Chapter-7

The Tale of the Tribes

Nirmal Kumar Bose wrote at length on tribes and the tribal situations in India, but before going straight into the tribal problem, it is necessary to understand the genesis of this community. Delving into the history of the term and concept of tribe, we find different authors have tried to deal with it in their own ways. Niharajjan Roy, for instance, said, “derived from a Latin root, the Middle English term *tribuz* meaning the three divisions into which the early Romans were grouped came to evolve into the modern English ‘tribe’” (Singh: 1972:8). He said, for the Romans, the tribes were political divisions while the Greeks have equated tribes with fraternities and geographical divisions. In Irish history the term meant families or communities with same surnames. In India however, we find the tribes were earlier known as *janas* which meant communities of people. Roy said that in fact the terms *jana* and *jati* were both derived from the root word, *jan* which meant ‘to be born’ or ‘to give birth to’, the Kullutas, the Kollas, the Bhillas, the Khasas, the Kinnaras and countless numbers of many others whom today we know as ‘tribes’ bearing almost the same recognizable names (ibid:8-9). Roy said, it is pretty evident that all such communities had a territorial habitat for themselves. After a length of time these territories came to be identified with each of these tribes and came to be known as *janapadas*. Thus Roy claimed that, ‘*Jana*’ therefore, seems to have to my mind, the term for what we have been taught to know as ‘tribe’, and ‘*jati*’, the socio-religious cum economic organization that was supposed to sustain *jana* and keep the given community of people together (ibid:8).

Bose likewise regarded the tribes as the communities living in the hills and forested areas speaking languages of their own and who have succeeded in preserving their social customs, religious beliefs and artistic traditions. They are economically backward people with rudimentary technology and poorly developed division of labour. They are the generally self-sufficient communities with little trade relations with other communities. Likewise, the tribal communities have their own social customs which keep them confined within their own limited periphery. They have retained their own social and religious customs pertaining to life-cycle rituals and other ceremonies. These rules and regulations influence their social intercourse with
their fellow members within their own ambit as well as govern their interaction with the non-tribal Hindus living outside their fold. Bose had tried to analyze the structure of the tribal society based on their various dimensions of collective living which dominated the society.

I

- **The economic structure**

Bose found the tribal society displayed a distinct economic pattern, but it must be admitted that the tribes were not a homogeneous society and therefore the patterns they furnished had to be different. This is also at the same time true that there were diversifications within a particular tribal group and therefore there were variations in the intra-tribal economic structure. Now this economic structure depended on the various forms of subsistence that the tribes designed for themselves. Bose divided the tribal groups according to their vocations and accounted for their distinction and significance. The divisions are as followed:

1. **The hunting and the gathering economy**

Some tribes were self-reliant in the sense that they retained a form of isolation from the outside communities. They picked for themselves basic economic vocations like hunting, gathering and fishing which were primary occupations, dabbling with natural resources. They did not maintain trading networks with others and lived in circumscribed conditions without much interference from outside. These tribes probably were confined to the primary stage of economic evolution such that the tools used for hunting and gatherings were simple and basic. But even when the technology was rudimentary and primary, the tribes did use their wit and wisdom to garner their profit. Bose while giving example of such an economy among the Andaman Islanders said, “The Andaman islanders generally lived in forests or on the banks of the rivers and seas to hunt animals. They therefore preferred living at strategic points for catching the game” (Bose: 1971:9).

The Andamanese caught fishes not with net but with bow and arrow. The aquatic creatures can well be spotted deep below the crystal clear water which facilitated the hunting even further. Prawns, turtles and crabs constituted their staple diet which they relished upon. These tribes therefore pursued their occupations along simple lines where there was no technological sophistication. Perhaps, not all tribes were such
simple, there were still other communities taking to cultivation or a slightly higher mode of production that involved much more drilling with the nature and its resources. Thus talking of the Birhor economy, Bose said,

The Birhors trap only small game, specially hares, pea-fowl, jungle fowl, small deer, such as are usually found near agricultural fields of villages. They trap the monkey as a side industry and sell the skin to the people of the Ghasi caste for making drums known as madals (Bose:1972:21).

According to Bose, this reliance on the primary economy does not mean that the tribes are all short sighted with no skills and knowledge. On the contrary, the Birhors have acquired the tactics of hunting the game from their forefathers who have in turn learnt the same through close observation and tactfulness. Bose corroborated this by saying,

They make adequate use of this knowledge in tracking game or in setting their nets. For instance, they know that small deer will seldom cross land broken by erosions and cut up into small ravines in preference to plain or sloping ground (ibid:22).

2. The slash and burn cultivation

The tribes residing in the north –east frontier of India comprising of the states of Tripura, Manipur, Nagaland, Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh practiced a separate kind of economy altogether. Their agrarian economy was based on slash and burn cultivation which very well fit into the heavily rain-fed areas where productivity was quite high. The slash and burn cultivation, known variously as Jhum, Dahi, Kaman or Taila in different parts of India, is described by Bose in the following way,

It was not necessary to tinker with the soil very much. It was left fallow for a few months so as to reclaim the fertility by itself. Some plots of land on hills and plateaus in villages were assigned for such cultivation. Such cultivation did not require ploughs or bullocks but just digging hoes and harrows to stir the soil well. The land was cleared of all its vegetation and the shaved bushes were kept to dry and mortify on the brushed land. Then as monsoon arrived the accumulated foliage were set aflame. The farmers took round to oversee the burning of the bushes lest the fire starts engulfing the village. After the forest was burnt, the soil was enveloped with the ash to boost the productivity .... such jhum
cultivation is carried out by the tribal families over generations. They don't cultivate the same land over and over again but keep the land fallow for sometimes to restore back its fertility. The tribal groups unlike the previous economy are not the nomads but stick to a specific area and its adjacent lands for long. Thus we find with the development of the tribal economy, the tribes are taking up a sedentary lifestyle thus forsaking their age old nomadic life (ibid: 17).

Bose added that the Juangs depend for their livelihood chiefly on shifting cultivation, which is called joom or jhum in Assam, but goes by the name of dahi (firing), kamana (shaving) or taila in the Keonjhar Hills (ibid:39). At the same time, Bose was quick to add that such cultivation could not bring assured food supply to the people. There was a gross dearth of food and nutrition among the Juangs though they worked hard on the land. Thus Bose lamented that,

In spite of hard work and constant supervision, the Juangs are able to raise only an insufficient amount of crops for their sustenance. Wet cultivation yields more; but there is not enough of such land in the inhospitable hill-sides to which the Juangs have been pushed by the more energetic and adventurous cultivators belonging to other communities (ibid:39).

Such a form of cultivation was also practiced by the hill Kharia tribes who live on the hills of the Singbhum district. Bose corroborated this by saying, “traditionally the hill Kharia practice slash–and–burn agriculture (shifting cultivation) on the pattern of the Saoria Paharias. (Bose:1964: 21).

Thus we find Bose wrote about the trials and tribulations of the shifting cultivation. He depicted well that though such cultivation helped the tribes to notch a scale higher in the ladder of economic development, nevertheless it brought with it problems and challenges that bothered the system. Especially he zeroed on the problems pertaining to the carrying capacity of the land and pointed out at the sheer lack of security that such mode of production lent to the tribal economy. Not just the economy, Bose found problems with the personae of the Juangs themselves. He added that,
On the whole, the Juangs are a conservative people, even by Indian standards, and they are scary to leave their homes unless under acute distress. A few years ago, the Government gave the residents of one village a new piece of land to build their homes. This was done, but an accidental fire occurred, and the Juangs returned to their old site, because they thought that the gods have become displeased with them (Bose: 1972:41).

3. **Cultivators and craftsmen**

The tribes slowly realized that adherence to such shifting cultivation will not be conducive for long since the carrying capacity of these farming practices is not so strong. Bose thought for such reasons and many more, the tribes especially the Juangs of Orissa, the Gonds of Madhya Pradesh and the Santals of Bihar and Bangladesh are shifting more towards the cultivation practices of the Hindu civilization. They were showing an increasing tendency to infiltrate the groups of cultivators, artisans and labourers. It seemed that they were desperately trying to blur their differences with their Hindu neighbours. They were thus seen turning themselves into occupation based categories which are frequently found among their Hindu counterparts. Such sections like owner-cultivators, labour-cultivators, mine-labourers, stone-cutters, forest-labourers, gardeners, fishermen and herdsmen were fast growing. The tribal men especially from Bihar, Orissa, Bengal and Central India were slowly taken over by the tide of such intermingling with their Hindu cronies. They were taking on to the production practices in such a way that their identification with the so called civilized men becomes possible. The tribal autonomy is thus no longer sustained. Unlike the Andaman islanders who still wanted to retain back their honey-comb societies, the tribes in other parts of the country were struggling hard to shed off their self-sufficient tribal status. Bose while talking of the tribes like the Santal, Munda, Oraon and the Ho said,

They are mainly dependent on plough cultivation. Hunting and fishing probably were important in the past but now of only ceremonial significance. These people live in permanent villages (Bose: 1964: 20).

Bose said along with these cultivating tribes there are other artisan tribes as well who supply the agricultural equipments and domestic items to the former. These include a number of artisan castes like the ironsmith tribes of Karmali and the Lohra, the
basket-makers and the drummers like the Mahali, and the traditional weavers of the tribal society such as the Chikbaraiks.

Thus Bose contended that the tribal economic structure is quite flexible to the extent that the system is often re-structured according to the growing needs of the society. The tribes understood that it is no longer possible to sustain themselves on the basis of their older economic mechanism. The tribes especially those in the central India had begun to show their malleability on the face of the fast changing economic scenario. They understood it very well that alliance must be grown with the Hindu society to gain a secured footing on a sustainable economic fold. Not always was this acceptance by the Hindu society taken as complete and absolute for often this tribal absorption, though allowed, was only partial and apparent. Bose contended that the various tribal communities like the wax – melting dhokra (a process of treating brass) craftsmen, the heera potters of Assam, the Asur tribes who are blacksmiths, though have tried hard to be assimilated in the larger Hindu fold, still do not get a straight acceptance within the Hindu households. They nevertheless are considered to be a part of the Hindu society and they struggled hard to reinforce their integrity with this society. But a change in the economic arena also brings with it a concomitant ripple in the other arenas. The tribal religion and culture, though retain its intactness, still try to show a loyalty to the larger Hindu society to which it owes a lot.

- **Tribal religion**

Bose deliberated on the tribal religion and had thrown light on several dimensions. He was not ready to take religion as a tranquilizer which distracts human mind from the hard core issues and soothes the nerves. He on the other hand took religion as the booster of man’s resolution and will, which revitalizes his spirit at times of morbidity and doom. Bose said religion can also at the same time titillate one’s imagination and urge him to spread his wings further.

The tribes have a strong belief in animism. They tend to believe that all living creatures on the earth are presided over by the almighty. He resides not only in the living souls but predominate over everything that is entrenched in nature and on the earth. The river, ocean, forests and the entire cosmos is captivated by the omnipotent force which rules over the universe. It integrates everything within its fold and even abides in the realm of the dead and the diseased. Hasnain corroborated this by saying,
Animism carries with it a belief in benevolent as well as the malevolent spirits which are supposed to influence the destiny of the man. The benevolent ones generally go unattended, as no one is afraid of them. Thus, for instance, the great sun god, Singbonga, of the Munda tribe is seldom worshipped as he is benign and does not harm anyone (Hasnain: 1983: 60).

