

Modern Education in Kolhan Government Estate in Singhbhum and the Ho Adivasi Society (1841-1947)

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Abstract

The present paper examines the transformative impact of the advent of modern education on the Ho society of Kolhan.¹. Before introduction of modern education, the adivasis of Kolhan were living in a world underlined by orality. They had no formal education and they did not know about the basic 3 Rs of learning; their wisdom and knowledge had traditionally been transmitted orally through generations. Therefore, when the British introduced modern formal education in the Kolhan region, influenced by their avowed policy of Civilizing Mission and compelled by practical needs, it led to varying social responses, ranging from outright rejection to reluctant acceptance to general enthusiasm. Regardless of the response to modern education, the adivasi society of Kolhan underwent significant changes. It was deeply impacted by dynamic forces that compelled them to adapt to changing circumstances. This paper attempts to capture the response and impact of Western pedagogy on the Hos through contemporary sources.

I. Introduction: Advent of modern education in Singhbhum

Macaulay's Minute of 1835 formed the general backdrop of the introduction of modern education in India. In 1835, Lord William Bentinck (1774-1839), under the influence of Macaulay and Raja Ram Mohan Roy's arguments, introduced modern education through the English medium in India. He himself believed that Western education was a panacea for all social evils prevalent in Indian Society. This pan-Indian context set the stage for the implementation of modern education in adivasi-dominated areas of India, including the

¹The erstwhile Kolhan approximately corresponds to the present West Singhbhum district.

Kolhan Government Estate (KGE)² in Singhbhum. However, the social situation in Kolhan was radically different from the national scenario. Unlike other parts of India, the Ho society of Kolhan was oral without any contact with the traditional or modern educational system. In fact, they were happy with their oral universe and the rich cultural fabric. The introduction of modern education in the region was the work of the British, forced by politico-administrative imperatives.

A modest beginning toward modern education was made when Major Edward Roughsedge³ entered the Kolhan region in 1820 to subjugate the dominant and resilient Ho adivasis of Kolhan, whom he called 'Lurka Coles' (fighter Kols). In 1820, Here, he was awestruck by the simplicity and oral nature of the Ho people, who lacked the ability to read and write, and were unconnected to any formal educational system. Describing this situation, he wrote to the authorities at Fort William: '...their language is merely oral... I did not meet a single Cole who understood a word of the Hindee or Orea languages.'⁴ The orality of Ho society posed a significant challenge to the British authorities, who had to rely on 'undependable' non Ho *Tanti*⁵ interpreters. As a result, the British authorities recognised the need to provide language skills to the Ho community through formal education programmes.

When the British finally quelled the formidable Ho challenge in 1821, a five-point agreement was made with them. The fourth clause of the agreement urged the Ho people to promote the education of their children in the 'Oreya or Hindee languages'.⁶ However, the agreement clause did not lead to actual beginning of modern education in Kolhan as Roughsedge was too occupied with his military campaigns to turn his attention to non-military affairs.

Twenty years later, Captain Thomas Wilkinson, the political agent to the Governor General, heading the South-West Frontier Agency (SWFA),⁷ revived the theme of

² After the subjugation of Kolhan in 1837, the Hos were incorporated into a formal state system called the Kolhan Government Estate, which roughly formed the present-day West Singhbhum district governed by Wilkinson's civil and criminal rules. The Civil Procedure Code was never implemented, but the Criminal Procedure Code and other all India regulations were introduced in Kolhan (Sen 2011: 88). KGE comprised 26 Ho *pirs* and 911 villages (Craven 1898: Appendix A). KGE was a non-regulatory area which did not fall within the jurisdiction of the Scheduled Districts Act of 1874.

³ Major Roughsedge (1774-1822) was appointed the first Political Agent to Government on the South Western Frontier Agency in 1819. His operational area was Ramgarh Battalion, which covered the present Jharkhand state.

⁴ Major Roughsedge, to Secretary Metcalfe, 9 May 1820, Extract Bengal Political Consultation, 3 June 1820, para 17.

⁵ Tantis have been living with the Hos in their villages for several generations and traditionally functioned as weavers, interpreters and accountants.

