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THE FEEBLE VOICES FROM THE FORESTS

To live in surroundings of one's origin is a fundamental right of man. But the tribals of Mysore and Kodagu districts are really cheated and are not permitted to continue living in the midst of the trees and animals that they are used to. H.D.Kote taluk of Mysore district has a greater number of tribals, and their situation today is pathetic and they live in inhuman situations due to the negligence and careless attitude of the authorities concerned.

Recently eight children died of starvation in Dadadha hadi. This event came to light due to certain circumstances. But there are hundreds of deaths that have not been recorded. Starvation seems to be clinging round their neck and may be quite a number of children do not even see the light of day due to the acute starvation.

To understand this situation better and to have a correct picture of the hadis and their problems, the Budakattu Krishikara Sangha,



Vanavasi Mahila Sangha and Budakattu Rangavedike along with the staff of FEDINA at H.D.Kote conducted a Jatha programme from 15 November

1991 and covered all the 112 hadis of H.D.Kote.

The following report is the outcome of this jatha, meeting with the people in their own hadis, holding discussions with them etc. Further, there are certain demands as well as suggestions placed before the society and its rulers in order that the tribal population can have a meaningful existence.

If you meet the tribals, especially the elder ones, they still remember how they lived in the thick of the forest, amidst the movements of the animals, among the chirping of the birds, gathering their roots and herbs, enjoying the green of the forest, living a challenging, yet peaceful life. The sweetness of the forest honey they enjoyed has become a bitter memory in the depth of their heart and mind over the last three to four decades. What has happened to the tribals of H.D.Kote? A little reflection is right in order here.

There are four groups in H.D.Kote, viz., Jenu Kurubas, Betta Kurubas, Soligas and Yeravas.

FEDINA
*Wishes All Readers
A Happy and
Prosperous 1992*

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Rehabilitation - A Farce

After the implementation of 1963 Forest Act, quite a few tribal hadis were rehabilitated. According to this settlement, every tribal family was assigned 5 acres of land, a house and other necessities were to be provided and new colonies were to be set up. Out of 112 hadis, only 17 were converted into colonies and the rest were left to themselves. Even in those 17 colonies, neither the allotment of land nor the construction of house has properly taken place. If only we glance at those colonies we can see for ourselves the real situation that persists even today.

1. Annur Colony: Instead of 5 acres of land, only three to four acres of land was distributed. The land that was distributed was unfit for cultivation.

2. Muskare Colony: The land that was allotted to them has been grabbed by others.

3. Beemanahalli Colony: Only a few have been allotted land. Even the land that has been allotted has not been properly demarcated and there is confusion concerning the ownership of land.

4. Vaddaragudi Colony: Land has not been allotted to all the families.

Similar confusions can be noticed in Penjahalli Colony, Udbhur Colony, Brahmagiri Colony, Maladahadi, Chennagundi, M.C.Tholalu, Haralahalli, Kudige, B.Matakere, Nemmanahalli and Ankanathapura colony. No one is certain about the land assignment, its whereabouts and its ownership rights. Many are

landless and homeless in these colonies.

To sum up, of the 773 families of the 15 colonies that were rehabilitated, 328 families are landless even today.

Landless Hadis

If this is the situation of the colonies that were rehabilitated, what about those who were shifted out of the forests and were not provided with any alternatives. One can just imagine the pitiable situation of these people who have neither the forest nor the land but are left in the lurch to fend for themselves. We can divide the landless hadis as landless hadis outside the forest and landless hadis within the forests.

All these hadis were in the forest earlier. Today the forest has disappeared and this land has become barren and has been entrusted to the Revenue Department. Their habitat has become closer to the revenue villages. Instead of saying they were forcefully shifted out of the forest, what we can firmly say is that the non-tribals along with the forest department have destroyed the forest so much, that the tribals are deprived of their natural surroundings of life and existence.

