CHAPTER 2
BHIMADOLE COMMUNITY

Our study is on the developmental activities of the church in Bhimadole community, consisting of 30 villages coming under Nallajella, Bhimadole, Dendaluru and Dwaraka Tirumala Mandals of the west Godhawary district of Andhra Pradesh. In this chapter we examine in detail, the nature of the community, various problems of the people and the developmental activities of the church (B.D.S) for the development of the people of the area. In this chapter we largely depend on the data collected from the Office documents of the BDS and concerned mandal offices.

I. LOCATION

Bhimadole community situates in the Bimadole and Dwaraka thirumala Dendaluru and Nallajerla mandals of the west godhawary district of Andhra pradesh. It is 26 km away from Eluru the district head quarters. The G.N.T. national high way and Culcatta-Vijayawada railway line passes through this area.

2. Geographical profile

2.1 Nature of the land

Bhimadole is not a flat plain ground. Half of the ground is up-land and the other is low land. Lowland consists of paddy
fields and marshy land having plenty of water and only slightly elevated from the sea level. Up-land means land, surface which is not very even and is considerably elevated from the sea level.

2.2 Soil

Black cotton soil is found in 50% of the villages. The up-land consists of gravel soil and it is rather dry. In the rainy season the black cotton soil is soft and in the summer it is dry and hard like rock and bricks.

2.3 Climate

Bhimadole is a very hot area. The usual temperature is 45 for about six months and a little lower during monsoon. In the months of May and June the temperature may go up to 52. In winter the temperature may come down to 20 only.

2.4 Rainfall

The average rainfall in this area is about 80 rainy days in a year. Cyclone and flood are usual in Andhra Pradesh, since it is very close to Bay of Bengal. If the summer is a little hard and lengthy, there will be drought in the up-land. The whole Andhra
was caught under severe drought for the last four consecutive years.

2.5 Cultivation

Following are the main cultivation of the area: Paddy, sugar cane, lime, groundnut, tobacco, ginglee, mango, coconuts etc. Most of them are seasonal and permanent cultivation is only in a few areas.

3 Infrastructure

3.1 Roads and transport

The G.N.T. National high way, Bhimadole, Bhimadole - Thanuku State high way, Vijayawada - Culcutta railway line etc. passes through the area. A number of long distance trains and buses pass through Bhimadole. But these vehicles are inaccessible to most of the villages. Except three villages, all others are connected to the main road either through kutcha roads or through pucca roads.

3.2 Electricity

There is electricity in all the villages. However there is not house connection to each house. The electricity is mainly used for irrigation purpose.
3.3 Communication

There are ten post offices and two telegraph offices in the area. All the villages have telephone facilities. All the villages possess at least one television set.

3.4 Medical facilities

There is only one primary health center and three private clinics in the area. There are number of registered medical practitioners.

3.5 Schools

There are aided schools and recognized schools in the area. There are 10 elementary schools, 2 U.P schools, and 1 high school.

3.6 Banks and financial institutions

There are two banks. However the rural villages are not able to get any financial OBCs assistance or loans from these banks.

4 POPULATION

The total population of the area is 13,097, out of which 76.5 % belongs to SCs and OBCs (other backward community). The SCs constituted 45% and OBCs constituted 31.5%. The
scheduled tribes are found very insignificant (0.06%). So majority of the people belongs to the lower strata of the society, both social and economical. untouchability and caste conflicts were common phenomena of the area.

5 Occupation

More than three-fourth (78%) of the total population depends on agriculture and rest are engaged in industry, home industry, handicrafts, service sector, etc. only 25.5% are marginal farmers and 52.5% are landless agricultural workers. So majority of the people largely depends on seasonal employment.

6 Religion

The data on religious groups indicate that 83.51% are Hindus, while 12.67% are Christians and only 3.82% are Muslims.

