

Tribal Youth Dormitory: A Hiatus or Heuristic?

Shibani Roy

*Anthropological Survey of India, Central Regional Centre, Seminary Hills,
Nagpur 440 006, Maharashtra, India
Telephone: 091-0712-2511375,2511714, E-mail: shibanirizvi@yahoo.com*

KEYWORDS Youth dormitory; tribal traditions; character; nation building and cultural heritage

ABSTRACT The presence of the institutions like Ghotul (Muria), Nokpante (Garo), Morung (Naga, Wanchoo and Nocte), Zawlbuk (Lushei), Nadrang (Dimasa Kachari), Mosup (Adi), Jyrkodam / Hangsekia (Karbi), Samadi / Chamadi (Tiwa / Lalung), Chavadi (Muthuvan), Dhum Kuria (Oraon), Rang bang (Bhotia) Kichuki (Angami Naga) Ikhuichi (Zemi), Iloichi (Zemi) and Dhanga Bassa (Bhuiya) amongst the Indian tribes have fascinated, intrigued romanticized and vehemently criticised by administrator social worker and politicians. Till date these establishment are devoted upon and viewed through the pinhole of formal education, morality and modernity. Besides, the socio-political upheavals taking place in the pan-Indian level and policy for upliftment of tribal have played havoc with these village based organisations which were the nerve centre of the tribal community. Thus, caught between the lure of modernity and haste for abandoning all that is indigenous, has left these organisations shattered, abandoned or transformed. This paper attempts to view whether these places were following the heuristic method of education wherein the pupil were given all the freedom to discover things for themselves, thereby training each other. Or these institutions were rather interstice or interface before attaining the adult role in the community. The term of reference for these institutions is youth dormitory.

INTRODUCTION

The English word 'dormitory' is derived from the Latin word *dormitorium* signifies a communal or collective sleeping quarter. This word is inappropriate for the communal sleeping quarter, which is like a preparatory school for the tribal children. Yet, it is being retained and used till we opt for an adequate alternative. On trying to locate the tribal youth dormitories at the Pan Indian level we find that these are confined to remote eastern tribal belt of India including Kerala, Chattisgarh, Orissa, Jharkhand, Meghalaya, Assam, Tripura, Mizoram, Manipur, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh and Andaman & Nicobar Islands. While being posted in the North East region and Central India for one and a half decades I had closely observed the functioning of these youth dormitories. More importantly, the interactions with the youth were vital to ascertain the dilemma and constraint faced by them in their mundane affairs.

The tribal ideology behind the youth dormitories will be based on available ethnographic account and extended interviews with the youth. The present state of affairs of these affects the social matrix of tribal village life. To begin with on trying to shift our venue of study from tribal to the non tribal zone we find that the Gurukul,

Ashram traditions can be traced back in India from 4000 B.C. to 1000 B.C. The period when Vedic Samhitas, Brahmanas and Upanishads were passed on to the next generation through the oral tradition. The fabled Ashram of Vishwamitra and Dronacharya have been immortalised by their disciples Ram and Arjun. The gurukul and ashram were institutions where all the children were treated at par. All the children spent their brahmacharya period here. They were not only taught to learn, think and recite but they had to participate in the activities of gurukul for economic sustenance whether, that be cow tending, horticulture or madhukari (begging for alms). Gurukul and ashram are still in existence and render specialised training.

The common feature between the tribal dormitory and ashram are recruitment and training of the young away from their families to enable them to take up responsible adult role later in life. Both can be deemed as preparatory schools where the *sanskriti* of that age and area was inculcated amongst the children through the various *sanskar*. Here, *sanskriti* and *sanskar* are used in place of culture, social sanctions and ritual performances. The aim and goal of Gurukul / Ashram and youth dormitory is common except for presence of a Guru i.e. tutor in the former and lack of it in the *Nokpante* and *Ghotul*. Here, the

leadership wrests on the most able and accomplished shoulders of one of the members, who organises and regulates the activities of the youth dormitory. Here, the approach to learning is heuristic wherein each day the child himself discovers new things about themselves in the company of his peers.

However, the training and education that the child received in these institutions can be best described as habituation, imitation or perhaps unconscious conditioning along with the other kind of learning which is conscious and conditioned. With the result that when the children become adult responsible members of the society they react, rationalize, behave and think in a given space and time in a pattern, which when collected objectively would indicate the cultural pattern of the group. And the process by which each and every individual is integrated into his society is called socialization. Thereby socialization turns out each normal individual the kind of human being who more or less perfectly measures up to his communities' expectations.

Here, it must be kept in mind that socialization of man is understandably more complex as compared to other animals; since human social institutions take on varied and changing forms. Through this process of socialization, the man adjusts with his fellow beings in accommodating the total body of traditions i.e. economic, social, technological, religious, aesthetic, linguistic and many others to which they are all heir. And this learning takes a special significance in every society since; it not only shapes the life of the people but also ensures the continuity and perpetuation of the culture. The way culture is embodied in a person determines the social personality which when viewed at the national level gives the national character. The personality and character are thus the intrinsic part of every society which is being cherished and upheld at even the cost of life. Margaret Mead (1925), Geza, Roheim, Ruth Benedict (1935), Ralph Linton (1945), John Dollard (1950) are some of the pioneers in studies of cultural personality.

