

## WORKSHOP ON TRIBAL ISSUES

### Introduction

The Director of Xavier Institute of Social Service (XISS), Ranchi, asked TACET for a programme for social workers, personnel officers and trainers, and for rural field workers, on Tribal Issues. The topics presented by the Director, Dr. M.V.D. Bogaert, were : addiction to drink, jealousy against tribals who have positions of leadership, absenteeism, and negative self-image among members of Scheduled Castes, especially in Jamshedpur and industrial areas. The programme was conducted at XISS, and was attended by 19 participants as follows : from among the faculty members of XISS, 3 persons; from the Tata Steel Rural Development Society of Jamshedpur, 3 persons; from the Central Institute of Psychiatry, Kanke, 1 person; from the SAIL, Ranchi, 2 persons; from the Association of Adivasi Societies, Jamshedpur, 6 persons; from the Indian Explosives, Gomia, 1 person; from TISCO'S Adivasi Affairs Dept., 1 person; from TISCO'S Community Development & Social Welfare Department, 2 persons. The programme was conducted by Oswald Summerton, S.J., one of the Directors of TACET.

Fr. M.V.D. Bogaert Director of XISS inaugurated the programme with the background material which had led to the organizing the workshop; he also announced, unexpectedly, that the programme would need to be conducted in Hindi. At

the beginning, the participants identified what hopes, they had from the workshop. These hopes included such expectations as the following : indepth analysis of the tribal problems; how to stop alcoholism and absenteeism; how to get more adivasi leadership in industry ; how to deal with tribal society which is dying; how to help individual adivasis that come for problem solving; how to deal with evils arising from superstition; how to get people to accept vaccinations for, e.g., polio; clarification on the issues involved, ways of promoting adivasi language, culture and religion; how to get justice for adivasis; how to get adivasis, especially villagers, to educate their children.

The next step was for the participants to begin an indepth analysis of the cultural underpinnings of tribal issues, working in small groups, they identified areas of Etiquette, Technicality and Character to tribal issues, to clarify how from tribal Culture itself, there were elements that were conducive to the very problems they wanted to solve. Among the problems identified were : alcoholism, absenteeism, (especially after leave for feasts), personal problems of adjustment, neglect of adivasis by government, etc. The participants also identified that there is an old culture which has been lost to all intents and purposes in the industrialised areas where a new culture is beginning to grow. For example, in industrialised areas, the Bahar Festival is being replaced by Holi. Another major change that was identified was, according to the participants, that in the old traditions, the man was responsible practically 100% for the family, whereas in the new traditions men are 60% responsible and women 40% responsible; in the old tradition, this responsibility referred to the social interactions, [while within the house the women had their responsibility.

The participants wrestled with the difficult concepts of cultural analysis, to identify elements of etiquette and technicality. The basis for their analysis was the "Cultural Parent", a TA approach to cultural anylysis and tranformation which has

been developed by Prof. Pearl Drego, Director of TACET. Under the headings : Beliefs, Ideologies and Rules were identified the joint struggle (i.e. men and women) for existence with higher risk than before, and, keeping in view the change in living conditions and atmosphere, a strong mutual assistance and co-operation. Under "Moral Codes" were identified strict adherence to moral codes related specially to faithfulness, sincerity and truthfulness. With regard to being 'male and female', the group members thought that since there are joint responsibilities in the new traditions, there was a growing sense of equality between men and women. Wealth, poverty, etc., were a seen as depending on the decision of the Almighty, and, superstition, customs, rituals, social hierarchies, and prejudices were still according to the remants of the old traditions.

One group looked at the elements of cultural Etiquette and identified where in the family structure, the emphasis was laid. Men were given first emphasis in relation to ideology, values and rules, moral, codes, wealth and poverty, social hierarchies, prejudices, ideal women, methods of reward and punishment, drinking, injustice to children, land and community. Women were seen has having first place with regard to culturally inherited beliefs, beliefs about life & death, beliefs about good and evil, beliefs about being male and female, beliefs about fertility, superstitions, customs, expectation of the ideal man, jealousy, neglect by government, money. Children have priority in matters redating to rituals.