Bose thought that the tribes follow rigorous rituals of mortuary and recurrently practice these in their daily life. They do it with an aim to maintain a cordial and amicable relationship with their forefathers and accept their presence in their regular banal living. Like Bose, Nadeem Hasnain has too felt along the same chord when he wrote,

Most of the tribes of India believe that life does not end with death, and that it continues to be present in one form or the other. Propitiation and worship of souls of ancestors seems to be the result of such beliefs. The tribes of middle India believe that the souls of ancestors come to their rescue in diseases to ward off other evil spirits. The tribal people of Chhatisgarh invoke the spirits of their ancestors through special ceremonies (ibid:60).

The tribes believe in totemism and this remains, as Bose maintained, one of the essential features of the tribal society. The tribes love to believe that all the components of the universe are possessed by some divine spirit. Probably this is the reason for which they abstain themselves from slaying certain birds and animals which they regard as their progenitors. They think it is this divinity and spirituality which has bestowed such diversity upon the earth that the nature must be extolled and worshipped. This has again been supported by Hasnain who said,

It is also believed by many tribes that certain objects are ‘possessed’ by some spiritual powers and thus a sort of fetishism appears to be the guiding principle among such tribes. Worship of such objects contains an element of magic which is further extended to the beliefs and practices of religio-magical nature. The Bondos of Orissa worship a particular sword in the belief that it connects them with the mighty Rajput warriors of yesteryears (ibid:60).
Bose inferred that the religio-magical property has been one of the essential features of the tribal society. Whenever they are inflicted by an ailment or malady, they take it as a prognosis of an evil spirit looming large over the victim. The situation may soon be set right by magical potions and sorcerers who were taken as saviours of such society. Thus sorcery and witchcraft are taken as essential elements of the tribal beliefs especially owing to the simple and non-testifying nature of the tribal minds.

In the same note, Bose spoke of the strategist mentality of the Christian missionaries to booby trap the vulnerable tribes for conversion. Bose felt sad that the missionaries had taken the advantage of the vulnerable tribal minds to persuade them for conversion. The poor tribes living in misery for long jumped innocuously into the traps laid down for them. The tribes being the followers of primitive forms of religion pour their heart out in extolling the foreign religion into which they have been converted. This dedication and adherence towards the religious practices make them easy baits for the Christian missionaries. They know it very well that the tribes with their innocent minds and god-fearing approach will vehemently advocate the religion of the missionaries. So they kept no leaf unturned to coax the tribal men. This religion undoubtedly drew men towards a modernizing drive but at the cost of their native practices. No doubt Christianity wooed the tribal populace towards a westernized idyllic situation that promised of liberal thoughts and welfare measures, but all these came at the cost of proselytization. Hasnain’s quotes can be cited in this context. He said,

As N.K Bose points out, Christianity has undoubtedly brought the message of a richer life, a wider companionship and a new sense of dignity to the converts. But it is interesting that the Christian religion has always been attended by the beliefs of the modern western civilization. And this was particularly so during the British rule when the converts felt closer to the British rulers than to their benighted countrymen. It is only after independence that allegiance to one’s native culture is being encouraged. It is now gaining acceptance that there can be a Christian religion which does not draw necessarily men and women away from their own culture and civilization (Hasnain: 1983:61).

Thus it is evident that Bose was not very amicable to the idea of the tribal co-option by the Christian missionaries. He felt that there is more to it than what meets the eyes though other theorists wrote at length on the altruistic mission of the Christian
missionaries and how they acted as catharsis for the tribes. Sociologist Joseph Bara wrote that Singbhum and Ranchi had been developed into centers of tribal education by the Christian missionaries. Bara saw the literacy campaigns of the Christian missionaries being modelled in line with the popular educational schemes of the missionaries of Bengal in the early 19th century. He saw a parallel connection between the two and took it as a ready yard stick to account for the flourishing literacy among the Mundas and Oraons of Ranchi. Contrary to Bose, Joseph Bara thus contended,

Against the backdrop of mass conversion in Chotanagpur, the thrust in the missionary schools was not so much winning new converts through their mechanism, but raising indigenous leadership, the catechists and teachers, and this shaped the missionary education as predominantly literary. These basic features of the educational growth contributed to the rise of Ranchi as an educational centre for a large area of tribal hinterland (Bara: 1997:786).

Even if the case of conversion into Christianity remains contentious, the fact cannot be ruled out that the very act of conversion was an absolute divorce of the tribal inmates from the past religious life. The Christian missionaries taught them that their gods were virulent and invidious, and therefore, they must refrain themselves from worshiping such gods. So the tribes once converted had to break all their relations with the past. But this never happened in Hinduism which meant worshiping a few more idols preferably in line with the Vedic pantheon. Hasnain himself reinforced this by saying,

But this was not so in the case of Christianity. It meant total break with the past. The Christian priests and missionaries assured them that their (tribal) gods were blasphemous and obscene. Sometimes, it led to disintegration of their lives (Hasnain: 1983:62).

Bose therefore extolled Hinduism for its malleability and ductility to adapt itself to the tribal gods without much ado. At the same time, the tribals nevertheless made their offerings to the Hinduized deities and borrowed the ritual practices from their Hindu brethrens quite avidly. Bose himself contended,
Without being converted, the tribes could easily participate in all the religious ceremonies conducted by the Hindus. Those tribes who conduct the life-cycle rituals and those of marriage under the supervision of the Hindu priests are said to have entered the Hindu fold in entirety while others are only on the verge of it (Bose: 1971:86).

Thus Bose has seen the influence of Hinduization quite amply in the realm of tribal religion. It is this fluidity of the Hindu religion to embrace the other forms of divinity with open arms that have made this religion so popular among the tribal populace. Hinduism as a whole is pluralistic in nature and it juxtaposes multiple pantheons together. The civilization has always boasted of the notion of unity within diversity and this seemed obvious in the face of a multilingual country with variable divisions. Each state bragged of its differences from others and this gyrating gulf made diversity quite palpable in the Indian subcontinent. The ethnic divisions were not always accepted with mirth and became a constant source of conflict and censure. It is not as much a subject of spontaneous acceptance as it is of banishment and ostracism. This happened because the ethnic groups were shunned by the mainstream cultures but the benevolence with which the Hindu civilization made room for the tribal inmates really amazed us. Bose had for time and again shown the reciprocal ties between the tribal and the non-tribal population. Haimendorf in this context spoke of the Gonds of Andhra Pradesh to speak of the nuances of the tribal religion and its relation with Hinduism, one of the kind that Bose spoke of.

Haimendorf while illustrating the tribal practices of the Gonds of Andhra Pradesh said that these men had changed many of their religious rituals under the influence of their Hindu neighbours. He said at the funeral ceremony, a cow is slaughtered and its meat is offered to the departed soul in accordance to a ritual called jagurla. But slowly the Gonds have been influenced by the Hindus to the extent that they have outdone the slaughtering altogether while others have substituted it by a goat. He had mentioned the movement of the Suruji Maharaj which sought to enmesh the tribal religion with a strong Hindu aura. Thus Haimendorf writes,
Without cow sacrifice the *jagurla* rite loses much of its significance, and while in some villages a goat is substituted, others omit the *jagurla* altogether. Thus the Gonds of Kanchanpalli, Chudur Gumurr, Netnur, Jamulkhara, Dhanora, and Chiklaguda no longer perform this rite, nor is it done by the new settlers in Mahagaon, who came from Kinwat and are devotees of Suruji Maharaj (Haimendorf:1982:173).

Bose also likewise spoke of various such movements which resolved to spread Brahminical influence across the horizons of Chotanagpur. Movements like Nimha Bhagat and Tana Bhagat movements were forms of puritanical agitations to jump headlong into reformations. Bose said these were not forced upon the tribal populace but they had spontaneously taken on to Hindu rituals. Especially Bose showed that the rise of Tana Bhagat and Kurukh religions testified how avidly the Oraons were taking up the Hindu practices. The affiliates of the Tana Bhagat showed that they had tried shooing off any such customs which were repelled by the Brahmins. Therefore, they put a break on such practices like widow-remarriage, divorce, free mixing among young girls and boys which had besieged the tribal society for long.

He had shown the basic features of a pristine tribal religion and the changes it accomplished under the influence of Brahminization. Now this was an intersectional process and an amplified one that was penetrated by multiple forces. It was rather the point of intersection of many factors like economy, polity, culture, ideology and so on. Therefore, religion cannot be studied in a vacuous form but must be recurrently studied in alliance with these potent forces. The tribal religion as against its crude form was not very innocuous but it germinated in all directions once served with a fertile ground. The political ideology of the ruling forces as well as the economic vulnerability of the tribal people was taken into apt consideration. This instigated a social change that soon spread to the nooks and crannies of the society and radically intruded the culture and living of the numerous tribal sections. True it was that such a social change could not penetrate all quarters of the tribal society with equal gravity but it nevertheless made an attempt to levitate some parts of it with a great jerk.

- **The tribal culture**

The tribal culture remains yet another interesting area of investigation upon which Bose placed much of his thrust. The area becomes more riveting especially because of
the dynamics it has spun with the other gamut of the tribal society. The tribal and the non-tribal societies when interact among themselves spew up a new social order which has its own strictures. Often it is found that the tribal inmates follow the rituals of their non-tribal counterparts and therefore bend their original cultural traits. Yet Bose said sometimes the cultural contours remain such robust and well-built that the tribes refuse to contort it even under the influence of the dominant cultural traits.

**The autonomous and empowering nature of the tribal culture**

That they are always swept away by the culture of the plainsmen may not stand correct. Bose had shown in the Koraput district of Orissa, the hill tribes frequent temples presided over by the Jain pantheons and are the followers of this denomination. This happened despite the overweening presence of Hinduism was felt strongly in the other districts of Orissa. The tribes in the district of Koraput are also found offering pigeons to their gods though it stood against the Hindu ritual practices.

Thus we find the tribal culture was liberal and open-minded. It was not stifled by the baggage of any mentor-culture but was rather allowed to flourish on its own. The culture also to an extent was pivoted by the geo-political lever. The culture of the plains was starkly different from that of the mountains and both retained back its autonomy. The autonomy could have been attributed to the ecological flavours of the region where tribes had very little to contribute in the making of the culture, but one still could not rule out the propensity of tribal entrepreneurship. The tribes stood strongly in support of their culture and vehemently retained and preserved it. Bose himself said, “The tribes of the mountains are thus not always as influenced by plainsmen as anthropologists have generally tended to believe” (Bose: 1972:7). Stuart Blackburn has corroborated this by giving the instances of the Himalayan tribes of the Apa Tani valley whose rituals are laid down elaborately in ritual texts. One of such ritual texts is known as *Subu Heniin*. The text is chanted on the first day of the three – week *Murung* festival which is famous among these tribes. Nyibu, the priest performs the festival and the performance is supposed to entail a great dignity in the local culture.

The ritual encapsulates slaughtering of a cow but in a sombre form without much gung-ho. This is against the Hindu ritual of enchanting the verses loudly with pompous gestures and rituals. The slaughtering of the cow itself is a mutiny against
the dominating culture and it brings out the uniqueness of the tribal culture. Not only has the cow in itself but the ways of performing the rituals spoke at length of the tribal autonomy and enfranchisement. Stuart Blackburn while describing the rituals pertaining to the sacrifice of the cow said,

The all-day performance has little theatre; in keeping with Apatani attitudes toward speech, it is restrained and measured. Now and then, the nyibu speaks to and gestures toward the animals, but in slow motion and a barely audible voice (Blackburn: 2008:164).

