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The Socio-political Organisation of the Paharia Tribe of *Damin-I-Koh* of Bihar–Jharkhand: A Story of Continuity and Change (1595–1784 AD)

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Absrtact

Not considered as a major tribe, the Paharias of Santal Parganas in Jharkhand have generally been a victim of scholarly neglect. The essay therefore attempts to present an overview of their socio-political organisation, as it developed up to the early British period. The essay also serves the collateral purpose of the transformation of a pre-state polity into a state system. Divided into three broad sections, the first section unfolds the specific ecological setting that had considerable influence on the Paharia socio-political organisation and the policies of the imperial forces. The second section covers roughly a history of more than two hundred years when the Mughals and British intervened and considerably changed Paharia socio-polity. The last section seeks to study how this intervention led to the formation of a hybrid socio-political organisation that considerably broke the isolation of the Paharias and joined them with the colonial political economy.

Introduction

This essay seeks to provide an historical account of the socio-political organisation of the Paharia tribes of *Damin-I-Koh* (meaning skirt of the hills) covering a period ranging between 1595, the year of the foundation of the city of Rajmahal, officially known as Akbarnagar and 1784, the year of the death of Augustus Cleveland (Habib 1982: 42; Nathan 1936: 269; Fazl 1965: 362). The Paharias of Damin-i-Koh region, or later day Santal Pargana(s) division of Bihar (presently in Jharkhand) have suffered scholarly neglect so far. The reason, as recent researches would like to attribute was due to their representation as an historiless people, a lack that is attributed to their pre-state and pre-literate socio-political formation (Guha 2002: 4–12; Sen 2005). Consequently, when scholars sought to historicise them, they had to face serious dearth of information. Adivasi oral tradition has not been explored for an inside account. The exogenous sources, the Mughal and British-day accounts, largely unfold a story that began from their periods, with sparse information about the traditional system as it had developed before the advent of the imperialist forces. So portraying a systematic and comprehensive socio-political picture has not been possible so far. But the information available on the Paharias, and the region they dominated, help us comprehend how physical and politico-economic ecology decisively impacted the Paharia lifeway, more so their socio-political organisation; how this became a point of attraction for the imperialist Mughal and British and how their intervention reinvented

Paharia socio-polity and paved their entry into a state system. The essay tells this story beginning with a sketch of geo-polity, followed by the advent of the imperialist and colonial powers in the Damin-i-Koh and the evolution of a hybrid socio-political structure.

A historiographical note

It will be interesting to provide a note on the sources from which this essay draws its historical materials. Rajmahal and its surroundings have been frequently discussed by the contemporary Persian historians and travelers. But the significant fact is that, though Rajmahal hill area is only a few kilometres away from Rajmahal town, the Paharias and their landscape had not figured in historiography and travelogues (Fazl 1965: 362). This erasure seems more irksome even though Teliagahri and Sakrigali, located in the Rajmahal hills region, were politically sensitive places during the Mughal era (Buchanan 1930: VII). However, with the advent of the British, the land and people came up for some mention by British ethnographers and anthropologists, mostly the employees of the British East Indian Company and the British Crown. It cannot however be denied that the Gazetteers and ethnographical surveys of this period focused more on caste and race, rather on the tribal communities. The little mention that we have, represent these communities as aboriginal group compared to the Hindu castes who were mostly considered as outsiders. Another notable fact is that the British ethno-historiography merely focused on administratively useful aspects of their life and that too on northern hills. Seemingly, the reason was that the hills region, dominated by Savaria Paharia, remained the very first and most important frontier of the Paharia with the Mughal and then the British local government (Pratap 2000: 4).

However, colonial administrative accounts, while informing about socio-polity of the Paharias, retrospectively provided some useful information on the Mughal-tribe relationship of this area.¹ (Buchanan 1930: ; Sherwill 1851: 544–606; Shaw 1807: 31–96; Birt 1990; McPherson 1909; O'Malley 1999; Martin 1976). Some Indian anthropologists and ethno historians too have contributed on these areas which are useful for the present study (Sarkar 1938; Vidyarthi 1963; Pratap 2000).

Geo-political setting

The extensive and hitherto unexplored tract of the hilly country known as the Rajmahal Hills, extending from the banks of the Ganges at Sakrigali and lying between latitude 26° 10' North, and 87° 50' North to the boundary of the district of Birbhum, forms the most north-eastern shoulder portions of the Vindhya Mountains (Sherwill 1851: 544-606). Presently, these are included in the Sahebganj district of Jharkhand, which lies approximately between 24° 42' North and 25° 21' North latitude and between 87° 25' and 87° 54' East longitude. The geographical area of the district is 1549,97 sq. km. The district encompasses Rajmahal hills and other ranges stretching from the bank of the Ganges in the north to the borders of West Bengal in the south (Singh 2012: 419).

However, the entire landscape comprising the Rajmahal Hills, the valleys inter-lying the hilly tracts and the immediate Gangetic alluvial strip circumscribing the

¹ Indian Tracts, Major J. Browne's Report, on the jungle-terai People of South Bihar during 1774-1779 (Henceforth Major J. Browne's Report). Darbhanga: Maharaja Dhiraja Kameshwar Singh Kalyani Foundation, 1996.

hills, came to be named Damin-I-Koh by the Mughals. Ever since, it was seen more as a distinct geographical entity rather than a composite political unit. The peculiar physical features and terrain conditions of Damin offered the territory a good degree of cultural insulation and security from external military invasion and political subjugation by either the Sultans of Bengal or the governors of Mughal government, having their capitals at Gaur, Malda, Tanda, Rajmahal, Delhi, Patna and Murshidabad (Salim 2009: 24–27; Fazl 1965: 362). In fact, no pre-colonial power could establish any firm and lasting political control by developing a systematic administration machinery for revenue appropriation in Damin-I-Koh (Pratap 2000: 33).

The Mughal nomenclature of this geologically distinct region alluded to its varied ethnic composition. Paharias or 'hill-people', as they were called in British ethnography, have lived in these parts from pre-historic times (Ibid.: 4). Throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, as perhaps before, Paharias resided only within the Damin and maintained their demographic superiority. Natural causes such as failure of rains, which were the prime cause for migrations of other such tribal communities like the Munda, Santal and Ho of Jharkhand, the Paharia population did not resort to migration as a means of survival (Ibid. 34, 43). It has been observed, 'The Paharias live in their eyries on the hill tops. The Paharia desired no further intercourse with foreigners' (Birt 1990: 35).

The cohesiveness as Paharia possessed was 'due rather to the physical condition of their mountain homes than to their internal forms of the government' (Birt 1990: 60). They were contained with the rough conditions of life in their isolated fastness and were in the habit of perfect independence. 'In the hills', 'left to themselves, tenures innumerable have grown up among them. Every hill is claimed as private property and the hills are brought and sold' (Powell 1990: 590).

The Paharias and the imperial forces

The Paharias and their homeland could not however remain isolated ever since the imperial forces cast their covetous eyes on the region. It will be interesting to understand the factors that attracted them to this region before relating the actual history of relationship. This area assumed significance because of its location. The chief land route from the upper provinces to Bengal ran through this area. This road was the only artery for trade and traffic, which ran through the alluvial strip sandwiched between the southern bank of the Ganga and the northern front of the Rajmahal hills. Controlling this vital route for military supremacy in Bengal therefore became politico-militarily important. The political importance of the region grew further ever since Man Singh made it the capital town of Bengal Subah in 1595 AD, a position that the city enjoyed during the rule of Shah Shuja (1639–1660 AD) (Sarkar 1973: 211, 332). The city emerged as the main centre of power, wealth and culture that radiated far and wide across Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. Naturally therefore, regional kingdoms, as also the rulers of Delhi, made attempts to subjugate the hills region and the Paharias. It was the disruption of Gaur during the Mughal-Afghan contest between Sher Shah and Humayun (1533–40) that facilitated the attempt to subjugate Rajmahal hills region. Rajmahal also developed as a port city with considerable impact on regional socio-economy. This was promoted when the Mughals constructed the fort of Teliagarhi to straddle the road that linked the Upper Provinces to Bengal as well as to access the Sakrigali pass (Pratap 2000: 33; Majumdar: 1939). The route across the highway was guarded by a garrison at the fort of Teliagarhi. That somewhat ensured the safety of the travelers and traders.

The subjugation of the strategically significant hills region was neither easy nor fruitful because of the prevailing state of affairs. The Paharias indulged in predatory activities taking advantage of the fluidity of the situation. The neighbouring zamindars and *ghatwals* (O'Malley, 1999 : 35) used them as political pawns. It was a common practice among them to incite the Paharia chiefs of their vicinity for plundering neighbouring zamindars, with whom they were on bad terms, and encouraged them to plunder the neighbouring villages and threaten to annihilate the ryots in the neighbouring hills. In return, zamindars offered the hillmen free and safe passage through the plains as far as the spot to be ravaged (Sherwill 1851: 545; O'Malley 1999: 35). Another reason was that the rugged hills and dense jungle they inhabited were mostly unproductive. Moreover, whatever natural product the Paharias collected could not even sell their products to the itinerant traders. This was the geo-political background before the advent of the imperial forces in the hills territory.

The Afghans were the first among imperial forces to forge a political link with the hills region. The Afghan ruler Sher Shah (1540-45) was one of the very few Muslim rulers who knew something of these hills. But the Afghan armies could never penetrate the hills of the Santhal Parganas. Though Afghan fief-holders had long occupied estates on the fringes of the highlands in southern Bihar and western Bengal, they could not occupy the interior of the hills and the plateaus, which from time immemorial had been occupied by the aboriginal races (Buchanan 1930: vii). It appears that the Muslim rulers used to grant jagirs to ghatwals for the protection of the hill routes.² It had become essential because after the defeat of Daud Khan, the last Afghan king of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa near Rajmahal in 1576, the history of these areas was "one of the constant vicissitude" (Ibid.: vi-viii).

However, Man Singh, the Mughal general under Akbar, incorporated the hill districts in the Subah of Bengal as part of Sarkar of Munger which comprised 31 *mahals* (territorial revenue unit). This new administrative unit practically extended from the Kiul river on the western boundary of Mahal Surajgarha to the strong wall extending from the Ganges to the hills (Ibid.: vi-vii). However, from the *Ain-i-Akbari*, which contained the details of the first Mughal rent assessment made by Raja Todar Mal about the year 1582, it becomes clear that the Mughals made practically no impression on the hill country. Their revenue authority extended only to the east of the hills on which they built their new capital of Akbarnagar, which later came to be named as Rajmahal (McPherson 1909: 24).

Though from Akbar's time, the Mughals appear to have enjoyed nominal authority over the whole area and actually possessed only the lands on the banks of the Ganges (Ibid.: 26), they saw little prospect of obtaining revenue from their barren hills.³ They therefore left the control of the region to mansabdars, of whom the chief were

² The Ghatwali appears to have been originally tenures granted for the protection of Ghats or passes through the hills. The ghatwals were small hill chiefs, who raised small levies for their defence and were responsible for peace and order in the tracts held by them or the Zamindars of the neighbouring tracts. They were also to maintain a militia to keep the hillmen within bounds (O'Malley 1999: 219, 246).

³ However, Rajmahal extra Damin i.e. the area without the region of Damin-I-Koh, was the only part of the district which regularly paid revenue to the Mughals from Akbar's first assessment in 1582 till the East India Company's acquisition of the Diwani in 1765. But the territory known as Damin-I-Koh, together with its extension towards the Ramgarh hills in the south, was never assessed nor explored by the Mughals. This was granted in mansabdari jagir at a nominal valuation to the Manihari Katura, who aided Akbar in 1576 (McPherson 1909: 26).

members of Khetauri family of Manihari. (O'Malley 1999: 34). Shah Shuja,⁴ the Governor of Bengal, entrusted the defence of the skirt of the hills to Raja Bahroj of Akbarpur in 1659 (Salim 2009: 221).⁵ In fact, after several failures in the hills, the Muslim rulers left the hillmen to themselves punishing them only when caught in plains. This unsatisfactory state of affairs lasted for some years after the British government conquered Bengal and Bihar.

The political uncertainty prevailing in the hills seemed to encourage Paharias to storm Lakragarh fort and drive out the Khetauri jagirdars. They also launched a series of raids on the lowland villages, which went unpunished during the unrest at that time. The problem of Paharia raids had however a long past. Sherwill informs that from the days of the Muslim kings to 1764 AD, these hill people were the scourge and terror of the neighbouring districts. Their armed bands, fully equipped with powerful bamboo, bows and poisoned arrows, descended from the hills, murdered all those who opposed their progress. They pillaged the country far and near, carrying away grain, salt and tobacco, money, cattle and goats. The hill men from their jungle hide outs invariably released poisoned arrows at the enemy soldiers and were in the habit of murdering all and every emissary sent from the Rajmahal. The Muslim rulers found it a hopeless case. This continued till the time of the British (Sherwill 1851: 545–46, 587). The raids no doubt disturbed peace in the region. Furthermore, these rendered the vital trade route between Bengal and Bihar unsafe. It is observed "No boat dared to move after dusk on the southern bank of the Ganga and even the government mail runners who in those days passed along with the skirts of the hills, by way of Rajmahal and Teliagarhi pass were frequently robbed and murdered at the foot of the hills" (O'Malley 1999: 34). The political confusion was confounded because the Khetauri Jagirdars coveted the fertile lands that skirted the foot of the hills. This brought them into a league with the Paharias (Ibid.). The Paharias of the South were also incited by the inhabitants particularly of Sultanabad, Raj Shahi and Birbhum who indulged in plundering each other's villages (O'Mally 1999: 35). It appears that neither the local chiefs and Muslim rulers nor the presence of the headquarters of the Mughal rule in Bengal within a few miles of their borders could any way influence their manner of life and political organisation (Sherwill 1851: 545–46; Birt 1990: 58). This was the political scenario of the Rajmahal hills before the advent of the British.

The British and Paharias

The territories granted by Diwani to the East India Company in 1765 included regions comprising the jungle-terai and adjacent hilly and forest areas. But it was only in 1769 that the English could make its first probing attempts at an effective control over the hills with the help of its armed forces.⁶ Several factors made the imperialist British interested in this region. Territorial expansion was obviously the major factor. Second was the safety of Company's eastern Indian empire which had been threatened by recurrent Maratha invasions of Bihar and Bengal.⁷ The Company administration could realise that without local support they would not be able to stall their progress to these provinces. Control of the trade routes passing through the hills region was no less important.

⁴ Son of Mughal emperor Shah Jahan.

⁵ This was popularly known as Raj Mahal.

⁶ J. Browne's Report 1996: A 8.

⁷ Ibid.: A 29.

However, the situation had become volatile because the Paharias were in a state of ferment. As related before, they indulged in open raid and foray for which they were castigated as plunderers in the British records. Bishop Heber writes, 'A deadly feud existed for the last 40 years between them and cultivators of neighbouring lowlands, they being untamed, thieves and murders, continually making forays, and the Muhammadan zamindars killing them, like mad dogs or tigers; whenever they got them, within gunshot' (O'Malley 1999: 35). The situation was further aggravated by the famine of 1770, which severely affected the territory that lay between Rajmahal hills and the Ganges (Ibid.: 70). The Paharias could more easily escape the extremity of distress owing to their practice of living upon jungle foods. When the famine was over, the raids of the hillmen upon the low country became most frequent and most systematic (O'Malley 1999: 34). On account of the widespread robberies and violence the ryots were driven out from their houses and were unable to reap the harvest. The renters were therefore unable to collect their revenues.⁸ This caused the government a serious loss of revenue.

The Company government found it very difficult to establish political control and pursue trade and commerce, because the poisoned arrows of the Paharias caused deadly fear in the ranks of the British light infantry (Birt 1990: 73). To protect their trade and commerce, as also the traders and travelers from tribal plunder, the colonial authority took the immediate step of establishing military stations at Rajmahal, Bhagalpur and Munger.⁹ But this proved ineffective because the outposts at the foot of the hills manned by the ghatwals were abandoned. Moreover, the famine swept away a number of *choukis* (police outposts) traditionally maintained by ghatwals till 1769. Aware of the crisis, Warren Hastings, the Governor of Bengal, raised a special corps in 1772, which was particularly trained for hill fighting (O'Malley 1999: 35). This was entrusted to Captain Brooke, the military governor of the south of Munger and Bhagalpur, which was then known as the Jungle Tarai. He was ordered to subdue the turbulent hill people and rebellious zamindars. Apart from taking military measures against the hill people, he was instructed to encourage the marauding tribals to become cultivators and lead a settled and peaceful life. Brooke therefore adopted the policy of encouraging the hill people to come down and settle on the cultivable land below the hills. Moreover, he made attempts to win the confidence of the hill people by extending kind treatment to the prisoners and their children and women folk.¹⁰ During next two years he spent in the hills, Captain Brook thus did much to carry out the policy laid down by Warren Hastings (O'Malley 1999: 35). In December 1774, Warren Hastings proudly announced in his dispatch to the Court of Directors:

'by the battalion employed in the jungle-terai, a tract of country which was considered an inaccessible and unknown, and only served as respectable for robbers, has been reduced to government, the inhabitants civilized, and not only the reduction of the revenues, which was occasioned by their savages, prevented but some revenue yielded from their country itself, which a persecution of the same measure will improve. Short as his tenure of office was, Captain Brook may justly be described as the pioneer of colonization in the Rajmahal hills' (Ibid.: 36).

