

Social Exclusion and Tribal Political Association in Transition: Two Case Studies

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Abstract: *The present work is based on the two field experiences from two significant tribal hamlets, Kanksa Block of Burdwan District and Narayangarh Block of West Midnapore District in West Bengal. At the stage of transition or at the stage of integration into the mainstream society, there is a question of social inclusion or exclusion whether there is a problem of compromise or conflict between tradition and modernity in Santal and Munda societies. Mainstream democratic theorists have come to see problems of inclusion and exclusion as absolutely central to their concern - who is in and who is out? Social exclusion focuses primarily on relational issues: inadequate social participation, lack of social integration and lack of power. The question is whether they are included or excluded from the mainstream society. Are they encapsulated? The work would explore this. In Santal and Munda societies' authority is shared. The headmen in Santal and Munda societies are partly independent and partly regulated by non-Santal and non-Munda traditions. But he, the headman plays his traditional role in the inner world of the traditional society. The headman or any official belonging to this category is the presiding authority, the first among the administrative elders. Today, the role of the traditional panchayat is on decline. The tribals are being drawn into an integrated economic programme through the Panchayati Raj system. New local leaders have emerged with the introduction of competitive elections. The introduction of election based on universal adult franchise has led to the growth of factions and parties in the villages. Though the statutory panchayats have reduced the status and authority of tribal panchayats, the tribal authority has some hold over the daily life of the tribals in several matters, particularly matters related to their inner world, though the latter sometimes is directed by the former, the latter do not want to sacrifice their tradition and the former do not make unwanted encroachment into the tribal tradition.*

Keywords: *Panchayat. Participatory Democracy. Politicization and Mobilization. Constitutional Provisions. Headman. Manjhi. Pradhan. Compromise. Conflict. Consensus.*

Date of Submission: 25-10-2017

Date of acceptance: 09-11-2017

I. INTRODUCTION

Is there any conflict between modern statutory Panchayats and traditional tribal Panchayats? The question is about tradition vs. modernity, superior vs. inferior culture, integration vs. autonomy, directed integration vs. automatic integration etc. We have tried to go into the problem in studying the Santal tribal community and Munda tribal community of the plain areas of West Bengal, particularly the Jungle Mahal area. I have concentrated on Kanksa block and Narayangarh block areas, the heart lands of the Jungle Mahal area. The whole of tribal India is at the present moment is going through the stage of transition. Here, the attempt is to assess the level of transition – conflict or compromise.

Theoretical orientation

‘Mainstream democratic theorists have come to see problems of inclusion and exclusion as absolutely central to their concerns. ‘Who is in and who is out?’—these are now recognized, by Michael Walzer (1993: 55; cf- 1983: chap. 2) and many others, to be ‘the first questions that any political community must answer about itself’. Feminists, multiculturalists and other ‘theorists of difference’ demand recognition for groups traditionally marginalized or excluded. A wide range of social policies—to do with housing, education, employment and so on—have all been recast (or perhaps just re-described) as steps toward inclusion and social integration, ‘mainstreaming’ previously marginalized individuals, families and communities. ‘The European

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[Union] now uses the term “social exclusion” instead of poverty’ itself. And nowadays even old Gaullists campaign for the French presidency in the name of ‘les exclus’. (Goodin, 1996)²

Social exclusion focuses primarily on relational issues: inadequate social participation, lack of social integration and lack of power (Room, 1997). Silver (1994) claims that social exclusion threatens society as a whole with the loss of collective values and the destruction of the social fabric. In a person’s life-trajectory exclusion occurs at different places and in different social spheres. Exclusion is a series of breaks in the web of belonging that leaves individuals stranded in a “social no-mans-land” (Castels, 1991).

Processes of social inclusion consist of more or less complex sequences of mutual interpenetration and incorporation, and are variously expressed in such familiar social activities as flirting, complimenting and flattering, honouring, introducing, initiating and debuting, exchanging gifts and secrets, promoting or electing for high office, taking into one’s confidence, dancing together, hosting, eating together, playing together, corresponding, caressing, making love and sleeping together, singing, marching, travelling and vacationing together, marrying, living together, and so forth. One thing all these activities have in common is that they make people—or rather, they are designed to make people—feel as though they have free and privileged access to certain highly valued social activities. Conversely, the expression acts of social exclusion is used to denote the myriad ways and means that people throughout the ages have devised to make other people feel as though they have no access, or at best have only very restricted access, to these highly valued activities. (Weitman, 1970).

