

Tribal Women in Prison : A Case Study of Bhopal Central Jail

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Crime is time, space, group and culture specific. Most theories on crime deal with non-tribal societies, there are few theories to explain crime in tribal setting specifically. Tribes specially face the dilemma of two worlds, that of tradition and the other of modern legal system and often overlooks the latter. Gond for example considers himself as an executioner rather than a murderer. According to a practice in a certain tribe, an accused rapist is taken to the hilltop by his fellow men in a procession and there he is put in a gunny bag whose mouth is tightly secured and the accused is rolled down the slope. The accused often dies due to this punishment, but if he survives he is accepted back by his community and justice is accepted as having prevailed. Another such example can be drawn from a cited case. Online edition of India's National Newspaper, Friday, February 16, 2001, reports from New Delhi The Supreme Court has affirmed a Delhi High Court judgment that in the absence of a notification in terms of sub-section (2) of Section 2 of the Hindu Marriage Act 1955, no case for prosecution of a husband - a tribal (Santhal) - for bigamy under Section 494 of the Indian Penal Code was made out by the appellant-wife, also a tribal (Oraon), because "the second marriage solemnized by him cannot be termed void either under the 1955 Act or any alleged custom having the force of law".

Clearly the interpretation of crime is group and culture specific and little is available about tribal conception of crime in sociological theories although some anthropological studies do carry descriptions of law and order conception among tribal societies, which are more in light of cultural studies rather than as interpretation of crime, law and order. However since culture defines our social responses no treatment of crime can be de-linked from its socio-cultural context. They are studies and records of crime committed by tribes, which however do not tend to explain crime in tribal society or crime committed by tribe's men.

Besides as statistics on crime along caste/ religious/ ethnic group lines are not available to allow any such generalized interpretation. Old British records for example showed certain tribes as criminal tribes. G.O.I. under the British rule passed an enactment in 1871 under which various tribes committing criminal activities were categorized as criminal tribes and organized tribal criminality was recognized as a fact. Although, this enactment was repealed in 1952, when these

tribes were denotified by the government of independent India. Noticing that criminal tribes too in matters relating to other than crime, are like other tribes

Merton (1967) tended to view criminal behavior among tribes as deviance and as the result of the blocking of the structural means to achieve the cultural goals. For Haikerwal:(1934), the criminal behavior is the result of cultural socialization in the family and tribe. The fact that there were tribal panchayats who facilitated and assisted members in committing crime by maintaining a scheme of social security. Kapadia; (1952) shows the cultural acceptance and interpretation of crime. Bruce; (1968) has shown how thugs assumes “thuggee” culture in the garb of religion. Witch hunting and burning too has been explained along power and patriarchal theory. Clearly the line between crimes, culture, systemic response to social needs is a very thin one. It is also claimed that a lot of tribal, specially women are booked for petty crimes relating to the forests, which is better understood in light of the traditional system vs. the modern system of forest governance. However there is no sociological theory which explains crime as experienced by some tribal and other marginalized people, who live some part of their lives between two or more cultures or civilizations.

Similarly crime committed by women has not received much attention until recently; most theoretical formulations tend to see women criminals as an aberration, researchers thus tend to treat women criminals without any gendered theoretical formulations. Crimes committed by tribal women have received even lesser attention from sociologist. Crime has been seen to bring out the complexities of multicultural, diverse and sometimes contradictory social order as much as it exposes the suppressed frustrations of social order itself. A view supported notably in Durkheim's study of social control and anomie. Crime is seen as a manifestation of structural and cultural strains. Other theories were proposed by Cohen, Merton, Sutherland, Cavanis and Johnson, etc. which show poverty, patriarchy, gender issues, class, caste, religion, etc. to be causative factors for explaining crime. Anju and P.K. Bajpai ; (2000) feel that shift in social values and cultural ethos have increased the complexities of everyday life and opened up large and unknown avenues for anti social behavior . Biological/ Psychological view was taken by Lombroso;(1876), Pollak; (1950), Reckless(1955), Cowie and Slater; (1980) , Freud ;(1930), Klein;(1973), etc. sociological theories view it along equality theories, economic theories, role theory, social disorganization theory and opportunity theory , . Anju and P.K. Bajpai (2000). Golodmink (1980) has shown double burden of work and household responsibilities, official indifference to women's needs, family breakdown, alcoholism etc. as reasons for crime. Also Shelly;(1982), Jasinska;(1982). Theories based on women's emancipation and increased involvement in crime , Adler;(1975), Denning;(1977), have however come under a lot of criticism Simon;(1957), Smart;(1977), Steffensmier;(1978), Leonard;(1982). Increasing role of women in crime has been questioned and analyzed as may be implying the increased independence of women , wider social role as compared to yester years, increased assertion of rights, patriarchy, cultural and social change and strains, also as system bias against weaker section, etc. Wider validation and acceptance of these theories are yet to come.

