge a close relationship with the local Chenchus. They started bartering with the Chenchus, obtaining forest fruits, honey and tubers and giving in exchange rats which they caught with their mouse-traps. The Chenchus were delighted with this valuable food as they had noted the skill to trap small animals. In retrospect, Furer-Haimendorf notes in his autobiography that they realised they made a mistake by not having eaten the rats themselves and depriving themselves of the only available source of protein. For, by the beginning of the monsoon in the Chenchu area there was acute food shortage and they were reduced to a Chenchu diet, living on edible roots and tubers and wild berries. By the end of the 9 months spent among these people, Furer-Haimendorf had a deep understanding of this unknown tribe and the problems they were facing. He had made many friends among them and with whom he remained in touch in his subsequent visits. Both Furer-Haimendorf and Betty walked the extensive forest areas and followed the Chenchu groups in their annual summer migration down to the river banks. They travelled as lightly as the Chenchus themselves carrying a blanket, mosquito net, tea and a few handfuls of rice and their notebooks and cameras. The constant mobility of this bandgroup in searching for forest food would often hamper Furer-Haimendorf in seeking lengthy discussions with the Chenchus who would get very restive. So the Haimendorfs hit upon the idea of doling millets to their informants who would then be no longer under pressure of time to leave for

their collecting grounds. They would then talk at length about their gods and their myths. In between interviewing the Chenchus he carried out a detailed census on all the families(426) on the upper plateau. The outcome of this work was published in 1943, with an appendix on the Notification of the Nizam's Government in establishing the greater part of the upper Amrabad Plateau as a "Chenchu reserve" covering one lakh acres. This important step to protect the welfare of this vulnerable group was the outcome of Furer-Haimendorf's work among the Chenchus. The rules governing the Chenchu reserve ensured the Chenchus living within this reserve to follow their way of life without restrictions and to extract all minor forest produce without payment for their domestic use. The forest department was made responsible to organise a purchasing and sale centre to purchase all minor forest produce brought by Chenchus and supply them with their requirements. No tradesmen was allowed to deal with the Chenchus from the reserve. The Forest Department was to help the Chenchus within the reserve to take up forest industries such as bamboo weaving etc. A specially selected Chenchu forest guard and forest watchmen sympathetic to the ideas underlying the creation of the Chenchu reserve were to be employed.

2. The Reddis of the Bison Hills (1945)

The next stage of Furer-Haimendorf's journey took him to the relatively isolated Papi Konda or Bison Hills in the South-Eastern part of the State. Access to the Hill Reddis was only by boat, for there were no roads or cart tracks along the banks of the Godavari. The Konda Reddis lived on the river bank settlements and the hills on both sides of the river and were traditionally shifting cultivators growing small millets, maize and pulses. They were independent farmers, but at the time Furer-Haimendorf started his research it had come to an end with the forest department of the Samasthan of Paloncha auctioning bamboo growing on the

hill slopes. Timber merchants of the nearby town had acquired the right of bamboo extraction and they employed the Hill Reddis in this operation. However, the relationship between the merchants and the tribals turned into one of exploitation, the tribals being led into debts by the merchants who advanced them grain and other provisions. The illiterate Reddis had no means of calculating the sums of money the merchants owed them as wages and the value of foodgrains they received. The Reddis were warned by the merchants not to divulge any information to the Haimendorfs, so the naturally friendly tribals became sullen and uncommunicative. In spite of these initial problems, the Haimendorfs continued on their tour of the Reddi villages observing and gathering information on the varied activities of these hill people. They spent an year in these areas both suffering from bouts of malaria and greatly weakened. They shifted camp to the hill top village of Gogulapudi where the Reddis were more traditional and remote from the influence of merchants. It was in those months that many of the tribals in that region came to the Haimendorfs to seek help and advice in their struggle against the oppressiveness of forest contractors, merchants and minor officials. Furer-Haimendorf used this information in drafting his powerful reports to the Nizam's government entitled, "Tribal Hyderabad-Four reports," 1945 which enabled the Administration to take the appropriate steps to improve the conditions of these tribal communities.