Thus Bose’s theorization of the tribal culture is two-fold. It spoke of the malleability as well as the rigidity of their culture. It is interesting how a tribal culture lets itself loose but becomes careful enough not to be over-indulgent while opening its doors to the outside culture. He went on elaborating on other aspects of tribal culture as well, which have been discussed below.

**The unsettled and unhinged nature of the tribal culture**

Bose found that the tribal men were simple and led austere lives and did not profess any attachment to their material belongings. They did not have considerable urge for such resources which were so coveted among the non-tribal population. Bose while talking of the Birhors said,

The most striking feature of the culture of the Birhor is that they have never formed any permanent tie with the land, either having a permanent place of abode or house, or through agriculture … they change the place of abode with the change of season and convenience, usually four times a year, and sometimes even as often as six times, if needed. (Bose:1972:16).

Thus it seemed pertinent that the tribal culture can portray un-attachment to the material comforts that the non-tribal world hankers after. There is a sense of asceticism and a tendency to relinquish everything that seemed such essential for daily existence. Thus we find the tribal men remained unperturbed without any agony for an absence of a permanent footing in their life. They took life as it came and did not show any preparedness for it. They did not have any obsession for fixed resources or any such thing which can earn them permanence in life. It showed they preferred this unsettled and unhinged life over the tempered and moderated one. Of course
some might account this by the deep poverty which had plagued the Birhor society for long but it still cannot explain such lackadaisical attitude towards possession of property among not so poor tribes.

The above point becomes even clearer when Bose talks of the Savaras or Saoras of the districts of Ganjam or Koraput. He said compared to other tribes like the Birhor and the Juang, the Savaras are far more settled. They are the permanent cultivators of the land and have a far more precise existence. Despite that Bose had shown that they do not show any obstinate coherence to the land to which they belonged. Their sense of belongingness to any form of properties, it seems is quite feeble and weak. They treasure their beliefs and customs more than the material benefits which they supposedly own. When a piece of land which they inhabit becomes intruded by calamities or a bad fortune, it is soon abandoned, however coveted it might have been. The Savara men also practice polygamy and prefer to keep wives in separate houses. All these showed the loose and the diffused sense of attachment that the tribal men had for their property which they can forsake any moment without much ado. Bose himself narrated the tales of the Savaras in the following manner,

When a tiger enters a cottage and carries away an inmate, the villages are deserted, and sacrifices are offered to some spirits by all the inhabitants. The prevalence of small pox in a village requires its abandonment. A succession of calamities leads to the same result. If a Savara has a number of wives, each of them requires a separate house, and the house sites are frequently shifted according to the caprice of the women. The death or disease of cattle is occasionally followed by the desertion of the house. (ibid: 16).

This corroborates the Savara’s deep faith in spirits and the other world. The belief remains so robust and sound that to uphold this they might have to undergo their claim to many such precious resources. Despite these beliefs, nothing can dither the tribal men to show their headstrong commitment to the ideas they have nourished for ages. This seemed to indicate, according to Bose, the foot-loose and bohemian aspect of the tribes not only as an aspect of their settlement and habitat, but as an inherent part of their culture and soul. This only shows the resolute mental set-up espoused by the innate and pristine tribal culture that denies to buckle down before the avid provocations of the worldly ostentations.
The institutionalized character of the tribal culture

Bose showed that the tribal culture has an institutionalized character with its in-built paraphernalia that gives it a conspicuous shape. The youth dormitories provide a very good example of such institutions. The youth dormitories are areas set apart for the bachelors and maiden for their social interactions. There was no stigma in it and it is professed in almost all tribal societies with equal élan. This is called Mandaghar in Keonjhar and Majang or Darbar in Pal Lahara. There was also a maiden dormitory called Dhangribasa but it no longer exists now. These structures which accommodate the youths become the hotbed of popular culture. They dance and sing to their heart’s joy in the Mandaghar with the lush green forests overlooking them. The Mandaghar is probably the largest hut in the village engraved with colourful symbols. It remains a platform for the inception of folk art and culture.

Though this hut is solely used by the men, the maidens equally help them to keep the hut in good shape. Through these collective tasks, men and women enter into regular intervals of social intercourse. Mandaghar also acts as a site of leisurely pursuits for the tribal men and women. The hard working tribal men hardly had time to spare for themselves but surprisingly this hutment acts as a great respite for them. The area gives them an occasion to recline back in comfort and enjoy the various performances tempered with the nuances of the popular culture. Near the entrance of the village is a larger hut with four-sloped roof known as majang or darbar. At night the unmarried men sleep in the majang while at the day time they chat and shape artefacts made of bamboo. Drums like changu are played by men with jest to which women dance sprightly. The music of the changu can be heard throughout the night and sometimes till day break (Bose: 1975:86).

Thus the culture so generated by the tribal folk is liberal and straight. It is chaste and pristine. The free mixing of the sexes does not bear upon the individual any guilt or shame because it is far liberal than the non-tribal ones. However, this is not to say that the culture breeds recklessness or audacity for there lies a scope for social control and restraint. This is generated by the internal mechanism of the culture itself when it seeks legitimization through the back doors of religion. The musical instrument it is said, is supposed to bellow out the voices of God and therefore playing the instrument is considered auspicious. Thus Bose showed that the culture of leisure has slowly evolved among the tribes and divinity is readily called upon to legitimize such
performances. A genre of folk art and culture was thus on the verge of development which the non-tribal populace was oblivious for long. Though known by different names, the presence of youth dormitory was prevalent for a long time in the tribal society. Not only among the Juangs they are present among the Mundas as well. Bose said,

There is yet another characteristic institution in the Munda village. The bachelor youth of the village do not sleep in their homes at night. The room in which they all sleep together at night is called the giti-ora or, dormitory. For the unmarried girls also a separate giti-ora may be set up in the house of some elderly widow where a room is available (ibid:43).

These places had been separately earmarked for entertainment of the tribal mass. This indicates an organized attribute of the tribal society to divide its space carefully into various chambers owing to the importance of the affairs. Light hearted performances rendering to the popular culture are therefore carefully placed in a separate bracket altogether. This way of institutionalizing performing arts and reserving for them a respective arena shows the significance of popular and folk culture in tribal society. Thus culture and its respective vehicles have been pertinently registered and organized. Adamant and unwary ways of interaction are not noticed. Culture that thrives in such a society is one of glitter and gaiety but at the same time that of precision and thoughtfulness. What is more interesting about these youth dormitories is yet another aspect of altruism and social learning.

The dormitories act as rites-de-passage for the tribal youths. They learn about their tradition and lineage in the forms of myths, stories and narratives. The oral history soon stimulates their interest and makes it even more inquisitive. The collective experience of cohabiting with their peers makes them socially strong and immune. Bose himself said,

The youth of the village not only sleep in the giti-ora, they also test each other’s wits by exchanging conundrums (their nutum-ka-ani). Besides this they learn about ancient days by listening to stories of the past (kaji-ki-ani) from the village elders (ibid:44-45).

These dormitories and the compulsory incorporation of the tribal youths in them act as rituals encompassing rites-de-passage. Victor Turner has rightly said these rituals
are those people who have been placed betwixt and between. They are neither here nor there. This is the phase of liminality where the recruits are in a state of flux (Gennep:1960). Therefore, Bose had tried to show that the tribal youths who stay in these dormitories try to settle the ambiguities that lay between pre and post adolescence years. The dormitories re-socialize the youths into the new responsibilities that would soon befall them thus a distinctive feature of the tribal culture is to impart the necessary knowledge to the recruits so that there is no scope of role-confusion. The youths are so well imparted training about the role set that they will take upon that their indoctrination to the collective conscience of the tribal society gets completed. Thus there are least chances of deviation and tribal youths becoming recalcitrant. The making of the tribal society thus stands compact and precise.

Thus Bose had tried jotting down the typologies of the tribes on the basis of their differing economic structure, religion and culture. He showed that it will be erroneous on our part to take tribal groups as homogenous ones since they tend to show diverse attributes based on the principal traits of socio-economic organization. It was based on these diversities, that their differences claim reverence and celebration without being clubbed together with the general crust of tribal living. Probably many of these problems remained unresolved and in the face of growing political articulation, the claims even became louder and conspicuous. Besides, there were general problems that engulfed the tribal populace per se, without any accompanying differentiation. These were problems of the basic infrastructure and livelihood that were grossly denied to these unfortunate men. In the next section, we shall therefore talk of Bose’s perception of the tribal problems and ways of ameliorating them.

II

The problems of the tribe

Bose discussed the various problems that the tribal society faced. This becomes easier for him since he had spent long time working among them. The long extensive fieldworks that he had conducted among the tribal men helped him look at them from a close quarter. The problems that were idiosyncratic of each tribal community could be better understood by Bose working rigorously among them. He therefore worked into different areas of tribal society and tried detecting the tribal problems at depth.
Perhaps his experiences of working in responsible positions as the Director of the Anthropological Survey of India (1959-64), member of the study team for hill districts of Assam in 1965 and Commissioner of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (1967-70) largely helped him to pick up the real life conditions of the tribal men and address their issues and challenges facing them. One of these issues was the idea of the carrying capacity of land and the subsequent concern for tribal sustenance.

**The carrying capacity of land and the question of tribal sustenance**

Bose worked at length on the issue of the tribal adaptation and survival on the land they held for themselves. The capacity of the land to sustain its inhabitants depended on several factors. Natural resources bequeathed by the land may be extreme but land cannot be kept unkempt. It must be properly nourished to tap it’s potent and strength. All these require the faculties that men use to caress the land that they have at their disposal. The usage of the land depends on the technical acumen, information, wisdom and the social organization that the cultivators apply on the field. Thus the land and its resources are left at the disposal of the men who use them to fend off themselves. Thus a piece of land with its resources remaining constant will have different degrees of sustenance depending on the mode of production being applied. Bose thus said,

The number of men who can be supported on a square mile of land by means of one productive system may differ from that of another. In each case, again, the distribution of population, the size of settlements, the distance which separates them, the distance which lies between market places where produces are exchanged, will all vary from one another in a significant way. In other words, if we fix the standard of consumption at a uniform level, then the optimum population figure for each productive system will differ from that of another in a marked way (Bose: 1972 :41).

Thus Bose inferred that the population thrives till the productive mechanisms are well in place and has not superseded the point of saturation. When such things happen, men may still cling back to their old modes of production and do not show any ways of being resilient. This obsessive attachment to the past is wrong as it yields to several crises in the life of the inhabitants. They suffer from bouts of malnourishment, physical emaciation, mental restlessness etc. They sometimes may even try to migrate
elsewhere in search of greener pastures. This happens when the land loses its vitality to feed them any further. At times they may stop pursuing their own occupation and instead fall back on the others. This happens especially when they feel gravitated towards other economy and take them to be more supportive in sustaining a population. This according to Bose had been a major problem of the tribal societies that do not have efficient systems of production to sustain the population inhabiting the land.

The systems of cultivation being feeble, the capacity to productively yield enough for the tribal populace remains lacking. For instance, Bose spoke of the Onge tribes of Andaman Islands who survived by hunting and gathering economy. The mode of production being rudimentary, the ancillary mechanisms needed to nourish the productive system was largely lacking. The economy that the Onge tribes projected was not suitable to feed the density of population that the land carried. Bose saw this as one of the crucial problems of the tribes not only of Andaman Island but in the other parts of the country as well. The productive systems of Assam, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh also suffered from similar kinds of constraints from which there seemed no redresser. Bose himself said,

> In most places, the pressure has crossed the critical point; and that explains why the Juangs have either become landless labourers working in other people's fields in neighbouring villages, taken to the plough themselves where it has been possible to do so.... when the technique of production is altered, it affects the distribution of population and brings about consequential changes in property relations, and the overall structure of the society in question (ibid: 45).  

