
BAIGA AND GOND TRIBES IN CHHATTISGARH, INDIA
Comparative Study of Community Behaviors in Development Context

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CONTENTS ■

...3	About Study Area
...4	Social Milieu of Community
...6	Resources: Basis for Development
...10	Baiga vs. Gond: A Comparison of Community Behaviors
...16	About the Authors

ABOUT STUDY AREA ■

Location

Kabirdham district in Chhattisgarh is fringe district away from mainstream, though the present chief minister of state hails from Kawardha, the headquarter of the district. Northern part of the district, particularly, is poverty-stricken and hunger-prone zone, which lies in Bodla block and, to some extent, in Pandaria block. From Kawardha one needs to drive for about an hour to reach Bodla, the entrance of poverty-hit remote belts. The villages of tribes that were studied exist in Taregaon and Magarwada clusters of Bodla block. Four villages (**Batipathra, Chhindpur, Komo and Putki**) were studied. The villages are located in Maikal range of hills that is eastern part of Satpura Mountains.

Table.1: Population Details of Sample Villages

S.No.	Name of Village	Name of Panchayat	No. of Families				Total Population		
			Total	Baiga	Gond	Other	F	M	Total
1.	Putki	Boda	28	0	28	0	63	61	124
2.	Komo	Mudgusri	73	45	22	6	110	118	228
3.	Batipathra	Batipathra	104	29	65	10	390	300	690
4.	Chhindpur	Batipathra	35	25	6	4	65	92	157

Topography

Being hilly and semi-arid zone the terrain is undulating with drains, streams and rivulets flowing down from uphill areas. On the highlands, the indigenous communities, particularly Baiga and Gond, have made lands for settlement and cultivation. Forests have become sparse, especially, in the areas where habitations have swallowed. The drainage of the area is in the shape that less and less water is stored inbound; majority of water runs off down into drains and streams. The agriculture mostly is rainfed with little irrigation avenues. Forests are also not so rich to support livelihoods.

Accessibility and Infrastructure

This tract of remotest villages has got road from Bodla to Daldali mines just for last 2 years. Means of public transport is the mini bus that plies few rounds in a day from Kawardha to Taregaon. Taregaon is roadside village. To access the insidious villages only katcha roads and tracks are there with no facility of transport. The villagers access local markets or basic amenities (available in Bodla) by cycle or bullock cart. Very few families have motorcycles.

In the name of infrastructure, there is almost nothing except electricity with erratic supply. The villages 2-3 km inside the Bodla-Taregaon road do not have even the electricity. One cannot dream for telephonic connectivity. No landline, no mobile network. If electricity is off, the telephone exchange of Bodla also fails. So in case of emergency the public transport is only the mean of communication. People usually transfer their urgent messages through bus driver and conductor. As far as health facilities are concerned, there is hardly any dispensary before Bodla. Yet few private health practitioners (none is degree holder) are sitting in Taregaon and few other villages on roadside. People face extreme difficulties in accessing treatment of illnesses. Elementary education, however, has satisfactory infrastructure at village level. About 2-3 years ago, there were some villages where no school facility existed, but now such villages also have got the arrangement of education.

SOCIAL MILIEU OF COMMUNITY ■

Settlement History in Relation to Microeconomics

In the study area, the settlement of human habitations is not more than 300 years old. Higher the altitude of villages, the newer the settlements. Villages in both Taregaon cluster as well as Magarwada cluster are mostly about 100-200 years old, and have been still evolving.

Batipathra hamlet in **Batipathra** village grew up from 3 families: of Tehari Dhruve and his 2 sons-in-law namely Pakha and Aghnu. They all migrated from Taregaon. It was the time when most of people had to nomad; but seeing the Haap river in vicinity and closeness to Mahidabra village (where Tehari had his relatives) the families settled and cleared forest to make lands. Gond families multiplied and colonized the village. Baiga families arrived into the village quite late in around 1952. Baiga who came earlier were allowed to settle within the boundary of Batipathra; but who came later had to settle on margins or they formed new hamlet amid forests.

For, the Gond tribe is enterprising and is oriented towards agrarian culture creted lands for cultivation. Baiga also have equivalent size of lands, or, sometimes, more than Gonds; but lands of Gonds are more intensively worked and productive, whereas Baiga have not put in hard labor to make lands productive.

If we look at the profile of Batipathra hamlets, some revealing facts come onto surface. Gonds inhabit in 2 hamlets out of 6; and only these two hamlets lie on revenue lands, while rest 4 hamlets are settled on forestlands. Batipathra and Bajaritola, which are co-inhabited by Gonds, also settled on forestlands; but the Gonds got lands regularized into revenue lands. It shows that Gonds have become relatively mainstreamed and influential in terms of resource/power acquisition. Sailutola, Bakchhapar and Padiadharan hamlets are exclusively inhabited by Baiga, which are still in encroachment status.