3. The Raj Gonds of Adilabad(1948)

The Haimendorfs after their return from Bison Hills and a brief stay in Hyderabad left for their tour of Adilabad (in the month of December 1941) which was the Northern most district of the Nizam's Dominions. Through the use of Survey of India maps they made their way up these highlands with extensive stretches of forest scattered with tribal villages and cultivated

areas. There were no motorable roads so they hired two bullock carts from Asifabad, the headquarters of the subdivisional officer. After having paid their respects to the Gond Raja living at Pangri village, they accepted the invitation of Lachu Patel of Marlavai to establish their permanent camp at his village. Furer-Haimendorf was greatly impressed by this articulate Gond who had an excellent understanding of the rituals connected with their clan-god worship. Besides, the highland area was scarce in drinking water and Lachu Patel assured them that Marlavai had a good well with dearth of water. So it was that the Haimendorfs settled down in Marlavai in a house built for them by the Gonds. They lived in a community who were occupied throughout the year with agricultural activities, seasonal festivals participating in rituals connected with birth, marriage and death and visiting neighbouring villages. A valuable task that Furer-Haimendorf set for himself was the detailed recording of Gond myths from the Pardhan bards who had an outstanding knowledge of these myths cultural heritage which was being lost in areas where Gonds were living with other populations. This had never been put down in writing but was orally recited over generations by the Pardhans. Furer-Haimendorf also studied in great detail the organisation and functioning of the Tribal Panchayats presided over by the Utnur Gond Raja, the most influential among the Gond local chiefs. The Raja settled disputes and was the custodian of Gond customs. After some length of time in Gond country, Furer-Haimendorf realised that though at first the Gonds seemed prosperous farmers without harassment of moneylenders and outsiders, they were in reality, facing many difficulties.

Marlavai soon became the gathering point, for Gonds from other villages to come to the Haimendorfs with tales of woe. At that time, though Furer-Haimendorf had no official position as an Adviser he was prepared to listen and note down their grievances but he made it clear to the Gonds that he had no authority to solve their problems. However, he assured

them that he would convey their petitions to the concerned officials and explaining personally the circumstances of each case. The Gonds too were happy to get a sympathetic hearing and thus Furer-Haimendorf came to build up a picture of the socio-economic and political situation that these people were facing. The picture that emerged was that already in the 1940s the Gonds were ousted out of the lands cultivated by their forefathers in the lower regions of the riverine tracts drained by the Penganga and Godavari. They had lost much land to Hindu and Muslim settlers. The highlands around Marlavai were still protected from encroachment with compact areas of forest and exclusively tribal villages. The alienation of land had already spread to the highlands of Utnur and Furer-Haimendorf noted the beginning of the influx of Maratas, Kunbis and Banjaras from neighbouring district of Maharashtra. Most of the village accountants (Patwaris) were Maratha Brahmans and had little empathy for the Gonds and were easily bribed to abet the non-tribals to occupy Gond clan land. Later with the help of W.V. Grigson, a former administrator of the state of Bastar who joined the Nizam's Government in the position of Revenue Member, Furer-Haimendorf was able to place proposals for tribal rehabilitation which were promptly sanctioned by the Nizam's government.

Anthropologist-Activist

During his stay at Marlavai Furer-Haimendorf had no official position to tackle the land problems of the Gonds, so he thought of other means to strengthen the Gonds in their struggle against exploitation of non-tribals. Since much of their inability was due to illiteracy and ignorance of government laws and rules he wanted them to be prepared for this eventuality. With this objective in mind, Furer-Haimendorf began to formulate the Gond education scheme and in May 1943 the training school was formally established in Marlavai

under the guidance of Furer-Haimendorf and with the support of the Revenue Member. It had a modest budget and this enabled the young Gond students to receive stipends for the period of their training. In this school a new set of tribal leaders-teachers and Patwaris were taught to maintain village records. It worked well as the new leaders worked harmoniously with old leaders as these new leaders were the sons of the soil.