⁶ Extract Political Letter from Bengal 13 June 1823, para 185, *Bengal Political Department, 1823: Operations against the Coles in Singbhum*. The Ho-British conflict in 1820-21 is popularly known in History as Ho revolt. In these years, the Hos under their legendary leader, Mata Ho, bravely fought the British forces led by Major Roughsedge. The Hos had to submit before mighty British battalion in 1821 and were forced to sign the one-sided agreement of 1821.

⁷ Following the Kol Rebellion of 1831-32, the British enacted Regulation XIII of 1833. In accordance with this regulation, the region of Chotanagpur encompassing Manbhum, Lohardaga (Ranchi and Palamu), and

imparting formal education to the Hos, whom the colonial administrators considered a ‘savage’ and sanguinary group of people. He was particularly concerned about the prevalence of witchcraft among the Hos of Kolhan, who attributed their illness to witchcraft and displeasure of their *bongas* and spirits. To eradicate the social evil, Wilkinson proposed the establishment of hospitals and schools, which he believed would eliminate ‘the dreadful prejudice’ of witchcraft altogether (Nath 2016: 18-19). Thus, he regarded education as a solution to the prevalent social problems in Ho society. A recent study noted that ‘being a Bentinck-day administrator, he was prescribing the same medicine, which his peer did by emphasising western education as the panacea for Indian social evils’ (Sen 2011: 63).

This was the general background of opening the first Anglo-Hindi school for Ho children in 1841 (Ricketts 1857: 105, Craven 1898: 23, Nath 2016: 19). Situated in the district headquarters of Chaibasa sadar area, the school was named Chaibasa School (also spelt Chyebassa or Chybassa School in British documents).⁸ This landmark event paved the way for a series of educational ventures, ultimately leading to the establishment of Chaibasa Zillah School in 1865 at Chaibasa (Nath 2022: 293). By 1870, many primary schools, village *pathsalas*, and middle English and vernacular schools were opened throughout Jharkhand (Sen 2012: 44).

The British’s initial efforts at introducing Western modern Western education in Kolhan were underlined by a focus on language promotion, primarily English and Hindi. Colonel Dalton, the Commissioner of Chotanagpur, informed W. Gorden Young, the Director of Public Instructions, regarding the Hos’ aptitude for learning English and securing employment:⁹

‘We have taken the Larka Kols, the most superstitious of all, under our direct rule. To civilize them as far as we can is our imperative duty; and it is both for their and our advantage that this should be done through an English, rather than through an oriental medium.’

In another letter to W. Gorden Young, Colonel Dalton, expressed his belief that the people of Kolhan would take up modern education in a more spirited manner ‘as any other class of natives in India’:¹⁰

‘It is not alone the Kols (Hos) that are to benefit [from modern education]; the zamindars and their relatives are inclined to send their children, the desire to learn English having extended to them in no small degree. I cannot pretend to divine

Hazaribagh was integrated into the South-West Frontier Agency (SWFA) in 1834. The district of Singhbhum was subsequently included in 1837. The Agency was declared a non-regulation zone and was headed by an officer called ‘Agent to the Governor General’.

⁸ Chaibasa School building is currently untraceable in Chaibasa Sadar area, and there are no existing photographs or sketches of the school.

⁹ *General Report on Public Instruction in the Lower Provinces of Bengal* (henceforth GRPI) 1869-70, 1870, 47. (Extract from Colonel Dalton Letter No. 108 of 11 June 1859 to Mr. W. Gorden Young, Director of Public Instructions).

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

what would become of the lads in after-life. The careers of those who have not a livelihood to earn would probably be rendered pleasant to themselves and more useful to their countrymen by the attainment in their youth of knowledge, however, small English literature and Science. Employment as writers, appointment now necessarily bestowed on foreigners, would be open to some, and in regard to the mass, especially the Kols, they are naturally very intelligent and would derive as much benefit from education as any other class of natives of India; perhaps more, because they are now the ignorant victims of a superstition that impels them to commit the most frightful crimes....'

II. Early struggle

In spite of the British expectation that the people of Kolhan would readily accept modern education, the introduction of formal education did not receive immediate support from the Ho society. The concept of modern education, with schools as an embodiment, was foreign to them. Because they were an oral society throughout their history, the idea of forsaking their traditional way of life did not go well with them. Their reluctance to accept modern education was often influenced by their daily routines and practical necessities.

