

Community Health Fellowship Scheme

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Report

by

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This paper is a small part of an ongoing research project in Boudh district in Orissa. The first part of the paper is more of a personal account where I have described about my engagement in the University campus politics in attempts of addressing some gender related issues, and experiences and dilemmas we face in the field as a woman researcher. The second part of the paper tries to give a brief overview of Orissa health situation. The analysis of the study is done on the basis of a field work conducted on Tikirapada village, Boudh district in Orissa.

When I first joined in University as a post graduate student of social sciences, the issue of reservation of women for the post of general secretary in Students' Union was on rise. Class room campaign was happening and many discussions were going on in the students' circle. At the same time many posters were coming up from male chauvinistic group and feminist group in the campus. After a point of time the issue of reservation of dalit women was added on. As a reflection of the surrounding atmosphere, in the class room also some debates happened in this regard. In the discussions often the issue of dalit woman's oppression was brought to the light, how she is subject to be doubly oppressed. At that time I used to think, may be this kind of oppression is more of a south Indian phenomena. More specifically a phenomena of Andhra Pradesh. It does not happen in Orissa, in my surrounding, back at home. May be in Andhra Pradesh dalit oppression is rampant and it gets manifested in necked form, hence it is accompanied by resistance. May be dalits in Orissa are in a better position, so there is less retaliation. And also I could remember people saying in busses and colleges in Orissa how jobs are pocketed by dalits, putting it as a case point for their better off position.

Later I realized how wrong I was. In Orissa the discrimination of dalits is as rampant as it is in other part of India. I can not even say that in urban centers like Cuttack or Bhubaneswar where I stayed, the discrimination against dalits was not happening, so I was unaware of it. Most of the time the discriminations are naturalized to such an extent that we refuse to recognize, even after they are pointed at. Another misconception I was holding for a longer period of time, may be till recently that no dalit movement has taken place in Orissa, against whatever oppression they have been facing, they have never retaliated against it. But reading some of the books on subaltern perspective and my interaction with some people in orissa during the fellowship made it clear that at different points of time dalits have retaliated against oppressions of different kinds. But most part of it is undocumented or ignored and not brought to the fore. The assertion of *Pana* (out caste group in coastal Orissa) during the 1866 Nanka Durvikhya (great famine) in coastal Orissa can serve as an example.

Being in university:

Though in our course syllable we are taught about different structural problems of the society, most of the time there has been encouragement to read these issues instrumentally and produce it in the answer paper during exams. When some of the students take their inspirations from the text book and try to practice it in real life, uneasiness can be found in many quarters, taking from students, teachers to administration. Many times the women students talking of gender issues in the campus are seen as 'unnatural' women. In spite of all these there has been attempts by few women in the campus to address some of the womens' issues.

Some of us had definitely got the inspiration from the earlier generation women leaders. With whatever sensitivity and understanding we had, a few of us had come forward to address an issues related to violence against women in the campus. After getting involved in a number of issues, we thought of organizing ourselves by giving it a name. And we named ourselves as 'womens' collective'. also entered in the election of students' union. At that time the right wing was trying to be stronger. So all the so-called progressive forces, such as left organizations, dalit organization called for an alliance, and we joined. After working with the left for a considerable period of time we realized that most of the time our issues gets sidelined, its not given the attention it required. By this time the 'women's collective' had dissolved. Few women of the group had left the campus. the issue of caste in gender also brought some gap between the existing members. At this point of time a few issues came up, which made us feel the urgency of organizing ourselves. The new organization, "Rebel songs" was initiated by three of us. Later some more have joined. It is just nine months old. Different kinds of gender related talks, seminars and documentaries are organized by this forum to sensitize the students or in a way putting forward the ideas and giving the options to choose. This semester an attempt has been made through seminars and documentaries to look at the emerging challenges of feminism, look at the issue of caste in gender.

Dilemmas as a woman researcher in the field:

It is a different and sometimes difficult task for a woman researcher to be in the field and interact with the communities while recognizing the dynamics of the community. And many times one had to be sensitive towards the sentiments and understandings of the community. Such as I being a young unmarried woman, initially at times some of the male members of the village refused to interact with me saying 'a woman has to interact with a woman., this is a womanly affair, a woman has to ask questions to woman only'. In the initial days in the field my presence in the field was seen as ' a woman who has not been bothered by her 'guardians' and left loose'. Most of the time me being a girl, standing out side the houses or village road and talking to people was not seen as a welcomable thing. Frequently I was called to sit inside the house and talk, because a woman standing on the village road for a long time was seen as loss of dignity of the village. Definitely it took some time to convince them. And also in the initial days I was not readily accepted by the caste pada people of the village after my return from out caste pada. On those occasions I was seen as a upper caste woman who is polluted by her entrance into the untouchable houses. few days latter I had to change the strategy, I used to go to the caste pada in the morning and the out caste pada in the afternoon. After the communities started identifying me with them, some of the upper caste women used to ask me in many ways not to go to out caste pada.