In order to open up primary schools in Gond villages, the medium of instruction had to be in Gondi as that was the only language spoken by the Gonds. Hence, the second function of this education scheme was to identify and train young and intelligent Gondi-speakers to become primary school teachers. Furer-Haimendorf spent most of his time recruiting the first teacher candidates and working out the basic principles of their teaching. He appointed a teacher to head this centre and with his help began composing primers and readers in Gondi written in Devanagiri script, which is the script used for Hindi, Marathi and other Indian languages. It lent itself to the transcription of Gondi phonetics and familiarized the Gond students with an all-India script. Urdu the language of Hyderabad state was to be introduced only in the higher classes (Furer-Haimendorf, 1990). By 1946 thirty primary Gond schools were functioning . By 1949 at the time of Furer-Haimendorf's departure the number of schools had trebled. By 1951, this centre which in 1943 had begun with the training of five semi-literate Gonds had produced ninety-five teachers, five village officers, one revenue inspector, five clerks and seven forest guards. One of the trainees of this school went on to finally become the president of the Panchayat Samithi of Utnur Tribal Development Block. The success of this centre helped establish a second centre at Ginnedari village in Asifabad Taluk. Teacher training centres were also established among the Koyas of the Godavari valley.

Anthropologist-Administrator

Between 1945-49 Furer-Haimendorf was appointed as the Adviser to the Nizam's government for tribes and Backward Classes. Besides giving advice he had the heavy responsibility of dealing directly with the problems of the Tribal population of the State. This was an enviable position for him as few anthropologists ever get the authority to bring about change and improvements among tribes. Furer-Haimendorf had immediate access to the Revenue Secretary and the Director-General of Revenue, being allotted an office in the Revenue Secretariat. He could thus obtain information on the current developments of tribal policy. During this period Furer-Haimendorf undertook tours to the different tribal areas of the state, co-ordinating the various schemes concerned with tribal problems throughout the Nizam's Dominions. Several of these reports of his were published by the Revenue Department entitled "Tribal Hyderabad".

Furer-Haimendorf was also appointed a Warden to the Civil Service House which was an institution to instruct freshly recruited young men in subjects that they would be required subsequently to know as District officers. His close proximity to these officers and interaction with them helped sensitise these people on tribal matters. Besides these two positions he was appointed as a part-time Professor in Anthropology in the Department of Sociology at the Osmania University. This was the first time that anthropology was to be introduced in this University. This gave Furer-Haimendorf an opportunity to turn out a cadre of officers trained in anthropology who would later join the Social Service, a department specifically concerned with tribal welfare.

Systems of Land Tenure in Tribal Areas

In homogeneous tribal populations there is hardly any problems of encroachments. Their ancestral or Clan lands are owned by the village community and therefore the concept of having permanent rights to individual plots was foreign to the tribes. The cultivation based on Clan ownership was similarly not recognised by the Nizam's government. The majority of the Gonds in Adilabad highlands then cultivated according to a system of land tenure known as siwa-i-jamabandi. The land they tilled remained government land, although they had permission to cultivate and annually pay the land revenue, they were not registered as owners (pattedars) in the village register. The allotment of land on this tenure system was within the powers of the tahsildar who endorsed the actions of the patwari and revenue inspector without inspecting the rights and wrongs of individual cases. This meant that the patwari had the final say in the matter. This allowed the lower revenue staff with opportunities to enrich themselves by shuffling land from one cultivator to another, and every year many tribals were evicted from land which they were cultivating on siwa-i-jamabandi tenure. The Gonds' practice of frequently shifting their fields and being the inhabitants of large expanses of cultivable land and forests became an attraction for new settlers who then obtained title deeds for the occupied land. At the turn of the century it was the government's policy to open up the district and encourage the influx of new settlers and to grant them title deeds free of charge for as much land as they could make arable. Moreover, the reservation of forests had begun to encroach on the traditional habitat of these tribes.

Tribal Rebellion

Until the British rule, the tribal people were left relatively undisturbed. The extension of a centralized administration under the British over areas which had previously been outside the effective control of princely rulers reduced the autonomy of the tribal people. Though most