7 BHIMADOLE DEVELOPMENT SOCIETY (B.D.S)

Vincentian Congregation is a religious order in the Catholic Church, which works among the poor and the lower strata of the society in India and abroad. The Vincentian Fathers have been working in Bhimadole, Andhra Pradesh for the last twenty-five years. Before that foreign missionaries had been working there. Everybody was concerned about poverty and other miseries of
the people. With the limited resources, they were helping the people. But they were not able to achieve the total development of the people. Though they initiated some changes, the help extended by the missionaries did not make a lasting effect in the life styles and the attitude of the people. Poor people always depended on the mercy of the rich. Many of these helps have resulted in making people dependent on the donors. The poor were only recipients. They were not aware of the vital role they had to play in the process of development. So the Vincentian Congregation made an assessment of the existing situation. A society by name Bhimadole Development Society was formed in 1992. Resourceful people of the locality and institutions joined hands to work for the development of the people. The objectives of the society are the following.

7.1 Objectives of BDS

a) To work for the social economic and cultural development of the people of Bhimadole and neighbouring villages without any distinction of cast and creed.

b) To provide facilities for the improvement of the literacy standard of the people. For those educational institutions shall be started, non-formal educational programmes shall be arranged and adult education programme shall be conducted.
c) To work for the improvement of housing and sanitary facilities.

d) To work for providing employment to the unemployed and the under-employed.

e) To promote agriculture and cattle development.

f) To work for the promotion of health and prevention of diseases.

g) To conduct health and educational programmes.

h) To work for improving the health of mothers and children.

i) To plan and implement community development programmes with the assistance of governmental and other agencies.

j) To co-operate with other voluntary agencies for implementing developmental programmes.

k) To work for the protection of environment.

l) To promote saving mentality among the people through small saving programmes.
m) To do such other things as may be incidental or conducive to the attainment of all or any of the above objectives of the society.

The society made a socio-economic survey among the scheduled cast people of the Bhimadole community. Trained village workers conducted the survey and an expert team under the guidance of Fr. Thomas Njarackal V C did tabulation and analysis.

8 PROBLEMS OF THE PEOPLE

The socio-economic survey conducted among the backward communities of the area gives a clear picture of life situation of people. Analysis of the results of the survey clearly indicated the causes of poverty and the forces affecting their lives. It helped the people and development activists to decide the direction of development efforts. Poor people of this area (SC, ST, OBC) are caught up in vicious circle of problems. Problems are mutually connected. One problem is either the cause of another problem or it is an effect of the other. These problems are touching the distinct aspects of their lives. The major problems identified are the following:
8.1 Lack of Organization and Leadership:

In the villages people are not organised due to lack of leadership. People are divided into various groups on the basis of castes and sub-castes. Everybody is concerned about one's own problems, that too about sustenance only. The recent development of Panchayat Raj has promoted leadership in the villages to an extent. But due to lack of motivation among these local leaders (village) an organised movement is hindered.

8.2 The caste Stratification:

In the villages, people are stratified into different castes. In the course of time certain castes got domination over the other castes. This led to the distribution of resources and power in an imbalanced way. As a result, privileged and unprivileged groups came into force. This resulted in the deprivation of opportunities for many people, low self-esteem and social status. Caste is somehow related to literacy level of people.

8.3 Illiteracy:

Lack of education is one of the causes of poverty and permanent low social status of the poor people. Caste
stratification has played a key role in keeping a particular group of people uneducated. The traditional social system allowed only a certain privileged castes to go for education.

Recently, efforts were made by the government to give more opportunities of education for the unprivileged classes but these opportunities of education for the unprivileged classes were not utilised by the people due to lack of awareness and financial backwardness. As education has no immediate tangible results to show, the poor unprivileged people do not show much interest in it.

People are not optimistic about the benefits of getting educated. They feel at ease with the traditional way of living. Because of these reasons the illiteracy level is very high. According to the recent studies illiteracy rate in this area is 77.8%.

