CHAPTER III

TRIBAL SITUATION IN ADILABAD

Among the districts of Andhra Pradesh, Adilabad is the biggest district in area, extending over 16,133 sq. kms., but the smallest in population size with 12.88 lakhs. The biggest river in South India i.e., Godavari and its tributaries like Penganga (which is called Pranahita and Wardha in the lower reaches), Kadam and Pedavagu drain the district. But for the Kadam, on which an irrigation dam is constructed, the other rivers could not so far be harnessed for irrigation purposes in this district. Consequently, though the total cropped area in the district is 38 per cent of the
total geographical area, only 6.7 per cent of the cropped area is irrigated which is again lowest in the State.

The district abounds in natural resources. With black cotton soil predominating over the other types, agriculture can be flourishing occupation. The rich mineral resources like coal, clays, limestone manganese, iron ore etc., gave vast scope for the development of coal, cement and other mineral-based industries and today the Bellampalli-Mancherial belt is one of the important mineral-based industrial complexes in the State.

The fertile black soil with conducive climate naturally helped in the extensive cotton cultivation, which in turn provided the raw material for the flourishing ginning factories in the district.

Again the rich forests of the district sprawling over an area of 7 lakh hectares forming 43.6 per cent of the total geographical area and constituting most important source of income to the State prompted the starting of forest-based industries like paper mills and artificial silk factories at Sirpur Kagaznagar. The forest revenue per square kilometre in Adilabad circle is the highest in the State accounting for Rs. 2,420. The total forest revenue from the district is also the highest in the state with the returns touching 177 lakhs.

The climate of the district which is hot and moderately humid is conducive for productive activity. The rainfall, in the district is fairly reliable and high, the percentage variability...
being less than 20 in eight out of 10 taluks, with an annual average rainfall of 995 millimetres, higher than the State average.

In spite of the vast resource endowment and industrial activity in the district it is the most backward district in the State in human resource development and infrastructural facilities. Density of population is lowest in the State with 80 persons per sq.km. and about 30.76 per cent of the population belong to weaker sections - Scheduled Castes (17.62 %) and Scheduled Tribes (13.14 %). 351 villages and towns were electrified constituting 22.6 per cent to the total which is again lowest in Telangana region. Similarly, rural communication facilities are also very poorly developed. As many as 1149 villages, forming 74.4 per cent of the total villages in the district are not having any road connection at all which is also the highest for the Telangana region. Of the 6,567 kms. of roads maintained by the Public Works Department barely 3 kms. is cement concrete with 86 kms. of metalled and 567 kms. of black top asphalt roads. Another important service sector, education also reflects the backwardness of the district. While the State literacy percentage is 24, for the district it is only 14.1. Even institutional facilities are very poorly developed. There are 1200 Primary Schools, 92 Middle Schools and 35 Secondary Schools in the district. The Primary level facilities in the district indicate that it is second backward district with
However, the general economic activity in the district is conducive for sizable contribution to State income. In fact, though, the district is considered to be economically backward from the level of living of the people, the rich forest and industrial resources boost up the State income and because of the high income from these sectors, the per capita income of the district is Rs.557.00 (at current prices) which is a little higher than the State per capital income of Rs.545.00 (at current prices) for the year 1970-71.

The resource endowment of the area and development situation of the district brings into light certain interesting features of the planned development. The quick growth of industries sector and the rich forest wealth have made sizeable contribution to the State income and the district is one of the important districts contributing sizeable income to the State exchequer. Yet the need sector is very poorly developed as is evident from the comparative backwardness of the district in education and infrastructural facilities like electricity and roads. Even in core sectors like agriculture and irrigation the district is very backward. Though the district is the most important cotton growing district, productivity in respect of cotton showed a disturbing declining trend in the recent years if a study of the index number of agricultural

productivity is made taking 1956-57 as the base of state level. Similarly, the very low percentage of area irrigated i.e., 6.1% which is about 1/5th of the State percentage of 30.01 is another indicator of backwardness of agriculture in the district which is mainly thriving on dry farming without much scope for intensive and improved agricultural practices as lack of adequate irrigation facilities hamper the extensive use of chemical fertilisers and restrict scope for introduction of short duration and high yielding varieties leaving agricultural production as a 'gamble in monsoons'.

It is thus evident that the high per capita income of the district is more due to high capital intensive industries and forests flourishing in the district rather than a product of agricultural activity though it is the main stay of the population. This further indicates that while the areas natural resources are developed to yield maximum returns, the people remained backward and poverty stricken.

Further, Adilabad has a high chunk (about 1/3rd of total district population) of population belonging to weaker sections like Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and the percentage of Scheduled Tribe population in the district is 13.14% which again is another indicator of the backwardness of the people of the district.

While the discussion in the preceding pages gives a fairly clear idea of the relative backwardness of the district in the State, the following indicators worked out elucidate the
difference in level of development existing between areas of tribal concentration and the district.

**TABLE 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No.</th>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>At the beginning of V Plan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tribal Area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Per capita income.</td>
<td>Rs.209.90*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Percentage of irrigated area to the net area sown.</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Percentage of literacy.</td>
<td>7.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>No. of beds per lakh of population.</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Percentage of villages electrified.</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Density of population (No. of persons per sq.km.)</td>
<td>50.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Value of gross agricultural output per acre.</td>
<td>Rs.147.12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These indicators are worked out for the project area carved out as part of the Integrated Tribal Development Project exercise.** The indicators clearly show that in this backward district the tribal areas are much more backward. These indicators reflect the level of development achieved in an area where about

** Integrated Tribal Development Project, Adilabad, Tribal Cultural Research and Training Institute, Hyderabad, 1975.
77 per cent of the Tribal population is found concentrated.

The low level of development as revealed by the indicators does not necessarily mean that the tribal societies are stagnant or no systematic effort has been initiated in the tribal areas. In fact the tribals of Adilabad have been the recipients of a series of development programmes specially evolved for their benefit during the last three and half decades as detailed in the next two chapters since the present chapter is intended for a study of the dynamics of culture change sweeping throughout the length and breadth of the tribal areas of the State with a historical perspective.

The present day tribal societies of Adilabad are in a state of flux. This has been due to the cumulative effects of various processes of cultural dynamics like directed, voluntary and imitative changes. The process of imitative change has been in operation since time immemorial with special impetus received since 1940's from the programmes of directed change initiated during 1942 in the then Nizam's time through the instrumentality of Gond Education scheme, Land Assignment programme, constitution of statutory Panchayats etc., which ultimately dovetailed into the programmes of planned development initiated during First Five Year Plan, intensified from the Second Five Year Plan, through which the opening of Multi-purpose Projects and extended through Tribal Development Blocks to other areas of tribal concentration in the District during
Third and Fourth Plan periods which are again fortified and consolidated with integrated area development approach of the Fifth Plan period covering larger areas of tribal concentration. Consequently, the cultural transformation of the tribes of the district can be conveniently divided into three phases as given below:

1. The contact situation as revealed in mythology, ancient monuments, historical works etc., and the socio-ritual and political consequences of the situation.

2. The first phase of directed change from 1942- which gave a new impetus and direction to the cultural transformation of the tribes with the initiation of Gond Education Scheme etc.