The intensity, depth and importance of the process of socialization does not begin and end with enculturation to style and habit of eating, sleeping, speaking and personal hygiene learnt during childhood but it continues as man passes through different stages of his life. The process of learning continues terminating at his death. It is an established fact that ecology, economics,

social and political organization set the parameters of sanctioned behaviour. At the universal level nine behavioural systems have been marked out:

01. Succorance	Asking others for help.
02. Nurturance	Giving help or emotional support to others.
03. Self reliance	As doing things for oneself.
04. Achievement	Striving to meet internal standard of excellence.
05. Responsibility	Performing one's expected role duties.
06. Obedience	As attempting to meet the demands of others.
07. Dominance	As attempting to change others behaviour.
08. Sociability	As making friendly approaches to other individuals.
09. Aggression	As hurting others.

Each of these systems of behavior in some form and degree is present in every society in a recognizable form and could best be identified as responses to specific universal situation. Thus at the universal level this nine fold behavior system is witnessed, which within the given social milieu is inculcated in each individual through games, recreations, (music, dance, poetry, rhyming), folktales, fables, fantasies, concept of the world (here it signifies 'their' world) where their origin, emergence, spread and standard, value orientation are dictated, sayings – which are passed on from one generation to the other, religious beliefs and concepts, theories regarding diseases and sufferings. The indigenous wisdom regarding cosmos, plant, animals and other – humans present in a society, is itself a store house of knowledge which is imparted to the young through sheer imitation, education and practice. Lastly, work, whether it is sowing the *jhum* field or carving wood or weaving is part of the process of socialization. The end product of which are mainly for sustenance, signified as craft.

All the above features go into shaping the personality of the individuals in the early stages of his life. And that is done in the tribal dormitory, Gurukul and Ashram – the societal / national character is shaped in these institutions. Here, I quote from Manusmriti (*Dwitiya Adhyaya*).

"savitri matrasaropi varam viprah suyantritah
naayantrivastivedoapi sarvaashi sarvavikrayah"

The gist of this *shloka* is the character is more important than mere scholarship / education. A man with no education but of high character is better than a highly educated characterless person. So, it is the *sanskar* which go in making

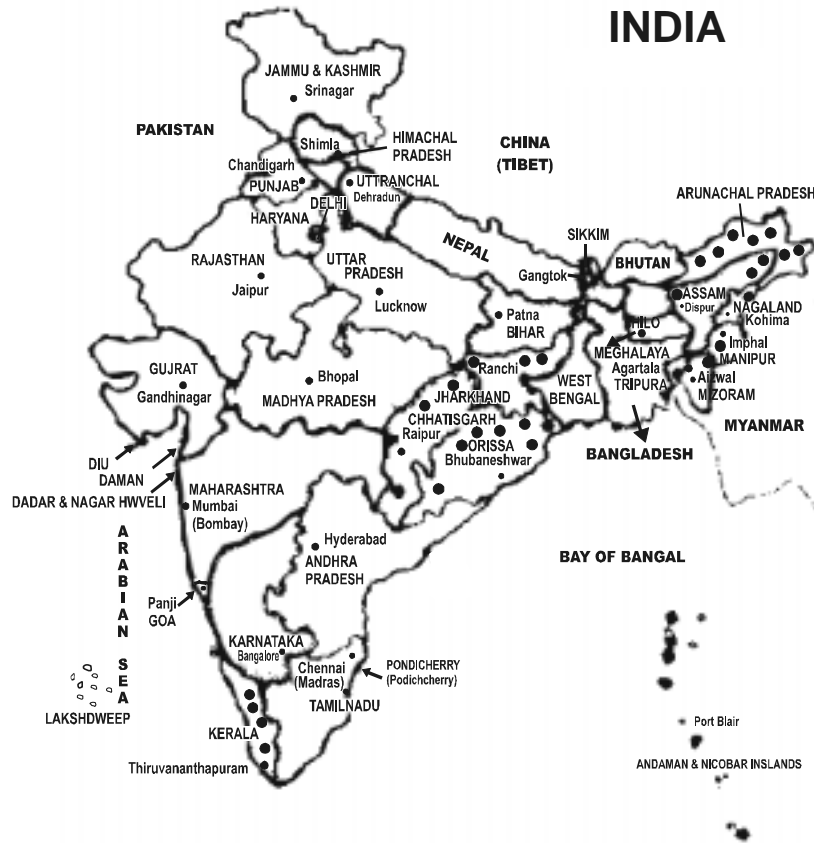


Fig. 1. India, presence of youth dormitory (Map not to scale)

Distribution of Youth Dormitories

<i>Area</i>	<i>Tribes</i>	<i>Locales</i>
Andman & Nicobar	Jarawa	Andman
Arunachal Pradesh	Adi, Wancho	East, West Siang, Tirap
Assam	Bodo	Darrang, Goalpara
	Kachari	Mikir and N.C.Hills
	Karbi	Lakhimpur, Sibsagar
	Deuri	Nowgaon, Lakhimpur
Chattisgarh	Lalung	Bastar
	Muria	Bastar
	AbhujMaria	Bastar
Jharkhand	Dorla	Palamau, Ranchi
	Oraon	Giridih, Ranchi
	Munda	Palamau, Ranchi
	Birji	Hazaribagh, Ranchi
Kerala	Birhor	Trivendrum, Palghat
	Mujhuvan, Manna	South and East Manipur Hills
Manipur	Tangkhul, Paite	West and East Garo Hills
Meghalaya	Garo, Hajong	Aizawl, Lunglei
Mizoram	Lusei, Hmar	Wokha, Phek
Nagaland	Lohta, Rengma	Dhenkanal, Keunjhar,
Orissa	Juang, Santal	Baleswar, Mayurbhanj
		North Tripura
Tripura	Durlong Kuki	

up the character and where is it done? In the Ashram, Pathshala, Nokpante, Morung Ghar, Murang, Zawlbuk, Nadrung, Mosup, Jirkdaun, Hangsekia, Benga, Dara, Samadi / Chamadi, Ghotul, Dhumkuria, Rang bang, Kichuki, Ikhuichi, Iloichi and in Dhangabassa.