On Brook's resignation in July 1774, Captain James Browne assumed the charge of Collector of Bhagalpur. During his entire tenure, Browne was busy in suppressing the

⁸ Ibid.: A 27–28.

⁹ Canning 1861: 128.

¹⁰ J. Browne's Report 1996: A 9.

rebellion of Bhuiyas and in bringing the rebellious chiefs of Ambar and Sultanabad to submission¹¹. He knew that the obedience shown by the mountaineers for three or four years during his tenure was solely due to the Company's military might. He believed that 'Conciliation and not conquest must be looked to if peace was to be brought to this sorely tried district' (Birt 1990: 75). His scheme was therefore the restoration of authority and possession of different tappas (pargana or division) to the successors of Sirdar Manjhis (Chief headman) through sanads, binding the interior Manjhis (headmen) to the Sardar Manjhis, and carrying of all transactions of the government with hill people through them. The other plan was to establish *haats* (markets) at proper places to facilitate the intercourse of hill people with those of the plains.¹²

The above steps were preliminary to Company government's plan of annexing the Paharia territory, a task that fell on Augustus Cleveland who became the Collector of Bhagalpur in 1779. With the full support of Warren Hastings, Cleveland implemented his tribal policy. His initial efforts were however at conciliation rather than at conquest. He was able to conciliate forty-seven hill chiefs to submit to the Company authority in lieu of an annual pension of fifteen thousand rupees (Birt 1990: 88). He also decided to raise corps of Paharia archers for the maintenance of peace in the hills and punish marauders. To pacify the tribes, Cleveland made following other arrangements:

that each of the Manjhis numbering about four hundred, should furnish one or more men as might be incorporated into corps of archers.

that a Manjhi should be appointed to every fifty archers, who should be accountable for the good behaviour of his respective division in the corps.

that the corps would function immediately under the orders of the collector of Bhagalpur and be employed in his districts only.

that the hill people would consider the enemies of Government as their own enemies, and that the corps would bring all refractory hill chiefs and ghatwals to terms, or expel them from their country.

that each hill chief commanding a division in the corps would be entitled to an allowance of Rs. 5, per mensem, the common people Rs. 3; and the Manjhis or chiefs a monthly allowance of Rs. 2 for supplying a common man for the corps.

that each man in the corps should have 2 turbans, 2 cummerbunds, 2 shirts, 2 pairs of jungheas and a purplet jacket annually (Canning 1861: 132).

Cleveland was very optimistic about the success of his policy. He claimed in 1779, 'The hill people have not for many years been so quiet as they have been for these last eight or nine months except near the boundary of Ambar' (Canning 1861: 131). Later, in a letter written on 21 April 1780 to Warren Hastings, he observed:

'These people (Paharias) in general, are now become so sensible of the advantages to be derived from a firm attachment and submission to Government, that many of them have not scrupled to declare, they would forever renounce all unlawful practices of robbery, murders, and devastations... To make friends therefore with the hill chiefs is with all due submission an object worthy (of) the attention of Government. In the memory of the oldest

¹¹ Ibid.: A 8-9.

¹² Ibid.: B 54-56.

inhabitants they never expressed themselves so earnestly for an accommodation as at present' (Ibid.).

There was yet another important element in the British policy. Cleveland was aware of the baneful role of the zamindars, to neutralise which he pursued a policy of annexation. He annexed the parganas of Ambar and Sultanabad to Company's empire and compelled the zamindar of Chanderry to surrender (Ibid.: 135). However, in August 1780, the Board of Revenue sanctioned monthly allowances of Rs.550 as an incentive for the future good behaviour of the chiefs (Ibid.: 129, 134). Flashed by the success of his efforts, he wrote, 'there is not a chief in that vast extent of country who will not gladly renounce his hitherto precarious and desperate way of life for the ease and comforts he will enjoy in being obedient to and under protection of a mild and regular government'.¹³

However, the principal aim of his tribal policy was to bring the tribal region under the direct management of the Company governments. As early as 1780, Damin-I-Koh was converted into a separate Government estate. O'Malley writes, 'A Government estate in the north-east of the district extending over 1,356 square miles and including portion of the Rajmahal, Pakaur, Godda and Dumka subdivisions. The name is Persian one, meaning the skirt of the hills, but the estate comprises not only, as might be supposed from the name, the country lying at the foot or on the slopes of the Rajmahal Hills, but also the whole range between the Ganges on the north and Brahmani river on the south' (O'Malley 1999: 245). This meant that the Company Government brought the tribes under its immediate management, thereby liquidating whatever control the zamindar or intermediate landlord claimed over this wild region (Powell 1990: 497). This was necessary to assert British authority, as well as to restore law and order in this region which had been greatly disturbed due to Paharia raids and the machinations of the local chiefs.¹⁴ Ethnicity, rather than the state control, was the central process of conducting the territorial politics as well as resource use. Under the new dispensation, being the most dominant group, the Paharias were allowed to manage the polity as also the resources of the hills (Pratap 2000: 31) however under the supervision of local English administration.

The subjugation of the hills region and the Paharias ushered them into a state system for the first time. Cleveland introduced a special administrative network to govern the newly formed estate. The main feature of his scheme was the reorganisation of the prevailing tribal system. The hills were at this time divided into different parganas or *tappas*, each under a chief called Naib. The people themselves were settled in villages located at separate hills they claimed and was presided over by a village chief or headman, called Manjhi. Brown had earlier proposed that this system of chiefs should be reorganised, that their services be enlisted for the preservation of peace and order, all transactions with the hill people be carried on through the Sardars and Manjhis and intercourse with the inhabitants of the plains be encouraged by establishing markets at the outskirts of the hills.¹⁵ Those Sardars, whose tappas adjoined the public road, were to be given stipends to dissuade them from making raids, and the old *chaukibandi* or chain of outposts, which had been abandoned in 1770, was to be restored and maintained by the governments until the service lands attached to them had been brought under cultivation. Government made

¹³ Ibid.: A 34.

¹⁴ Ibid.: A 28.

¹⁵ Ibid.: A 33.

a monthly cash allowance to support the 'Sardars' and Naibs and then left the land and all its products to the people (Baden Powell 1990: 590).

The changes that Cleveland introduced could secure the good behaviour of the Paharias. He was also able to neutralise the zamindars, who lost even that nominal control which they had once exercised over the hill people. His tribal policy was so salutary that the Paharias endeared him to their heart and lovingly called him as *Chilmini Sahab*, a memory they still rever.¹⁶ The good effects of Cleveland's policy continued for nearly forty years after his death on 13 January 1784, though all other schemes devised by him practically fell to the ground (O'Malley 1999: 41–43; Also Shaw 1807: 94). The hill assemblies became almost unmanageable. The stipends promised to the tribal chiefs, though regularly paid, did not reach them. In fact, the breakdown of Cleveland's system may be ascribed to his successors, more particularly to Rasul Khan, who abused the trust reposed in him, and his corruption and tyranny led to numerous complaints. So after the establishment of peace in the area, the ideals of imparting justice to the Paharias and improving their lot were relegated to the background. Instead, the Paharias and their territory were subjected to rapacious exploitation. The economic condition of these tribes therefore worsened¹⁷ (O'Malley 1999: 43). Thus, Cleveland's pious hopes of 'civilizing' the Paharias and improving their lot were belied.¹⁸

Socio-political organisation

The story related above gives us an idea about the critical historical forces that intervened and finally shaped Paharia life. The major change that occurred was the movement of a pre-state people towards state formation. This was not however an organic growth but an extraneous institution that was slowly and steadily grafted on the Paharias. Another feature was that the exogenous system could not be completely imposed for the contradictions within either the Mughal or British state systems emanating from their failure to fully subjugate the tribals. Presumably, both the imperial systems were threatened by rebellion by the freedom loving Paharias, a threat which was heightened by the ecological factor. A hybrid system of governance with an amalgam of customary tribal and exogenous Mughal/British institutions therefore became a political necessity. The following pages will elaborate the broad framework and the tale of change and continuity in Paharia socio-political and economic organisations.

Historical records however are not much informed about the Paharia socio-polity as it had developed before the advent of the Zamindars and the Afghans. This lack is characteristic of the extraneous sources on the tribals in general. As they were considered a historiless community, reference of their past is fragmentary. We have mere clues to an earlier history, which have to be developed in order to unfold the story of continuity and change in the socio-political organization of the Paharias.

¹⁶ There is a mausoleum in his memory at Bhagalpur opposite the circuit house. The inscription on the gravestone read: Cleveland was the son of J. Cleveland and Sarah and was born on the 19th September, 1754. He arrived in India on 22nd July 1771 and was appointed Assistant to the Collector of Rajmahal in 1774, Assistant Factor at Bhagalpur in 1776 and Junior Merchant and Collector of the district in 1780. He was also judge of the Adalat in 1782. Cleveland fell ill in 1783. With a view to recover he started his voyage to the cape in the ship *Atlas Indiaman*, but died near the mouth of the Hugli on 13th January, 1784 (J. Browne's Report 1996: A 37; Shaw 1807: 94).

¹⁷ J. Browne's Report 1996: A 35

¹⁸ *Ibid.*: A 34.

The Paharia socio-polity, as it existed before the onset of zamindari system, presumably was two-tiered with village as the lower unit. Cluster of four to five scores of villages formed the higher unit named *tappa*. The head of the *tappa* was called Sardar Majhi who was assisted by a *naib* or deputy. He was supreme within the limits of his area of influence. In each village, the person subordinate to him was called Manjhi. Below him all functionaries were equal. There was no autocracy, no clearly defined ranks and grades, each with its own house hold duties and socio-political responsibilities (Birt 1990: 60–61; Powell 1990: 497; Sarkar 1938: 63). The offices of Majhi and Sardar Majhi were initially elected ones, but these subsequently became hereditary. We may presume that like other tribal communities in Jharkhand, the Paharias had developed a pre-state village republican polity where the heads of villages and *tappas* were more social leaders who governed the units under their charge with the help of village elders. Maintenance of general welfare and of peace and harmony of the village were their precise functions (Sen 2012: 33-35). The village community, with the help of the Majhi and village elders, seemed to conduct the management of village resources. Payment of occasional subscription, rather than any regular rent or due, was the social norm. Armed with bow-arrow, the entire community very likely functioned as social militia for the safety of the village. This pre-state polity underwent historic changes under the zamindars, the Mughals and the British as evidenced largely by colonial records.

The zamindaris on the outskirts of the hills formally included a certain area of the hills on the part of their individual jagirs. One among them was the zamindar of Manihari to whom belonged the tract of fertile lands at the centre of the tribal territory (Pratap 2000: 40-43). The Paharias were thus incorporated within the feudal system. The indigenous headman system, which had prevailed in Damin-i-Koh from pre-British days, was reinvented during feudal rule. Accordingly, the headman came to be appellated other than Majhi as *Pradhan* or *Mustangir* also. The Manjhi was the 'head' raiyat of an original or semi-original community, who had social as well as official functions to perform. Mustangir was a person to whom a proprietor leased a cultivated village on *ijara* or *thika* (lease) on a rent fixed for a term of years with the right to collect what he could from the raiyats. (Jha and Mishra 2006: 50; Sherwill 1851: 545) The mutual arrangement between the Manjhi and the ryots was that in all plunder, one half went to Manjhi and his family. The other half was divided among the *Dungareahs* (adherents). From the cultivated lands, one sixth of all productions of their cultivations was paid to the Manjhi in kind.¹⁹ The peasant did not sit in the presence of his chief without being desired to do so. A waiting peasant had to follow the practice of *Salam* (salute). It was considered disrespectful even to enter a chief's house without being invited (Shaw 1807: 83). So the tribal egalitarian norm was distorted and the norm of social difference and hierarchy characteristic of feudal system came into socio-political practice.

The higher office of chief Manjhi was bound by a *muchalka* (written under taking) to the zamindar of the *tappa*. He was allotted jagir lands in the plain country for his support. If any robbery occurred within his area, he was required to trace the culprits, and bring them to justice. It was also his responsibility to prevent people from the inner hills passing through the ghats towards the plain country. Thus, he was to every intent a very 'Feudal Lord' while his ryots, called *Dungareahs* formed his solidery and

¹⁹ Ibid.: A 18.

paid him implicit obedience.²⁰ The other officials were *Kotwals* or *Fauzdars* and *Jamadars*, who were appointed by the Manjhi. The Jamadar was merely an honorary officer. The Kotwals received grain for their services or perhaps the Manjhi remitted their contribution to them. The Manjhi could be dismissed from office when any of them offended. He received no contribution from any village but his own. However for imparting justice, he was paid in proportion to the amount or magnitude to the cause (Shaw 1807: 88-89).

The internal government of the hills was based on the principle that Manjhi and Dunganer would protect each other. While the Manjhi swore to provide justice in disputes among the adherents, the latter swore fidelity to him as long as he would protect them (Shaw 1807: 87). How the network operated is elaborated by Shaw. He writes, 'The Dunganer apply to him for land to cultivate and he allots it; when the crops are ripe, the cutwal (Kotwal) and Phojedar (Fauzdar) on part of the Manjhi, prepare with proprietor of each field to estimate what portion he can afford to give his Manjhi ... if obstinately refused (a case which seldom happens) the Manjhi cannot forcibly take any part: but as a punishment he can prevent this refractory Dunganer from cultivating in his territory again' (Shaw 1807: 88).

The Paharias could more or less preserve their ancient form of government. On all practical purposes, they were free from being controlled by the zamindar. For instance, the ryots under Manihari zamindari did not pay any regular rent to the zamindar (Pratap 2000: 31). It has been suggested that the Paharias had their own system of internal political territorial divisions, the Paharia Manjhis had for some other purpose accepted the Mughal nomenclatures of their territories (Pratap 2000: 40-43). We cannot however deny that the socio-political institutions had undergone several mutations in the eighteenth century, though the extent of change varied area-wise. The Paharias came to be politically constituted into northern and southern group of tribes, corresponding with the two subgroups of the Paharia; the northern belonging to the Savaria Paharia, and the southern to the Mal Paharia. The former had an appropriate language and had not the least vestige of the doctrine caste.²¹ Contrary to northern part, the southern tribe had adopted the Hindi or Bengali language as spoken in low lands adjacent to their hills (Martin 1976: 82-83). Secondly, the pargana division had fallen into disuse, though the offices of Sardars and others survived. This was a relic of old Kolarian system of village government with nothing above it but the chief of a group villages. The old tribal terms were lost and Parsian names of office were adopted (Powell 1990: 497). Thirdly, new offices of Naib and Fauzdar were grafted on that of the Manjhi or chief Manjhi. This appeared to have been both a result as well as cause for further undermining of the ancient tribal institution of the Paharias.²²

However, during political uncertainty prevailing due to the decline of the Mughal government, the feudal system also degenerated considerably. This encouraged the Pahari Sardars to organise and incite the raids upon the zamindars of the plains (Birt 1990: 49, 62). To tackle the problem, the zamindars finally decided to parcel out some of the fertile lands that they had already cultivated at the foot of the hills. They offered jagir or service tenures to the Sardars. The condition of their holding was that they would render service to the zamindars by preventing any further raids of the

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.: B 54.

²² Ibid.: A 18.

Paharias. It was an attempt to create a buffer state, a ring fence of Paharia landlords between themselves and the hills. The Sardars were to guard the pass that led down into the plains. This was purely a local and personal arrangement. The Sardar of each tappa was supposed to meet zamindars once a year for renewal of the agreement along with Manjhi. However, this was not a full proof arrangement because despite this mutual agreement the zamindars could not put a stop to frequent raids of Paharias (Birt 1990: 49, 62).

After the advent of British rule, the Paharia system of governance was reconstituted by the new rulers by making an amalgam of old and new institutions and practices. The hill villages were formed into tappas, comprising four to five scores of villages, under a Sardar Manjhi. A Sardar Manjhi, who received contribution from his own village or from one in which he resided, came to be paid a remuneration of Rs. 10 per month. The chief, who was all in all in his territory, acted as a judge also. Next to him were the *Naibs* who helped him in actual administration. They were the heads of 16 to 20 villages. Very often there were four to six Naibs under a Sardar. They got Rs. 3/- per month from the Government. Each village had its local headman known as Manjhi. His main function was to look after the welfare of the village. His duty was to collect taxes from the village people and deposit the same at Divisional court. His own remuneration was only a commission on the total amount of taxes collected. The last in the hierarchy was the village watchmen or *chowkidar*. His duty was to guard the village from the ravages of the wicked and to provide news of daily death and birth to the Sardar. The Sardars in most cases were illiterate. Usually they employed *Patwari* (village accountant) a man of the plains to assist them (Sarkar 1933: 63–65).