3. The second phase of directed change of the planning era from the beginning of First Five Year Plan to date.

Before entering into a descriptive and quantitative discussion of cultural transformation process, it is imperative that a basic idea of the various aspects of tribal life is formed. There are seven identified Scheduled Tribes viz., Gond Pardhan, Kolam, Thoti, Naikpod, Lambadas and Andh. Except Naik and Lambadas the other tribes are found almost exclusively inhabiting Adilabad district while Naikpods and Lambadas are dispersed tribe found living in almost all the forest areas of Telangana districts. However, Andhs are confined only to a few
villages in Utnoor Block, Gond is the most populous of the tribes, Thoti being the least numerous as shown below:

**TABLE - 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No.</th>
<th>Name of the Tribe</th>
<th>Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1961</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Gond (Including Naikpod also)</td>
<td>93,334</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Kolam</td>
<td>16,459</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Pardhan</td>
<td>9,344</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Andh</td>
<td>1,468</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Naikpod (included under Gonds)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Thoti</td>
<td>429</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Lambada</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As the Lambadas of Telangana region were included in Scheduled Tribes list only from July, 1976 by Presidential Order, their population figures (1971) were not readily available.

Gonds are the most dominant tribe of the area popularly known as Raj Gonds meaning princely Gonds. The derivation of the word Gond is not clear. While others refer them as Gond, they call themselves 'Koitir' or 'Kei' meaning 'people' in their language. Cunningham observes that the name Gond is derived from Gouda, 'a geographical term which gave its name to the Gond people.* According to him Gouda or Gaur, the

'Western' Gauda of Wilford comprised the districts of Betul, Chhindwara, Seoni and Mandla. "In A.D. 1041 Gauda formed part of the dominion of Karnadeva Raja of Chedi." Cunningham's view was supported by Chatterton and he says "possibly the name Gond came to them, because in early days this part of India formed the Western portion of the Old Gaur Kingdom of Bengal and so the Dravidian Koiturs, who lived in Gaur land became known as Gonds.** They trace their descent from groups of mythical brothers—four, five, six and seven and the Gond society is divided into four exogamous phratries (Sagas) named after the four groups of mythical brothers. The members of each phratry are considered to be the descendents of the respective groups of brothers. Each phratry is in turn divided into a number of clans (Paris). The prefix 'Raj' distinguished the Gonds of Adilabad from other groups of great Gond tribe such as Dhruwe, Maria, etc., and the attribute 'Raj' is considered to have been derived from the princely status they enjoyed for a long period as rulers and chieftains of the famous Gondwana with Chanda as the principal seat of Gond rule and Manikargh, Sirpur, Utnoor etc., as vassals where the ruined forts today stand witness to the once flourishing Gond rule.

The term, Raj Gond, on the other hand was attributed to racial admixture by Forsyth when he observed that "Towards

* Ibid.
the east the mixed breed call themselves Gond - Rajputs or shortly Raj Gonds and are the direct result of the alliance between the Rajput adventurer and the Gond* and this view was conditionally accepted by R.V.Russell**. However, C.B.Lucie Smith attributes it either to noble descent or conquering Gond groups and says the epithet 'Raj' was originally applied to royal and noble Gond families from which the distinction, spread to their followers and the governing class generally, or it may describe the leading Gond tribe which in ancient days conquered the land from other aboriginal Clans.***

In contrast W.V.Grigson attributes it to initative social factors rather than the historical and thinks that the term Raj Gond was a product of "the tendency, familiar throughout India, of local groups of primitive races which are gradually being hinduized to regard themselves and to be accepted by their Hindu neighbours as separate Hindu castes under new name.****

Haimendorf, however, agrees with the view of Lucie Smith, especially in the context of Adilabad Gonds. He says that the situation in Adilabad seems rather to accord with second

suggestion of Lucie Smith, for here the Raj Gonds do not form a ruling class or even a class of privileged economic status, but an entire tribal group comprising all strata of society from the feudal chiefs down to the poorest labourer.*

Starting as far back as 870 A.D. the Gonds ruled either as independent rulers or as vassals of the Khiljis, Moghuls, Bahamanies and Marathas until 1751 A.D., when the last Gond ruler of Chanda, Nalkanth Shah was deposed by Raghoji who annexed Chanda to the Maratha Kingdom.

According to the origin myth of Gonds, which is preserved in the songs of the Pradhans, a satellite tribe of Gonds who served as bards to Gonds, it was Pahandi Kupar Lingo, their culture Hero who rescued the mythical Gond Brothers (from whom all Gonds are believed to have sprang up as mentioned earlier) from God Mahadeva who threw them into a cave. It was Pahandi Kupar Lingo again who settled them, found brides for them and laid foundations for the present day social organisation based on four fold phratry organisation and political organisation among the Gonds.

While describing the conditions of Gonds of Adilabad, Prof. Von Furer-Haimendorf (1948) mentions that "as long as the Gonds remained the ruling race, their standard of living and their material culture seems to have been by no means low, and there can be little doubt that,

HARVESTING

PLOUGHING
relative to the general standards of yesterday, it was higher than it is to-day."*

The traditional calling of present day Gonds is settled agriculture. Many of them are owner cultivators, sometimes employing labourers for helping them in agricultural operations. Poorer sections among Gonds also serve as agricultural labourers for both Gond and non-tribal land-lords. Jowar and cotton are grown extensively with rainfed or dry irrigated (Asman tari) paddy confined to small patches. Mixed cropping is in vogue and pulses like black gram, green gram, Bengal gram etc., are sown in between rows of cotton or jowar or paddy plants. Wooden ploughs with iron shares, iron sickles, iron crow bars and axes are traditional agricultural implements. Carts with small wheels called 'Rengis' drawn by diminutive but agile and energetic bullocks and ideally suited to hilly areas are used for carrying people while slightly larger carts are the major means of transporting goods and hill produce. Most of the area is under dry cultivation. Both men and women work in fields. Gum 'Karaya' and 'Chironjee' **seed are collected and sold to supplement the income from agriculture. Though Beedi leaf bearing plants are an abundant wild growth, the leaves are auctioned and many contractors seasonally employ Gonds as labourers for collection of leaves on daily wages. The Gond are

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** From fruits of Bachavania Latifolia.
is famous for bamboo also, which is used as raw material in the manufacture of Rayon and Paper in the Sirpur Paper and artificial silk mills. But it is very rarely that Gonds engage themselves in bamboo coupe cutting operations.

The Gond ritual practices and seasonal festivals are vividly described by Prof. Haimendorf in his monograph on Raj Gonds of Adilabad. 'Persa Pen' is the supreme deity the Gonds whose cult of deities are found in every Gond village. Besides the Hindu temples of Shiva (Popularly known as Shambhu Mahadev), Vishnu and Hanuman are also found in Gond villages. But these are considered to be the temples constructed by the former Hindu rulers and Gond knowledge of Hindu Gods very limited and confused. Sethu Madhava Rao* mentions that "the Gonds are said to have been thrown by Mahadeva into a cave. There is thus an attempt to link Gond traditions to the figures of Hindu mythology."

Another interesting tribe of Adilabad are the Pardhans, who are the traditional bards to the Gonds. Though inferior in status to the Gond, they are the advisors and bards to the Gond patrons whose mythology is preserved in the songs of the Pardhans. Each one of the Gond clans has its hereditary Pardhan bard who is to know the Gond origin myth and history and descent of the Gond family to which he is attached while their patron Gonds are ignorant of their own mythology and family history.

* Sethu Madhava Rao, Among the Gonds of Adilabad (1949) A.I. He worked among Ponds as a Revenue Officer in charge of assignment and other programmes of development during Nis time and wrote monograph on Gonds and also wrote Gondi and Kolami Grammar, of Adilabad District.
The Pardhans are considered to be very shrewed and this great quality of Pardhans has been amply recognised and incorporated in their mythology. It was Pardhan cultural hero Hirasuku Pardhan who gave shelter to the Gond heroine Manke when she sought his protection to escape the ill treatment of her husband. The services of family Pardhan are indispensable while conducting Gond marriage negotiations. In former days, if a Gond is to marry a particular Gond girl he used to send his Pardhan bard to the house of the girl's father to mediate and settle the matter. At that time when the father of the girl refused or became adamant to reasonable offers, the Pardhan used to fix his stick called 'Gorka' in the Court Yard of the girl's house. It was for the girl's father either to throw out the stick or agree for the proposal. Usually, the father of the girl dare not throw out the stick and yielded to the wise counsel of the Pardhan. However, this practice is on the wane now.