Rodgers (1995: 51) notes that an emphasis on process is particularly important for development academics concerned with links between deprivation and development: ‘Particular patterns of development may have exclusion built into them, in that economic growth is concentrated in particular regions or groups, the gains are captured by national or international elites [and] the need for cheap and docile labour leads to the suppression of rights.’ (1995: 51). Sen (2000: 8) believes the concept of social exclusion is useful because of its emphasis on the role of relational issues in deprivation. He then goes further, arguing that it is important to distinguish between exclusion which is in itself a deprivation (that is, the exclusion has constitutive relevance) and exclusion which is not in itself negative, but which can lead to other deprivations which do have constitutive relevance. Sen (op. cit.: 13) cites landlessness and lack of access to the credit market as examples of this latter type of exclusion, which have what he calls ‘instrumental importance’. That is, landlessness or not having access to the credit market may not be impoverishing in themselves, but may lead to other deprivations (such as income poverty) through causal consequences, such as the inability to take advantage of income-generating activities that require collateral or an initial investment and use of credit (ibid.).

This is not an idle question. Who is included in the nation and why some are not, or only partially, is a crucial issue in an age when rights and status are determined by such inclusion for which people have been willing to fight and die. Included constituencies are acutely aware of this issue and seek to protect their privilege. Excluded groups are equally aware, with their very identity shaped by official or informal exclusion and their collective action often aimed at forcing inclusion. Indeed, the demand for inclusion in the nation, for citizen-ship and/or group rights against discrimination, has inspired many (though not all) modern social movements. This dynamic, framed by the issue of national inclusion, remains a central political issue of our time.

To Anthony W. Marx (2002) it is nationalism that is not an imagined community of inclusion, as a sort of literary trope, or an institutionalized process toward inclusion propelled by economic development and modernization. Instead of, nationalism is often purposefully exclusive.

When the concept of ‘tribe’ is dismissed as a colonial construct, a pejorative with connotations of backwardness, the reason may be confusion arising from the state’s definition of its Schedule of Tribes. This is often mistakenly read as the official definition of what is a ‘tribe’.

B.K. Roy Burman (1993a) stresses that it is the ‘structural distance from the main body of the people of the country’ that has enabled many tribes to remain unassimilated. The point is neither isolation nor backwardness, but tribes not being politically obliterated even as they were open to the influence of technologies or cult practices from the mainstream, or indeed even as they influenced the cults of the latter. B.K. Roy Burman (1993b) stresses that it is the ‘structural distance from the main body of the people of the country’ that has enabled many tribes to remain unassimilated.

² Among them: Dahl, 1979, 1989: chap. 9; Shklar, 1991; Bader, 1995; Dryzek, 1996. (2) See, e.g.: Smith, 1987: chap. 1; Minnow, 1990; Young, 1990; Honneth, 1992; Taylor, 1992; Habermas, 1993; Kymlicka, 1995; Phillips, 1995; Tully, 1995. Cf. Fraser, 1994, 1995; Nicholson, 1996. (3) Commission on Social Justice (1993: 20; see also Jordan, 1996; Atkinson, 1995a). See Room (1995: 105-6) for background on the European Observatory on Policies to Combat Social Exclusion and its annual reports to the European Commission. (4) Jacques Chirac was hardly alone in appealing to those values, however: cf. Balibar (1991) and Ballardur (1994). French social policy debates tend to discuss remedies to the problem in terms not of ‘inclusion’ but rather of ‘insertion’ (Evans et al., 1995), thus implying that ‘les exclus’ are there regarded as passive objects rather than as active subjects.

W. Kymlicka and W. Norman describe the tough standards that intellectual arguments for protective discrimination must meet. 'Critics of minority rights can no longer claim', they write, 'that minority rights inherently conflict with citizenship ideals.' At the same time 'defenders of minority rights can no longer claim that concerns about civility and civic identity are simply illegitimate attempts to silence or dismiss troublesome minorities' (Kymlicka and Norman 2000: 41). North-east India is a region where the politics of protective discrimination for scheduled tribes (STs) today raises some of the most difficult issues of justice, fairness and costs on system legitimacy.