When we talk of participating with the community with their cultural activities and their festivals many dilemmas comes on the way. In the village in most of the cultural activities and celebrations of religious festivals the village temple becomes the centre. To this place the out caste groups are not allowed to come. Here if one is constantly participating in all the festivals with the upper caste groups of the village, unintentionally one is getting identified with the caste groups of the village. Another difficulty comes for a woman researcher is that, given the public nature of celebrating the festivals, in most of the villages the public celebrations of festivals are masculine in nature, where all the male members come together and celebrate festival, can a woman participate in the festivals. And if one is interfering or intervening the originality of the cultural form of the place gets disturbed or changed. For example during my stay, three festivals had taken place in the village such as gamha purnima, sankranti and janmastami. If we take these three cases, janmastami was more of a private and house hold affair. In this case most of the women observed fasting, went to temple in many groups and came back home. But if we take gamha purnima and sankranti, they were public in nature. In case of gamha purnima caste men (mostl young men) of the village got together in the morning, did puja, then gamha was placed at a high place in the centre of the village and all men were required to jump and get it down. Women of the village were required to stand in a corner of the village street and watch it. If we see sankranti festival, allmen get together in the village temple, after worshipping they sit on the village mandap for religious discussions, arrange feast where only men participate. Taken these public nature of celebration of the festivals, the question raises can a woman researcher participate in all the activities of the community, in true sense.

Field report

My decision to work in Orissa is the outcome of several factors. Firstly though Orissa is the place of my birth, I felt my knowledge about oriss is very limited. Secondly my academic interest in understanding some of the dynamics of Orissa was also a factor. Orissa being one of the backward states, not much research has been done compared to other states in India. There is an urgent need to address some of the problems the villages in Orissa are facing. For that one needs to have a thorough understanding of the social dynamics of Orissa societies. Here I am saying Orissa societies because whenever one is talking of Orissa society, there is always the attempt to paint the picture of coastal Orissa as 'the Orissa'. The coastal Orissa language is used as the Oriya language, both in written form and in speech. The text books are written in coastal Oriya language. There has been attempts to ignore the diversities of cultures between the western Orissa and eastern Orissa. And put it as a homogeneous Oriya culture, which is dominant coastal Orissa culture. By which the other part gets marginalized, both economically and otherwise.

Orissa is one of the least developed states in India, in terms of social development and health status. In terms of social indicators of development, Orissa has remained far behind the national average. Over 47 percent of its population live below poverty line. The infant mortality rate is 97 per 1000. literacy rate is 51 percent, and life expectancy at birth is 57.2 years (dept.of public enterprise, govt. of Orissa, 2002). The under five mortality rate is 104 per 1000. over 50 percent of India's deaths from malaria occur in the state. Female death rates between the ages of 20 and 24 are amongst the highest in India (Ager and pepper,2005). The poor, scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and women are the most vulnerable groups. In the scheduled caste group the outcastes or the untouchables who are in the margins of the society are the most vulnerable group. In Orissa both the scheduled tribe and scheduled castes constitute nearly 38.66 percent of the total population, out of which scheduled tribes constitute 22.13 percent and scheduled castes constitute 16.53 percent of the population. 93 caste communities are included in the category of scheduled caste.

Methodology:

The study was conducted in Tikirapada village in Baunsuni panchayat of Boudh district. The selection of village was made on the basis of the size and heterogeneity of caste groups. Both qualitative and quantitave method has been used for the study. Survey method was used to get an understanding about the village profile and to build initial rapport with different communities of the

village. Unstructured interview method, observation method and informal group discussion was employed to conduct the study.

The village has 152 house holds. In this village mostly service caste groups live. Only one caste group in the village called *Dumal* caste, which is not a service caste. It is a agricultural caste. In the village 52 households are from *Meher* caste (weaving), 26 households are from *Dumal* caste (agricultural), 9 households are from *Badhei* caste (carpenter), 17 households are from *Teli* caste (oilseed grinders), 19 households are from *Keuta* caste. 2 scheduled tribes families have settled in the village, who are believed to be migrated to the village some two generation back. One of the tribal family is said to be a '*baramasi*' family, because they have gone for inter caste marriage with different caste groups. And 27 households are from *Ganda* caste, which is an out caste group. Though because of Gandhian reform the caste has been renamed as Harijan caste, the attitude of the caste groups towards the outcaste people has not changed at all.

Caste and Occupation profile of the village:

The Meher families are engaged in their traditional occupation, i.e weaving clothes. They are generally engaged in weaving sambalpuri pattern cloths. It generally takes eight to ten days for a person to complete one saree. Though it is always considered that man is the weaver of the saree, most of the invisible work behind the weaving is done by the women of the house. Women are mostly engaged in keeping the thread in order, arranging the thread for weaving, holding the loom while needed when men are engaged in weaving. Though this caste group's main occupation is weaving, they occupy some agricultural land for cultivation, through which they fulfill the grain requirement of the family.

The Keuta families are mostly engaged in fishing. While men go for fishing and catch the fish, women are engaged in selling it in the local market. This caste group is also engaged in agricultural activities. Except one household who has 14 acres of land, all others are either small scale farmers or agricultural labourers.