The Gonds are very fond of listening to the Pardhan songs. On every important occasion the Pardhans act as bards and musicians at the Gond ceremonies and sing Gond mythology throughout the night to the tune of their traditional string instrument called 'Kingri'.

The mother tongue of Pardhans is Marathi but most of them speak Gondi which is major medium of communication between the tribal groups of the region. Their social organisation is also based on the Gond exogamous phratry system.
with same clan composition and clan names.

In spite of being bards and trumpet players traditionally for Gond families, the main occupation of Pardhanas however is agriculture and agricultural labour. A majority of the Pardhanas now thrive on settled cultivation and agricultural and forest labour. They, also collect minor forest produce like 'Chronjee', gum Karaya, Mohwa flower, 'Add' leaf etc., both for household consumption and selling to Girijan Co-operative Corporation.

Though their social status is very low, Pardhanas are economically as advanced as Gonds and are a force to reckon with in the regional political organisation in view of their ingrained capability for manipulation, manœuvrability and adaptability to changing socio-political and economic situations.

Kolam is another tribe of the district with distinct language, and way of life characterised by subsistence level of living but having social organisation similar to Gonds. Again the Kolams have their own rituals and pantheon of Gods inspite of their participation in the Gond festivals and rituals.

Until recently they were a tribe of shifting cultivators doing agriculture on hill slopes and jungle clearings with the help of a digging stick or a hoe. While the Gonds and Pradhans live in foot hill areas and plains areas, the Kolams are mostly confined to hill slopes living in small groups. Even where they live amidst Gonds, their small settlements are constructed a little away from the main village where Gonds live. They are

The undulating tract with stones and boulders lying between mountain ranges and flat lands.
popularly known as Kolam 'Gudas' meaning Kolam hamlets. Their thatched huts of bamboo wattle covered with hill grass are smaller in size than those of their neighbouring Gonds. The Kolams look more primitive than Gonds and Pradhans with coarser physical features, darker skin complexion, thick lips and heart shaped faces.

The Kolams speak Kolami belonging to the Dravidian group of languages without any script and nearer to Telugu and Kannada. Many of them know Gondi. But the Kolami spoken in Utnoor area differs a little from the Kolami spoken in Chinnur and Sirpur areas due to heavy influence of Telugu. Some of the Kolams and Gonds of the region forgot their respective mother tongues and speak Telugu or highly Teluguised Kolami or Gondi and frequently use Telugu as medium of communication instead of Gondi which plays a similar role in Utnoor area.

The physical features of Kolams of the two regions are more refined and resemble the neighbouring Telugu population indicating ethnic admixture due to their close contacts with the Telugu population amidst whom they live.

Kolams of the hilly tracts live in small and almost isolated groups with little knowledge of other groups and even their own group living in other areas. In contrast to the Gonds and Pradhans their knowledge of other areas of Kolam habitation and physiography is very vague and limited to
their immediate neighbourhood indicating lack of communication with other areas and tribes and the consequent isolation. Though their social system is based on the Gond exogamous phratry organisation and clan grouping, local variations are also noticed. While the Kolams of Chinnur and Sirpur adopted the Surnames of the Telugu population amidst whom they are living, those inhabiting the Gond country have the exogamous phratry system of the Gonds with clan names as their surnames.

Due to scarcity of land for shifting from cultivated patches in view of increased population pressure and stringent forest conservancy measures, most of the Kolams became agricultural labourers on Gond fields and of non-tribal immigrant cultivators while a few adopted themselves to settled agriculture also. Besides hoe cultivation, the Kolams are also adept in basket weaving. It continues to be a subsidiary traditional occupation.

Ayyak is the Chief deity of Kolams and they claim descent from the mythical Bhima second of the five Pandava brothers. The Gonds refer them as 'Pujari' or priests though they do not invariably be the priests of Gond deities as 'Katora' is the priest of Gond village deities belonging to Gond Tribe. However, instances are not lacking where in some villages a Kolam acts as the priest of Gond deities. Kolams participate in all the festivals of Gond deities and offer worship. Bhima, the Kolam deity finds a place in the cult of Gond village deities indicating the symbiotic relations existing between Kolams and Gonds in ritual practices besides economic activities and social life. Though Kolams serve Gonds
as agricultural labourers, adopted social structure of the Gonds and perform duties as the village priests still their separate language, worship of Bhima as high god, distinct physical features and life cycle economics distinguish them from Gonds.

Thoti is a small tribe and similar to Pardhans they are also bards to Gonds. But unlike Pardhans they do not have Marathi as their mother tongue as Gondi is their mother tongue. The Thoti bards use pure Gondi in the recitation of origin myth of Gond race. While comparing the Gondi used in the recitation of Gond myth by Pardhans and Thotis Sethu Madhava Rao* remarks that "I felt that the language used by the Pardhans contained and unnecessarily large number of Marathi words whereas the Thotis were sparing in the use of Marathi". He rightly attributes this difference to the influence of mother tongue Marathi of Pardhans and Gondi of Thotis.

The Thotis have same four fold phratry organisation of the Gonds similar to Pardhans and Kolams. Their social status is lower than that of Pardhans. Consequently, they occupy the lowest rung of the social ladder of the tribal societies in the area.

Though Thoties are also bards to Raj Gonds their services are limited to a few Gond families unlike the Pardhans who are patronised extensively. Unlike the Pardhan in services of a Thoti's are not requisitioned during marriage negotiations or as advisors in similar situations.

Thoti women are adept in tattooing and tribal women of Gond, Kolam, Pardhan etc., and even some of the plains settlers get their forehead, calf below the knees, chest, fore arm and upper arm etc., elaborately tattooed.

It is very rarely that Thotis practice settled cultivation as they do not usually possess lands. They are mainly agricultural and forest labourers. As bards to Gonds, their services are remunerated in kind annually and other perquisites during ceremonies. Besides, Thoti women further supplement their income by earning a little in kind or cash through tattooing.

Another important tribe of the district is the Naikpod, the once shifting cultivator tribe who could successfully adapt to settled cultivation. This tribe is usually identified with Kolams in view of their common traditional occupation of shifting cultivation and their language, Naikadi which in many respects resembles Kolami, the mother tongue of Kolams. But in their social status and social structure they are entirely different from Kolams. Naikpods claim superior status over Kolams, two rungs above Kolams i.e., one step above Gonds. While the Kolams eat cooked food in Gond houses, Naikpods do not accept cooked food from Gonds. But Gonds eat cooked food from Naikpods. Further, both Kolams and Gonds were once beef eating communities which is always taboo among Naikpods. Thus Naikpods occupy the highest rung of the social ladder of the area. Similarly the Gond four fold phratry organisation adopted by Kolams of the region is absent among Naikpods. Naikpods have exogamous septs or surnames without totemic symbols. Even their ritual structure is different from Kolams. Even though Bhimana is the common God to both tribes who is worshipped even by Gonds, Ayyak the high God of
Kolams is not recognised as high god by Naikpods. Their occupational base also shows variation. Naikpods rear Tussar Cocoonos traditionally whereas Kolams do not know the art of rearing and collecting of Tussar cocoonos.

The present day Naikpods are mostly settled cultivators and agricultural labourers and to some extent forest labourers also. They are adept in both wet and dry cultivation living in separate 'Guda's/hamlets of Gond main villages or some times in exclusive villages.