The term 'deliberative democracy, refers to the 'idea that legitimate law making arises from the public deliberations of citizens' (Bohman and Rehg 1997: viii). It is based on the assumption that rational decisions are the outcome of effective deliberation. Deliberative democracy also refers to 'a conception of democratic government that secures a central place for reasoned discussion in political life' (Cooke 2000: 947). In other words, deliberation leads to reasoned agreement among citizens on the merits of legislation. It believes that the legitimacy and the constituent rationality of the society are increased by the process of deliberation. James Bohman and William Rehg argue that 'as a normative account of legitimacy deliberative democracy evokes ideals of rational legislation, participatory politics, and civic self-governance' (1997: viii). Deliberative democracy is often dysfunctional in a society characterised by asymmetrical distribution of power and resources. The manifestation of exclusion at various levels of deliberation emerges out of this asymmetrical relationship. A key argument is that asymmetrical distribution of power and resources in a society undermines equal opportunity for political influence and thereby undermines democratic deliberation (Knight and Johnson 1997: 298).

The inclusion or exclusion of social actors in the processes of globalization, enculturation and development are products of power and policy. But they are also, often, the failure of analyses to recognize the role that stakeholders play in the development of social organization and production. In this way, our analyses do reflect the ideology of our social surroundings, as the media and the "mouth talk" of government agencies and multinational corporations assure us that boundaries no longer exist, only possibilities for increased expansion and profit. In addition, the relegating of local regions as the passive "victims" of globalization promotes the same view of social agency as the promises of increasing stock prices and the consequent accumulation of wealth, despite what may be temporary setbacks (Kirsch, 2003).

'Widely located at different social spaces between tradition and postmodernity, the dalits of India are facing two kinds of challenges. The first is emerging from outside the milieu of dalithood. We may call it the challenge of inclusion. Till today, they have remained excluded in various ways. Despite the state intervention through various policies, the overall social location of the dalits remained at the fringe of the Indian society. Prevalence of caste differentiation among them has prevented them to make collective efforts for various inclusionary strategies. Still majority of them remain a part of the poor sections of the Indian society.' (Judge, 2012: 277).

Methods

The study is based on intensive field work. To collect relevant data both the primary and secondary sources have been used.

Primary Sources

- a. Sample survey – unstructured interviews with the tribal people of the areas under study.
- b. Structured interviews with the party and panchayat leaders using an interview schedule.
- c. Focused interviews with some local level leaders in relation with politicization pattern and programme implementation.

Secondary Sources

Books, journals and periodicals have been used for collecting relevant data.

The work is mainly based on field survey and qualitative analysis. Given the qualitative nature of study purely quantitative techniques have been avoided to the extent possible. The attempt has been made to elicit information through what Galtung has characterized as dialogical method in the interview process. Participatory Rural Appraisal Method (PRA) has been used to collect data from the daily experiences of the tribal beneficiaries.

- ❖ Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) is a methodology which helps in increasing contact with local communities, understanding them and learning from them.
- ❖ PRA helps indigenous knowledge building exercise.
- ❖ PRA is a process of communication and a menu of techniques for seeking villagers participation, initiates participatory process and sustains that participatory process.
- ❖ PRA is a means of generating different kinds of data, identifying and mobilising intended groups and evoking their participation and also opening ways in which intended groups can participate in decision-making.

- ❖ PRA is sometimes known as Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA) or Participatory Rapid or Rural Appraisal (PRA) where the emphasis is on both 'rapid' and 'participatory'.
- ❖ PRA is described as Participatory Rapid Rural Appraisal (PRRA) and Participatory Learning Method (PALM).
- ❖ Principles of PRA: Optimal Ignorance; Seeking Diversity; Offsetting Biases and Triangulating; and Listening and Learning, Learning Rapidly and Progressively and Learning Through Participation. Here, community approach rather than individual self as the unit is more important and justified. In this regard, Bagele Chilisa's Indigenous Research Methodologies is most important.

Type of sample: Non-probable purposive sampling

Sampling size: One hundred forty five approximately from each block

Type of observation: Participant

Units of observation: Individuals, institutions, and community

Distribution of questionnaire: Socio-economic and socio-political questions on various sub-themes

Interviews conducted: Free associational and focused

Particular characteristics of interview: Short and precise, indicative and projective

II. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The tribal associations include individuals and elders, families, villages and clans. I have to explain this with Santal and Munda authority structures. 'The communal life of the Santal is well-organized, in which the authority is shared, even joy and sorrow of one is the joy and sorrow of the whole community.' (Biswas 1956: 221). Actually, the Santals are Munda in origin. With the more inclusive and incorporative process of cultural diffusion, the Santal and Munda societies have not totally changed, but have become partly dependent and have been partly regulated by the surrounding cultural developments – sanskritization and modernization. They are in the intermediate position between the two extremes, 'primitives' and peasants.

