

Reassembling the Paradigms of Intervention in the Scheduled Areas

A Case for Tribal Social Work

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This paper engages in a critical understanding of social work in the context of tribes in India. Based on the fieldwork, observation and reflection of some voluntary organisations working in the scheduled areas, it is assumed that social work intervention in the tribal areas is going through a critical period. In fact, the traditional approach to social work theory and practice has started to experience tensions of the method-focus versus contextualisation debates. Social work can no longer remain a silent spectator, non-committal and non-judgemental, exclusively championing the status-quoist theory and a profession of charity, paternalism and welfare. In its holistic sense, such a paradigm of intervention fragments the social structure more than it empowers. However, this period, if viewed from an emic perspective, paves the way for the possibility of theorisation and practice from lived experiences. In such a historical context, the author makes an attempt to reassemble the empowering paradigms of intervention in scheduled areas; a case for tribal social work.

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INTRODUCTION

The understanding of social work among tribes has its foundation in charity and philanthropic works emanating largely from religious endowments. In particular, religious institutions and/or religious based organisations have made a yeoman contribution to tribal development especially in areas of health, education, employment, and poverty alleviation. In the post independence era, the voluntary sector has emerged as an important sector that undertakes social work activities catering to social development of tribes and poor sections of society in particular. Besides, social work as

a discipline and profession, constitutes a significant part of this. Today, this profession has crossed its seven decade year mark with approximately 250 social work colleges (Narayan, 2001; cited in Bodhi, 2011) and still growing in number. One can conclude that it has established its credible space within the academic and professional arena to a certain degree. However, contextualisation of social work theory and practice in India and, scheduled areas in particular, is still in its infancy stage as demonstrated by the theoretical and pedagogical gaps. Theorisation from experience (Guru and Sarukkai, 2012), would be very critical in strengthening its academic and pedagogical credibility. One can in fact comfortably say that the pedagogical principles of social work are fundamentally defined by the acquired and borrowed theories from the contexts of its origin. The social work intervention in this situation focused primarily on changing attitudes and behaviour of individuals as a means to effecting changes in the wider social system by improving the problem-solving capacities of individuals, by encouraging individuals to be self-diagnosing, and by realising and fostering growth in the persons who make up the system.

Social work methods take precedence over context and structure at this juncture. However, to say that this practice is mostly defined by charity and philanthropy is not to undermine the contribution of the discipline to the state building process and social development of the most vulnerable sections and individuals of the state and society, but to propagate a space for contextualisation of theory and practice with a view to strengthen its pedagogical relevance. One needs to move beyond the concerted confines of normative theorisation (received theories) to unravel the understanding emerging from experiential reality. Our intervention processes at the level of problem solving and individual centric approach has to extend itself to the structural conditions that shape human reality. Robert Mullaly's *Structural Social Work: Ideology, Theory and Practice* (1997) and Lena Dominelli's *Anti-Oppressive Social Work Theory and Practice* (2002) are rare theorisation emerging from Canadian and British context along this premise. The Second UGC Report of the 1980s also indicated the need to move towards contextualisation. In fact, social problems, issues and social action were introduced as important curricular themes (ibid.), since then. Besides, the Gandhian approach, also called 'constructive work' befits mention as an important framework of intervention among tribes during these periods.

Nevertheless, there is no credible literature for reference pertaining to social work theorisation and contextualisation as viewed from the reality of scheduled areas per se till date. To build a tribal social work

theoretical premise for intervention, engagement along this line is primary to understanding the dynamic intricate relationship between the context, ideology and intervention (Saldanha, 2008). Towards this direction, the basic theoretical constructs that determine the reality is broadly described along the following themes: a) colonial and post colonial premise; b) international premise; and c) lived context and emerging theorisation.

Colonial and Post Colonial Premise

The scheduled area, as a concept, policy and practice is fundamentally a colonial theorisation confined within the colonial construct of the civilisation versus the 'other'. In such an approach, a distinct category of people is described as people to be civilised and administered within the state context. In the early stages of British colonisation, these areas were considered to be backward areas (Government of India Act, 1919), un-surveyed and un-administered. As a policy framework, these areas were later categorised as 'excluded areas' or 'partially excluded areas' in the Government of India Act, 1935. Keeping the principle intact, they were renamed constitutionally as scheduled areas in 1950 (1949), in particular. The scheduled areas are further classified into 'tribal areas' (Sixth Schedule area), referring to the Northeast region where the tribal people are predominantly in the majority and, 'scheduled areas' (Fifth Scheduled Area), referring to the other regions where tribes significantly populate.