The existing educational system is not sufficient to improve the literacy rate, as most of the villages do not have school facility. The villages, which are having school facility, do not have sufficient teachers and minimum facilities. Lack of motivation among the parents and children causes large-scale dropout among the students.
8.4 Health related Problems

Common diseases seen in this particular area are anaemia, diarrhoea, skin diseases, TB, vitamin A deficiency, worm infestation, and polio fever among children. These diseases are poverty related. Waterborne diseases also are common.

There are certain primary health centres supported by the government. But the services rendered from these centres are very poor due to the lack of facilities and trained personnel. As a result these centres are considered to be the centres for the poor people. Rich people make avail of the private services, which are naturally expensive and effective. Generally these centres give more importance to the curative aspect of health. Here, the diseases are not diagnosed but the symptoms are treated. A preventive and promotional approach to health helps the people to be the custodians of their health.

8.5 Poor Housing, Drainage and Sanitation

In the area 53% of the houses are kutcha houses and 13% huts. Lack of proper drainage and sanitation makes the surroundings of these houses very unhygienic and unliveable. The drainage system in the villages, as a whole is very poor. As a
result the people are prone to many waterborne diseases. Poor sanitation is another special feature in the villages. The people resort to the age-old custom of street defecation.

8.6 Water Scarcity:

The villages come in the upland area, therefore there is no access to the canal water. There are many marginal farmers having half acre to two acres of land. But due to lack of water they are not able to cultivate the land. As the rainfall is very less in this area people are not able to depend much on rains. A good number of people get water from the bore wells of the neighbour landlords, which is very expensive. This affects the income from the crops adversely.

Scarcity of drinking water is another problem. The villages have open ponds, which are not clean and safe. Because of the environmental pollution, open excreta disposal and a free access to animals, water in these ponds is not kept clean.

8.7 Agricultural problems:

People in this area largely depended upon agriculture. Agriculture labour is the occupation of the majority of the people. By its very nature this occupation becomes seasonal. During the
cultivation and harvest times people will have occupational opportunities. For the rest of the period they are forced to sit idle. Even with regard to marginal farmers, as they depend mostly on monsoon, the expected income is very little. Lack of improved machinery for cultivation affects the agricultural development of this area.

8.8 Unemployment:

The rate of unemployment is very high. It is mainly, due to the over dependency on agriculture which is uncertain and seasonal for many reasons.

Even the people employed do not have round the year employment. Hence under employment is another problem.

Lack of education and technical knowledge forced the people to depend exclusively on agriculture. Wandering young people in the villages is a common phenomenon. As a result, youth power, which is the wealth of the nation, is wasted. Unemployment causes criminality among people.

8.9 Problems related with Cattle Development:

Cattle rearing is one of the major occupations in this area. Due to many reasons, cattle rearing do not become profitable.
One such reason is lack of scientific knowledge in dairying. Secondly, people look for immediate returns, which is practically impossible because of the lack of scientific attitude and poor variety of animals. Financial source for purchase of animal is a big problem for the poor.

8.10 Lack of Cottage Industries:

Due to the lack of organization, technology, training and lack of money for initial investment, there are no effective household industries. Very few people are employed in industrial sector. As a result, the young and energetic youth of the proposed area left unemployed. This idleness makes them wander and make no effort out of their youth power.

8.11 Child Labour:

There are certain industries near the project area. All of them are clay based, i.e., pipe making, ceramics, china clay, powder etc. In those industries children below the age of 14 also are employed. Some of them are from the project area. Another sector where children are employed is cattle rearing. On a small wages children are employed to take cattle to the grazing land.
8.12 Lack of Assets:

The abject poverty seen among the low caste people in the villages is due to the lack of assets. In an agrarian economy, land, cattle etc. are the said assets of these people and the main source of income. Out of their wages they cannot think beyond a substance level. Naturally they will be forced to work for other people having land and other assets. From the survey and observations this plain fact was made evidenced.