The following is the case study of a Gond women inmate in Bhopal central jail . It typically brings out the social reality of a tribal women who is pulled into a modern world with alien social

institutions that she does not understand, nor is equipped to survive in. Her story is the story of clash of civilizations and her inability to deal with it. It is about change and its cost to individual life. It explores the reasons that make a simple tribal woman party to crime. Her trial and sentenced to jail and experience of life in jail raise social issues. Her situation in a sense speaks of a wider group and its interface with mainstream society and social processes. It shows how formal systems respond to marginalized and weaker sections of the population. What prospects is she likely to face on release. Naturally, some of the issues touched are relevant more to jails as a social system but nonetheless they also reflect on how it is experienced by marginalized people and specially women as a group and in that, it reiterates that institutions are very insensitive to the weaker sections.

Case study

Jeta Bai, not her true name, is 56 years old, she herself doesn't know. Although she was wearing jail clothes, a coarse lemon yellow sari with a thin blue border, dry and thin hair about shoulder length and plaited as most others with her, yet her tribal identity was clear from the tattoos on her face arms and legs and also in her poise. She had many lines on her face, which showed the hardships she had faced and a detached expression. She seemed to talk frankly and comfortably in Hindi, but again in a very detached and spiritless manner. She has been in jail for about 8 years, first in Hoshangabad then she was shifted to Bhopal central Jail. She has been tried and convicted for murder under section 302 and 304 of the Indian penal code. The trial took about five years. The victim was also Gond tribal, Mangu Lal, 28 yrs. not his real name, he was Jeta Bai's tenant and refused to vacate her room neither had he paid the rent for almost over two years. This was often a cause for bickering between the two. Besides Jeta Bai's second husband often joined his tenant in his waywardness in the lure of free liquor. This along with economic hardship was a cause of constant bickering between Jeta Bai and her tenant. In a drunken state one night Mangu Lal went to Jeta Bai's portion to ask her husband to join him for a drink. Mangu had bought a bottle of country made liquor, and as usual offered to share it with Jeta Bai's husband with whom he enjoyed some kind of compatriot ship. Both the tenant and Jeta Bai's husband were already drunk and went on to add to that. At around eleven pm her husband came to Jeta Bai demanding for food for himself and Mangu, which was refused by an angry Jeta Bai. When he proceeded to help himself there ensued a struggle between the two of them, a push from Jeta Bai landed the drunken Mangu on the axe lying on the floor. Taking it up and threatening to kill Jeta Bai he lunged forward only to be killed by a provoked Jeta Bai. Seeing this her husband fled out screaming murder, but was controlled by Jeta Bai's brother who lived next door and came to see what the trouble was about. Jeta Bai's brother tried to help her clean the place and between them they stuffed the body in a gunny bag and set out in a hired auto to throw the body in Narmada river. They were intercepted in the toll naka by police and taken into custody.

