Chapter VI

A SUMMARY OF CONCLUSION

The study of the processes of socio-economic development, bilingualism and language shift among the Chotanagpur tribes brings out a number of significant aspects pertaining to the changing socio-cultural and economic situation in an otherwise predominantly tribal region. As a consequence of large scale immigration of the non-tribal population, ever since resource potentiality of the region came into light, has not only brought about a significant change in the composition of population, but has also transformed the social, cultural and economic fabric of the Chotanagpur region. Changes in the economic landscape has been a point discussed so very often that one may not labour on it at all. However, not much has been known about the impact of changing economic landscape on the social and cultural milieu of the region. In this study, a modest attempt has been made to examine the sociolinguistic aspects of bilingualism and language shift in the region in association with changing socio-economic parameters.

The Chotanagpur region, today, presents an interesting picture in terms of sociolinguistic backgrounds of population. The two distinct linguistic groups i.e., the Munda Branch of the Austric Family and the Northern Branch of the Dravidian Family, on the one hand, and the Northern and Eastern Branches of the
Indo-Aryan Family, on the other, who were distributed over mutually exclusive territories now find themselves in a state of overlap. Under the overarching impact of the socio-economic transformation of the region, the tribes, though numerically preponderant, are finding their economic vocations non-remunerative, social and cultural practices only of ritual value and their language of hardly any practical value.

The 'outer domain' has disturbed the relative autonomy of the 'inner domain'. The lines which separated the two are now fast disappearing. The stakes are too many, especially for the tribes, but most significant among them could be the process of 'squeezing out' being experienced by the tribes today. The patterns of spatial distribution and composition of languages have indicated that the peripheral areas of the Chotanagpur region are linguistically less diversified than that of its core areas, whereby a total replacement of the tribal languages by one or the other non-tribal languages, *viz.* Hindi or Bengali or Oriya has taken place. In the peripheral areas, the non-tribal linguistic groups have now acquired a significant proportion of the total population such as in the north-western, eastern, northern and southern parts of the region.

The numerical strength of the non-tribal linguistic group is of such magnitude that any other tribal or non-tribal language as the second ranking language is spoken only by less than 5 per cent of the population. On the contrary, in the core
areas of major tribal linguistic groups, namely, the Santhals, Oraons, Munda and Hos, high to extremely high linguistic diversity has been observed. This has been so on account of almost equal share of tribal and non-tribal linguistic groups, or because of a sizable share of more than two linguistic groups of different origin. Thus, one finds high to low magnitude of linguistic diversity as one traverses from the core of the tribal region to its periphery. It may also be noted that the situation varies significantly from the district to the lower administrative unit. However, a more realistic picture may emerge only if the study of linguistic diversity is carried out at the village level. In such an endeavour non-availability of data poses a serious challenge.

A significant negative relationship between the levels of linguistic diversity and the share of first ranking language suggest that the two variables move in the opposite direction in a significant way. On the basis of this result, one may argue that real nature of linguistic diversity in the region is expected to have began with the immigration of the non-tribal linguistic groups. The linguistic diversity might have reached its highest point with the continued immigration of the non-tribals, but thereafter, it may have started declining as is obtainable from existence of lower magnitude of diversity in many lower order administrative units in the peripheral areas of the region, where one of the non-tribal linguistic groups shows its absolute dominance. This fact is also supported by a negative
relationship of linguistic diversity with the share of non-tribal population and also with the growth of population. The growth of population may largely be attributed to a heavy inmigration of non-tribal population.

A significant positive relationship between linguistic diversity and the number of linguistic groups consisting more than five per cent share in the population indicates that a mere size of linguistic groups does not make the area linguistically diversified a true sense. A linguistic group contributes positively towards diversification of the area linguistically if it constitutes a sizable share in the total population. This is perhaps why one finds high to extremely high linguistic diversity in the core areas of the major tribal groups.

The implications of linguistic diversity may be directly observed in the changing sociolinguistic phenomena like bilingualism and language shift among the tribes. The increasing share of non-tribal population in some parts of the region may result in total disappearance of tribal elements from the scene and appearance of non-tribal traits in other areas which are still the tribal strongholds.

The Census of India, 1961 reveals that bilingualism among the Chotanagpur tribes was of a low magnitude (25.00 per cent), and was characterized by a minimal male-female disparity. The primary data generated from the field during 1989 in the
course of present study shows that about three-fourths of the
total respondents are bilinguals who also exhibited a notable
male-female disparity. In the later case, bilingualism in Hindi
displayed the disparity in favour of the tribal males, while it
is in favour of the females in case of bilingualism in
Sadari/Khortha. It is found that bilingualism has largely grown
among the speakers of the traditional tribal languages. The non-
tribal regional languages have been declared by them as their
subsidiary languages by an overwhelming majority among the
bilingual tribes. One may, therefore, say that non-tribal
regional languages have become indispensable for the tribes in
the changing social and economic scenario of the tribal habitat.