However, this demographic classification has to be understood within the criteria of geographical surveys and territorial demarcations (state, districts and blocks, and so on) determined around certain political centres located mainly in the plains, outside the territorial boundary of the tribes. For example, in the Northeast context, tribal areas were surveyed within the confines of political centres in the valley (Mackenzie, 2005). However, the scheduling process is beset with several unresolved issues very much shaped by the tempers of the electoral politics from time to time. In fact, some tribes are still tribes not covered under this area. Besides, the implementation of the constitution and administrative policies along these lines are still based on the principle of 'single line administration', even with the implementation of the Tribal Sub Plan (1975) and the Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act 1996 (Sharma, 2010). Nevertheless, these schedules take cognisance of the tribal social and political structures indicating the federal nature of the constitution. In fact, the Fifth and Sixth Schedules are described as 'Constitution within Constitution'. Constitutionally, they pave the way,

towards the possibility of operationalisation of the concept of autonomy and self governance (not secessionist construct) as viewed from the context of the tribe; reaffirming the larger precepts of democracy, social justice and pluralism.

Constitutionally, tribal societies of India are defined as Scheduled Tribes; that it is the prerogative of the President of India to recognise tribal communities (Article Number 342). It is a socio-legal, politico-administrative term. However, as a people, tribal societies of our country are better described as ‘culturo-political entities’ (cultural and political communities) (Oommen, 1997). But in general, the understanding of the concept of a tribe and the reality presuppose waves of colonisation in history. In particular, the concept of tribe was defined by the colonial ethnographers. It basically means people of the colonies who are required to be brought within the civilisational concept of the British. In that sense, tribe has a colonial construct and derogatory in a sense (Xaxa, 2003). In the state context of India, Elwin Verrier considered them as specific societies that need to be preserved. His understanding about tribe is usually referred to as ‘isolationist’. Tribes, he said, should be preserved and protected (Elwin, 1957). The Hindu sociologists such as G.S. Ghurye considered them as ‘backward Hindus’ (Ghurye, 1963; cited in Nathan and Xaxa, 2012). They need to be assimilated to the larger Hindu society. However, the state considered that tribes should be treated as specific societies of the country. This approach is usually viewed from the ‘*Nehruvian Panchsheel*’: they should be allowed to be integrated in their own genus and wisdom (Elwin, 1957). Their culture and customary practices have to be recognised by the state. In the context of Northeast India, this approach is described as ‘political integration’. In other parts of the country, both ‘cultural assimilation/integration’ and ‘political integration’ are used simultaneously as an approach to uplift tribes (Oommen, 2011). In fact, the politics emerging from the scheduled areas is basically an expression of a struggle to reclaim and reconstruct the foundation of life: territorial, land, customs, polity, worldview, lived cultural and historical experiences. In the present situation, the available literature indicates that ‘*adivasi*’, an endogenous terminology (translated as original settlers), is a well accepted self-ascriptive identity construct. It also has a similarity of meaning with the international concept called ‘indigenous peoples’. Besides, concepts such as ethnicity and nationality are also being used to describe tribes especially of the Northeast (Burman Roy, 1999).

International Premise

In general, the politics of conceptualisation and recognition of indigenous and tribal peoples in the history is heavily defined by the meta-political perspectives (top down). For example, it is known that the debate around indigeneity is strongly situated within the context of countries like the Latin Americas, Australia, New Zealand, and so on, on the one hand, while on the other hand at the macro level, countries like Africa and Asia do not give space for articulation of specific experiences (Erni, 2008). Therefore, the conquest and colonisation processes in such regions are constantly augmented by the politics of nation state processes: surveys, categorisations, classification, territory demarcation, and development induced displacements of indigenous and tribal people by the colonial structures (which have been referred to as waves of colonisation processes). In fact, as an example, it is important to observe that the Indigenous and Tribal Populations Convention (No.107) adopted by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) in 1957 operated within the colonial perspective of tribes as ‘savage others’. ‘Tribals’ and ‘semi-tribal’ were considered as others to be integrated and assimilated to the mainstream national community while focusing on land and cultural rights. This framework, however, limits the understanding of indigenous and tribal peoples to merely as a ‘pre-colonial people’ or ‘cultural objects’ and, therefore, the inclusion of the voices from tribal experiences is limited. In fact, one is aware of the only intervention made by Prof. Ram Dayal Munda, who represented the India Confederation of Indigenous Tribal Populations (ICITP) at Geneva in 1993. While speaking on agenda item No. 4, Munda said, “In the Indian context unless definitionally specified, everyone could be called ‘indigenous’ after the British colonisers left the country in 1947” (Roy Burman, 1995:9). In other words, the normative theorisation on indigenous and tribal people has been hijacked primarily by the politics of the dominant groups within the global political space.