Bose said when people shift from one form of cultivation to the other there must be consequential changes in the carrying capacity of the land itself. Bose in such theorization of the sustenance capacity of the land was actually following the Marxian model of economic determinism. Like Marx, he also felt that the basis of the social structure lied in the economic plank which in turn determined the superstructure of the society. The power distribution of the society was thus determined by the economic structure which in turn influenced the allocation of resources in the society. Bose followed such an interpretation to account for the recurrent changes that seemed frequent in the tribal society.
For him the stages of transition from one form of production to another provided enough inquisitions to trace the innumerable changes that trailed behind. It was not just measuring the economic impact but also evaluating the rapid changes creeping in the social organization that interested Bose. He thought the people did not suddenly change their mode of production and therefore did not take such a major decision impulsively. They might have been pestered by some factors affecting the land which forced them to forego the modes of production they had followed for long. The tribes were known as the conservative communities in general who did not suddenly change their age long modes of production but did whenever they were forced to do so. Bose thus tried to find the critical points at which breaks appeared in the symmetrical line of economy and created fissions in the entire socio-economic system at play. Thus the question of the vulnerability of land becomes a possible ambit of concern.

However, Bose while discussing the issue did not use this idea of the carrying capacity to only throw light on the crippling and disabled nature of tribal production. He also gave certain instances to show that there are of course some skilled tribes who are well equipped to extract the maximum resources even from these increasingly frail fragments of land. They were equipped with the various techniques of land usage and applied them deftly to get a generous yield from the land. The Apa tani tribes living in the Subansiri district of Arunachal Pradesh for instance is a classic instance of tribal dexterity and skill. Though they do not have necessary technical expertise, their land still yields benevolently. They have kept no leaf unturned to nurture their land in all the available ways and in this case they have refused to be outdone by their civilized counterparts. Bose himself added, “The Apa tani are expert in irrigation and by a well-designed social arrangement, they help one another in the maximum utilization of water as well as of soil” (ibid: 45).

Bose therefore showed that some of the tribal communities are resourceful enough to accelerate the carrying capacity of the land in their own bountiful ways. However, he wondered whether enough work was done to ascertain the capacity of other lands where tribes inhabited. He feared lands where primitive modes of production are applied such as the slash and burn cultivation, there the productivity drops down to an extent where it becomes impossible to support the existing density of population.

Bose lamented on the fact that enough work has not been done on this area for which the tribal lands are fast becoming impregnable with numerous problems leading to its
non-productivity and fallowness. When a tribe shifts from one form of cultivation to another, it is necessary to evaluate the change in productivity that clandestinely slips in. The position of the land at these crucial points of transition is necessary to evaluate. The land might become ailing and feeble to reconcile between the two distinct forms of cultivation. The land when suddenly taken off from one form of cultivation and installed into a new mould may not be able to adapt itself accordingly and besets new complications in the tribal life. However, the tribes communities in the remote areas of the country shift themselves from one mode of production to another without much fanfare. They may not even be aware of the implications which this transplantation or resettlement may convey. They simply re-settle when they find the previous form falling short of the necessary productivity. Bose himself said,

No work has yet been done by any research institution in India on the increase in carrying capacity when the slash and burn cultivation is replaced by terracing and irrigation under the same geographical conditions. But this is a work which should prove to be of greater practical as well as theoretical interests (ibid: 45).

Bose also said measuring the carrying capacity is no mundane task for not only the nature of the land must be taken into consideration but other factors such as the specialization of the tribes in alliance with the Hindu society must also come for apt consideration. Bose said finding out if specialization as that found among the Hindu caste based society is present among the tribal societies and comparing their respective carrying capacity of the lands with those which did not profess such specialization. Bose wanted to make such a comparison to reach to a substantial analysis. Bose therefore wanted to find out if infiltration of the Hindu ideology and technology into the tribal communities serves any purpose for the latter. Thus he wanted to go deeper into the question of tribe-caste nexus and investigate the undercurrents which it might contain.

Thus Bose wanted to see how the Hindu influences have traversed a long way to make penetrating drives into the tribal land and productivity. The tribes being possessive about their lands feel disappointed when they felt that their native lands could no longer support them. They had realized over the ages that Hindu method of caste based cultivation gives land an extra boost which their rudimentary production would never do. They thus feel gravitated to the Hindu social organization and its fall
outs. Bose himself raised the question, “Is the critical point, or, let us say, the explosion point, higher in the case of a socially highly differentiated community than in the case of a less differentiated one?” (ibid: 45).

Bose was therefore not just looking into the geographical aspects of the land that ushers the carrying capacity; his work was also sociological in the sense it was an inter-disciplinary work. The work was intersectional in terms of enumerating the capacity by several dimensions of the land such as the density of population, technological advancement, irrigation facilities, physical infrastructure, slope of the land and its gradient, texture of the soil as well as the structure of the encompassing society, the history of tribal settlement on the land, the process of social interaction with the outside communities and the way of importing foreign ideas from them. Bose was therefore using an idea of carrying capacity imported from human geography to deal with a bigger social problem such as tribal land rights and land alienation. He has taken digressed ideas from multiple disciplines to explain the amplifying problem of tribal agitation and unrest that they are fuming with. The areas pertaining to tribal movements and revolts and counter-active attempts of accommodation and assimilation can be better understood in a larger gamut.

Bose lamented that not enough study has been conducted to determine the carrying capacity of the land. Though the tribes have tried sustaining themselves through different means of production, they were mostly left on their own without any attempt to systematically monitor their moves. To an extent, this resulted from the ignorance of the tribes who resisted any attempt towards evaluation or monitoring of their land. Bose himself explained the gravity of the problem. He said for instance,

The area of the North Sentinel Island is only 23,0 square miles; but we know nothing about the size of its population. Only once, forty-eight adult men were counted when an attempt was made to land there. The Sentinelese rushed up to the beach with bows, arrows and spears and signalled to us not to land. The attempt to land was given up as it might lead to unnecessary conflict (ibid: 42).

Moving away from hunting and gathering tribes, Bose advanced towards a slightly higher rung of productive system, viz, the shifting cultivation. This kind of cultivation when used by the tribal men showed a mixed characteristic. At places the carrying capacity of the lands pursuing such forms of cultivation was optimum but in others it
was low. Therefore, the regional attributes must be taken into consideration while assessing the potentiality of the land. The productive system alone cannot evaluate the potentiality of the land. The regional nuances must be given serious thrust. Thus Bose wanted to analytically draw a hierarchy of the productive modes of economy and delve into its regional typicality. He thus never wanted to draw a homogeneous picture of the tribal productive systems but wanted to find its multiple shades. Bose himself said,

In the Mizo district, where the carrying capacity fluctuates between 32 and 43, the actual density is from 7 to 20. There is enough land for everybody to go around, and the problems arising out of slash – and-burn cultivation are thus not acute. In contrast, in Bastar, there is enough land in two villages while in two others the actual density and supportable capacity come close to one another. In Orissa, on the other hand, where only 22 to 27 persons can be supported, the actual density varies from 11 to 81 (ibid:44-45).

Thus Bose clearly showed that the carrying capacity as a concept is a variable in a sense that it varies from one region to another. With the system of production remaining constant, carrying capacity differs from one region to another within the same state. Therefore, there is a regional imbalance within a state with one area prospering while the other languishing. The slash-and burn cultivation as a mode of production therefore produces mixed results thus creating intra and inter-state differences. Bose had tried to show that though slash and burn cultivation is one notch above the hunting and gathering economy, the carrying capacity of the tribal lands have not everywhere improved. The density of the population remains the major decisive factor where the marginal surplus accrued from the slash-and burn cultivation gets absorbed. However, kudos must be given to this form of production that the tribal men have evolved, to escape the sterility of the rudimentary kind of hunting and gathering economy. The tribal men had always remained shrouded with problems relating to land usage. Nevertheless, they had been enterprising enough to unfold a productive system all by themselves to escape the futility of the age –old system. Bose definitely admired the tribal institution in recognizing aptly the fissions that developed in their productive organizations. The capacity to readily identify a sickening economy and to make quick attempts at its replacement surely showed the maturity of the tribal economy. The tribal society thus was resilient enough to recover
from the lapses that the stultifying economy produced for it. They made all the necessary attempts to adapt to the new situation once they hear the alarm bells. Bose himself said, “For, our assumption is that a community explores new avenues of adaptation when the saturation point has been reached under its particular productive organization” (ibid:43).

Bose had shown that the tribes over a long period of time had always run after an appropriate mode of production which could support their economy. It had been a wild goose chase for the tribal men but they did not give up. They went on exploring higher reaches of productivity but with an effort almost incredible. Bose lamented that with stark absence of research and planning for the tribal populace, their journey from one form of production to the other had remained unnoticed and unrecorded. It was necessary to enumerate whether the new form of production yielded a higher level of productivity than the previous one. However, the various forms of economy that the tribes had delved in were kept aside like a haphazard array of systems with nothing to infer from them. This lackadaisical attitude had made the researchers miss out on important issues of land usage and farming concerning the tribal society. In dearth of this information on tribal topography and land productivity, adequate scientific study and analysis of the tribal problems had not been sufficiently possible. Therefore, record keeping of major challenges stultifying their system had not been thoroughly possible. Bose while giving the instance of the Saora tribes of the southern Orissa narrated how they have stumbled while moving from shifting cultivation to a more settled form of cultivation with plough and irrigation. However, he bemoaned that,

No work has yet been done by any research institution in India on the increase in carrying capacity when the slash and burn method is replaced by terracing and irrigation under the same geographical conditions (Bose: 1972:43).

Therefore, what is interesting about Bose is that he did not just look into the geographical components of land usage but also ventured into the social issues. He was not just a human geographer but also a sociologist in true sense of the term. He did not just look into the slope of the land or its drainage or its soil texture but drilled into other social areas as well. Bose corroborated this by saying,
But there is an additional factor which has to be taken into account. Among tribes like the *Saora* of Orissa or *ApaTani* of Assam, we do not get the same kind of professional specialization as under the Hindu caste system. There may be some individuals among these tribes who are better carpenters, better house builders or some skilful in hoe-cultivation than others. But there is no specialized group as under caste (ibid: 46).

Thus Bose was undertaking the question of land usage along the multiple lines of analysis. He showed that line of enquiry along a single axis of geography cannot unearth many such dimensions that were embedded in the social arena. The sociological issues, if kept unaddressed, would never be able to analyze the tribal problems along the inanimate lines of enquiry. The soil, land or the slope alone would not be able to address the tribal issues if the social ambience which the tribal men inhabit remains unexplored.

This arena dealt with such issues like religious, ethnic or racial attributes which mingled with one another to produce such colourful combinations. Bose therefore was tempted to research along the inter-sectional lines of enquiry where he recognized the importance of plural dimensions of the tribal society. Bose was interested perhaps because he delved on the socio-religious influences on the tribal life and went on to co-relate these with the geographical aspects of land usage. In a way he was interested in initiating a wedding of socio-religious and geo-topographical issues. He said that unless the latter issues are incorporated, important issues like carrying capacity of the land or the productivity of the economy cannot be determined. Socio cultural matters were thus brought to the fore to aid the analysis of more mundane geo-physical factors. The religio-cultural issues were thus used as the supporting or secondary components to unearth primary problems confronting the tribal life.

