

Traditional Local Governance and Indigenous Cultural Resource-Management Relations

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'Coal Bidding' and Mainstream

While we were busy at the Round Table : 2015 Session of INCAA on 21st February 2015, at Utkal University, Bhubneswar on the theme 'Society State, and Governance', the same day the whole of India through national news channels were celebrating bidding of coal blocks with high profit. Since the morning, the news was telecast in all languages. This led me thinking, whether villagers in the mining belt could be equally happy with the rest of India on the success of coal block bidding? What were the levels and degree of happiness, if there is any, of villagers in the regions where mines are located! It also flashed back in my mind that some old tribal men of Lohardaga District of Jharkhand didn't even know to whom the adjacent hill of their village belongs. Sitting at a distance of 400 kilometer from them, I could, however, imagine the sense silence of those old men of Lohardaga.

In a biographical account on a Navajo woman, an Ethnographer deciphered that silence as the rule of life in a Navajo family of reserve members (being cheated) who hardly share bitter experiences of life on account of deprivation that enacted outside home!(Kessler 1976 : 108-114) Silence reins all those marginal communities. The 21st February is the Day of World Indigenous Languages. But television channels hardly paid any attention to the

indigenous languages. I, being an anthropologist, was unable to connect myself with the happy announcement of coal bidding. Whether, we live between these two worlds (nether world)! Faces of old men of Lohardaga were distracting my concentration.

India as a nation-state introduced the concept of local governance through different Schedules and Articles of the Constitution so that commoners and indigenous people could carry on their holistic inter-connectedness with the environment. Participatory traditional political systems of the tribal/indigenous societies were attuned to cultural ethos which is there in the decision-making process in their habitat, cultural, and social environment. Culture in broader sense encompass all living creatures in a habitat. Tiger stories of different communities, and rites and ritual practices are proof of such claim¹. UNESCO (2010) 'International Conference on Biological and Cultural Diversity : Diversity for Development- Development for Diversity' (www.unesco.org) acknowledged critical links between cultural and biological diversities. The word 'cultural' indicated all means of sustainable development based on traditional knowledge and knowledge of indigenous people in the form of tangible/intangible, and the elaborate definitions include 'landscape' as an important parameter. It defines, 'The landscape concept recognizes

¹ One such ritual says of connectedness of biological creatures with human society. Among the Wanchoo tribe of Arunachal Pradesh, at the time of going to forest for collection of huge log utilized for making log-drum and log-mortar and pestle, community members pray for forgiveness to each and every living creature that survive on the tree and in forest through songs. These rituals are community based but the frequency of such performance is getting less with time. Collection of logs from old trees is based on bare necessity. This is never misused even by the rich people.

the constant interplay between people and their natural surroundings, and more specifically the manner in which human societies shape the land and are in turn, shaped by it. The concept of cultural landscapes, as recognized within the framework of the World Heritage Convention, underlines the significance of this encounter between biological and cultural diversities.'(Working Document on Convention of Biodiversity, UNESCO, www.unesco.org/mab/doc/iyb/icbed_working_doc.pdf).

The present paper aims at discussing two landscapes and the inter-connectedness of those with local traditional governance. Here local governance locates two kinds of authority : One is age- old community based governance system (in anthropological literature referred to as non-state society's political system) and its relation with cultural landscape archetype; as livelihood situations directly related to resource-management of the autochthones. The word 'cultural landscape archetype' is perceived here as a situation where people/community could restore relations with land, forest, and water and all environmental resources of their territory for generations together and are not affected by colonialism drastically. Further, the traditional local governance system could retain customary law related practices and that means, they maintain their age-old definitions of lands, forests, water bodies, hills and other resources of the community (for survival and sustainable development). The second is colonial landscape archetype situation that refers to those cultural geographies of tribal, which are shared by rulers as well as the states' mainstream people and minorities (autochthones/indigenous and tribes) since colonial interventions. The mainstream people earn the right over cultural geography of the later by the rules