With the subsequent establishment of the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Conventions, 1989, by the ILO, also known as Convention 169, there has been a shift in the theoretical approach towards understanding indigenous and tribal peoples. The ILO Convention 169 makes a fundamental theoretical shift in its approach—from positivist to constructivist (Kingsbury, 2012). The emerging constructivist theoretical premise in the post colonial context allows space for engagement at the level of discourse. Xaxa (2005) is one such articulation. This discourse questions the normative stance. For instance, some of the conceptualisations in

the Northeast have been made along ‘confronting the constructionist’ (Baruah, 2003) in the context of homeland movements and propagating the statist approach of integration and ‘contesting marginality’ (Nag, 2002) within the nation-state. Nevertheless, the constructivist premise allows theorisation from lived experiences, narratives and histories. Therefore, the ILO Conventions 107 and 169, provide a platform to understanding self identification, self determination, human rights and movements from different locations within the larger structures of power and discourse.

This premise also has been further reaffirmed by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in 2007 (Erni, 2008). In fact, in such a theoretical direction, defining, classification and ascription allows for the recognition of the people and their world view. It asserts self ascription of the people, their history and polity to supersede the ascription by others, although most of the time contested politically. In fact, one has to understand this situation from the ‘post Barth’ framework. In such a context, conceptualisation along identity, ethnicity and nationality on the one hand, and intra-inter social relationships and intersectionality of class-ethnicity on the other are observed in the literature repository indicating the dynamic reality of the present context. It is observed that at this point in time the defining process is left open ended: within the premise of self identification and self determination. The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples does not define ‘who indigenous peoples are?’. However, the basic criteria as laid out in the working definition of the Working Group for Indigenous Peoples indicates that such an exercise involves a complex and dynamic reality and conceptualisation. Therefore, it can be firmly said that a space has been created for the articulation of indigenous and tribal peoples’ experiences by taking into consideration the local specifics.

Lived Context and Emerging Theorisation

The lived reality of tribes, often described in literature as multi-ethnic, multi-lingual or multicultural, is characterised by diversity. In fact, based on the understanding arrived at during the fieldwork, it is known that every tribal village is a political unit by itself. The description of clan based and/or ‘segmentary’ (Pritchard, 1940) society within the holistic perspective as understood in Sahlins (1968) is often referred to in tribal studies to describe tribal societies. Further, the understanding emerging since, particularly post Barth (1970s), has moved towards understanding culture in terms of boundaries. The focus has been on permeability. However, the political aspect in it is often overlooked.

At this juncture, it is imperative that tribal peoples in the local context of the Northeast articulate their lived reality and emerging theorisation. This is to say that the reality of the hill areas and Scheduled areas, Fifth Schedule and Sixth Schedule in particular, with specific focus on pre-colonial, colonial, post colonial structures and the emerging state territorial demarcation induced migrations/immigration and development processes vis-a-vis tribal land and territory, customary rights and polity, need to be understood. Thus, the situation demands that we revisit the conceptual categorisation and recognise processes from the lived reality and experience. Discussion along this direction definitely brings us to the realm of ontology, that is, the nature of reality. Tribal peoples have to be understood at the level of their ontological reality.