Adjacent to Batipathra, **Chhindpur** was colonized by Baiga tribe. Living in the deep forests sometimes, the Baiga concentrated on this fringe of jungle. Due to nomadic and solitary behavior of Baiga tribes many families initially constructed hutments, but they left. Over a period of about 15-25 years, 30 families have finally stayed in Chhindpur. Notwithstanding the tendency to construct solitary houses at distance from one another, the Baiga of this village have constructed houses in queues both sides of village's central road.

Baiga also cleared the forests to make lands. They have plenty of lands, but ever remained afraid of foresters. Of late, the Gramodaya Kendra, an NGO based in Kawardha, succeeded to weed out their fear. Means of cultivation, inputs necessary for better farming and skills to produce more are absent with Baiga community in Chhindpur.

Komo is peculiar village as far as the settlement history and landscape are concerned. Village had complete dense forest in which 2 families (Lamu and his father-in-law Mandhu) settled first. They struggled and cleared forests to make lands. Other Baiga families joined then and colonized the village. Sukhram Gond and Mukhram Gond arrived village very late whom Baiga actually accommodated. At the moment 44 families of Baiga reside in Komo, and their houses are scattered across large area. On the contrary, 15 families of Gond and 5 families of Yadav reside in colony. Most of Baiga families came to village after being displaced from mines. Recently, 7 families have settled in the village after having been displaced from Daldali bauxite mine.

As a result of concerted constant efforts of all communities of village, 34 families of village have got land titles, and the village recently in 2005 converted into revenue village from forest village. Despite the fact that Gond arrived in Komo after Baiga, and Baiga shared their lands with them, today Gond overtook Baiga in terms of resource acquisition and overall development.

Gond community in **Putki** village was observed in advanced phase of evolution vis-à-vis Gonds of other two villages i.e. Batipathra and Komo. They have developed relatively and reaching closer to caste community in anthropological evolution.

Summarily, the human conditions in different villages reflect that the inhabitant communities are in varied stages of anthropological, social and economic evolution depending on the temporal, spatial, ethological and environmental opportunities.

Social Composition and Power Balance

Feudalism is in evolution phase in the area. However, the outsiders continued to exploit, mostly economically, the poor. On virgin lands of this northern part of Kabirdham district Gond tribes first started cultivation about 300 years ago. Hence they settled wherever they found suitable landscapes. There are some villages, however, where Baiga tribes settled first followed by Gond. One such village is Komo. Other than tribes, several non-tribal communities also reached to settle in jungles; they are Yadav, Kurmi and Sahu.

Since Gond are first settlers of native lands and they carried forward the agrarian practices, they emerged as having bigger share of resources and power. Gonds are locally known as *kisaan* (farmer) by virtue of their evolution as principal cultivators. Baiga, on the other hand, have socially dominated by all coexisting communities. Even when they are pioneer settlers in some villages they have accepted their subjugation and dominance of others. Unlike plains of Chhattisgarh and many of highlands, the non-tribes do not overpower the tribes in this area barring Baiga. Non-tribes e.g. Yadav, Kurmi, Sahu or else live under the dominance of Gond. So Gonds are most powerful in the area followed by non-tribal communities with the Baiga on bottom line.

Baiga community is the vulnerable social group. Historically the Baiga were the nomadic slash and burn cultivators and hunter-gatherers. As a consequence of compulsion to leave jungles and to sedentarise to practice agriculture, they began learning the farming for only about 10-25 years. Baiga thus lack means and resources, skills, attitude, knowledge and support to practice agriculture and produce food. Hunger, malnutrition, illnesses and helplessness make them further vulnerable and weak killing their ability to negotiate and participate in development process. In general, the Gond community does not like Baiga and perpetuates keeping them excluded.

Looking at the villages studied, the Gonds are dominant community in both the villages (Komo and Batipathra) where Gond and Baiga live together. Chhindpur and Putki villages are exclusively inhabited by Baiga and Gond, respectively. Batipathra is village that has 6 hamlets wherein Baiga and Gond co-inhabit, as well as Baiga live in isolation. Here Gond have given space to Baiga to develop and come forward.

RESOURCES: BASIS FOR DEVELOPMENT ■

The field observations and transacts reveal that the land is prime base of production and livelihoods augmentation. Apart from land, there are some other resources on which the survival economy is based, and they are:

Resource Base for Food Production and Livelihoods

1. Cultivable Lands and Agriculture
2. Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFPs)
3. Livestock
4. Wage Labor

Resource Base for Social and Political Change

1. Women Associations at Micro Level
2. Panchayati Raj Institutions
3. Baiga Raj Panchayats

People's Access to Resources

Access to Land and Agriculture

It is well evident that the first settlers — the Gond or Baiga tribes — had cleared the dense forests to make lands. Baiga tribes, however, are still busy in making lands. It is commonly observed that there is no dearth of landholding in the villages. But due to lack of inputs the agriculture is poor in the area.