Bose said the potentiality of the land or its sustainability can be better assessed if the level of specialization of the tribal communities can be known in prior. This is very clearly reflected in Bose’s words when he said,

One line of enquiry which is worth while pursuing is to find out if a caste-based society of specialists is capable of supporting more men per square mile of land than an unspecialized community, even when other conditions of slope, rainfall, terracing, the presence or absence of the plough, remain constant. Is the critical point, or, let us say, the
explosion point, higher in the case of a socially highly differentiated community than in the case of a less differentiated one? (ibid: 46-47).

Bose wanted to find out whether the unspecialized tribal communities are less productive than those pursuing the caste-based specializations. His preference had long been the area of fusion between the tribal and the Hindu inmates in terms of their material and non-material culture. He observed that there had been a general tendency of the tribal society to imitate the strategies of the livelihood of their Hindu counterparts. However, Bose assumed that this urge grew from an obsession with the Hindu economy.

**The imminent problems of over-Hinduization of the tribes: a case of overdose of tribal absorption.**

The caste based specializations brought with itself a kind of stable and systematic proliferation of benefits which accelerated the carrying capacity of land many times. The tribes might have understood the pitfalls of their unspecialized economy which though produced arduous labour never yielded enough for the family to survive. Thus, from the very beginning an affinity of the tribal society can be sensed towards caste oriented differentiated labour. This was nothing new, since the process was going on from time immemorial. It was quite well known that the tribes and their references were found aplenty in the ancient literature. As Bose was himself found writing,

Even in the earliest Sanskrit literature, there are references to the *Saoras* who inhabited the wilds south of the Indo-Gangetic plain. It was, however, a term, which apparently covered many tribes, of whom the *Saoras* of the Orissan highlands may have been one…. The descendants of the Vidya Brahmin and his *Saora* wife are still employed as servants in the temple of Jagganath. They alone have the privilege of handling the images, carrying them during the ceremonies of the *Snana* and *Ratha Yatra* to their proper seats, and of painting the idols every year after they have been discoloured by washing in the great *Snana* Festival. (Bose:1972: 46-47).

Thus the myths and legends were found to be packed with tribal life and their close association with the Hindu caste society. This was not just elucidated by Bose but by many of the earlier socio-historians. Such literature can suggest the basis of the growing affinity of the tribal society towards this caste based Hindu conglomeration.
In this context yet another observation can be quoted as made by the historian, Sudhakar Chattopadhyay, who said,

The varna system was not, however dying out completely. Dr B.R Ambedkar has shown how in the historical period various foreign tribes, who entered into India, were admitted into the caste fold. This was possible only through the varna system which is elucidated in the later pages of the great epic” (Chattopadhyay:1965).

Ambedkar had also shown how various tribes in the ancient literature like Yavanas, Sakas etc. have become an integral essence of the Hindu society and even attained precious positions in the society. The four-fold division of labour was maintained while assigning status to the tribes. It probably marks the genesis of the entry of the tribes clinging to the rope of the four-fold segmentation or the cāturvarnyam. Probably, this is how they have developed a liking for this varnashram system and Hindu economy for its sustainability. The tribes in large number while adapting the Hindu caste based production was also growing the possibility of escaping the malice of unspecialized production and inefficient land usage. Bose believed that the influence of the process of Brahminization had been far penetrative on certain tribes such as the Mundas and Oraons compared to that of the Juangs and Pauri Bhuiyans. However, Bose had lamented on the fact that the process had grown overboard to the extent that the tribal men were so avidly taking up the practice that there was little nativity left in them. Bose thus said,

We will see that the process of finding a place for other communities within the varnashram system has been going on in India for many centuries; and that, as a result of this, many people have almost given up their individual identities so as to nourish and enrich the wider Hindu society (Bose: 1975:71).

This tendency to show such head strong allegiance for the caste based system of production was especially found in Orissa but not in Bengal. Caste based productive system grew as a non-competitive federation upon which each caste could claim a monopoly. The system grew in such an emboldened form in Orissa that a community of weaver castes refused to encroach over the monopoly of their peer community even when they were offered lucrative gains to reproduce the other’s patterns. However,
the caste based economy could not gain such foothold in West Bengal in terms of monopoly since the caste ascriptions were not maintained in choosing vocations. Bose himself while comparing the two states said,

In Bengal where the tradition of caste has been eroded to a large extent, in a village in the district of Hoogly where there are nearly 1200 looms working even now, the people who earn by way of weaving do not merely belong to the weaver caste; some of them are even widows who belong to the Brahmin caste. They make their living by means of this craft. Bata’s shoe factory today employs nearly 12,000 workers, of whom 10,000 are from Bengal. The workers are divided into skilled and unskilled categories. Among skilled workers, we find 43% are formed by Brahmins, Kayasthas and Vaidyas; thus, Brahmins in Bengal have taken to weaving, the manufacture of shoes in a factory, or even running a shop for hair cutting and shaving where shaving and hair dressing are done by the Brahmin proprietor himself (Bose: 1972:38).

Bose said, surely these could be taken as bold signals of change and that the society was fast moving forward abandoning behind the shackles of traditional moorings. However, for the tribal societies, a contrary position could be noticed. They struggled hard to befit the crease and corner of the caste based hierarchy. They desperately hankered after this monopoly and went to an unimaginable extent to gain such a monopoly. This might seem probable in a society where the tribes were brought up on the staple diet of caste regulations. The biggest problem which the tribal society combated is their tendency to eulogize the caste society and worship its every feature. Not that it was bad in its entirety but it definitely had its own share of vices. When a section of the caste society was finding ways of escaping its own strictures, the tribal recruits were obstinate in their commitment to the caste based economy. This found entrenched expressions in the social movements initiated by the tribes themselves. The movements showed that in their bid to blindly emulate the Hindu society, the tribes were in turn compromising with their spontaneous rhythm of life. They were trading their simplicity and austerity for a stereotyped and run of the mill life style.

Bose, for instance, spoke of the Tana Bhagat Movement which could be taken as a form of reform movement among the Oraon tribes in their drive to purify themselves in line with the caste Hindus. There were many devotional sects among the Oraons, one of which was the Tana Bhagats. In their desperation to seek a form of purity they
abnegated all forms of practices that were an integral part of tribal identity. Bose while narrating the tale of the tribal fascination for the Brahminical form of life said,

The Tanas sought to root out from their ancient folk culture everything that might be regarded as degrading in the eyes of the Brahmins. As a result, their anger was directed not only to the spirits and goblins, but equally to widow re-marriage, divorce, the free mixing of young women and men, songs, festivities, dances, colorful garments and garments with decorated borders (Bose:1975:67).

In this way the tribes in their drive to seek endless gratification to be in sync with the Hindu society resorted to all the possible ways. This weakened the strong sense of identity that they always carried for themselves. It turned them into feeble communities feeding on to other host communities.

This movement was especially prevalent among the Oraons of Ranchi and Singbhum. The purifying spree went such wild that the Oraons even refused to take up cultivation since it did not remove poverty or uproot famine or epidemics in the state. The Oraons even stopped working as labourers for other communities in their disgust for the state and the nation. The Tana Bhagat movement was a kind of messianic movement in which the Oraons prayed for a divine intervention. They hoped for the annihilation of their problems with the restoration of the golden age back on the earth. They were awaiting the authority of a charismatic leader who could alleviate all their problems with a magical wand. The problem of the tribal society was such unrealistic reliance on the metaphysical forms of mediators who were expected to descend down on the earth as a saviour. Bose himself found this when he said,

There lived a man called Jatra Oraon in village Beparinwatoli in the Bishnupur thana (police station) of Gumla subdivision. In 1914, his age would have been 25 years. This person announced in the month of April in that year that Dharmesh, the high god of the Oraons, had revealed to him that they would have to give up the worship of ghosts and spirits and the practice of exorcism, and that they would have to refrain from animal sacrifice, meat eating, liquor drinking and other indulgences. ……. good days would be coming soon, and then the Oraons would not have to bear any hardship either in this world or in the next. Moreover, God had given to Jatra Oraon certain songs or spells by which fever, styles and other ailments could be cured (ibid:65).
Bose therefore showed that such strong obsession with the Hindu society and attempts for absorption created problems in the path of tribal welfare. It created a false sense of identity and illusions that they subscribed for long without realizing its pitfalls. Thus allegiance to a system is good till it creates a hyper-real society where the inmates are trapped for reasons they themselves are unconscious of. This attachment to Hindu society is sometimes uncalled for, since the tribes must be taught to live on their own terms. It actually serves as an instance of overdose of tribal absorption. This is particularly so when the caste based occupations are waning fast. Bose therefore spoke of alternative and all-inclusive vocations to make the tribes increasingly self-reliant. He therefore had this to say,

> It is of great importance to rehabilitate tribals into agriculture that they do not gravitate into another endogamous ‘cultivating’ jati. It would be wise therefore to allocate land to them, and at the same time train them in crafts like carpentry, blacksmithery and the like and help them earn by means of the new crafts learnt. Formation of any new caste must be nipped in the bud (Bose: 1972:109).

**Disintegration of the tribes from the main stream population**

This over-engagement with the Hindu caste society was banal for the tribal men. Bose had observed that the tribes were gradually getting trapped in a strange situation especially in terms of their relation with the non-tribal populace. The absorption of the tribes into the caste fold had already been discussed so far but what had remained more crucial now is the changing relation between the tribal and their non-tribal counterparts. This is more important now because the non-tribal population is slowly infiltrating the tribal habitats. With the development projects undertaken everywhere, the tribes are soon finding their native places to be modified in terms of the contemporary demands. In this bid of modernization, the tribal heartlands are all being radically transformed into synthetic habitats where the tribes are at a loss. The reverence for the tribal culture and their rights over their own resources were now being endangered. Bose had himself said,

> With the extension of agriculture, mines and industries into new areas, the tribes of the state are often rendered helpless witnesses of a situation over which they have no control (Bose: 1972:65).
Thus the tendency to impinge upon the other communities was growing fast when the mutual respect between the two communities was seen fast receding. Prof Haimendorf said this was unlikely in the past when the tribal communities were encouraged to retain back their identity. It was not that they did not infiltrate the Hindu caste groups but it was not taken as imperative. Tribes who wished to keep their original identity without relinquishing to the process of assimilation were encouraged to do so. He gave the instance of the Raj Gond, who wished to maintain their separateness from the Hindu communities. They indulged in all those practices that were taken as blasphemy according to the Hindu scriptures. They were bold enough to pursue their own practices without being allured by the dominant caste ideology. Haimendorf had said,

Thus the Raj Gonds, some of whose rulers vied in power with Rajput princes, used to sacrifice and eat cows without debasing thereby their status in the eyes of their Hindu neighbours. The Hindus recognized the tribes’ social and cultural separateness and did not insist on conformity to Hindu patterns of behaviour, and this respect for the tribal way of life prevail as long as contacts between the two communities were of a casual nature. The tribal people, though considered strange and dangerous, were taken for granted as part of the world of hills and forests, and a more or less frictionless coexistence was possible because there was no population pressure, and hence no incentive to deprive the aboriginals of their land. This position persisted during the whole of the Mughal period. (Haimendorf: 1983:34).