At the conceptual level, we are referring to a culturo-political entity having its own worldview, which is closely defined by their culture, land and polity. Therefore, one is referring to the larger concept of a political space for the tribal peoples as defined by the culturo-political rights within the state and global context. In such a circumstance, identity, here understood as collective identity (as different from western understanding of identity as a personhood), is constantly in negotiation with the state for a political space within the nation state frame, which is mostly governed by the Westphalian definition context and understanding. It should be mentioned that the political and administrative category as defined in the Constitution: Scheduled Area (Article 244), Fifth Schedule and Sixth Schedule, in a way brings in an understanding of the state from the context of tribes (also implied to as multi cultural and multi ethnic) covering the South Asian and South East Asian context. However, in the emerging socio-political context of the state, collective identity, state and conflict is often discussed as a debate between primordialism versus the circumstantial and is instrumental in the broader theoretical framework of constructionism. As a matter of fact, the scientific nature underlined in the context is multi-dimensional and dynamic. This paper is limited to discussing an entity: ontological reality within the larger frame of a 'political space' where economic and social rights are embedded. Therefore, as viewed from such a framework, tribal peoples are positioned as an 'epistemological community/communities'.

SITUATING THE DISCOURSE AND PARADIGM OF INTERVENTIONS

In the perspective of tribal social work, as a proposition, it is understood that the historical context of the people, usually referred to as tribes and/or

adivasis, is defined primarily by culture, land and resources: *jal, jungal* and *jamin* within the larger concept of territoriality—a political boundary. In a political process, their identity, culture, land, resources and territoriality form integral parts of the whole. Identity and culture become instruments for their political assertion, self determination and self rule; forest, land and customary rights are the symbol of their territorial existence. The concept of collective identity and political assertion, which are often described as identity politics are expressions of socio-political responses to the emerging context of the state. In fact, there is a theorisation arising from the experience of the people as alternative discourse in the state context. This discourse, although greatly determined by the state discourse of national development, paves a way for the emergence of a theorisation from lived experience, narratives and history of the people. Some of the literature describe this context as ‘embedded reality’ (Biswas and Suklabaidya, 2008) and/or ‘foundational’ (Savyaasachi, 2012) that needs to be recognised to realise the principle of the Constitution enshrined in the Indian Constitution. Within this discourse, various interventions in the scheduled areas are described below.

State Approach

Traditionally, development for tribes is usually explained through the ‘*panchsheel*’ philosophy. However, in practice, it is usually operationalised within the colonial understanding of tribes and civilisation. Development processes usually proceed from the perspective of the state. Understanding the underlined dynamic and complex history of social interaction between tribal societies, development work and state often gets clouded by the principle of eminent domain.

Within the larger debates of assimilation, isolation and integration, fundamentally ‘a melting pot’ premise, the state intervention in the tribal areas have been focused on welfare as seen in the various policies and programmes for administration and development of the tribal areas. The state approaches to scheduled areas can be broadly identified in three phases: a) Panchsheel Period of 1950s, b) Tribal Sub Plan of the 1970s and c) Panchayati Raj Extension to Scheduled areas of the 1990s (Sharma, 2010). In fact, the intervention approaches and programmes after the 1990s are redefined within the larger theoretical constructs of inclusive development. Some of the programme interventions such as Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MNREGA) and National Rural Health Mission (NHRM),

in particular, are examples of the same. It is made explicit that social development and social justice among tribes can be realised only through inclusive development and good governance.

This approach is also envisioned in the administrative structures at the Centre and State levels. Although the single line of administration in the context of tribes has several issues, efforts to respond to the changing context have been made, as is seen in several policy shifts taken place during the last sixty-five years. In particular, the emergence of the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, indicates the efforts made towards a tribe centric intervention; the policy shifts, however, need to be understood within the larger national development projects. It must be remembered that not all policy changes have happened for the benefit of the tribal population. In fact, they are quite often treated as the expendable or dispensable population that can be relocated at the whim of the government. The issue of development induced displacement in scheduled areas is but only the tip of the problem associated with national development projects. The movement for '*jal jungal jamin*' has its origin in such a situation. A glance at some of the literature emerging from within the tribal contexts gives us a bird's eye-view of the inherent issues in the tribal areas. For instance, B.D. Sharma, describes the situation in his book *Unbroken History of Broken Promises* (2010). Nandini Sundar's *The Subalterns and Sovereigns* (2007) goes deeper to describe the situation in terms of the conflict of power between the two political systems with specific reference to Adivasis in the Bastar area. Bela Bhatia's *Justice Denied to the Tribals in the Hill Districts of Manipur*; Sajal Nag's *Contesting Marginality; Ethnicity, Insurgency, Subnationalism in North-east India* (2002) and James Scott's *The Art of Not Being Governed* (2009) also throw some light on the reality and the emerging theorisation in the Northeast.