Moreover, there is serious concern in relation to the access to land. It is immaterial how much land the people hold, it is rather significant how much land the family has got the legal title of. If we look at this essentiality, Gonds and non-tribes have got legal titles of lands they hold. It has happened because of several factors. Baiga lagged behind in getting titles. Baiga in rarely any village (e.g. Komo) have got land titles, although they have plenty of land. Reasons of this are:

- a. Baiga are relatively new settlers and have less stake as well as interest in lands. Late recently, they have started realizing the importance of land in their survival, and hence trying to get legal titles on lands.
- b. Baiga since were nomads and now changing lifestyle slowly, many a time either give up lands and migrate to other places, or mortgage it to others. Sometimes they sell their lands.
- c. Baiga usually make lands from forests; so they think it can be made anywhere amid jungles and anytime. So they don't want to indulge in harassing procedure of getting titles. They avoid struggling for their entitlements.
- d. Baiga are not politically so empowered that they can negotiate with state authorities or can fight for land rights.

As far as agriculture is concerned, again the Gond community is locally known as *kisaan* (farmer), which means they know farming and practice comparatively improved agriculture. General observations also reveal that Gond do better agriculture as they are doing it for centuries; they possess more and productive lands with legal titles. On the other hand, their counterpart Baiga do agriculture but they are in learning phase of farming. Moreover, they also collect few NTFP materials along with wage labor on-farm. Baiga despite having enough land prefer working as wage

labor on others' lands. It reflects that they avoid the risks involved in farming in own lands. As the lands of Baiga often remain fallow or unworked, hence are less fertile, less productive.

Thus, the Gond community is most progressive and in general doesn't want to see Baiga be developed. But against this common observation, Gond of Batipathra have supported Baiga of Batipathra hamlet to develop. Gonds of Batipathra have invested quite much resource in improving agriculture. Epidemic of a weed, *Argemone* sp., in the farm fields is the indicator of their progressiveness in agriculture. With external seeds, the seeds of weeds invaded their field. Similarly, *Cuscutta* sp., has covered much of the crop areas and vegetation. It was actually imported from outside. Both the weeds are not endemic to the area. Gonds also have vegetational fencing surrounding their lands, while Baiga do not have such practices. Baiga of Komo have, to an extent, tried to improvise the farming practices. They also attempted to obtain titles over the cultivated lands. With the support of Gramodaya Kendra they have got titles over the lands from Revenue Department. Baiga mostly come in the influence of revenue workers or forest guards and continue to be exploited in the hope that they will get entitlement or not simply be removed from land. Effect of constant efforts of Gramodaya Kendra on the attitudes of Baiga towards lands is something commendable. Baiga of Chhindpur, for example, have begun realizing that the land is limited and cannot be created further even if jungles surround them. And affirmation to existing lands is essential; otherwise they may lose it also. They were afraid of the threats of foresters. Now they have developed resilience to face them, and thus deny leaving their lands in any condition. They have this year invested labor in farm bunding, while previously they preferred working as farm labor on wage basis. They realize what better would have happened once they had put efforts in their own lands instead of working on others' lands.

Demarcation of lands has not yet taken place in the area. People desperately need it. Demarcation can benefit the people in number of ways; simultaneously, it may also cause loss to those who cultivate lands in excess to actual size. Excess land is the encroachment. With the facilitation of Gramodaya Kendra the farmers of Komo and other adjacent villages approached Governor of Chhattisgarh, who ordered to do the demarcation in stipulated time. Revenue officials managed emergency order of Governor in the way that demarcation has become next to impossible now.

In accessing the better agriculture and satisfactory productions, the means and inputs necessary for farming played quite significant role. Gond community particularly has generated assets for cultivation, and thus capitalized over it. These assets include bullocks to plough, agriculture implements, seed, fertilizers and irrigation source. Gonds have succeeded in improving their agriculture only because they have got the means, assets and resources to invest in farming. Baiga farmers from Komo highlighted their inability to invest in agriculture. Baiga farmers in general lack bullocks, seeds and other inputs. A Baiga has to wait for the availability of bullocks, seed, water, etc. When they require it, they don't get it. Resulting delay in sowing, watering, weeding, and so on lowers down the yield. If a Baiga hires one pair of bullocks from other farmer, he works in exchange for 5 days on farmer's fields. If some Baiga buys bullocks, and it dies unluckily; the family comes under debt. For instance, Chhotan Baiga of Komo bought 3 bullocks two years ago for Rs. 8000, but all three bullocks died of epidemic. He bought bullocks after selling 6 quintals of mahua and 2 quintals of pigeon pea. Similarly, Dhansingh Baiga of Komo possesses 5-7 acres of land. He bought a pair of bullocks for Rs. 5000 about a year ago. One of the bullocks died. So he has to hire a bullock to till the field. Likewise, Baiga people incur the losses in terms of seed sowing also. At times when Gonds keep a fraction of crop as seed to sow next year, the Baiga do not keep seeds because they eat away entire stock of foodgrains in lean season. So they borrow the seeds from Gonds, and on crop harvest they refund 1½ time grain. While arranging seeds the sowing gets delayed causing lower yields. Or instead of sowing 3 fields they are able to sow only 1 field. Baiga so is highly vulnerable in relation to practicing agriculture.