The British modeled the judicial administration on tribal and Mughal systems. The disputes and differences, whether with regard to the property and otherwise, between the inhabitants of the same locality, were settled by Manjhis with the help of Kotwal, Fauzdar and Jamadars (Shaw 1807: 71). For murder and all capital crimes, the delinquents were brought to either Bhagalpur or Rajmahal to be tried by an assembly of the chiefs. It was felt that not even the severest injury or the deepest grievance would induce the Hillman to seek redress in the Bhagalpur courts. The Company government introduced some changes. Firstly, the higher sessions court of the council of Sardars was formed. This was to meet twice a year for trying all offences that had occurred during the previous six months within its jurisdiction. The court of collector was constituted as an appellate court that might modify or reverse its decision, except in case of capital punishment. The Hill Assembly was the next higher court which was empowered to inflict or rescind the sentence of death (Birt 1990: 101–102). The Hill Assembly was intended to punish the Paharia raiders. To combat such raids, the Hill Rangers were organised (Ibid.: 103–107). The people of all the villages could assemble during trial of offenders in which the Sardar Manjhi or chiefs of tappas and their Naibs or deputies, sat in judgement (Shaw 1807: 71). Cleveland, after noticing some practical defects reserved the ultimate power, in special circumstances, in his own hands. Thus, one finds the first germ of the famous court of justice known far and wide as the Hill Assembly (Birt 1990: 100). Finally, in April 1782, Cleveland obtained sanction to withdraw the whole of the Rajmahal Hill tract from the jurisdiction of the ordinary courts (Ibid.: 100–101).

Economy

The economic base of the Paharias was precarious and unsound. Like other Adivasi communities in Jharkhand, they subsisted on rudimentary agriculture and

manufacturing, supplementing their earning through gathering and barter of the natural products. Over the centuries, like socio-polity, their economy also witnessed changes. Agriculture was the backbone of their socio-economic life. By and large, the economy of Paharia tribes, excepting southern area, was based on forest oriented agricultural system in which nature always played an important role. They always preferred to remain in their own and developed only limited amount of relationship with outside world. The shifting cultivation, locally known as *khallu*, was the base of the Paharia economy. It was practised on the sloping hill sides only. Under this system there was practically no rice cultivation. (Pratap 2000: 45–46).

The agricultural implements of the Paharias were very few. All people could not even afford to have plough, though sickle and the sythe were two very common implements. The axe was also used for cutting woods (Sarkar 1933:162–63). It should be mentioned here that since cultivation was largely confined to hill tops and sides, and plots were small, it was not feasible to use plough, which required larger size of plots. Consequently, cultivators were obliged to resort to simple implements such as pointed iron or stick for breaking up the ground. Thus the Paharia tribal community could never enjoy the bountiful yield of plough agriculture prevalent in the plains. As such, it could produce only meagre and often precarious surplus.²³ Paharia tools were made from iron and wood. The use of stone was only for mill-stones (*chakki*) deployed for grinding maize and millet. The iron components were all made by ironsmiths in the lowlands and purchased by the Paharia at weekly markets. Some other tools were *masu* (steel axe), *jugri* (digging stick), *kutchia* (light harvesting sickle) and *tatro*, the heavy iron sickle (Pratap, 2000: 69–70).

Many of the southern tribes adopted the plough and used it for the cultivation of rice in low land. On both the hills (southern and northern) and swelling lands, after two crops, the field was allowed to remain waste for five to seven years (Martin 1976: 246). Bajra (*Holcus Spicatus*) was the favourite crops of the Paharias, who grew it on the hill sides. In Damin-I-Koh, it occupied no less than 7 percent of the total cropped area (O'Malley 1999: 165). Its introduction therefore had been the greatest improvement made in cultivation.²⁴ Other products were maize and janera (*Holcus Sorghum*) (Martin 1976: 247). It has been argued that the introduction of a number of new cereals into the primitive agriculture of these tribes within a short period of twenty to forty years from the time of Browne (1774–78), especially the adaption and large scale cultivation of maize by them, would suggest that soon after the establishment of British rule changes in rearing of new crops had begun. It also shows that even though this tribal community was largely insulated, it was not wholly averse to the adoption of new crops.²⁵ Besides the cultivation of grains and cereals, the Paharias depended on forest products like mango (*Mangifera indica*), *Kend* (*Diospyros-Melanoxylon*), *Kathal* (jack fruit, *Atrocarpus integrifolia*), *Tetuli* (*Tamarindus indica*) and *Bair* (*Prunus domestica*) (Shaw 1807: 87).

In the Rajmahal hills region, trade and commerce was the other basis of economy. But the tribals did not control the levers as they were merely the dealers in primary forest products and minerals. Mahua (*Bassia latifolia*) was of great economic importance for the Maler Paharias. They locally brewed mahua liquor and maize beer, which were of great value in their socio-religious life. Besides this, flowers of Mahua

²³ Ibid.: A 21-22.

²⁴ Ibid.: A 20.

²⁵ Ibid.

tree, the seeds of *sakhua*, *dammah*, *kutha*, *tekoor*, which the mountaineers gathered from the forests, formed the principal items of the trade of the jungle-terai. Traders purchased mahua flowers, their common price being five annas per maund, and carried them into the plain countries for the purpose of distillation.²⁶ *Tassar* was another important item of trade. The coarse species of silk was produced by a kind of silkworm found in the jungles. The Paharias gathered the cocoons and sold them without further preparation. The best kind was sold for two rupees eight annas²⁷ (Sarkar 1972: 162-163). The lac was another tradable forest product, the worms of which were reared by the hills people in Kul (*Zyzphus Jujuba*) trees. (Ibid.: 161-162). This provided the raw material for the lac manufacturing industry stationed in Pakur sub division (O'Malley 1999: 203). The Paharias spent much of their energy in the collection of *sabai* grass, which grew abundantly particularly in the northern part of the Rajmahal hills and the eastern portion of Godda. This was sold to the sabai mahajans who often cheated the tribals. The grass was imported by paper mill agents (O'Malley 1999: 205; Sarkar 1972:162).

The timbers of good quality, available near Rajmahal hills, fulfilled the demand of naval industry. Munger was an important centre of iron equipments. Rajmahal hill provided iron and woods required for making boats. Thus, the hill area helped making and repairing boats, which was of great importance in the contemporary trade and wars (Sherwill 1851: 561-562).

Of the minerals, iron was the most important item of trade of Damin-I-Koh area. The existence of a developed market and the flourishing manufacturing centre at Munger so close to the region must have generated a regular and high demand for iron.²⁸ The iron ore, particularly the raw material, was collected from the Rajmahal Hills. After moving through the *haats* (village markets) close to hill themselves, the ore finally move to the principal marts at Rampur, Pratapur and Prasunda (Oldham 1854: 280-281; O'Malley 1999:200). Iron, crudely processed by iron workers (Kol and Agaria), reached the smiths of towns, gaining in value with increasing distance. Such a pattern of trade and agrarian political interaction indicated a degree of independence on the part of population lying within the forested area, including the shifting cultivators, the Paharia (Pratap 2000: 39). In many places throughout the hill district, iron was however smelted (Oldham 1854: 280-281) for the manufacture of agricultural implements like mattocks, picks, ploughs, knives, axes, spears, etc. by the village blacksmiths. However, the operation was carried out in these hills on the smallest scale (Oldham 1854: 280-281; O'Malley 1999: 200).

Besides iron, the black basalt from the Rajmahal hills were used for building architectural_momuments of Bengal including the monuments located at Rajmahal (Dani 1961:10). The clays (*khari*) were also found in the hills of this area (Martin1976:168). This white rock was quarried and exported to Calcutta, Murshidabad and to other places where it was used for white washing, writing on the wooden boards or ornamenting pottery and toys (Sherwill 1851: 563). Another natural product was *abruck* (mica) a species of Isinglass. This was dug out of the several hills of the jungle-terai. As mica had a very limited use in this area, it was sold for one rupee per maund.²⁹

²⁶ Ibid.: A 23.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.: A 27.

²⁹ Ibid.: A 23-24.

The land and water routes were used for carrying out trade and commerce. The Paharias obviously treaded the jungle and village paths to bring their commodities to the adjacent marts. Francis Buchanan informs that they brought firewood, posts, ploughs, mortars, planks, *jonera*, *makayi*, cotton, *bora*, *orohar*, charcoal, sabaigrass, honey, wax etc on their heads to the markets for selling them to the merchants. In lieu of all these, they carried back to their homes rice, cloth, tobacco, salt, beads, brass, ornaments, cattle, milk, ghi, oil, fish dry and fresh, pepper and other seasoning and iron implements (Shaw1807: 84–85).³⁰ Presumably, the traders and mahajans made use of bullock carts to carry the collected merchandise from the local to the principal marts. The contemporary Persian and English records inform us that boat was very important for trade and commerce. This was the most desired way of transport around Rajmahal in time of fighting among the ruling communities. Manrique found over 2000 boats assembled from surrounding districts at Rajmahal port.³¹

Trade and commerce understandably introduced and reinforced the market economy among the Paharias. This in its trail made money the medium of exchange parallel to the barter economy prevalent among them. Cleveland established regular bazaars at the foot of the hills for the sale of honey, wax and hides, which the hills produced. He gave the Paharias tax free lands to cultivate wheat and barley (Canning 1861: 129). Sherwill mentions about Barhait as a capital town of the hills. It was located in the centre of great valley, which extended 24 miles north and south. Through the several narrow passes, Barhait was linked with the prominent places like Bhagalpur, Majhua, Rajmahal and Rajmahal hills (Sherwill 1851: 575). From Barhait large quantities of rice, mustard and several oil seeds were transported in carts to Jangipur on the Bhagiratti (Shaw1807: 85). The towns like Pakur, Godda, Dumka and Ganga Prasad acted as redistributive centres for goods that were brought in by peasants and petty traders. Cotton, iron ore, silk worms, and grains appeared in bulk at these towns and these then passed on to the other larger markets of Bhagalpur and Munger (Pratap 2000: 39).

The above facts make it clear that the economic foundation of the Damin-I-Koh was very frail. Depending largely on monsoon for water, Paharia agriculture could not grow in the same way as the farmers of the plains region had done. The cultivators produced to eke out a living and did not produce a surplus for the market. They depended mostly on the forests during drought and famine. Paharia manufacture and commerce was similarly confined to a very narrow compass, the sole purpose of which was to barter out the forest products and minerals in exchange for their daily necessities (Shaw 1807: 84–87). They failed to register technological progress that would have factored their material growth, despite the fact that they were in possession of both the iron ore and the technique of iron smelting. Furthermore, despite an early contact with Rajputs, Brahmanical influence on Bhuiyas and their chiefs, there was no parallel diffusion of innovations and inventions in the techniques and material life among the tribals in general in the hills region.³² The meagerness of surplus produced in the tribal community meant almost a complete absence of accumulated capital in the hand of the community or its members. The paucity of capital prevented any investment of capital by indigenous people in the trade and

³⁰ *Journal of Francis Buchanan, Bhagalpur District 1810-1811*. Patna: Government Printing Bihar, Bihar and Orissa, 1930, 103-104.

³¹ *Travels of Fray Sebastin Manrique 1629-1643*, with Introduction and Notes by Lt. Col. C. Eckford Lucard and Father H. Hosten, S.J. Vol. II Oxford: Hakluyat Society, 1927, 134-138

³² J. Browne's Report 1996: A 24.

commerce of the area. Browne states that only capital engaged in the trade of Jungle Tarai came from outside, from the Bengali traders.³³

Conclusion

Thus, it becomes clear that the socio-polity of the Paharias witnessed significant changes during the long timeframe under review. The information available to us give us some clues to their pre-feudal and pre-colonial history. What we learn is that for centuries, the Paharias remained the most dominant demographic group having a full control over the land and resources of the hills region of Damin-I-Koh. During their pre-feudal phase, they had been able to develop their village republican polity and a socio-economy based on rudimentary agriculture, foraging and hunting. The ecological and environmental factors played key role in their socio-cultural life. This area assumed strategic importance because it controlled vital route for military supremacy in Bengal and was rich in its forest and mineral resources. It was natural that the local zamindars, as also the imperial forces like the Afghans and Mughals, became interested in this region. But none of them could subjugate the Paharia land within their empires. The Paharia Sardars continued to maintain the guards at the pass that led down into the plains. They at the same time resorted to pillage and plunder of the neighbourhood. This became a political problem which neither the local chiefs nor the Afghans and Mughals could resolve. The Paharias therefore enjoyed virtual political autonomy before the advent of the British. But they failed to form a supra-tappa state system because of the precarious economy and lack of technological advance. This was the political situation before the advent of British rule. The strategic importance of the Paharia homeland and the natural resources prompted the British to gain political control over their territory. This way the pre-state Paharia polity was incorporated into the colonial state system. However, colonial rulers introduced a kind of dual administration when they pre-empted the traditional system of Paharia governance through their Majhis and Sardars. New offices and institutions were introduced in their body politic. This considerably eroded their previous autonomy. Augustus Cleveland introduced the paternalist system of governance that endeared him and the British system to the Paharias. However, their socio-political and cultural life stood progressively reinvented. Moreover, they were forced to be part of mainstream market economy where they merely performed the role of suppliers of primary products, while the levers of economy were under the control of outsiders. The gradual erosion of Cleveland's patriarchal governance left the Paharias a disgruntled lot. It was natural that when the famous Santal *Hul* broke out in 1855-56, they did not remain a mere spectator.

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³³ Ibid.: A 25.

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Schooling the Tribes and Chybassa School: Advent of Primary Education in Kolhan Government Estate in Singhbhum (1841-51)

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Abstract

The essay probes into an uncharted area of the advent of modern education in Singhbhum to fulfil a long gap into how literate tradition first entered into this tribal region. The author is fortunate in accessing some vital archival papers that helped embodying the institutional basis of early colonial experiment through the Chybassa School about which we have practically no knowledge. In different sections, the author makes an attempt to elaborate the very motive behind the foundation of the School, rather the purpose of disseminating western education; the Administrative and Academic structures that gave the School its form and content; the interesting story of tribal response to modern education; the doubts and dilemma that clogged this experiment of introducing modern education and finally to resolve the mystery of its supposed demise.

Introduction

Introduction of western education in ‘tribal’ region of India shares the general backdrop of its introduction in India. The debate about the nature and purpose of modern education in India was finally settled by the Macaulay Minute of 1835. He highlighted the Indian backwardness on the one hand and advocated teaching the Indians advanced civilization of the West through the medium of English. He had the support of such a great contemporary as Raja Ram Mohan Roy who was simultaneously advocating for the introduction of Western education in Bengal. The then Governor-General Lord William Bentinck, mainly influenced by arguments of Macaulay and Ram Mohan, introduced modern education through English medium in India in 1835. He himself believed that Western education was the panacea of all social evils prevalent in the Indian Society.

Thomas Wilkinson, the Political Agent to the Governor General, heading the South West Frontier Agency (SWFA), was the key man behind the introduction of modern education in the newly acquired Kolhan Government Estate (KGE) (1837). A Bentinck-day administrator, he championed the British policy of civilising the Ho Adivasis, whom the colonial administrators considered as a savage and sanguinary group of people. He was particularly concerned about the prevalence of witchcraft among the people under his charge. He found that the Kols (Hos) attributed their sickness to witchcraft and displeasure of their *bongas* and spirits. To eradicate the

social evil, he proposed the establishment of hospitals and schools, which Wilkinson believed would eliminate ‘the dreadful prejudice’ of witchcraft completely. A recent study on the Ho observes:

‘We should understand that the Bentinck-day administrator was prescribing the same medicine, which his peer did by emphasizing western education as the panacea for Indian social evils. So physical and mental treatment i.e. policies regarding health and education charted their course in Singhbhum as ancillary, a concomitant to the greater strategy of the reform of witchcraft. This marginality was eloquent in the palpably inadequate health and education facilities provided for Singhbhum during the entire length of British rule. This also impacted the process of knowledge-making’ (Sen 2011: 62–63).

This was the precise administrative policy behind ushering western education in the KGE. This factored the establishment of the first Anglo-Hindi school at Chaibasa in 1841. The historiography of the early phase of the dissemination of modern education has been very scant. We have only the Gazetteers as the staple (O’Malley 1910: 201–5; Roy Choudhury 1958: 165–67), which later researchers mainly used (Sahu 1985: 210–11) to provide the meagre information of the birth of the first modern school in 1841 and its early demise in 1851 for lack of response. Obviously, the task of providing generic details did not prompt them to concentrate on education.

Since the early advent of literate education among pre-literate Adivasi people is an interesting area of research, particularly to unfold the story of response and impact of western pedagogy on the Hos and avowed British policy of addressing social change through the institution of modern education, the present paper seeks to fulfil the need of illuminating the hazy area of tribal, rather Ho history. This has been facilitated by the access to some crucial archival sources that provide relevant details about the stipulated purpose of opening schools, administrative structure including the management committees and the state of finance; academic structure elaborating the syllabus, books and the faculty position; social response to modern education informed by the number and social base of students as also their performance at the examinations and lastly, the mystery of the early demise of the school. In different sections, the essay would seek to dwell on these aspects of early British endeavour to found the base of western education in tribal land.