Jeta Bai remained in the lockup for two days when she was presented before a magistrate and sent into remand. The two days in lockup. She could recollect that she didn't know what was happening and only sat around indefinitely waiting and expecting her husband and son to come and take her out. Neither came. Her brother's wife's family helped her brother. As she did not have a

lawyer, she was represented by the lawyer provided by the government, whose name she doesn't know. She met him once when she was told some of the proceedings to be followed. All other communication came via the jail warden and guards. Other inmates also shared general information about court and jail procedures. According to records she alone was convicted for life for murder by sudden enragement. Her brother was left with three years sentence although he had actually served a little more, due to delay in records according to Jeta bai (information could not be crossed checked). She was once visited by her son when sent to jail as under trial, and her brother met her on release before going back, ever since no one from her family has visited her. She does not expect them too either, for she understands their economic and social limitation. Her second husband mean while remarried and has nothing to do with her anymore though he continued to stay in the same house.

According to the warden and others Jeta Bai is very hardworking, quite and keeps to her self. She has one friend, another tribal women from Betul with whom she talks and shares work. She is neat and clean by habit, does her work and never gets into any kind of quarrel with anybody. Strangely she doesn't seem to pray or follow any other religious ritual on her own but sits for prayers or bhajan singing with others mutely clapping her hands. When asked as to how she views life in jail her answer was simple "kya kare", whatever happened-happened. She feels helpless and is resigned to life. When asked about why she killed Mangulal, she sees it as an accident and because of his behavior violating her rights. She does not feel guilty in any way. On release she will go back to her children in Betul district. Will try to settle her property matters in Hoshangabad. Her husband has ever since died and her brothers family live in her quarters. She knows that traditionally she would have had to give a banquet for her reintegration in her group in the village but towns are different. Overall she seemed more confident about her future compared to other inmates and did not show any guilt or remorse.

Socio-cultural background: Gonds are one of the major tribe of Madhya Pradesh, they are the most numerous and also the most wide spread. The term Gond appears in Tulsi Das's "Ramcharitra Manas" for the first time, the other references mentioned by Shukla: (1986) dates as far back as 1213 A.D. They are one of the elite ethnic groups in Madhya Pradesh and in the schedule tribe list of Madhya Pradesh Gond includes fifty one other names. Not only are they numerically predominant among the tribes of Madhya Pradesh but also reflects microcosmically the diversity of the tribal situation. Inappropriately clubbed as being closer to lower caste Hindus in the caste-tribe dichotomy, which is now preferred by scholars over tribe-caste continuum Chakravarthy: (1996). Generally tribes are perceived as a small social group of simple social structure, occupying common territory, speaking a common language, they marry within their community and have relative cultural homogeneity. This description does not seem to fit the Gonds in toto. The Gonds are aggregates distributed in different geographical areas and time horizons of development and their villages are linked with supra-village structures by multiplex links of kinship, ritual, politics and culture. (ibid). Fuchs (1960) has pointed out the inaccuracy of the census reports with regard to the enumeration of the Gonds for various reasons. For one the racial origin of the Gond is shrouded in mystery. There surely seems no racial, cultural and linguistic uniformity in the Gonds. Russell and Hiralal, Grierson, Fuchs, etc. Interestingly they have been a ruling class and unlike most other tribes of the

region they have a long recorded history. Some Gond rulers established dynasties which lasted for centuries, but some of these rajas surrounded themselves with Hindu officials and adopted the Hindu/ Mogul method of administration. During the medieval times these tribes occupied a powerful position politically and economically controlling as they did the key trade routes, forest resources and powerful tribal militias. Subramaniam (1992) Gond rulers were won over by the British, whose latter policies deprived and alienated them. "The British adopted a system of indirect rule through local intermediaries and quarantined the tribal in isolation." Elwin: (1964). A policy which is today criticized for being an extension of the imperialist approach of divide and rule. According to Bailey the Gond tribe cannot be studied along a uni-dimensional mathematical continuum. Chakravarthy too points out that the Gond culture has been characterized by a process of sanskritization, withdrawal and also secondary primitivization. On the other hand the process of culture integration on the theoretical plane has been seen to tend to give rise to two types of crisis, namely existential and exiological. Doshi: (1972). To an extent Jeta Bais story exemplifies this crises at the pragmatic level.