Situation of irrigation is universally worse as this is water deficit zone. Rainfall although is plenty, but almost entire water runs off through drains. Most of lands are rainfed and thus single crop. Some progressive and economically able Gond farmers have got pumps or the wells to fetch river water or groundwater. For a Baiga, however, it is quite difficult to create irrigation source because of his high vulnerabilities.

People's Access to NTFPs

Non-timber forest products (NTFPs) are lifeline in the areas where dense forests occur. But since the studies villages chiefly do farming to augment food and livelihood, NTFPs collection is secondary source of livelihood. Moreover, the NTFPs are not available in more number and more quantity. As the forests have fast depleted, not only the quantity available has declined but the number of NTFP items has also dwindled. At the moment several commodities are available: mahua flower, mahua fruit, char kernel, lhasa (gum of Saaja, Dhaura), aonla, etc.

All the NTFP commodities collected are sold in the same season to local traders who either approach villages or sit in weekly haat bazaars. Exploitation in the purchase of commodities is not as sheer as it is in South or North-East Chhattisgarh, but it is present.

The communities, however, lack skills of maximizing the profit margins on unit sale of a particular NTFP commodity. An intensive planning and action is required to enable the communities especially Baiga women in negotiating the prices, in adding value and in handling/ storing the material.

Livestock

Livestock is integral part of agriculture and rural economy. Be they Gond, Baiga or any non-tribe, almost every family rears animals. Gond farmers mostly have bullocks, Yadav have buffaloes. Buffaloes and cows are kept for milk, as also their male offspring act as pullers or carriers.

Animals kept for food security and income generation are goats, poultry birds and pigs. But not all families rear all or any of these. Baiga families particularly lack the necessary resources to invest in buying the mother animals for multiplication. The women, who have been organized with the intervention of Gramodaya Kendra, wish to rear animals for income generation if they are supported.

Wage Labor

Human being is biggest resource for a planned development. Like elsewhere in the rural India the human resource in northern part of Kabirdham are underutilized. More significant here is that the families who even work on-farm search wage labor outside. This is particularly true for Gond families. Baiga, however, engages in wage labor for large part of the year. Baiga families not only work as construction labor, plantation labor or rehabilitation of roads/lands but also work on farmlands of Gond people. Even if the Baiga families have lands, they prefer working on others' farmlands as wage labor.

Critical factor in wage labor realm is what forces the Baiga prefer working as wage labor on others' lands to working on their own lands. Working on own lands must give them long-term fruits, but they don't do that. As a matter of fact Baiga tribes have the world vision outside the land based household economy, and they don't see the investment in lands may happen to secure their future generations. But the concept of 'future' among Baiga is different from the concept of future among others. Now only some Baiga families have started realizing their future in land-based economy. Other factor is that some Baiga families really do not have buffer stock of food to eat during the

days they work on their own fields. Lastly, the land management is new technology for them, as they had to practice slash and burn agriculture amid the forests. Obviously, they are now bound to practice sedentarized cultivation.

Social and Political Ground

Women Groups

Women in most of the villages where Gramodaya Kendra works have potential to carry forward the change process. Women in rural society work more than men, and they are sincere and committed (as observed in Putki village). The women have dual burden. As part of integrated development project, Gramodaya Kendra has organized the women separately in the form of 'saving groups' (29 saving groups have been active). The women, who had never to sit together, now sit together on definite intervals and discuss their problems, issues and achievements. To begin economic empowerment process among themselves, they have started saving petty amounts and linking themselves with banks. Beyond savings and credit-thrift they aspire to start micro-enterprises based on the resources they have in surrounds.

Group discussion was held with the members of 3 women saving groups in Batipathra, namely: Jyoti, Kirti and Jagriti women saving groups. The women wish to do fish rearing in 3 ponds of village, organized selling of NTFPs, and cattle rearing, and to run mid-day-meal scheme in schools. They already inter-loan for their petty needs of child education and crop farming e.g. hiring bullocks on rent, tractor tilling rent, etc. Similarly, the Kalyani women saving group of Komo village wants to rear goats, pigs, local chicks, and to do ration shop, kitchen gardening, etc. These women have clear-cut vision on what can be done to improve women's situation. Women of Putki village are very progressive and they have clear mandate of their empowerment amidst gender inequity.