9 DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES OF THE BDS IN BHIMADOLE COMMUNITY

9.1 People’s organization

Development can be achieved only through grass root level organization. People’s participation in the developmental activities can be made sure through such groups. There are two types of basic organization in Bhimadole community. They are 1) Mahila Mandal 2) youth group.

A Mahila Mandal

In each village woman’s self-help groups were formed with government registration. Membership is voluntary. These are
known as Mahila Mandal. Women belonging to the age group of 18 to 65 are eligible for membership. Each group has a president, vice-president, secretary, and treasurer elected by the members themselves. These office bearers are given special training in leadership and accounting. The president presides over each meeting, vice president prepares the agenda and conduct the meeting secretary arranges the meeting and treasurer takes care of the accounts. Each group has to meet twice in a month in the presence of the program officer. All the important issues are discussed in this meeting.

Mahila Mandal has the following functions.

i) Discuss all policy matters

ii) Collect the savings of the people and make decisions on the loan application from the saving scheme.

iii) Select the beneficiaries of income generating programs such as Buffalo Scheme, goat scheme etc. They also take decision on the application for the sanitation units and scholarship.

All the decisions are taken on the majority basis, after a detailed discussion. They also recommend punitive action against those who violate the norms of the organization.
Mahila Mandal served as a medium for women empowerment. It indeed developed the leadership quality of the illiterate women, instilled in them high aspiration in life; make them face all the social and economic challenges with confidence.

B. Youth Group

Youth group consists of men under the age group of 18 to 45. There are nearly 50 members in each group. Each group has a president, vice president, secretary, joint-secretary etc. The president presides over the meetings, vice-president prepares the agenda and conduct meeting, secretary arranges the meeting and the treasurer takes care of the account. It has the following functions.

i) Organize and conduct the cleanliness program called Navuru (My Village)

ii) Select the beneficiaries for the housing project and supervise the construction of the work

iii) Discuss all-important issues concerning development.
Mahila Mandals and youth groups are the basic organizational machinery through which all activities of the BDS are carried on. They are the grass root level organization, which discussed in detail all policy matters and executed them. They worked as a channel of communication between the villages and the central administration of B.D.S.

9.2 Education:

Lack of education is one of the major obstacles to development. 90% of the Bhimadole community are illiterate. So BDS chalked out and implemented many programs to educate the mass.

1) Adult Education (Informal education programme)

This programme aims at educating the illiterate people of the area. They are taught the Telugu alphabet and basic arithmetic. Now majority of the people writes their own names and signs on documents. Classes are conducted from 6 PM to 7.30 PM. Educated youth and students are the teachers. BDS provides study materials and teaching aids. This programme is clubbed with government literacy program.
ii) **Child Labor School:**

Child labour is very common in Bhimadole community. Majority of the children stops education in the primary class itself. Child labour school educates such kind of children below 12 years. They are given coaching to appear for formal examination and helped to persevere their studies. They are also given vocational training such as tailoring, cycle repairing, basket-making etc. Special coaching is given to develop their literary and sports talents. The students get Rs.100 as stipend from national child labour project. Nearly 50 students who were educated in these schools now preserve their education in reputed colleges with government scholarship. Thanks to these schools people became aware of the need of education and send their children to schools on their own. These schools could arrest child labor and crime among children below 14 to a great extent.

iii) **Scholarship Programs**

Selected students are provided with fees, bus pass, and uniform and study materials. Mahila Mandal and youth select the beneficiaries after evaluating their academic performance and economic status. Preference is given to the orphans. These
students in return works as teachers in the informal educational Programs and night schools.