The Santals

The Santals have a strong sense of tradition and ethnic identity is carried out by the concepts of hor hopon, the true man in society and hor disom, the Santal community or country. Every head of the family has the right to speak and headmanship is duly sanctioned by the family heads before the village council though it is inherited in nature. Effective authority in the village is exerted by the village council, where every family head is free to exert through compromise and persuasion. The village council or the panchayat is headed by Manjhi or the headman. Village council or panchayat is the most important socio-economic and political unit. Parganait is the head of all the inhabitants of his own area, the Pargana. Ten to twelve villages or communities constitute a larger political unit, the Pargana. Parganait deals with the inter-village settlement of disputes assisted by Desh Manjhi. In all activities of the villages the headmen or Manjhis have had to consult with Parganait, especially in marriage and justice activities. Parganait is elected from the headmen of all constituent villages. The supreme authority resides in the Lo Bir or the Hunt Council, which is formed by the people of a number of villages throughout the entire district. Punishments to the breaches of laws and settlement of disputes are generally performed by the Manjhi or village headman and in exceptional cases; especially in violation of clan exogamy and social excommunication Lo Bir and Parganait interfere. Manjhi is assisted by Paramanik, the assistant headman. Jag-Manjhi and Jag-Paramanik are the executive officers of Manjhi and Paramanik, respectively. Naiki or priest is trusted with the functions of worshipping the aboriginal deities assisted by Kundam Naiki or assistant priest. Gorait or village messenger acts as peon to the headman.

The Mundas

The headman in the Munda society is partly independent and partly regulated by the non-tribal tradition, but the headman plays his traditional role in the inner world of traditional society. They are within the period of transition, from tradition to modernity. They are not out of their traditional orientation, yet. Generally, Munda tribes do not go to the Police or modern political system to settle their disputes. They aptly participate in the statutory Panchayat system in spite of having their own. They take part actively in politics and also in elections of the Panchayats (Field Survey).

The traditional Panchayat of the Mundas is hereditary that maintain law and order in their society in terms of consensus and deliberation. The Mundas have evolved a political organization of a two tier structure suited to their needs headed by a traditional chief, i.e. Hatu Panchayat at the village level and Parha Panchayat at the regional level. However, these Panchayats are in the process of decline. The Panchayat meetings are held more regularly during the agricultural season certainly to help in regulating the various activities related with agricultural operations. The judicial and social functions of the Hatu Panchayat are to settle disputes for maintaining peace and order in society. The legal authority of Parha is vested in Parha Panchayat. Parha

Panchayat is hereditary and the jurisdiction of Parha Panchayat extends over the entire area of the Parha (Halder and Bhowmick, 2005). The judicial authority of the Parha Panchayat is now exercised in cases of breaches of law and order and disputes over inheritance and partition. A person who disobeys the verdict of the Parha Panchayat is liable to be excommunicated. Munda (the village chief), Pahan (the priest) and Mahato (the messenger) are the three important office bearers of the Munda panchayat system. The assistant of 'Pahan' is called 'Pujar'. 'Mahato' or 'Munda' administrates, collects rents, settles disputes, applies and adjudicates the rules in all social and religious matters (Halder and Bhowmick, 2005). In Narayangarh Block 'Mukhia' is the headman. So far the system of remedial process of the village Panchayat is concerned it is observed that a complaint is to be lodged along with a fee of Rs. 150 on account of proclamation of charges. The 'Dakua' announces the fixed date of hearing and place for holding the village court by beating a drum. Generally, the open court is held at 'Baram Than' (the Holy Tree). Social control is maintained with unanimous decisions. No one tries to defy the verdict or verdicts (Field Survey). Furthermore, there is a mixture or combination or compromise of and between traditional and statutory panchayats. However, it has been observed that the traditional Munda panchayat still holds sway in Munda society of two villages like Harinageria and Birbiria. But, exceptionally, in the village of Daharpur this system is remarkably diminishing. This may be for several reasons: firstly, the sudden demise of the Mukhia or the Village Headman, secondly, his son is an employed person and unwilling to take the post of Mukhia. He is otherwise and attuned to modernism and consumerism, thirdly, the village Daharpur is very close to NH-60 and highly communicated in terms of societal, economic, political and administrative matters (Field Survey). In actual terms, they are in the process of transition between social inclusion and exclusion at the same time. They are in the cradle of transition.