Thus channelizing the development process through women is highly desirable, as the women are bigger source of mainstreaming social change.

Panchayati Raj Institutions

Like other areas the northern part of Kabirdham district has gram panchayat, gram sabha and panchayat committees at village level, janpad panchayat at block level and zila panchayat at district level. Significant to note here is that Bodla block despite being tribal dominated has not been included in scheduled area under 5th Schedule of Constitution. Status of panchayati raj governance is no different in this area from other areas. However, the people of this area have shown relatively a positive response towards panchayat affairs. Best model is of Batipathra village where all panchayat representatives have been elected uncontested. The villagers have such a harmony and affinity that they disallowed anyone to contest election for any post. In a village meeting, for the post of sarpanch and panches, names were spelt, and people including women raised their hands. Names so were finalized and intimated to panchayat authorities. Following the intervention of Gramodaya Kendra, the women particularly have started attending gram sabha meetings, but they still do not speak. Gradually, women will start taking part in local governance affairs.

Pragmatically, the panchayati raj institutions are big platforms through which many changes in lives of people could be brought. These institutions have immense potential to route in the development of villages.

BAIGA vs. GOND: A COMPARISON OF COMMUNITY BEHAVIORS ■

Worldview and Attitude towards Life

Worldview of tribes is definitely different from that of non-tribes. We cannot say, whose worldview is superior and whose inferior. But essentially it varies community to community. If we see the worldview of tribal communities it is eco-centric or nature-centric. This also depends on how much a particular tribe is mainstreamed.

Gond tribes in whole Gondwana country (that includes Chhattisgarh, about half of Madhya Pradesh and parts of Maharashtra) had ruled for many centuries. The ruling Gonds are generally known as Raj Gonds. Raj Gonds had also ruled Kawardha. As the community reigned the northern part of Kabirdham district, they developed the means and sources of production i.e. agriculture lands, and mainstreamed their erstwhile worldviews. Unlike primitive tribes (e.g. Baiga) they see that in present conditions agriculture only can support their lives and their generations. So they must have to develop the farming systems and its peripheral infrastructure.

Gond being ruling class also came in contact of agrarian non-tribal communities, and learnt how to sedentarize and to cultivate lands. Like most of non-tribes, they see the accumulation of materials/assets is necessary for sustaining the production systems and hence the life. It is why they behave as if they are non-tribe agrarian community. Another factor is that they have over 3-4 centuries history of practicing agriculture and community life.

Their counterpart, the Baiga, on the other hand, have typical tribal worldview that Mother Earth's chest cannot be tilled, that there is no need of accumulation of food and material as Mother Earth will take care of their children, that Mother Earth has lots of forests for him, so and so forth. Baiga does not worry for the children, for next generation; so for whom should he accumulate the material?

Historically, the Baiga tribe is nomadic tribe who till recently was hunter-gatherer or had to practice the slash and burn agriculture. A critical fact is that Baiga prefers solitary life; he does not want to live in colony or group. He is self-centric liking privacy and unilateral control. This typical behavior of Baiga is continuing as yet, despite the fact that they have numerous compulsions to change.

For various reasons, bringing Baiga into agrarian lifestyle is tedious and Herculean task. And, moreover, the efforts of mainstreaming them or changing their nomadic lifestyle are very new i.e. half-a-century old. Communities that have learnt agriculture in 3000 years do expect from Baiga that they learn agriculture in 30 years, how is it possible? They are, if any, in primitive phase of agriculture. Hence they migrate from cultivated and worked lands and settle at other location. So they don't care for proper seed sowing, farm bunding, irrigation sources, and so on.

Development Seeking Behavior

When Gond lives in colony or group and has sense of community, the Baiga is 'individualistic' and 'self-centred'. Latter's behavior has emanated from his inherited 'solitary nomadic' behavior. Gonds cooperate one another within the community and desperately seek their development. They relatively welcome the education. For example, in Batipathra village the Gond community in the beginning of Gramodaya Kendra's intervention was resistive to girl child education. But now after constant persuasion they have been sending their girls to schools. In other villages too, like Putki, Komo, etc., Gond families have been changing their attitude towards girl child education. On the

contrary, Baiga people (except in Batipathra hamlet) do not take interest in child education. In Batipathra, the Baiga actually have assimilated the community characters of Gonds, and so their behavior has changed (or been changing). They have learnt quite from Gond in Batipathra.

Opposite the common beliefs of anthropologists and pro-tribal activists, Baiga reflect certain negative behavioral traits, such as:

- Baiga speaks lies and applies mind negatively viz. likes to destroy the fellow Baiga.
- Baiga as an individual is greedy also. He looks for how he can find the money. For little money he sells off the land also.
- Baiga tends to break the rules or impositions set by the community or group. He wants freedom. So he does not want to abide the strict norms of institutions.
- Baiga has strong individualistic vision. They do not tolerate seeing fellow Baiga families prosper.
- Leadership of Baiga is highly selfish and dictatorial.

