

PRESENT SCENARIO OF THE TRIBAL IN MADHYA PRADESH AND CHHATTISGARH

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Introduction

- **Origin (The Word Tribal):** Derived from a Latin root, the middle English term 'tribuz', meaning the three divisions into which the Early Romans were grouped, came to evolve into the modern English 'Tribe'. With the Romans, the 'tribe' was a political division.
- **Definition:** Today with the anthropologists and sociologists of western origin the term means, according to the latest edition of the Oxford dictionary, "a race of people; now applied especially to a primary aggregate of people in a primitive or barbarous condition, under a head man or chief." It is in this meaning that most of the western scholars working on India, have been using this term, with but slight change.
- **The Tribal Village:** In anthropological literature, two types of villages are mentioned on the basis of society found in existence. They are the rural and the tribal village. The tribal village differs from the rural village in that it is located in the ecological setting of forests and hills. Such villages are marked with tribal economy, display culture-bound features, and are associated institutions of secular and religious heads of the village as well as traditional panchayats, etc. (Vidyarthi & Rai, 1977)².

The settlement pattern of tribal villages in India is distinct and is mostly of one type and is best described as: 'hamlet', with a few exceptions of the other, a rather general type, i.e., compact. The hamlet village is usually scattered over a large area sometimes covering even 25 sq.km. Sometimes the distance between these hamlets may be three to five kilometres. Generally, the satellite settlements are scattered over the fields or forests or hills of the village. This type of village can usually be found in all parts of tribal India, especially in middle and southern India.

The M.P. & Chhattisgarh Scenario

The tribal people, who constitute about 8.6% of the total population of the country, generally live in hills and forests. Despite being a small minority, most of them live in relatively isolated localities where they often constitute a majority. The tribal groups, both within a region and inter regionally, vary a great deal from each other in physical type, language, economy, and culture, styles of living, and nature & intensity of contact with the non-tribal.

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2. Vidyarthi & Rai in 'The Tribal Culture of India' define the tribal village. It is their definition that has been used for reference in this paper.

Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh together have the largest tribal population in India. The population of the scheduled tribes works out to about 21% of the total population of erstwhile combined Madhya Pradesh. The present statistics show the tribal population to be 30.6% of the total population in Chhattisgarh and 21.1% of the total population in M.P.

Zonal Distribution in M.P. & Chhattisgarh

The tribal areas in M.P. & Chhattisgarh have been divided into four zones:

1. Southern Tribal Zone:

This zone comprises of:

- (i) District Bastar
- (ii) District Durg

The comparatively more backward tribes of Bastar are:

- a. Abhujhamaria
- b. All Maria tribal groups
- c. Dorla

The important tribes of Durg are:

- a. Gond
- b. Halba & Halbi
- c. Kavar, Kanwar, Kaur, Cherwa, Rathia, Tanwar, Chattri

2. Eastern Tribal Zone:

This zone comprises of:

- (i) District Raigarh
- (ii) District Sarguja
- (iii) District Bilaspur

The important tribes of Raigarh are:

- a. Oraon
- b. Gond
- c. Sawar

The comparatively more backward tribes of Raigarh are:

- a. Korwa
- b. Baiga

- c. Kharia

The important tribes of Sarguja are:

- a. Gond
- b. Oraon
- c. Nagasia

The comparatively more backward tribes in Sarguja are:

- a. Korwa
- b. Baiga
- c. Birhor

The important tribes of Bilaspur are:

- a. Gond
- b. Dhanwar
- c. Bhaina
- d. Kawar, Rathia

The comparatively more backward tribes of Bilaspur are:

- a. Baiga
- b. Binjhwar
- c. Korwa
- d. Kharia

3. Central Tribal Zone:

This zone comprises of:

- (i) District Shahdol
- (ii) District Mandala
- (iii) District Balaghat
- (iv) District Chhindwara
- (v) District Betul

The important tribes of Shahdol are:

- a. Gond
- b. Kol
- c. Baiga

d. Pao

The comparatively more backward tribe of Shahdol is: Baiga

The important tribes of Mandla are:

- a. Gond
- b. Baiga
- c. Kol
- d. Pardhan, Pathari & Saroti

The comparatively more backward tribe in Mandla is: Baiga

The important tribes of Balaghat are:

- a. Gond
- b. Baiga
- c. Pardhan, Pathari & Saroti

The comparatively more backward tribes of Balaghat are: Baiga & Binjhar

The important tribes of Chhindwara are:

- a. Gond
- b. Korcu
- c. Bharia, Bhumia
- d. Pardhan, Pathari

The important tribes of Betul are:

- a. Gond
- b. Korcu
- c. Pardhan, Pathari & Saroti

4. Western Tribal Zone

This zone comprises of:

- (i) Khargone
- (ii) Dhar
- (iii) Ratlam
- (iv) Jhabua

The important tribes of Kharone are:

- a. Bhil
- b. Bhilala
- c. Patelia

The important tribes of Dhar are:

- a. Bhil
- b. Bhilala (including Barela)
- c. Patelia & other sub- tribes

The important tribes of Ratlam are:

- a. Bhil
- b. Bhilala

The important tribes of Jhabua are:

- a. Bhil
- b. Bhilala
- c. Patelia

Special Features of Tribal Areas

1. **Forests/ Hills as Habitats:** It is said that the tribal people live in hills and forests. But the full implications of this statement are not generally understood. It can be said that about half of the tribal areas is covered with forests. In Bastar and Surguja, forests cover 70.52% and 52.06 % respectively. In such a situation, any programme of economic development must rest on the use and exploitation of the forests.
2. **Sparseness of Population:** About 80% of the villages have a population of less than 500 persons. Thus, quite a number of villages, having a population of less than 500, are not compact villages and are split into a number of habitations
3. **Communication Gap:** Communications are scanty and difficult in tribal areas. Such a situation raises a real problem as to how the benefits of the development programmes should be extended to a majority of the tribal living in interior areas.
4. **Tribal Agriculture:** With agriculture as their mainstay, 96% of the tribal working force is engaged in agriculture.

Problems of the Tribal

In the year 1940, W.V. Grigson (I.C.S.) was posted on duty to investigate the conditions of the aboriginal tribes. And this led to his work 'THE ABORIGINAL PROBLEM IN THE CENTRAL PROVINCES & BERAR' which was published in 1944.

Not much has changed since then, as the problems of the tribal remain more or less the same as had been highlighted by W.V. Grigson. However, unlike Grigson, the present administration doesn't seem too keen to undertake any monumental task to investigate about the problems and conditions of the tribes.

The problems of the tribal can be broadly classified into four categories:

1. Agro economic
2. Political
3. Social
4. Cultural

A detailed layout of the tribal problem is as under:

1. **Poverty:** Poverty of the tribal farmers is mainly attributed to subsistence nature of shifting cultivation. Therefore, it is indispensable for the tribal cultivators to collect resources from other sources such as hunting, forest produce collection, working as forest labour, road work, etc. The shifting cultivation involves both economic function & non-economic function and such nature of productive activity has acted as great barrier to change.
2. **Land Holding:** Another defect is that the size of land holdings is too small to be economical. It may not be more than 2.7 acres in M.P. & Chhattisgarh. Coupled with the lack of irrigation facilities and of fertilizers, the yield is bound to be very low, and even below the subsistence levels.
3. **Tribal Rights on Natural Resources:** The process of implementation of some important provisions of a central legislation which acknowledges rights of tribal societies over natural resources and prohibits displacement of the tribal in a "cavalier fashion" in the scheduled area is fraught with uncertainties.
4. **Agro silviculture issue:** The tribal always lived in the forests and depended on them for food and shelter. In this sense, the forests belonged to them till the govt. stepped in with the orders for 'reservations'. At present the tribal are employed by forest contractors on low wages under difficult situations of work.
5. **Tribal Indebtedness:** One of the worst forms of exploitation to which the tribal are exposed is through traditional money lending. Barring Bastar, which has a low level of indebtedness, in other areas the economy of the tribal is controlled by the money lenders. In spite of the large amount of exploitation, the tribal look to the money lenders for their needs, e.g., supply of credit, supply of domestic requirements, marketing, etc. Credit for social and religious purposes is readily advanced by money lenders. The tribal fully realizes his dependence on the money lender and regards the repayment of debt as a part of his moral responsibility. Because of his innate simplicity, honesty & ignorance, he is unwilling to come to court and contest the claims of the money lender.

It is obvious from the above account that the present burden of indebtedness has far outgrown the capacity of the tribal debtors and is acting as a serious drag on their economy. Unless drastically scaled down, there is no hope of redemption for the tribal debtors.

In actual words, the increased earnings of the tribal, simply go into the treasury of the money lender.

6. **Credit Requirements:** The tribal are poor and their need for credit is great. The credit requirements of the tribal are both for productive and unproductive purposes.

Productive Requirements: The low income of the tribal cultivator leaves no surplus for investment in agriculture. This adversely affects agricultural productivity, reduces income and increases reliance on borrowing. This forms a vicious circle, one leading to the other. In certain areas like Jhabua, even sowing is dependent upon seed loans.