9.3 Training Programme:

i) Leadership Training

Special classes and seminars are arranged for leaders of Mahila Mandals and youth groups on leadership and unity once in two months. Special training is given to them in accounting and topics such as women's rights, role of women in family, saving, family life, the different privilege offered to the farmers by the government, basic knowledge in law etc.

ii) Vocational training

To enhance the employment/self employment opportunities, vocational oriented training is given to the people. Training is given in leaf plate making. BDS appoints teachers and technical experts for training. A nominal fee of Re. 50 is collected from each candidate. Financial assistance is given to buy tailoring machines BDS makes arrangements for the marketing of the leaf plates.

iii) Driving Schools

75 days training is given in driving. Each student is given 2.5 hours training in every day either morning or evening. So
their daily work is not affected. BDS help them to get driving license. Many of them got job as drivers in government and private services. Some of them work as taxi drivers. Some bought auto rickshaws with government grant and bank loan.

iv) Tailoring Training

BDS arranged training for tailoring as part of woman empowerment. Nearly 25 students are selected by concerned Mahila Mandal and given training in tailoring in a rented building in the same village. A nominal fee of Re. 20 was collected from each student. BDS provides infrastructure and personnel for training. 6-month training is given to each batch. Those who complete the training successfully are provided with a tailoring machine. Many young women belonging to the poor strata of the society are benefited out of this project.

9.4 Awareness Programme:

i) Street Play

BDS staff together with village youth stage Street plays once in a month in each village. The entire village, gather together for the street plays. Powerful conscientisation is provided through this street plays. The theme of the street play include wide variety of social and moral problems such as child
marriage, alcoholism, customs, bad habits such as tobacco chewing, prostitution, illiteracy, saving, unity for development etc. Because of the plain and simple presentation and powerful dialogue people can easily follow them. These street plays played a vital role informing public opinion, which changed the very psyche of the village community.

ii) Pre Marital Course

A three-day course on marital life is arranged to youth, both men and women in each village once in a year. The topic includes the role of partners, responsibilities of parents, anatomy of human body, sexuality, sex organs, and pregnancy, childbirth and family life.

iii) Seminars and classes

Experts in different walks of life are invited to give classes to the villagers on a wide range of subjects such as, herbal medicine, nutrition, kitchen garden, immunization, TB, AIDS, contagious disease, food nutrition, gynic problems, family planning, importance of breast feeding, children’s health in mother’s hand, worm disinfections etc.
9.5 Health related Programme:

BDS gives top priority for the health of the community. The health programs of BDS includes the following

i) Mobile health unit

ii) Major medical camps

iii) Follow up and referral cases

iv) Assistance to handicapped.

v) Health education seminar, herbal garden, kitchen garden

vi) Video programmes

vii) Mass education like street play in subjects connected with health

9.6 Sanitation Programme:

Open defecation is a common feature of rural Andhra and Bhimadole community is no exception. It was the root cause of many contagious diseases. BDS conducted massive awareness programs such as seminars and street play to make the people conscious of the dangerous consequences of open defecation. Initially people were reluctant to make use of this facility. Once they understood the need of it they began to demand for it.
This project is executed clubbing with government project for village sanitation. The state government sanctioned a subsidy of Rs.2000 for each sanitation unit to people belonging to the lowest strata, both social and economic. But the money will be sanctioned only after the construction of the toilet. No prior help is given. So majority of the rural poor could not make use of the government help.

BDS on the other hand take Rs.750 from each beneficiary and the extra expense is met by the BDS itself. Once the construction is over the beneficiary applies for the government assistance. After the verification procedure, the government social service department sanction Rs.2000. BDS deposit 50% of this amount in the same scheme. 50% is given to the beneficiary in kind, i.e. food grains, rice and other essential things.

This project changed the very face of the village. Open defecation became very rare. It could irradiate common contagious decease like dysentery to a large extent. The premises of the village and the street became clear and neat. It created a sense of hygiene among the villagers and there by improved the health of the rural poor.
9.7 Women’s saving:

As part of the women empowerment BDS initiated Women’s Saving Scheme. It was organized through Mahila Mandals. Each woman has to save one rupee per day and thereby 30 rupees per month. This amount is deposited in the state government saving project called DWCRA. This enables them to get government loans together with many other benefits such as cooking gas, stove, scholarships, toilets etc. After six months saving they can apply for loans from this deposit. The concerned Mahila Mandal will discuss the matter before sanctioning the loan if needed.