British administrators had adhered to a non-interference policy with tribal rights and customs, the establishment of "law and order" in these areas exposed the tribes to the pressure of more advanced populations. Traders and money-lenders were able to establish themselves under the protection of the British administration. Often they were followed by settlers who succeeded in acquiring large tracts of tribal land. By imposing an alien system of land tenure and revenue collection developed in advanced areas on the tribals, the government unintentionally facilitated the transfer of tribal land to members of other ethnic groups. This set about a deterioration of tribals' position in Peninsular India as early as the middle of the 19th century and continued into the 20th century. This gave rise to a series of rebellions of tribals against the authority of the government. This resulted in defeat and loss of lives among the ruled who had to struggle against the organised power and sophisticated system established by the ruler. One such rebellion was the Rampa Rebellion in 1879, which involved the Hill Reddis of the East Godavari Agency of Madras Presidency, now part of Andhra Pradesh. This Rampa country was in possession of a feudal lord who was not a Reddi. He had managed to control the lives of these tribals. He had leased out his villages to subordinate chiefs for an annual income of Rs 8,750. The last straw of this oppressive rule was the leasing the toddy revenue to contractors entitled to collect taxes at their own discretion. Simultaneously, the feudal Chief brought an excise regulation forbidding the hill Reddis from drawing toddy for their own use. Compounded with this the civil law operating there was an additional grievance to the tribals whose trustfulness and ignorance of court proceedings enabled the traders to play mischief by making unfair contracts with them. When the tribal people could not fulfill their contracts the traders would file suits against them, obtain ex parte decrees and acquire as much land as they could lay hands on. The hill people blamed the government for all these injustices and therefore carried out the attacks on the police stations

and this movement spread to neighbouring hill areas covering an area of 5000 sq miles. Government forces countered this guerilla war and did not quite succeed to entirely suppress this rebellion until 1880.

The aftermath of this movement instituted special methods of administering tribal areas in Madras Presidency to protect the tribals from exploitation and encroachment by outsiders. The various orders that were passed from time to time were consolidated in legislation known as The Agency Tracts Interest and Land Transfer Act, 1917. This served as a blue print for future legislations in other tribal areas. The four important regulations of this Act were:

1) The interest on any debt or liability shall not as against a member of a hill tribe be allowed or decreed at a higher rate than 24% per annum nor shall any compound interest or any collateral advantage be allowed against him.

2) The total interest allowed or decreed on any debt or liability against a member of a hill tribe shall not exceed the principal amount.

3) Notwithstanding any rule of law or enactment to the contrary any transfer of immovable property situated within the Agency tract by a member of a hill-tribe shall be absolutely null and void unless made in favor of another member of a hill tribe or with previous consent in writing of the Agent or any other prescribed officer. (Agent was the revenue officer comparable to the Collector of a normal district).

4) Where a transfer of property is made in contravention of sub-section 1) the Agent.....may on application by anyone interested decree ejectment against any person in possession of the property claiming under the transfer and may restore it to the transferor or his heirs.

This act remained in force till the promulgation of the Andhra Pradesh Scheduled Areas Land Transfer Regulation, 1959.

Protective Tribal Land Legislation in Hyderabad State

Large scale evacuations occurred in the 1920s in Adilabad district as a policy of forest conservancy and continued until 1940. This policy of clearing large tracts of forest of human habitation, including old, established villages led to the only case of armed resistance by Gonds in this district. It was a small rebellion called Babijheri named after the locality in which it occurred and has found a place in Gond folklore. The leader of the Gonds was a Kumra Bhimu who tried repeatedly to get some land as most of the land in his village had fallen into the hands of non-tribals. He finally settled in the village of Babijheri which was subsequently established as an enclave in the state forest. Since Bhimu and the other Gonds had no patta rights they were asked to vacate the place. As they had not vacated the place by the specified date, all their houses were burnt by the forest guards. They then moved to Jhoreghat, east of Babijheri and with the permission of the patwari and revenue inspector cleared some land. The forest guard then came and told them they could clear as much forest as they liked provided they pay him Rs 500. They borrowed the money and paid the forest guard but he continued to harass them to pay more money. Bhimu and four other Gonds went to Hyderabad and obtained printed permission to cultivate 57 acres. In spite of showing this permission the forest guard threatened to burn their houses if they did not pay the money he demanded. However, the forest ranger without the knowledge of his superior officer sent a party of his forest staff with a gun to enforce the evacuation of these Gonds. They resisted this party and overpowered them and finally the forest staff ran away after they got a good beating. The negotiations between the district forest officers and Bhimu and his supporters were mismanaged and Bhimu refused to give himself up. The police party then advanced into the hills where Bhimu and his supporters had gathered and Bhimu fired the first shot without wounding