The Dumal caste group is engaged in agriculture. Most of the people are small scale farmers. Few landless agricultural laborers are also there in this caste group. Only four young men of this caste group have migrated to near by towns in search of job.

Badheis (carpenters) are engaged in their traditional occupation. Most of the time they migrate to different towns and cities of Orissa for work. So we can see this community as economically better off in the village. The improved economic status of this community is not only for the migration but the high demand of the wood work in the house construction in Orissa.

Teli community is also engaged in agricultural work. They are no more engaged in the traditional occupation. Most of them work as wage laborers.

The ganda community(out caste), which is an outcaste group are engaged in brick making occupation, sometimes migrate to different areas for work, during off season they work as agricultural laborers. Some of them have bought some land for agricultural purpose.

To understand the landholding pattern of the village we can look at the landholding of two caste groups

Landholding of Meher caste of the village:

Land in Acre	No. of houses
Land less	09
.1 to 1 acre	26
1.1 to 2 acres	15
2.1 and above	2
Total	52

Landholding of the Ganda caste (out caste) of the village:

Land in Acre	No.of houses
Landless	10
.1 to 1 acre	10
1.1 to 2 acres	6
2.1 and above	1
Total	27

Since the residents of this village are predominantly from service caste groups the agricultural land holding of none of the caste group is high. Most of the agricultural labourers work in the field of the Brahmins and Malis of the neighboring village such as nuapada and gadabhitara bausuni. The Brahmins and Malis of the neighboring village hold large patches of land which expands to tikrapada village.

Education:

If we look at the overall education status of the village, the education status is very low. Most of the village children drop out in the primary level, further the education status of the girls being very poor. If we see the caste wise education status in the meher caste 3 persons have completed their graduation, four persons have completed their intermediate and one person has completed his matriculation. And all these people are male members. Only one girl has reached to the level of tenth standard. In this caste group girls generally dropout from school after completion of their primary education and help their mothers in arranging the threads, help in weaving. In this caste group both men and women marry at an early age soon after a man starts weaving cloths properly, he marries. Men generally marry when they are around 20 years old and when women are around 16 to 17 years old. So before marriage a girl learns all the 'help' needed for weaving.

If we see badhei caste group, though this community is small in size the education status of this caste group is slightly better off than other caste communities and in

that women's education is also quite better. 2 persons have completed their graduation out of which one is a woman. 2 women have completed intermediate education. Another one person has completed his 10th standard.

Among the keuta caste one person is primary school teacher and the andganwadi worker is also from this caste. The education status of this caste group is not good. So is the dumal caste and teli caste.

If we come to the education status of the ganda caste (out caste) group, one man has complete his graduation and engaged in a small business, another male member is doing his graduation. One male member has completed the intermediate. Six children have dropped out in tenth class, out of which five are men and one is female. In the out caste families it is found that when the eldest child of the family is a girl child, most likely she never goes to school or she drops out from school at a very early stage. When both men and women in outcaste families are engaged in wage labor, the elder girls of the family take care of the siblings.

Analyses:

If one tries to understand the caste dynamics of the village community, though in the village the Brahmins as a caste group is not found, Brahmanism as an ideology is very much prevalent. It gets manifested at different levels in different ways. In the village the caste groups almost stay in such a manner that not much ritual purity is maintained while interacting with each other. If we look into the caste hierarchy and the practice of untouchability, a twin process of owning and othering takes place. Firstly the out castes are owned or an inclusive or taking in process into hindu fold takes place against all other religious categories, then a process of othering happens where the out castes are kept apart or pushed into the margins of the society.

When we talk of the out caste groups, the out caste lives in the outskirts of the village. Ritual purity is maintained in a stricter way. They are not allowed to use the tube wells of the village which is used by caste people. They are not allowed to go to the premises of any temple in any village where their identity can be revealed. In the village there are four tube wells. Out of which the ganda caste people are allowed to use only one tube well. When the tube well meant for them goes out of order they are forced to use the water from the water reserve or from a well which is not cleaned for a long period. Near the water reserve of the village

two concrete steps are made for the villagers for taking bath. But the out caste groups are not allowed to take bath there. They are made to take bath in the mud slope. The village school which is supposed to be a secular institution, the practice of untouchability gets reenacted here. During the mid day meal programme, the children from outcaste group are made to sit in a separate queue and have their food. When one of the school teacher was asked about this he replied 'government circular comes where we have to report about the number of scheduled caste children having food in the school, so it is easier for us to count, if they sit separately'. But it is noticed that while keuta caste group comes under the category of scheduled caste, the keuta children are not made to along with outcaste children. The out caste children are also not allowed to use the school tube well, because it is used by the upper caste groups for collecting water.

Here one sees that while some of the service castes come under the category of scheduled caste, they don't face the similar kind of discrimination that the outcaste groups face. Most of the time the caste groups are the agents of oppression against the out caste groups. And the negotiation of the power works through consensus and rather than confrontation. Here the ideological state apparatus of Althusser works successfully, where the ruling class ideology operates and sustains through the consensus of different institutions of the society. Here the reinforcement of a brahminical ideology comes through the practice of the ideology at different institutional levels of the society, such as school, temple, family, village as a whole.