Gonds follow the clan system. The clans are divided into groups or phratries. The endogamous groups that divide the Gond society are called biladeri or jat which is subdivided into exogamous family groups which are organized in a two fold manner. One called the gotra or kul while the other is called garh. Fuch; (1960). Garh is a territorial system. However now a days Gonds favour the kinship or gotra system. The gotra system is exogamous however not binding. In earlier times Gonds practiced shifting cultivation to a much greater extend than today and therefore they don't privately own forests, land, rivers, etc. Thus they lost all land when the land settlement took place and all personal claims were examined. Thus effecting changes in the Gond society and forcing them to reconcile their system to the new property concepts. Fuch; (1960).

Gonds follow the Baudhayana system where in women have no right to independence and inheritance is only in the male line. Though women can have some private money i.e. Money earned by special efforts, or presents received from lovers or relatives etc. called pogri or kamori. Gonds do not have any strong organization, but each caste/ tribe in the village has its elders and generally they arbitrate in disputes. There are culturally established rules of behavior and social sharing and any miscreant is punished by the village elders who on hearing both sides decide punishment and uphold and interpret their traditional customs. They follow marriage, food, religious etc. rules and taboos. Punishments may entail a bottle of liquor to food for the whole community or even expulsion from the tribe. For example a Gond who has served a prison sentence is outcaste on return since food taboos are broken. The tribe council will fine the person and a purificatory banquet will be held.

They follow the custom of marriage by service, by exchange, by capture, by elopement, by intrusion. Widow remarriage (unless very old) is a common practice as is polygamy. Levirate is also practiced. Joint family is the rule. Divorce is permitted only to man, a wife can only run away and her lover or second husband will have to pay compensation to the first husband or parent. There is record of gifting/promising of daughter for some service. This of late is not being adhered to very strictly. Fauch ;(ibid).

Political life of most of tribal India reflects democracy and authoritarian systems coexisting. Traditionally every head of a community at different levels was accepted undisputed on basis of heredity and their authority was final. On the other hand the system ensured sharing of authority and tribals had a share in the political management of their village, forests, water bodies, land etc. Other communities did not as a rule interfere with them. (Although they were mostly on the lowest rung of caste society). Communal ownership and decision making patterns of various other tribes on similar lines have been documented and studied. Thus the Gond tribe is not as a rule a political unit and tribal solidarity is not seen to extend beyond the subsection or potential marriage relationships. (The British however disrupted this tribal solidarity.)

The basic political unit in the Gonds is the village community. A village may have servant castes living along side as those of ahir, agaria, dhulia, pradhan, etc. or it may be a mixed village with people of other communities also living there. Tribal societies are traditionally dependent on word of mouth and are community oriented. Sharma: (1978). Traditionally tribal village and caste panchayats regulated the religious life of the Gonds and acted as intermediaries between them and the state and also exercised criminal and civil jurisdiction. Each group and community had its own traditional tribal council known as the panchayats. These councils are headed by a mukhia with a few members to assist him. Which usually are village headman, priest, watchman, and elders. As long as they perform their duties effectively, fresh elections do not take place. These councils maintain peace and harmony and uphold Gond customs Singh: (1991). Traditions are maintained from memory and consensually interpreted. Purification is demanded of an individual who commits a serious breach of custom. In order to deal with internal dispute or dispute with co-villagers they depend on traditional method of conflict resolution. According to Chaudhary and Singh: (2006) conflict resolution is done by organizing a meeting of villagers and village elders on hearing both sides usually take undisputed and usually accepted decision. This system however was been replaced by a protracted legal system, by the British and further strengthen in independent India, which has proven quite unfortunate from the Gond perspective looking at the fact that it is alien, not understood, rigid, distant, expensive, corrupt, long drawn, its officials are often feared, etc. Commenting on the system Grigson: (1938) notes that government officials on duty in the village would expect free hospitality and more from already burdened tribals. Also they would interfere and increase rifts by arbitration " ... tahsildar would entertain complaint under the section of Indian Penal Code punishing adultery from a husband dissatisfied with the panchayats decision and thereby undermine yet further the traditional system and authority of the panchayats."