Unproductive Purposes: Due to his deficit economy, the tribal has to depend upon credit to meet his unproductive needs which include family expenditure on consumption, as also provision for social, religious and other demands, these being more urgent to him than his productive requirements.

7. **Production and Marketing:** Production in tribal areas is mainly for home consumption. The deficit economy of the tribal leaves little marketable surplus. There is little monetisation and organised markets are almost non-existent. The tribal villages do not have shops. Even for their daily needs, the tribal have to depend on the weekly or fortnightly markets ('Haats'), held in certain villages on appointed days. The tribal are not even free to sell their goods in their best interests.

In the peculiar circumstances prevailing in the 'haats', the traders manipulate the forces of demand and supply. The ignorance of the tribal regarding weights and measures is also used against them. The shrewd traders quote prices several times more than the actual prices & engage in protracted bargaining, making tactical concessions.

8. **Failure of Credit Co-operative Societies:** To save the tribal from the clutches of the money lenders, it is necessary that their credit requirements for agricultural purposes are met fully by the co-operative society. The present position in this respect however, is far from satisfactory. The basic difficulty in tribal districts is that cooperative central banks are very weak. It is futile to expect that central banks of tribal areas, where savings are low or negligible, would be able to raise share capital and deposits to any appreciable extent.

It is also highly doubtful if cooperative credit can be successfully linked with marketing as long as the trader cum money lenders' tentacles over the tribal economy aren't loosened by regulation of trading which should create conditions in which the tribal can freely bring his produce to the cooperative societies.

9. **Religion:** There is a question which frequently comes forth: "What is the religion of a tribal"? The test proposed was to ask a person whether he worshipped Hindu or tribal Gods. This distinction is meaningless. The real problem is not whether Gonds or Murias are Hindus or not, or whether they call themselves Hindus or not, but how far contact with Hinduism has affected the tribal religion. Here is a very curious question: Why is it that the Gonds, Pardhans, and Baigas of Mandla, who live along the main Hindu pilgrim route to sacred Amarkantak, have hardly any religion at all, either Hindu or tribal; while the Murias who live in Bastar far from Hindu influence, have a highly developed, authoritative, and richly furnished system of worship that is actually, while wholly tribal, far from akin to real Hinduism? The Mandla aboriginal is completely Hinduised, yet he knows nothing of the religion.

The fact is that the tribal is always willing to worship a few more Gods, if by doing so he can gain some material or social benefit.

However, religion so far has been a costly affair for the tribal. For the tribal, expenditure on religious ceremonies is unavoidable. The trader cum money lender encourages the tribal to celebrate religious functions on the scale beyond his means and traps him with a loan.

Over a period of time, Christianity too has been playing its part in the tribal heartland. Apart from Hinduism, the missionaries have also impacted the tribal. However, it has been observed that despite this considerable evangelisation, the tribal doesn't completely give up his kind of religious dogmas.

10. **Education:** Tribal people desire to have education much more than that we generally recognize for them. In the absence of education, the tribal students are unable to take advantage of the seats reserved for them in technical and professional institutions. They are unable to use the reservations provided for them in state and central government services. The employment opportunities thrown up by a large-scale industrialization of the tribal areas are also beyond their grasp.

"Without education the world is a vague blur."

-Remark by a tribal student

THE TRIBAL VIEW- POINT

One is actually aware of the criticism that politics and plans of tribal development are being conceived without consulting the central character i.e., the tribal himself.

On the floor of the legislative assemblies also, the view point of popular representatives finds vent. But one who has been grounded in tribal grass roots level feels rather confounded. He senses that the demands of the scheduled tribe legislators in the Parliament and legislative assemblies, are rather elitist, relative to the requirements of the semi- clad forest dwelling tribal. While the perpetual exploitation continues, the tribal has realised that his rights in forests and over natural resources are not protected. Further, land alienation to a very large extent has also affected the tribal, as their land has been grabbed by the non-tribal. The non-availability of employment in tribal areas is also a major source of discontentment.

EXPLOITATION ALL OVER

In the first place, the tribal are exploited by the money lenders, forest contractors and rural merchants and even petty traders. A study by the Madhya Pradesh Government was able to assess the extent of the exploitation to at least 20% of the tribal' annual income. High rates of interest are charged. The forest contractors pay low wages and get 'begaar' from them. The rural traders and other businessmen cheat the ignorant tribal by using defective weights and measures, and in making false calculations. These evils could be immediately mitigated by administrative and legislative measures, and by a strict enforcement of these.