However, going by the spirit of the Constitution, India is a nation of cultural diversity. It recognises the co-existence of different cultures, social systems and 'self rule' (Savyasaachi, 1998) and/self determination as articulated in Article 342 (1), the Fifth and Sixth schedules, and the 73rd and 74th Amendments—devolution of powers to the local authorities. The logic of scheduling tribal areas highlights Constitutional provisions that affirm the self rule or self determination perspective. In this context, the local authorities (either *Gram Sabha* or village councils) of the tribal village become the highest platform of power and decision-making.

Voluntary Organisation Approach

The voluntary organisations (VO)s emerged in response to the existing social problems. The VOs are committed to their vision and mission and, thus work towards effective service delivery with the overall objective of bringing about the desired social and economic changes among the target groups. There is, therefore, a mushrooming of VOs who profess to be agents of social change. This phenomenon has created an environment of competition among them and consequential professionalisation of the field.

The VOs have always played a major role in the welfare and development of the scheduled tribes. This has picked up momentum especially during the last two decades due to the proliferation of reputed and well organised VOs. The government has also made concerted efforts to utilise and mobilise the spirit of voluntarism existing in Indian society. Post independence, the spirit of voluntarism gave birth to various individual and group/community based organisations. Many of these organisations acquired legal status under various Acts such as the Society Registration Act 1860, Trust Act, Company Act, and so on.

By the early 1980s intervention strategies were focused around people's participation, conscientisation, empowerment and understanding poverty based on class, caste, gender and ethnicity (PRIA, 1991). Two emerging strategies around this time can be inferred from the classification by PRIA:

- a) Grassroot and development based NGOs adopted participatory and innovative approaches and undertook concrete sectoral activities (agriculture, watershed, environment, non-farm income generation, health, literacy) relevant to poverty-stricken groups.
- b) Empowerment NGOs addressed the structural causes of poverty (unlike action groups they receive foreign funds).

These organisations can be further classified as: a) welfare NGOs; b) development NGOs; c) empowerment NGOs; and d) social action groups. They first enter into collaboration with the government; the other two are often in direct confrontation with the state policies, legislation and practices. However, literature indicates that in the 1980s, NGOs were called to participate in micro level poverty alleviation and basic need programmes. They were perceived to have comparative advantage in reaching the poor, eliciting people's participation, promoting innovative and cost effective approaches to poverty alleviation, identifying and disseminating appropriate technology, making the government delivery

system accountable, and so on. Baviskar (2001) also identified different types of voluntary organisations classified on the basis of intervention strategies used. These are:

1. Techno-managerial, reformist, and radical organisations (Shah and Chaturvedi, 1983);
2. Welfare-oriented (including health and education), development organisations, and empowering NGOs in Gujarat (Hirway, 1995);
3. Gandhian, service delivery organisations, professional organisations, and mobilisational organisations in Gujarat (Iyengar, 1998);
4. First generation relief and welfare, and second generation organisations, attending to small-scale and local development projects, and third generation community organisations interested in building coalitions (Korten, 1990: 115-27); and
5. Charity, development and empowerment work organisations (Elliot, 1987).

The first generation relief and welfare NGOs, predominant in the developing world, often have close ties with state and international development aid organisations and do not overtly engage in political activities. Second generation development NGOs address issues like public health and agricultural development. These groups frequently help their constituents to overcome structural constraints, challenge local and regional elites, and assist in reducing dependency relationships. Third generation NGOs explicitly target political constraints by engaging in mobilisation and 'conscientisation'. Their focus is on coordinating communications and linkages among people's organisations. These networks help to spread awareness of the practical local successes of some second generation development strategies and serve as catalysts for wider social movements. However, these types are more ideal than real and not mutually exclusive (Fisher, 1997: 448).

Partnership

In India, a systematic and formal process of interface has been observed in the post independence era between the state, VOs and tribal society (Thakur and others, 1997). As observed in the field, the interface/convergence of voluntary organisations, tribal society and state is predominantly service and welfare in orientation. A meaningful and purposeful interface between the state, VOs and tribes is crucial for tribal development. Therefore, it becomes important to engage in understanding and arguing for a pro-

tribe paradigm positioned from the perspective of self rule and/ self determination. The interface between the tribal community, state and voluntary organisation can be better understood from a socio-political framework. The tribal community is contextualised within a dynamic boundary interaction (Barth, 2000) of different political realities. The tribe as a distinct social and political entity is created through a process of interaction between the state and tribes as manifested by the emergence of a new political power structure vis-à-vis the tribal community over a period of time. The historical process is critical to understanding the emergence of the state and its institutions. The state, therefore, emerges as a primary domain on which the present social and political reality gets operationalised. Today, India is a primary domain over which the paradigm of development for Scheduled Tribes gets conceptualised and operationalised.

