UNDERSTANDING THE LIMITS OF THE EMPOWERMENT MODELS IN SUPPORTING DISADVANTAGED COMMUNITIES IN INDIA

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Abstract

The purpose of the study is to improve current understandings and practices in relation to past and current interventions as approaches to assisting disadvantaged communities in India. This work will have implications for policy-makers and practitioners, as well as helping to improve the life circumstances of the individuals and communities they seek to assist. A key focus here has been to understand why theempowerment models and how they work, and don't work, to assist rurally located Indian communities. The Structuration model has been extensively discussed to understand the problem in hand.

Key words: Empowerment, Communities, Development, Structure

Introduction

India has been trying to tackle problems of poverty and under development, on a war footing since obtaining independence from the British in 1947. During the two hundred years of British rule India's share of the global GDP has come down from 24% to 3% (Dutt, 1902). The 'self-sustaining' Indian rural economy, where in most villages were having an economic eco-system, was broken' due to industrial revolution and subsequent import of British goods. India was largely left as an agriculture based commodity producer (Dutt, 1902). Though India wanted to have a Gandhian, bottom-up village as center based development plan, called as 'Kumarappa Plan' (Kumarappa, 1945), the then Government of India and its leadership opted for centralized planning. Gandhian leadership and thought (Gandhi, 1910) was not followed in the economic development plans. Over the next 50 years, each plan period included some development programmes aimed at rural development and poverty alleviation. The focus of poverty alleviation had been built on the belief that there would be trickle down from economic growth and focus on specific political priorities.

The model of centralized planning was finally aborted in the year 2015 and the central planning conversion was implemented as a national think tank as the strategy largely did not work in the first 50 years of development (especially on rapid poverty alleviation). In the first 40 years of independence, the Indian economy grew at 3 percent per annum, which Prof. Raj Krishna, the noted Indian economist called it as 'Hindu rate of growth'. The political priorities kept changing from 'infrastructure' development to focused individual or family level poverty alleviation. Poverty alleviation did not happen at a rapid rate (Gaiha, 2008; Ranganathan, 2012; World Bank, 2011). There was an admission by the leaders that only 17% of the funds intended for poverty development reached the poor, as most development was executed 'for the poor' by the state apparatus with very little participation of the people in focus.This understanding led to belief that India needed to refocus on village panchayats and give greater importance to the Gandhian model of village democracy. With the 73rd and 74th amendments to the Indian constitution in 1992, 29 items of development administration were supposed to be directly transferred to village panchayats. Apart from the federal and state governments, the third tier, village panchayats became legitimate constitutional entities. In a way, the bottom up planning or development of villages and poverty alleviation has been mandated as all plans were to be passed in 'Gram Sabhas'.

Centralized plans and programmes had failed in the field, especially in areas inhabited by Adivasis or tribals. There were cases where the State tried to promote dairy business as an income generating activity, only to realize that most of these communities treat milk as a healthy food option. State tried to promote plantation of tea in Adivasi villages and provided jobs as per rehabilitation, could not succeed as the Adivasis were not interested in jobs. Similarly, the State's initiative to promote gem and precious stone processing was not valued

much by Adivasis. Even there were incidents of local people uprooting the horticulture plantations as their consent was not taken. Further, there were cases of selling back of paddy processing equipment as locals did not know how to use those implements.

Indian state still fails to understand the tribal communities. Most programmes run on trial and error and it is difficult to predict the fate of an intervention beforehand. One does not seem to know what works and what does not work.This leads to a great deal of wastage and sometimes damage to the community too. The development interventions have promoted modern medicine, agriculture and education. In the process, the Adivasis traditional knowledge systems seem to be impacted. Most participatory development approaches believe in community empowerment, but they also do not seem to deliver the results. Somehow the communities did not seem to own the outcomes.

The above discussion poses certain questions on the theory and practice of empowerment and social action, as it is applied to tribal communities.

1. If one is not aware/exposed to a particular food/ thing, one may not want to have it. Does 'exposure' place limits on empowered action?