Thus the tribal council which used to be all powerful in directing the behavior of its members are now weakened for the administration has abrogated the rights of tribal council. Doshi; (1972). Statutory panchayats too have come into existence in every village with elected officials. Panchayati Raj however has pushed some to political leadership positions, these new elites however function as non-tribal elite.

Very little is found in literature about gender relations among the tribals along the gender perspective until much recently. No statements can be made about the status of Gond women as such except along certain statistical variables, theoretically also, on the other hand the concept itself has involved more contradictions than consensus. The tribal society being generally

heterogeneous. The gender problem assumes a different dimension. In this society women are very hardworking and contribute in a major way to the tribal economy. Banu: (2001) points out that women work harder than men, yet they are vulnerable to male chauvinism, are beaten and treated badly. They work all through their lives on land and have no right in the entitlement of land. However there is not much marked division of labour and society is basically equalitarian in the gender sense of labour, it seems more tilted on age. The use of the term 'tribe' should not conjure up images of egalitarian societies based on collective land ownership. Land is privately owned and worked upon. Land ownership is not equal but highly unequal. However, given the fact that the land is unproductive and usually bears one crop in two years or so, both ownership of land and unequal ownership of land retain only a limited significance. Subhramaniam. (1992). Dowry is mostly absent, divorce is simple and has no stigma attached, also widowhood too is not stigmatized. Purdha is not practiced in a limiting sense as in other communities, no special value is attached to virginity and remarriage, child marriages are rare and no religious ideology upholds and justifies the subordination of women. Metha: (1999) states that women work harder than men. Sons have no great religious importance, though we find tribal women following men in religion, and having no separate identity but identify with men. Banu:(2001). In some tribes women do bear the stigma of witch and suffer thereof but this is not practiced in the Gonds. While commenting on the position of women in the Marias for example Grigson: (1938) concedes that the Maria women's position vis-à-vis her husband is far freer than that of a Hindu wife although on the whole women are a kind of property or valuable adjunct to the household and family. She is a taboo when menstruating and also suffers some other taboos as well. On the whole they have a larger participation in economic activities and a more decisive role in family management than their counterparts elsewhere. Also Singh, Vyas and Mann: (1988). Likewise migration for labour is done in large kin groups for mutual protection and better bargaining power. This too reinforces the tribal character.

Added to this essential compulsion for a collective life are the long-standing tribal traditions, which ensure greater independence for women and children, greater collective sharing of resources (frequent communal feasts held in rotation in different settlements), sharing of labour during peak seasons and in labour intensive operations like house-building and well-digging and mutual assistance in times of trouble. These features of tribal life are reinforced by aspects of culture like collective singing, dancing, worship, forms of marriage etc. Likewise migration for labour is done in large kin groups for mutual protection and better bargaining power. This too reinforces the tribal character.

Analysis: The last fifty years or so have seen a shift in the interest and perception on tribal studies and our approach towards it for a number of reasons. The tribal autonomy, which, was a main cause for their homogeneity, was relatively broken by the British rulers, non tribal zamindar and money lenders etc. (Sharma, 1991) and subsequently by wider political and socio-economic changes. The Indian Government has a commitment to planned tribal development unlike previous rulers and its intervention has broken their physical and social isolation. The social order that kept the tribes away from interference has given way before the rapid growth of power, roads and communications.

(Chakravarthy, 1996.) The historic isolation and its consequent buffering is now no longer there for tribes. Pamecha: (1985). However development being not an equalizing process, its cost is often paid by the socio- economically weaker groups while the benefits are reaped by the dominant groups. So we have witnessed the development of tribal lands while tribals themselves remain underdeveloped and also increasingly deprived and further marginalized. Clearly the issues which faces the tribal society most prominently are the loss of traditional customary rights over land, forest and water of the tribal's and its consequent loss of complete tribal lifestyles and its inherent social, economic, cultural and political deprivation. This has been a reason for migration out from tribal areas, and most tribal's find themselves as laborers and living in slums.