The aspect of this learning process and experience that distinguishes man from other creatures, by means of which he achieves competence in his own cultural environ is enculturation. The essence of which is unconscious and conscious conditioning

exercised within limits sanctioned by a given body of customs. And within the life time of the individual accumulation continues. But the most formative years for this are childhood and adolescence. Since, as an adult he is involved in upholding the cultural matrix through his interaction and responses through which the stability and continuity of the culture is attained. The adult behaviour and its repercussion that is quality of life can be measure by the crime rate, suicide rate and activity of the people during their leisure (Fig. 2).

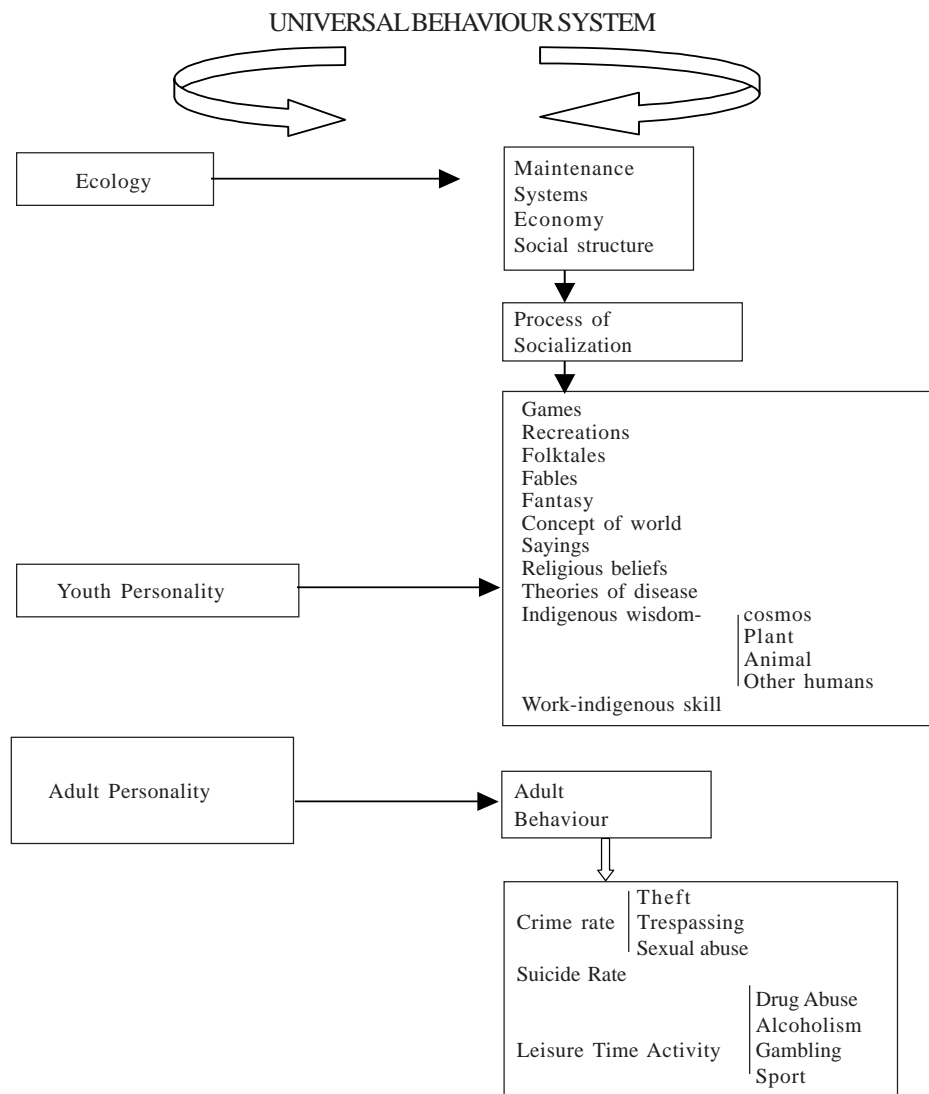


Fig. 2. Universal behavior

Thus learning process during the formative years becomes the main bulwark of the society since the personality or national character emerges out of it. Here with the help of psychologists the leading social anthropologists John Dollard (1950), Murdock (1945), Gillin (1948), Hallowell (1955) had brought out the Yale theory of learning. Wherein it was said that behaviour originates in a drive towards some goal. The tension involved, notably anxiety, emerge into action when a Cue (cause to take) or stimulus occurs, producing a response or goal response. If this meets consistently with a reward, which reduce tension, then it is reinforced into a habit. It results in punishment, through deprivation and increase of tension, the response may be discontinued, or a consistency of frustration may build up, resulting in aggression and other compensatory or escapist outlets (Fig. 2).

This range of learning, unlearning and relearning during the formative years of man goes on through elaborate symbolic communication, stored cultural experience and nurturing by helpers within the society. The drives are always within cultural specificity, while anxiety, conflict and tensions are dependent on individual and group experiences. The cues are provided mostly by cultural signals and expectations and the parent, guru, shikshak, sardar, motiari push and direct the children towards responses, which are normal habits. Whereas societies have punishment to deal with deviant children. And the first learning is most critical / vital standing as a model for later learning.