Andh is another small tribe of settled agriculturists. Their original home land was Maharastra from where they spilled over into Adilabad district. While they are included in Scheduled Castes list in Maharastra they are included in Scheduled Tribes lists in Andhra Pradesh. Their mother tongue is Marathi. Their stature is short and skin colour dark. In their facial features they resemble the low caste Marathas like the Incars, Ojaris etc., who are also found living in Adilabad district adjoining the Maharastra border areas.

They do not profess any tribal religion of the region or participate in the rituals of the other tribal festivals as they are a part of the Hindu system professing Saivism with Shabhu or Siva as their supreme deity. Andhs do not freely mix with the Scheduled Castes of the region and claim superiority over them. Inter dining with other low caste groups is not practised. Adult males wear the sacred thread to which Shiva's Phalic symbol 'Shiv Ling' is attached. However, they accept cooked food from the hands of Naikpod, Kolam and Gond. But these three
groups do not accept cooked food from the hands of Andhs. The two low status tribal groups of the region, Pardhan and Thoti eat cooked food from the hands of Andhs but Andhs do not accept cooked food from these two groups.

This small group is a flourishing agricultural tribe, raising paddy, jowar, cotton and pulses in their fields owning cattle, carts and other agricultural implements required for pursuing settled cultivation.

The hard working Andh men and women look like any other Maharastrian agricultural group in their modes of dress, hair style, decoration etc. Their life cycle ceremonies and seasonal festivals conform to Marathi rituals and festivals rather than the local tribal or other groups' performances in the region.

Banjara is another large tribal group who immigrated to Adilabad and other parts of Andhra Pradesh along with the invading Muslim armies from the North, especially the Mughals. They were suppliers of rations to the warring Mughal, Maratha and even the British in the wars that were fought in Deccan between these forces. After the establishment of the British empire the hostilities ceased and the services of these Nomadic traders on pack animals were not more required, nor the trading activity profitable in the face of stiff competition from other groups who used faster modes of transport like buses and trains. Consequently a sort of mal adjustment had set in for some time during which the Banjaras took to highway robbery and thieving resulting in notifying them as a criminal tribe which was later
on denotified after Independence. Though a section of the Banjaras living in coastal Andhra and Telengana were notified as Scheduled Tribe as per Presidential Order, 1956, the Banjaras living in Telangana area could be scheduled in 1976 only after removal of the area restriction.

The traditional occupation of the Banjaras is cattle rearing. Many of them took to settled agriculture and agricultural labour. Their distinct dress pattern studded with small mirrors stitched into lower and upper garments, glistening anklets, silver ornaments hanging from hair and necklaces of various types especially those of old silver coin, ivory or ivory like plastic bangles worn from the wrist to upper arm make Banjara women typical of the tribal and rural women of Andhra Pradesh.

The Banjara claim descent from Mota and Mola, the two mythical brothers who tended Krishna's cows. Banjara culture and language indicate that they hail from Northern India and their folk lore depicts them to be the descendants from Rajput stock. The present day Banjaras of Andhra Pradesh live in detached settlements of huts called 'Tandas' usually at some distance from main village. Each 'Tanda' is headed by a 'Nail who acts as the spokesman of the 'Tanda' besides deciding social disputes. The Banjaras are strong and virile with fair complexion.

Like many other tribes the Banjaras also believe that the world is full of spirits, both malign and benign. Sestal:
TRIBAL
WOMEN

Gondi

Gondi

zenthan

Thoki

Thoki

holam

holam

Pardhan

Pardhan

Banjara

Banjara
and Tulja-Bhavani are the two malevolent deities that are feared and appeased through prayer and animal sacrifice. Benevolent Gods of Hindu belief especially Lord Venkateswara or Balaji besides Shava Bhaya of their own are worshipped. Their festivals have two types of implication productive and seasonal. The rituals like those connected with Agricultural production and fertility of their maiden provide for much pomp and elaborative. The Holi festival typical of the North Indian ritual system is celebrated with much pomp and festivity.

The preceding discussion gives an idea of the prevailing tribal ways of life and social organisation of the region. In general the tribal groups of the area can be arranged in a hierarchy based on their commensal practices and commonly accepted social status of each tribal group vis-a-vis other groups as given below with Thoti at the bottom and Naikpod at the apex. Banjaras are an exclusive group. As they are immigrants, they do not fit into the social hierarchy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Naikpod</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kolam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pardhan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thoti</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is generally argued that tribal societies are egalitarian. But the 'pristine purity' and egalitarian basis of these societies underwent metamorphic processes due to age old
contact with the Great Tradition. Consequently, while retaining the traditional tribal stratum, certain practices and precepts of Hindu society are imbedded into the system resulting in the emergence of a jumble or conglomeration of tribal and Hindu practices each intertwining with the other and at the same time retaining its own peculiarity. The Gond origin myth and pantheon, the Koalm pantheon of deities and language and the Naikpod social system and the language amply illustrate the impact of Hindu systems of religion, language, social order etc.

The situation has been the product of a process of contact, interaction and absorption of cultural practices by Little Tradition from Great Tradition. The earliest reference to primitive stage of Gonds was made by Ptolemy who described them as leaf clad. Cunningham believes that there may have been leaf clad Gonds in the Ptolemy and these are the people intended by his Phullitae - Gondali. When exactly the actual contact between tribals and Hindus occurred is lost in the obscurity of time. While it is futile to search for contact point in the remote past between tribals and non-tribals, the mythology of Gonds and other tribes fairly reveals that these aboriginals are in constant interaction with outsiders since time immemorial. Hindu God Sambhu Mahadeo and his consort Girijal Parvathi figure prominently in Gond mythology sung by the Pardhans. Bhimana, the second of the Great Pandava brothers of Mahabharatha legend is the high god

Kolams who finds a place in Gond pantheon of gods also. The mention of ninety million Gods, various sages like Vyasa and Hindu high Gods like Brahma, Isthu (or Vishnu), Ramadhenu, the heavenly cow and the Nether world in Gond mythology also reveal the flexibility of tribal religion and the impact of Hindu religion and beliefs on it. Naikpods also celebrate many of the Hindu festivals like Ugadi, Sankranthi, Sivarathri etc., besides their own deities like Chilakalayya, Konda Bheemana, Pochamma etc.

In their language also many Marathi, Telugu and Urdu words find a place. While Marathi words are frequently used in Gondi spoken in Utnoor and Adilabad Taluqs, Telugu words are liberally used in Gondi spoken in Boath, Sirpur, Luxettipet and Chinnur Taluqs, being predominantly Telugu speaking areas. Urdu words also find a place, though to a lesser degree in the Gondi spoken by the tribes in all these areas similar to Telugu and Marathi spoken in the area as Urdu was the State Language in the erstwhile Nizam’s dominion.

Both as independent rulers and as vassals of stronger kingdoms, the Gonds and other tribes of the region were constantly subjected to the various reformatory and religious movements that were sweeping through the larger society. These movements made dents in the local tribal societies also.

Forsyth* believes that these Gond Kingdoms were actually established by the Rajputs who immigrated to these tracts between the 11th and 15th Centuries or even earlier in the wake of pressure from Mohammedan invaders of upper Indian. However

Temple* was of the opinion that these kingdoms were established by Gonds only with the acquired skills of marksmen or sturdy warriors while battling with wild beasts with bow and arrow and this skill gave them enough courage to organise themselves under chieftains who could establish at least three or four principalities including low lands where non-tribals lived and from them they borrowed their civilization. Temple's view was also supported by Chatterton**. He observed that nearly 600 years ago four independent Gond Kingdoms arose more or less simultaneously and these were (1) Garha, (Northern), (2) Deogarh (Central), (3) Kerla, (Central), and (4) Sirpur/Chanda (Southern).