The local Ho society got help from their children in household chores. These adivasi children were extra hands for their parents and family. They helped the family at home and outside work. Especially during the harvesting and sowing seasons, the attendance of the students was negligible because it was considered more important for them to stay at home.¹¹ Not only going to school was a time-consuming exercise, they also struggled to understand the potential benefits of the new education system. An amusing report from Singhbhum's officiating Deputy Inspector of Schools highlights this situation:¹²

'When I asked the Kols to send their children to schools, they absolutely refused, saying, "If our children will attend the school then who will catch fish, on the sale of which we live, and who will cultivate the ground, which is the chief means of our subsistence?"' After great endeavours I induced them to send their children to school, but they complain of the weakness of the understanding power of their children....'.

Thus, even if a Ho boy was enrolled in school, there was no guarantee that he would continue attending. He could leave school at any time due to various reasons. This presents the government with a formidable challenge of both bringing students into classrooms and preventing dropouts. A contemporary government records observed that the adivasi boys of Kolhan were registered on the rolls, but only a few of them showed themselves in the classrooms¹³. The diagnosed causes were poverty, need of extra hands in the cultivation, the languages taught in the school being alien, and prejudices of the Hindu teachers who

¹¹ *GRPI, 1845-46*, Appendix A, 5.

¹² *GRPI, 1869-70*, 526.

¹³ *GRPI, 1875-76*, 37.

regarded their adivasi pupils as *mlechcha* and hostility of the land-owning class toward the provision of general education.¹⁴

The government's treatment of the poor attendance at the school was rather frivolous. A system of giving cash prizes was introduced for the students who had performed well in the school's academic and non-academic areas since 1846.¹⁵ Later, this amount was increased to half *anna* per day in order to ensure regular attendance of the students in Chaibasa School. This amount was further raised to 2 annas per day.¹⁶ In 1847, the Chairman of Education Committee, Fred J. Mouat prepared a holiday table in which all government school will have 61 days annual leave. The local committee of the school was empowered to make fair changes according to the local requirements.¹⁷ To arrest the dropout problem missionary schools started giving harvest holidays which got a good response.¹⁸ But still, when the children were in primary classes, they had to go to school as per the instruction of their parents who did not consider regular school attendance as a priority. School attendance was often hindered by family celebrations or other obligations.

We do not have any direct evidence regarding the impact of the government's monetary measures. However, a brief examination of contemporary government records over several months can safety conclude that the prospect of monetary benefit did not fully address this situation. It is understood that in a tradition-bound society where money had little role to play, these monetary measures were expected to elicit lukewarm response.

Deep-seated superstitions also played significant role in hindering the advancement of early education. The Hos linked various events, both minor and major, with omens.¹⁹ In the year 1872-73, during a visit to a school in Chaibasa, the Deputy School Inspector discovered a low enrollment of students. Upon investigation, he learned that on the day the school opened, some parents were bringing their children when they witnessed an eagle descending and swooping down on a wandering chicken. This incident frightened them, leading them to refrain from sending their children to school. They believed that if their children attended this school, the entire village would face calamity.²⁰ We can presume that several other unrecorded minor incidents might have impacted the attendance of students in schools and slowed down the overall progress of education in Kolhan.

Parents' fear about the safety of their children also emerged as a potent factor in the low enrollment in schools. During the Deputy School Inspector's visit to Kotghar village in Singhbhum in 1872, he saw some tribal families within the school premises. Upon inquiry, the Inspector learned that these families were hesitant to send their children to school due to the fear that if their children attended and gained even a little education, the British

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid., 69.

¹⁶ Ibid., 165.

¹⁷ GRPI, 1847-48. Appendix No. 1, ix.

¹⁸ Gharbandhu, 15 December 1912, 75.

¹⁹ GRPI, 1872-73, Appendix A, 525-26.