The tribals of these hadis face untold miseries and problems. In some of the hadis, the tribals have not even place to build their small huts. For example, in Suthigehundi, when the tribals began to construct their small huts, a farmer of that village threatened them on the pretext that the land belongs to him. So some of the families

migrated to Anehatti Dipo Mala. Here the forest officials did not permit them to live peacefully, so again they shifted to a nearby place and have settled in a place belonging to someone in Hebbalguppe. The Tahasildar has distributed them houses under the new programme called ASHRAYA. But when the labourers began to dig foundation for the houses, the forest officials took away all the instruments and informed them that this land belongs to the forest department. We can see such disturbing situations practically in every hadi.

In Bhavikere hadi, the land that has been made ready for cultivation by the tribals has been encroached by non-tribals. This has already happened seven times. Even this year, they have been preparing some forsaken land for cultivation. They are sure that some one or the other will claim that land next year. There is the inbuilt fear of being driven away.

The tribals struggle to prepare the land for cultivation and invariably some non-tribals encroach it. This is the common practice around here. Forcefully moving from their settlement is the repeated story that happens every year at different places. The unsure and insecure lives of these tribals continue creating history, but it remains in the dark, never being recorded, never being made known to the so called "society", which having ears hears not, having eyes sees not, and having mouth opens it not for the rights of these helpless tribals.

Two acres each were allotted to seven persons in Survey no.72 in Chikkereyur hadi. But the possession of this land is with one big landlord. Nothing has happened in spite of the many applications and supplications made to the government. In spite of the land being allotted, the tribals have only the piece of paper with them without the actual possession of the land and are unable to cultivate the land which belongs to them.

Some other tribal settlements happened to be in the midst of the villages. Chennegowdanahundi is

Table 1. Landless hadis outside the forests:

Hadi	families	hadi	families
Anehatti Dipo Mala	26	Anehatti hadi	4
Satthigehundi	7	Kothnahalli	25
Chamenahalli hundi	24	Chikkereyur	20
Hosahalli hadi	12	Prabhanagar	25
Chennegowdana hundi	10	Dadadhahalli	20
Seegodu hadi	16	Heerehalli (near Moleyur)	7
Devalapura	30	Bavikere	36
Hanchipura	20	Naganahalli	10
Motha Kerchadi	15	Heerehalli	49



Editorial

THE VOICE OF THE VOICELESS

1991 will go down in the history of the world as a memorable year for the historical decisions taken, violence committed, communal hatred perpetuated, gruesome murders committed etc. At the international scene, Soviet Union became a reality of the past, paving way to a new Commonwealth of Independent Nations, the effects of which are yet to be felt globally.

In India, the murder of Rajiv Gandhi brought to an end the family rule and the election fought during that period saw the Indian National Congress emerging as the single largest party. Narasimha Rao was sworn in as the P.M. of India with new faces to head some of the key portfolios. Liberalization, devaluation and inflation has made the cost of living rise higher. Prices are soaring high and the poor person's life is made more and more difficult.

Violence based on caste, religion, language, boarder and basic resources have continued and have taken new forms. Instead of building bridges of understanding and fellowship, more and more walls of division, hatred and misunderstanding have been constructed which have given cause to continuous suspicion, doubt and lack of trust in the other. From East to West, from North to South, all the States of the Union are gripped with one issue or the other and this has made the life of common people more difficult.

Atrocities on women, dalits, tribals and children have increased and their feeble voices of protest have been crushed, their unsteady raising of hand to claim their rightful place in the society is put down heavily and they are made to submit themselves to all sorts of inhuman and unheard of tortures.

Is there any hope of change for them during 1992? Will their voice be heard, will their rightful cry for justice be answered? Will the mainstream society and its rulers be open to understand the plight of these voiceless, weak and downtrodden? Or will 1991 continue its sway over 1992 also?

As members of this society, we who are committed to a new human society have a duty to perform - to be the voice of the dumb, the hand of the handless, the feet of the crippled, the eyes of the blind, the ear of the deaf, etc. Otherwise, the next generation will surely point their accusing finger at us shouting: 'having eyes you saw not, having ears you heard not, having mouth you opened it not to uphold the rights of the the downtrodden - the tribals, dalits, women and children'.

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The Feeble Voices

an example of this. Houses were constructed for them. But the people of the village fought with them and almost pushed them out of the village. Now they have moved away from there and have settled behind the forest guest house near Handpost with some small structure not meant for human habitat.