Purpose

Advent of western education in the tribe-dominated Singhbhum district of SWFA has largely to do with the British paternalist mode of governance. Wilkinson instructed S.R. Tickell, the Assistant Political Agent of KGE, to function not as a distant and insensible ruler, but to be their *Ma-Bap* (Mother-Father) (Sen 2011:18). Early British administrators firmly believed that the ‘blood thirsty’ and ‘savage’ tribals, who resorted to witchcraft with impunity, were kind of errant and unruly children. The dissemination of modern education would cause their mental regeneration which would finally prompt them to desist from the brutal act of witch-killing. This was precisely in mind, when J.H. Crawford, Governor General’s Agent, in his report of the Chota Nagpore and Chybassa Schools observed, ‘That the success of such efforts is not more directly apparent in the returns submitted, is attributable only to the comparatively simple and primitive condition and feelings of the people for whose improvement the schools are specially designed’ (General Report on Public Instruction in the Lower Provinces of the Bengal Presidency for 1849–50: 262).

Carrying forward British civilising mission however was the distant and ultimate goal. Closer and more immediate goals fuelled British policy. In KGE, the British introduced Wilkinson's Civil and Criminal Rules in 1837 that made literacy as the basis of governance (Sen 2012: 66–7). This made literacy, particularly a knowledge of English, rather a knowledge of the three Rs, necessary for the people under charge. Obviously, this was privy to the fulfilment of the other political purpose. It is a well known aspect of avowed British paternalism that education would train the natives to serve as clerks and other levels of colonial bureaucracy. Officials also hoped that 'the few Cole scholars now in the schools shall begin to be drafted into Government employment as they become eligible for it, the bulk of the people will attach a positive value to education...' (General Report on Public Instruction in the Lower Provinces of the Bengal Presidency for 1849–50: 262)). The entire package was to convert them into collaborators; educated tribals to serve British administration, while their village and supra-village (*pir* heads), rather tribal Manki–Munda system, functioning as the lower level bureaucracy (Sen 2012: 64–8).

Governing machinery: administrative and academic

The Chybassa School was run by a Local Committee as adduced from the Report of 1844–45 (General Report on Public Instruction in the Lower Provinces of the Bengal Presidency for 1844–45, 1845: 166–67). The Committee consisted of three persons: De Fountain, Captain, 40th Regiment Infantry, Commanding troops at Chybassa, W.H. Oakes, Assistant Agent, Governor-General, South-West Frontier; C.B. Chalmers, Civil Assistant Surgeon at Chybassa. It becomes clear that the newly conquered parts of SWFA in the district of Singhbhum conformed to the same principle of governance as was found in the general governance of the SWFA. The basic feature was the amalgamation of the military and civil functionaries in which the like of the Political agent and his Assistant were both military and civil officers in tandem. What is interesting is the inclusion of the medical personnel, very likely also a military official, like the assistant Surgeon. This conforms to the policy enunciated by Wilkinson of treating the dreaded social evil of through modern education and western medicine through the institution of modern hospital.

Pedagogic governance had another distinguishing feature. Schools like Chota Nagpore and Chybassa Schools were to belong to the category of South-West Frontier (SWF) Schools, to be centrally governed and controlled as a single unit. But decentralization was an important feature that extended autonomy to local committees within the generic policy of superintendence and control of the immediate higher authority, represented by the Agent and supreme jurisdiction of the Council of Education. This is reflected in the reports of the SWF schools being forwarded by the Agent to the Council for information and approval (General Report on Public Instruction in the Lower Provinces of the Bengal Presidency for 1850–51: 185). A cardinal feature of the pedagogic governance was the direct involvement of the Agent not through attendance of the local committee meetings, but to oversee and regulate the actual functioning through frequent visits of the school. It is observed:

'The Government, however, doubted the propriety of depriving the hill tribes of the means of improving their intellectual condition, and the agent was directed to impress upon his assistant at Chybassa the necessity of frequently visiting the school and encouraging the people to send the children there to receive instruction' (General Report on Public Instruction in the Lower Provinces of the Bengal Presidency for 1844–45: 167).

Besides, the immediate superintendence of the Assistant Political Agent, the superintendence of the Inspector of Government Schools was in function (General Report on Public Instruction in the Lower Provinces of the Bengal Presidency for 1847–48: 161), though we have no further information of how this was conducted.

Academic structure

The school establishment had two teachers in 1845. They were Birjnauth Ghose, Headmaster and Parah Cole, Assistant Teacher (Report on Public Instruction in the Lower Provinces of the Bengal Presidency for 1844–45: 166). Number of teachers virtually remained the same throughout the period under review. Reports are silent about the procedure of drafting teachers. Obviously, the local committee conducted interviews to select them. Yet the question is was there any advertisement for the posts and how the incumbents had information about the vacancy. It appears that the headmaster was a Bengali and an outsider for the Kolhan region. Meanwhile, outsiders from the neighbouring districts of Bihar, Bengal and Orissa were making entries after 1837 to serve British administration and pursuing other jobs and professions (Sen 2011: 21). Ghose seemed to have either one of such job seekers or he had migrated from Bengali-speaking Dhalbhum region of Singhbhum.

More interesting however is the appearance of the name of Parah Cole as Assistant teacher. His name appeared in several subsequent yearly *General Reports on Public Instruction* describing the affairs of Chybassa School. If we take ‘Cole’ as the generic name of the Kolarian race in Singhbhum, the person was likely to be a Munda. Since modern school education appeared in 1841 in Singhbhum, there is little likelihood of any tribal native getting educated to the extent of becoming a school teacher within a short span of 3–4 years. Therefore, it is a matter of investigation on our part as to know the identity of the person variously spelled in the Reports as Parah/Porah/Purrah Cole and the circumstances of his becoming an Assistant teacher in Chybassa School in the early days of schooling in Singhbhum. Two Reports shed light on his identity, one by calling him a ‘Nagpore Cole’ i.e. a tribal native of Chotanagpur region (General Report on Public Instruction in the Lower Provinces of the Bengal Presidency for 1849–50: 262), and the other mentioning him as a ‘Christian Cole’ i.e. a tribal native who by faith was a Christian (General Report on Public Instruction in the Lower Provinces of the Bengal Presidency for 1872–73).

Furthermore, we find within eight years minor changes in the faculty. Firstly, we have a new headmaster named Kali Charan Dutta. Secondly, there was the creation of the third post. Interestingly, Porah served both as English and Hindi teacher, Udit Lal was appointed as acting Hindi teacher (General Report on Public Instruction in the Lower Provinces of the Bengal Presidency for 1849–50: 260).

Chybassa School was divided into two departments—one English and the other Hindi. The students were divided into 8 classes. Students of class one studied English Prose Readers and those of classes 2 and 3 studied geography, arithmetic and translation (General Report on Public Instruction in the Lower Provinces of the Bengal Presidency for 1844–45: 166–67). This reveals that the purpose of education was to introduce a modern curriculum through the teaching of language, arithmetic and geography. We have an elaborate list of syllabus and texts (see Appendix) which makes it clear that the official purpose was to offer secular education and impregnate the pupils with modern ideas that had virtually a western origin as embedded in the text books mostly of western origin. The secular nature of education stands explicitly

mentioned in a subsequent *Report* which states ‘good secular education is given through the medium either of English or the Vernacular tongue’ (General Report on Public Instruction in the Lower Provinces of the Bengal Presidency for 1856: X). The question yet remains how the textbooks were made available. Since this was a pre-grants-in-aid institution, availability of books was constrained by the quantum of ‘funds at the disposal of the Government’ (Ibid.). Since the allotment of a sum of Rs 110/- (General Report on Public Instruction in the Lower Provinces of the Bengal Presidency for 1844–45: 166–67). was meagre, doubts about the supply of books to each and every scholar creep in.

Social response

It will be worthwhile to examine the nature and extent of social response to this new institution. We already know that the early demise of the school was factored by the lack of social response. The ancillary query should be the direction of the response and to clarify whether it was to English or vernacular education. In 1844–45, the school had 61 boys on its roll of whom 7 were ‘Coles’, i.e. less than 10% of the total enrolled students (General Report on Public Instruction in the Lower Provinces of the Bengal Presidency for 1844–45: 166–67). The subsequent report reveals the increase in number of tribal scholars. The English department registered an entry of 30 pupils, while that of the Hindi section was 35 i.e. an increase of 4 students. The distribution of students in the English department was—tribal 10 i.e. one third, Hindu 18, Muhammedan 2. On the other hand, in the Hindi department the break up was—tribal 20; Hindu 13, Muhammedans 2. There is a clear rise in tribal share, which was a little less than the half (General Report on Public Instruction in the Lower Provinces of the Bengal Presidency for 1849–50: 262).

From the *Report*, we get a revealing information. Unlike rest of the Bengal Presidency, the Hindu Zamindars of the area also began to realise the importance of education, especially English education and admitted their children to the schools. In 1849–50, it was reported that ‘the minor Thakoor of Khursawan, his brother and cousin have all been enrolled as students in it [Chybassa School], and are applying themselves earnestly to the acquirement of the English language...’ (Ibid.).

On the other hand, the colonial administrators found the ‘Coles’ of Chybassa slow and unwilling learners of English language and willing learners of Hindi language. The *Report* of 1851 makes a useful observation in this regard when it says,

“‘Hitherto English instruction has been considered of the greatest importance, and in consequence chiefly attended to, but this is, in our opinion, an error. The difficulties the Coles have to encounter in learning English, from the absence of an instructor acquainted with their language, are so great, that there is at this time but one single Cole in the English department, and we do not think he is likely to acquire any useful knowledge of the language; with the exception of this lad, the whole of the English students are foreigners to the district, or the sons of foreigners who have settled in the bazar here. The Coles, however, show no unwillingness to learn Hindee, of which many have a decidedly useful knowledge...’” (General Report on Public Instruction in the Lower Provinces of the Bengal Presidency for 1850-51: 184).

This deficiency of the ‘Coles’ in learning English was ascribed to the unavailability of such teacher who was equally proficient in English-Hindi-Cole languages as he had to use Hindi and Cole as link languages while teaching English to the ‘Coles’. The *General Report of Public Instruction for 1849–50* laments that, ‘The

assistant teacher [Porah Cole who taught English and Hindi at Chybassa School] is a Nagpore Cole, but the language of the Lurka Coles of Singhboom is quite distinct from his, and consequently he is unable materially to assist the Hindi teacher.’ (General Report on Public Instruction in the Lower Provinces of the Bengal Presidency for 1849–50: 262). These facts clearly support the argument put forth in two recent studies on the tardy and uncertain dissemination of western education among the Ho Adivasis (Sen 2016: 114; Bara 2005: 634). Perhaps, the reason was much deep-rooted, ascribed in a recent essay to the dissonance between oral and literate pedagogic traditions (Sen 2016: 104–16). Perhaps, one may also like this lack of response to be attributed to the fear of their Christenisation through the English language education.

Bureaucratic doubts, dilemma and supposed closure of the School

Chybassa School was probably closed down in 1851 (Roy Choudhury 1958: 165). We also have a report in this regard, of the Agent to the Governor General sent to the Council of Education on the 30th September 1851. I quote the report at length for a clear idea of the bureaucratic dilemma that finally led to the sad demise of an early British experiment to disseminate English education among the Hos.

“‘The Institution [Chybassa School] was specially intended for the improvement of the Lurka Coles; but the experience of a course of years has shewn, not only that this object has not yet been attained, but also that it is not likely to be, through the means hitherto employed. At the same time Chybassa is a very small place, containing no other class whose interest can be weighed against those of the Coles, or by whose example they can be expected to benefit. Considering that the latter have no written language, I regard the appropriation to an English department of the chief funds of a school designed for their instruction, as a mistake, which should remain no longer uncorrected.

“‘I accordingly submit for the consideration of the Council of Education the expediency of the constitution of educational arrangements at Chybassa being entirely remodelled. The cost of the present Institution is rupees 110 monthly, the greater proportion being chargeable to the English department, and a small sum only to that of Nagree. I suggest that both be abolished; and as many Bengali Schools as the above sum would suffice to maintain be established in their stead.

“‘I consider Bengali preferable to Nagree, because the latter is as much a foreign language as English is to the Coles, and the bulk of the people of Singhboom, of which Chybassa is the sudder station; whereas Bengali is the vernacular of Dhulbboom, (a portion Singhboom itself) and of the more civilized districts contiguous. Moreover, it is nearly akin to the Ooriya language, which is understood in many parts of the Colehan: and over which it has these advantages, that it is a common official language, and that books and instructors of it are readily procurable.

“‘I believe that for the sum which is now expended on the English and Nagree School of Chybassa, five efficient Bengali Schools might be maintained; of which I would propose to locate one at Chybassa itself; two in other populous quarters of the Colehan; one at a large manufacturing town named ‘Seraikele’ on the border of the Colehan; and one in a central situation in Dhulbboom. Should any of the scholars educated at these schools have the desire to acquire English also, they would have an English school at no great distance, either at Chota Nagpore, or at Bacoora, or at Midnapore...’” (General Report on Public Instruction in the Lower Provinces of the Bengal Presidency for 1850-51: 184–86).

From the above report, we may deduce that tardy growth of English language education was assigned largely to the incapability of the tribals to acquire education and the inadequacy of Chaibasa to develop as a centre of education. It is not however clear whether Chybassa School was actually closed down. We know from records that new schools were started at Ghatshila, Dhalbhum, Chaibasa, Charri, Jayantgarh, Kolhan and at the headquarters of the then Saraikela State. In these schools, the subjects were taught through Bengali medium. Soon, these Bengali schools proved useless and it was reported that the Hos would not attend the schools (Roy Choudhury 1958: 165). In fact, predominance of Bengali population in Manbhum district prompted the policy makers to open Anglo-Bengali schools in place of Anglo-Hindi schools. But they failed to realise that in Singhbhum there was no case of predominance of Bengali population as in the case of Manbhum. The government did not grasp this situation and imposed Bengali language as the medium of instruction in the government schools. However, this 'mistake' was realised and Bengali was replaced by Hindi in 1854 (General Report on Public Instruction in the Lower Provinces of the Bengal Presidency for 1865–66: 247).

Conclusion

It becomes clear that immediately after the formation of the KGE as a distinct administrative unit, the English officials set on the task civilising the 'savage' tribals. With the idea of ending the vicious evil of witch-killing endemic among the Hos, Wilkinson therefore decided upon a two-pronged attack on the evil through the institutions of modern education and hospital. This motivated the local administrators to found the Chybassa School, a government sponsored Anglo- Hindi School. With a local committee to govern the administration, this early attempt at disseminating secular education was a novel idea particularly among the Hos who had no tradition of literate education. Though the experiment did not meet with success, the seed of modern education was sown, which proliferated in subsequent decades, resulting in the slow graduation of the Adivasis into a literate culture.

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Appendix

List of syllabus and text in ‘Junior Division’ comprising classes 1 to 4

Subject	Text Book
FIRST CLASS	
Literature	Gay’s Fables Exemplary Biography (Chambers’s) Lennie’s Grammar
History	Pinnock’s Catechism of English History
Geography	Stewart’s or Ewart’s
Arithmetic	S.B. Society’s (Chamier’s) or Smith’s
Vernacular	Bengali—History of Bengal and Arithmetic Urdu—Chamanistani Urdu and Arithmetic Persian—Dastural Insha and Arithmetic Hindi—Reader No.2, and Adam’s Grammar
SECOND CLASS	
Literature	Poetic Reader No. 1 Azimghur Reader Prose Reader No. IV Lennie’s Grammar
History	Pinnock’s Greece and Rome
Geography	Chambers’s (Educational Course)
Arithmetic	S.B. Society’s (Chamier’s) or Smith’s
Vernacular	Bengali—Nitikotha No. 3, and Manoranjan Itihas Urdu—Aklaqi Hindee and Qawadi Urdu Nasr Persian—Gulistan and Nisabussibyan Hindi—Reader No. I and Adam’s Arithmetic
THIRD CLASS	
Literature	Prose Reader No. II Woollaston’s Grammar
Geography	Chambers’s (Educational Course)
Arithmetic	S.B. Society’s
Vernacular	Bengali—Nitikotha No. 2 and Barnomala No. 3 Totakahani and Spelling Book No. 2 Persian—Parsi Nama and Toti Nama Hindi—Pleasing Tales and Nitikotha No. 2

Schooling the Tribes and Chybassa School

FOURTH CLASS	
Literature	Prose Reader No. I Easy Primer Spelling Book No. I
Arithmetic	Arithmetic Tables
Vernacular	Bengali— Barnomala No.1 and 2, and Nitikotha No. I Urdu—Spelling Book No. I Persian—Husufi Tahajji and Amad Nama Hindi—Hindi Primer and Nitikotha No. I

Source: *General Report on Public Instruction in the Lower Provinces of the Bengal Presidency for 1845-46*. Calcutta: Military Orphan Press, 1846, Appendix—A, viii–x, pp.204–6.

Note: It is likely that the above syllabus and text were common to the 'Junior Division' of all the schools of the 'lower provinces' of the Bengal presidency including Chotangpur and Singhbhum, except for some modifications in special cases.