anyone. Thereupon, the police opened fire killing Bhimu and ten other Gonds and wounding many others. This left the Gonds deeply resentful of the Government and it was not until 4 years later that the measures for their rehabilitation were implemented. Furer-Haimendorf knew that a fundamental change in tribal economy would be achieved only by securing the rights of the tribals to the land which their forefathers were cultivating. This could be done only by new legislation modelled on the 1917 Act and creating an agency concerned with the protection of tribal rights. Hence Furer-Haimendorf identified a zone covering tribal villages in Adilabad district and notified it to bring protective legislation to the tribes living within this area. With the support of the Revenue Member, W.V. Grigson he helped formulate and execute the farsighted and radical Tribal Areas Regulation 1356 Fasli (1946 A.D). This swung into action in 1949 during the interim period when Hyderabad State came under Military government. This law assured the tribes of permanent rights in the land they cultivated and empowered their traditional panchayats to run their affairs and decide any cases without outside interference. This regulation empowered the government to make the rules which vested the administration of the Notified Tribal Area in the first talukdar (Collector) as agent, in the special social service officer as assistant agent and in a panchayat to be established by the agent. Instead of having to deal with numerous officials and distant courts whose proceedings were unfamiliar, the tribals were now in the care of officers of the Social Service department who were sympathetic to their cause and vested with sufficient powers to prevent land alienation among the tribals as well as exploitation of tribals by non-tribals. Furer-Haimendorf helped correct the injustice done to the tribals of Adilabad when large areas of tribal Clan land was taken away from the tribals by the Nizam's government and held as reserved forest. He persuaded the government to dereserve 160,000 acres of fertile land for allocation to 12,000 tribal families(15 acres/family) along with title deeds, popularly

known as "Haimendorf pattas". This had a positive impact on improving the economy of the tribals, 85% of whom now had adequate land for cultivation.

Implementation of land legislation

To implement these protective measures Furer-Haimendorf created a Special agency attached to the Revenue department and known as Social Service. This agency which he directed until he left in 1949 provided the field staff for carrying out the tribal welfare work. These officers were trained in anthropology in Osmania University and even learnt several of the tribal languages such as Gondi. They were posted in tribal areas and their activities helped forge friendly relations between tribals and government officers. The tribals had easy access with the officials sympathetic to their problems and able to provide quick remedial measures. Also, the presence of officers of the Social Service department acted as a check even on the high-handedness of forest-guards and patwaris.

The organization of Co-operative societies to inculcate the habit of thrift and self-reliance provided Social security to the tribals. There was also provision for the supply of plough bullocks to needy tribals on long-term credit. The establishment of village grainbanks helped provide food security to the tribals in eventuality of crop failures.

Restudy of Tribals in Andhra Pradesh (1977-88)

When Furer- Haimendorf returned in 1977 to do intensive research on the Gonds of Utnur he found the whole demographic scene had changed with numerous settlers from Maharashtra. This non-tribal movement into the tribal area of Utnur had reached a climax between 1965-1975. They occupied cultivable land at the expense of the Gonds in the span of a few years. The laws prohibiting the aquisition of tribal land by non-tribals were obviously

ignored. The methods used to achieve this were similar to those used 40 years ago to dispossess the tribals of the lowlands. Apart from outright trickery and bribing of patwari and revenue staff to change entries in the land register, the immigrants deliberately led Gonds into debt, then induced them to lease their lands and finally refused to return this land to the owners. The occupant's name was entered in the village records as owner in place of the original owner with the connivance of the patwari and revenue officials. The demographic figures for Marlavai Circle in 1941 show that it was purely tribal in composition, the percentage of tribals in 1961 was 90%, but by 1971 it had dropped to 65%. To compound this invasion into the tribal areas, in 1970s the Banjaras an immigrant community from the district of Berar succeeded in dislodging many Gonds from their holdings. At that time the Banjaras were not notified as tribes but in 1977 with their inclusion in the list of scheduled tribes there remained no legal bar to the transfer of land from the Gonds to Banjaras. Such transactions between tribals were permitted by law. Hence, with these two important events the position of the Gonds which had stabilised, turned a full circle to return to the precarious position Furer-Haimendorf found them in the 1930s. There was one important difference, there was no more vacant land available in the forested highlands for the Gonds to take refuge in and they were thus reduced to becoming landless laborers.