Until the beginning of 14th Century most of the Gond country was under the rule of Yadava Kings. According to legend the first Gond Kingdom was established in 895 A.D. by Bhim Ballal Sing with Sirpur as his capital. The legend mentions a number of Gond rulers like Hira Sing, Kesar Sing, Dinkar Shah, Ram Sing and Suraji Ballal Shah and the last of these was supposed to have won the title of 'Shershah' and secured gift of Gondwana from Mandla Southwards from the Emperor of Delhi in appreciation of his services. It was his son Khandkya Ballal Shah who shifted the capital of kingdom from Sirpur to the present day Ballarshah first and then to Chanda. Hir Shah, Ram Shah, Kondi Shah and his son Babaji were some of the Gond Kings whose names are mentioned in the legends. The last mentioned is described as having ten thousand horse and forty-thousand infantry besides possessing the

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diamond mines of Wairagarh in Ain-I-Akbari. From this it can inferred that Babaji ruled 'Chanda around 1600 A.D. and shifting of capital from Sirpur to Chanda by Khandkya Ballal Shah must have taken place at the beginning of 16th Century by taking into account the period of the rule of three Gond Kings in between Khandkyas Balal Shah and Babaji. Though legends mentioned that the first Gond King Bhim Ballal Sing established his Kingdom in 895 A.D., middle of 14th Century or after the collapse of the Kakatiya Kingdom in Warangal in 1323 A.D., Gonds must have established their rule taking advantage of the confusion that prevailed for two decades consequent upon the fall of Kakatiyas. Around "1350 A.D.Gonds seized power and established the Kingdom at Sirpur, whence they must have over flown into the present district of Chanda."* However, the Gond Kingdom of Chanda was restricted to Sirpur and Chanda. Evidence is lacking to show that Gonds replaced the Yadvass in those parts of Adilabad which were included in the former Berars, viz., the taluks of Rajura and Kinwat (Transferred to Maharashtra after States Reorganisation in 1956 A.D.) and Adilabad, Beath and Utnoor retained in present day Andhra Pradesh. These five taluqs latter passed on to the Bahmanis and their successors, the Nizam Shahis. The remaining taluks of former Adilabad district (Nizam's Dominions) viz., Chinnur, Laxettipet and Nirmal were under the Rajahs of Warangal. Consequently, it could be safely concluded that the Gonds could replace the former dynasties only in Sirpur and Chanda areas.

The history of Deccan provides many glimpses into the notable role played by Gonds and other tribal of the area in the

* Sethu Madhava Rao, Among the Gonds of Adilabad, 1949 PP.13
political vicissitudes of the Kingdoms of Warangal, Bahamani, Kherla, Malwa, Khandesh etc.

Since Firoz Shah Bahmani subjugated Raja Narsing of Kherla and Gondwana (no evidence to show that whether Raja Narsing was a Gond or not) in 802 Hijri (1399 A.D.) the Gonds seem to have been employed as soldiers. In 815 Hijri (1412 A.D.) Firoz Shah Bahmani made another attack on Gond Kingdom and the Raja of Gondwana became his tributary after handing over three hundred elephants to the Bahmani King. Taking 1350 A.D. as the date of establishment of independent Gond Kingdom of Chanda, the Gonds must have enjoyed independent status for about a little less than a century though their vassals like the Raja of the Gond area Kherla near Betull were feudatories to Bahamani Kings as earlier. Again Mahur and Kalam which were supposed to be feudatory petty kingdoms of Bahamaniis seemed to have enjoyed independent status; for some time either under some Gond or non-Gond Rajah or as vassals of rulers of Chanda. The famous Muslim historian Ferishta writes that Ahmed Shah Bahmani attacked the fort of Mahur and took possession of diamond mines in Kalam belonging to the Rajah of Gondwana after putting to sword a garrison of five thousand at Mahur.

Here it may be mentioned that Mahur was one of the important centres of religion and knowledge for a long time both for Vaishnav sect of Mahanbhav of Hinduism and Jains. The founder of Mahanubhav movement, Chakradhar (1275 A.D.) himself writes in his autobiography that he visited Gond areas from...
Mahur. Further, the innumerable Jain images found in Mahur point to a flourishing Jain culture, perhaps before the advent of Khiljis. Evidence is not lacking to show that the Mahants of Sikhar Jagir at Mahur enjoyed the patronage of Gond rulers. Sethu Madhava Rao* mentions that at Mahur, the Gosai Mahant of Sikhar Jagir spoke of the kindness shown by a Gond Rani to the founder of the 'Math'.

The ruler of Gondwana seemed to have enjoyed fairly independent status, though subjugated once or twice by the Bahamanis. This is evident from the fact that the Gond Rajah had allied himself twice with the Sultan of Malwa and once with the rulers of Khandesh during their campaigns against the Bahamanis in the 15th century. Further, Ferishta's account of how a Gond Rajah treacherously took the troops of the Sultan of Malwa, after a hard campaign against Bahamanis, through arid and waterless route resulting in the death of Sultan's troops due to hunger, thirst and heat and the remanants of which were finally attacked and killed in large numbers, clearly shows that the Gond Rajahs not only took sides in the inter State wars of Muslim Kingdoms of the area but were also capable of wreaking vengeance whenever opportunity arose. However, the independent status of the Gond Rajahs came to a definite end by 1598 A.D. when Akbar annexed Berar with the Forst of Manikgarh also included in it.

As has been already discussed, the then Gond Rajah Babaji became a feudatory of the Moghuls from whence the Rajahs of Chanda became tributaries of the Moghuls. Along with Chanda, the Gond Kingdom of Deogarh also became a tributary of Moghul and in the internecine wars that frequently occurred, one of the brothers Bhaktabuland embraced Islam with a view to recover his throne from the brothers at the end of the 17th Century. With the fall of Chanda and the larger princely state of Deogarh all the other smaller Gond Vassal States like Sirpur and Utnoor had become tributaries of Moghul Kingdoms.

The Maraths came into prominence in the Deccan by the beginning of 18th Century. Raghoji Bhonsle annexed the Kingdoms of Deogarh and Chanda in 1748 and 1751 respectively thus bringing all tribal tracts of Gondwana under Marathi rule. The Marathi rule at one time touched Godavari in the South. But in 1773 A.D. Madhoji Bhonsle entered into an agreement with the Nizam by which Manikgarh with the surrounding territory was handed over to the Nizam in return for the forts of Gawligarh and Narnala in Berar and finally the treaty of Deogaon in 1803 A.D. resulted in cessation of the whole of the territory south of the Penganga to the Nizam of Hyderabad by the Bhonsle Rajah. And the former Adilabad district was encompassed by Penganga on the North and Godavari in the South with Pranahita in the East forming natural boundaries on three sides and Nanded district of former Bombay presidency as its western boundary.
We can now be clear about the changing suzerainty of parts of former Adilabad district from the discussion in the preceding pages. The former Bearars included the Taluks of Adilabad, Kinwat, Boath, and parts of Rajura and Utnoor which successive dynasties of Yadav, Moguls, Bahamani, Imadshahi and Nizam Shahi ruled. Similarly, the Rajahs of Warangal were succeeded by Bahamanis and Kutub Shahis of Golkonda in the taluks of Chinnur, Luxettipet and Nirmal. It was only in Sirpur, Asifabad and parts of Rajura* that Gond kings of Chanda exercised their almost independent status until the Moghuls subjugated them in the last years of 16th Century whence they remained vassals of Moghuls until the Kingdom of Chanda was finally annexed by the Maraths in 1751 A.D. As Sethu Madhava Rao very accurately sums up "It would thus be correct to say that the Gonds ruled only in the eastern parts of Adilabad, first as independent rulers from 1350 A.D. to 1600 A.D. and as tributaries of moguls till 1751 A.D."**The Gond rule extended in all over 4 centuries of medieval period of Indian history.