²⁰ Ibid.

government would send them to work in the Assam tea gardens.²¹ Parents' another apprehension was linked to Christian missionaries. There was a concern that the missionaries might attempt to convert their children to Christianity as part of the educational process. The village Munda of Kotghar also regarded the missionary schools with suspicion.²²

In the early days of the introduction of modern education in Kolhan, no upper class Hindu family wanted to send their children to school, because children of local poor tribals used to go there to study. Upper class Hindu families considered themselves to be higher than these tribals in socio-economic and in caste terms. They felt that if their children study in the same class with tribal children, their social status will be reduced.²³ According to the Report of the Examination results of Chaibasa School from July 1841 to January 1842, only the Diwan of Kharsawan had shown exceptional courage in sending his child to study at the newly established Chaibasa School, without caring about social condemnation. In 1850, his younger brother and a cousin had also come to study in the English section of Chaibasa School. At that time, some more upper-class Hindu families sent their children to the school, but soon took them out due to the fear of undermining their social prestige.²⁴

Inadequate infrastructure also contributed to low attendance in schools. During the early days of education in Kolhan, the Lower Primary and Upper Primary Schools were mostly run in hut-shaped dilapidated *kacha* houses (mud houses), in which there was lack of blackboard, bench, desks and other teaching materials. Initially, the British Government undertook the construction of school buildings, but subsequently, the responsibility for maintaining Lower Primary School buildings was delegated to the concerned village *Munda* or *Manki* of the *Pir*.²⁵ According to the *1947 Report of the Kolhan Enquiry Committee*, the majority of school buildings were in a state of neglect due to the *Manki-Munda*'s indifference to this responsibility.²⁶

A large number of students found the government schools' curriculum distasteful and perplexing which led to frequent dropouts.²⁷ In 1850, J.S. Davis and J. Kiyrrri, members of the local committee of Chaibasa School and officials of the Annual Examination of Government School, Singhbhum reported that at the commencement of the academic session in 1850, two Ho students enrolled in the first grade, but one of them left the school within three months, apprehensive of the demanding coursework.²⁸ The reason for the students finding the government school curriculum monotonous and difficult was very

²¹ *Ibid.*, Appendix A., 526.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *General Report of the late General Committee of Public Instruction in 1840-41 & 1841-42*, William Huston and Co., Calcutta, 1842, 202, Para-331.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Munda* was the hereditary headman of a single village, whereas *Manki* was also a hereditary chief of a group of villages, called *Pir*.

²⁶ *Report of the Kolhan Enquiry Committee*, 1947, 3.

²⁷ *General Report on Public Instruction in the Lower Provinces of Bengal Presidency from 1st Oct 1849 to 30th Sep. 1850*, Calcutta: Bengal Military Orphan Press, 1852, 260-262;

²⁸ *GRPI*, 1851, 260-62.

clear. They were abruptly introduced to subjects like English, History, Geography, General Knowledge, and Grammar starting from the first grade. Second-grade students were even taught about the History of Greece and Rome (Nath 2016: 26-27). The pressure to complete the syllabus, coupled with the sudden shift from practical knowledge to theoretical learning, overwhelmed many students. Consequently, a significant number of them lost motivation after failing at exams and dropped out.²⁹ However, some, like Soharam and Dunardam in 1850, excelled in their studies, setting an example for their peers at Chaibasa School.³⁰ Still, the issue of dropout never ceased to be a major concern for the school authorities till the first half of the twentieth century.

Yet another difficulty impeding the growth of modern education in KGE was related to the payment of primary teachers. What the government gave to the teachers as salary was not sufficient for them and these teachers were supposed to be compensated by people's contributions. However, the people were not willing to pay much. This problem appears to have been prevalent in a more acute form in Singhbhum district as we find a government report lamenting that 'In Singhbhum, there was, of course, no traditional reverence for the guru, and hitherto little or nothing has been contributed by the people.'³¹ However, this observation seems misdirected when applied to the predominantly adivasi region of Kolhan where monetary economy barely existed and people had hardly any surplus money to part with. Their inability to financially support gurus should not be interpreted as disrespect towards them.

Inducing the people to pay to the gurus gave much anxiety to the government and at one moment it thought of levying educational cess. But it was feared that such a cess would prevent the people from sending their children to schools and the whole purpose of levying cess would be defeated.³² The government also thought of giving the management of primary schools to the local Panchayats, but dropped the plan due to the fear that the time is not ripe for introducing this scheme. The situation remains that the controlling agency for the primary education remained in the hands of the Magistrates who acted under the advice of the local committees.³³ However, in the year 1888, the situation had changed and the control of the Primary education was vested in the District Boards.³⁴

III. Shifting perception and social change

In spite of their initial inhibitions and reservations, the adivasis of KGE gradually realised that they could no longer afford to ignore modern Western education, even if they did not like it, because it was seen as a way to success and recognition. This societal

²⁹GRPI, 1851, 260-62.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹GRPI, 1875-76, 36.