imposed by colonial rulers²; Roy's (1912 and 1915) discussion on the traditional political system of the Oraon and Munda reveals pluri-cultural set up of the then social systems. Cornwallis' rule of 'Permanent Settlement System'(1793) was more than one hundred years old by that time when Roy published his books. These books reveal that civil court was unable to settle claims of tribal people over their traditional land rights. Roy's pioneering attempt of writing those books was aimed at documenting customary laws of tribes to dig out their traditional rights. Permanent Settlement System allowed the rich peoples of the city (Kolkata) to purchase 'Jamindari(s)' by bidding during colonial periods. During the post-colonial period and even later, the same system continued. During post-colonial situation this was the colonial governance that completely ignored definitions of each and every resource of the indigenous and autochthones/non-state societies'. Unfortunately, academics till date subscribed those colonial nomenclature and perceived environment under the category of 'natural resources'. The planners of developmental initiatives defined 'natural resources' as resources of the state. Cultural definitions of resources, and environment, social history of conservation processes are still marginal issues of the state as well as the academics.

Objective and Methodologies

To locate traditional local governance and its relationship with cultural resource management, I preferred to begin with success stories. Success stories are conceptualized from the situation of a tribal state, the Arunachal Pradesh where the people enjoy exclusive rights over land and they are

² Here, the word colonial connection is traced back from pre-British era. Past of the tribal communities are conceptualized by "Tribe-Caste, Tribe Peasant Continuum", State Formations of Chottanagpur to perceive pluri-cultural dynamics of rural Jharkhand today.

the decision makers on the issue of further utilization of environmental (cultural) resources. The word 'land' in broader sense refers to land, water, forest, and hills resources, which are common attributes of cultural environment. The second set of examples referred to villages of Fifth Schedule Areas of Jharkhand, where tribal people do not enjoy exclusive rights over their cultural resources.

The topic of enquiry referring to relationship between traditional political organization and cultural resource management is a less discussed topic. Colonial rule of three hundred years in the mainland India mostly re-modeled local governance systems to less visible or invalid situations. The control of traditional governance system over cultural resources mostly disappeared. In a few pockets of north-east India's hills, such systems may still be visible due to late entry of the British Administration, or due to the tribes' well-defined culturally evolved system. With this background, this paper discusses 'success stories' on the phenomena relatively less visible. Data were collected through fieldworks during 2011-2015. The data on Pasighat were collected in 2011 and data from different villages of Ranchi District, Jharkhand were collected mainly during 2012-2015.

Cultural Landscape : The Adi Experience

At the outset, I must share my first experience at Pasighat town of Arunachal Pradesh. That town is quite distinct from other Indian colonial towns that by and large present a sight of unplanned growth and ever expanding features. Pasighat, the small administrative center since hundred years, is surrounded by prosperous villages like Mirku, Mirbuk, ... on three sides and the mighty Siang river on the other. The overwhelmingly green foothills villages, because of their forest like kitchen gardens adjoining almost every house, rolling hills with lush green

cover of trees, and the blue Siang river, together project a soothing look of the town. I was inquisitive to know how people of Pasighat could save their lands from land hungry people, like farmers of other parts of India, industrialists, miners, absentee landlords, and the real estate dealers! Let me share with you that Pasighat for me is an example for understanding two phenomena : a place where colonial intervention is not more than one century old and the second, the colonization process was apparently slow due to strong traditional local governance and indigenous cultural resource- management relations. This is really an example, of often unfamiliar or invisible scenario in the Indian context, particularly in the post-colonial tribal belt! There are a few other factors that deserve attention for proper appreciation of this example. The carry over of 'Inner Line Permit' regulation in the post-colonial situation protected lands of the tribals of Arunachal Pradesh from land-hungry sharks. The Sixth Schedule in particular, evolved a form of local governance system in the adjoining areas of the Adi habitat. Moreover, active engagement of tribal intellectuals and leaders in decision-making processes to establish rights of self-determination like that of Meghalaya, Assam, Nagaland, Mizoram, provided a sort of ideological support. Above all, the role played by the traditional political organization which practiced the customary law for resource-management of the Adi is the point that deserve close scrutiny. All of us know that after independence of India, the people of Pasighat were engaged in articulating identity and preferred the word 'Adi' or 'people of hills' to introduce themselves. They discarded the colonial word 'Abor', that appeared derogatory to them. It was a political decision which was to a great extent mobilized by Bogung Bokang Kebang³. According to the

³ The highest body of traditionally three-tier political organization of the Adi

Indian Constitution, the Adis were identified as a 'Scheduled Tribe'.