With the advent of the British rule, the position was drastically changed. With the advent of the new order and policies, the tribal lands now became accessible to the common men. The tribal lands therefore lost their virginity once they came into the hands of the avid men with their eyes on the land and its resources. The British rulers thus played a shrewd game. It brought the tribal lands under its legal jurisdiction and coaxed the tribal men by saying that it must have served them good because they have been brought under the watchful purview of the administrators. In reality, though it turned wretched for the tribes who soon saw the imperiousness of the haughty traders and moneylenders before their own eyes. Bose said that the situation then was horrible since the tribes were getting vanquished of everything that they possessed. Bose therefore said,
Today however, the problem of tribal disintegration has taken on an altogether new complexion. Firstly, penetration into the less developed regions is much more rapid than in former times. Secondly, the economic organization of caste itself is crumbling into pieces; it is incapable of coping with the demands of production made by an expanding population having an expanding scale of needs. Under slow infiltration, a special occupation could be assigned to a tribe when it became a caste (Bose:1975:67).

Bose lamented that with the loss of a monopolized job umbrella, tribal men once uprooted from their forests and temporary settlements have nothing to do. The very weakening of the caste structure which acted as a federation of cultures had collapsed. Along with it, the functional feedback impact of the caste –tribe understanding had disappeared. Suddenly the tribal men were made to realize that they have nothing to fall back upon and only if they have raise up against all odds, it must be their individual dispensation as against the collective spirit which enlivened them in the past. The very sense of belonging to a social group under the older economic arrangement had ebbed out altogether. According to Bose, this newly found sense of individualism and freedom is toxic for it radically changed the very identity of the tribal culture upon which it had rested for generations. It was embarking on a new and never known path of alienation and disintegration. Bose therefore proclaimed,

The chief point to which attention is being drawn is that individualism, in an exaggerated form, is responsible for a rapid disintegration of tribal cultures in a way in which it has never before occurred in the history of India’s cultural evolution (ibid:51).

**The problem of land alienation**

Bose saw all these factors as paving the ground for alienation of the land from which the tribal inmates had suffered badly. Tribal land was soon losing its exclusivity and the sanctity it had. The world was ready to frame all possible ways to evict the natives from their own land. Bose himself bemoaned,

Even when there are laws preventing the transfer of land belonging to the members of tribes to ‘outsiders’, it was obvious that the control over land was progressively, and surreptitiously, passing out of their hands into those of the money-lenders who cultivated it through paid labour and were themselves absentee landlords. Little credit is available to
tribes; and the only source available entraps them, and eventually leaves them deprived off their possessions (Bose: 1972:65).

Bose tried to understand the problem of land alienation from the problem of development induced displacement. He said with the project of modernization at its full swing, the resources which were so long taken as the tribal custody was soon impinged upon. Forests were claimed and the tribes were sent to the back burner. They retired into lonely and more restricted stretches of land where sustenance became a liability for them. As Bose said,

As the tribesmen were forced into more restricted stretches of hills and jungles, they have either to starve if they try to continue in their accustomed modes of production, or be completely lost in a new world to which they can hardly adapt themselves (ibid:65-66).

Bose seemed quite vexed with the deteriorating positions of the aborigines. He though made similar kinds of observation seemed to be slightly sympathetic towards the British while elucidating the disastrous conditions of the tribal men. He did not blame the British men absolutely for the conditions of the tribal men. He insisted that the British administration had resorted hard to ameliorate the sinking conditions of the natives but all went in vain. He had written,

The deterioration of the aboriginals' position, which in many parts of Peninsular India began as early as the middle of the nineteenth century and continued into the twentieth century, occurred despite the fact that many British officials sympathized with the tribesmen and some of the most fervent advocates of tribal rights were found among the officers of the Indian Civil Service. Yet, the recommendations for reforms contained in numerous reports were seldom implemented in full, and even where they were incorporated in legislation they did not always prove effective (Haimendorf:1982:35)

Though Bose and Haimendorf were both scholars in this field, perhaps it is at this point that Bose could claim to be distinct and noteworthy in his approach. While Haimendorf took an ambivalent stand towards the colonial economy and the way it served to bring changes in the tribal life, Bose was more radical in his view. He felt that the new foliage of the economy and the thriving principles of capitalism were
slowly eating away the rubrics of the native communities. He was least persuaded by the rigours of capitalism which he finds is in no match to the indigenous economy.

Bose though might sound otherwise, still said,

The corrosion is more rapid because of the mechanical rapidity and ease of movement of present times. It is also more rapid because of the urgency of expansion of the industrial and commercial system, which has a higher economic potential than the economic organization of caste as well as the lowlier productive organizations of the tribal people (ibid:52).

This was more in tune with the Gandhian idea of economy (Bose:1940,1941,1945a,1946&1946a) where he stressed hard on an indigenous form of industry that shall tap the resources of men themselves instead of developing a blind reliance of mechanized industrial arrangement. Gandhian influence was running high while Bose was formulating his idea of national economy. Gandhi’s quotes from Young India will clearly indicate this alliance. He wrote,

What I object to, is the craze for machinery, not machinery as such. The craze is for what they call labour-saving machinery. Men go on ‘saving labour’ till thousands are without work and thrown on the open streets to die of starvation…. today machinery merely helps a few to ride on the backs of millions. The impetus behind it all is not the philanthropy to save labour, but greed (Gandhi:1924).

Bose was not just against imperial industrialization but even against colonial land abuse. Bose discussed the colonial land usages further to explain the imperial takeover of the tribal lands that went on stealthily. Bose felt that the tribes were slowly losing their control over their land. This was because of the silenly getting complicated rules of land revenue and tenure. This further showed little concern for the aboriginal lands and their exclusiveness. This new system of administration poached upon the original tribal land rules and absolutely jeopardized the aboriginal land system. The indigenous land system thus broke loose to make way for the invaders from outside.

The lands were slipped off in the hands of the others. The non-tribal men were all hand–in–gloves with one another to usurp the resources of the tribal men. The tribal lands were earlier taken as closed and inaccessible ones protected from the glare of
the avid enterprisers. However, later on the outsiders trespassed into these lands with the tribes feeling left out and hapless. This was the result of the colonial administration which booby trapped the tribal men to siphon off their land. This was furthered by the proliferation of parasitic classes in the colonial period like that of the money lenders and absentee landlords who fed on these tribal lands. Bose thus observed, “Little credit is available to the tribes and the only source available entraps them, and eventually leaves them deprived off their possessions” (Bose: 1972:65).

Thus the colonial regime proposed rules of administration and alongside elaborate paraphernalia for land management and transfer. The British administration imposed rules of land reform and rent. Bose found that there was little option left for them in these fast developing tribal belts. The foreign invasion meant that the virgin lands were incessantly being pumped out of their vital resources leading to the further destitution of the tribes. This was further instigated by the development projects undertaken by the plains men whereby the tribal lands were all sapped of their valuable resources. The irony lied in the fact that the tribal men felt dejected and was rejected on their own lands. They were uprooted mercilessly from their own lands and little rehabilitation drives were initiated for them. While stating the conditions of the tribes in Andhra Pradesh, Bose said,

- **Some of the reasons of the ensuing tribal unrest**

Bose felt likewise in every other sphere, the tribal men were suffering from long and un-ending bouts of maladjustment with their non-tribal counterparts. He thus lamented that unnecessary punishments were meted out to the tribes which they did not deserve. This was because the laws establishing their offence were not according to their native ones. In other times when they could have gone scot free, unnecessary burdens of punishment were levied on them after having tried them in the foreign
courts of law. With the legal system, the political structure was also fast upgrading itself. The Indian political edifice was fast getting reshuffled with the drive for emergent decentralization. The Panchayat system getting its conspicuous structure, the resultant reorganization made necessary changes in the power equations of the states. This amalgamation in the power structure also brought necessary ripples in the tribal communities in the respective states. Bose felt these changes had affected the tribal societies rather adversely. He wrote, “elections are manoeuvred by the clever plainsmen in such a manner that they can now add to their own power and use it for furthering their private interests” (Bose: 1972:66)

Unlike a discriminatory politico-judicial system that was jaundiced towards the rights of the tribal men, Bose felt, there was a need of similar structure formed especially for them. Such a system was implemented in the Adilabad district of Andhra Pradesh where a political reorganization was attempted to reform the depressed conditions of the Gonds. Haimendorf takes us back to the Nizam’s government which established a new department known as the Social Services Department. This was further attached to the Revenue Department and headed by the advisor for the tribes and backward classes. The department was dressed up in a way to better handle the administrative measures pertaining to the tribal belt. Though it was a bureaucratic body speeding up the reformatory measures meant for the tribal populace, the proposed laws and regulations were not impersonal but rather empathetic in character. Haimendorf while enquiring the genesis of this act wrote,

The culmination of the entire tribal policy of Hyderabad State was the promulgation of an act known as the Tribal Areas Regulation 1356 Fasli (1946 A.D.). This regulation empowered the government to "make such rules as appear to them to be necessary or expedient for the better administration of any notified tribal area in respect of tribals and of their relations with non-tribals." The substance of this regulation was incorporated in the Tribal Areas Regulation 1359 Fasli (1949 A.D) and the rules giving effect to its provisions were issued by the Revenue Department under the title Notified Tribal Areas Rules 1359 Fasli on 16 November 1949. (Haimendorf: 1982:43).

Thus a separate Panchayat was formed to cater to the needs of the tribal communities. This gave a ray of hope to the tribal men since they tried assuring themselves that justice would now be rendered to them without inhibition or delay. The tribe’s vested
interest on the new Panchayat system as they felt it would be their very own system of administration without any prerogative for the plainsmen. Haimendorf said, the establishment of tribal panchayat backed by the authority of government gave the tribemen confidence that they could run their own affairs without outside interference. (Haimendorf: 1982:43).

Thus the system was well in place to counter the ills emanated by the politico-judicial structure maintained to suit the needs of the plainsmen. The tribal Panchayat system continued to persist even for seven more years after the partition of the Hyderabad state and it continued even after the union of the Telengana and the Andhra districts to form the new state of the Andhra Pradesh. Therefore, Haimendorf bemoaned,

Unfortunately for the aboriginals of the Telengana districts, this regulation was repealed in 1963 and replaced by the Andhra Pradesh Scheduled Areas Land Transfer Regulation, 1959. While the latter regulation also protected the land of tribals, prohibiting any transfer to non-tribals, it did not contain any provision for the maintenance of tribal panchayat, and more importantly stripped the social service officers of the authority and judicial powers with which the Hyderabad regulation and rules had invested them (ibid:43).

Bose might have felt that the repulsion of an exclusive regulation and the absence of a political mandate for the tribal men had been responsible for the fast erosion of the tribes and their virgin society. But he felt there were still other causes that can be counted upon for tribal decadence and mayhem.

Bose felt lack of education among the tribes is yet another cause of their problem. Bose grumbled that, education is undoubtedly on the increase but the pace is slow enough. He complained that the tribesmen are not able to utilize it in order to secure or maintain their own freedom (Bose:1972 :66). Following the footsteps of Haimendorf, Bose felt that if the tribes were given proper education, they would not require long term welfare measures. At least for the time being, the tribes must be brought within the purview of stubborn welfare strategies but once they have overcome the present hurdles, and embarked on a much stable platform, such strategies might be broken loose. For this to happen, they must be given proper educational facilities and opportunities. Echoing the words of Haimendorf, Bose felt,
At least for a fair number of years, tribesmen do need special treatment. If they come up in education, which should be of the right type, there may come a time at the end of, say, ten years when the protection can be withdrawn. There is every justification at present of placing them under some kind of protection so that they do not lose everything before it is too late (ibid:66).