If we come to the gender issue we can see the gender roles gets institutionalized at a very early age through rituals. Here I am looking at very few institutionalization of gender roles for the purpose of the study. We can see that in the childhood both the boys and the girls are made to play on *saptapury amabasya* (no moon day), where the girls are required to fry different kinds of cereals and keep it in a basket. The boys are required to come with mud made elephants and horses and ask the girls to feed them. In one end of the village the play gets enacted, and the whole village caste group children come together for the play. The outcaste children are not allowed to participate in the play. This particular festival can be looked as an institutionalized way of enforcing the gender roles where the girl is asked to engage herself in the household chores, and the boy as a person who is supposed to deal with the activities outside home, who comes back to home for food and food will be prepared and kept for him when he arrives.

The gender hierarchies can be better understood if we look at some of the rituals that the women in the village observe. *Chitra mangalabara osha* (Tuesday fast) is

observed by the married women for the well being of the family. And when a woman is child less on the day of fasting she is required to go for bath early in the morning and without removing the wet cloth from her body she is required to go for begging to seven houses in the village. If we see the social context of begging in Orissa in caste groups except Brahmins, ritual begging is seen as a payment for the sin committed by a person. Mostly when a cattle gets killed by a person one is asked to go for ritual begging. Here in this case of woman begging, all the blame of childlessness is put on the woman. And she is asked to get rid of the sin by begging. The possibility of male infertility which might have caused childlessness is ignored. And the woman is held responsible for the childlessness.

If we look at fastings in general, women in this part of Orissa often go for frequent fastings and for longer duration. If we the reason behind ritualized fastings it is often done for the good health of the family members. As Biswamoy Pati says 'the underlying philosophy of fasting seems to suggest self imposed pain and suffering in order to negotiate effectively with as well as prevent disease (Pati,2001).fasts are often seen as a female activity. Some of the fasts also reflect the gender polarization in this area. Such as some of the fasts are observed to carry male children.

But we can not analyze the gender relations of all caste groups in a single framework. For an out caste woman fasting as not as much an issue as it is for an upper caste woman. For me as an upper caste woman the Oriya Laxmi Purana, which is often sited as an example of empowerment of women, through the narration of the story of Laxmi,

Goddess Lakshmi visited the house of her devotees irrespective of their caste and granted them boons for their prosperity. Bu it was not tolerated by Lord Jagannath and Baladeva, who were supposedly the upholders of caste hierarchy. Consequently Lord Jagannath did not allow Goddess Lakshmi to enter into the temple at the instance of Lord Baladeva, and therefore, she lived alone at the sea-beach of Puri. Lord Jagannath and Baladeva became pauper at the departure of lakshmi. They did not get alms, although they wandered from door to door with a begging bowl. They spent days after days without food and in the end they unknowingly reached the house of Goddess Lakshmi and asked for some food. Goddess Lakshmi came to know this and she sent a message through her maid that it was the house of an out caste woman and food would be served if they were ready to accept. Lord Jagannatha and Baladeva gave their consent to take food from the out caste house. Thereupon food was immediately served. Lord Jagannatha , however could guess from the taste of the food that it was cooked by Goddess lakshmi and every thing was disclosed very soon. Lord Jagannatha and Baladeva then requested Goddess Lakshmi to forget all things of past and to come back to the temple. At last Goddess lakshmi agreed to come to the temple if her principles of social equality were to be accepted by lord Jagannatha and Baladeva. Goddess Lakshmi wanted that the people of all denominations, from out caste to Brahmin, had to take food together in the premises of the temple (mallik, 2004).

is definitely a site where the gender roles gets reenacted. So it provides a space where women get trapped into oppression. The Laxmi Purana being very prescriptive of gender roles establishes the gender hierarchy in a much stronger way. But for an out caste woman it is definitely a source of empowerment by which she can have access to worship the Goddess at home without anyone's intervention, while she is denied access to temples or even not allowed to worship any God on her own.

In Tikirapada village while dowry is a problem of some of the upper caste women (though dowry is not demanded in cash, its only taken in kind), it is not a problem of a out caste woman at all. Because the dowry system is not practiced among the out castes of the village. While a man gets married to a woman, he gets an additional labour force. So when one is talking a problem of a particular place, one needs to see whether it is a common problem for all or it is the problem of a specific majority, and whether all the groups can be brought together for that specific issue.

In Tikirapada for a caste woman the issue is the Anganwadi not distributing supplementary food regularly, for an out caste woman the main issue is along with supplementary food, how her child is allowed to sit in Anganwadi along with all caste children and not ill treated.