³²Ibid.

³³Ibid.

³⁴The General Report on Public Instruction in Bengal for 1887-88, General Department, Education, 1889, 1-2.

acceptance was captured brilliantly in a Ho song which counselled people to take up education and adapt to changing time (Archer 1942: 27/98):³⁵

It's dark everywhere
The glory of [Ho] is fading
Friends! Let's begin reading and writing
Ka, kh, ga, gha... (A, B, C, D)
With knowledge gained, wisdom attained
Your fame will spread far and wide

We witness a swift change in the attitude of the Kolhan population with the recognition of the value of modern education. The initial reluctance quickly turned to eagerness for learning. As noted in the Annual Report of 1868-69, there was such enthusiasm among the local tribals towards education that children and adults started flocking to the schools every month. The age limit for enrolment was not yet fixed, so pupils up to the age of 5 to 28 years were placed in the same class.³⁶ There was a festive atmosphere regarding enrolment in the school. Earlier, the parents of these tribal children were told to send their children to schools; now they started coming with their children to enrol in the school. In addition, adult students came to the schools to enroll themselves, regardless of their age. These adult students started coming to school to get a better life. They had also become aware of the consequences of education. From 1868-69 the students over the age of 16 were returned, but they did not easily leave the school, they kept on urging the school management to enrol them in the school.³⁷ In its annual report of 1869, the Inspector of Schools for the South-West Division acknowledged this remarkable transformation:³⁸

'It is with sincere pleasure that I see a growing desire among this people for the acquisition of knowledge. Kol children and adult of every age will flock in numbers for admission at the beginning of every month. The former are generally admitted, while the latter, if they happen to be above 16 years of age, are told to go back, but often in vain, for they cannot comprehend why age, to which they are utterly indifferent (disdaining ever to keep the least calculation of it whatever) should be a bar to their education. Admit them or not, they will not cease to attend the school regularly when not detained by business at home; they will have books, will sit wherever you will make them sit, and will thankfully and cheerfully receive any instruction imparted to them, either by their teachers or more advanced fellow students. These are certainly hopeful signs of progress among a people who were

³⁵ Janum Singh Pingua from Parsa village in Majhgaon block translated the original Ho song into Hindi, and Sanjay Nath from Jamshedpur provided the subsequent English translation.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 135, Appendix A.

³⁷ GRPI, 1868-69, 135-36, Appendix A, 135-36.

³⁸ Ibid.

buried in ignorance for ages past, and upon whom the light of knowledge and civilization has but just begun to dawn.'

The 'Village Notes', originated during the Kolhan Settlement of 1916-17, conducted by A.D. Tuckey, and preserved in the Chaibasa Record Room, illustrates an important aspect of social change in Kolhan. In many villages where there were no schools, the adivasi children used to walk varying distances ranging from 1 to 19 miles to attend schools established in neighbouring villages. This shows that modern education was widely accepted as a road to government employment and overall prosperity. The table below shows the distance from a particular village to schools in other villages:³⁹

Table 1: Village-wise data of school-going children and the distance covered

Village	Pir	School going children	Distance of school from village
Roladiah	Thaai	6 boys	Kokcho school, one mile
Gitilada	Thai	3 boys	Kokcho school, one and a half miles away
Kariasinduri	Thai	3 boys	Attend school at Tantnagar, 3-4 miles away
Pendargaria	Thai	6 boys	At Chaibasa, 19 miles
Kathbari	Thai	16 boys and 18 girls	In the village school
Tonto	Thai	5 boys	Thai village, 1 mile
‘Dumbisai	Gumra	23 boys and 04 girls	The attend Zillah school and Mission school at Chaibasa, nearly a mile away
Jorapokhar	Gumra	14 boys (9 Hos)	Attend the Upper Primary village school
Matagutu	Gumra	8 Ho boys and 2 Ho girls	Attend school at Bingtopang, about a mile from Matagutu
Serengsia	Gumra	8 boys (7 Hos)	3 boys attend school at Chaibasa, and the rest at Jhinkpani school about 2 miles away
Nimdih	Gumra	12 boys	2 miles Kunta village
Bamebasa	Gumra	7 boys	2 mile adjoining village

³⁹ The above data have been taken from separate files of 'Tuckey Settlement Village Notes' (TSVN), 1916-17. To demonstrate the involvement of boys and girls of Kolhan in modern education, we selected three particular Pirs out of a total of 26 in the erstwhile KGE.