This way the landless tribals face innumerable difficulties. Neither the blowing wind, nor the falling rain, nor the bright sunshine can wipe away the miseries faced by these tribals. They are living amidst a slow moving death, unwanted and rejected by the mainstream society.

Table 2
Landless hadis in the
midst of forests:

hadi	families
Balle	56
Muleyoor	42
Golur	45
Sebinakolli	24
Manchur I	20
Manchur II	6
Kaimaradahadi	16
Kalkere hadi	9
Aanemala	13
Bavali hadi	7
Thimmanahadi	
Hosahallihadi	16
Sunkadakatte	12
Udbhur Kerehadi	18

The families that live here have labour only if the forest department offers them some job here and there. Otherwise they have no labour at all. Some times they migrate to the neighboring state, Kerala, in search of labour. When they have no labour, they have to face the stark reality of life, i.e., hunger. One of the major contradictions one notices here is that no tribal family has been given any land. Yet people belonging to "Odiga Gowdas" have been offered thousands of acres of forest land for cultivation. One can firmly affirm that only when the bureaucracy, politicians and landlords have any humanity in



Will their wait be in vain?

them that the lives of the tribals would become meaningful and not just by inserting some acts or amendments in the Constitution of our country. The problems the tribals face are far beyond the reach of the structure of laws and constitutions. They could be perceived only by those who have a human heart which opens its eyes to the situation and life-struggle of the tribals. Dr. B.D.Sharma, when he was the Commissioner for SC/ST, has submitted a detailed report to the Government of India, in which he, for the first time, gives a real picture of situation of the tribals and pointed out suggestions for their upliftment.

Some hadis are in the forest and in fact do some sort of cultivation. They have not yet received any ownership right over the land they cultivate. They are:

Maladahadi	42 families
Dammanakatte	33
Bhogeputra	25
Seegur hadi	37
Badaga I	21
Badaga II	16
Udbhur hadi	37
Majanakuppe mala	10
Uskoor Mala	36

These families have been cul-

tivating the land belonging to the forest department for the last 10 to 12 years. Since they do not possess any document of right of ownership, no government benefits or programmes reach them. The tribals who live within the forests have been deprived of any government welfare programmes. Nor do the Forest Officials permit them to plan any developmental programmes. For example, Bhavikere hadi was allotted 30 houses by the Zilla Parishat; but the Forest Department did not permit them to construct these houses. From 1987 onwards, nearly 210 houses were approved for the tribals who live in the forest, but no house has been built due to the stiff stand taken by the forest department. Further, these tribals also face lack of proper drinking water, school, medical facilities, etc., which are basic for a proper living.

On the other hand, most of the government welfare programmes can be utilised by only those who have land. Hence, the tribals who are landless, have not been touched by these programmes. Even though some have received some benefits, it has not helped them to lift themselves up from the

miserable situation they are in.

To sum up, of the 3037 tribal families in H.D. Kote, 1650 are landless. In their own land of birth, they have to find alternatives for a meaningful existence and survival.

Tribals Displaced By Dams

Three major dams have been constructed in H.D.Kote, viz., Taraka, Kabini and Nugu. Out of these, Kabini is a major one. It has brought around 61 square kilometers of land under water. In the process, (according to the report of Public Works Department) 14 tribal hadis were displaced. But nothing is mentioned about their identity, their rehabilitation and the various alternatives offered to them. According to the survey we conducted, the following details have been obtained.

15 Tribal hadis have been displaced.

Chatarahundi: There were 16 Soliga families. After the displacement, these families dispersed to Boredevara manti and Bundanamala.

Kanakanahalli colony: There were 36 families of Jenu Kuruba and Soliga community. They used

to cultivate land here. After the displacement, they moved to Katuvalu, Boredevara manti, Bandipura, Basavapura and Bundanamala.

Jaganakote: There were 32 Betta Kuruba families. Of these 13 were allotted land in Kenchanahalli Survey No.1. But this land was encroached by farmers and forest department. The tribals had to

they are landless and dispersed in Kothnahalli and Heerchalli.