The district level analysis of bilingualism among the
tribes do not reveal any definite pattern. The pattern becomes
somewhat clear at the block/tahsil level analysis. It has been
observed that bilingualism is low especially in those units where
there is a lower share of tribal population. Perhaps the reason
could be seen in a higher rate of language shift among this
segment of the tribes there. Contrary to it, bilingualism is
higher in the units having higher tribal concentration. Thus,
the relative size of population could be construed to have hold
the key towards emergence of the phenomena of bilingualism and
language shift.

Bilingualism in Hindi in terms of urban-rural continuum
shows its inverse relation with distance from the town. A
similar relationship has also been observed between bilingualism in Hindi and the age of the tribal respondents. It yielded a positive relationship between the distance from the town and age of the tribal population, on the one hand and bilingualism in Sadari/Khortha, on the other. The male-female disparity gets reduced in the nearby villages to the town and also in the younger age of the population, meaning thereby that disparity tends to become higher with increase in distance from the town. All the four major sample tribes more or less conform to the above trends.

The magnitude of the language shift among the Chotanagpur tribes (i.e., abandonment of their traditional languages in favour of other languages) is of much higher level (42.00 per cent) as compared to that of bilingualism. Once again, one finds a minimal male-female disparity in terms of language shift. The three well identified directions of language shift are: shift over to non-tribal regional languages, shift over to other tribal languages and shift over to Sadri/Khortha, a pidgin language. The first dimension of language shift covers about three-fourths of the total shifts. In the remaining portion of language shift, other tribal language have a higher share than that of Sadri/Khortha.

Language shift is of higher magnitude in the districts of Sambalpur, Keonjhar, Surguja, Raigarh and Palamau; the shift is largely over to Oriya language in the first two districts,
while in the remaining districts it is over to Hindi language. The language shift is marginally low in the district of Sanththal Pargana (only about 5.00 per cent), followed by Ranchi, Singhbhum and Mayurbhanj districts. It may be noted that a higher magnitude of language shift has largely taken place in those areas which have experienced a higher influx of non-tribal population.

The primary data generated from among the Oraon, Munda, Ho and Sanththal tribes indicates to the phenomenon of language shift only in case of the Oraon tribes. It reveals the fact that the Oraon tribes exhibited two-fold shift in their mother tongue, first from their own traditional language Kurukh to Mundari, another tribal language, and second from Mundari to Sadri. This second shift covers about 40.00 per cent Oraon respondents. One has observed a greater shift among the Oraon males rather than among their female counterparts. This second shift is inversely related not only with distance from Ranch town but also with age of the Oraon population.

The primary data also revealed a case of partial language shift among the four major sample tribes. The partial language shift has been seen in terms of use of Hindi in different domains of the tribal’s life. It is obtained that the restricted domains like family and friend have yet not experienced frequent use of Hindi by even a single bilingual respondent, while a large number of bilingual respondents have
reported 'frequent' use of Hindi in 'outer domains'. The Christian tribes who constitute a very low population, show an exception to this partial shift in mother tongue as they use Hindi even in their restricted domains 'frequently'. The male-female disparity in terms of partial language shift is of lower magnitude in the 'inner domains', but is of higher magnitude in the 'outer domain'. Once again, the inter-tribal variation is of a low magnitude. In a spatial context, Hindi bilingual display its greater use in the nearby villages to the town than those inhabiting the far-off villages. The age-structure of the tribal population exhibits a much higher use of Hindi by the middle aged respondents than those belonging to the younger and older age-groups. The younger bilinguals are placed on the second position in the case of partial language shift.

The development of social and economic infrastructure like schools, dispensaries, drinking water, irrigation, electrification and transportation; acquisition of modern assets like bi-cycle, motor cycle, radio, television sets; use of high yielding variety of seeds, chemical fertilizer, pesticides; and access to agricultural loans etc., indicate that the tribes of today have moved in the direction of consumption/utilization of modern facilities and amenities. In many cases, this utilization rate is of poor nature, but it has certainly come in a way of tribal-non-tribal interaction.

The levels of literacy among the major tribes is of a
moderately higher magnitude. It is marked by a higher male-female disparity which is in favour of the tribal males. The literacy rate is inversely related with distance from the town and also with age of the population. This has been amply reflected in increasing disparity levels with increase in distance from the town and also with increase in age of population. In other words, rise in both male and female literacy towards the town and also towards the younger age-group of the population has been associated with similar pace of rise in bilingualism in Hindi among the tribes.