Breakdown of Tribal cohesion

The author's own independent studies among the Gonds of Adilabad district from 1970s and the unique opportunity she had in accompanying the Haimendorfs on their annual revisits from 1977-88 resulted in two publications co-authored with Furer-Haimendorf entitled, "Gonds and their neighbours, 1982" and "Tribal Cohesion in the Godavari valley, 1998". The picture that emerged was that in spite of protective legislation, the wholesale

immigration of non-tribal settlers and the introduction of commercial cash crops, mainly cotton among substantial tribal groups was too great an onslaught on the Gonds' way of life. The entire cropping pattern of Utnur taluk underwent a transformation that was detrimental to the Gond economy. The high prices for the cotton transformed a food producing area into a region concentrating on growing cotton. The increasing number of commercial centres in the area and exploitation of the tribals by traders, leading them into debts and ultimate loss of ownership of their lands to non-tribals. Added to this the Gonds had to face the change in governments twice in the span of a decade. The partition of Hyderabad state in 1956 and the merging of the Telengana districts with Andhra districts into Andhra Pradesh. This change of administration also brought about the repeal of the Hyderabad Tribal Areas regulation in 1963, replacing it by the Andhra Pradesh Scheduled Areas Land Transfer Regulation, 1959. While the latter regulation also protected the land of the tribals, prohibiting any transfer to non-tribals, it did not contain any provision for the maintenance of the tribal panchayat. Most importantly, it stripped the social service officers of the authority and judicial powers with which the Hyderabad regulation and rules had invested them. The authority of the civil courts, which the Hyderabad Tribal Areas Regulation had set aside in all cases involving tribal land, was now fully restored, and any non-tribal whose occupation of tribal land was challenged by a revenue official could, and still can, lodge an appeal in a civil court. The termination of the functioning of tribal panchayats ended an institution which had regularly brought together the headmen of groups of villages in settlement of disputes according to the rules of tribal customary law. The commercialization of the local economy further resulted in the breakup of tribal solidarity, as it inevitably tended to encourage individualistic tendencies as opposed to the welfare of the community.

The imposition of a grassroot democratic system, the Panchayat Raj in tribal areas was designed more for the needs of more advanced regions of rural India and undermined the traditional authority of tribal panchayats. Previously, the village was the basic unit and now the smallest unit was a cluster of villages or the gram panchayat. Hence, the splitting up of villages and the reconstitution of blocks from parts of different villages was done more for beauracracic convenience, but definitely undermined tribal village cohesion and created division within tribal society. Since tribal areas are no more homogenous due to the demographic transformation, the constitution of villages dispersed over large distances and consisting of other ethnic groups, the elected members could seldom meet and had little sense of solidarity and purpose to accomplish anything. In 1977, Utnur Taluk had 40 gram panchayats, and in 29 of these the Sarpanch was a Gond or Pardhan, while in 7 gram panchayats an immigrant Banjara held that position. Even in gram panchayats with a tribal sarpanch, non-tribal members exerted a far greater influence, especially if they were economically more powerful.

In view of all these problems highlighted by Furer-Haimendorf, the Bhuria Commission was appointed to re-examine the provisions of the 73rd Ammendment Act, 1992 and recommended a system of Panchayat Raj in harmony with existing traditional tribal institutions. The Panchayat Act, 1996 (extension to scheduled areas) was passed by parliament and in 1997 the Andhra Pradesh State too enacted it. However, the Act is still to be implemented since the Panchayat Raj elections have not been held in the State. The gram sabha is empowered to safeguard its customary law and settle disputes. They have the control over the management of community resources and have powers to decide on

land alienation cases and restoration of the land back to the original owner. They have the powers to grant mining leases and licenses. This was the Ghost of Hyderabad Tribal Areas Regulation, 1949 rising from the grave after half a century.

The Future Role of the Anthropologist-Activist in Tackling New Challenges

The younger generation of anthropologists cannot afford to sit in ivory towers anymore but move into the difficult yet challenging role of focussing their attention on the future welfare of tribal societies whose very survival is being threatened by the process of modernisation. The trend today, even among the educated class as well as administrators is a growing unwillingness to accept, that 40 million tribal people continue to need special protection. The ecologists are fighting to save the forests, but very little attention is being paid to the displacement of tribals living for millennium of years in these forests which have now been reserved or established as wild life sanctuaries. For eg, the Rajiv Gandhi Tiger Sanctuary in Andhra Pradesh which was earlier a "Chenchu Reserve" protecting the rights of this small group totally dependent on the collection of minor forest produce is now a reserve to protect tigers. The forest department has been trying to resettle some of the Chenchus outside this reserve. This programme has failed, with the Chenchus returning back to their forest homes. It is ironic that so much hue and cry is made for the protection of tigers by the environmentalists but so little attention is given to the plight of this threatened tribal group. It is in such an issue that both anthropologists and ecologists need to come together to help put this matter in a proper perspective. They should approach the government to work out the modalities of implementing programmes in a scientific and humanistic manner.