Assertions:

While one is talking of the discrimination against or the exploitation of outcaste groups, there has often been attempts to see them as passive, fatalistic and powerless victims. They are often thought as having neither the will nor the capacity to resist. But many times these subaltern groups try to resist against the oppression in the possible way. In this religion plays an important role in their life. Resistance against the hegemonic brahmanical culture has happened at many points of time in many forms. In Orissa the resistance was also visible in the development of popular cults like the Mahima Dharma, as a counter to Hinduization and upper caste domination. This was especially triggered off by the post-1866 famine context, which made life extremely difficult –even for those who survived. If they had accepted relief (*chatra*) from the centres established by the colonial administration, they were excommunicated. A new caste had emerged, called "*chatra khia*". During this period the Mahima cult not only resisted the varna order but also posed a serious challenge to it. People who became associated with the cult were expected to begin a new chapter of their life, without any reference to their past. This aspect, associated with the deletion of

one's memory with regard to one's past. This implies the transcending the caste boundary which is rigidified. In Tikirapada village it was also found that five outcaste families have taken Mahima dharma as an alternative. But the question always remains even though the person wants to forget about the past, does the society allow her/ him to forget. Though the five families have taken mahima dharma, the practice of untouchability is applied against them to the same extent as the other members of the caste group. In this area only the outcaste groups have taken the Dharma. But some of the members who have taken mahima dharma, the space for treating some of the disease is available to them. Though in literature we can find that the out caste people were allowed to practice the treatment for a very limited injuries and diseases, such as snake bite. Brahmins had not been interested in learning the treatment, since they had to touch the feet of the lower caste people while doing the treatment. Often the indigenous treatment done by the upper castes is given a brahminical slant, certain mantras often accompany the treatment. In this village two of the people from mahima cult are engaged in providing indigenous treatment to people. But their method of treatment is quite different from the brahminical indigenous treatment. They do not recite mantras while treating. They only apply the roots of different medicine plants for treating the disease. In my view this can be seen as a form of assertion.

It was also observed that in the village has three mandaps, the out caste people are not allowed to sit on the mandap. But while a mahima saint comes with saffron color dress, he is allowed to sit along with the villagers on the mandap, he is received with much respect by the caste groups of the village. While it's a known fact that the outcaste groups mostly go for mahima dharma. And in the near by locality no upper caste person goes for this. it can also be looked at as a survival strategy.

This is very much evident from the Tikirapada village study. In this part of Orissa the *Danda* festival is quite famous. During the *danda* festival the *danda nacha* happens in the village, where the out caste groups are not allowed to take part. And most of the time they are interested in taking part in *nacha*, which is a traditional way of recreation. In traditional *nachas* mostly the religious mythologies gets enacted. So during *Danda nacha* the caste groups enact *krusnalila nacha*. The out caste groups wanted to take part in *nacha*, since they were not allowed by the caste groups to perform, they started performing *Laxmipurana* in their *pada* some thirty years back. Now they have constructed a Laxmi temple in the village, which serves for them as an alternative temple. Definitely the contribution of Panchasakha movement in Orissa in creating some space for the out caste groups to worship goddess laxmi, who is given a special place in agrarian economy, can not be ignored.

The attempts to fight against the oppressions are made in many ways and one can see especially among the young generation among the out caste people the urge to overcome the caste hierarchy is more. But most of the time the number becomes an obstacle. Some of the youngsters of the dalit pada say, 'since we are not allowed to use the mandaps of the village, the most of the public facilities of the village sometimes we voice it out. But at that time the whole upper caste groups stands united against us. And we are some 27 houses against a big number. So we are made to be silenced. And in such cases police takes the side of the caste groups. Some of the outcaste people complain that when any marriage happens in the upper caste pada the village school remains closed because the feast happens in the school building. But the out castes are not given the school building for the feasts during their marriage. On each sankranti, which comes once in a month, the school remains closed, because the upper castes do the village feast in the school building. These complains has to be looked as the consciousness of dalits about the injustice happening against them.

Tandhei, is often referred by the villagers as an evil force which causes most of the diseases. It is always referred to a woman, who is skilled in causing harm to others. She knows some two and half line mantra, when she aims at a person and recites the mantra, the person falls sick and suffers from various diseases. It is also believed by the villagers that tandhei attacks people whose blood is sweet. It was noticed during the stay in the village that few women are considered as tandhei by their neighbors and some of the villagers. Many rumors also sprout which make these women as the centre of discussions. During my field visit many villagers had also warned me about the tandhei attack, and had advised me take enough precautions against that. When I asked some of the out caste women about the existence of tandhei in their pada, most of the women told 'tandhei does not exist in our pada, our women do not cause any harm to others. Only in the upper caste pada tandhei stays'. This can be looked as an assertion of dalit women.

Women as agents of caste hegemony:

If we see the role of gender relations in maintaining the caste hierarchy, in the village while maintaining the ritual purity of the caste or family, the role of women in practicing it much stricter and more rigid compared to male members. Because women are often seen as the safeguards of both the family honor and caste honor. The whole issue of purity is mostly centered around the food habits and the drinking habits, specially the drinking of water. And the women are given the responsibility of taking care of these two jobs. They are engaged in both collecting water and cooking food. If we see the water collecting activity near the tube wells, one can get a clear understanding of the maintenance of purity of each

of the caste group in the village. While collecting water for house each of the caste group try not to touch any person from any other caste. If at all any person comes closer and touches the person who is collecting the water, immediately the water which is collected is thrown and fresh water is collected to take it to home. Many times keuta women complain that the dumal women maintain much ritual purity. While talking to other caste women they ask them to stand at a distance and talk, because if they touch any person from a different caste they are required to change the cloth while cooking. So to avoid that they ask the other caste people to maintain distance. And the practice of ritual purity becomes more rigid with relation to reproductive aspect of women's body. Some of the out caste women assert that ritually they are more pure because they follow more stricter rules during the menstrual periods. Women are excluded from the main house, they are kept separately for seven days. Only on the seventh day after taking the purity bath and consuming cow dung water and tuls leaf water they are allowed to interact with the other members of the family and caste. This instance can be taken as the attempt of some of the out caste groups to sanskritise themselves.