The Role of ‘Unknown’ Terrain, Rivers, Hills and Jungles and the *Chuar* Disturbances (1767–1833)

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Abstract

This paper seeks to focus on the economic and environmental aspects behind the *Chuar* disturbances. An attempt is made to comprehend how the East India Company state’s lack of local knowledge of the terrain and environment of Bengal hampered their expeditions against the different rebels of eighteenth century Bengal, including the Chuars, while *Chuar* people’s intensive knowledge of the terrain and environment enabled them to prolong their rebellions. The study is based primarily on archival and official documents, which turn out to be our only source to historicise the disturbance in the absence of an indigenous account on this historic event. The essay is divided into the following sections: Introductory section unfolds the historical background of the revolt, followed by a description of the historiography on *Chuar* rebellion. The third section deals with land, terrain and the people of the *Jungle Mahals*. The next section studies the economic causes of the Rebellion followed by examining the role of terrain, rivers, hills and jungles as providing the ‘Unknown’ factor in prolonging the skirmishes. The concluding section sums up the findings of the sections above.

Introduction

The English East India Company (henceforth EIC) was a nascent state in the mid 18th century. It was slowly making a transition from being a purely mercantile enterprise into an administrative body. The initial years of the Company’s administration was marked by several key features and goals, including maximisation of land revenue and territorial expansion. In order to maximise the land revenue, the EIC government experimented with a number of land revenue settlements and policies. Throughout the 1770’s these land revenue and land settlement policies were implemented in Bengal. These policies included the resumption of previously rent-free lands like the charity lands and the *chakran* lands (rent free lands given by the zamindars of Bengal to the employees in lieu of their salaries). This measure endangered the livelihood of a large number of people of Bengal, such as the religious mendicants like the *Sannyasis* and *Fakirs*, the *paiks*, and the *Adivasis* like the Chuars. Moreover, the zamindars, who had since a long time enjoyed a certain hierarchy and dominance in rural Bengal, could not reconcile to the changed scenario. They saw their powers being slowly either stripped away or altered. These changes had other far reaching consequences as well. The revenue settlements opened the doors for intermediaries like Devi Singh, a revenue farmer, to enter Bengal. Devi Singh farmed Rangpore and Dinajpore during 1781-1783. During his term, Rangpore rebellion took place in 1783.

Meanwhile, the Bengal frontiers continued to be threatened by the Marathas which kept the Company troops busy. All these events had enough ammunition to make the period 1770-1800 extremely volatile in the annals of Bengal. The problem was accentuated because of the emergence of the 'robbers' and 'bandits' of every kind in Bengal countryside. In this background, the Rangpore peasant rebellion, Chuar rebellion and Sannyasi and Fakir rebellion took place during 1770–1800.

The Chuar disturbances (term used interchangeably with revolt/rebellion/insurgency) of the Jungle Mahal area of 18th century Bengal spanned over sixty years (1767–1833). The existing historiography, elaborated below, underlines economic grievance as the major factor behind the rebellion. Taking cue from this analysis, the author seeks firstly to elaborate how the arbitrary enhancement of revenue by the Company state and the dreaded sunset laws triggered feudal resentment and how the *paiks* were agitated against the loss of their ancient rights to own rent free *paikan*¹ lands. But the question is when the Chuars still lived a most primitive life lacking resources material and military, why and how the ill equipped indigenous community were able to sustain their struggle against Company state for more than six decades? To provide an answer, the second purpose of this essay is to highlight how the environment and terrain of Bengal, unexplored and unknown for the Company troops and its white commandants, emerged as a key factor behind this protracted indigenous rebellion. This factor had double impact on the course of the event. On one hand, it hindered the efforts of the troops to quash the rebels. On the other, it aided the rebels to flee into the dense jungles and evade getting caught by the Company troops.² The cruciality of environmental factor coming to the knowledge, the imperialist British deployed the strategy of counter insurgency by hiring the services of the knowledgeable local *harakara* spies (runners in Persian) for collecting useful information regarding the rebels as also of hills, jungles, rivers, monsoons, terrain and environment. The paper therefore seeks to emphasise that Chuar rebellion may best be understood when economic and environmental factors are critically investigated. But before that I would like to form an understanding of the existing state of historiography of the rebellion.

Historiography on Chuar rebellion

There has not been much focused and extensive study, either during colonial period or later, on the Chuar rebellion. The pioneering colonial-day short essay by J.C. Price on the rebellion titled 'The Chuar rebellion of 1799',³ is however a rare example. Other works focus on the history of the Midnapore district where the event makes an incidental presence. The post colonial study on the *History of Midnapore* by Narendranath Das (Das 1956) is one such instance. The other works foreground different trajectories: The *Bhumij Revolt* by J.C. Jha (Jha 1967) brings in Chuar ferment while making an elaborate study on the *Bhumij* uprising. Ananda Bhattacharyya's paper 'Chuar Rebellion of 1799' viewed this under the rubric of 'Adivasi Movement' (Bhattacharyya 2012: 69-78). Against this grain, two short

¹Paikan Lands were the rent free lands given by the zamindars to their paiks in lieu of salary for services provided by them.

²Interesting fact was that other rebels like the Sannyasis and Fakirs also used hills, jungles, rivers and terrain of Bengal against the enemies who had a very rudimentary idea about the treacherous tropical environment.

³This essay was reprinted in A. Mitra (ed.), *District Handbooks: Midnapur, Alipore*, 1953, Appendix IV.

essays seek to explore the causal aspects: Aparajita Bhattacharya's essay 'The Chuar rebellion of 1799 an ecological approach', while projecting the rebellion as essentially a clash of two civilisations, examines the event from a standpoint of nature and environment (Bhattacharya 2007: 33-39); and the present author highlights the economic aspects of the rebellion in her book *Chuar Disturbances* (Sengupta 2012: 45-56). It is clear, therefore, that Chuar rebellion has not been explored from environmental angle, though in recent decades an environmental approach to history has emerged as a significant sub-discipline. The author would however argue that while foregrounding the environmental aspects a fresh look into the economic aspects of the rebellion is also necessary. That is the reason why the author has included only economic and environmental aspects of Chuar disturbances.

Land, terrain and the people of the Jungle Mahals

On 27 September 1760, Mir Qasim, the ruler of Bengal, ceded the *chaklas*⁴ of Midnapore, Burdwan, and Chittagong to the EIC with the right to extract revenue from these areas.⁵ This was reinforced and extended when the English obtained the right of revenue administration from the Mughal Emperor through the grant of the *Diwani* of 1765. The district of Midnapore was located between 21°36 and 20°57 North latitude and between 86°33 and 88°11 East latitude (O'Malley 1911:1-2). The district formed a part of Jungle Mahals, which lay between the districts of Birbhum, Bankura, Midnapore and the hilly country of Chotanagpur. Alpin observes 'In the Eighteenth Century, a considerable portion of the area under enquiry appears to have formed part of an indefinite administrative unit called the Jungle-Mahals lying between the Chota Nagpur and plains of Bengal. This was subsequently defined as being composed of certain paraganas in Birbhum, Bankura and Midnapore ... The fact that there was once an administrative unit, roughly corresponding to this area, and the fact that this area contains the largest population of Sonthals outside the Sonthal Paraganas and outside Chota Nagpur are not accidents' (Alpin 1981: 4). The western Jungle Mahals, bounded by Midnapore in the east, Singhbhum in the west, Panchet on the north and Mayurbhanj on the south, was a terrain with rocky uneven and mountainous soil and was covered with thick woods, rendering it impassable. Naturally fortified, the region never formed a part of either the Mughal administration or the Nawab's government (Firminger 1926: 106).

Predominantly inhabited by the *Santhals*, the Jungle Mahal was also the home of the nomadic tribes, their descendants being the *Lodhas*, *Majhis*, *Bhars*, *Bhumijis*, *Kols*, *Nats*, *Bauris*, *Bediyas*, *Bagdis*, *Layeks*, *Khairas*, etc. The Santhals inhabited the jungles stretching from Rajmahal hills upto the districts of Birbhum, Budwan, Midnapore and Cuttack (Man 1983: 2). In the 1760's, under the residency of John Graham of Midnapore, this area was brought under the purview of the East India Company. This tract was divided into various small and large semi autonomous zamindaris (often called Rajas) of Midnapore, Garbheta, Salboni, Silda (parts of), Ramgarh and Lalgargh, Jhargram, Nayagram and Khedargram. The people of jungle

⁴*Chakla* (Persian: چکله) was a district level administrative *division* in India during Mughal period

⁵At that time, 'Brahmanbhum Baroda', 'Chandracona', 'Chitua', 'Jahanabad', 'Mandalghat', 'Kharija', 'Bhursat', also 'Bagree', fell under the purview of the district of Burdwan. The *chaklas* of Midnapore consisted of 54 *parganas*. The English also obtained the right over the *chaklas* of Hijli comprising 32 *parganas*. The *parganas* of Bagri were included into the Midnapore districts in 1801 (Chatterjee 1987: 89-81).

kingdom largely lived in peace under the supervision of the zamindars' administrative officers (Chatterjee 1986:8–9). The lands of the Jungle Mahals were held under a kind of 'feudal' tenure by the *sirdarpaiks* (leaders of paiks) and others who paid quit rents to their respective jungle zamindars and were ready to turn out for a raid at short notice. The jungle chiefs or zamindars moreover were 'disorderly' and a self-sufficient class described as mere freebooters who robbed their neighbours and one another. Their tenants were classified as 'banditti' whom they chiefly employed in their outrages. In fact, the term thief has been altered to banditti by the colonial bureaucracy.⁶ These ravages kept the zamindars and their servants continually in arms. They used their hired men to attack each other during the time of harvest. The hostile zamindars always committed depredations on each other (O'Malley 1911: 47–48). They made collection of revenue very difficult. In the eyes of the Company administration, it was therefore a turbulent countryside, to gain full control over which was the primary task before the EIC government. There was yet another reason. Since the zamindaris of these jungle chiefs acted as kind of a buffer between the frontier of the Maratha provinces in the west of Bengal⁷ and the territories under the EIC, the Company state was keen to strengthen the southern frontier that included Midnapore, Bankura, Birbhum, Purulia, Jessore, etc (Das 1956: 2). But this was rendered very precarious because of Chuar disturbances raging over large parts of the Jungle Mahals.

Who were the Chuars?

The Chuars were the Bhumij tribals belonging originally to the Mundari mainstock. After moving away from the Chotanagpur plateau, they settled in large numbers in Midnapur, Bankura and Purulia districts of Bengal (Jha 1967: 39). The colonial ethnography obfuscates their ethnic identity and generally presents them in a pejorative sense to denote them as mere 'robbers' and 'banditti'. Grant's *Analysis of Finances of Bengal* (1767) described them as a tribe of robbers, aborigines of the country, who were still in the habit of offering human sacrifices to goddess *Bhavani* and *Kali* (O'Malley 1995: 37). Even their identification as lawless group of people is marked by confusion. Mr Short, a contemporary English official, applied the term more specifically to denote only the rebel *Naiks*. On the other hand, J. Strachey, the Magistrate of Midnapur during Chuar disturbances, preferred to call all the turbulent paiks of the Jungle Mahals by the common name of Naik. However, later, other East India Company officials used the term Chuar more generically to include all the dissatisfied *ryots*. It came therefore to signify the entire gamut of their lawless conduct in the extensive forest tracts of Midnapur, Burdwan, Birbhum, and Bankura (Roy 2008: 494–495). However, the tendency to underline Chuars as a lawless group was the generic trend. Kavi Kankan Mukundaram Chakraborty's⁸ work *Kalketu Upakhyān* called them '*choors*'. J.C. Basu in his *Midnapurer Itihash* similarly identified them as outlandish people (Basu 1939: 1–100). Such an appellation finally went into their identification in Bengali lexicon (Bhattacharyya 2012: 69).

⁶Judicial Criminal (1793-1815), Proceedings dated 27 June 1796.

⁷Parts of Maratha Country lay in Orissa.

⁸The 16th century author of the Bengali literary work named *Chandi Mangal*.

Causes of the Chuar rebellion

The Chuar disturbances that spanned over more than sixty years starting from 1767 may be divided into four distinct phases. The first phase commenced in the 1760s under the leadership of zamindar Jagannath Dhal, followed by the disturbances of 1799, the Naik rebellion of 1809–1815 and finally the Bhumij revolt of Ganganarain (1832–1833). Scholars have attributed different factors to these disturbances. Narendranath Das was the first post-colonial scholar to comment on the subject. He emphasised on the economic reasons behind the entire movement (Das 1956). The present author has similarly attributed economic motive behind the above movement (Sengupta 2012; Sengupta 2015). J.C Jha, who worked extensively on the Bhumij rebellion, cited the forceful Hinduisation of the Bhumij people as the principal cause of their rebellion (Jha 1967). Aparajita Bhattacharya has viewed Chuar disturbances as a clash between the indigenous and western civilisations (Bhattacharya 2007). Ananda Bhattacharyya also viewed the movement as a paikan movement, inspired by the urge to assert Adivasi identity (Bhattacharyya 2012). Since the paper seeks to focus on the economic and environmental factors, these have been elaborated below.

Economic background of Chuar rebellion

In order to understand the economic factor stimulating the Chuar disturbance we have to form an understanding of the nature and structure of Chuar economy as it had developed since the advent of the breakaway groups of the Mundas in the southern part of western Bengal. The migrant Mundas acquired forest lands and carved out their village settlements. Since then they came to call themselves the Bhumij i.e. the sons of the soil or indigenous. We do not however have solid information about their village organisation and nature of their socio-polity. On the basis of available evidences, we learn that from the 16th century, a section of them began to enjoy *Ghatwali* and *Bhuinhari* tenures. During the rule of Akbar, the Mughal emperor, his minister Todarmal conducted the land revenue settlement. Lands were divided by *Todarmali* settlement (1570–1580) into *Bangar*, *Parauti* and *Charchar*, based on the fertility and capacity to pay revenue. Tribal peoples in general tilled the lowest type of *Charchar* lands, which were mostly small in size. Naturally, they did not have the capacity to pay rents (Jha 1967: 2–20). The Bhumij were ruled by semi-independent zamindars, who styled themselves as ‘native’ Rajas. Since the time of the Mughal rule, they had been accustomed to their independence and only paid a nominal tribute to the Mughal emperor. These jungle zamindars used to hire paiks (village police) from the Chuar community to serve as village police. The head paiks were known as the sardars. In lieu of salary, zamindars allotted rent free *chakran* lands (land of the employees, also known as the paikan lands) to these paiks. The paiks considered this ownership to be their ‘ancient right’. Instead of cultivating the lands, they mostly hired landless Chuars to till their lands. They therefore acquired the status of Paiks’ tenants. These tenants were different from non-tribal peasants who lived in the nearby villages. Even though the Chuars did cultivate these paikan lands, there was no marked solidarity between them and the non-Chuar peasants of the villages.⁹ It becomes clear therefore that land and earning from land formed the very basis of Chuar economy affecting different such elements as zamindars, paiks and ordinary tenants. This economic base came under serious threat under the EIC rule.

⁹Judicial Criminal (1793–1815), Volumes 1-30; Committee of Revenue (1781–1786), Volumes 1-16.

Between 1766–67 the EIC pursued the policy of bringing the Chuar region under their revenue network. But the jungle zamindars viewed this as interference in their economic life. They believed that payment of regular revenue and the enhancement of its quantum would be adverse for them. The periodic settlements and the implementation of the *Permanent Settlement* in 1793 made their condition more precarious and challenging. Firstly, the Company state made the settlement directly with the zamindars for ten years but with the provision of selling the land of the defaulter. This caused distrust of their zamindaris, which passed to non-tribal zamindars. Secondly, it brought about the police regulations in the rural Bengal. This rendered the system of hiring 'native' paiks obsolete as they came to be replaced by professional police. Thirdly, the government adopted the policy of resuming the rent free paikan lands. This created two problems. It left the paiks without a means of subsistence. The ordinary Chuars, who used to till these lands, lost their source of earning (Das 1956; Bhattacharyya 2012).¹⁰

Thus, the first Chuar rebellion broke out in 1767 as a reaction to the enhancement of the revenue of the jungle zamindars. Their principal objection lay in the fact that it was a Jungle territory and it was extremely difficult to yield even small amount revenue from it and pay it at Midnapur.¹¹ Additionally in the year 1767, John Graham, the resident of Midnapur, was instructed to demolish their mud forts other than those required for the protection of the country. This policy was also not taken well by the zamindars. The local administration used a stick and carrot policy in dealing with them. Such zamindars, who readily submitted and made regular payment of their revenues, were allowed to retain their estates. On the other hand, those who did not were deprived of their land-holdings. The paiks, who were affected by these changes, responded by allying with the tribal rajas. It must, however, be mentioned that these paiks were not the pawns in the hands of these tribal rajas. They rebelled independently without any prompting from their respective landlords.