A third group identified attitudes of men, women and children about the tribal issues that had been identified. On alcoholism : men believe that this is a traditional right of men, that is connected with illiteracy and with accepting their position in life; women and children accept themselves as following men and doing what is traditional. On jealousy : women have negative attitudes and lack of understanding towards those who are in a better (material) position ; men have a negative attitude towards

those who are different, and, children are motivated by their parents. On the neglect of and injustice towards children, men believe that if their sons are educated some harm will befall them, a Dayan will come and snatch them away, and, as for the girls, since they will go to another family it is no use educating them, women think that the children should do some work, and children accept the orders of the parents. On neglect by the government : men think the government should put the adivasis, into positions of leadership, women do not want to be asked to think, and they follow their husbands, and children don't understand the problem. On the alienation of land away from adivasis: men are misguided, they are ready to do things such as taking loans against their lands in such a way that they lose the lands, they lack information; women accept what the husband does, and children have to obey. On loans, the men are misguided, women follow the men, and children follow the parents. On superstition : men accept superstition as part of tradition, they agree to it due to illiteracy and because they lack adaptability to situations apart from what they have learnt from the elders; women and children follow.

The group worked hard on the first day, and since they were working with a new model, they found some difficulty. On the second day, as preparation for taking action on what they had discovered, the faculty gave them some of the psychological tools that come from TA. Through these, the participants began to understand the dynamics of what was taking place in the Tribal Society in Jamshedpur, and they began to understand that by shifting ego states, they could generate options for themselves and not be hooked into a destructive way of communicating. The following topics were dealt with : egostates, transactional analysis proper, basic human hungers, structure of time, analysis of psychological games from both an individual point of view as well as from a psychological point of view, analysis of motivation and strokes. These topics and their application to adivasi life took up the second and third days. On the last day, the participants

analysed issues in four groups. Group one took the tribal issues of Alcoholism and Superstition, Group Two took Absenteeism and relations with Government and Management, Group Three took Loans and Injustice to Children, and Group Four took Land Alienation and Women's Issues. All groups examined the issue of Jealousy. The groups analysed each of the problems according to the dimensions of Cultural Analysis (Drego). They began to construct solutions by using various combinations of ego state descriptions : Nurturing Parent, Protecting Parent, Photographic Adult, Combining Adult, Free Child, and Adapted Child. In addition, they analysed the problems from the point of view of societal games, and, they took examples of some beliefs to begin to re-write them. For examples, for the belief that getting drunk is traditional to adivasis and that they have a right to fun that they can get from alcohol, a new belief is that healthy drinking is traditional to adivasis, and they have a right to non-destructive use of alcohol and to having fun, thus they did not do harm to themselves, their children, or to others.

Group One consisted of Mr. Bholu Singh, Mr. A.K. Sinha, Mr. Bomkin Bansriyar, Mr. S.P. Dass, and Miss Meher Mundu. On the topic of Alcoholism they said that Alcoholism has been considered a basic element in celebrating a function; part of the Etiquette is that when the men return from the place of worship, they are to be welcomed by the women, and alcohol plays a part in this. On the Technicality: the method of production of the alcohol is in the individual household through the labour component of the female members; in addition, there is a diversification of cereals nowadays, increasing indebtedness, and a shortage of food which means less food for making the drink, and less food to eat: there is an overall tendency to destruction. On Character: by following the custom, the people feel near to each other. On Superstition, the Group members identified that many suffer from some disease or other because they refuse to go to doctors and rely on their own primitive methods; they need information, education on this. The group identified the

facts of jealousy, mentioning the Indian Crab Game.

Group Two consisted of Mr. Robert Khalko, Mr. A.K. Das, Mr. R.S. Mahato, Mr. A. Ahmed, and Mr. Chhote Hembron. On Absenteeism this group identified the Etiquette as consisting of the traditions concerning drinking, illiteracy, family customs and ill health; Technicality consisted of fashion or style, and respect for the others, and, Character included laziness, insecurity regarding self in relation to management. Analysed as a societal game, Absenteeism has four stages: in the first stage, the Employee is Persecutor, the Employer is Rescuer, the Family is Stage Manager (preparing the drinks), and the Neighbours are Spectators. In Stage Two, the Employee becomes Rescuer, the Employer become Spectator, the Family and Neighbours become Rescuers. In the Third Stage, the Employee becomes Victim together with the Family, the Employee becomes Persecutor, and the Neighbours become Spectators. For a New Etiquette, the group suggested an adaptation of the old traditions—for example, offering a drink, instead of giving a full glass, to give a glass that is one tenth full of alcohol which is then to be used for enjoyment, not for intoxication. This will mean an adaptation of tribal education to cleanse the tradition from what is destructive, towards focussing on enjoyment of the alcohol which can only be achieved if a certain amount is drunk. On Relationship with Government/Management: the group identified as Etiquette the belief that is held by the community that the government is responsible for them and their welfare, the Technicality that government does scientific planning for them, and the Character that the Adivasis themselves do not have to accept responsibility for what they are and do. Thus, in terms of the game pentagon, the role of Government is as Stage Manager in the first stage, shifting to Rescuer, and possibly to either Victim or Persecutor; the adivasis themselves begin in the role of Victim, shift to Persecutor as they remember all the wrongs done to them, and when they take inadequate action, they go back to being Victim once again. Social workers begin as Spectators, they shift to