The resource-management of tribal societies is regulated by kinship based organizations. In case of the Adi, the village level organization (DolungKebang and Bane Kebang) control community resources of forests, river beds, water resources, etc. There is community/clan based forest lands. People do hunting and gathering in the forests. A few forests are treated as sacred groves, in which the inhabitants are allowed restricted entry. There is a particular period of time to go to sacred groves.⁴

Forests in general are well defined and demarcated. Members of the village /clan community only can have access to those places following the customary regulation. Apart from that, every family has well demarcated cultivable lands. Each portion of the topography within the territory of villages and beyond is well defined. Access to any resource is regulated by custom. Even within a family sons and daughters enjoy unequal access to resources. The institution of marriage also control access to resources. Married daughters are prohibited to have access to those forests for gathering. Their husbands from other villages cannot have access to wife's father's clan forest for hunting without permission from the village council. Any married woman can have access to husband's and father-in-law's community forest land for gathering (affiliated to clans/ community property). Trespassing into other clans' land without permission for procuring anything is an offence. Usually people do not violate rules. Village Kebangs of the Adi of a block are affiliated to higher body- 'Bango Kebang'. Inter-village matters are usually dealt with in this Kebang. Members of Bango Kebang are nominated from Dolung/ Bane Kebang.

⁴ Prof. Tamo Mibang, the present Vice Chancellor and a member of the Adi community said this in personal communication.

Non-state political system is a familiar concept to many ethnic groups and as well as to anthropologists. In such a political system, local governance from clan/lineage level to regional level is connected, structured, and governed by customary law. In the Adi system, the middle tier operates at inter-village levels known as Bango Kebang. The supreme tier is the Bogung Bokang Kebang. These three tier political platforms of the people are traditionally represented by elderly male members. Dolung/Bane Kebangs control, regulate community resources at local levels. Inter-connectedness of the Adis with the environment gets further strengthened by their knowledge on extractive resources. Highly educated Adi men and women participate in supervising vegetable garden, cultivation of crops. Gathering is a common practice of women and they go to forest to collect leafy vegetables, mushrooms, ethno-medicines, fire woods, fruits, tubers, and many non-timber forest products. Inner Line Permit to a great extent helped the people to firmly establish their right over land of the region. Panchayati Raj Institution (PRI) was introduced to the then NEFA and present the Arunachal Pradesh in 1969. This platform of local governance introduced electoral politics and created a platform for comparatively younger generation. PRI looks after government funded development programs.

In Meghalaya and Mizoram, during post-colonial situation under the provision of Sixth Schedule, similar political systems of local governance embraced electoral process for selecting District Council leaders to govern tribal societies. Provision of District Council administration accommodated customs and practices of traditional polity. Those in-built systems gradually widen scope for exercising more power and within a decade after independence, the nation-state India experienced growth of democratic

processes, put the accent on demands of autonomy of District Council, Autonomous Councils, and Territorial Councils. Ethnic movements in those communities for establishing political identity (s) culminated into state formations and states like Nagaland, Meghalaya, Mizoram, and Arunachal Pradesh were born during 1963-1988 (Chaube 1973). What was the inner reason that could be a guiding force for the people that helped them to establish right to political self-determination? Was it the world's indigenous people's movements? Those experiences of people of other parts of the world might have inspired them, as it can be presumed that 'share-croppers' movement⁵ and language movements⁶ at that moment in the neighborhood might have stimulated them, but probably establishment of states by tribal people for tribal people was embedded in their political experience, which always linked local system of governance with greater realities. Academicians like Tamo Mibang, Nani Bath, Tabang Mibang and many others of Arunachal Pradesh identified traditional polity of tribes of Arunachal Pradesh as examples of participatory democracy. In this context it can be said that the Adi definitions of their land, forest, fauna, flora, soil, stone, water resources, and everything ensure their proximity with politically distinct cultural environment/landscape.