Bhutia	Barkela	2 Ho boys in U.P.	3 miles on foot to Barkela village, half mile on foot to another village
Ganbra	Barkela	3 boys 1 boy 5 boy	1 mile from Ganbra to Barkela U.P. Chaibasa Vernacular School, half mile from Ganbra, Lalia village L.P
Pata Guera	Barkela	9 Ho boys	1 mile to Barkela village

The above table of village-wise data of school-going children shows an increasing social response to modern education. The village students daily travelled from one mile to 19 miles to reach their schools. In a few villages, along with the boys, the Ho girls also travelled the same distance to the schools. This suggests that by the second decade of the 20th century, modern education had overcome gender barriers and become deeply embedded in Kolhan society. By the second half of the 20th century, girls' education became a common occurrence in Kolhan. Parvati Purty, a retired Ho school teacher from Jetiya village of Noamundi block of West Singhbhum district informs us that her family has three generations of learning and teaching. She recalls that when she started schooling at the village school, her father, her sister, and her maternal uncle were already teaching there. Later, after completing her post-graduation and B.Ed. from Ranchi University, she became a school teacher and taught in government schools of Tonto, Chitimiti and Majhgaon in West Singhbhum.⁴⁰ We hear similar stories of educational history from several families living in different parts of Kolhan. They share a familiar story about the close association of their women with learning and teaching.

It is obvious that the adivasis of Kolhan accepted modern education, first with some reluctance and later willingly, to grab government employment. An inspector for schools noted in the context of Bengal that 'Western education was valued, because the natives had the idea that it would lead to...employment under Government.'⁴¹ This situation was true for Kolhan as well. The Hos who were educated up to high school and whose handwriting was good got the jobs of writing reports in the Government offices.⁴² Thus, only knowing English and writing well also became a way of getting job. On 1st April 1901, W.D Thomson, the Deputy Commissioner of Singhbhum wrote that less literate 14 peons were appointed in his office, among them 5 were Hos and rest other were adivasis, for this 'less educated' was an essential qualification.⁴³ These tribal peons according to their work got salary of 5, 6 and 7 rupees per month.

⁴⁰ This account is based on personal conversation with Parvati Purty in February 2023.

⁴¹ *GRPI, 1856-57, Appendix A, 123.*

⁴² *GRPI, 1869-70, Appendix A. 48.*

⁴³ Revenue Department Index No. 185 R. Collection No. XIII, File No. 23 of 1900-1901, Detail List of Establishment.

As individuals secured jobs, their family situations improved compared to others. Those employed in government positions became keen on sending their children to school, recognising the correlation between education and government employment. They became aware of the significance of government jobs, both in terms of social prestige and financial stability. Consequently, Kolhan society underwent a gradual shift in professions.

The students who got primary level schooling became the focal point of educational transformation, because seeing them other students started coming forward for getting education. For example, there were two meritorious students from Chaibasa School named Soharam and Dunardan of class 4, who later completed their higher education and got clerical jobs in the office of the Deputy Commissioner of Chaibasa.⁴⁴ Due to their achievements, Soharam and Dunardan became a source of inspiration for other students.⁴⁵

It is not just about employment; the school going Ho boys were getting more articulate in their social interaction. They began to speak in Hindi and some amount of English, too. They also started mingling up with their 'Diku' neighbours whom they had feared just a few years earlier.⁴⁶ Sometimes, even government officials found it hard to believe that these were the same individuals they once held a less-than-respectful opinion about.⁴⁷ Thus, the social isolation of Ho children was coming to an end and the tribal society was shifting from a mono linguistic to a multi linguistic society. This shift not only broke their social isolation, but also increased their chances of getting new jobs.