Rescuer, and end up as Victims or Persecutors. Possible solutions are to be found in changing the accepted beliefs, and in giving an educational bias that motivates the Adivasis to take responsibility for themselves and teaches them to refuse to be dependent, as this leaves them open to exploitation. On Jealousy, Group Two reflected that the Etiquette is low self-image of the Adivasis and a reaction to this when anyone of them dares to be different. The Technicality is drawn from the group cohesiveness which works against the interests of individuals and even of the group as a whole, and also from the pain resulting from poor distribution of material goods and resentment for anyone who succeeds in bettering his or her condition. The Character comes from the fear that arises when, seeing another Adivasi improve his lot, the thought comes that this one also will join the ranks of exploiters. In this situation, the role of Stage Manager is held by Government and by landlords in whose interest it is to keep the Adivasis in a subordinated Position. The Adivasi who betters his lot is also in a Stage Manager position, and he is dragged down from this into a Victim position, or else dragged himself and his family down through, for example, excessive use of alcohol.

Group Three consisted of Mr. A. Ansari, Mr. S.N. Purty, Mr. S.N. Kalindi, Mr. Rajaram Hansda and Mr. Iqbal Khalil. On the topic of Loans, the Etiquette was identified as a misguided "if I need money for anything, or, to meet the demands of my village or family, I can borrow it". The Technicality is the protection given to the money-lenders and merchants and landlords to give loans without any safeguards for the Adivasis. The Character is indicated by, "I have the money for today, what does it matter about tomorrow". The Stage Managers in this process are the government, the lenders, and leaders. The Public is in the role of Spectator. The money lender moves to Persecutor, and the role of Rescuer is filled by labour welfare organisations. The Victim is the Adivasi and his family. Regarding the Problem of Illiteracy among the Children: the

Etiquette is partly that the children are there to help alleviate the poverty of the parents by working, and partly the superstitions that they will be harmed if they become educated. The Technicality is the culturally inherited knowledge which was effective and satisfying for a closed, forest society, but which is now-a-days ineffective and counter-productive. The Character is a combination of rejection and neglect which can then get some nurturing, albeit ineffective. Teachers and parents fill the role of Stage Manager, and the public are Spectators. The Parents also become Persecutors, and Rescuers are court agencies, and voluntary social organisations. The children are the Victim as well as, in the long run, the Adivasi people themselves. On Jealousy, Group Three, identified the Etiquette as the inherited beliefs, the Technicality as the inherited knowledge, and the Character as hatred, rejection and drives. Society itself fills the role of Stage Manager while the public watch on (as Spectators). The Persecutor is the jealous person, the Victim is the person against whom jealousy is expressed, and the counsellor or social worker is the Rescuer.

Group Four consisted of Mr. Durga Gope, Ms. V. Surin, Ms. Duli Majhi, and Mr. Surendra Nath Murmu. On the issue of land, the group identified the roles played by the different people. The Adivasis when they experience a time of financial difficulty, demand paisa thus taking the role of Persecutor. They can also be Rescuers by being ready to sell their land for money. The Spectators are the people who watch, and the Stage Managers are the members of the family who don't stop it. On women's issues, the Etiquette is that a woman's place is in the home, women don't know anything, they have no place outside the home; part of the Technicality is that if employed, others don't let them get promotion because in this way men have less chances; also, it is important for women to be with men for social uplift because if left free, they will be freed; also part of the technicality are the low wages and harrassment. Character includes what men feel they can rightly do by teasing and dis-counting the women.

A high degree of optimism marked the final, evaluative sessions of the workshop. Some expressed satisfaction that at last they had means of identifying what was going on, plus possible ways of providing solutions or the beginnings of solutions to these problems. Some expressed the desire that the programme were longer, and that there be some follow-up in the future. Others said that they had received personal insights that would be useful for them and their families as well as for their professional work. One person expressed satisfaction that the workshop had been conducted in Hindi and that it was good Hindi and understandable.

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