Growth of the Pasighat town was not rapid like many colonial towns of India. Villages surrounding the town are prosperous and well-maintained. The landscape of Pasighat

⁵ Revolutionary Communist Party led share-croppers' movement engaged both tribal and non-tribal communities of Assam in late nineteen fifties, which enhanced rates of profit for share-croppers.

⁶ Language movement started in the region since 1960s. 'Bhasha Andolon' of the Bengalis of the then East Pakistan, Bodo Sahitya Sabha's demand to introduce the Bodo medium at primary level of school all happened during that decade of 1960.

does not demonstrate narrow roads and drains or unplanned houses along the streets. There is no visible deforested patches of lands anywhere around. Cultivable lands are never used for house constructions; streams and ponds are full of clean water. There is no slum within or at the outskirts of the town, neither are there any concrete structures at central places. The vast blue sky of the town, the mighty river Siang along it, and pollution-free breeze are the delights of life of Pasighat dwellers. During the post-colonial era, this town has become the hub of government funded schools and colleges for education within the region, a place of reference for intellectuals. Intellectual inhabitants of the place are careful about this glorious image of their town and are cautious to maintain it. In 2011, the State Government decided to celebrate birth centenary of Pasighat. Dates and programmes of celebration were finalized. Public Works Department constructed venue for the programme, advertisements were circulated, when the Adi intellectuals of the place were deeply engaged in a debate about the cause of celebration of birth of the town since, according to them, 2011-12 also marks the hundred years of colonization of it. This debate initiated by the civil society members of the town was too powerful, and political leaders and administrators being aware of that had to postpone the celebration.

This example of Pasighat is an eye opener for observations on the relationship between Traditional Local Governance and Cultural Resource-Management. This example further refers to culture that faced relatively less colonial intervention and still controls its extractive resources⁷ and regularize livelihood options. Those

⁷ The very idea of extractive resources are mostly non-commercial, directly connected with traditional knowledge base and livelihood at substantive level, sometimes referred as non-timber forest resources.

resources represent economic and environmental history and cultural ecology of the people. For most of indigenous communities of many nations, cultural landscape archetypes become a part of oral traditions, social history, and folklore but not a tangible reality. Intellectuals may refuse to accept such correlation between local age-old governance systems with effective cultural resource-management. Gender perspective analyzes and establishes apparently invisible relations of these two aspects differently (Boserup 1970; Agrawal 2010).

Experience of Adivasi (Indigenous) People of Jharkhand

During Murmamela / Jatra (annual fair for all the Oraons) in the month of Kartik (October- November) every year near Brambe, the Oraon of all parah gathers from Jharkhand, Bengal, and Odisha. The word 'Parha' denotes the local political organization, which has which has very little influence governance understood in political terms. The 'Murmakhunta' probably transformed from the place of justice dispensation of the highest body of the Oraon to a ritual pole of sacred religious importance. Further, Murmamela still signifies gathering of all Parha representatives, which is one of the very important indicator to understand the past of the political system of the Oraon (as an example of non-state societies). Villages of Ranchi district and specifically of Mandar block are mostly multiethnic villages and were under Ratu king (Maharaja). Concept of Parha-Raja (Oraon Chief) may be a reality in Bero but unknown to people of most of the villages of the Mandar block. The Ratu kingdom can be perceived as an example to understand state formation happened in the tribal belt under the influence of Kshtriya-Brahmin networks. Especially the 'Maharaja' title signifies that possibility. Roy (1912) mentions the structure of pluri-

cultural political organization of the Oraon hundred years back. The reference of Roy (1912 Ibid) of local governance and the gathering of Murma indicates two tiers of traditional political systems of the Oraon. The village level tier may be compared to the Addling/ Bane Kebang and the Murma gathering is comparable with the BogungBokangKebang of the Adi. Due to superimpositions of new political governance systems (sub-divisional and district levels with police and judiciary) since two hundred years, the role of Parha organizations of the Oraon became symbolic in Murma. One of the ancient examples of participatory democracy is merely a fair today.