The present day tribal areas of Adilabad district came under the Nizam's rule along with Kinwat and Rajura Taluks as part of the treaties of 1773 and 1803 with the Bhonsles. These areas formed part of former Hyderabad State since 1949 in which year the Police Action resulted in the merger of the Nizams Dominions with the Indian Union and the formation of Hyderabad State. Again in 1956 the States of India were reorganised on linguistic basis resulting in the transfer of tribal areas of Rajura and Kinwat Taluks to Maharashtra State while the rest of

* The present day Adilabad district is carved out with predominantly Telugu speaking areas after States Reorganisation in 1956 on linguistic basis. Accordingly the Taluks of Rajura and Kinwat went to Maharashtra while Madhole Tq. of former Nanded dist. was transferred to Adilabad District.

** Sethu Madhava Rao. Among the Gonds of Adilabad. Author. 1949
the tribal areas of Adilabad are retained in Andhra Pradesh.

Since the merger of former Nizam's dominions with the Indian Union, the political set up existing in tribal areas has been undergoing radical change. The feudal system initiated since the establishment of Moghul suzerainty around the beginning of 16th Century over all the tribal areas of Adilabad by the creation of various feudalistic institutions like Jagir, Mokhasi etc., and village administration characterised by the appointment of hereditary village officials (Watandara) like 'patel' and 'patwari' had been further expanded and strengthened during the Maratha rule by the addition of Desmukhs and Deshpandees belonging to both tribal and non-tribal communities and continued during the Nizam's rule have given way to democratic institutions of political authority. With the abolition of the 'Jagirdari' system the monopolistic hold of the 'Jagirdars' 'Makthedars' 'Mokashies', Desmukhs', 'Deshpandees' etc., on the economic, political and social and even ritual life of the tribals had been completely broken. While democratically elected representatives of people have been kept in charge of various Statutory political institutions, varying from a small Gram Panchayat at village level to the people's parliament at the highest national level, the revenue, law and order etc., administration of the 'Jagirs' is made over to the normal Governmental Departments. Thus the administrative, political and economic hold of the feudatory chiefs created during Gond, Moghul, Maratha and Nizam's rule was completely wiped out and a new system with far reaching
political economic and administrative consequences has been initiated so as to bring the tribal societies into the mainstream of national life.

The consequences of these changing socio-political situations for the life of the tribals can now be fruitfully discussed in the light of the description in the preceding pages with reference to the three situations of contact, interaction and acculturation of tribal societies discussed earlier.

The contact situation, can be traced to the middle of the 14th Century where the first Gond Kingdom was organised amidst the fluctuating fortunes of Kakatiya, Yadava and Bahamani dynasties of Deccan and even the Khiljis of Delhi. And from this time on Gond Rajahs were actively participating either independently or in collusion with one of the neighbouring, Malwa, Kakatiya, Khadesh, Bahamani, Khutub Shahi, Nizam Shahi, Moghul and even the latter Maratha empires in their internecine wars of those times and the resultant process of interaction suggest that unlike other tribes the Gonds and other tribals of the region were not living in complete isolation but had multiple contacts with other population. Prof. Haimendorf rightly observes that long before the rise of Maratha power, Gond Rajahs were established in the area.... but descendants of other Gond Rajahs (of different clans and phratries can still be traced) and we can therefore assume that Gonds of Adilabad lived under petty chieftains who each dominated only few groups of villages before more affluent and ambitious Rajas built the forts whose ruins are still standing at various points of the country.
The Gond forts, and particularly the magnificent built Manikgarh Fort, suggest that the Gonds of those times did not live like so many aboriginal tribes in virtual seclusion, but entertained manifold relations with other populations. For the forts with their carved reliefs and stucco ceilings are evidently built by expert craftsmen who must have sought employment with the Gond Rajas. Similarly blacksmiths and brass founders of non-aboriginal stock who are still found in Gond Villages and who have adopted the Gond social organisation and are like Pardhans conversant with Gondi, have probably been for many generations a permanent feature of the local culture pattern, and it is more than probable that traders from low lands regularly visited the court of the Gond Chieftains...... that until recently a feudal system prevailed among the Gonds of Adilabad district who while recognising the sovereignty of H.E.H. the Nizam, lived to all practical purposes under the jurisdiction of the race, but the principal holders and cultivators of the land and such men of different stock as lived amongst them were craftsmen and perhaps a small number of traders. Although the military power of the Gond Rajahs seems to have been broken a considerable time ago, the administration established by the Nizam's Government did not at first affect condition among the bulk of the aboriginal population.*

It is thus clear that until the annexation of Gond Kingdom of Chanda by the Maratha rulers, the Gonds and other tribals were under a feudal system of administration composed

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* Prof. Haimendorf C.V., Tribal Hyderabad, Govt. of H.E.H. th Nizam, 1945, Hyderabad.
A MOGHAL SANAD TO A MOKHASI OF BOATH
TRIBAL RAJAH, FORT & FAMILY OF A MOKHASI
of Gond tribal heads like petty 'Rajahs' and 'Mokashies' (feudal Land-lords) for all practical purposes. Further, it was only a small number of traders and craftsmen that might have been living in the Gond area while the Gonds were not only the real rulers but also 'Principal holders and cultivators of the land.' Thus, political power, administrative authority and economic resources of the tribal area, especially land, the principal source of livelihood for the bulk of tribal population were under the complete control of the Gonds.

Historical evidence clearly indicates that the Gond country was once economically flourishing and Gonds were very good builders of dams and forts. Sir Richard Temple praises the construction capacity of Gonds as "They stopped up the gorges by dams of massive masonry, the valleys then filling with water and becoming reservoirs, some five, some ten, some even twenty miles in circumference, worthy to be called artificial lakes. In building their palaces they equalled the most advanced Hindus and surpassed any Hindu structure to be found within hundreds of Miles." The Gond Kings were also very prosperous. Jadunath Sirkar mentions that when the Moghul Chief Dilir Khan marched on Gondwana in 1667, the Vazir of the Gond ruler of Chanda arranged peace by presenting "Dilir Khan with a thousand gold coins, Rs.2,000-00, two horses and an elephant. Besides paid a fine of 7,000 mohears and Rs.5 lakhs to the imperial government and promised
a war contribution of Rs.1.00 crore payable in two months. Dilir Khan stayed there for two months and collected Rs.77.00 lakhs. In April 1667 Dilir Khan had to leave as further collection became impossible as the peasantry had fled away."

This shows that the exactions of the Moghuls some times became too heavy forcing the general population to run away into interior areas. Further, the amount of gold and money paid indicates that the Gond country was a flourishing one in those days.

**Chatterton's account of the loot collected by another Moghul Chieftain, Asaf Khan also speaks of the wealth of the northern Gond Kings. "101 cooking pots full of large and valuable gold coins besides Jewels, gold and silver plate and images of the gods, these were but portions of the spoil. Greatest of all were the number of elephants which Asaf Khan took, and which numbered fully 1000."

Another proof of the prosperous economic conditions of even common Gond comparable to the advanced cultivators of the plains is evidenced by the raising of rice and sugar cane to provide for their staple food could be discerned from Chatterton's*** quotation of Sir Richard Temple. "The number and size of these tanks is certainly remarkable. In some parts they

*** Ibid.
cluster thick round the feet of the hills. ....... The two staple foods of the district, rice and sugar cane are entirely dependent upon the water supply from these tanks."