The next two rebellions were the results of subsequent policies. The EIC government systematically rolled out their plans to resume all rent free lands including the charity lands and the chakran lands. Thus, the *bazezameendaftar* (keeper of records of rent free lands) was created in 1788 to keep records of all such lands.¹² This adversely affected all zamindars and paiks. The provisions of the Settlement left many zamindars disgruntled. The sunset law, an important provision of the settlement, suddenly gave the Company state the right to dislodge a defaulter and replace him with a new one. Side by side, they implemented the police regulations that made paiks irrelevant in Bengal police system. The Company also resumed the paikanlands¹³ to turn these cultivable rent free lands into revenue

¹⁰This fact may be substantiated by the data collected from proceedings volumes of Judicial Criminal (1793–1815), Volumes 1–30.

¹¹Committee of Revenue (1781–1786), Volume 11, Part 2.

¹²But the process had started much earlier. In the early 1770's, the Company administration began to settle the malguzari (revenue) lands for retrenchment of expenses. They also started to slowly resume the chakran lands and whatever else they considered to be bazezameen. This resumption of rent free lands did not remain local. They also attempted to resume the rent free lands in Hoogly. The other charity lands were not resumed by the Company state at that point. So the police regulations and the government's decision to resume the chakran lands did not come out of the blue. The resumption continued in the 1780's even after the creation of the bazezameendaftar.

¹³Paikan Lands were the rent free lands given by the zamindars to their paiks in lieu of salary for services provided by them.

generating cultivable lands. Disgruntled paiks and ordinary Chuars joined hands with the jungle zamindars that caused the second Chuar rebellion. The government used brutal force to suppress the Chuar rebels of 1799. But they knew they would need the paiks to maintain peace and order in the Jungle Mahals. So they made a settlement with the sardars of the paiks, but hanged most of the ordinary Chuars. But the disturbances in the Jungle Mahals did not end there. Soon the Naiks, the sardars of the paiks, rose up again. The Company state again crushed them. Finally, with the Bhumij revolt of Ganga Narain and establishment of a separate pargana in 1833, the disturbances came to an end. The nature and character of each phase was different, as was the composition and the result. But the economic grievance turned out to be the common factor. We will next move to the environmental factor which played a very decisive role in the rebellion.

Role of environment and terrain

The East India Company had built their empire in India on the strength of military prowess, equipped in weaponry and superior military strategy. For instance, their forces had the privilege of using the cartridges musquets/muskets, other arms and ammunitions as also artillery.¹⁴ It is reasonable therefore to assume that they would be able to suppress any insurgency very quickly. Yet we have noticed insurgencies like the Chuar disturbances spanned over sixty years. It begs the question: why did it take the East India Company's forces so long to suppress this rebellion? This makes the role of environment and terrain very crucial.

The Company State: the unknown terrain, un-navigable rivers and the treacherous monsoons

Bengal's terrain was not only unknown to the white commanding officers but it was also enigmatic for the ordinary sepoys as well. The terrain was interspersed with numerous and normally un-navigable rivers including *Kasai*, *Kangshabati*, *Tarafeni*, *Subarnrekha* and *Rupnarayan*.¹⁵ During monsoon, these rivers turned out to be menacing, having the capability of inundating and destroying neighbouring villages.¹⁶ The monsoon season in Bengal, lasting for months, was particularly treacherous as it forced military officials to withdraw their detachments.¹⁷

The jungles played equally important role during disturbances. The jungles of Bengal, except for the *Sundarbans*, were of tropical-deciduous nature and were dense and impenetrable. The English troops, who were recruited from outside, had no familiarity with the landscape. Naturally, they found it difficult to negotiate with these jungles. In fact, the jungles of Bengal were so thick that if the rebels fled in the thick foliage, 'they could not with propriety be pursued by the *sepoys*'.¹⁸ Sometimes they fell sick with malaria, diarrhoea and dysentery. The inhospitable Bengal terrain, hills and jungles therefore became an obstacle for the free movements of the Company

¹⁴ Letter of Wilkinson, Dinajpore to Governor General in Council, dated 28 September 1795, Judicial Criminal (1793-1815), 2 October-18 December 1795, Volume 27; Letter of Hurst to Col. Charles Chapman, Controlling Council of Revenue, Patna, 9 April-28 June 1773, Volume 7 Part 1.

¹⁵ Judicial Criminal (1793-1815), 1 November - 27 December 1793, Volume 3.

¹⁶ Provincial Council of Revenue, Dacca(1773-1779), Volume 1.

¹⁷ Judicial Criminal (1793-1815), 20 September- 20 October 1783. Volume 7.

¹⁸ Letter of John Jendell to the Magistrate of Midnapore, dated 27 January 1795, Judicial Criminal (1793-1815), 14 June- 5 July 1793, Volume 18.

troops during the Chuar disturbances. Jendell, an English military officer, mentions 'the immense jungle on those hills through which none but the Chuars can penetrate made me apprehensive for the safety of the detachment'.¹⁹ It is noticeable that they did not mention the names of these hills and jungles. It can be assumed that they had yet to learn the names of these hills and jungles.²⁰

Terrain as a weapon of the Chuar insurgency

The weakness of the EIC's troops became the strength of the Chuar rebels who used the hills and jungles as safe abodes and sanctuaries. Interestingly, not only the Chuars, but Sannyasis and Fakirs also used this environmental advantage to elude the English army. An example might elucidate the point. When the Mayurbhunj Raja started to rebel against the Company state during 1766-67, the English officials sent forces to apprehend him. But the *sepoys* faced a number of problems. The area was in the centre of a large jungle. The roads were narrow. It was extremely difficult to apprehend the rebels, who had the tendency to flee into the jungles where it was 'beyond the power of human exertion to root them'.²¹ The Mayurbhunj raja was able to elude the forces for three years before he could be caught and expelled from Belarichor.²² So the physical environment including the hills, jungles, rivers, terrains, were as much an 'enemy' to the Company as the Chuar rebels they were combating. Rebels like Futteh Singh, former Zamindar of Raipur,²³ used a similar tactic. Futteh Singh, his brother and his adherents used to flee into the jungles.²⁴ Jendell writes, 'apprehension of Futteh Singh is very improbable whilst a large force continues out against him as he will only retreat farther into the jungles where it will be impossible for sepoys to follow him or into the Maratha country (parts of Maratha country lay in Orissa).²⁵ These hills and the jungles became a safe refuge for 'banditti' of every kind.²⁶ From the Chuars to the Fakir leaders like Kurram Shah and other jungle tribes, all used to hide in the jungles,²⁷ and utilised the jungles as safe abodes to attack the troops and then escape into the jungles. Once they took shelter in a thick jungle, it was hard for the English troops to overtake the rebels due to the distance and the countryside intersected by many rivers and lakes.²⁸

¹⁹Letter of John Jendell to the Magistrate of Midnapore, dated 27 January 1795, Judicial Criminal (1793-1815), Volume 18.

²⁰These hill ranges included Belpahari, Kankrajhor etc. The rivers included Subarnarekha.

²¹Committee of Revenue (1781-1786), 17 August 1781.

²²Ibid.

²³Raipur was a zamindari, near Birbhum. Futteh Singh was its zamindar. He rebelled against the EIC along with the other Jungle zamindars.

²⁴Letter of William Hill, Midnapore, dated 25 May 1795, Judicial Criminal (1793-1815), 3 July-24 July 1795, Volume 22.

²⁵Letter of John Jendell to the Magistrate of Midnapore, 27 January 1795, Judicial Criminal (1793-1815), 30 January-27 March 1795, Volume 18.

²⁶Letter of Shaw, Bhagalpore, dated 18 July 1795, Judicial Criminal (1793-1815), 3 July-24 July 1795, Volume 22.

²⁷Letter of the Raja of Nepal, Judicial Criminal (1793-1815), 31 -28 August 1795, Volume 23.

²⁸Provincial Council of Revenue Murshidabad(1773-1780), Volume 3. The Company officials probably meant all the *jhils*, *khals*, *nallas*, ponds, and rivers which used to flood during the monsoons and used to become un-navigable during that time.

The role of Harakara spy network: The Company state's counter-insurgency measure

Protracted Chuar rebellion thus became a nagging problem for the EIC administration. They dabbled with two strategies to resolve the crisis. Firstly, the colonial documents suggest that during the Chuar disturbances, the officials toyed with the idea of having the Chuars in the militia in place of regular troops because of their familiarity with the terrain, an advantage which the English sepoys did not have. The Company state hoped that this would be acceptable for the Chuars also because it would give them a stable means of subsistence.²⁹ Unable to put this into practice, the military strategists decided finally that they should deploy *Harakaras* i.e. local spies, runners and guides, for information. They hired the Harakaras and *digwars*³⁰ to take 'unfrequented routes' over hills, to and from places like Midnapore to obtain intelligence reports on rebels like Futteh Singh.³¹ They set aside a sum of money to employ forty-five forest contractors and labourers to clear the hills, valleys of trees, jungle, stone and other 'impediments'.³² As 'they were well acquainted with the haunts of these thieves', these men were ordered not only to find the whereabouts of the rebellious sects but also to help the army in rooting out other 'thieves and thugs'.³³ The intelligence reports provided by the Harakaras, enabled the English to deploy troops quickly in the pursuit of the insurgents.³⁴ Interesting fact was that this Harakara network as a counter-insurgency measure was used by the English to deal with the Sannyasis and Fakirs as well.³⁵ This is evident therefore that the EIC viewed the thick jungles as hindrances to their efforts and evolved their own strategy to negotiate with the unknown terrain.

Concluding remarks

Thus, it becomes clear that the inability of the Company state to comprehend the complex nature of indigenous landholding system prompted them to experiment in a number ways with the prevailing system. The measures to gain control over the Jungle Mahals, imposition of heavy taxation, substitution of the old village police system with a new one that replaced the paiks with men of their choice, adversely affected the semi-independent life of different sections of the Chuar zamindars, paiks and peasants, besides burdening them economically. In this backdrop, different phases of the Chuar rebellion took place. What characterised the rebellion is its protracted nature lasting for a period of over sixty years.

Deviating from the convention of studying the Chuar disturbances from mainly economic and political angles, the present essay seeks to underline that a new perspective may be added if the rebellion is addressed from the environmental standpoint. The paper therefore focuses on the environmental factor that was

²⁹Letter of Jendall, Midnapore, dated 11 March 1795, Judicial Criminal (1793-1815), 3 April- 29 May 1795, Volume 19.

³⁰Digwar meant watchmen, guard specially employed by the zamindars in the Jungle Mahals.

³¹Letter of William Hill, Midnapore, dated 25 May 1795, Judicial Criminal (1793-1815), 3 July-24 July 1795, Volume 22.

³² Ibid.

³³Judicial Criminal (1793-1815), 21 November 1794, Volume 16.

³⁴Controlling Council of Revenue at Murshidabad, 7 May-28 June, 1770, Volume 12, 3232.

³⁵Letter of Captain Hudson Murshidabad to William Harwood, dated 28 November 1770, Controlling Council of Revenue at Murshidabad, 3-31 December 1770, Volume 2.

deployed as a weapon of insurgency. An attempt is also made to highlight how environment as an unknown factor initially handicapped the English forces and how finally the EIC administration unravelled the mystery of the terrain by deploying the harakara system as a weapon of counter insurgency. It is therefore safe to assume that if the colonial masters had an intimate knowledge of the terrain, the vagaries of the long and treacherous monsoons and unpredictable Bengal riverine system, they would have suppressed the rebellion much earlier. They probably would not have needed the assistance of the local guides and the Harakaras.

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Social Welfarism in Contemporary Gujarat: The Bharatiya Janata Party and Scheduled Tribes

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Abstract

Why do political regimes create patron-client relations at the micro level and what is the rationale behind these patronage networks? Surveying a wide range of literature on Patronage, Clientelism and Distributive Politics, the dominant argument that emerges is the centrality of *'the logic of contingent exchange of benefits for votes during elections'* that characterises the binate relationship. Drawing inferences from a primary level field survey at the micro (ward) level in Ahmedabad district in the state of Gujarat, the study finds that the 'architecture of welfarism' is largely defined by the change in the political and policy stances of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), rather than on accentuating constructs of ethnic and religious identity. This argument largely challenges the assertion that the party in its method of political control resorts to measures of ethno-nationalism, especially in Gujarat. The study further highlights the growing inclusive approach towards the Scheduled Tribes and other communities, including the Muslims, and specifically focuses on the contemporary nature of the BJP as a political party and a regime in Gujarat.

Introduction

The debates surrounding the changing nature of democracy in the twenty-first century have largely moved from the popular lexicon of 'waves of democracy'¹ to that of 'deepen democracy'. While the former notion deals with the idea of ways and methods to promote and stabilise democratic institutions, the latter entails the idea that provides the scope to improve the quality of citizens participation in public life (Fung and Wright 2003; Teitelbaum and Thachil, 2010: 2). An important topic of discussion emanating from this broad discourse is the manner in which political parties and politicians attract or mobilise voters to win elections (Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007; Stokes et.al 2013). Scholarship on these issues classifies the strategies and tactics under different headings such as 'pork-barreling', 'machine politics', 'clientelism' and 'patronage'.

Pork-barelling essentially entails the practice of appealing to a narrow set of voters through officially articulated policies, chiefly through allocation of budget. Machine politics (or political machines) are exercised through political organisations that seek to drum up support by tacitly involving an exchange of particularistic benefits to

¹ The concept of 'waves of democratisation', put forth by noted Political Scientist Samuel.P. Huntington (1991) can be conceptualised in at least three ways: as rises in the global levels of democracy; as periods of positive net transitions to democracy; and as linked sets of transitions to democracy.

sections of the electorate for votes before elections. A political machine² in its fundamental construct can be considered as a specific type of political party. Having a tight, hierarchical organisation, it includes party agents at the grass root level, and systematically distributes patronage among its members. This is done through policy that are targeted to constituencies of specific groups through provisions of club goods, that can be extended only by imposing the costs of them on other groups. The operation of 'selective benefits' through a multitude of ways are inimical to the sustenance of the machine. The much discussed forms of clientelism focus on the use of material inducements to voters in return for support. And finally, patronage entails the use of public resources by politicians seeking electoral support from individuals. It in a sense can be viewed as a specific type of clientelism (Stokes 2007; Wyatt 2013: 28). However, fundamentally the focus is on the difference between programmatic and clientelist modes of incorporation. The former is understood as a system under which parties implement officially articulated public policies to secure broad support. While the latter is defined as a technique relying on the discretionary dispensation of excludable resources³ in return for votes (Stokes 2007; Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007, Teitelbaum and Thachil 2010). Whatever, the means adopted by a party or politician, it is agreed upon that clientelism entails targeting benefits to a select group of individuals. Whereas, programmatic forms of vote mobilisation tend to promote investments in public goods and services that can be accessed by a far larger percentage of the total population (Teitelbaum and Thachil 2010).

In the context of India, which has been dubbed as a 'patronage democracy' (Chandra 2004), the government has monopolised access to basic goods and services valued by a majority of the population. In this case, the government officials are recognized as the actors who decide the manner in which these basic goods are distributed within the population. In this set up, there exists a relation between receiving of benefits in exchange for votes during elections by the incumbent party. In a 'patronage democracy' voters decide between politicians not by assessing their policy positions, but by assessing whether a candidate will favour them in the distribution of patronage. It should be kept in mind that patronage in this context has largely considered the ethnic criteria of caste as a determining factor in the establishing of patronage networks⁴. However, viewing the idea of a patronage democracy, the critical question is, whether 'caste' is the only factor that defines the larger logic of establishing patron-client relations? There exists a strand of literature that highlights the changing nature of Indian political parties and party strategies that are shifting from a clientelist to a broad based programmatic mode of appropriation. The rationale that dictates this course of action is the rapid economic growth which has also raised costs of providing acceptable selective benefits to increasingly demanding voters (Wilkinson 2007; Teitelbaum and Thachil 2010; Elliott 2011; Wyatt 2013).

² The key aspects of a Political Machine in this part of the paper have been borrowed from the often cited definition of the concept by Guterbock (1980).

³ An excludable resource is typically understood as a good or a service that can be refused to the consumers if they have not paid for it in spite of receiving or benefitting from it.

⁴ Chandra has elaborated upon the logic of 'Ethnic Headcount' in a party that is one of the strongest factors that determines the choice of a voter during elections. For further discussion refer Chandra (2004).

In keeping with the above mentioned theoretical debates and concepts dealt largely under the overarching theme of distributive politics⁵, this paper argues that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) regime in Gujarat through its programmatic policy approach, especially in the domain of social welfare policy has enabled it to widen its political base by not only co-opting the Scheduled Castes (SC), other backward castes but also the Scheduled Tribes (ST)⁶. Among the STs, the Bhil with a sizeable population of 3.4 lakh (46%) represents the majority of the community in the state that have also voted for the party in successive elections. Among others, the Dubla (8%), Dhodia (7.9%), Rathwa (7.2%) and the Naikda (5.3%) are the other major ST communities in the state that have also rendered their support to the party. However, it is the Bhils that have largely been voting for the BJP steadily. The strategy adopted by the BJP by effectively bringing in the historically marginalised STs within the ambit of welfare in the state has contributed to the communities upliftment and has further enabled the BJP to expand its political base as well. This approach adopted by the BJP regime has also been an effort in striving to create a well rounded welfare state in Gujarat.