Then there's the problem of the naxalite instigators and how they exploit the situation if the villagers don't support or join ranks with them. The Naxalite instigators simply kill the villagers who don't join ranks with them or are suspected of being police informants.

In this context, it is important to mention the idea of salwa judoom and its architect Mahendra Karma and its subsequent wiping off: To counter the Naxalites in Chhattisgarh, a counter force of local tribal was started and named 'Salwa Judoom'. The conception of the same was done by the political leader Mahendra Karma (a tribal himself). However, this movement suffered a setback when Karma along with several others, was eliminated by the naxals in a massive attack at Sukma in the dense interiors of Chhattisgarh.

Thus, be that as it may, the tribal still finds himself stuck in between the forest contractor- rural trader- politician nexus and the Naxalite instigators (who also exploit, threaten and kill them if they don't join ranks with them).

The Bastar situation can't be blamed on the money lenders, as Bastar has a very low level of indebtedness, and hence its economy isn't controlled by the money lenders. Why and how the naxal leaders found ground there, needs to be thoroughly explored and analysed and understood (are they taking advantage of the innocent tribal psyche or are they terrorizing the tribal by killing them if they did not join ranks with them or refuse to accept power- wielding hegemony!)

Many rights activists blame both the Maoists and the state for the current vulnerabilities of the tribal villagers.

POLITICIZATION OF THE TRIBAL SCENE

The political culture of the tribes is undergoing a radical transformation. Tribal problems are increasingly being politicized. A sizeable part of the current manifestation of tribal interest in India is undoubtedly the product of manipulative politics.

It is often speculated whether the Maoists active in tribal hinterland, have a political backing too. However, one would like to believe that no political party or politician would support and celebrate the martyrdom of CRPF jawans or the merciless killing of innocent tribal by the Maoists suspecting them to be police informants. These must be dealt with an iron hand by the state. The so called, self-professed, fashionable “intellectuals” from political Delhi seldom realize how and why the CRPF jawans lay down their lives for building roads, serving in the most difficult terrains, in dense forests, in snake infested camps, with no contact with families, no mobile networks (because the naxals simply won't let mobile towers in the region, lest their hegemony over the tribal is threatened). They don't realize why simple tribal are picked up and eliminated on suspicion of being police informants. Strong intellectuals must stand up strongly against the armed Maoists. The “intellectuals” must not come, visit and go back, rather must actually stay and “serve” in the tribal interiors and make their beautiful contribution there, and watch what beautiful ideas can come forth, devoid of the politics, money and the leisure of Delhi! ©

ETHNIC & NAXALITE MOVEMENTS

The emerging cultural trends have tended to hurt the sensitivities and the pride of the tribal people. This alone can explain the phenomenal growth of ethnic movements in the last three decades in several parts of the country. Tribal cultures are put on a show, as it were, on important national days, mostly for the pleasure of political and urban elite. The representation of tribal on such occasions is much decorated, varnished and polished. A particularly distressing aspect of this process is to give filmic touches to tribal art. Photogenic and creative growth of their art is exhibited. In this process, conventional idiom suffers.

The tribal discontent can be for reasons socio- cultural, economic or political. The tribal economy is simple and their needs are few. Thus, their discontent is largely cultural. Their political rights have been protected as enshrined in the constitution. Newer dimensions are emerging in tribal areas, these might be indigenous or alien, and they remind the tribal of their relative deprivation, thereby mobilizing them for a sustained struggle. These alien elements actually thrive in this relative deprivation of the tribal, because if the tribal develops, their political control over the simple tribal would diminish! Most leaders actually seek to keep those backward (often trying to further push them to relative deprivation) whose self-professed messiah these ‘leaders’ happen to be! In this, these disruptive forces see their own survival! This is the case in Chhattisgarh too, where any development activity (road building, etc.) is sabotaged and bloodily blasted by the naxals/Maoists. As has recently happened in Sukma, where

CRPF jawans were martyred in ambush. The jawans were engaged in securing road-building (the development that is sought)!

Naxalites have crept in tribal areas, particularly in Abujhamaar of Bastar, Balaghat, Rajnaandgaon, Mandla, etc. Recently, a tribal organization viz., 'Aadivaasi Mukti Sangathan' has been active in Khargone district.

Moreover, the confrontation between the tribal and non-tribal is not a phenomenon of recent origin. Now, however, certain non-tribal, self-motivated and self-anointed individual activists and organizations have come to the fore to provide leadership to the tribal.

(It however remains to be checked as to how much motivated are these; whether these are funded agencies acting at behest, crying victimhood or are these genuine ones).