Displacement Due to Forest Laws

Karnataka Forest Act 1963 and Wildlife Protection Act 1972 has brought in more displacement from the forests.

They are:

Gadimachanayakanahalli - 65

Of the many things said in the circulars, one thing that props up as an important issue is that one should not consider that the tribals have encroached the forest land, rather these tribals have lived there for generations and hence for them living in the forest is their fundamental right.

move out to a nearby place near N.Begur, which is today known as Jaganakote.

Maranahadi: 60 Jenukuruba families lived here. They owned sufficient land and even cultivated rice. They had to move to the upper part of the hadi as the lower part came under the cover of water. The land they used to cultivate was submerged, and today many of them are landless.

Manchegowdanahalli colony: 20 Jenukuruba families lived here. They had to move to Dammanakatte, K.R.pura, Doddahadi and Macchur hadi.

Bhogeputra hadi: 20 Jenukuruba families had to move away from here due to the submerging of their land. They moved into the forest and built up their hadi under the same name.

Similarly, those which were displaced due to submerging are:

Naganakatte hadi - 18 families
Kakanakote Masti hadi - 40 families;
Maradaboddedevara hadi - 20 families;
Sidiluhodeda hunasamarada hadi - 15 families;
Sundepurada hadi - 30 families;

Maranahadi - 60 families; Dammanakatte hadi - 18 families;
Dhyavana hadi - 30 families;
Hosahalli hadi - 23 families.

Besides these, the 30 families that were displaced under Taraka Dam submerging, were cultivating around 80 acres of land. But today

families; Metikuppe hadi - 60 families; Sonahalli - 30 families; Kothnahalli hadi - 30 families; Malahadi - 35 families; Badaga colony - 18 families; Seegur hadi - 9 families; Alanahalli hadi - 15 families; Vadera halli hadi - 35 families; Bhavikere - 30 families; Dadadha halli hadi - 20 families.

Most of these families were cultivating land in the forests and were content. Today most of them are landless and are displaced from the forests. They are left with no alternatives either. Both the government and the forest department have ignored their demand for a right to live and turned a blind eye towards their rightful demands.

There are some other hadis that have been displaced from the forests and have been brought to the periphery of the forests.

They are:

Balle - 42 families; Doddahadi - 16 families; Macchur hadi I - 22 families; Macchur hadi II - 16 families; Sunkadakatte hadi - 12 families; Golor Hadi - 32 families; Kadegadde hadi - 12 families; Hosur hadi - 16 families; Banur hadi - 8 families; Bavali hadi - 7 families; Mule hadi - 43 families; Aane mala - 21 families; Hosahalli hadi - 26 families.

So far these families were right in the forest, cultivating the land for their livelihood. Today they

have been moved to the very periphery of the forest with no land to cultivate and have become landless labourers.

Now efforts are on from the forest department to further displace them from their present places of existence. Totally 1086 families of 41 hadis have been displaced due to forest laws and construction of dams.

The life style and the food habits of the people who live in the forest is a special and peculiar one. They know the forest so well, as if they live in the very heart of the forest. They used 47 varieties of roots, 90 kinds of fruits, 60 kinds of greens/leaves, 43 varieties of mushrooms as food.. If these are displaced from their natural habitat, one is uprooting from them their very fundamental right of existence, their right to live.

Government Circulars

In order to fulfill the rightful demands of the tribals, the government need not contravene any law. Dr. B.D.Sharma, the commissioner of SC/ST, placed before the government certain recommendations and suggestions in order to help the tribals.

The government has discussed this in the meeting of secretaries and has sent out 6 circulars on 18-8-1990 to be implemented by all the state governments.

Of the many things said in the circulars, one thing that props up as an important issue is that one should not consider that the tribals have encroached the forest land, rather these tribals have lived there for generations and hence for them living in the forest is their fundamental right.

The second circular No.13-1-90 F.P.(2)18-8-90 pertains to the rights of the tribals.