The paper is broadly divided into four sections. Having touched upon the wide ranging literature on distributive politics in the first, the second section draws out the methodological construct in which the research endeavour is undertaken. The third section provides an overarching picture of the political scenario in Ahmedabad district and focuses on the Jamalpur-Khadia constituency. Particular attention is laid on the role of the BJP regime and its thrust towards the implementation of social welfare programmes within the constituency. The section further argues that this strategy has helped the regime to gain electorally in the process. The final section summarises the change of stances of the BJP regime in Gujarat, which focuses on the creation of an inclusive welfare state. The approach has enabled the regime to incorporate the STs (and other backward communities) within its political fold.

Sites of distributive politics

Kanchan Chandra (2004: 67) astutely distinguishes between Micro and Macro levels of politics. According to her, micro-levels of politics (e.g. family, village, ward, neighbourhood, and municipality) are information rich environments, in which individuals know each other personally and have engaged in repeated interactions over a long period of time. And, macro- level of politics (e.g. State, province, region, nation, large district) are information poor environments, in which individuals do not have personal knowledge about each other and do not have a history of repeated interactions. The level at which control over the delivery of benefits is vested varies across political systems. In some systems, it is politicians at the macro-level of politics who pull the strings by which benefits are released at lower level of politics. In others, control over these benefits is vested directly in elected officials at the lower levels (e.g., with municipal councillors or village headmen). Working closely with this framework of analysis an attempt has been made to study the Jamalpur-Khadia

⁵ The term denotes an overarching theme wherein relations between political parties/regimes and the voters are explored. In order to understand the connotative variants of Distributive Politics refer Golden and Min (2013).

⁶ I use the term Scheduled Tribes all throughout this paper as I analyse and look at this category from an administrative viewpoint and do not delve into its connotative variant *Adivasi* that contains within itself a whole range of socio, economic and political dialogue.

Constituency⁷ in Ahmedabad that provides an interesting case of changing political equations in the state of Gujarat.

Description of the study area

‘Ahmedabad’ or ‘Amdavad’ has been one of the state’s fastest growing districts (Government of Gujarat, Statistical Abstract 2013). The district is divided into 11 sub-districts; 9 statutory towns and 512 villages (Administrative Atlas, Census 2011). For electoral purposes, the district has been separated into 21 assembly constituencies and one seat for the Lok Sabha. Categorising the population on the basis of locality, 67.5 % of the population resides in the urban areas (Administrative Atlas, Census 2011).

According to the 2011 Census, 83.76 per cent of the population in Ahmedabad is Hindu, followed by 12.24 per cent Muslims, 2.90 per cent Jains and 0.70 per cent Christians. The SC and ST comprise 10.94 per cent and 0.94 per cent of the total population respectively⁸. The Hindu community is largely involved in entrepreneurial activities of different kinds. A majority of the Muslims are self-employed, while the ST community is largely involved in agricultural and construction labour.

Methodological and empirical background of the study

The primary level field survey has been conducted at the constituency level and further narrowed down to the ward level. The focus is on the selected social welfare schemes and programmes introduced by the state government in the sectors of Health, Education, Housing and Poverty/Unemployment. The analysis of these programmes is made at the level of policy making as well as implementation. As it throws greater light on the functioning of the state apparatus and in turn captures the element of distributive politics at the micro level, greater focus has been laid on the implementation process. To assess the implementation of the social welfare programmes at the constituency/ward level, the following schemes have been considered:

Social Sector	Name of the Scheme	Beneficiaries	Provisions of the Scheme
Health	Mukhyamantri Amrutum (MA)	BPL households in Urban areas	Treatment upto Rs. 2 Lakh for diseases ranging from Cancer to Cardiovascular problems.
Education	Vidhyalaxmi Bond Scheme (VBS)	BPL households in the Village and Urban areas	As per the Yojana a sum of Rs. 2000 is paid to the girl child in the 1 st Standard and once the child arrives in the 8 th standard a lump sum amount for the bond is paid with interest.
Housing	Mukhyamantri GRUH(Gujarat Rural Urban Housing) Yojana	Lower level Income and EWS households in Urban and Rural	The three-fold objective of the yojana is to make the cities free of slums and

⁷ The constituency covers Ward No. 44 and 45 of the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation (AMC) in the central zone

⁸ The population figures for the SC and ST are according to the 2001 Census.

	(MGY)	areas.	villages free from kachha houses. The programme strives to provide access to affordable housing to lower income groups and EWS.
Poverty	Garib Samruddhi Yojana (GSY)	BPL households in Urban areas	The GSY yojana in its vision focuses on permanent employment, health, education, housing, roads, power and other services. The unique proposition of this yojana is to address the issue of urban poverty and unemployment, through a multi-pronged approach or action plan that strives to integrate the state's deprived population into the developmental process.

The above selected programmes (with the exception of the GRUH Yojana) are specifically targeted towards the BPL (Below Poverty Line) households residing in the urban areas. The criterion to get access to these schemes is based on the BPL classification introduced by the Government of India (Planning Commission) in the *Report of The Expert Group to Review the Methodology for Measurement of Poverty, 2014*⁹. At the household level, the identification has been done using the BPL list of the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation (AMC) and the statistical information guide for the GRUH Yojana. For practical and logistical reasons, a purposive sampling technique has been adopted to cover the diverse population within the area which gives the exercise a rotundity of perspective. However, largely in keeping with tenor of the journal, the findings dealt with in this paper stress more on the ST population residing in the Jamalpur-Khadia region.¹⁰ A semi-structured interview schedule has been used to interview the household members.

Distributive politics in Ahmedabad district¹¹

The city of Ahmedabad was founded by the ruler Sultan Ahmed Shah in the year 1411 AD. The Bhadra Fort that is situated on the east of the Sabarmati River encompassed the entire city within its walls. Historical evidence points to the fact that Ahmedabad was a nerve centre of commercial activity since the sixteenth century, and continued right up to the advent of the colonial rule (Forrest 1903). With the establishing and mushrooming of Textile Mills and Industry under the colonial rule in 1861, and the revenue that it generated for the colonial administration, the city earned the name of 'Manchester of India'. The growth of the textile industry in Ahmedabad

⁹ http://planningcommission.nic.in>pov_rep0707 . Accessed on December 4, 2014

¹⁰ A total of 170 households are categorised as ST in the area. The total sample survey in order to maintain rotundity factored in those communities as well. The overall purposive sample size was restricted to 120 households.

¹¹ The portrayal of the city has been made using a wealth of secondary literature (Gillion 1968; Yagnik and Sheth 2005; Jasani 2010 and Berenschot 2011).

came to define the space within which the Hindu-Muslim dichotomy was absent.¹² However, with the decline of the Textile Mills especially in the 1980s, the outcome was the cascading effect it brought in the form of clear cut cleavages especially, in the defining of the urban spaces. Chiefly this cleavage was notable in the housing pattern and urban expansion into what is now referred to as ‘Hindu Ahmedabad’ and ‘Muslim Ahmedabad’.¹³ If one could capture the geography of Ahmedabad, the Sabarmati River could be considered as an equivalent of the Tocquevillean distinction made in relation to the Mississippi River that divided the state of Ohio and Kentucky, representing two contradictory set of values on either side, in the United States of America. Similarly, the Sabarmati River divides the city of Ahmedabad into the Eastern and Western parts. The noted scholar Rubina Jasani has looked beyond this division of ‘east’ and ‘west’ made by the river as mere geographical divisions, but as a symbol that ‘reinforces class, religious and psychological divisions in the population’ (Jasani 2010: 156). What is particularly interesting in such a distinction is that there exists clear cut tell tale signs of urban expansion and housing settlements that reinforce this dichotomy. This in turn has a bearing on the socio, economic and political setup of different localities that fall within the respective domains of East and West. An interesting aspect that points towards the spatial organisation of religion and especially class in Ahmedabad is the pattern of housing, which is different in the East and West. In the Eastern part of the city, which largely comprises the Walled or Old city, a unique housing pattern emerged that is called *Pol*,¹⁴ while in the areas where the textile industries were located the housing pattern was known as *Chawls*¹⁵. On the Western part locating new Ahmedabad, a modernised housing pattern emerged that included bungalows; societies and apartments (Gillion 1968; Chaudhury 2007; Rajagopal 2010), while on the eastern part, the citizens resided in Chawls. The Chawls were built for the labourers working in the Textile Mills by the owners of the Mills. It should also be pointed out that the housing arrangements had also been distinguished by caste and religious affiliations (Breman 2004). The patterns of housing settlements as witnessed in the case of Ahmedabad has had a very powerful role in affirming identities of its residents; especially in the construction of a ‘Hindu-Muslim’ category that is weaved into the daily narrative and made prominent by the Hindu nationalist discourse in Gujarat, in the past. The population categorised as SC and ST too are within the groupings that reside in the old walled city, especially in mixed neighbourhoods. The SC community have continued to reside in

¹² The organisational structure of Ahmedabad has been defined by two very important characteristics: First, there never existed a difference of categories, based on religion in land, housing and commercial expansion in the urban planning process. Therefore, the interaction between different communities was inevitable that gave rise to civic ties. Second, under the colonial administration, due to the growth of the Textile mills in the area the rise of local elites came to dominate different forms of civic institutions and textile associations. These elites gave a new direction into Ahmedabad’s urban expansion that factored in their own economic and political interests, that led to the breakdown of heterogeneous communities residing together (Jasani 2010).

¹³ In a piercing account of the decline of the Textile industry in Ahmedabad the noted scholar Jan Breman (2004), points towards the phenomenon of class and religious identities becoming more prominent due to the collapse of an inclusive workspace that fostered inert-community relationships. But once labour opportunities became limited and the mobility of the laboring class was curtailed, the sense of economic insecurity forced the communities to neighbourhoods that over time gave rise to ghettos in the city of Ahmedabad.

¹⁴ It is pronounced as *Pod* in the Gujarati language.

¹⁵ Chawls are large buildings that are divided into several tenements, which are rented out to labourers at a cheap rate.

the pols after the decline of the textile industry, in which they were employed. Although miniscule in number, the STs are largely the upward mobile population that have managed to get better access to education and employment opportunities in the informal industry and have thus continued to reside within the pols.

The backdrop, against which the existing settlement pattern existing in Ahmedabad is presented, is to broadly highlight the different social and political consequences that emanate out of such a set up. Also, it enables one to capture the interface between the citizens, state and civil society in a given backdrop that in turn reflects the dynamism of the terrain. Furthermore, specifically it is an attempt to capture the element and pattern of distributive politics at the micro level. In the context of my research endeavour, focusing upon the evolution of the pol, I highlight the patterns of distributive politics in the old city of Ahmedabad. I particularly focus on the BJP's strategy of incorporating the STs in Jamalpur-Khadia constituency into the welfare footprint of the state. This renewed mode of incorporation by the BJP signals the programmatic approach it has adopted in extending the welfare-net of the state, irrespective of caste and religious status. The ST community in this grand plan of action have benefitted given their positionality/location as urban citizens in this context. Given they are not within the ambit of the state's developmental plan aimed specifically at the tribal dominated areas of eastern Gujarat, under the Van Bandhu Kalyan Yojana (VKY). The VKY is also known as the Chief Minister's 10-point Programme, which was launched on February, 27, 2007 and is executed by the Tribal Development Department aimed towards the development of the tribal population.

In an effort to mainstream the tribal population into the fast paced growth of the state, under the leadership of Shri Narendra Modi the Government of Gujarat launched the programme in 2007. The VKY is a 10-point scheme that strives to make the STs partners in Gujarat's phenomenal economic growth process. Apart from integrating them in the main stream economy, the VKY also focussed on providing school education, housing, health facilities, clean drinking water, employment opportunities and LPG connections to all in the tribal dominated regions of the state. In terms of its outcome, the programme has enabled approximately 7 lakh tribal families to double their income. In addition to this, the literacy gap between the general and tribal population has been reduced from 21.4% to 15.5% till 2014. The plan has also enabled the population to have tap water connections from 3.9 % in 2001 to 56% in 2014 that covers 5,884 tribal villages of the state. In the housing sector, a total of 3, 81,063 houses have been constructed until 2014. Debroy (2012) argues that the string of inclusive policies towards the tribals adopted by the ruling BJP regime has been met with considerable success. Given the success of the programme in Gujarat, the scheme has been replicated at the national level as well when Shri Narendra Modi was elected to the office of the Prime Minister of the country.¹⁶

¹⁶ Policy document of the *Vanbandhu Kalyan Yojana* Government of Gujarat, Tribal Development Department, p.8.

Understanding the pol¹⁷

The Pol is essentially a labyrinth of elongated wooden houses that comprise one or two entrances. The name Pol is derived from the word *Pratoli* in the Sanskrit language, which means 'enclosed area'. It is essentially composed of small lanes and *chowks*¹⁸. Historically, this has been inhabited by people from the same religion or caste (Gillion 1968; Berenschot 2011). In the old part of the city of Ahmedabad, there still exist round about five hundred pols (AMC 2004). An interesting historical aspect attached to it has been the functioning of the erstwhile *Pol Panch*¹⁹. The duties attached to the *panch* ranged from laying down the tenure and rules of renting, buying and selling of houses within the pol to the collection of taxes from the inhabitants and also maintaining the sanitation within its premises (Doshi 1974). It is also believed that with the control exercised over the property within the pol, the *panch* has been able to maintain control over the homogenisation of communities as well. Therefore, in contemporary Ahmedabad, there still continues a trend where pols are concentrated with populations from exclusive categories, thus making them Hindu, Muslim or SC dominated institutions. However, in several instances, members of the Dalit and ST categories also reside with the Muslim populations in pols in Ahmedabad.²⁰ The phenomenon of the minuscule population of the ST in the city represents a unique case for further research. It is because approximately 94 per cent of the population is concentrated in the eastern districts and other parts of the state that include the Dangs, Valsad, Navsari, Panchmahal, Vadodara, Sabarkantha and Bharuch (Lobo 2002). In about 32 *talukas* of these districts, the Adivasis comprise more than 50 per cent of the total population. In an effort to effectively implement developmental and social programmes, the Government of Gujarat have categorised them as Adivasi talukas (Lobo 2002: 4844). However, a small section of the population, due to historical reasons and their exposure to education and other employment opportunities, are spread in several other districts of Gujarat as well. Ahmedabad represents such a case too. With the steady development of the city, the population residing within the pols migrated to different parts of the city. Statistics provided by the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation (AMC) in 2001 in its official report titled *Recommendations for the Conservation and Revitalisation of the Walled City of Ahmedabad*, points towards about a 20% drop of the total inhabitants residing in the pols when compared to the 1971 figure, while the total population of the city has doubled in the same time period.

The decline of the pols is attributed to the growth of the municipal administration in the city. The growth in a sense overarched the functions that were practiced by the pol *panch*, which in turn contributed significantly to the pol culture. Historically, the Ahmedabad Municipality evolved from the Five Member Wall Committee that was constituted under the aegis of the British in 1831. Later on, the Committee was vested with greater duties and responsibilities in 1858, which made it a Municipal

¹⁷ The construct of the Pol in this part of the paper draws heavily from the studies of Ward Berenschot (2011) and Kenneth Gillion (1968). Building upon their excellent description of the *pols*, I have striven to capture the changing dynamics of the political scenario in old Ahmedabad.

¹⁸ A Chowk is an open market area located in a city which is at the junction of two roads.

¹⁹ Panch is literally translated as five. In this case it denotes a five member committee.

²⁰ In order to get an accurate picture of the Jamalpur-Khadia constituency and the *pols* that comprise such a mixed population within them, I referred the official BPL list of the AMC where the coding of households, based on different classifications, have been made in a detailed manner.

Commission, being renamed as the Ahmedabad Municipality in 1974 (Yagnik and Sheth 2005; Berenschot: 2011). As the city experienced horizontal growth, it was only in the year 1965 that the very first development outlay for the municipality was sanctioned by the Government of Gujarat. Since then, the new elites, which had emerged as a powerful class following the phenomenal economic growth of the city, managed to capture the prime localities in the town and asserted their dominance. The town planning activities of the AMC resulted in the upwardly mobile Hindus being relocated to the new parts of Ahmedabad, and the Muslim and backward communities to the Old Walled Ahmedabad (Rajagopal 2010:103). There exists a large population of SC and ST households²¹ in areas of Saijpur, Gomtipur, Vasna, Girdharinagar and Sardarnagar in Ahmedabad.

The renewed thrust especially towards the pol and newer areas in the locality through the extension of the AMC is a significant step in reaching out to the ST community. This is particularly noteworthy, especially due to the BJP's thrust towards achieving overall administrative accountability in the state. Also, the step enables us to analyse the growth of the BJP in Ahmedabad and look at how the brand of politics the ruling party promotes has ramifications on the local structures of power.

Political scenario of Ahmedabad

Preceding the rule of the BJP in Ahmedabad, the Congress through its Kshatriya, Harijan, Adivasi, and Muslim (KHAM) alliance managed to hold on to the echelons of power in Ahmedabad, till the period of the 1980s. The ST population residing in the locales of the district received importance under this strategy. Consequently, they had been very effectively incorporated into the patronage networks of the party. The domination of the Congress through its Gujarat Pradesh Congress Committee (GPCC) President Jivraj Mehta came to an end when in the 1987 elections the BJP captured the AMC. The ascent to power of the BJP at the municipal level signaled the decline of the faction-marred Congress in the state. The strategy of the KHAM and reservations introduced by the Congress to stabilise its political base created discomfort among other sections of the society that in turn challenged their dominance in this period.²² The aftermath of the violent agitation of 1985 and the repercussions of factionalism that plagued the Congress pushed the city of Ahmedabad beyond the Gandhian pillars of peace and non-violence that characterised Gujarat politics²³.