The saving project made a drastic change in the very psyche of the rural women. This made them confident and financially independent. The villagers took loans from the zamindars with huge interest, which dragged them to bonded labor. They have to depend on the landlords for every need such as marriage, death, after death ceremonies, feast, social celebrations such as maturation functions, village feast etc. The villagers can never return the loan with a huge interest in spite of the life long hard work in the fields of the landlords. This made them virtually slaves. The women were subjected to many kinds of exploitation including sexual abuse. They were forced to terminate the education of their children and send them for work
of the fields of the landlords. The saving project helped them to get out of this sad predicament to a great extent.

9.8 Income generating programme:

BDS provided interest free loans and subsidies for the financial development of the people. Following are the income generating programme of BDS

i) Diary programme

BDS provides financial help for buying buffaloes to women. The beneficiary should have a deposit of Rs.2000. She has to forward an application, which is discussed by the mahila mandal before sanctioning the project. BDS provides a loan of Re. 6000 from which Re.3500 is to be returned within one year. 50% of the amount returned is deposited in the saving account of the beneficiary.

All the beneficiaries unanimously agreed that this project is profitable. The buffalo gives an average of 4-5 litter of milk per day. Nearly one litter is used for domestic purpose. This indeed improves the quality of the food. The balance is sold at a rate of Re. 10-11 per litre. Nearly Rs. 8-10 is spent on cattle feed. This is also not required always. During rainy season the buffaloes
are fed on grass. Usually they take the buffaloes to the fields. So cattle rearing do not affect their daily work.

Buffalo project played a major role in women empowerment of the area. This helped women to find self-employment and provide stable income for the family. This project also improved the food quality of the people of the rural area.

ii) Goat

BDS provided loan and subsidy for goat rearing. Beneficiaries were mainly patients, especially TB patients. This is to enable them to use goat milk. As a rule the people of Andhra Pradesh will not use goat milk, which is medicinal but they prefer the meat. BDS makes the people aware of the medicinal quality of goat milk. The beneficiary has to provide Rs.500/-. BDS sanction a loan of Rs.1100/- from which Rs.350/- are to be returned. 50% of this amount is deposited in his saving account. This project indeed helped the patients of the area.

iii) Fruit selling

BDS sanctions RS. 1000 as loan, which is to be paid back within one year. No subsidies provided. They buy seasonal fruits and sell them through manual mobile shops. From the profit they
pay back the loan in installments. Different types of seasonal vegetables and fruits are sold through manual shops. The women go to the every doorsteps of the village and motivate the people on the need of vegetable consumption and quality food. So this project helped to provide health education besides income generation.

vii) Laundry

BDS provides Rs.3000/- as loan, which is to be returned within one year in installments. No subsidy is given. This project is sanctioned to dhobis. This money is to be spent on buying iron box and cart. They go to every doorstep of the villages to collect cloths for washing and ironing. They also go to the houses with the cart and iron box for ironing the washed clothes. This project ensured stable income for the family.

All the loans and subsides provided through the Mahila Mandals. They examine the applications and make recommendations after having thorough discussions on the eligibility of the applicant. No loan is sanctioned by the central administration directly. This ensured people's participation, and enhanced the leadership quality of women. It also helped to gather women together in spite of the difference between
different caste groups of the area. It strengthens the sense of unity among them. All the decisions were taken on majority basis, which in turn enhanced the democratic institutions of the area.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, we examined the nature of the Bhimadole community, the problems of the people of the area, and made a short description of the different activities of B.D.S. to solve the problems of the area. A detailed analysis of the development activities of B.D.S will be made in chapter 8 in order to examine whether B.D.S through its activities aimed at the integral development of the Bhimadole area.