Kolhan Settlement operations also supported modern education. They began the practice of village-level record keeping that consolidated reading and writing. The rights and jurisdiction of the village officials as well as numerous village level data were important items of entry in settlement reports of Craven (Craven 1898) and Tuckey (Tuckey 1920). 'Thus, record-keeping began requiring the maintenance of a record book with comprehensive information for each village. For this work of record keeping, the educated people of the village whose handwriting was good were recruited for this task and kept in the government jobs. This encouragement seems to have found favour with the people of Kolhan. Even the Mankis of the Pirs and the Mundas of the villages tried to get educated.

Village Note of Kokcho village of Thai Pir observed that Turam Manki residing in the village was a minor. His uncle Dogar Manki was acting on his behalf, and he was 'certainly one of the few men...who knows Hindi properly. He can translate Ho into very good Hindi.'⁴⁸ Another Village Note of Tentra village of Thai Pir revealed that the village Munda Chamru's son 'Mahabir Singh, originally Bir Singh is the School Master of Tentra [village] School.'⁴⁹ This indicates that not only school-going children, but also traditional

⁴⁴ *General Report on Public Instruction in the Lower Provinces of Bengal 1st October 1849 to 30 Sept. 1850*, W. Palmer Military Orphan Press, Calcutta, 1851, 260-62.

⁴⁵ *General P.V. 1872*, File 169, 76.

⁴⁶ *GRPI*, 1875, 75.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 37.

⁴⁸ K SVN, Kokcho village, Thai Pir.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

leaders of Kolhan society, such as Mankis and Mundas, benefited from the newly introduced formal education system and that the modern education system in Kolhan was further legitimised.

Girls' education was not to be lagged behind. A girls' school was opened in Chaibasa on 16 April 1871 which apart from the government fund was also supported by the local contributions from 'the European and native gentlemen'.⁵⁰ The school owed its inception to the dedicated efforts of Captain Garbett, the acting Deputy Commissioner of Chotanagpur at the time. In 1872, the total enrolment was 43 with 28 Hindu girls, 4 Muslim girls, 1 Christian girl, 8 Ho and 2 Santal girls. Colonel Dalton estimated the number of girls in Chaibasa Girls' school as 60, including daughters of Mankis. The school seems to have progressed well as gleaned from a report of 1885 written by an Assistant School Inspector:⁵¹

'...the small and outlying district of Singhbhum, otherwise backward, has advanced wonderfully in matters of female education, and can now safely stand in comparison with a majority of the most advanced districts of Bengal. The improvement...has not been in numbers only, but also in the efficiency of schools.'

Conclusion

From 1935 onwards, the introduction of modern Western education was a pan-Indian phenomenon with varying effects across the country. However, nowhere in India its impacts was as far-reaching and transformative as in the remote, adivasi-dominated region of Kolhan Government Estate (KGE) in Singhbhum. Here, the traditional oral society became a literate society after contact with formal education. This transformation was neither smooth nor swift. Initially, there was great distrust for formal education among the Hos which resulted in poor attendance in schools and continuous dropouts. However, the situation gradually improved with the increasing awareness that modern education was indispensable and offered earthly benefits. Therefore, the Hos adopted modern education largely for its practical use, rather than for attaining systematic knowledge and skills. In particular, they were interested in acquiring proficiency in Hindi and English which gave them coveted government employment, financial benefits and social prestige. These incentives played a significant role in spreading modern education in KGE. Even the traditional Ho leadership-Mankis and Mundas-recognised the importance of education for their children in order to equip them with the necessary skills to attain government jobs. Thus 'Western knowledge was treated as a means to an end seldom valued in and for itself' (Seth 2007: 17).

Since the adivasi society in Kolhan adopted modern education due to its apparent benefits, it is debatable whether modern education in Kolhan produced a Gramscian (Gramsci 2020) model of modern intelligentsia, i.e. a highly educated and politically active group speaking for society. Empirically, it can be asserted that a formidable adivasi literati

⁵⁰ General P.V., December, 1885, 104.

⁵¹ Ibid.

did not emerge in Kolhan until the mature phase of the Jharkhand movement during the post-independence era. However, individual cases of intellectuals continue to emerge. In addition, while modern education unleashed forces of change, it remains debatable whether modern education had enough strength to uproot deeply embedded socio-cultural beliefs and practices within Ho society in Kolhan.

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