From linguistics perspective 'Place names', may denote tribal features to some extent⁸. Different places of the Ranchi district in the oral literature of the tribe is source of many rivers like 'Subarnarekha', 'Koel' and small rivers. Tribal people define lands by names. They identify different part of villages and regions by the relatively high and low land elevations. Women and flora relations signify conservation strategies⁹ and closeness of tribal people with natural resources. All these signify their close relation with environment. Fifth schedule provisions during post-colonial situation neither strengthen traditional local governance nor decolonize policies of extraction of natural resources. Industrialization policies of nation state have been evacuating indigenous people from their lands as it was before independence. At present it is continued in the name of development and welfare for the modern state India. Process of internal colonization, problems of migration of

⁸ 'Nagra' / 'Nagri' as name of village signifies a particular type of soil might be available in that area.

⁹ Oraon women collect dried and fallen Sal leaves (*Saora robusta*) to use as fuel. Their techniques of collection of dry leaves and storing technique tells interdependence of people and Sal trees.

the autochthones disintegrated them. Ever expanding nature of colonial towns of the region, attempts of land grabbing many a time are referred in the popular media as riots while those are land struggle between tribal and non-tribal people. Land disputes culminated to declaration of those lands as lands for annual fairs in villages. Traditional Political organization of the Orion is mostly unknown phenomenon to the present generations. Colonial practice propagated only a few positions like 'Mikhail' (village head), 'Pahang' (priest) and place like 'Akhra' (meeting place of villagers). Mikhail is more of a person like the 'Orderly' of government and less leader /representative of people. The 'Pahang' is more religious. The dilapidated conditions of the 'Akhra' of different villages prove the lesser amount of importance of 'Akhra' in today's village life.

Fifth schedule provisions of local governance could not guard indigenous people's habitat and land resources. Indigenous habitats of different locations suffered from different types of crisis. Within schedule areas government lands, forests, became point of disputes. Age old inter dependence of forest and tribes was recognized only recently after 2006. Government forest policy allowed plantation of alien trees (Eucalyptus) in the land of Sal (*Saora robusta*). The region of Jharkhand is home of Sal, Mahua trees. Mostly Sal grows here spontaneously. People utilize fruits of sal tree as source of food, dry leaves as fuel and to make plates for commercial purpose (under development programmes), and trunks for construction of traditional houses. Other trees are Mango, jackfruit, different types of Jamun, Amla, Pinal, Palas, Ber, Tamarind, Karanch, Pipal, Fig, and many other trees, which are related with livelihood. More or less all these trees need no care and born from seeds. There is a particular type of mushroom

grows in the forest, which sprout due to thunder. The origin of rivers and forests full of such trees are life line for the tribes. There is yet to develop any conscious policy to guard these two essential aspects of culture from state governance system. Urban constructions which ignore cultural knowledge of people may lead to a dangerous situation and source of destruction of cultural habitats of this high land. This is risky due to absence of local governance system.

In 2013, I was in Jawal village of district Lohardaga. We were in a team and staying with an Oraon family. This was a village in a small valley surrounded by hills and forests. There are Bauxite mining areas at a distance of 5-12 kilometer from this village. None the places either mining areas or the Lohardaga town is connected to this village by metal roads. There was no electricity, no high school, and no doctor available in the local hospital. On the second day of stay I asked the oldest male member of the family that whether hills adjacent to his house belong to his village. He replied, "I don't know". In other discussions he said during his childhood he saw people of his village, his grandfather went to deposit taxes. Those days they were staying under absentee land lords. People of this village basically produce rice, and maize for family consumption. Village has Panchayat representative. In an evening meeting people of the village narrated that there is crisis of drinking water. Though the village had water bodies and well but those were not safe for drinking. Our team suggested the educated youth of the village to write letters to district administration through district president of panchayat. There were NGO members from PRADAN, and we requested them to help villagers to draft letter. From Jawal we went to visit Bauxite mine. We entered from the backside of the mine through forest route. There was Sunday market, labourers were purchasing a few cheap articles, and we went

ahead, met a few Asur men, labourer, sitting in front of dilapidated small huts, wearing ragged dresses and said us that the entire land of the place of mining was once habitat of ancestors who stayed here.