Alongside, this is also equally true that the need for educating the tribal men had cropped up quite late in the national conscience and this surely had triggered more the problem of land alienation. It is really startling to learn that before 1950 there was no programme for formal education of the tribal men in our country. It was after the promulgation of the Constitution, that the need for formal educational measures of tribal men was considered. Nadeem Hasnain said, “with the adoption of Constitution, the promotion of education of Scheduled Tribes has become a special responsibility of the Central as well as of the State Governments” (Hasnain:1982 :128). Bose nevertheless, had widely taken up the issues of tribal education as an agenda of the Indian state. He felt unless the men from these communities are given education, nothing can be done to upgrade their status.

- **Bose and his idea of tribal education**

Bose felt that education for the tribes must begin with mother tongue rather than through any extraneous language. The preliminary lessons must be taught through spoken words rather than any form of codified and written language. At a sectional conference on Tribal Education held at Lucknow on Dec 29-31, 1963, which was presided over by N.K Bose himself, the resolution adopted at the meeting, suggested that concrete steps must be taken to ensure economic and social integration of the backward communities to boost up the weakness of the national structure. The resolution adopted therefore depicted the social reality in the following way:

So far as Scheduled Tribes are concerned, the conference felt that the manner in which economic integration has taken place in the past, in many cases, accentuated class distinctions rather than led to their dissolution which is the ultimate aim of Republic of India. It is therefore, hoped that the foundation of national integration should be laid on the active promotion of economic equality…such economic integration should be supplemented by educational endeavour (Bose: 1972:126).
Bose felt the nation has the emergent need to educate its masses so that they can abstain themselves from the current parochialism and the growing sense of intolerance, eating into the roots of the society. He believed that education is a technical process, though it might have regional ramifications, but the idea is to beset the society with strong educational and vocational curriculum.

Bose wanted to build up unified society nestled within a common economic design but culturally resilient enough to cater to various communities and their burgeoning diversities. Bose felt, to attain this, it should be a prerogative within the curriculum to teach not just the mother tongue but the language of their neighbouring people as well. This will help in reaching the all-encompassing goal of inclusive education. Bose believed that unless such exchanges take place, national integration will not be possible. He therefore proposed that the tribal students be sent off to other areas on state funds and scholarships. Unless, such travel grants and endowments are encouraged, the tribal communities will remain insular without any exposure to the outside world. This will severely outdo their chances of integrating with the hitherto mainstream society. He stressed that not just the tribal children but even the non-tribal ones should be given this opportunity so that they too can spread their wings to fly high. Bose hoped that, “It is hoped that this simple, yet practical measure will help to foster a feeling of national oneness in an efficient and helpful manner” (ibid:127).

Bose was not just pedagogical in his approach, and therefore proposed many alternative measures for tribal education. He felt that not just rote-learning, but imparting educational skills through other mediums like audio-visual aids, might inspire the youths to learn more. Bose therefore said, not just such aids, but theatrical performances and one-act plays, where one can role-play other actors from neighbouring states, will open a rich space for interaction and growth. Hence, Bose, definitely was innovative and liberal in approaches which helped him to think out of the box, to propose such schemes. Bose at the same time voiced clearly his take on protection of tribal rights.

**Bose and Ambedkar: an attempt to connect the two on the question of the policies of tribal education.**

In advocating such lines of education, Bose was not just following the Gandhian philosophy (Bose:1949,1949a,1949b,1950&1950a) but also showing inclination
towards Ambedkar. Ambedkar himself proposed a means of liberating the children from the backward sections and urging them to explore further with unbridled freedom. Ambedkar believed in harvesting the best minds of the villages, giving them necessary education and then inducting them in government jobs. This way a planned development of the nation is possible. Ambedkar felt that way of empowering the backward masses, for ten years would create a large pool of man power. He said in this context,

Thus you will create a few people with high qualifications and place them in high posts. That will be 2000 times better than the 2000 boys educated in primary education in Marathi or Gujrathi (Ambedkar: 1956:74).

Bose was elated by this proposal submitted by Ambedkar and therefore took cognizance of this great jurist (Bose: 1972b:222). What seemed interesting is this, Ambedkar and Bose though both spoke of social upliftment of the marginal sections did not harbour similar opinions of the caste system. Ambedkar was ready to do away with the system altogether but Bose treasured varnashram system though he cursed the caste system for the inequality it garnered in the society. We take Bose as a Gandhian scholar, but it is interesting how he veered in other directions as well thus substantively importing from elsewhere. Unlike Gandhian idea of universal primary education, he showed noteworthy interest in special educational needs, as did Ambedkar to build upon a national store house of talents. Of course, the area of tribal education cannot be homogeneously framed on primary units alone because it had wider amplifications, and Bose seemed to have understood it well. He therefore seemed careful while granting protection to the countrymen on the scaffold of education.

The issue of protection and the Gandhian way of bolstering the tribal integration

Bose deliberated quite at length on the issue of tribal protection. He tried analysing the pros and cons of such protection if at all allowed to indulge in this nation. On one side was a strong argument in favour of protection. The tribes needed to be protected to challenge the manoeuvring tactics of the local leaders who try to wield political influence on them. The outsiders if excluded from the local tribal panchayat elections might make positions of the tribes more secured. This might abrogate their chance of
winning election, especially if trespassed by the outsiders. Bose reflecting the opinion of the social worker, Mr V. Raghavaiah, who has spent his lifetime in the service of the adivasis of Andhra Pradesh, said,

Local bodies which are entrusted with the administration of justice also should have a president who belongs to a tribe. Customs should be respected; and the provisions of the Indian Penal Code should not be applied rigorously when there are extenuating circumstances provided by the social customs of the tribe in question (Bose: 1972: 67).

Thus this argument strongly vouches for tribal leadership in matters affecting them and takes a sceptical look at the ‘others’ who pitches in to assume leadership just for the sake of their own selfish interests. The disdain for the outsiders was so strong that many felt that the tribal panchayats must be treated as an altogether separate unit with least interference from outsiders. Thus it proposed an insulated tribal system of governance that is absolutely closed from the outside world. Such a system Bose felt might be apparently taken as serving innocuously for tribal welfare but its long term consequences might seem gawky and dicey. For this to be established, we must realize as Bose said, that the water tight compartments between the tribes and the non-tribes must be brought down. To identify the tribes as exploited and the non-tribes as exploiters is equally wrong for they are not mutually exclusive categories and one can be subsumed in the other. There can be tribes who are exploiters and there can be plainsmen who are exploited. Bose had clearly pointed out that the crux of the matter is, “It is necessary to distinguish clearly between those whose presence impoverishes tribe’s men, and those help to enrich the life of the latter” (ibid: 67).

So Bose felt, what is most important is to relegate the hostility ensuing between the camps to the back burner. It must be recognized that the absolutist approach of drawing a bold line between the tribes and the non-tribes might not be much useful in integrating the tribes with the main stream society. Bose prescribed specific means to stop this growing problem of disintegration when he said,

The means of ending exploitation may be either through constitutional devices or an organization of the strength of the exploited so that they can achieve their goal by their unaided effort. The two can also be combined with one another, if ‘direct action’ is non-violent and the aim is ‘peaceful persuasion of the privileged class (ibid: 70).
Bose had very well recognized the strength of the intravenous tribal solidarity that comes from within and which necessarily does not need to be borrowed. He felt that such sort of power bolsters the tribal communities many times more than the one gained by hub knobbing with the powerful men. Bose corroborated this by saying,

> When a community is placed in enjoyment of such power, it remains inwardly unconvincing about its own strength, and harks back to outside support whenever thrown into a crisis (Bose: 1972: 71).

Thus it is very clear that Bose wanted the tribal men to muster their strength from within, without stooping low before the outsiders. He said only when the tribal men have made themselves self-sufficient and self-dependent only then should the question of constitutional safeguards arise. Bose supposedly, was contemplating of a self-reliant and potential tribal society which have thoroughly recognized their inner power that have shrouded them so far but have suddenly remained unnoticed. He did not blindly hanker after constitutional reforms but wanted to approach this issue on a well-grounded platform. So, for Bose, legal safeguards were less important than the tribal skill to build upon their own sustainability and resource. For him, the victory of the tribal groups did not lay in mere clamouring for constitutional measures but in strengthening and empowering their own souls. Bose himself said,

> Reform brought about merely by well-meaning people at the top without adequate sanction to back it in case of failure is poor stuff. It is like an independence which is given, not earned (ibid: 71).

Bose reminds us that since the tribes could not discover such in-built strength, at times they demanded for an extra protection which is not due to them. When the tribes fail to nourish their own resources they illegitimately fall back on the non-tribal power lobby and take undue favours from them. This is wrong, for such an immature behaviour by a section of the tribal populace puts the entire tribal mass in peril. Such improper action makes the entire tribal community overtly dependent on their non-tribal counterpart without letting the tribes gain their self-reliance and strength. They harvest an altogether separatist tendency and once encouraged they always find an opportunity to get for themselves special privileges and exclusion. What is wrong is that such an attitude from the very beginning makes the tribes opportunist and insular.
They lose their immunity to fight back on a general podium and remain maimed for life. They lose their vitality to combat a crisis without that special support being rendered from outside.

Bose therefore warned the society and its politico-judicial measures against the danger of being over-protective towards the tribes. Instead they should be given a chance to independently fight for their own causes without seeking external support. Such a selfish attitude upsets the plan of nation building altogether without giving a chance for inter-communal co-operation and harmony. Bose seemed alarmed when he observed,

> Under these circumstances, a tribe thinks that it would like to have an exclusive territory of its own hedged in by a protective barrier, where it can live on its own terms and if necessary grant a second-rate citizenship to ‘outsiders’ who come and work there, rather than work with everyone else in an endeavour to build up a new world where there is no exploitation and where everybody enjoys freedom to shape his own destiny in his own way and grants similar freedom to others to do so (Bose:1972: 71).

Bose therefore understood that the problems of tribal exploitation are rather more complicated than what met the surface. He said the problem lied not merely in separating the tribes from the non-tribes but in proposing means to squash power from the hands of the powerful. The Gandhian technique of Satyagraha was well applied by Bose to fight back the exploitation faced by the tribes and to create an exploitation-free society. In such a society power shall be rendered firmly in the hands of the farthest men in pedestal who have the least access to power. Bose bolstered his view by saying that,

> This consists of uniting all the exploited in specific situations for the exercise of Satyagraha in both its aspects, namely, constructive activity and militant non-violent non-co-operation (ibid:67).

So it sounds that Bose seemed to have a strong influence of Gandhi not only in his other works but also in the area pertaining to tribal studies. He proposed the Gandhian technique of Satyagraha to counteract the tribal problems pestering the society at large. Gandhi believed, this means would enable the system to trickle down its
resources to the last man in the queue so that no one returns empty handed. He believed that as long as the prevalent differences among men exist there will be an ongoing clash between them which might perforate the very social layer shielding us. Gandhiji said the best way to abet this is to implement the means of Satyagraha so that the differences can be resolved in rather an economic, efficient and peaceful way. Gandhi said Satyagraha had a stark difference from any other violent form of war where there is either victory or defeat but this is unlike the Satyagraha where there is mutual agreement over unilateral fallout. Both parties are relieved as each has something to saviour upon. Gandhi himself said,

In satyagraha, on the other hand, both sides are eventually expected to arrive at an agreed solution based upon justice and fairness. As the end is a joint achievement, there is neither victory nor defeat (ibid:67).