Social exclusion and Social capital

'The rise of an exclusive society involves the unravelling of labour markets and the rise of widespread individualism concerned with identity and self-actualization. Role making rather than role taking becomes top of the agenda... the culture of social exclusion is closely linked with that of the outside world, is dynamic, is propelled by the contradictions of opportunities and ideals, of economic citizenship denied and social acceptance blocked.' (Young, 1999: 401). To get out of this relative deprivation and social exclusion formation of social capital, both structural and cognitive is important here: 'Structural social capital facilitates information sharing, and collective action and decision making through established roles, social networks and other social structures supplemented by rules, procedures, and precedents... Cognitive social capital refers to shared norms, values, trust, attitudes, and beliefs. It is therefore a more subjective and intangible concept.' (Grootaert and van Bastelaer, 2002: 10-11). In Marxian perspective, the role of bridging and bonding social capital is crucial to get out of deprivation and oppression. For Marx, aggregate social capital is the total process of socialization of capitalist production. Capital forms social power and takes part in the production and reproduction of social classes. Like this process the working class is transformed from 'class-in-itself' to 'class-for-itself' by strength of the social power of collective action. This is called as 'bounded solidarity'. Place of social capital both in traditional socio-economic process and structure and in its transformed nature may be stated below following Wilson (2006), forms a triangular in relationship. The process is spiral (Fig. 1). The traditional socio-economic process and structure reflects intra-communities communal relationships and its transformed nature reflects inter-communities relationships and tries to form a social aggregate.