Jeta Bai along with her husband had moved to urban setting, leaving their ancestral land in the care of her sons, children of her previous marriage. Remarriage is still widely practiced and no stigma is associated with widowhood. Women play important role in managing everyday lives. Jeta Bai and her second husband accumulated some land holding in town. Her second husband's children from previous marriage were grown up and settled (son and two daughters whom she helped in marring off.). Jeta Bai ran a small ration shop in the front area of her two room kuccha house in a slum of Hoshangabad . Her husband had a job with nagar nigam through some relatives, which was the main reason for their moving to Hoshangabad from Dindori. Social linkages form the basis of economic linkages as well, and the wider kinship group was seen to form the basis of their urban settlement. They continued to live by their traditional value system and their own kinship and tribal community there was their reference group. On the death of her first husband she was married again by her village elders in keeping with the budhayana system. Her second husband became an alcoholic and lost his job in the nigam as he was any way not permanent. He did no work but depended on Jeta Bai's income from the shop. Falling short of money they decided to rent out a part of their house to another emigrant from their village. Studies have shown tribals to be burdened with debts and habits of conspicuous consumption thus thrusting them into market economy and depriving them of their land. Chakravarty: (1996). The tenant could hardly pay the rent and was constantly indebted. Thus starting a pattern of bickering and complaints to elders by either party. Finding the neighborhood tribal group in favour of landlord, the tenant tried to influence others through non tribal's of the community including a local political worker. Seeing which, Jeta Bai approached the police thana to have her room vacated. Here too she was not successful for a number of reasons. Foremost of which was that not knowing the required formalities it took her a long time even to get to speak to the thanadar which she did after having spoken to a whole series of people over three days. From there she was directed to the S.C./S.T. thana. Notably all this she did without the active support of her husband, but found support in her kinship group. Her husband found all the tension too much and therefore found another reason to beat his wife for pressurizing him. Violence against women is often socially sanctioned to some extent; Kudchedkar and Al-Issa;(1998) how ever tribal society had different ways of coping with such situation some of which have been mentioned earlier but in urban setting they aren't effective. Some other kin's felt that Jeta bai should not take the matter outside the community despite the beating, causing strain in her relations with them, while her shop suffered too. The shop the property of her first husband was also a source of dispute. Also the whole process required money.

Dube:(1992) observes that ... "the tribal situation in India cannot be viewed in isolation from the wider context of the themes and the strategies operating in the national life." Looking at the peculiarities of the tribal situation, he observes, a part of the problem is in the process of planning it self. " ...there was little consonance between the modernization objectives as formulated by the elite and their acceptance by the masses...the result was ambiguity, confusion and contradiction in the formulation of the goals of change. Such formulations were often an uneasy and untenable compromise between tradition and modernity." *ibid.* Jeta bai's value system and social expectations clearly demonstrates this hiatus.

Mean while the local tribal Gond community got divided over its support on the issues. Some felt it was important to maintain brother-hood and support each other. Sharing and not profit making was the traditional norm. The tenant should be allowed to pay as and when and however possible. Also because of the support of outsiders some of the elders felt it best not to intervene. Some others along with Jeta Bai herself, felt that as a landlord Jeta Bai's rights were being violated and the matter should be taken up in the village panchayats back home or resolved in her favour within the local community.

At the level of self government the Gonds of M.P. are easily out numbered by non-tribal, consequently the socio-economic power concentration remains in the hands of non- tribal even in local bodies. Men are more likely to have linkages outside the kinship group rather than women due to traditional role division between the sexes. Democracy has undermined the old authority structure without replacing it with a viable alternative. Chakravarthy; (1996). The local kinship group couldn't uphold its traditional pattern nor were they able to successfully resolve dispute. One of the reasons for which has been noted as... the frequent misuse of power by the Government functionary has eroded the mediatory status and credibility of the headman making the village multi factional and creating new patron- client relationship with petty functionaries and the tribal elites themselves become partner in the exploitation of his own men. Yorke; (1982). Also the Gond emigrant community in the city has different affiliations within and outside their community as well as are at different levels of acculturation and assimilation in urban culture. Conflict and strain are the natural partners in the situation.