The above conceptual frame work is applicable in understanding the process of socialization and enculturation of children irrespective of the fact whether they are members of youth dormitory, Gurukul or a boarding school. Since, it is imperative for a society to train and socialize the children for its perpetuation. Thus, the privilege princelings from the metropolis and the tribal child from isolated hinterland were weaned away from the warmth of the mothers lap and put to rigors of disciplined and regimented life.

The segregation of the youth from their family and at times from the opposite sex, also has a very significant effect.. The emphasis of certain ethnographers over the romantic-erotic aspect of tribal dormitories are highly questionable. Since, the sanctity of the tribal dormitory is given the highest priority, wherein the married or widowers and widows are not allowed. Strict

code of secrecy prevails over the members of the dormitory. Even within Ghotuls where both the sexes assemble, sexual congress is a sacrilege. In tribal dormitories the youth is not only made aware of the cultural aspects, but also of his physiology as an important part of learning. One of the prime features these Ashrams Zawlbuk and Nokpante achieved by segregating the youth was the practice of Brahmacharya or celibacy. The practice of Brahmacharya centered around the concept of eugenics popularly known as Sujananiki. When translated it means the science / technique of improving the progeny. It was based on conserving / preserving the virya / und (sperm / egg) to mature before it is utilized to reproduce physically and mentally healthy progeny who are devoid of congenital abnormalities and deleterious genes responsible for deterioration of mental and physical well being. This is intrinsic and pre requisite for creating a healthy society. Our Indian system of maintenance of endogamy at various level is a fall out of the concept of sujanan shashtra. Hence, as a method of preserving and conserving "healthy genes" the practice of brahmacharya was adopted wherein an individual as a matter of cultural norm was sent to an institution away from home wherein besides leading a celibate life he underwent rigorous training in other fields of knowledge, thereby, diverting the sexual energy of the youth towards developing other skills and learning to control the basic sexual impulses. This formed the main axis of maintaining a harmonious society, which is devoid of sexual abuse. Further, the end of the period of segregation is marked by marriage and entry into active participation in the community affairs.

The channelisation of sexual energy of the youth thus achieved, was always directed towards village welfare. When Ram and Lakshaman could protect the heritage of their Guru Vishwamitra from being plundered by aliens. Till date, the dormitory youths are a force, which protects the village from wild predators, and enemy attacks. Besides helping the villagers with maintenance of road, houses and take the responsibility of arranging annual feasts and other communal get together.

Thus the period of stay in the dormitory which ranges from 5 to 15 years at a stretch is an important passage rite, which is heightened and made more effective by elaborate rules, regulations and dand / fine money imposed for any

transgression of the rule. Witness to this is the structure of the dormitory; it is the most majestic and tastefully decorated structure in the entire village.

This long period of association in an ashram or dormitory is like a prolong passage rite and when viewed in the backdrop of birth ceremony of a new born, wherein the child is exposed to the world after the long months of uterine existence. Here, the foetus is devoid of sunlight and in the post uterine stage he is totally devoid of mother's influence and enter this world by propitiating universal power and the people seeking their blessings. Thus the notion of newborn entering into a given cosmos, thereby rendering his physical exposure into the new environment to establish a harmony between entering the world and the given order of the world. This is important since, in harmony lies the compatibility of man and his immediate environment; besides its continuity at present and in the future for the generation to come. The ashram and tribal dormitories were recognized as institutions that transformed a child to an adult responsible member of the society.

Both can be deemed as preparatory schools where the sanskriti of that age and area was inculcated amongst the children through the various sanskar. Here sanskriti and sanskar are used in place of culture, social sanctions and ritual performances.

Another aspect which needs to be clarified here is that by bringing forth the similarities of Gurukul / Ashram and tribal dormitories I am neither trying to compare them nor trying to trace their antiquity. Rather, the presence and prevalence of these institutions goes to prove their importance and organisational prowess. Since Gurukuls were more elaborate with a figure head called Guru, the life was strictly Spartan, regimented devoid of the freedom of self governance as exhibited in the tribal dormitories. And this establishes the fact that the ancient sagas had modified and transformed the Nokpante and Ghotuls to ashramshala. Here, the mention of Valmiki Ramayana (Griffith Ralph T. S. 1963, cf. Roy, Shibani, 2003) wherein the author gives details of behavioural characteristic of forest dwellers specifically of tribes living in dandakaranya forest (Chapter 47.4 & 5). During the search of Sita's whereabouts the youths use to wander the whole day in the jungle but at night fall all use to collect and sleep together.

This has been interpreted as habituation to sleeping under a common roof. A practice still found amongst the tribal of present Ganjam and Vishakha-pattanam.

The above conceptual frame work which can be summed up as heuristic the tribal way of socialization and enculturation is heuristic in method where self learning is a joyful experience which inculcates the nine fold mode of behaviour in the personality development of the child. Keeping in view the important aspect sujananiki for getting healthy progeny and more importantly canalising the unbridled youthful energy for sustenance and development of the community.

On reviewing the historical processes at work; the colonials who came to plunder, did not remain confined to natural resource and wealth but they wanted to curb, disturb and crush the very basic social fabric and intellectual property of the subcontinent. The mental / spiritual strength and concept on which the entire Indian civilization persisted was challenged on scientific ground. And all that was indigenous and traditional was scoffed at and rejected. Here, the standing example is of Indian cotton and weaving around which entire subcontinents' economy rested. And till date we are reeling under the loss of our traditional craft and craftsmanship. The resurgence of charkha and takli by Mahatma Gandhi was the first wobbly step of freedom movement. The formal education system introduced by the colonial administrator primarily was aimed at proselytization where the third 'R' was meant for religion. Nevertheless, the large chunk of formally educated urban masses could serve the administrator. With the basic fall out of traditional economic system (client – patron) and introduction of foreign good and clamour for administrative jobs – set in motion the gradual and definite erosion of traditional educational system.