It is but sure that once has compulsion to change his worldview and attitude, Baiga has started realizing the call of the time. They have least options now to continue nomadism and slash and burn agriculture. It means they can no more cut forests to make lands everywhere. Till the date they make lands, and later sell, mortgage or just leave it, and migrate to other location where they again repeat the same. Government has already banned such a practice. So they have no alternative but to develop the existing lands they have in possession. On the other side their population is increasing posing double challenge of survival.

Only a fraction of Baiga families are able to realize these situations. Some key people believe that means and sources for developing their agriculture, for accessing education, for getting health services, and for benefiting from development schemes are necessary, but more essential is the “attitude towards development” that in general looks absent in Baiga community. For example, both Baiga and Gond have lands. Gonds have arranged bullocks, seed, plough, irrigation, fertilizers, cart, etc. to develop farming, which Baiga could not do. Where the Gonds have brought these things from? Why could Baiga not arrange all necessary means and sources? It is nothing but the positive attitude and willingness to develop the agriculture, which made Gonds superior.

Take an example of ‘gram kosh’ (village fund) which Gramodaya Kendra introduced in villages. The villagers if contribute Rs. 100 each family, Gramodaya Kendra also contributes equal amount. Gram kosh is for development of agriculture, education or alike. If any family seeks loan from it, the villagers decide and give loan after assessment. In Gond villages or where Gonds are in majority, these ‘gram kosh’ generated sufficient amount of money and the families got benefits of community fund. But in Baiga villages it could not work. Wherever it grew in size, the powerful Baiga family grabbed the ‘gram kosh’ and utilized for himself. In Pachrahi village, for instance, the Baiga people asked Gramodaya Kendra to support their gram kosh extra, as they wanted to give loan to particular family for buying an engine pump. They had about Rs. 9000 in ‘gram kosh’ fund, which was insufficient. So they sought extra contribution from Gramodaya Kendra, which broke the norm to support the initiative of Baiga (as Baiga rarely take such initiative at their own). Later, the family took loan and bought pump. Engine pump has done enough irrigation. The family has not only developed own lands but also earned money out of selling the waters. But the family denied repaying the loan amount. Even the family stopped attending village meetings. This story is sufficient to establish ‘individualistic’ and ‘selfish’ attitude of Baiga people. Positive thing in this story is that the purpose of ‘gram kosh’ to develop families is relatively fulfilled, as at least some families succeeded in developing their lands. The objective, however, of making the action a ‘collective action’ is defeated.

It was observed that less and less Baiga participate in the group discussions or just in village affairs. If it is the meeting for discussing the development of village in general, they avoid participating. In Batipathra village, only 10-12 Baiga men and women participated. Moreover, they belonged to Batipathra hamlet only, who are quite different from other Baiga in the behavior. Almost none participated from Sailutola, Bakchhapar and Padiadharan hamlets. Similarly, after calling twice, only 3 persons assembled in Komo in about 2 hours. Baiga of Komo reported that many people ask the fellow Baiga to attend meeting and report them back the outcome of meeting. Non-Baiga people usually complain that if Baiga comes to meeting he comes in drunkard condition, when he neither can understand anything nor let others hear properly. Reasons for this non-cooperating behavior of Baiga may be either of the following:

- Baiga is tired of attending meetings, which the government workers call in the village frequently.
- Baiga is apprehensive that nothing will happen in the meeting, which is according to his needs or thinking.
- Baiga does not need at all the model of development that is being discussed in meetings. He requires something different, or he needs nothing at all.
- In the meetings, the Baiga is not given due respect, as he sits in the last queue, or sits on ground considering himself the creature of bottomline. Sometimes, government people and outsiders misbehave with him.
- Feeling excluded and disgruntled (as mainstream society presses him to feel like that), he escapes the public appearance.
- Baiga does not like to be disturbed, as he wants isolated and solitary life.

Whatever it is, it is but difficult to interpret the behavior of Baiga exactly. Nothing can be universalized for Baiga people. Development seeking behavior of Baiga is typical and mixed.

When one can hear Baiga saying, “hum toa dongar ke aadmi hain, hum nahin sudhrenge” (we are the people of hills, we wont change), Gramodaya Kendra has reverse experiences also. In Chhindpur village, the Baiga families have made houses in line on both sides of central path. Some families have constructed farm bunds this year after long persuasion and seeing the same in adjacent Batipathra village.