It is the new and alien legal system which has become the instrument of trauma for most of the tribal people because of their unfamiliarity with its working. Besides it has also become an instrument of exploitation in the hands of non tribals for cheating and robbing so much so that... "even the protective and ameliorative legislation has proved to be loaded against them." Chakravarthy; (1996). In this case the matter being a dispute between two tribal's it was allocated to the special thana. The thana's function according to the modern legal system which is known to be formally distant, expensive, withdrawn from the society, time consuming etc. It is in murder and grievous hurts that tribal motives are least understood by courts. Seemingly violence is part of tribal life and legal taboos are not recognized by tribal society *Ibid.*

During her trial Jeta Bai was represented by the government lawyer. She was held guilty of murder, while she herself maintains that it was an accident. Probably with more family support and better understanding of legal procedures she would have been able to better represent and pursue her case. The trial was long drawn and settled against her. Jeta Bai when asked about legal

procedures could only say “...wakil sahib bole diekhe ge, ab kya hotahai kya maloom”. Clearly demonstrating her ignorance of legal procedures beyond the need of a lawyer.

Jail is perceived as the last solution of all modern day society to formally control crime and deviance. It is a culture specific phenomenon. According to Emile Durkheim the nature of law has been essentially repressive and jails are responsible to actualize the negative sanctions imposed by law now it is expected to be reformatory and function in a manner to rehabilitate the individuals faith in society and therefore help the individuals become better citizens. Recent studies on the subject reflect the various social process which have influenced the system and which do not prescribe to the view of it being reformatory as idealized. Infact it is a very harsh experience for women for a lot of reasons. For one jail means moving away from their families, which is often a first experience for most women. Women more than men live their entire lives in and around their families. Therefore their entire conception of self is rooted in their family roles. Not only do jails physically and emotionally distance them but affect their very self conception and the stigma erodes their social acceptance and social security. No wonder then rehabilitation for women is a more problematic than for men and more women inmates are depression prone and mentally disturbed. Besides, most Indian families being patriarchal, find women easy to replace, the husband often remarries and the women is left with no home unless her own family takes her back. The tribal situation is a little better in this regard since women are important economic contributors. But how it will respond to an old women who is not in her prime remains to be seen. Besides urban setting has redefined socio-economic relations mostly to the disadvantage of women.

Prisons on the other hand suffer from overcrowding outdated procedures and professional skills, low maintenance, are ill-equipped to face growing judicial activism and press vigilance and most of all are required to balance human rights and system goals and security needs. Status paper on prisons in India, B.P.R.D. GOI.(2000). These limitations obviously reflect on prisoners. Besides it also comes as a further cultural shock to the tribal who is not only used to more autonomy but also is alien to patriarchy and well defined hierarchy amongst other socio-cultural patterns. The mentioned case is another example in support of this thesis.

Conclusion

Tribes in Madhya Pradesh have been synonymous with forest. Betul district is known for its forest cover and the tribes there even when practicing agriculture continue to maintain a primary relationship of inter dependence with the forest which is impossible in urban situations. They also tend to depend on more than one source of livelihood and often supplement their income and food basket with forest produces and game. Tribes in rural areas continue to follow their traditional pattern of socio-cultural governance to a greater extent than those living in urban areas, but it is an increasingly difficult life. The changed economic, legal and administrative setup is not supportive to their traditional socio-cultural fabric. Due to this there is confusion in individual perception and responses, and the social security net has been adversely impacted. Making it more difficult for the weaker sections specially women. The changed scenario forces them to seek new lifestyles without the support of congruent structures, these tendencies have influenced the Gond society and made it diverse, multidimensional, open and moving in time and space. No doubt some individuals have done well in this and climbed the tribe caste continuum. However most have lost the little that they had.

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