Brambe is a village of Ranchi district, and one of the developed villages of the region. This place supplies huge amount of vegetables as commercial productions by the farmers round the year from its weekly market to adjacent states. People of this village are multiethnic, belong to different religious faiths. Panchayet members of this village identified village boundaries at four sides, forest tracts under government, private lands own by landlords since British time, cultivable lands and river. Women member(s) further identified high and low lands of entire village which will be around three square kilometer. In this village seats of PRI are reserved for women. So we met women Mukhia, Four ward members, who helped us thoroughly for preparations of resource map and population map of the village. This village received building for panchayet office, generator, and machines to initiate cold storage at micro level. The village has pucca road and water supply, three primary, middle and high school, post office, banks, hospital, and at present Central University of Jharkhand campus is located here. British administration had a military barrack here, and there was Leprosy Mission hospital. This place received benefit of safe drinking water supply since then. Now Public Health Engineering department expanded that system, supply water in the village. Irrigation system is part of personal entrepreneurship in this village and region. Usually, people dig well at cultivable areas of low lands and reserve rain water. During 2009-2011 due to insufficient rain Brambe and its adjacent areas was declared as draught prone.

Both the villages of Jawal and Brambe are predominantly Oraon tribal village. The other residents are usually Hindi

speaking and in various professions. Literacy rate is comparatively better in the Brambe village. Traditional political institutions of the tribal communities are unknown to present generation. Fifth schedule facilities could not strengthen local governance system. Welfare and Development initiatives of modern state India and its industrialization programme marginalized indigenous people in their own land. There are hardly any resident and family members of who are highly educated and in white collar jobs found in those two villages. Children of present generation are going to school and colleges. Despite the nearest most urban center Ranchi is famous for schools since last century. A comparative account indicates that right to self-determination has enriched the Adi tribe more rapidly than the Oraon.

Adi and Oraon Womens' Contribution in Resource Management

Resource management (Thomas F. King 2011; John 2009: 216-249, Fowler 1974)) in tribal societies in general locate separate role of men and women. Women the main labour force in production organizations and as gatherer, in tribal societies of hills and plains, cultivate and conserve knowledge on cultural landscape archetype (fauna, flora, soil, land mass, water). Livelihood Knowledge (Indigenous Knowledge System/Traditional Knowledge System) practices of women's doing, conserve the environment. Agarwal (2010) observes that nature of utilization of forest resources differ between men and women. While men do timber extraction for commercial purpose women restricts in firewood gathering without causing any harm to trees. Big industrial ventures, as it happens for mining, construction of mega dam which destroy top soil and subsistence resources engage more men labourers. Eco-

friendly practices of house construction, dependence of ethnic food, ethno-medicines, and ritual of community fishing engage more women. Taboo on indiscriminate use of forest resources regulated by indigenous knowledge system is to a great extent learned and shared in women's line from mother's to daughter's generation. Women's significant contribution in food production system, helped to define- kitchen gardens, different types of cultivable plots, different types of soils, forests, and habitations, lands for fishing, hunting and gathering. From riverbeds to high hill, big stones, streams, are indicators to identify any place/ space. Customs of use of all patches of land are based on different types of sanctions enjoyed by men and women. Customs of caring daughters in the Adi society by allowing married daughter at parental home up to the birth of two-three children probably symbol of acknowledgment for women's contribution in the Adi society. The livelihood activities, knowledge of Oraon women on of the region are reflected in their economic self- dependence. They practice traditional knowledge as well as are availing benefits of education. Change in the extractive resources of their landscape will directly point of distress for women of the region.