Likewise, the Baiga families of Chhindpur after long have little realized the importance of child education. So some families have been sending their children to alternative school recently started in the village. Previously, several children of Chhindpur had to go to Gudli where they were beaten by Gond children. The lady teacher also had apathy towards Baiga children. She not only threatened them often but also once beaten them by slipper. So after experiencing hostile environment of school the Baiga children tended to pass time in the way. They neither had to stay at home nor they had to go to school. Sarpanch of Gudli and Baiga parents of Chhindpur questioned the lady teacher. Anyway, Baiga of Chhindpur with the assistance of Gramodaya Kendra succeeded in getting school right in their village. In the beginning 27 children enrolled, now 8-9 pupils are regular. Some children are engaged in works like animal herding, tending the siblings. Many other children live free, as they want freedom. To see overall picture, the Baiga of Chhindpur are very slowly changing their attitude. On the day of visiting them for this study, none of them was in drunkard condition. Same was the situation in Batipathra and Komo.

Some individuals among Baiga are certainly different from the mass. Dukal Singh, panch, of Chhindpur village has got the hairs cut. He said that non-Baiga people easily identify the Baiga due to

long hairs, and behave with him discriminately, harassingly. Dukal Singh removed such identity of Baiga that creates negative image. He is quite progressive. He also performs vermi-compost on-farm.

Baiga have also started, though lately, realizing the needs of the family. They now understand that more number of children in family cause unavoidable burden on the expenses of the family. The rising population is one of the anxieties Baiga has today. In 1970s, the government banned the vasectomy or tubectomy among the Baiga community after the scientific findings that population of Baiga was declining. Now once the population of Baiga on average is increasing with the increased average size of families the rule made by government did not change ever since. Baiga of numerous villages including Batipathra wish to opt family planning measures to control the population, the government officials and health workers do not support their aspiration. They are actually afraid of any legal action that can happen against them. What will happen of this aspiration, the Baiga is not sure; but this is sure that Baiga have inclination to change, to develop.

Baiga panch of Batipathra suggested in meeting that the Baiga of his village should form a fund in order to support the needs of schoolchildren of clothes, books, etc. The poorest may seek help from this fund. Youth group can operate this fund and generate money for it from among community members. This is another example of Baiga's positive thinking and imagination, but why is this restricted to Batipathra?

In general, the behavior of majority of Baiga people is still passive to the development. Factors have been discussed several times. Amusingly, if it comes to get legal title (*patta*) on land, Baiga generally readies to bribe, or simply seen active. Why is it so? Some Baiga families have got legal titles also, but they after receiving it either mortgaged/ sold the land or want to do so. Baiga have come to know that only after getting legal title they can sell land to Gonds and can get good prices. It reflects that they seek legal titles not for getting ownership over the lands and cultivate it peacefully, but they like to make money out of it. Many Baiga families have done so, and then migrated to other place and made new lands.

Unlike Baiga, the Gonds have systematic thinking. They not only work hard but also continuously think how they can grow and prosper. Gonds and Yadav of Batipathra village in order to improve and diversify their agriculture want to have ensured irrigation. They suggested to build checkdam on stream flowing close to village, or to construct lift irrigation system along the bank of river. They have finely observed the impact of the checkdam built in Chhui village. After the checkdam, the water has started flowing in the stream even in summer, which was simply a dream otherwise. Gond took notice of this phenomenon, whereas their counterpart Baiga did not.

On the front of social empowerment, the Gond have also made progress vis-à-vis Baiga. It is nothing but strange that Gonds of Batipathra have been supporting and inducing their women to come forward. Normally, it is males who suppress the women not to take part in development process. Women of Batipathra have been supported tremendously by the males, on the contrary.

In Komo village, Gond farmers are vocal to speak about the benefits and importance of farm bunding, compost making, etc. The farmers have constructed bunds on their lands to check rainwater, increase moisture content, and arrest soil erosion. They had to throw the dung scatteredly; now they make compost out of it following the intervention of Gramodaya Kendra. On the other side, the Baiga have not done the same. Farmers like Mr. Jagat suggested few interventions to further develop the agriculture. He suggested kitchen gardening and farm forestry (with aonla and mango). Identically, the women also suggested organized selling of mahua and other NTFPs. The women showed their desire to undertake goatry and piggery. "Farm bunding is effective only when all fields are bunded. If some farmers will do and some will not, the heavy

runoff may abandon the constructed bunds also”. Such a knowledge the Gonds of Komo have right now. Baiga do not think so deeply about the farming systems. Gond farmers of Komo dream the wells on their fields after they raise groundwater level through farm bunding and other water conservation measures.

As has already been discussed several times, the Baiga of Batipathra village are exception.

There are fewer gaps in health seeking behaviors of Gond community and Baiga community. Both the communities equally complain for absence of health facilities, but none of them make efforts to hold the health workers accountable or to question their irregular visitations. The MPHWS or ANM actually do not serve the populations regularly and intensively. They are casual in health service delivery. In common diseases like malaria or diarrhea, one has to visit private practitioner in Taregaon. In case of emergency, they go to Bodla or Kawardha. But they do not act to make health services reach their doorstep efficiently. Women’s reproductive health always remains in worse condition. Many women have died during childbirth due to lack of proper support and medication.