We also come across some of the folk tales of the area where the adivasi people's ritual purity is sited by which they are believed to capture many supernatural forces. In these cases the adivasi women's ritual purity during their menstrual cycles are highlighted. In all these cases woman's body is taken as a site where the ritual purity of a particular caste group gets established.

Attempt of homogenization:

The attempt to homogenize different experiences of people, different needs of people happens from policy levels to the grass root level where it gets implemented. In the health centre also it is found that the hegemony of western medicine gets established to such an extent that the regional specificity of certain diseases are not at all given importance. Often it is brushed aside as superstition or as not following the prescription. The victim blaming attitude very much prevails among the PHC staff. In this area a particular kind of skin disease is prevalent. And it is called by different local disease by people. But when they come to the health center the first thing they are told that no disease exists with such name. so they feel their disease is not getting dictated. For this disease people go to the local healers.

As I have mentioned earlier Tikrapada village exists in the interior of Boudh district of Orissa. And in this part of orissa the spoken language is quite different from the coastal Oriya language. Most of the Phc staff of the near by PHC are from the coastal Orissa. Though some of the PHC staff are working in the area for a quite longer period of time, they refuse to speak the language of the local people.

During some of the personal discussions some of the PHC staff say how this language is inferior to the mainstream Oriya language, hence their unwillingness to neither to learn nor to speak this language.

It was also observed during the field work that while the ANM's husband is engaged in the private medical practice in the locality, the male health worker is also engaged in private practice. So most of the time the health service is minimized at the health centre, so that these people get sufficient clients for their private service. In the area malaria and sickle cell disease is widely prevalent. Most of the villagers go for the private to these respective people because they feel much care is taken and free medicine is available if they go for private treatment. If they go for government treatment the medicine is not given as per need.

Health specific:

Though all the issues discussed above are health related, and some have more particularly focused on health, these are some of the issues that needs to be addressed immediately. In the village most of the deliveries happen at home. If we take the statistics of the deliveries that has happened in last ten years, only four wome of the village have gone to the health centre for delivering babies.

Infant mortality rate is high in the village in general, and it is further higher among dalits of the village.

In the village five people from the out caste group have suffered from tuberculosis. None among them have gone to the local PHC for treatment. In the advanced stages of tuberculosis each one of them have gone to Phulbani district for treatment. Phulbani is the neighboring district headquarter. The Phulbani hospital is considered as a good hospital. But all these people have gone for private treatment to the district hospital doctor. When I asked these people about their not taking medicine from the local PHC, most of the people said the local PHC is not good, not proper attention is given there. Only when we go for private treatment to *sana baboo* (male health worker) he gives proper attention. Then he asks to go to Boudh or Phulbani to take x-ray. Any way we have to go for private treatment, so we go to a better place. For getting treatment on many occasions they had to sell land.

While talking to some of the health centre staff it was found that the village people The andganwadi worker who is a keuta woman, does not go to the out caste pada. On certain occasions when the andganwadi work takes place in the house of the andganwadi worker, on those occasions the out caste children are not allowed to go there. She says, 'the out caste women often come to the caste pada to collect the supplementary food, so the need of going to dalit pada does not come. In our area also due to the family custom we avoid going to dalit pada.' It is also observed that none of the health workers go to dalit pada during their visits to the village.

Classes in CHC:

Though for me the orientation course was like preaching the converted, at the same time it gave a different kind of exposure, where I got a chance to interact with people from diverse disciplines and different streams of thought. Some of the debates in the classroom as well as outside of it was thought provoking and instigated me to assess my own self and systematize some of my scattered ideas.

On 14th April the selection for the CHC fellowship was made and on the same day we started attending the orientation classes. In my understanding, the structure of the course taught in classroom is based in five themes.

1) Primary Health care approach:-

This area was dealt in a very systematic way. First the existing health problem was brought into discussion. In that, the health situation across the globe was analyzed along with health situation in India. Determinants of health and the gaps between the developed and developing nation's health determinants was discussed. Along with that how globalization as a force is furthering gap was discussed.

Second point focused on the responses to such and challenges before us. Under that broad category we had discussion on global response to context and India response to context. In global response, discussions were centered on people's health movement, people's health assembly, people's charter on health, while in case of Indian context the theme was specifically drawn from Karnataka experience.

Thirdly the existing revolutionary ideas in understanding health was discussed. In this all the inspiration is drawn from Alma Ata declaration. At the same time the gaps between planning and implementation was mentioned. Along with that how one need to understand the primary health care approach in the present day context and what are the new inputs the approach needs now were discussed.