Even before the government declared certain forests as reserved, many of the tribals lived in these forests. Without considering this fact, today they are considered as those who have illegally occupied the reserved forests, and are to be forcefully evacuated. It was important on the part of the department to identify these tribals before the forest was declared reserved and produce documents

of their existence. The lack of such documents with the forest department is not the mistake of the tribals, but the sluggishness of the department, and for this the innocent tribals should not be victimized. Hence these tribals should not be considered as illegal occupants of the forest land. They were there even before the act came into existence.

Secondly those who possessed land before 1980, such land must be legalised. No tribal should be displaced before proper alternative is planned and implemented.

Government of India has sent out a circular to all the state governments concerning the rehabilitation of the tribals. NO.6-21-89 FP 1-6-90. Some of the main points here are:

1. This plan has to be implemented in the degraded forests that exist even in reserved forests.

2. Sufficient land has to be identified for rehabilitation and should be converted into blocks for such purpose. Every family has to be allotted 5 hectares of land for raising forest and 2 hectares of land for cultivation.

Besides, according to the National Forest Policy 1988, the traditional tribal right to forest is to be respected.

Other aspects that are dealt in these circulars are:

Granting of ownership of forest land; settlements that exist in the forest area to be considered as revenue villages and provision must be made for their development; due compensation to be offered if any harm has been done by wild animals; only tribals to be taken for all the works within the forest and giving them the just wages etc. Against this background, we place before the government some of the fundamental demands of the tribals of H.D.Kote.

Urging Feeble Voices

1. The tribals of H.D.Kote are forest dwellers from several centuries. They have been deprived of all the basic rights and have become homeless and landless. Considering this fact, the forest

department should rehabilitate them within the forest according to the plans presented in circular no.6-21-89 FP1-6-90.

- a. In the plan of rehabilitation, the degraded lands are to be identified and are to be allotted to the tribals.

- b. We have already mentioned the hadis and families to be rehabilitated. They are:

- i. 356 families from 18 hadis who are landless and are outside the forest.

- ii. 284 families of 13 hadis who are living in the forest.

- iii. 1086 families of 42 hadis who are displaced due to the forest laws and construction of dams.

- iv. 257 families of 9 hadis who are cultivating the forest lands are to be given ownership rights.

2. The government should grant 5 acres of land to each family (totally 1659 families who are landless) and undertake a comprehensive developmental programme for them.

3. Through LAMP society, the tribals are to be allowed to collect the minor forest produce from all categories of forests.

4. The tribal skills are to be encouraged and developed and the necessary raw material like bamboo should be provided.

5. Tribals are to be taken for forest work and those tribals who have worked as watchmen for many years are to be made permanent.

6. In order to assist the agricultural activity, government should plan irrigation facilities for the tribals.

7. Government should follow the Andhra Pradesh Model (ITDA) and open single window to handle all the programmes pertaining to the tribals. A critical evaluation should be conducted on all the tribal programmes to find out their meaningfulness and effective implementation.

8. In order to make basic education compulsory among the tribals, more and more Ashrama schools are to be opened wherever necessary.

FEDINA NEWS CORNER

SARJAPURA

Sheep rearing

A programme to assist landless labourers and those who depend only on casual wages has been initiated at Ittangur village. Six women beneficiaries have been chosen and they are given a pair of sheep each for rearing. It is hoped that this programme will give additional income when the number of sheep increase in due course.

Shramadan at Kallahalli

On 26th October, the people of Kallahalli organised a shramadan (free labour) where every one in the village participated. When people join together they can do wonders. This was proved during this one day shramadan during which they repaired the road which goes through their village and cleansed the whole village. This has helped them to work together for common goals. Kallahalli village looks much brighter today and the people of the village are proud of their achievement.

H.D.KOTE

Jatha

The recent starvation deaths at Dadadahalli colony, where 8 tribal children died evoked the tribal people to organise a Jatha which received full support from BKS, VMS, Budakattu Ranga Vedike and Fedina-Vikasa. This jatha which began on November 15th went through all the colonies and ended on 21st December 1991. The idea behind this jatha was to visit all the 106 Hadis of H.D.Kote taluk and get the situation analysis of each hadi regarding the requirements of the tribals. All the hadis participated in the jatha. The Budakattu Ranga Vedike, which is the cultural forum of the tribals, performed few street plays and sang some songs which were well appreciated by everyone. During the concluding function at Mooleyur hadi on December 21st, the DC of Mysore district Mr. Sid-

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daiah spoke to the tribals and assured them that proper action will be taken to solve their problems. Around 500 tribals were present at this meeting.