There is difference of opinion between Forsyth and Temple regarding the mode of acquisition of higher skills and technology by Gonds. Forsyth attributes it to the knowledge imparted by the immigrant Rajput chief, his Brahmin priest and the accompanying industrious Hindu peasant resulting in the establishment therein of the arts of agriculture and commerce and the worship of Hindu gods and the institution of casel. On the other hand Temple was of the opinion that the conquering Gond Chiefs "borrowed their civilization from their conquered subjects; and on a less scale the history was repeated of 'Grecia capta ferum victorem Icepit.'"

Whether it was the work of Rajput Chiefs or that of Gond conquered low land people, Gond culture underwent a radical transformation from the leaf clad Gonds of Ptolemy's description to prosperous builders of forts and settled cultivators playing notable role in the politics of medival period of Indian history. However, throughout Moghul period the Gond Chiefs were maintaining a little irksome feudatory position. But the rising Maratha Power, especially in the latter half of 17th Century, supplanting the waning Moghul Power had completely broken up the Gond or 'Semi-aboriginal' principalities until they were no more heard in history.

The effects of the Maratha rule had also been devastating on the economy of the hill tribes as described by Forsyth. "The financial straits of the Maratha chiefs now led to whole sale disregard for all rights of property inconsistent with their demand of a rack-rent from every acre of the soil commanded by their troops. The hill chiefs were now left of the last of their possessions in the plains.... They took to the hills with their tribes and returned their hands against the spiler, till the name of Gond and Bheel became synonymous with that of hill robber." The degenerating consequences of Maratha rule were vividly described by R.V. Russel... 'the Gonds were driven to take refuge in the inaccessible high lands, where the Maratha continued to pillage and harass them... under such treatment the hill Gonds soon lost every vestige of civilization and became the cruel treacherous savages depicted by travellers of this period.' Within a short span of 50 years i.e., by the beginning of the 19th Century the once princely tribe responsible for the law and order of the region has turned into a band of highway robbers and looters, and raced from the plains to the mountain fastness.

By the turn of the 19th century the British rule was firmly established in the country and lawlessness in the country was suppressed with the liquidation of Maratha, Pindari, Thug and other marauding bands. However, the damage had already been done and the tribal could not retrieve his

** Russel, R.V. Imperial Gazetteer of India, Central Provinces Calcutta, 1908 P.159.
his lost economic and political status and continued to live in perpetual hand to mouth existence in the remote forest and hilly regions by means of unrewarding primitive agriculture in the unproductive rockey and undulating terrain. The hill men have been constantly pushed to farther and remote areas by the ever increasing incursions of non-tribals in the wake of increasing population pressure in the plains areas.

With the firm establishment of the British rule after the successful suppression of 1857 War of Indian Independence and the final acceptance of British suzerainty by all the native states of India peace was restored and Western modernisation process slowly started making its appearance in India through the instrumentality of educational institutions, medical and health facilities, roads etc., on the lines of western genius. However, this modernisation process took a long time to reach the remote and far flung tribal areas especially those of Adilabad as evidenced by the following description of socio-economic conditions prevailing in Adilabad district (originally sub-district Sirpur Tandur) at the beginning of 20th century.

The Imperial Gazetteer of India 1899 describes that of the aboriginal tribes the Gonds and Lambadis from the majority but none avail themselves of the opportunities for educating their children placed within their reach ... In 1901, 23 boys belonging to the aboriginal tribes and 626 out castes were at school ..."* This constituted an insignificant

* Imperial Gazetteer of India Provincial Series, Hyderabad State, 1899 P.78.
percentage of the total population of Gonds (55,000) and Lambadas (1,72,000) of the sub-district of Sirpur-Tandur as per 1901 census. The sub-district in general was very backward in regard to various socio-economic infrastructure. In 1903 there were 4 Primary Schools 2 dispensaries, no metalled roads and only 6½ sq.miles of area was irrigated through 223 tanks, 99 wells and 17 channels. One can imagine the facilities available in tribal areas in the context of poor infrastructure developed in the district in general as given above.

The retroactive socio-economic process unleashed after the fall of the last Gond Kingdom in 1751, reducing the once prosperous Gond peasant to primitive tribal cultivator described in the preceding pages had its concomitant adverse impact upon the prevailing feudaistic politico-administrative structure even down to the village. Marathas and the latter Nizams introduced the feudal lords called 'Deshmukhs' and 'Deshpandes' with 'Watan' belonging to non-tribals while continuing the Gond 'Mokashis' and 'Maqtadars' late in the 18th century and in early 19th century. This super imposition of non-tribal feudal structure took away a part of the powers enjoyed by Gond 'Mokashis' as collectors of land revenue and protectors of law and order besides being social and religious heads of the 'Watan' villages. The 'Deshmukhs' were entrusted with the work of collecting revenue from a group of villages known as 'Parganas' and the 'Deshpandes' used to keep accounts.
of the same. Further, "an additional incentive, the 'Deshmukhs' and 'Deshpandes' were given the 'Watans' of 'Patel' or 'Patwari' for at least some of the villages under their jurisdiction...

The Gond 'Mokashis' were simply not recognised as hereditary 'Watandars', and although the 'Deshmuks' and 'Deshpandes' made use of them for the collection of revenue, as the non-tribal 'patels' and 'patwaris' still do today, the 'Watans' passed over to the non-tribal, and the Gond was left over with the semi-religious and social functions."

The ultimate result of this has been the fading out of the Gond chieftains from political, economic and administrative areas as the non-tribals were imposed on them and the Gond 'Mokhasis' were not recognised as 'Patels' and 'Patwaris'. The Gond 'Mokashi' remained a social and religious head and like the Muslim 'Kazi' was entitled for marriage fees and also decided cases of religious and social nature. The parties disagreeing approached the higher status Gond Rajan in appeal who was also entitled to certain dues fixed by custom. But the Gond Rajah who might have exercised revenue and magisterial functions in addition to his religious and social duties when he was under Gond rulers was neglected with the advent of foreign rule and he was either replaced by a Government Official or by the newly created 'Deshmukhs' and 'Deshpandes'. Further, in the conditions laid down for the creation and renewal of 'Jagirs' and 'Zamindari' during the Nizam's time, inter alia, contained the stipulation that it is the responsibility of the feudal lords to populate these sparsely inhabited areas so that more land may be brought...

* Sethu Madhava Rao, P. Among the Gonds of Adilabad, Author 1949, P. 29.
under plough by the newly settled tenant cultivators and the land revenue of the state thereby increased. This stipulation coupled with the increasing pressure on land due to population increase in other areas resulted in the influx of a large number of non-tribals into the areas. Further, 'Laoni Khas' or special assignment of land as an incentive to populate the area prior to 1940 also resulted in many non-tribals owning land in tribal areas. The immigration of land hungry Hindu caste groups belonging to both Telugu and Marathi speaking areas like Velama, Reddy Kapu, Kunbi, Maratha etc., coupled with extension of regular revenue administration with officers like I'Taluqdar,' (District Collector), II'Taluqdar' (Deputy Collector), 'Tahsildar' (Taluk Revenue Officer), 'Naib Tahasildar' (Dy.Tahasildar), 'Girdawar' (Revenue Inspector), 'Patwari' (Village Accountant), Police'Patel' (Village Law and Order Officer) and 'Malipatel', (Village Revenue Officer) and the consequent conferring of 'Patta' or individual ownership rights disturbed the existing traditional system of community ownership of village lands. On the other hand the forest laws were also becoming stringent day by day with exactions of petty forest officials becoming more and more harsh and unbearable for the tribal. Further, along with the non-tribal immigrants, a number of traders and sarkars, especially belonging to Komati or Merchant caste had also set up their shops selling daily requirements like cloth, salt, oil etc., to tribals at exorbitant rates and purchasing
minor forest and agricultural produce at throw away prices from tribals besides indulging in usurious money lending through the instrumentality of which cultivated tribal lands were alienated systematically. Added to this, the nefarious activities of non-tribal 'Assaldars' or 'Watandars' (hereditary officers for revenue collection and maintenance of Law and Order in a group of villages) and their 'Gumasthas' or clerks most of whom belonged to Brahmin caste perpetrated manipulation of records against tribal interests in favour of non-tribals besides appropriating for themselves vast chunks of cultivable land. The cumulative effect of all these unchecked amenable activities of non-tribal cultivators, merchants and petty officials was frustration and suspicion of the motives of the existing government and the consequent mounting tension which resulted in the famous Gond uprising of Babjhari under the leadership of Bhimu. As usual a series of petitions and oral representative to officials at various levels including even an unfruitful and disastrous visit to Hyderabad under the leadership of Gond leader by name Bhimu to meet the concerned higher ups at Hyderabad, all of which were of no avail, preceded the inevitable uprising. The uprising did not even last a day as the Gond leader Bhimu was shot dead when he faced the police party with a few of his Gond followers near the village Bobjhari in Asifabad Taluq.
BABJHERI UPRISING -
CONFISCATED ARMS AND THE ACCUSED