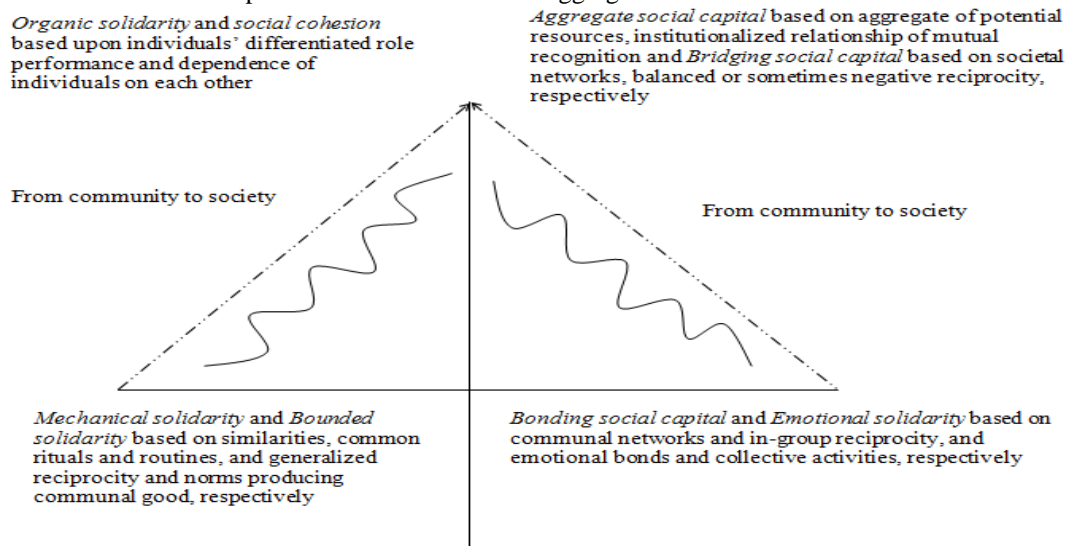


Fig. 1

This type of social reality can be explained either by accepting P-S-P syndrome or by S-P-S syndrome or by a combination of both. I do accept the last, the post-Marx-post-Modern approach that can be explained through a diagram (Fig. 2). In this process of social capital and tribal socio-economic structure at particular time (t) and space (s) the role of culture is important, where culture may be defined as an aggregate of values and traditions, knowledge, beliefs, art, morals, laws, customs and any other capabilities and habits, which is deeply linked to the everyday life of the people, and in that sense, it is a matrix of perception which allows one to appraise the world (International Centre for Development, 1979). Here, social capital can be defined as societal relations, source of social control, source of family-mediated benefits and source of resources mediated by non-family networks (Portes, 1998). Portes (2000) suggests two possibilities of social capital, one of which seems to me favourable to primordial structure and relations and another to the structure and relations other than primordial – first, ‘for every political system (city, nation, etc.), if authorities and the population at large are imbued with a sense of collective responsibility and altruism; then, the system will be better governed and its policies will be more effective.’, and second, ‘for every political system, the higher the rate of exposure of the general population to the printed media and the higher its participation in associations; then, the greater the level of ‘civicness’ and the better the policy outcomes.’ (Portes, 2000: 4-5). I do prefer the first in case of traditional tribal structure and relations. The interaction between process of social capital and structure is spiral or zigzag and forms a triangle. Social capital is used to explain the interactions among civil society actors, the state and market, and the civic engagement leading to better market functioning and improved governance. In this process the role of culture is important. ‘Social capital depends on processes of identity formation through norms exclusion and inclusion. More often than not, membership in a social network occurs on the basis of ascriptive criteria related to ethnicity, race, gender, national background and social class.’ (Fernandage Kelly, 1994: 97). Social capital depends on the cultural meanings attributed by the group members to the social relations. Social capital is the function of social relations in a particular time and space. It is the symbolic understandings of social relations.

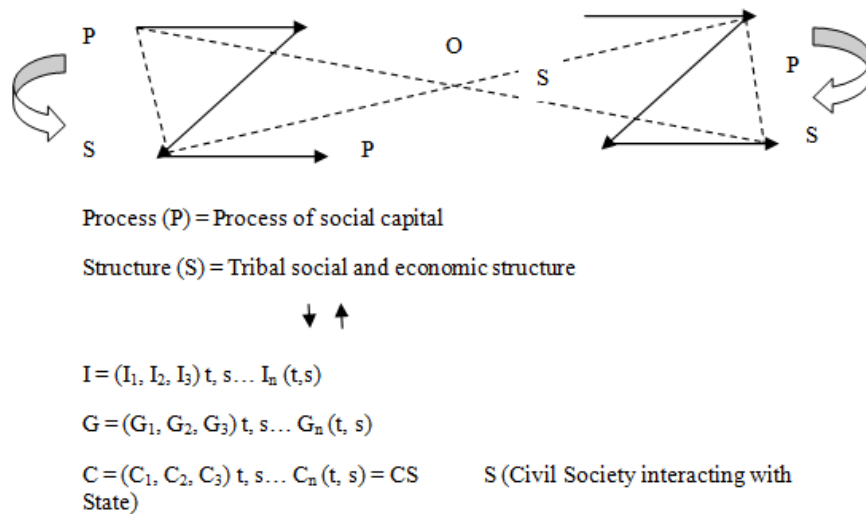


Fig. 2

Social capital can be traced in norms and values of behaviour and social and functional relationships between individuals and groups that constitute the part of the civil society, which is defined as the conceptualized space occupied by social institutions and groups in between state, market and family. Social capital can also be defined as civil society institutions. Foley and Edwards (1999) regards social capital as dependent variable while the social structure determines its context and utility. However, I do regard that social capital also acts as independent variable, where structure is treated as dependent variable. ‘All human societies have norms, networks, and horizontal associations that facilitate the agendas of individuals and groups... Social-capital mobilization,... reflects political construction and political opportunity, with social energy and scaling up being important for organizational growth and consolidation.’ (Mustafa, 2005: 343). Political opportunity means shifting conflicts and alliances, social energy reflects the motivated activists, and scaling up essentially designates the moving beyond the small. This political-construction approach seeks to explain the distribution of positive social capital in rural societies.

However, the role of the traditional panchayat is on the decline. 'The tribal councils which used to be all powerful in directing the behaviour of its members are now soon weakening, for the administration has abrogated the right of the tribal council to sit in judgement on criminal cases. The naya Panchayats have taken over the judgement of the ordinary civil cases in its hands. This has reduced the dominance of tribal or clan councils.' (Doshi 1972: 469). The first crack in the headman system occurred when more rent was demanded from the Mandal or headman. The headman, therefore, had to collect more rent from the tribals, which was not proportionate to the extension of agriculture. Necessarily the tribal people of the Jungle Mahal area were indebted to the money-lenders, and were burst into discontents and developed a fissiparous state of mind. The headman lost their traditional status. With the process of dispossession of headmanship, communal ownership of lands was transformed into individual ownership. Therefore, indigenous economic activities and social structure of the tribal communities were shattered, identity of the tribal communities were distorted by the colonial rule. Collection of revenue, policy of isolation or 'leave them alone' towards the tribes, establishment of central police and judicial system – all contributed to the decline of authority of the tribes.