So while talking about the means to end the tribal exploitation Bose spoke about the effectivity of this method to tackle the tribal issue. He himself while explaining the vitality of this technique said,

This consists of uniting all the exploited in specific situations for the exercise of Satyagraha in both its aspects, namely, constructive activity and militant non-violent non-co-operation. He also held that as the aim of Satyagraha is ‘peaceful persuasion’ of the privileged class, it can be combined with constitutional reform (ibid: 67).

So it is well evident that Bose did not do away with the constitutional reforms completely but also warned the nation against the vices of overt protection. This cripples the will power of men to survive in natural conditions of trials and tribulations without which the tribes would lose their natural instincts for defence and immunity. He spoke of constitutional reforms but did not indulge in spoon feeding the tribal communities at every stage. He said, such obsessive concern for the tribal men could harm them altogether because they would never learn the lessons of self-development and self-potentiality. Bose therefore warned us that constitutional reforms should not merely crop up to forcibly empower the tribal men but there should be well rounded steps designed to vitalize them. Such empowerment should start at grass- root democracy and should not be confined within the ivory tower so that tribal men can become conscious of their rights and duties as well. Mere
imposing the tasks of empowerment on the central organizations might not help if men from different levels irrespective of their socio-economic rungs do not pitch in. Bose therefore spoke of an all rounded democracy where decentralized task management might help to evenly distribute the resources of a well-conceived nation among its diverse sections of population irrespective of their positions down the socio-economic and racial hierarchy.

**Tribal separatism and the danger of the two nation theory**

Bose warned us against this gradual but steady march towards separatism for he saw in it the latent threat of the two nation theory\(^1\). He repeatedly saw the increasing danger of partisan politics looming large on the social front. He was scared that a strong prerogative for tribal reservation might wedge an invincible difference between the tribal and the non-tribal domain. Bose, though supported protective strategy, had some reservations against it. He was scared when he thought, “this was nothing short of admission of a ‘two nation theory’ in regard to Adivasis and plains people” (ibid: 72). Probably, Bose was upset because he was alarmed by the separatist tendency that would soon follow to throw the national harmony in jeopardy. The two-nation theory regarding the division of the country between the Hindus and Muslims was possible only on the basis of religious identity. Religion was made a bait to soon divide the nation into two contentious camps that saw the fragmentation of the country on a permanent scale, never to be re-united again.

Bose thus feared that the animosity that cropped up between the two communities would be fatal and can come back to us once more if we by now do not question the issue of overt protection indulged by the certain sections of the society. As they had ideologically created Pakistan as a separate state so were certain sections of the society in favour of exclusive tribal domains. Bose was scared that such isolation might carry with it the in-born germs of the latent two nation theory that had historically destroyed the social fabric of our country. Bose was thus scared that the tribal communities would also bask in such glory and would demand for separate and insular homelands to pronounce their distinctions from the non-tribes. Thus the issue of granting exclusion to the tribes also carried with it the latent vices of the two nation theory which still has blood cuddling experiences for all the Indians fresh in their minds.
Bose was alarmed by such an ideological fancy of the tribal communities. He feared if not handled properly, the nation state will be shredded into multiple pieces once people started demanding separate home states on both territorial and ideological grounds. Bose undoubtedly shuddered at such a horrifying sight and tried all means to save his country from such a gory destiny. In his bid to save the country from the ingrained dangers of the two-nation theory, Bose proposed multiple means. He said,

> The lives of the citizens of India are being changed considerably in many ways. If those who are in the same economic position combine in spite of linguistic or cultural differences in a joint endeavour to build up a new life and convert those who oppose it by means of peaceful persuasion, then only will integration of the right type take place. We can obviate the dangers of a latent two nation theory only by trying to encourage unities of economic and social interests as they arise in course of the nation’s changing life (ibid:72).

**Self-determination is necessarily not separatism: Assessing the demands of the hill tribes**

Bose asserted in easy terms that not all claims for recognition and articulation are pestilent enough to be taken as an aggressive call for separatism. There are calls for self-recognition and determination by the hill people—especially the minor tribes men, which must be taken in its own right. Talking of the men from North – East India, Bose said,

> They have repeatedly emphasized the point that the claim of self-determination is not a claim for separation from India: the demand for separate state voiced by several delegates is not equivalent to separatism (ibid:73).

Bose felt that the strong urge, for this distinct identity among the hill tribes, might have not promulgated, had it not been indoctrinated by the imperial connivances. Bose in every way was an admirer of the Hindu civilization, and did not spare any opportunity to showcase its blatant differences with the opulent western civilization. He felt the British imperialists had always pursued to painstakingly tread the line of differences between the plain and the hill people. Instead of removing the ensuing gulf, they tried all means to brandish the distinctions with austerity. Bose therefore grumbled,
Hinduism respected the beliefs and social systems of the hill people, even adopted their gods and goddesses within the Hindu pantheon. In contrast, the British rulers tried to emphasize the distinction between plains people and hill people and helped substantially in maintaining the latter at the picturesque level of museum pieces, when they did not want to do away altogether with tribal culture by means of westernization (ibid:77).

It seems that Bose had tried raising a point about the western influences on the tribal culture, which for him was the chief point of contention. Time and again he chose to shower his appreciation for the Hindu civilization and he might want to assure his readers of the comfortable space that the tribal men shared with such a civilization. The contact with the latter civilizations, especially the European contacts, he believed must have radically changed the stability, equilibrium and poise, that the hill tribes had diligently furnished for ages. He therefore complained,

But it can be admitted without reservation that, as an objective fact, the culture of the indigenous hill people has not remained what it was before its contact with either the plains people or British rulers or Christian missionaries (ibid:78).

Bose therefore saw the genesis of this tribal identification, embedded within the non-Hindu hegemony, which dictated the country for long. Later on this identification has changed into a form of self-bloating in one’s own attributes, where every community was engaged to bring out and showcase the best of his group. Such dynamics of group formation, was however not new, but was present since the beginning of nineteenth century in Bengal. Bose therefore opined of the tribal men,

When under the hostile impact of an alien culture, they tried to rediscover the roots of their own culture and cast them into new moulds so that they could cope with the problems of modern life (ibid: 78).

This had continued since the days of Raja Rammohan Roy through those of Vivekananda, Rabindranath and Gandhi. Bose found nothing wrong with this since it became almost a pre-dominant trend among the various communities to show-off their best qualities which, they felt, could extol their communities. Therefore, such communities make a beeline to harangue for social reforms and educational policies
that would benefit them as well as place them on the national forum with other high-heeled groups. The same trend when percolated through the tribal communities should therefore not raise an eyebrow, since what they had been following was pursued for ages. Bose therefore said, “There is nothing unnatural about this, and every reason for us to feel a pride in this dynamic character of indigenous culture” (ibid: 78).

This way a culture marches on as it instils the new elements of modernization in its way so as to alter the very basis of its foundation. In that way there should not be any difference between the hill and the plain culture, for each is unique in its own way. Therefore, Bose asked, “Why can’t we view one another sympathetically and come closer to one another in understanding?” (ibid: 78). Bose answered to this himself by pointing towards the homogeneous system of economy and polity that had chiselled the nation along a uniform structure. Perhaps, the fear of getting trapped under this unanimity without getting a chance to preserve its own diverse character is what is driving the tribal enclaves to stop co-operating with the larger nation state. This is what is creating furore in the minds of the tribal men which is getting vent through these imminent unrests. Bose therefore asked a pertinent question, “But why should this fear be there if the Republic of India decides, as it has already done in our Constitution, that there should be unity at certain levels and diversity in others?” (ibid: 79).

The fear can be dispelled, Bose believed, through federalization of culture where one form of culture does not rule the roost but has learnt to co-exist with the others. Bose felt Hindu civilization is the bed rock of such federalization where cultures survive in unison without showing their conceit and being smug about it. He therefore in admiration of the civilization said,

Hindu civilization had many defects which progressively weakened it in course of time, but it had at least, one point of strength... this was the belief that truth never comes to any person or community except in fragments. If the whole truth does come to any one, it becomes incommunicable to anyone else, except through the fragrance of a protected life. It was through the recognition of this fundamental truth that Hinduism became a federation of faiths; while the social system which it built up was the non-competitive organization of caste. Unfortunately, caste was also divided into privileged and unprivileged classes (ibid: 79).
Therefore, it seemed Bose was solely interested in the study of civilizations and how it attained the task of integration among the sub-sections of the society. The tribal problems, especially of disintegration and detachment were studied from the perspective of civilizational approach that based its understandings on the ways to accommodate various groups with diverse ramifications within a single and all-encompassing fold.

**Conclusion**

Bose eloquently dealt with the tribal question in India with an open mind that did not speak of taking sides with either groups, be it the tribes or the non-tribes. He empathised with the issue of the tribal problems and showed enough sensitization while adeptly handling the issue of tribal rights and the constitutional safeguards of tribal protection. He was wary at the same time, lest the non-tribal population gets dejected at the overt-benevolence and doling strategies of the state in favour of the tribes. Bose, it must be remembered, was weaving the problem of the tribes across the framework of civilizational integration and resilience, for which he dealt in depth with the question of symbiosis of the tribal and non-tribal groups, both of which he thought are indispensable for building up a synchronised society. Bose recognised the differences between the aboriginal and the non-aboriginal ones, and this he took as nothing pathological for it should be considered absolutely inevitable for a country as diverse as ours. Not just the hill and the plains men, differences were quite natural even among the tribal outfits, where there are differences pertaining to various gamut of life and living. Bose therefore presented an array of tribes according to various attributes, and residing in various parts of the country. His intention was to develop a cross-section of tribes across a continuum based on numerous yardsticks. This probably could bring out the underlying differences between the tribes themselves, because at one side remained the poor and the primitive Birhor tribes of Orissa and at the other end of the pole remained the politically structured Khasis tribes of the North-East. Thus Bose wanted us to realize that differences are innate, they are not morphed or reproduced for the sake of brandishing a community, but are natural. Therefore, not just between the tribes, even within the tribes themselves, there are ensuing differences which must be given credence. The task of any social scientist is to recognize these diversities and propose ways towards a greater syncretisation.
Bose was at the helm of affairs for long, for which he proposed means to end the tribal exploitation and make every effort to bring a sustainable development. True it was that within the civilizational framework, Bose wanted to develop a sustainable idea of tribal existence and their mutual understanding with the outside community, such that it does not trigger national development at the cost of tribal sufferings and alienation. This was tagged along with Gandhian strategies to make ‘swadeshi’ means, the mission of the nation such that self-independence of the tribes does not get throttled on the face of federal state and its larger economic motives. The sustainable development of the tribal groups necessitated that the larger and massive agenda of state mechanism does not interfere with the retention of the indigenous qualities of the tribal soul which they are so fond of. Tribal societies are dynamic and they will continue to change with the tide of time, but Bose proposed an-inclusive growth strategy of the indigenous communities, such that it shows high sense of adaptability and mutual understandings that shows clear signs of civilizational osmosis and inter-penetration.

**End notes**

1 The idea of the two nation theory goes back to Sayyid Ahmed Khan, who believed in dividing the nation in terms of religion, so as to build a separate nation of Pakistan based on Muslim minority, such that all the Muslims irrespective of their caste, class, linguistics and culture can live together (Jalal:1995:2).
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