The induction of missionary and administrators who turned into ethnographers further affected this fine mesh of our social system. Since, they were more philanthropist than anthropologists. Besides, their upbringing in strict European Christian traditions reflected amply on their writing and understanding of Indian civilization, which also included the tribals. These accounts amplified the romantic – erotic aspect and sexual exploits of the tribals unquestionable. Keeping in view the Indian Anthropological traditions I would present the message of Ghotul

“that youth must be served, that, freedom and happiness are more to be treasured than any material gain, that friendliness and sympathy, hospitality and unity are of the first importance and above all that human love – and its physical expression – is beautiful, clean and precious,” is microcosm of Indian civilization. The quality of human being is based on each individual personality shaped during early youth, which depicts the social personality and national character and forms a firm base for nation building.

In the Indian context the 1902 born Clerical Don of Oxford came to India and became a philanthropist. He went native travelling in the interiors of tribal area opening schools, dispensaries and tending the sick. In the Maria tribal territory of Bastar, he discovered the kingdom of the young – Ghotul – the republic of the children. And this became a landmark of tribal studies. The 750-paged book titled “The Muria and the Ghotul” was published in 1947 and translated into French, Italian. Though the Ghotul was an independent, autonomous children’s republic, where the married grown ups were not allowed. Yet, the grown ups were unable to manage any communal village affair without their intervention.

Elwin had recorded two types of Ghotul –

1. Fidelity to a single partner during Ghotul period. They married and divorce was allowed and infidelity punished.
2. Attachment between Ghotul boys and girls forbidden – and being together beyond three days was punished.

The main feature of the Ghotul atmosphere was to eliminate jealousy and possessiveness, to inculcate the sense of communal property and action – ‘everyone belonged to everyone else’. It was imperative for all the unmarried girls and boys to be members of Ghotul. The membership and initiation, probation, grading, ranking with special titles was an elaborate organized affair. The leaders appointed amongst them were vested with the authority to discipline. The members – Chelik and Motiari act as helpers during wedding, as choir group during funerals, were dancing before the clan gods. The Ghotul games and dances brought diversion and variety to the otherwise monotonous village life. Most importantly Ghotul fostered every kind of art form – from wooden combs to tobacco boxes, necklace, pendant and belts of bead and cowries. The arresting feature of the Ghotul was its carved

doors, pillar, beams making it the finest house of the village. Where the heroic ancestor Lingo Pen presided and pervaded in all Ghotul activities thereby providing them with knowledge art and beauty and protecting them against evil forces, deeds and action. The life at Ghotul began at nightfall. Where the children were regimented and disciplined through performance of routine duties and obedience to all the elders in the Ghotul. The elders choose their partners and stated a prolonged grooming session. The Murias had a very natural attitude towards sex, which was resting more on individual freedom, lack of external interference total absence of the sense of guilt, sin and sinning. They believed that when boys and girls cohabited with the sanctioned code it was one of the cherished aspect of life “hassi ki nat” i.e. “joking relationship” is the expression used by them to connote the relationship of ‘chelik’ and motiari. Here, the philanthropologist was intensely involved with the cohabitation part of the youth based on the sleeping space allotted to each member, underscoring the community service, enculturation within the social climate and personality building of the youth. However, the latter has been abundantly reflected in his writing as ‘healthy appearance, pride in themselves and their culture’, spirit of service, lastly the quality of life – they were a happy lot before marriage and also after marriage. Most importantly the strict and strong domestic morality are noteworthy amongst them. Adultery incest was rare. Prostitution was unknown, none of the motiari would give sexual favours for money. Here, I would like to narrate the instance of 1974 of Bailadila plant where they had come as labour force and served at the homes of the governmental officials. The then Commissioner has found that all the 30 girls had conceived. The commissioner had arranged mass marriage of these girls with erring officials. The fate of the girls was not heartening since, after marriage within due course of the time the officials got themselves transferred and the girls with their children were left behind, they became destitute taking up the oldest profession of our civilization. They were not acceptable in their villages since, they had married men other than their own. These girls were the victims of lust of the urban males who paid for intimate services. This debasing aspect of lovemaking – ‘lust’ was not known to them. The enculturation of tribal with respect to

physiological sexual differences of males and females and understanding of adult sexual behaviour is based on mutual love respect and enjoyment and lust does not. Whereas, the crime rates of the urban centres project a dismal picture of the urban society and psyche of the people.

Some Figures Pertaining to Crimes Against Women

- As a sample the records maintained by Delhi Police are taken to emphasize that 58 per cent of Accused of crime of rape were between the age of 18-25 years
- Most of the accused were the “drop outs” of the school
- 30% of the accused were illiterate.
- 95% accused were known to the victims

<i>Year</i>	<i>No. of cases of Rape recorded by Delhi Police</i>
2001	381
2002	403
2003	300

Profile of victims reveal that

- 60% victims were minor
- 57 victims were between the age group of 02-12 years
- 107 victims were between the age of 12-16 years
- 107 victims were between the age of 16-18 years
- 25 victims were of the age of 25 years and above.