Partnership with voluntary organisations has continued throughout all the five year plans for the welfare and development of Scheduled Tribes. A proactive stance on this strategy was taken from the Tenth Plan¹. Since then, VOs were considered as the ‘only medium to reach the un-reached’ and experiment/develop alternative models to match the local tribal people and their needs. The Approach Paper of the Tenth Plan states that the ‘VOs will, therefore, be encouraged to play an effective role in improving the status of tribals in the areas of education, health, nutrition, employment and income-generation, besides sensitising the administrative machinery and conscientising the tribals to realise their rights and potential besides safeguarding them from social and economic exploitation’.

The government funded voluntary organisations are basically working on welfare work. There are approximately twenty-seven different specific projects in the grant-in-aid scheme. They can be grouped as working in three different sectors of development: education, health, training for livelihood skills and also other development related projects on sanitation, environment, drinking water and legal redressal services. As per the data available in the evaluation project submitted to the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, the Ministry funded only 164 organisations across the States in 2005-06.

Tribal Social Work: A Paradigm of Intervention in Scheduled Areas

A tribal social work intervention is context based. It is a socio-political action emerging from the structure, context and processes over a period

of time. Politically, it is founded on tribal identity: '*jal jungal jamin*', territorial rights which include land, customary rights and worldview; culture, identity and social work as understood within the perspective of a cultural and political entity, a collective identity, a tribe. In such a context, there is a dynamic politics of autonomy, self-rule and self determination as proactive self identification process in the context of the larger politics of categorisation. Implied in this process is the politics of identification and/or scheduling as an ongoing dynamic socio-political process. The point of emphasis in this paper is that within the given space, it is important to understand state, tribe and society from a coexistence and federal frame of self-governance system. This formulation can be understood as the process of the State, as a political entity, recognising the authority or governance in the tribal community: 'to have control over the resources and to manage institutions that promote their own development while maintaining their culture and identity' (Singh, 1990; Savyasaachi, 1998). Therefore, positioned from a tribal identity frame, development has to be culturally and politically contextualised to create a free political space for tribal communities to exercise their power and authority over their community and safeguard their resources, culture and identity.

In this context, the state has to work towards an inclusive, equitable and just development process taking into consideration culture, identity and self governance: 'to protect and develop them along their own genius' (Elwin, 1957). In this process, identity based resistance or mobilisation has been commonly observed as a socio-political strategy to negotiate for space across tribal habitations. Every move towards the process of building a modern nation exerts coercion on the tribal identity. Therefore, a nation building process in the context of tribal society is a politics of narratives of interaction and power—a dynamic discourse between the State, tribe, nationalities and ethnicity in a multi-nations context (Burman, 1983; Singh, 1990; Devalle, 1992; Oommen, 1997; and Xaxa, 2005). The social work intervention strategy in such a context should involve the conscious movement towards 'working through tribes' (Akhup, 2009: 609–610). The theoretical premise that underlines this approach assumes that tribal societies are epistemological communities (Akhup, 2012) which are defined by the foundational reality: their worldview, beliefs and science as rational and practical. Intervention at the most should focus on giving them the recognition of their agency besides providing accurate information, relevant education or training to allow individuals to change on their own. Intervention should be aimed towards

enabling the tribes to strengthen their system, secure territorial rights for ‘*jal jungal jamin*’. Research and advocacy on self governance, creation of a discourse, promotion of visionary thinking, engagement with them on issues and/or reconceptualising the situation in order to bring about greater understanding about the need for change would go a long way towards intervention towards empowerment. Specifically, participatory rural appraisal and village planning (micro) can be important skills for effective intervention in the scheduled areas.

Three theoretical positions from a historical context have been broadly identified to situate tribal social work and the intervention strategies: a) work among tribes; b) tribe centric approach; and c) tribal social work.