The levels of educational attainment among these sample years age-group tribes are largely of a low order. This is evident from the fact that about half of the total literates have been reported to have attended primary stage of schooling, while higher stage of educational attainment is scantly represented. The primary and middle stages of schooling together constitute about two-thirds of total literates. Such a low educational attainment will have a far reaching impact on the proficiency in Hindi which is not only the medium of education but is also the official language in the areas surveyed. Once again, the tribal females have been larger share of literates with primary and middle stages of schooling than those of the tribal males. Thus, the females will perhaps have lower ability/proficiency in Hindi than their males counterparts.

A quite high share of about two-thirds children in the
6-14 years age-group are enrolled in schools. Once again, there is a large gap between the boys and girls enrolment which is in favour of the boys. Nevertheless, a higher enrolment rate among both the boys and girls is an indicative of spread of education among the tribes. A low spatial variation in the enrolment in this age-group is because of availability of primary schools in each sample village and easy access to middle and high schools within a distance of about 3 to 5 kilometers.

It has been observed that there is a low participation rate of tribal workers in non-primary activities of economy. Furthermore, a large number of these non-primary workers are unskilled labourers who are working as porters, rickshaw-pullers, helpers, security guards and so on. The nature of these jobs is such that it largely involves tribal males. This results in a higher rate of male participation in non-primary activities when compared to the female participation. The overall tribal participation in non-primary activities is inversely related with distance from the town. The inter-tribal variation is again of low magnitude.

The correspondence of Hindi bilinguals with economic and non-economic activities indicate that only one-fourth Hindi bilinguals are engaged in non-primary activities. Thus, a large section of Hindi bilinguals is either engaged in primary activities of which activities are engaged in non-economic activities or engaged of more than three-fourth is constituted by
students. This situation is changed to a great extent when tribal males and females are considered separately. The latter show a much higher share of students among the total Hindi bilinguals. It is also noted that a higher share of Hindi bilinguals who are engaged in non-primary activities, is constituted by unskilled labourers as porters and similar activities already indicated. The services like army/police/security guard, clerical/peon, shop-keeper/trade etc. also constitute a fairly good share of Hindi bilinguals among the tribes. The inter-tribal variations are marked by a much higher share of the Oraon Hindi bilinguals in non-primary activities, while the other three tribes are very close to each other in terms of the participation rate of Hindi bilinguals in non-primary activities of the economy.

The Hindi bilinguals among the tribes who are engaged in non-primary activities also exhibit a decline in their rate of participation as distance increases from the town. It is observed that the tribal males follow a similar trend, while their female show some variations, although of a lower magnitude. Similarly, the Oraon tribes display a consistent decline in the participation of bilingual non-primary workers from one distance zone to another from the town, whereas the other three tribes show irregular and fragmented patterns.

On the apparent time scale, the middle age-group constitutes a much higher share of (Hindi) bilingual non-primary
workers. The older and the younger age-groups share almost equally with a lower proportion of bilingual non-primary workers. This is reflected in an steep rise followed by a steep fall in the share of Hindi bilingual non-primary workers from the young to the middle and then from the middle to the old age-groups, and the vice-versa. The salient feature of bilingual non-primary workers in the young and the old age-groups is this that the former constitutes a large number of porters whereas the latter has many peons.

It has been observed ontained that the socio-economic factors such as tribal literacy, total non-primary workers and non-tribal population have positively contributed towards the growth of bilingualism and language shift in non-tribal regional languages (Hindi in this case). Contrary to it, the variables like tribal concentration and linguistic diversity have a negative relationship with bilingualism and language shift.

The primary data reveal a greater role of tribal literacy and non-primary activities among the tribes in the spread of bilingualism in Hindi among them. These variables shows a significant positive relationship with bilingualism in Hindi. It is, however, to be noted that literacy has played a much greater role in the growth of bilingualism in Hindi among the tribes. A significant positive relationship between bilingualism in Hindi and male respondents shows a phenomenal rise of Hindi as a subsidiary language among the tribal males.
The tribal women have not responded favourably towards the adoption of Hindi as their second language, as is evident from significant negative relationship between bilingualism in Hindi and female respondents.

The relationship between Hindi bilingual respondents and total sample respondents is positive in the younger and also in the middle age-group, while it is negative in case of the older age-groups of the tribal population. This relationship is significant for the younger and also for the older age-groups. On this basis, it may be established that bilingualism in Hindi has grown with much faster rate in the young tribal population. It may be concluded that bilingualism in Hindi has been largely promoted because of higher literacy rate which is significantly higher in the young age-group of the population.