Nonetheless, this however doesn't mean that the tribal have no problems at all.

The Catch 22 dilemma is that the power seeking maoist/ naxal leaders aren't even letting the state address and solve the problems of the simple tribal. They act like a deterring wall between the state and the tribal, preventing any development discourse to materialise in the hinterland. Their power has its basis in the tribal backwardness, and any disruption in their hegemony is strongly rejected by them in the most bloody of methods.

The data available for 2015 indicates that about 1700 live IEDs were recovered from Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Odisha, Bihar, West Bengal, some parts of Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh and Gadchiroli in Maharashtra in 2015 alone. CRPF records indicate that the Maoists triggered 40 blasts in Chhattisgarh in 2015.

THE SUKMA FLASHPOINT

The naxal attacks at the CRPF's Road construction opening party at Sukma in Chhattisgarh present a gory example of how grim the naxal problem has become. In March 2017, huge amounts of explosives were used in the Sukma attack. Bullets were fired from AK-47, SLRs and Insas rifles.

12 Reserve Police Force (CRPF) personnel were killed in the maoist attack in Sukma. A team of experts from Talegaon-based Institute of Improvised Explosive Devices Management visited Sukma and recovered at least seven high explosive bombs, 15 arrowhead bombs and about 200 IED command wires from the site. It was one of the deadliest attacks on security forces. According to Mohammed Jamal Khan, commandant of the institute: "We are trying to establish the modus the Maoists used in this attack Based on our reports, we will draw up a counter attack strategy for future use."

At least 112 personnel of CRPF's 219th battalion were out for a road opening task on March 11 in the dense forests near Kottacheru village under Bhejji police station when they were ambushed and their arms were looted. The recovery of the explosives and

cartridges from the spot clearly indicates that the Maoists used a huge quantity of the explosives to inflict maximum casualties on the CRPF. The findings also indicated that bullets were fired extensively from AK-47, SLRs and Insas rifles. The bullet casualties were considerable. They were fired on from all directions and hence the CRPF personnel could not counter attack. Decoding the attack, an officer said, the Maoists used IEDs through a command wire system, and immediately shot several rounds followed by arrowhead bombs. Such an operation would need at least 100 maoists. They were getting hold of commercial explosives used for mining.

Again, In April 2017, another maoist attack on CRPF jawans in Chhattisgarh's Sukma left 25 personnel dead. This shows that authorities have failed to effectively tackle the insurgency in the country's heartland. Poorly trained and bereft of a specialist intelligence wing, local language skills and a higher management proficient in counter- insurgency, CRPF has had the odds heavily stacked against it in the maoist red zone. In fact, the paramilitary organization (three lakh personnel) was headless since February and only got a chief two days after the Sukma attack. With such structural weaknesses, CRPF is having difficulty serving as an effective counter-insurgent force. The April attack took place barely 20 kms. from the March attack site. It seems either not enough lessons were learnt, or the state simply doesn't care!

The ROP (Road Opening Party) of CRPF 74 batallion was patrolling near Burkapal, Chintagufa, on Dornapal- Jaggargunda road, a 58 km.stretch that snakes through the maoist – held region. Like the CRPF personnel attacked in the march ambush, these troopers, too, were providing security to a road project. The CRPF jawans ran out of ammunition after a two-hour gunfight with the maoist guerrillas. Survivor jawans of the maoist massacre in Sukma recall the feeling of helplessness as they counted down the last bullets in their magazines while the Maoists plastered the area with gunfire and kept inching closer and closer towards the few jawans fighting for their lives. Account of the survivors indicates that the sophisticated weapons looted in the march ambush- like rifle grenades and rocket launchers- were used in April's massive attack. The jawans were completely outnumbered and ran out of ammunition after a 2-hour relentless gunfight. The CRPF estimates that there were some 300 maoists involved in the attack, outnumbering the troopers seven to one.

The Maoists looted 22 weapons- 12 AK-47s, five UBGLs, 2 LMGs, 3 Insas Rifles and also 5 wireless sets and spare batteries, 2 binoculars and 22 bulletproof vests. 75 magazines and 2,820 7.62mm rounds for AKs and 16 Insas magazines and 600 5.56mm bullets and most worryingly, 62 grenades for UBGLs were looted. It is suspected that the operation was led by maoist commander Hidma who heads the south Bastar battalion.

The reinforcements were also trapped in an ambush as they raced to the rescue. In a daring operation, IAF choppers landed on the encounter site to evacuate the injured. This comes exactly a week after Air Chief Marshal BS Dhanoa's first visit to Bastar.