It is a well-known fact that the Ghotul and Morungs were strictly forbidden for married men – it was considered sacrilegious for them to step in these precincts. The information on Ghotul / Morung is taken from village elders and married men. Is it not true that these people might have had become nostalgic giving vent to their imagination, while narrating their youth. It is essential to note here that admit all the freedom of the youth homes a strict code of conduct forbids them to divulge any happening, incident and daily routine of Ghotul to anybody of the village. If they pass any information they are expelled from Ghotul and that is a very severe and harsh punishment for an adolescent. In post Independent India Indian Anthropologists have tried to visually record the events inside the Ghotul at night equipped with hidden cameras, but they have failed miserably (– personal

communication). Besides, in Ghotul life there is no mention of use of any indigenous method for controlling conception. And when they witnessed absence of pregnancy they interpreted it as adolescent sterility. Overlooking, the strict etiquettes and boundaries / Lakshman Rekha which prevailed in these Morungs and Ghotuls. Besides, they never mentioned the practice of Nularim (Roy Rizvi, 1990, p.144) during courtship of Mizo youth. They totally ignored the Zawlbuk leaders’ testimony for the sexual maturity of a youth prior his courtship. Sexual escapades and love life of these youth that was romanticized and recorded – never went deeper to understand that marriage and nuptial bed had lot of sanctity and symbolism associated with it. Hence, the available literature is to be used with caution before concluding anything. More so, because exclusive male / female youth homes kept the boys and girls under strict chaperonage of widowed women or a widower, or old man, love letter writing, food offers were viewed within strict code of conduct. The concept of Sujananiki (both virya / anda) was known to them that’s why the youth had to follow strict code of conduct and divert their youthful energies towards community service.

With the Christianity and church gaining a firm footing within the tribal areas the Morung, Ghotul and Nokpantes met with a natural death. First the structure of the Ghotul collapses due to disuse and non maintenance. The church premises and church activities taking away the major part of the time. However, exceptions are also witnessed where with intervention of the gaon burra and village chief the structure is maintained for entertaining visitors from other villagers and government officials. At places it is turned into a club which primarily caters to the sports need of the youth, however, also used for organizing the youth to mobilise for certain socio-political goals. The Independence movement in India set in motion various social reformatory movement in our country and in different areas these were initiated by different socio-political agencies. The prime objective of these were to inculcate, personal hygiene, abandoning tribal belief pattern of nature worship, abstinence from alcohol and of course general cleansing of Ghotuls and dangarbasa. The effect seen in Ghotul was that of increase in masturbation and homosexuality, unknown earlier. Gambling in various forms taking over the youth gradually.

And in most recent times the outsiders non-Gonds from urban areas try, to vandalize the sanctity of the few Ghotuls left in the interior by debasing the togetherness of the youth. A safe and secure shelter where they can spend some time and discover themselves and shed all the

curiosity regarding opposite sex. All these revelations are made in stages along with the learning of various arts and craft. During the community services and annual ceremonial dancing the spirit of sharing, cooperation pervades over the general bonhomie bringing all