2) Understanding community and dealing with community: - with this regards three communication classes were taken. Insights were given to develop communication skills. Orientation to life skill was given. Classes on health nutrition was taken to improve one's own nutritional knowledge at same time help communities in improving their nutrition. Issues on women's health empowerment was discussed which provided insights into the problems with the existing structure and the need for intervention at the level of community.

3) Health research: - in this some ethical issues in research was highlighted. Issues pertaining to medical ethics and public health ethics were discussed.

4) Understanding specific disease problems:- issues on mental health problem were discussed in detail. Specific diseases such HIV/AIDS, TB were discussed. The presentation on AIDS problem in Kenya was enlightening.

Along with that issues related to tobacco addiction and alcohol addiction was discussed in detail.

5) Health finance and health insurance scheme:- in this the problem within the insurance scheme were highlighted.

Two documentary films were shown during the programme. Both the documentaries brought in many issues ranging from standardization and formation of monolithic Indian culture to issues related to gender, poverty and informed consent. We visited two NGO's during our Stay: - their approach towards understanding certain issues such as mental health problem and street children was helpful. We also visited Hosur as apart of the orientation programme. Nutritional assessment of children below 5 years was done.

The second term of orientation was held for the last fifteen days of the fellowship programme. During this period more discussions on different community dynamics was brought in. more debates and discussions were introduced about culture and the effects of globalization on culture.

Field Report

Dalit is not a homogenous category. In Tikrapada village there are two caste groups who come under scheduled caste category, such as *keuta* (fishing community) and *ganda*. *Ganda* community is an untouchable caste community, but *keutas* are not untouchable caste. They stay in the same *pada* with upper caste people. The Anganwadi Worker belongs to the *keuta* caste. She says all scheduled castes are not *harijans*. Only untouchables are *harijans*. So in our village the *gandas* are *harijans*. We do not call them *ganda*. We call them as *harijan*. We never go to their houses. I have never gone to any of the *harijan* house for immunization or anything else. For taking supplementary food the *harijans* only come to the anganwadi centre.

In whatever small possible ways the *harijans* assert. One *harijan* woman says that in our *harijan pada* there is no *tandhei*. In the main village where upper castes stay, *tandheis* stay there only. The *harijans* are not allowed to enter into any temple neither in the village nor in the nearby villages. But surprisingly I found that the *harijans* of the village have constructed a temple of their own. They have a *lakshmi* temple in the village. Then a question raised in my mind that while the *harijans* are not allowed to enter into any other temple, why they have *lakshmi* temple? Why only this temple! what is the significance of this?

Lalbaboo Pera said that during the month of *baisakh* the *danda jatra* happens in the village. All the upper caste people participate in that. They have their own *nata* (drama) in the village. We *harijans* are not allowed to take part in that. But we always wanted to take part in the village *nata*. So some thirty years back some of the youngsters in the *harijan pada* decided to have our own drama group. And we will perform *lakshmi purana*. Then we kept a *lakshmi* photo in our *pada* and started our drama there. Later, some ten years back we constructed the temple.

Mithila, a *harijan* woman says, 'people say we are *harijans*. But we have more restrictions than others. When a woman menstruates in other upper caste house, she enters into the kitchen and touches everything and everyone. But in our houses when a woman menstruates, for seven days she does not touch anyone and also she is not allowed to kitchen. On the seventh day she takes bath by applying turmeric, oil, *tulsi* leaves then she has to consume cow dung water, *tulsi* leaves water, then only she is allowed to interact with others.

There are four tube wells in the village. The *harijans* are allowed to use one tube well. When the tube well used by *harijans* does not work, they are not allowed to take water from other tube wells. They fetch drinking water from near by open water reserves. In the school also the *harijan* children are subject to discrimination. In school while having mid day meal the *harijan* children sit in a separate queue. They are not allowed to sit along with their upper caste classmates. The *harijan* children are also not allowed to use the school tube well, because the upper caste houses use the school tube well. After having the lunch in the school, they come back to their *pada* tube well and wash the plate. And also whenever they feel thirsty, they come to their *pada* and from there they drink water and go back to school.

When I asked one teacher about this kind of practice of untouchability during the mid day meal programme, the teacher explained that if we ask the scheduled caste children to sit separately, it is easier for us to count, because everyday we are supposed to report how many scheduled caste children had lunch in the school. But it is observed that all scheduled caste children do not sit in a separate queue during lunch in the school, only the children belonging to the untouchable caste group sit in a different queue. Other children from the caste group of *keuta*, though they are scheduled castes, while having food in the school they sit along with upper caste group children.

Five houses among the harijan have taken *mahima dikshya*. Two persons among them do cheramuli medical practice. Sujana Tandia's second daughter was suffering from paralysis. He took her to different places for treatment. When she did not get cured with any kind of medicine, Sujana decided to practice cheramuli medicine on his own. And he cured his daughter with that.

Gandhi Tandia also gives cheramuli medicine. He treats people suffering from fevers, menstrual problems and some other minor diseases.