The grim situation: A jawan who has been posted in Chhattisgarh's Bastar for four years said his earlier posting in J&K was "easier and smoother" than the anti-maoist operations because of the hostile terrain and troubled conditions. "Guarding Kashmir is easier than being a part of an anti-maoist operation", the CRPF constable told the media from his hospital bed in Raipur, bristling at news reports that they were having lunch when they were attacked. He and other survivors are furious at the media reports that the jawans were relaxing after having lunch when the attack took place, "This is pure imagination. We had had our lunch two hours before the attack and we never rest during an operation".

Pointing at the involvement of villagers in the attack, another constable said, "It's only by the weapons that a maoist can be identified. When they approached us dressed like villagers and spoke to us, we didn't imagine, they would be firing at us after a while. They kept an eye on us on the pretext of collecting mahua fruit, grazing their cattle or passing by on a cycle. The forest, about 1.5 kms. from the road, was so dense that visibility was poor even at 15 metres at noon. Soon after a few men passed by with a herd of cattle, we sensed danger and took defensive positions. Our instinct was right. The next instant, the firing started. Maoists were hiding about 150 metres away and suddenly fired at us from UBGLs, leading to maximum casualties. Though we retaliated, they outnumbered us as we were divided into teams. And they kept coming at us from all directions."

The jawan who suffered multiple injuries in the ambush recalls the chaos and fear of the first few seconds of the ambush when his comrades were being cut down around him. Every cover they ran towards, turned out to be another death trap. "They were in large numbers and were firing at us with Under Barrel Grenade Launchers (UBGL), AK-47s and hurling hand grenades at us. We were out of ammunition after two hours, which is why the ambush led to more casualties. Other teams weren't able to come to our rescue because of the incessant firing. Although the dead and dying troopers had full magazines on them, the firing was so intense that no one could get out of cover and retrieve the ammunition." The reinforcements who were looking for the first group were also attacked as they walked into the second ambush and suffered higher casualties.

The Hard Life: The 58 kms. long road that is being constructed from Dornapal to Jagargunda, has 10 CRPF camps. The jawans from these camps provide security during road construction. For the purpose of Road-opening, the jawans have to start at 6 in the morning. They take their food and water along. The CRPF jawans reach the road construction site 2 hours before the labourers to clear the road of any naxal mines, etc. Forty CRPF men provide security to 10 construction labourers. When these jawans return to their camps in the evening after 8 hours of field duty (excluding 2 hours of travelling to and fro the camp and back), they still have to perform their camp duties including providing security to the camps against naxal attacks. The jawans perform their duty in the extreme heat of 45-degree Celsius, with no water available on-field, they carry their water from the camps. Sometimes the 1-2 borewells at the camps also dry up in the summers. The jawans have to sit in the open as the Naxalites plant pressure bombs under the trees. The jawans find 4-5 IEDs every

month. Sometimes the jawans identify these while sometimes they get hurt. Every step they take is accompanied by the threat of an IED blast. There's no electricity in the CRPF camps, snakes are also a threat in the jungle camps. Many times, they can't even talk back home over phone. A jawan in Puswada camp couldn't even go to his home town at his mother's death, he could go after one week after the road had been cleared/ opened.

At Tamilwada camp the jawans had to eat only rice and potatoes for one month in August 2016 as the ration couldn't reach due to rains.

When the jawans fall ill they have to be treated at the camp itself until a road opening party can ensure safe passage.

The CRPF jawans lay down their lives for building roads, serving in the most difficult terrains, in dense forests, in snake infested camps, with no contact with families, no mobile networks (because the naxals simply won't let mobile towers in the region, lest their hegemony over the tribal is threatened).

This area of south-Bastar where the naxals are repeatedly indulging in blood-bath is the fort of red- terror. It is a stretch of dense forest extending for about 900-1000 sq. kms. It's Headquarter is Jagargunda. In order to encircle Jagargunda, roads are being constructed on three sides by the state. The first road, where maximum incidents of maoist violence are happening, is the 60 km.road being constructed from Dornapal to Jagargunda. Besides this, the second road is being constructed from Bijapur to Jagargunda and the third one from Aranpur in Dantewada to Jagargunda.

It is the Dornapal- Jagargunda road which is the biggest challenge. This has been under the maoist control for 17 years. When the decision to build this road was taken, the PWD sought tenders 18 times. However, no contractor was ready to take up the project out of fear of the maoist. As a result, the Police Housing Corporation was entrusted with the task of building this road.

It won't be an exaggeration if one says that this road is being built with sand-cement and the blood of the duty- abiding CRPF jawans.