Community Institutions and Leadership

Development of society in villages depends on the community institutions. Stronger and democratic the community institutions are the greater the opportunities one community gets to develop. And leadership is the axis of community institution.

Gond community in the area has better-shaped institutions, though informal and invisible. Every Gond village has a ‘patel’ who not only collects revenue but also acts as chieftain of entire community in village. The clans of Gond also have clan leader called as ‘sermia’, who delivers mainly the religious, spiritual and social functions. Patel on the other hand vests judicial powers also. Both patel as well as sermia are inherited posts. Community leaders of Gond generally have superior character and lead the community in progressive direction. For example, Gond leader of Batipathra, Mr. Bale Singh Pandram, who is also the patel, encourages and supported the girl child education. Community institutions of Gonds led by relatively committed leaders allow the innovations diffuse fast in the benefit of all. These leaders also filter the negativities. For instance, the patel of Batipathra was once misguided by deputy ranger against Gramodaya Kendra. But he was patient enough to observe the deeds of Gramodaya Kendra and thus he let the social good prevail. As a result, Batipathra is model of development action and social change.

Except the Baiga of Batipathra, Baiga in general do not have attitude of behaving in community. They mostly reflect individualistic behavior. They don’t like collectivity. What is serious with Baiga is that their leaders are rarely supportive and positive. They are rather dictators. They prohibit any good idea to percolate in Baiga community. Such bad leaders are found in Damgarh, Taitirni, Dhauratola, Thakurtola, Gudli, etc. Mr. Durga of Gudli, Maniram of Junpani, Mahavir of Chhindpur, Daroga of Komo and Santu of Pachrahi are infamous for their dictatorship.

Baiga in Komo village are divided into two groups, both led by two brothers. One by Chaitu, and another by Chhotan. If Chhotan group calls meeting the other group affiliates do not attend, and vice versa. The Baiga people of Komo told that none comes even when it is a community meeting. People even do not gather in marriage of someone. Yes, they gather only when someone dies. But the same Baiga in adjacent village, Mudghusri, gather and participate in meetings. All it shows that Komo has divisive politics within that keeps other half excluded. This is a case of leadership crisis in the village.

Conclusively, before forming any institution among Baiga it is a challenge to create community feelings among them. As long as they don't develop "affinity" in the learnt behavior towards the fellow Baiga, they cannot come together to form institution. If any institution is imposed on them, it cannot work. However, there is no set formula to develop 'affinity' among Baiga families.

Participation in Political Affairs

Micro-politics of village determines various dimensions of socio-economic environment. This micro-politics becomes hyperactive when it comes to determine electoral politics or the benefit sharing. And this micro-politics could be inter-community or intra-community. The community that is politically inactive always remains marginalized or excluded. Be it the matter of participation in village panchayat or the involvement in party politics, whosoever attains the power to negotiate actually accesses or catches hold the resources in large quantity. Those who cannot bargain lose their share in the incoming or existing resources. Where the power to negotiate or bargain comes from? One source of attaining power is "participating in micro-politics", which means taking part in panchayat affairs, in resource management, in development discussions, in social affairs. At least there should be a representation of the person who wants share in the benefits accrued or to be accrued from the political process.

In above conceptual background, if we see Baiga community it is found absent almost on each platform. Due to constitutional privileges and special status even among tribes, government has given reservation/ emphasis for Baiga to participate in governance institutions. Despite all favorable legal environments, they don't participate desirably. Reasons behind this are two: one, Baiga do not have adequate willingness to participate the governance at village level or above; second, the non-Baiga communities and the government functionaries deliberately exclude them. Actually, both the reasons are true for this area.

Visibly, the Gond dominates and overpowers the panchayat meetings and decision processes. Gond also derives the power from external sources. Baiga seems to be powerless even if he takes part in meetings. It is the fact that Gonds have kept the Baiga out of the panchayat domain even when Baiga represent the panchayat institutions. What lies in the roots is that Gonds don't want Baiga to live even in the vicinity. Gond perceives Baiga as encroachment on their living space, rights and privileges. This thinking among Gonds has germinated due to many factors. Actually, government has special project for Baiga called as 'Baiga Vikas Pradhikaran' (Baiga Development Authority), which provided plenty of assets to Baiga. Though the exercises of government have all gone futile, the Gonds have developed an "antipathy" syndrome.

Since Gonds have been united and powerful, the Baiga surrender in front of them. Had the Baiga been equally powerful, it would have been a violent conflict between the two communities. So the rift between them is exploded in the form of exclusion of Baiga from all collective affairs.

Baiga in general also do avoid contesting elections of panch or sarpanch. Those who have been elected as panch, mostly do not attend the panchayat meetings. If they attend any they don't voice, let alone they would advocate the interests of people.

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