One common feature of these harijan treatment providers is that they don't do jhad phunk, while the other caste treatment providers do jhad phunk. These treatment providers treat the disease only by applying cheramuli.

In the water reserver of the village there are two cemented slopes for taking bath. But both the slopes are used by the upper caste people, one by upper caste men, the other by upper caste women. And the harijans continue to use the mud slope. They complain that though two slopes are there for the village, we are not allowed to take bath there. If we go there the upper caste people scold us. When we ask sarapanch he says in your village there are two wards, so we have constructed two slopes. You have to manage with that. We are helpless, because we can not argue with upper caste people, if we tell something the whole village unites against us. We are only 25 houses and they are some 125 houses. And they have all kinds of arms with them. So we will be definitely in trouble.

Sujana Tandia says that on every sankranti the upper caste people have feast in the village school, so it is a holiday for children, whenever any upper caste marriage happens the feast happens in the school, so it is a holiday for children. But whenever we harijans ask for the school building for giving our marriage feast, we are not allowed to have it in the school.

Though there are three mandaps in the village, we are not even allowed to sit on any mandap in the village. It is observed that the village mandaps are generally masculine places, where men sit and chat.

It is also observed that the practice of untouchability varies from gender angle to it. Men's practice of untouchability is quite different from the way women practice untouchability. In a way the practices that women observe are more stricter in comparison to men. Within the caste communities also women practice untouchability, that a male member from the same caste group is not required to do. For example, women while collecting water for kitchen is not expected not to touch anyone from other caste groups. And one *keuta* woman complains that, "the *dumal* caste women act too much. They do not touch us and while talking to us they will ask us to stay away and talk. And

they often say , ‘you know we are going to cook by wearing the same saree, so how can we enter into the kitchen by touching everyone!’”

The concept of purity and pollution is very much linked to the food taking behaviour of people. And the act of eating is considered to be a sacred act.

At the same time some of the members in the harijan community do not see the attitude of the upper caste villagers as something unjust. They view that they have a very harmonious relation with all the villagers.

Ghamudu Danta, a village politician, who belongs to Dumal caste says that since ages the untouchability is practiced in the villages. And the villagers believe in it. And also it is acceptable to the harijans. The harijans say that it is justified. Our earlier generation people used to eat beef, some one generation back also the practice of beef eating was there. So there is nothing wrong in the practice.

Health seeking behavior:

Basant sahu, one of the respondent replies ‘gunia gives cheramuli which cures disease. But gunia can not give vitamins. The doctor gives vitamins, which strengthens the body. So we go to both gunia and doctor.

Another respondent says ‘cheramuli used to work against diseases. but these days due to use of fertilizers in the food production, the cheramuli medicine is not working fast. We want quick recovery from disease, because we do not want to loose wage. So these days we are taking aelopathy medicine. Cheramuli medicine takes some time to act, but aelopathy medicine has a quick effect.

Ajodhya meher, a local healer says as per my knowledge since three generations my family has been practicing the traditional healing. I provide treatment for different kinds of diseases, such as tandhei, alati, stomach pain, menstrual problem, infertility etc. and also if some one is pregnant and wants a boy child, if the person consults me within three months of conceiving, I can guarantee that that person will definitely get a boy child. We call it as badali. Some times i go to visit patients, whenever called. But I do not to to harijan houses for providing treatment. Only they come to my house.

Alati, a disease mainly happens to children. The villages say that there are different types of *alati*, such as *peta alati*, *chama alati* etc. when *peta alati* happens the child does not pass any motion, and does not drink milk also. It generally happens to new born babies. The aelopathy doctors say that there is no such disease exists like *alati*. So the villagers always take the patients to the local healers. Most of the kids suffering from *alati* are taken to a place called *sakma*, where the healer recites some mantra and with a hot glass bangle pierces in three, four places nearer the naval of the baby. Along with that he gives tetanus injection.

Nabin Karna, a school teacher also provides medicines for different kinds of alati. He says there is no aelopathy treatment for alati. And in alati the jhad phunk mainly works. We also give some medicine apart from doing jhad phunk. And after the person gets

cured she/ he has to go to the nearby siva temple and offer a puja. The medicines are made from nature.

Patriarchy and its relation to health:

Different rituals and its relation to the wellbeing of the family: Women observe many fasting for the good health of the family members. Bhai juntia, a fasting is observed by women for the good health of their brothers. Another fast called pua juntia is observed by women for the well being of their son. But no such fasting is observed for the well being or good health of women folk.

Different religious fasting its relation to the infertility of women. Folk tales related to bhuani debta, who is a woman and how she kills mostly men. The story gets constructed around the village priest and his spirituality, and how he manages with it.

Women's purity in the family and its relation to handle different kinds of evil forces around the family.

Different folk tales or local beliefs and its relation to women. Tandhei is generally considered as a woman. It is believed that these women know two and half line mantra. And whose ever blood is sweet, the tandheis eat their blood. And it is believed that on tandhei amabasya night the tandheis go naked to the open places and wander in search of their food. It also reveals local perceptions on different kinds of tastes of blood of different people.