Modern developments have influenced the villagers in demanding statutory Panchayats, when statutory Panchayats act as parallel to the traditional village organizations. The politics of middle-classness and reformism have induced the tribal leaders to take the advantage of being important in the tribal society with the help of statutory Panchayats in terms of getting developmental facilities and participating in the meetings Gram Sabhas and Gram Unnayan Samities. As modern institutions PRIs act as the buffer between traditional tribal values and modern social democratic values, so that the modern system may survive without any major crisis. This crisis may crop up from tribal society out of distrust, frustration, relative deprivation and anomie. To this end, the tribals have been incorporated in the parliamentary democratic set-up of the country. The imperatives of the party dominated statutory Panchayats are to represent multi-class interests, stimulate capitalist growth and co-operate with all sections of the society. 'To win the votes of the people other than workers, particularly the petty bourgeoisie, to form alliances and coalitions, to administer the government in the interests of workers, a party cannot appear to be irresponsible, to give any indication of being less than wholehearted about its commitment to the rules and limits of the parliamentary game.' (Przeworski, 1980: 30-31). The tribals are now in collaboration with the party-panchayat leaders in view of their existence in the greater political society and socio-economic benefits through political society. Few tribals are also party-panchayat leaders and few of them have become the neo-elites. Still, traditional Panchayats are performing its role in parallel with statutory Panchayats.

Politicization and mobilization of the tribal communities are intended to pursue reformism of 'red Panchayats' and penetration of the countryside without the landed class and controlled mobilization of the lower classes. Kohli (1983) finds that 'the CPM's organizational arrangements allow it to penetrate countryside without being captured by the propertied groups. In part because of the democratic-centralist nature of the party organization and in part because of the carefully reorganized local government, the CPM can now reach the lower peasantry without landlord mediation. This feature of the CPM distinguishes it from all other organized political alternatives in India. It allows the regime to channel some developmental resources directly to the rural poor, as well as to mobilize them for occasionally fulfilling reformist goals.' (Kohli, 1983: 806). The imperatives of reformist goals, popular representation instead of bureaucratic strongholds, continuous search for winning elections and multi-class alliance have made the tribals conducive to parliamentary games. Penetration of the countryside without the landed class and controlled mobilization of the lower classes have created the tribals to be within the limits of parliamentary games and constitutional procedures. Due to these structural constraints they are forced to follow the limits of statutory Panchayats and subdue the demands for tribal autonomy and resistance. Furthermore, the tribals are in the grind wheels of capitalist democracy and globalization. Still, they are preserving their self-identity. This self-identity is the identity of tribals as such. Disputes within the tribals are resolved within them through the tribal Panchayats. Rituals and practices are followed traditionally, particularly in religious and marriage ceremonies. But, when disputes are not resolved traditionally, then statutory Panchayats interfere, but in consensus with the tribals.

The political controls are exercised by the dominant elite over lower-class members, particularly the SC and ST members. The 'red panchayat' dominated by the CPI (M) exacerbated this tendency by changing the law to make appointments to SCs and STs and women by the state government depended on the recommendation by the local Panchayats dominated by the locally dominant middle class. The middle class also includes tribal bargadars and professionals, who are economically and politically power holders in parallel with the non-tribal middle class. Ashok Rudra (1981) points out that the sharecroppers are now in an intermediate position. They aspire to be a landowner and by sharecropping several small plots of land as well as his own land, often have the economic status of the middle peasant (Mandal, 1981). The tribal bargadars or sharecroppers are more well-to-do than that of the landless sharecroppers and landless labourers. The more well-to-do tribals have become the neo-elites and party-panchayat leaders. The Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Commission stated that '...the middle level peasantry are controlling the most powerful rural organization named as Kisan Sabha (CPM) as well as the Panchayati Raj institutions in the State.' (Ministry of