The CRPF camp has been established at Burkopal. It is from this camp that the jawans had started for the purpose of Road-opening. Road-opening is the process of ensuring that the construction work goes on smoothly without any naxal intervention through land-mines, pressure- bombs, etc., prior to the starting of work by construction labourers, thus ensuring their safety as well.

The naxals used women and shepherds for performing reiki and then attacked the jawans by ambush. The National Highway 30 from Sukma via Konta to Telangana is being constructed for the last 30 years but it's still not complete. The contractors leave the project mid-way due to the naxals. Often the tenders had to be cancelled. The naxals have launched a tactical- counter offensive campaign to deal with the pressure created by the state and the movement of the forces.

What's needed is a smart security grid that brings together different agencies, enhances coordination among them, and provides resources, equipment, personnel, training and leadership where needed.

RR Bhatnagar took over as Director General (DG) of CRPF in challenging times in May, 2017. The post was vacant for over 2 months, a period in which the force had lost many (12+ 25= 37) of its men in one of the worst maoist terror attacks in Chhattisgarh. The DG has been visiting the three states worst hit by maoist terror- M.P., Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand, to analyse the challenges his men face & plan the CRPF's new anti-insurgency strategies. He is anguished by the loss of lives of his CRPF men, the jawans, in the battle against the underground Maoists. Yet the DG emphasises that the situation is still in their favour and the Maoists are on the run and being squeezed out from their hide outs. The DG believes that if one compares, the general trend in the LWEG (left wing extremists groups) theatre is that of decreasing maoist influence and consolidation of successful operations by CRPF and state police.

The CRPF has reviewed and redrawn a completely new strategy to take on the LWEGs. The first and major decision has been the moving of an ADG- rank officer from Kolkata to Chhattisgarh with instructions that CRPF troops who take to the field in combative operations must be supervised from the headquarters and control rooms and backed with every possible support- technological, logistical and operational with main emphasis on intelligence inputs. Changes at the field level have also been incorporated. The combat operations against these groups, most of them, underground or hiding with the rural and tribal populations, should not be carried out in isolation by central forces. It has to be joint operations with the state personnel leading from the front. The standard operating procedures (SOPs) have to be changed and state and regional factors have to be included as a must. The CRPF men are unacquainted with the local language and topography. They are strangers in inaccessible forests while the state police are well acquainted with the territory held by maoist groups. This gap has to be bridged for successful liquidation of the marauding Maoists and to carry out developmental projects and implement welfare measures.

No new training plan for jawans deployed in red zones has been planned. More emphasis is being laid on infrastructure, technology and intelligence from all quarters.

The biggest lesson learnt from recent attacks on security forces is to ensure 33% participation from the state forces in joint operations. This has been a major change in strategy after the recent attacks. The joint operations will have central and paramilitary forces only. The army isn't being involved in these counter- insurgency ops.

Why is it that the jawans or forces come so often at the receiving end and are then forced to make a retreat?

The above query has been responded to by the DG CRPF: "It's not a right perception. If you compare the areas under maoist influence a decade back and today, their territories have shrunk. By such dastardly killings (Sukma attack), they want to register their presence which is under threat at the hands of our jawans."

Biggest challenge: At present, the most daunting task before CRPF is the road construction security which is being challenged and thwarted by Maoist groups. They don't want to allow the state to build roads that will bring development measures and welfare programmes.

Maoist desperation shows on road that could lead to rebel doom

The 57 km. stretch of difficult road from Dornapal to Jagargunda-that barely qualifies as a road for the most part- is the lifeline for Maoists to retain their grip on the poor tribal of Sukma district. The worse the road, the better it is for the rebels, which is why they are running a merciless campaign to stall construction.

The road passes through areas dominated by Maoists and if people, goods and security forces can start moving from one end to the other at trucking speed, the rebels' stranglehold will loosen. For more than a decade, rebels had full control of this heavily mined stretch till the government started building culverts and roads- under heavy security cover – in Sukma. Twice in a month, CRPF road opening parties giving protection to this project have been targeted, leading to the loss of 37 troopers.

During Salwa Judoom, the controversial anti- Naxalite movement that began in 2005 and subsided in late 2008, Maoists dug up this road at many places and blew up culverts on what was then a kuchcha stretch to prevent movement of security forces. They even demolished school buildings on both sides to deny troops vantage points. In 2010, security forces posted at Pollampalli, Kankerlanka, Chintalnar, Chintagufa and Jagargunda camps had to trek everywhere. For every vehicle movement, the road opening party had to scan the area for landmines. It was during this time that one of the worst ever massacres by Maoists took place at Tadmela close to this road. 76 security personnel (75 from CRPF), were killed.

