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THE PATTERNS AND ORIENTATIONS OF MIGRANT TRIBAL LEADERS

Political Science

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ABSTRACT

The leaders of migrant tribals of Bhubaneswar city seem to be having an ambiguous identity. They are waving between two worlds-their native place and the city they have adopted. They are tied to their village by strong sentiment, and they are attracted by the facilities and opportunities provided by the city. They belong to both, and they would not choose one at the expense of the other. The leaders of slum tribals are largely self-made. Family background has not helped them. On the contrary, the tribal leaders residing outside slums have got the benefit of their family background. This is, though, an irony. Heredity, which is a function of tradition, is linked to educated and upper-status tribals leaders in the city. These leaders, viewing themselves as an upper 'class', hardly socialize with tribal 'commoners' living in slums.

The patterns and orientations of migrant tribal leadership in Bhubaneswar city have been discussed and presented in this article. The influence of migration and urbanisation on tribal leaders has been analysed. The factors of 'push' and 'pull' have caused migration of tribals from different parts of the state of Odisha, especially from the districts of Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar, Balasore, Sundargarh and Kandhamal to the capital city of Bhubaneswar [1]. They have come mainly in search of work. The city has attracted three groups of tribals-those who have permanently settled at the city; seasonal migrants who divide their time between the city and their native place, and employees who are posted or transferred here. Many of the last category, because of facilities and other attractions of the city, decide to settle here. They are generally highly-paid functionaries in government and private organizations.

A leader and his followers are inseparably related to each other. There is face-to-face contact between them [2]. The leader helps the followers in achieving their individual and group objectives [3]. He influences people to cooperate in attaining some common goal which they regard as desirable [4]. He stands with them at the time of their difficulty and adversity. He articulates their interests and takes up their problems with related authorities. He is their authentic representative and spokesman. He tries to resolve the differences and disputes among the followers. The followers, in return, extend their support and loyalty to the leader. They would not generally question his leadership. The leader and his followers belong to the same group. He cannot exist outside it. The relationship between the leader and followers is influenced by the group culture and dynamics.

The authority of the leader is moral rather than legal. The leader is expected to be democratic, but, sometimes, he may develop authoritarian tendency. He tends to have monopoly over leadership and not to share it with his followers. Lipset calls it "Oligarchic Leadership" [5].

Tribal leaders like leaders in general, may be divided into three types, namely, traditional leaders, modern leaders and mixed leaders who combine the characteristics of traditional and modern leaders. Traditional leaders are who hold leadership position in the traditional structures of tribals like village or basti committee or their cultural organizations. Those who occupy positions in modern elective structures like Panchayati raj bodies, municipal organizations, political parties or trade unions are modern leaders. Informal leaders who do not hold any formal leadership position, may sometimes, be as influential as or more influential than formal leaders [6].

The sample of tribal leaders, selected for this study, comprises, besides traditional, modern and mixed leaders, also both formal and informal leaders. Further, some tribal elites and elite-cum-leaders have also been studied to get a comparative perspective on the migrant tribal leadership. Elite is one who has achieved excellence in some field or sphere. When an elite holds a leadership position in any organization, he is an elite-cum-leader.

In the past, tribal leadership was hereditary, ascribed and tradition-oriented. But new tribal leaders are individualistic and have achieved rather than ascribed status. They are enriched by education, political experience and skills and contact with non-tribal society [7].

The migrant tribal leaders of Bhubaneswar city, like many migrant tribals, are caught in an identity dilemma. They want to stay in Bhubaneswar, but they do not want to leave their native place. The capital city has its attraction, so has the native village. They have their parental home, land and other assets in the village; they have their kin members and close relatives.

At regular intervals, they go to their native places to attend family functions like marriage, birth and death rituals, and to take part in community festivals which are observed in different seasons. They are sentimentally attached to their villages.

Further, some of them, finding it difficult to rise in politics in Bhubaneswar, try to enter election politics in their native district. Bhubaneswar is their present and future, but their past, stored in their native place, continues to have a spell on them.

There is a marked difference between slum leaders and non-slum leaders-those who stay in developed localities. The slum leaders generally identify with slum-dwellers. If they succeed in politics, their influence and prestige, to some extent, goes up. But they would not decline themselves from the slum-inhabitants, particularly those who belong to his tribe. But non-slum tribal leaders, who belong to much higher educational and economic backgrounds, tend to maintain a distance from the members of their tribe living in slums. These upper-status tribal leaders and elites socialize among themselves; they visit one another's house. Many of them maintain social relations with general caste people who were their colleagues in their offices when they were in jobs and who are otherwise close to them. When migrant tribals organize any cultural function in the city, both upper-status members of the tribe, and the commoners of the tribe living in slums attend and enjoy it. But this interaction between them mostly ends there. It seldom leads to forging closer relations between them. This social distance between them becomes evident in the annual get-togethers of different tribes in Bhubaneswar. These get-togethers, which are expensive, attract only non-slum leaders and other migrant tribals

having higher status. Thus, a sort of 'class' division has grown among the migrant tribals of the city[8].

CONCLUSION

Migrant tribal leaders, like most migrant tribals, have, in a way, an ambiguous identity, rather a dual identity. They belong to two homes - one is where they were born and the other which they have adopted. The modern facilities of the city and the sentimental tie with the native village have almost equal attractions for them. They would not court one by rejecting the other: they want both.

An element of class has crept into the interrelations among the migrant tribals of Bhubaneswar city. The upper-status leaders and elites living in developed or 'posh' areas seem to consider themselves as a superior class and not inclined to have equal social relations with the members of their tribe residing in slums.

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