Epilogue

UN Working definition of Indigenous peoples, as already mentioned, "Adopted by the UN Working Group in 1982 says, Indigenous populations are composed of the existing descendants of peoples who inhabited the present territory of a country wholly or partially at the time when persons of a different culture or ethnic origin arrived there from other parts of the world, over-ruled them, by conquest, settlement, or the other means, reducing them to a non-dominant entity or colonial situation; who today live more

in conformity with their particular social, economic, and cultural customs and traditions than with the institutions of the country of which they are now form a part, under a State structure which incorporates mainly the national, social, and cultural characteristics of other segments of population which are predominant" (Wilmer, 1993 : 216). It further says, "[Indigenous People]... are descendants of groups which were in the territory at the time when other groups of different cultures or ethnic origins arrived there." India's policy on tribes and indigenous people in Sixth Schedule Areas by protecting land rights, rights to self-determination, right to practice culture and customary law, has already shown some prosperity of the concern people. Contribution of tribal people of north-east India in democratic decision making process of India is significant. Their whole struggle connected the traditional knowledge systems, ethos, and practices with modern system of democracy at regional level. Cultural resource management is interconnected with traditional governance system.

In Central India in general and in villages like Brambe and its adjacent region, earlier participatory practices of the people (for making irrigation dam) is no more popular now. The people under the new political system await instructions of the Panchayat for repairing dams, while previous community activities used to include such routine work for yearly maintenance. So, with the growth of populations no new irrigation dam has been constructed in this region. In Bero, experiences of the people is somewhat different. Bero is another block of Ranchi District. The traditional chief of that region, Parha Raja Simon Oraon¹⁰ since 1950 put his all efforts to stop water flowing

¹⁰ Reference from the unpublished short biography of Simon Oraon, written by Mr. Hemant Minj, JRF, in the Center for Indigenous Culture Studies, CUJ

down after rain and started construction of dam while he was only fifteen years old. An illiterate adolescent teen ager, committed to his work succeeded only due to his determination. He depended on his traditional knowledge of irrigation and innovative skills which is very much ingrained in the cultural systems. He on the basis of his observations, life experiences, and hard work, initiated the job. Due to his position as Parha- Raja, Simon could convince his community members who followed his instruction and shared hard labour with the Raja. They worked together with Simon Oraon. This initiative of Parha-Raja culminated into construction of four dams, canals, big ponds. His initiatives saved old trees of adjacent government forests. This eighty six years old man is engaged in afforestation program since the past 40 years and planted with his fellowmen millions of trees. All Parha Raja might not have taken similar approaches. But while a traditional Chief like Simon Oraon did so valuable, eye opening job, this is not a moment to select him for different awards, and felicitations and to write articles in Newspapers only. Not even featuring such personalities in feature film or documentary film¹¹ Delhi and Ranchi Doordarshan produced Documentary film on Simon Oraon.

. Popular cinema artist character roles (reference- Majhi-the Mountain Man released in August 2015) may set good propaganda to such personality but the audiences forget such important persons soon.

Mainstreaming of indigenous knowledge is not a new idea. Writing biographical account on this person is also an important duty of the researchers and litterateur. Equally crucial is to bring the places like Pasighat in the map of knowledge. Whether all these efforts will create space to

¹¹ Delhi and Ranchi Doordarshan produced Documentary film on Simon Oraon.

establish indigenous right to practice traditional knowledge for welfare and benefit of humanity to establish human rights remains a question. When indigenous people's thoughts will be considered equal to mainstream thoughts? When planners will understand that indigenous and traditional knowledge systems can contribute a great deal for cultural resource management and cultural landscape and for conservation of biodiversity? Do mainstream would be able to survive without such success stories of contributions of grains by indigenous people, which are constantly filling up the promise of food security, increasing green vegetation on once unfertile lands, conserving water, and transforming topography by telling that 'God has given you earth to draw sketch of life on it' or 'the greatest enemy of human is not another human but unfertile land, which you can make fertile by your care' (Excerpts from Simon Oraon's speech, dated 4th September 2015, CUJ, Jharkhand on the occasion of Felicitation ceremony by the university on the eve of Teachers Day).

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