The author has been taking part in these programmes and debates with the government which involve tribals and other rural poor in participatory management of forests in Andhra

Pradesh. She has evaluated the JFM programme as an independent consultant teaming up with senior foresters in suggesting strategies to make this programme sustainable, by tying up the economic improvement of the poor with the scientific management of the forests. Pingle has been involved in analysing the process of empowerment of grassroot institutions in decision making and implementation of forest management and protection(1993,1998). She has also stressed the importance of strengthening womens' thrift groups to take a more active role in their own development process. The JFM programme in AP has clearly shown that when tribal communities are handed over the responsibilities of protecting and sharing the usufructs from forests, the impact on forest regeneration is good. Besides, the attitude of the tribals to the foresters has undergone a sea change in a short span. The tribals who used to disappear on seeing a forest jeep, on the contrary, now see them more in the light of development agents who have come to their doorstep to help attend to their basic problems. The Andhra Pradesh government is now designing rural programmes based on the participation of the community, such as water users committees, watershed committees, forest protection committees, thrift groups, education committees etc. The earlier top down developmental approach which the government had been following has failed to trickle down to the grassroot level. However, for the participatory approach to work, the mindset of the beauracracy has to be re-oriented to take up these new challenges where the answers are not known. They have to be determined through a scientific approach and involvement of the village communities who have a repository of empirical knowledge on the soil profiles, flora and fauna, which they are so closely in touch with. It is here, that anthropologists and ecologists should work together to help gather the information for effective implementation of these programmes.

The political empowerment of tribals at the grassroot level through active participation in Panchayat Raj elections will give them a capacity to influence decision-making process,

planning and implementation of their welfare programmes. The one third reservation for tribals and their women, guarantees their representation. In the States of Madhya Pradesh and Karnataka, poor rural and tribal women have already won representation in Panchayat Samathis, often more than the minimum of one third seats reserved for them. The women who were previously shy to appear in public are now confidently bringing basic amenities to the villages they represent. They are active in improving education, health and sanitation in their villages giving more priority to these programmes than their men. In this sphere of activity too, the Anthropologist has an important role in creating awareness and capacity building of tribal women and men to participate in both the political and development process. These efforts cannot be done by the government alone and NGOs and anthropologists/sociologists should pitch in to give a helping hand.

The educational backwardness of tribals in Peninsular India co-relates with continuing high levels of poverty among them. The government in Andhra Pradesh has made very little impact on imparting quality education to the tribal people. The latest overall tribal literacy in AP is 17% as compared to 44% in the general population. The dropout rate in tribals in the primary and middle school level is 82% in boys and 89% in girls. All this indicates an apathy of the government to impart good education to the tribals and make it their top priority. In contrast to the situation among the tribals of AP, the tribals of the North-East who were economically far more backward than the Gonds, became in a short span of time more literate and attained the same level of education and political maturity of any other ethnic group within the wider Indian society. The mission schools in the North-East gave quality education to these tribes thus making them aspire for positions of responsibility in administration service. This just shows that there should not be any compromise in

educational quality in tribal areas and lessons can be learnt from the success story of the North-Eastern tribals.

The work that Furer-Haimendorf did for the welfare of the tribal people half a century ago is still so relevant and radical, for providing deep insights in tackling the complex problems facing the tribals in India. Those of us, anthropologists, administrators and NGOs who have had the opportunity to interact with him have come away a little bit wiser than before. Marlavai was the home of the Haimendorfs and they returned so often to watch anxiously over their beloved Gonds, often some what helplessly in their struggle for survival. Not having the authority anymore to bring about change, Furer-Haimendorf resorted to persuading and gently prodding many a young civil service officer working for the welfare of the tribals, to take the appropriate steps in the right direction. Hence, the annual visits of the Haimendorfs helped rally and inspire a group of people seeking ways and means to help the tribal cause. The Haimendorfs have endeared themselves to the Gonds who have immortalised them in their myths. The Gonds of Marlavai have built mausoleums for their beloved ancestors, Christoph and Betty Haimendorf.

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