COURTESY: STATE ARCHIVES, A.P., HYDERABAD.
The encounter* with Gonds on the 6th Aban, 1349
Fasli (1940 A.D.) and its aftermath could be reduced to the
following stages.

1) Gond called Bhimu appeared in these parts about
5 years ago probably from Chanda and finally settled down at
Babjhari and Jodghat after being in Hajura and Utnoor regions
for some time.

2) He is a man of strong personality. He engaged
a Gond master who is educated in Central Provinces for
educating his sons indicating that he was having a fairly
enlightened world view.

3) Bhimu began illicitly cultivating land in a
forest which extended over 300 acres.

4) The forest department tried to stop him and
induce him to move to Jodeghat from Babjhari to a new forest
village which was being formed.

5) This ended in a clash with a small party of
forest subordinates on 13th Shehrewar, two of whom were
admitted into hospital for the injuries they had received
at the hand of Bhimus' men.

6) On 25th Sherwar D.S.P. went with Assistant
Taluqdar to arrest Bhimu and six of his men.

Gonds resisted. But ultimately the Officers
succeeded in arresting them. Actually this arrest resulted
in merely releasing them on bail on the spot.

* Source: State Archives, Hyderabad. The events are
constructed on the basis of a special official report
15 P.A. 49 Fasli No. 2, Political Agitations, of former
Nizams Dominiums.
7) Bhimu and his associates twice failed to appear in court. Warrant was served with difficulty, that too after a struggle.

8) Meanwhile Bhimu with the assistance of Mahadeo Master wrote various letters to the Taluqdar and D.S.P. demanding back weapons seized at the time of his first arrest, saying that one of them carried on it his 'Deo' (Deity).

9) He also claimed title of Rajah and a Jagir of five villages. He threatened to march on Asifabad and warned a merchant there to be ready to feed his followers on pain of dire consequences.

10) Rumours started spreading that he was collecting arms and hundreds of men for his 'fauz' (army) and boasting of knowledge of 'Jadu' (magic) which would make bullets harmless.

11) To check him the Taluqdar decided to march to Jodeghat with a force of about hundred police, D.S.P., Civil Surgeon, Assistant Taluqdar and Tahsildar.

12) He left on 4th Aban and camped at Varadhan and sent message to Bhimu which were replied with defiant messages.

13) Early on the 6th before dawn the force made its way 800 ft. up to the plateau on which Jodeghat is perched.

14) Reaching the village at 7 a.m. it was found that some 500 Gonds collected from various places were massed out side the village fully armed with Guns, Swords, spears, hatchets and lathis.
15) For four hours the Taluqdar tried to persuade the Gonds to lay down the arms. They induced them to reduce their grievances to writing by the hand of Mahadeo Master.

16) The Taluqdar went to the extent of giving in writing to the D.F.O. that no dues should be collected from Gonds until the court case was disposed of.

17) This did not satisfy the crowd. Deoji and six others of the deputation gave an ultimatum to the Taluqdar to leave the place with his police otherwise they will be killed to a man.

18) Gonds became excited and the Taluqdar expected an attack if the deputationists were allowed to return so the deputationists were detained as hostages.

19) The mob began to approach from its position of 80 yards. The Asst. Taluqdar says that he saw a number of bullets fly past.

20) The Taluqdar warned and made a show of force. The Gonds started a dance in a state of possession which was taken to be war dance.

21) Orders were given to use buck shots but when this proved of no avail to stop the mob, ball and quick fire was ordered. A fusillade began.

22) Bhimu fell ten yards in front of the line of police and near him his nephew. The crowd broke and fled into the jungle leaving eight others dead and 13 wounded. Several were arrested inside houses with loaded guns.
23) It is likely that the total death-roll may be eventually 12.

24) The Director General Revenue thought that the firing was insufficiently controlled.

25) The arrested Gonds were also released after a trial on the basis of a mercy petition from the Gond prisoners.

In the wake of the police many leaders of Telangana belonging to leftist communist party and congress began blaming the local officials for their high handedness and condemned the unnecessary use of force which resulted in the death of Bhimu and a dozen of his followers. The events as depicted in the above official version amply reveal that the situation could have been very well controlled without use of force. The show of force especially the large police force accompanying the 'Taluqdar' seemed to have aggravated the already sensitive situation and the detention of negotiators as hostages added fuel to fire confirming the worst doubts of the Gonds that the officials were only intending to cow them down with force. The presence of a doctor with the 'Taluqdar's' police party also shows that the officials were convinced of the need for a violent show down. However, the uprising, though short lived, was an eye opener to the authorities at Hyderabad to the grave situation and this resulted in the initiation of a series of development programmes as it was clearly realised that backwardness, exploitation from without, ignorance and illiteracy are the causative factors of restiveness and unless
a series of ameliorative and development oriented programmes are taken up and the tribal societies are brought on par with other relatively advanced sections of the society these backward areas will continue to be the breeding grounds for revolts and unrest.

Consequently Prof. Haimendorf was requested to study the situation so that a programme of action could be launched in the tribal areas. Prof. Haimendorf after making a preliminary study of the situation formulated certain programmes of development. Simultaneously he conducted a study on the socio-religious life of the tribe which was published in 1945.

Further he delved into the economic conditions of the tribals of Adilabad in particular and published it as his tour diaries entitled 'Tribal Hyderabad'. His tour diaries vividly describe the plight of the Gonds and other tribals by giving a number of case studies of tribals who lost their lands due to the incursions of more advanced non-tribal caste groups like Reddis, Velamas, Brahmins and even Muslims in the wake of previous policy of populating of district by encouraging outsiders to settle through land assignment pursued by the then Nizams Government. Besides he also mentioned about the consequences of the laws of forest conservancy followed by the then Government due to which reserve forest boundaries were redrawn encroaching upon tribal lands and even habitations. The non-tribal intrusion on the one side and the ever escalating reserve forest boundaries on the other sandwitched the tribal choking his economic resources.

and squeezing his freedom of action resulting in 'loss of nerve'. Consequently the proud and once ruling tribe was reduced to a life of perpetual poverty and a breeding ground of exploitation and despair.

The first phase of contact situation and the consequent socio-economic and political implications of the interaction between the tribal and non-tribal populations and the emerging situation has been discussed in this chapter. The second phase of change comprising of the first phase of directed change from 1942-52 starting with the initiation of Gond Education scheme will be discussed in Chapter IV while the third phase of transformation forming part of the second phase of directed changed of the planning era, from the beginning of First Five Year Plan will be discussed in Chapter V.