Work among Tribes

This approach, which is premised on the ‘problem-solving school of thought’, adopts a colonial understanding of tribes. It tends to view tribes as objects of welfare and development. They are usually referred to as the recipients and/or beneficiaries. This theoretical framework focuses on assimilation. Debates in social anthropology refer to this approach as the functionalist school thought envisioning the ‘death of tribe’, which perceives tribes as ‘a stage in an evolutionary phase’. In other words, it is a top-down approach that considers tribal areas as resource-poor, people with no skills and with poor access to new production raising technologies. It is primarily motivated by a mission to save tribes with a missionary zeal of ‘working for tribal community’. Therefore, the focus is on service delivery as the interface between the state, voluntary organisations and community is premised on charity and philanthropy, usually inspired by religious fervour, and has therefore also been defined as the ‘supply side’ approach (Clark, 1993). The paradigm focuses on efficient delivery of inputs, that is, implementation of government and other sponsored development programmes (Iyengar, 1998).

Tribe Centric Social Work

There are three historical processes that define this stage of the intervention. Firstly, that intervention in the scheduled areas has come a long way accompanied by various policy research and reflection of both the state and voluntary organisations working in the tribal areas. In particular, it is informed by the historical developments since the *Panchsheel* period and, in specific, the establishment of the social welfare department and grant-in-aid funding for voluntary organisations in the 1950s. The 1970s further

marked the emergence of Sub Plans. However, a major shift in focus came in the 1990s with the institution of the Ministry of Tribal Affairs. Theoretically, this move is deemed as a 'tribe centric approach', the first initiative at the governmental level. Since then, there have been various pro-tribe policies emerging such as the National Draft Policy for Tribes, Forest Rights Act, Samata Judgement and the Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996 (PESA), which indicate a movement towards tribe centric intervention.

Secondly, at the pedagogical level, 'tribe centric social work' emerged within the larger disciplinary and professional boundaries of the schools of social work along 'women centred' and 'children centred' social work practice. This framework operates within the larger pedagogical framework of school of thought in the pre-critical phase. In earlier writings, the author had also proposed a need for shifting the focus from the paradigm: 'working for tribes' and 'working with tribes' to 'working through tribes' within this framework (Akhup, 2009). It was around this time that professional interventions in scheduled areas by way of fieldwork intervention were seriously discussed.

Thirdly, in this phase, the organisations are observed to be playing an active role in the process of development with the basic aim of 'working with the tribe'. They are seen as an active agent of change with a strong vision for the development of tribes. This stage comes as a reaction to the service interface approach. However, studies (Bhatt, 1995; and Akhup, 2010) have also shown that organisations could not always interface successfully with the tribal communities. In fact, there is an increasing focus on understanding the nature and impact of the state-voluntary organisation nexus within a neo-liberal capitalist interest in the schedule areas.

Tribal Social work

Tribal social work is an indigenous approach to social work theory and practice; an embedded model. It is defined by the reality of tribes. Tribal society positioned as an 'epistemological community' is an organic theoretical foundation for tribal social work. It situates the epistemological community on the ontological foundation of what it is. It is an agency. As an approach, it accepts the post Barth theory of understanding boundaries, but extends itself to the level of understanding power structures that often disempowers. This framework is inclusive with the possibility of entering into analytical engagement at the level of intersectionality: intra-inter and tribe-

state. It is assumed that the underlying theoretical premise of this approach presupposes that schedule areas and tribal communities cannot be perceived as objects of change. They are not at the receiving end, but are the principle subjects of change, changes and, agency is foundational and not external.

CONCLUSION

It is important to take note of the underlined social work perspective in the context of tribes. Social work intervention has to be operationalised within the theoretical premise of tribal social work and the discourse. Social work, social action and development should be considered as part of the social structure. People are the masters of their own history, development and change. The concept of agency fairly explains the basic premise of change and transformation in the context of tribes. In a sense, social work in the context of tribes is political. It has to include the concepts of space and territoriality understood within the larger multicultural and democratic framework. This is a road map towards a sensitive contract among stakeholders to minimise conflicts and fragmentation, and to maximise justice and respect for the tribal society. Therefore, the author is not arguing for an ‘out-of-box (state)’ paradigm, but negotiating for the recognition of a political space for a tribal social work discourse expressed in ‘*jal jungal jamin*’, self governance, power and authority of the tribes, and the right to govern themselves within the democratic frame of the country.

NOTE

1. The approach paper to the 10th plan qualifies this move as one of the major strategies in the Tenth Plan.

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