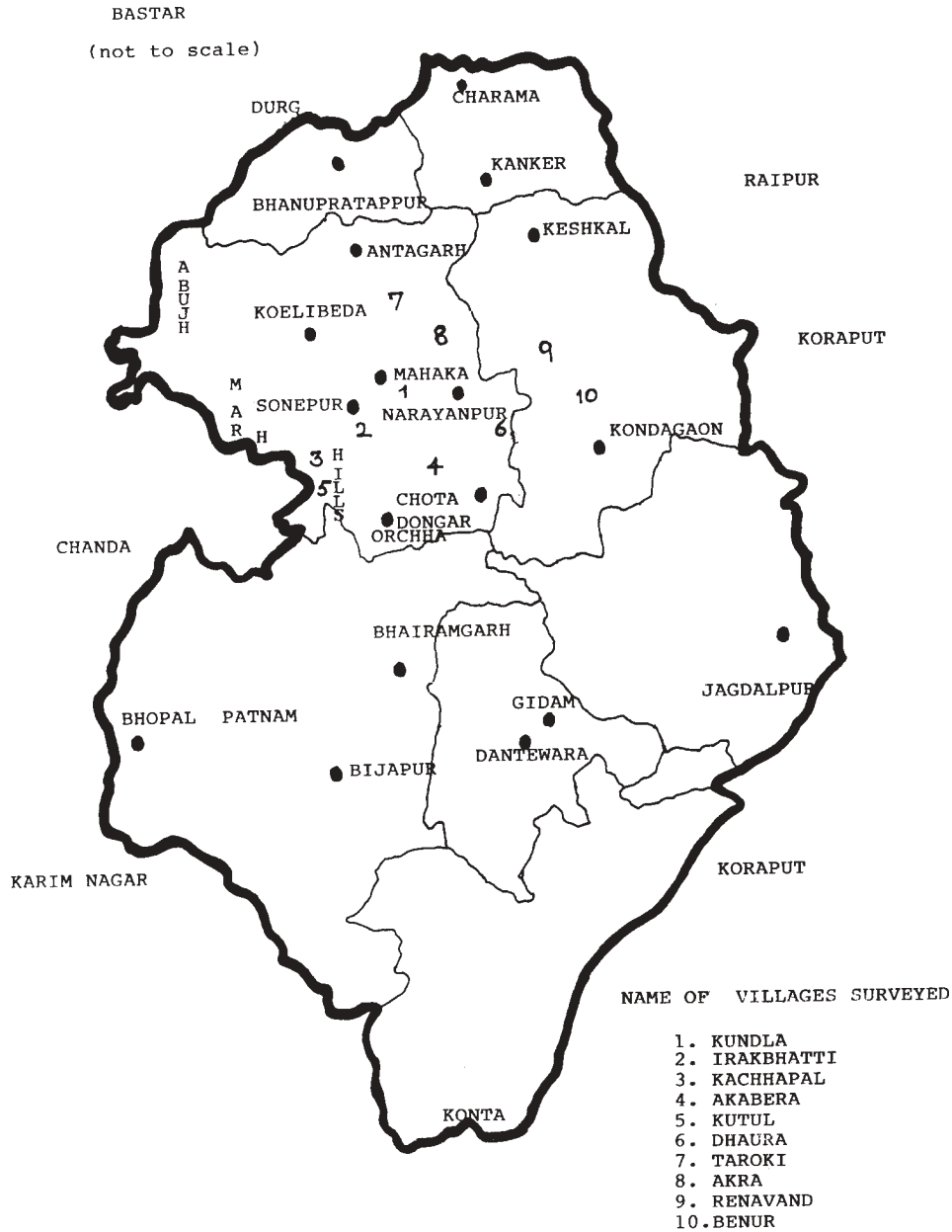


Fig. 3. Map of Bastar

of them close together to uphold with pride the ethos and spirit of their community, cherishing it unto death. I presume this must be the goal every community wants to achieve. Which is arrived at by the specialized process of learning evolved with care and precision keeping in cognisance the variety of behaviour forms which the community experiences from its interacting members.

These Ashram, Pathshala, Gurukul and Morungs have survived the ravages of time mainly because they are the institutions which strengthen and ensure the survival of healthy community. Before, transforming, rejecting them on inadequate top side information. I will request to make a sincere effort at reinterpreting and reviewing this institution removed from the beaten track.

During 1999 I had been travelling to the interiors of Bastar area and within Raipur administrative boundary I had visited and studied Mainpura, Tuhameta, Gariaband and Panduka villages. While at Jagdalpur the nearby villages of Kangoli, Dharampura, Dhurgura, Madhpal and Asna were studied too. While Parchanpal, Kondagaon were the two villages where intensive field work was carried out. While stationed at Narayanpur the villages of Kokhameta, Akabera, Kutul, Kachhapal, Irakbhathi, Kundala, Mahaka, Bijli and Gadbangal were approached to collect collateral information.

On assessing each village situation it was revealed that Anganwadi, Prathamik shala, Ashram shala and Samaj Bhawan were taking up the prime places in each village. The Ghotuls were partially maintained, abandoned or left for self-decay. Yet some villages did maintain the structure and used it frequently. The circular pattern of the Ghotul structure at places was converted to barrack like rooms obviously girls' room and boys' room with a window conjoining the two. They still sound the hakum to call upon the youth to collect in these Ghotuls for work and entertainment. But the governmental programmes under IRDP, TRISM and NGO's educational activities attract the children more to these schools. Not because of formal education but because of the mid-day meals served at these centres. The Anganwadi also provide meals to the pregnant mother which confirms presence of her children in these institutions.

On reviewing the entire setup I conclude that, the youth get acquainted with their own

physiology and to the act of sexual intercourse within the premises of the Ghotul. It should not be imagined that they practise all this, rather, through dance, songs all the adult roles are enacted or mimicked. The general belief of people regarding Ghotul as an institution to encourage premarital promiscuity is totally untrue and biased with false morality and decorum. They fail to see the immense purpose of Ghotul, where the youth power is channelized, disciplined, regimentalised and educated for taking over the duties of an adult. Instead the visitors and the people who matter, magnify the aspect of boys and girls sleeping together at night. The most impressionistic period of youth is the time when it is easy to divert the individual from the set pattern of societal norms towards a directionless future. This malady exists in several societies, where youth power is being wasted or misused for vested interest. Formal education, lack of employment opportunities and crumbling traditional values are unable to give anchorage to the youth who turn out to be menace for the family and society where as the youth dormitory system within the confines of Ghotul is able to propagate, channelize and utilize the youth power for the general benefit of the village society. However, with the introduction of the formal education system within the village confines, the school curriculum not only made the children aware of the three R'S in education. But the moral values and the standard pan Indian social norms were introduced to them through the textbooks and the non-tribal teaching staff. Along with education, they learnt to question themselves and feel ashamed of their tribal heritage and culture. The sparse clothing of their woman appeared as nakedness, the heavily tattooed body of the woman became a sign of backwardness. The colourful headgear and long hair of the unmarried youth became rustic. The songs and dance were only subscribed for sexual titillation. And Ghotul one of the prime village institutions was branded as vulgar and cheap by the urbanized moral standards. Some of the social workers with particular religious orientation preached against pre marital interaction and abstinence against drinking of alcohol. In the Gond family before their meals the entire family relaxes with leaf cups full of sulphi, toddy, landa, mandia. All the village gatherings had the tradition of the hostess of the Ghotul or Motiari serving the drink to all the invitees. The outsiders

viewed this with disapproval. The constant ridicule of their way of life did affect and eroded the tribal wisdom of long standing. Children became irregular to their Ghotul duties; parents insisted that children remain at home and study for their examination. The tribal songs, dances and tales were lost and no more repeated to the younger generation. Radio and television took its place. Cheap Hindi lyrics replaced the soul touching words and the rhythm of the tribal songs. With time and increased negligence, the structure of Ghotul fell apart and the children flocked around TV sets or Cinema halls if available. Outsider's i.e. non-resident villagers started visiting the Ghotul at night, which further deteriorated the functioning of the institution. The naxalite dictates compelled the youths to desert the Ghotul. Instead of freedom the sense of fear stalked the Ghotul youths. The parents of the school going girls stopped sending their daughters to Ghotul even at the cost of paying Ghotul dand and not being helped by Ghotul inmates when required. In Mahaka village the dysfunctional Ghotul is almost reduced to a boys' club. However, the programme of adult literacy at least is the pretext of maintaining the structure of Ghotul. After dinner the adult men and women collect here for learning to read and write. By the light of petromax or hurricane the classes are being held, a youth who is willing and has at least had primary education is given the responsibility for conducting the classes. Black board, chalk, hurricane and kerosene oil are all provided by the block office.