Home Affairs, 1981). This is going on till now. Few of the power holders are tribals. Constitutional provisions for tribal representation have provided them enough inputs to be associated with the statutory Panchayats in consonance with the policy of integration with the mainstream Panchayats. Article 243D states that seats shall be reserved for SCs and STs in every Panchayat and the number of seats so reserved shall bear, as nearly as may be, the same proportion to the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in that Panchayat as the population of the Scheduled Castes in that Panchayat area or of the Scheduled Tribes in that Panchayat area bears to the total population of that area and such seats may be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a Panchayat. Not less than one-third (including the number of seats reserved for women belonging to the SCs and STs) of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every Panchayat shall be reserved for women and such seats may be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a Panchayat. The fundamental spirit of the Panchayat (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996 (PESA Act, 1996) for tribal areas under 5th Schedule is that it devolves power authority to Gram Sabha and Panchayats rather than delegation; hence it paves way for participatory democracy. The provision under constitution and the composition under this act call for every legislation on the Panchayat in 5th Schedule area be in conformity with the customary law, social and religious practices and traditional management practices of the community resources. It also directs the state government to endow powers and authority to make Gram Sabha and Panchayats function as Institutions of Local Self- Governance, especially on matters of enforcing prohibition of sale and consumption of intoxicant; ownership of minor forest produce; power to prevent alienation of land and restoration of unlawfully alienated land, management of village markets, control over money lending etc. PESA also empowered Gram Sabha of the Scheduled Areas to approve plans, programmes for social and economic development, identify beneficiaries under poverty alleviation programmes, certify utilization of funds by Gram Panchayats, protect natural resources, including minor forest produce and be consulted prior to land acquisition. This integration policy and aspects of participatory development have pushed and pulled the tribals to enter into the processes of statutory Panchayats.

Though the statutory Panchayats have reduced the status and authority of the tribal Panchayats, the tribal authority has some hold over the daily life of the tribals in several matters. The tribal Panchayats have adopted certain changes to meet the challenges of modernization. In this process, the deliberative opportunities, educational facilities, community development programmes and cooperative societies as contributory factors have changed the minds of the tribals to adapt to the new environment. Therefore, the tribal leaders have emerged to meet the diverse requirements, social, economic, cultural and developmental aspects of the tribal life. Some of the traditional tribal leaders have tried to swim with the new currents of development, make important links between the old and new ideas and values, traditional and modern institutions; and established a new rapport with tradition and modernity along the lines of their own genius. These leaders may be called as transitional leader. An efficient leader makes a synthesis or compromise between the 'consensual' power of a manjhi and 'unqualified' power of a pradhan at the transitory level. Here, a triangular alliance and power relationship is formed between tribal leader, non-tribal leader and administrative officials.

III. CONCLUSION

Therefore, the political life of the tribals is an admixture of traditional and modern elements. Political parties are actively creating favourable atmosphere for the tribals in articulating and aggregating their interests, socializing and recruiting the tribals, communicating the tribal interests with the wider world, and in cooperating the tribal leader's role performance of collective duties and commitment to Santal tradition. In statutory Panchayat bodies the tribal members play a positive role, but not to the desired extent. The newly born tribal elites and tribal members of the statutory Panchayats still seek advice from the experienced traditional leaders in the decision-making affairs. The compromise and cooperation between tradition and modernity is the reality of the present day tribal societies. Sometimes it is argued that the non-tribal people and the non-tribal leaders are really the colonizer and the tribals are colonized people. The tribals are now in an unequal national and global market instead of being free players in the market economy. The tribal resistance and struggle centered round land, forest resources, labour and wages, cultural hegemony and control of the economy through a subtle means of surplus accumulation within the matrix of colonial and neo-colonial oppression. In the post-independent development integration pattern there is a lack of cultural autonomy. Hence, there is no need of directed integration. 'The manner of the integration of the tribals into the wider Indian society will ultimately be determined by political decisions, and these will not be the basis of moral evaluations.' (Haimendorf 1994: 322). There is the need for cultural tolerance and appreciation of cultural values. Tribals should not be separated, but assimilated within the broader Indian society in an automatic way. There is the need for protection so that they cannot be exploited by the non-tribals and neo-elites among the tribals in an undue manner. They can develop along their own lines. In the faces of formation and mapping of cultural strategy and construction of tribal culture with reference to the culture of western modernity by the non-tribal people, the need for the notion of difference and autonomy and the justification and recognition of difference cannot be ignored. In fact, the

modern cannot be exclusively modern and traditional cannot be solely traditional, there is a fusion between the two. These are nothing but the traditionalization of modernity and modernity of tradition.

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International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Invention (IJHSSI) is UGC approved Journal with Sl. No. 4593, Journal no. 47449.

Dr. Md. Ayub Mallick *Social Exclusion and Tribal Political Association in Transition: Two Case Studies.* International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Invention(IJHSSI), vol. 6, no. 11, 2017, pp. 01-09.