In this context, it is important to analyse how the BJP regime has managed to extend social welfare to a constituency that is affected by riots. Scholarship in the past have highlighted the existence of 'Riot Networks' that have been a result of the growing disjuncture or failure of state institutions to provide services, sometimes even basic amenities to the citizens of the state or locality. This lacuna enabled the rise of a complex network of political fixers and mediators who negotiated on behalf of the citizens with the State. This arrangement largely defines the networks of

²¹ Out of a total of 1,17,9823 Households in Ahmedabad, 5, 94,523 belong to the SC while 66,846 are of the STs.

²² For a detailed discussion on the KHAM strategy and the issues of reservation that created much discontent against the Congress regime in Gujarat refer Wood (1990) and Shah (1987).

²³ For a detailed discussion on this aspect of Gujarat Politics refer Varshney (2002) and Mehta and Mehta (eds.) (2011).

patronage and clientelism at the local level (Spodek 2001; Berenschot 2011). In the course of this paper, on the basis of the state government data and primary level data collected through a field study in the Jamalpur-Khadia Constituency of Gujarat, I would like to argue that the BJP regime through its focus on administrative accountability has not only been able to extend the benefits of welfare programmes to the constituency, but has also successfully weaved in the ST community within its larger political base. This strategy has enabled the party to hold on to the political reigns in the state till now.

The case of Jamalpur-Khadia constituency

The constituency of Jamalpur-Khadia, situated in eastern Ahmedabad region, provides an interesting case of changing political equations over time for the Congress as well as for the BJP. What is particularly worth noting is the demographic composition of the constituency in terms of its diversity. According to the latest available data, the constituency has 61 per cent Muslims. The ST population accounts for roughly 1.01 per cent in the constituency (Census 2001). There are three ward councillors from the Congress and one Independent candidate who have been elected in 2015 in Jamalpur, while four ward councillors from the BJP in Khadia. The areas of Jamalpur and Khadia had been separate constituencies prior to 2012. However, with the merging of both the constituencies under the new delimitation exercise in 2012, the BJP managed to make inroads by winning the Assembly seat in the area. An important factor that deserves attention in the case of the Jamalpur-Khadia constituency is that during the 1981, 1985 and 2002 riots, the constituency experienced violence. Interestingly, after 2002 there has been almost no incidence of violence in the area. Also, the phenomenon of greater accessibility of the citizens of the locality to the basic services provided by the AMC and the state sponsored welfare programmes, highlights the growing penetration of the BJP approach towards development in the area.

The rise of the BJP onto the political scene of Gujarat in the late 1980s had been the outcome of the growing influence of the *Sangh Parivar* and the disgruntlement of the Patels, Brahmins and Baniyas within the Congress and the KHAM experiment. This along with the riots of 1981, 1985 and 2002 factored the BJP's rise that largely rested on the criterion of a Hindu-Muslim dichotomy. The riots of 2002 and the role of the ST community in it were particularly glaring (Lobo 2002). The influence of this dichotomy was not only on the broader political canvas of Gujarat but also on the local structures of power that were dominated by the BJP and various affiliates of the *Sangh Parivar* (Berenschot 2011). However, with the *Sadhbhavana Mission* that was waved off by the former Chief Minister Narendra Modi in 2007, the local power equations were broken down. The political message of rapprochement, especially through providing BJP tickets to Muslims at the local level, was the first step towards the achievement of an inclusive posturing by the party and its leaders. In the period between 2009 and 2013, a total 297 Muslims were given tickets by the BJP to contest elections at the local body elections. It is astonishing to note that out of the 297 candidates 142 won²⁴ (Suswind and Dhattiwala 2014: 101). The actions of the BJP, especially under the leadership of Narendra Modi came to characterise a new phase of the BJP, where ticket distribution was generally made in a non-partisan

²⁴ This figure comes up to 48% of the candidates declared victorious.

manner. In Gujarat, 26 constituencies are reserved for ST candidates.²⁵ What is interesting to note is that areas reserved for the ST too benefited greatly as the allocation of tickets to the reserved candidates were made on the work done by the candidate in the area in the past. The structure of the party has enabled it to identify leaders or cadres of the party that have a considerable track record in being non-corrupt and working in a disciplined manner to convey the message of the party to the voters. This approach adopted by the BJP especially after the 2007 elections has enabled it to transcend beyond its traditional Brahmin-Baniya base that has been in conflict with the backward class population in the past (Shah 1994). However, in an effort to bridge the gap between the different castes in the state, the BJP started its Adivasi cell way back in 1980 to fight for the cause of the community.²⁶ The party has steadily gained its ground with the STs thereon.

An important ramification of this step has been the BJP's electoral victory in tribal dominated constituencies in Gujarat. To consolidate its political base, the inclusion of Muslims within the party has had positive effects as well. A case in point to this would be the election of 2010 where in Rajkot and Salaya Municipality elections, the Muslim BJP candidates won with huge margins. Moreover, the BJP won the Jamalpur-Khadia constituency in the 2012 Assembly elections, signaling not only the dominant Muslim community's support for the party, but that of the SC and ST population as well. The crucial point to be highlighted is that in spite of the difference in political representation (at the ward level) i.e. the BJP in Khadia and Congress in Jamalpur, the accessibility of communities to the state's social welfare schemes and programmes have been uniform. Primary level field interviews with the residents of the constituency brought out interesting facets of these aspects. Among the many interviews conducted in Jamalpur-Khadia constituency, the one with a resident named Dilip²⁷ drew my attention to an interesting contrast. This existed between the phases of pre-2002 and post-2007, in regards to the administrative priorities of the BJP regime in the context of this constituency.

Excerpts from the interview²⁸

Q: Do you feel that your community (said ST) has seen a stark difference, whether positive or negative in administrative priorities by the BJP, since it's ascending to power in Gujarat?

A: Let me first point out that, the rise of the BJP in Gujarat is not because of the Hindu-Muslim divide or communal angle attached to it but due to the failure of the Congress to unite the electorate. The fact of the matter is that in the late '80s and early '90s, the issue of reservations that was prominent not only in Gujarat but in all parts of India, resulted in the various sections of Hindus, opposing each other. Animosity was great amongst them. However, as the 1992 Babri-Masjid demolition took place the Hindu-Muslim cleavage came

²⁵ The reserved constituencies for the STs in the Gujarat Vidhan Sabha are Danta (Banaskantha); Khedbrahma and Bhiloda (Sabarkantha); Morva Hadaf and Santrampur (Panchmahal); Fatehpura, Jhalod, Limkheda, Dahod and Garbada (Dahod); Jetpur and Sankheda (Vadodara); Nandod and Dediapada (Narmada); Jhagadia (Bharuch); Mangrol, Mandvi, Bardoli, Mahuva, Vyara and Nizar (Surat); Gandevi (Navsari); Dangs (Dang); Bansda (Navsari); Kaprada and Umbergaon (Valsad).

²⁶ The BJPs Adivasi Cells in 1992 very vociferously demanded the allocation of forest land to the tribals in the eastern district of Dangs. This was the manner in which the party initially reached out to the Tribal community.

²⁷ This name is an alias meant to protect the identity of the respondent.

²⁸ The interviews had been conducted in Gujarati language. I have provided the translated version for the benefit of the reader

to the fore and deepened in Gujarat, which was furthered by the post-2002 riots as well. What is crucial, that I am telling is that, while the Congress had in their public posturing always prophesied to stand by us (said ST); on many levels we still were unable to get access to proper housing or civic amenities. An important aspect that was also absent was the accessibility in getting BPL cards, which has fairly improved now. What is interesting is that the BJP, especially after 2007, under the leadership of Narendra Modiji has become efficient in several administrative matters. This is a welcome step for our community.

In order to test the validity of his statements, especially with regards to the accessibility of BPL cards, I deemed it fit to cross-check his response with the perceptions of other members of the locality.

Excerpts of the interviews conducted with individuals X, Y and Z²⁹

Individual (x): BPL ration cards for the welfare schemes are an important factor that has prompted us to vote for the BJP in the present.

Individual (y): I feel I am better off under the BJP than the Congress as I have been able to get access to better employment oppourtunities and social welfare programmes under Modiji.

Individual (z): The sense of having an inclusive government has provided me the allure of a better life for my children has what kept me happy. My children have availed the benefits of the scholarship schemes and programmes and therefore, thankful to the government for their efforts.

The following data-set represented in Table 1 highlights the number of households from different communities having access to different state sponsored social welfare schemes:

Table 1: Beneficiaries under the social welfare programmes

Sector	Scheme	Identity of Beneficiaries			
		SC	ST	OBC	Muslims
		23	30	23	44
Housing	MGY	11	9	9	7
Education	VBS	2	5	3	11
Health	MA	7	12	4	12
Poverty	GSY	3	4	7	14

Total Households =120

The above mentioned data set points towards the successful delivery of social welfare schemes to different sections of the constituency. The outcome of these measures initiated by the BJP lay in the potential conversion of votes of the ST from

²⁹ The names of the respondents have been kept anonymous. Although in order to test the validity of their claims the author cross checked their name with the official BPL list and ascertained their beneficiary status.

the Congress to the BJP particularly in the Assembly elections of 2012. This enabled the party to expand its footprint in the constituency³⁰. Below presented Table 2 sheds light on the perceptions of the beneficiaries regarding the BJP regime:

Table 2: Perceptions of beneficiaries vis-a- vis BJP

Q.	Answer	Identity groups of the Participants			
		SC	ST	OBC	Muslims
What kinds of changes have taken place in matters of governance under the BJP?	Focus of governance has increased under the party.	17	24	20	31
	Focus of governance has decreased under the party.	6	6	3	13

Total Households=120

Empirical data points towards the positive affirmation of the residents towards the BJP in the locale, especially in terms of perceptions when related to matters concerning administrative efficiency. It is observed that this is mostly due to their access to BPL cards and a slew of social welfare programmes floated by the Government.

The performance of the BJP in terms of extending the welfare provisions to the diverse set of communities in the constituency points towards its commitment towards programmatic policy making which is supplemented by Post-clientelist Initiatives as well. The concept is put forth by the noted social scientist James Manor (2013) where he argues, 'Post-clientelist Initiatives refers to a programmatic approach of execution of policies that are non-partisan in its approach, and are therefore protected from the 'brokers' and 'mediators' that operate at the micro-level.³¹ The approach of the BJP in terms of its extension of state capacity, in a sense has been vigorous in the recent past. This denotes the declining of traditional forms of clientelism and the rise of post-clientelist initiatives, especially in the case of Jamalpur-Khadia constituency. As Berenschot (2011) argues³² that the state's limited capacity to extend itself in its everyday manifestations creates a space, which is termed as a 'political field'. It is in this 'political field' that the highly controlled act of distribution of the limited resources becomes one of the most important factors to achieve electoral benefits. This 'political field' creates an opportunity for mediation by 'fixers' or 'mediators' to act as buffers between the State and citizens. This produces a complex web of patron-client relations. While the argument put forth by Berenschot makes perfect sense in a context, where the state or even political regime caters to the needs of its core constituency, to protect its voter base. The fact is that

³⁰ The Constituency with its Muslim dominated population prior to the 2012 Assembly elections voted consistently for the Congress. In 2012, the BJP for the very first time was able to make inroads into the minority dominated area. The SC and ST population residing within the constituency have shifted their voting patterns as well. The appeal towards the BJP is significant and had been evident through the positive responses evoked by them in the course of the field survey.

³¹ Author's emphasis.

³² Berenschot (2011) has predicated this argument on the work of Bourdieu (1999).

in the case of Jamalpur-Khadia constituency, the BJP has had a bi-partisan approach. The gain made by the BJP in the wards is through the extension of an effective bureaucracy and a shift of policy towards a much more programmatic³³ style of functioning. With such an approach the party has managed electorally to make steady gains in the area.

Scholarship in the context of Gujarat, in the past has argued that the institutions in the state are overburdened due to the growth of the economy and population. This has added pressure on the limited resources of the State (D'Costa 2002; Kundu and Mahadevia 2002; Bereschot 2011). While this strand of scholarship has highlighted the situation in Gujarat, it should be noted that during 1998 and 2002, the state faced administrative challenges under Chief Minister Keshubhai Patel. Pressure mounted on him especially after he failed to gain control of the disaster management and rehabilitation process after the 2001 Earthquake that hit the region of Kachchh.³⁴ Moreover, after the Godhra riots (2002), the socio-economic fabric of the state was adversely affected. These grave incidents, in a sense, created anomalies in assessing the role of the administration in that time period. However, recent strands of scholarship have highlighted that in comparison to Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, Gujarat State has been relatively more successful in extending a basket of services to its citizens. In a comparison of 15 largest Indian states, the relatively wealthy state of Gujarat hovers around 6th place in terms of the provisions of various services, i.e. after more successful states like Kerala, Karnataka and Punjab (Hirway and Mahadevia 2004; India Human states like Development Report 2011). The performance of Gujarat in providing a strong administrative setup is evidence of its phenomenal governance approach (Debroy 2012; Panagariya and Rao 2015). While the gains made by the BJP regime in the Jamalpur-Khadia Constituency through a programmatic approach has proved to be a successful method of appropriation, the regime has not completely transcended itself from establishing patron-client relations, as observed and argued by Berenschot in the riot prone city of Ahmedabad. In an extensive ethnographic account of three neighbourhoods of Ishanpur, Maneknagar and Ram Rahimnagar, he states:

The difficulties that especially the poorer citizens face when dealing with the State institutions underlie the capacity and interests of political actors to instigate and organise communal violence. It is the ineffectiveness of the State, especially in riot prone areas, that give rise to patronage channels that are polarised along communal or ethnic lines. But not everywhere patronage channels are organised along these lines (2011:192).

Berenschot's observation is that it was only RamRahimnagar that was able to avert violence post-2002, largely due to their strong civic ties or networks. In Jamalpur-Khadia constituency, with the decline of clientelist networks and political mediation to a large extent, the area has been able to avert communal violence in the past decade. This transition has been particularly interesting for the BJP, in terms of its political tactics to win elections and attract voters in Gujarat. An approach that

³³A programmatic appeal to voters relies on the logic of not creating specific programmes just for certain communities that are part of the regimes social or voter base. But on officially articulated policies that have a universalistic appeal and do not pander to clientelist appeals. In the case of Gujarat, the Ministry of Social Welfare and Ministry for Social Infrastructure Development board have floated several schemes and programmes on this ground.

³⁴ For a detailed account of the administrative incapacities shown by the Gujarat Government under Keshubhai Patel after the 2001 Earthquake refer Simpson (2013) and Mukhopadhyay (2013).

clubs programmatic policy making and execution and simultaneous existence of patronage in few areas (as pointed out by Berenschot) points towards the change of strategy by the party in order to hold onto the reins of power and simultaneously expanding its voter base. I argue that this has hitherto proved very effective in keeping it in power for two decades now.

Concluding remarks

A reflection on the role played by the BJP regime in Ahmedabad district highlights the embracing of a programmatic style of functioning by the party, which is also supplemented by post-clientelist initiatives. With the retracting of the notion of 'boundary activation', where through a repeated emphasis on the difference between religious communities and the affirming of one's identity at the expense of the others, the division made between 'us' and 'them' (in this case the ST and also the Muslims) has seen a clear decline. With the expanding of the capacities of the state, especially in the domain of social welfare, as we have seen in the case of Jamalpur-Khadia, the regime has managed to expand its electoral base within the ST, members of Hindu community and to an extent with the Muslim minority as well. The change of strategy by the regime and the party has been most prominent under the steadfast leadership of Narendra Modi, especially during post-2002 years, when the party's popularity began to decline particularly in areas where riots or communal polarisation never occurred (Dhattiwala, 2014). This phenomenon was particularly interesting as even in Hindu dominated constituencies, the BJP began to lose its vote share (Dhattiwala, 2014). It is here that the measures adopted by Narendra Modi through his government's focus on governance and creation of a welfare state, that point towards the re-formulation of strategy to widen the voter base of the party. The electoral data suggests that within the SC, ST, OBC and to an extent the Muslim communities, there has been a greater push towards the BJP after 2002. This in a sense signals the remission of the strong and overt influence of *Hindutva* in acting as a sole strategy of co-option of different communities in the state, as argued by scholarship in the past. While the role of *Hindutva* as an ideology acted as a starting point for the BJP in affirming their stand towards the inclusion of the ST within the BJP the change of strategy is evident. The thrust of the BJP regime to characterise itself as a programmatic party, in the contemporary political scenario, has enabled it to shift stances in times of crisis as well as opportunities. This in turn has hitherto enabled it to hold onto the reins of power in Gujarat. This approach has further provided a stable political regime to the citizens of the state.

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