Introduction of formal education, government aids, tribal sub-plans and intervention by beaurocrats, social reformers and NGO's have left these people disillusioned the dand imposed by the Ghotul for not sending the children which ranged from 2-3 thousand rupees had not made any impact on families even at the cost of social boycott. Added to beaurocratic indifference and exploitative tendencies prevailing in this region, tribals are left with a sense of helplessness. Though they had been garnered to achieve the statehood which they have, the state of affairs of these people remain pathetic and doleful. The once happy, healthy and contended people have expressed their feeling in dadariya folksong lamenting over the state of affairs of Chattisgarh.

In the forest there is no animal
And in the pond no fish
Life to him is a miserable burden

There is none to console his heart
In hunger we have forgotten
The dadariya and also the karma
In poverty did we loose or dance
Such a burden life has become for us
Even in youth we don't have
Cravings of love

The youth energy is no more channelised and diverted towards constructive aspect of society. Which ranged from helping the villagers for maintaining road, defending the village boundary or helping the village destitute and arranging communal dinner and festivities. However, it is with a sad note that I mention that even after 50 years of Independence people have not realized the importance of these institutions. These places were being used for proselytization after which they were automatically abandoned on moral ground falling into disuse and decayed. Revived in Independent India for adult education and for dance practice and recitals for the visiting VIPs. Even the tribal parents feel that their children should concentrate on school syllabus rather than Ghotul. Little realizing that where they send their children for education and ahsramshalas run under tribal sub plan where the child stay in the school dormitory eats hostel (non tribal diet) food, dons tunic / salwar and recites, writes, speaks in a language not his own. Further, the things taught to him are alien to his environment. The current trend of teaching the three R's to the tribal children has been to include the culturo-ecological environment of the group in all the teaching aids. Recent trends in India and abroad have revealed the importance and essentiality of the institution of bachelors hut. IDEA – Integrated development through Environmental Awakening is a non-governmental research and developmental organization established in 1981 in Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh. This had been one of the pioneering institutions, which had started community development education programme for the stability and sustainability of the tribal traditional agro-eco-cultural knowledge systems and worldviews. In this the dormitory education training programme was conducted with the tribal youth, tribal traditional institutional functionaries and functionaries of modern developmental agencies. Through dormitories, 1200 tribal youth have been given training. Besides, village leaders, youth, farmers, women and traditional institutional functionaries in subjects as Agro-

ecological, health practices, eco-developments, watershed management, mountain and land management. In some of the interior tribal areas where opening of school and retaining the staff is a challenging proposal. The Ghotuls are abundantly being used for extending Literacy programme in the morning for the children and at night for their parents under spread of adult literacy. One of the tribal youth of the village, itself is engaged for imparting the training.

In countries outside India poverty, demoralization and rapid culture change reduces the effective parenting. Resulting in increase of domestic violence, spousal abuse, incest, drug abuse – i.e. instability of the family with negative mental health effects. These cases have been specifically studied amongst American Indian communities (Norton and Manson, 1995, Chris Tenser and Manson, 2001). In these countries the government has provision to immediately remove the children in care centres and foster homes. However, in certain instance the authorities relied upon the cultural traditions like Whipper Man a non-parental disciplinarian. These traditional system proved to be effective not only as a means of social control but also improved upon the delinquent behaviour specifically in case of Navajo (Dinges et al., 1974). The falling back on tradition helped the families not only in social survival but prepared their children to cope with the rapidly changing world - thereby giving them cultural identification, strengthening of family ties improving the self image of the child.

For the last fifty-five years in the socio-political arena, the central debate has been how to bring these marginal communities within the mainstream. The efforts had been centered around education. It is true that the basics of education not at the cost of the character; the personality and character which takes shape within the cultural milieu needs to be restored for overall development of the youth in nation building.

REFERENCES

- Barayon, R.S. 1974. *Verrier Elwin 's Kingdom of the Young*. London: Oxford.
- Gillin, John. 1948. *The Ways of Men – An Introduction to Anthropology*. New York: Appleton
- Griffith, Ralph T. S. 1963. *Vedas (cf.) Search of Roots- A Study in Ethno Genesis*. S.H.M. Rizvi and Shibani Roy. New Delhi: BRPC.
- Hallowell A.I. 1945. "Sociopsychological Aspects of Acculturation", (pp.177-200), in R.Lington (ed.), *The Science of Man the World Crisis*. New York: Columbia University.
- Dollard, John. 1950. c.f. *Six Cultures-Studies of Child Rearing*. Beatrice B. Whiting (ed.) 1963. New York: Wiley.
- Linton, Ralph. 1945. *The Cultural Background of Personality*. New York: Appleton.
- Linton, Ralph (ed.). 1945. *The Science of Man in the World Crisis*. New York: Columbia University Press. pp. 123-42.
- Mead, Margaret. 1928. *Coming of Age in Samoa*. New York: William Morrow
- Murdock, George 1945. "The common denominators of cultural Materials", (pp. 123-142), in R. Linton (ed.) *The Sexual of Man in the World Crisis*. New York.