Things began changing a few years ago when the government took up road construction between Dornapal and Jagargunda in patches. Locals say that now there is an asphalt road from Dornapal to Pollampalli and culverts demolished by Maoists have been repaired.

According to PWD officials, for years, contractors avoided taking up projects in this area because Maoists would attack construction workers and set fire to vehicles and equipment but the project progressed gradually under the protection of the security forces. The remaining stretch of the road is to be built with reinforced cement- concrete (RCC), which has been already laid at different places. Work is progressing at an extremely slow pace, but it is happening despite the maoist threat.

On the Dornapal- Jagargunda stretch, which passes through the so-called 'liberated zone of Dandakaranya', the Maoists understand very well that the construction of this

road will help move forces faster and deeper into rebel- held regions from the nearby NH-30. Security forces point out that the road will push maoist deeper into the forests, reducing their area of influence.

Also, the road will bring prosperity to these parts, further weakening the hold of the rebels. This explains the desperation of the Maoists. But the government seems equally determined to complete the road. According to Chhattisgarh C.M. Raman Singh, "Maoist attack CRPF because they (the CRPF) are giving protection to the road construction project in Sukma. The state has taken up road and construction activities at many places in Sukma and Dantewada districts. Maoists are rattled since all this development troubles the rebels. We are determined to continue with these development activities and such attacks will not affect the morale of our forces."

The Gangaloor – Bijapur road is a good test case. Till a few years ago, this stretch was also wrecked by bloodshed unleashed by the Maoists. But after an RCC road was constructed violence has greatly reduced.

Timeline:

April 6, 2010: 76 security personnel, including 75 from CRPF, killed in ambush near Tadmetla, Sukma

May 23, 2013: Top Congress leaders of Chhattisgarh killed in Darbha valley in Bastar. The then Congress chief Nandkumar Patel, veteran tribal leader Mahendra Karma, former union minister VC Shukla, former MLA Uday Mudaliyar among 27 slain.

Jan.29, 2017: CRPF jawan killed in pressure bomb blast in Sukma

March 11, 2017: 12 CRPF personnel killed in ambush near Bhejji in Sukma

April 24, 2017: 25 CRPF personnel killed near Burkapal,, Sukma

STRATEGY for DEVELOPMENT

It is true that our tribal societies have been undergoing recurrent cultural shocks and their absorption in what is considered to be the "mainstream", is not only a debating point with anthropologists and sociologists but a live issue in determining development strategies.

Strong protective and promotional measures are required to be taken urgently. The protective measures should include debt relief, regulation of moneylending and trading. The promotional measures must include provision of credit both for productive and unproductive purposes, organisation of a strong cooperative machinery for the marketing of tribal produce and also for providing them with necessities of life at a fair price. The elimination of the forest contractor and his replacement by the tribal' own labour cooperative societies will strengthen the foundation of the tribal economy.

It must be clearly recognised that the worst policy towards debt is to ignore it and do nothing.

In the present circumstances education for the tribal is more than a mere acquisition of knowledge. It is actually a massive programme which can throw up a forceful youth leadership that can stand up against and fight the entrenched force of exploitation.

Most of the tribes live in forests areas, and thus forests have a special significance for them. Suitable agro silviculture programmes could be an effective policy instrument for the uplift of the tribal areas, as also a method to counter the shifting cultivation system still prevalent among them.

The programme should provide the five fs: food, fuel, fodder, fruits and fair returns for the farmers.

The most crucial imperative in the strategy for tribal development should be a device which can pull them out of the perpetual brink of starvation and provide food security for the 12 months of the year.

The entire developmental strategy would have to be built around the reconceptualization of human needs.

As far as the Maoist menace is concerned, unless the state is stern and genuinely concerned, they will continue to nibble India (Tribal India in particular)![©] As has been mentioned earlier in the paper, the Bastar situation can't be blamed on the money lenders, as Bastar has a very low level of indebtedness, and hence its economy isn't controlled by the money lenders. Why and how the Naxal leaders found ground there, needs to be thoroughly explored and analysed and understood (are they taking advantage of the innocent tribal psyche or are they terrorizing the tribal by killing them if they did not join ranks with them or accept their power-wielding hegemony). Many rights activists blame both the Maoists and the state for the current vulnerabilities of the tribal villagers.

Conclusion

The tribes cannot continue to live indefinitely in their isolation and primitiveness when the physical, cultural and psychological environment around them is changing rapidly. The impulse for change would manifest itself within tribal communities also. The tribes have to find for themselves a place in Indian society consistent with their conception of honour.

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