WAYANAD

Exhibition

Under the auspices of Fedina and Adivasi Aikya Samithy, an exhibition of traditional handicrafts of the tribals of Wayanad was organised which was both interesting and informative. The one day exhibition which was held at Vazhavatta area was much appreciated by tribals and non-tribals. Traditional household utensils, jewellery, farming equipments, food preservatives, musical instruments etc. were the main items displayed on the occasion. Tribal medicines were also part of this exhibition.

Legal education seminar

Kuppady, Vazhavatta, Nambiyarkunnu and Edakkal areas, legal education seminars were conducted. Fundamental rights of the citizens of India and other legal issues specifically related to the tribals were discussed. Mr. Luckose Jacob, Advocate Mathew Velloor, Advocate Geevarghese, Baby Paul and E.T. Raju took classes during the seminar.

Vegetable gardens

The Adivasi Aikya Samithy members have started vegetable gardens at Kuppady in Bathery area. Vegetable seeds for this purpose have been supplied by the Ambalavayal horticulture department. Organic farming methods will be used to develop these vegetables. Ms Agnes Luckose and Ms Indira took classes to explain the advantages of doing organic farming. There is a plan to implement this programme in all the other areas.

NILGIRIS

Balawadis

Balawadis have begun to function at Cholady, Kanayamvayal, and Chempakappally areas. Along

with these balawadis, health education, vaccination and child care are also given importance. There are 75 children attending these balawadis.

World literacy day

September 8th, the world literacy day, was celebrated with various activities. The literacy jatha which was organised by the cultural troupe was the climax of the celebration. This jatha which began at 8.00 a.m. at Ayyankolly reached Bitherkad in the evening. Street dramas, songs and other cultural events made this programme an enjoyable and successful event.

CHENGAM

Staff Training

Since our programme at Chengam is of recent origin, it was decided to invite the Chengam team for a follow-up training at Bangalore office. All the staff members participated in this training programme from 2nd to 6th December 1991. Giving guidance on various aspects of social work, Mr. Sam Chelladurai and Mr. Saravanan from Indian Social Institute conducted this programme with the assistance of Promod John and Bangalore office staff.

Two of our tribal staff members were sent to Vellore for training in mushroom culture. They will be giving training to the tribals of the villages to cultivate mushroom for additional income.

Community Health Centre

December 18th will not be easily forgotten by the people of Jawadi hills and our team at Chengam. One of their long cherished dreams materialised on that day when they inaugurated their community health centre with great joy and pride. Representatives from our other project areas were also present to share the happiness with the people of Jawadi hills.

KITTUR

Re-starting of handlooms

In Machi village, the Khadi Gramodyog of Bailhongal had put two weaving maggas, which they wanted to take back as the people had not been showing very keen interest in making use of these. The staff requested the chairman to give them some more time. So after a long discussion with the villagers and with the help of one of the villagers, we managed to find a man from nearby village who could repair the looms and teach the Machi people weaving. Now the magga is re-started with much vigour.

Meeting with AEO

We have been thinking of programmes which were sidelined because of the land issue. The schools were the ones which were badly affected. One of the staff has shown interest to start a school in Galaginamada. So, all the team members sat with the villagers to discuss about the Kulavalli area schools. It was decided to contact the new AEO at Bailhongal and brief him about the situation. 20 villagers along with the staff went to Bailahongal and requested the education department to visit these villages. Upon their request, the AEO visited Dindlekoppa, Sagara, Papermill and Kulavalli. A school betterment committee was formed in all these three villages for the first time and the AEO has approved these.

Working Together

There are many issues such as ration cards, bus services, post office services etc. which affect all the nine villages. Rather than struggling to sort out these issues in isolation, they have decided to work together. In view of this a meeting was organised at Nimgapur where representatives from the Kulavalli cluster participated.

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