2.   Sometimes even if the people know the benefits of a new job/scheme or sees people from the community who have reaped these benefits, they are not motivated enough to do it. Does that mean that exposure alone does not work?

3. Does community level practices place limits on empowered action?

4. A development scheme fails, then is it due to inefficient programme capacity or were there other community level reasons?

The Purpose Of The Research

The purpose of this study is to improve current understandings and practices in relation to past and current interventions as approaches to improving disadvantaged communities. This work will have implications for policy-makers and practitioners, as well as helping to improve the life circumstances of the individuals and communities they seek to assist. A key focus here will be on the construction and implementation of empowerment models and how they work, and don't work, to assist Tribal Indian communities. The following are the key questions that guide this research:

1) How does contemporary theorizing and application of empowerment influence disadvantage communities?

2) How do those theories explain the process of empowerment as it happens or does not happen in local and tribal communities?

Methodology

While there are many economic, social and socio-psychological and behavioral frameworks to understand human development and empowerment, this study will choose to use the 'agency theory' in sociology to try and understand the problems at hand. 'Agency' in Sociology is the 'capacity' of individuals to act 'independently' or freely. "Structures" either facilitate or debilitate agency (Giddens, 1984). Structure can be understood as 'recurred' patterns that limit agency. In fact, most development action has pre-supposed structures that debilitate agency and have interventions aimed at bringing in changes in the structure to facilitate agency (Giddens, 1984).

Most literature is replete with the structure-agency dualism (Giddens, 1984). However, the current study will look at the work of Anthony Giddens who has examined the interaction of structure- agency through the 'theory of structuration'. It can be termed as 'institutional' sociology a la 'institutional economics'.

Attempts will be made to add to the existing understanding on the subject with regard to the tribal communities.

Discussions

"Agency" in sociology is defined as the capacity of an individual to act independently and make his or her own choices. Since historical times, human action and its origins were studied. When this word emerges? What are the philosophical foundations of the agency approach? It will be pertinent to place the debate of human empowerment and agency in the sociological and philosophical thought as it evolved over time.

The theory of structuration as proposed by Giddens is discussed in detail as a major possible approach to understand the social situation of disadvantaged communities in India especially with respect to poverty alleviation.

(i) Tribal Development in India

It is helpful to apply this perspective and approach in the Indian tribal communities and to explore an attempt to develop the Indian paradigm, philosophy and tools to look at Indian society in Adivasi India. Unfortunately, there seems to be a huge gap in such knowledge. While there have been many efforts to study tribal societies, most seem to use western and accepted sociological or anthropological frameworks. There is no evidence of any clear attempt or describe or debate the need for such an approach. A literature survey of self and self-rule in tribal people in India throws up a few distinct perspectives. Tribal people were considered as pristine and unadulterated by the modern culture. There is a dominant view that they should be left to themselves. This is called isolationist perspective.

G.S. Ghurye on the contrary look at tribals or tribal people as sharing the culture of the non-aboriginals Hindu community in the areas of their living (Ghurye, 1966). According to him they should be an extension of the lower level caste continuum of the Hindu society. This is known as assimilation view. However most of the Indian sociologists or anthropologists, like Ghurye (1959), Bose (1929), Majumdar (1950), and Bailey (1960), viewed the problem from a structuralist or conflict angle. However, there does not seem to be any original approach or view about understanding the tribal community from their own perspective.

(ii) Contemporary Understanding of Empowerment

Empowerment theory implies that requisite competencies exist in the people. Due to structures and lack of resources, such competencies could not be exercised. Facilitating such people would mean that people are able to overcome these difficulties and use their competencies (Rappaport, 1984 & Zimmerman, 1995). In India, in the last few years, the state and many development organizations promoted self-help groups as agents of social change and development. In this process, a group of men or women of homogeneity are escorted through an empowerment process. It is assumed that such empowered local groups will be able to plan for their own development better. Empowerment is considered as now a critical path to development. Zimmerman (1995) argues that empowerment is both a value orientation for working in the community as well as a theoretical process. Empowerment is a process by which individuals, groups and organizations gain mastery over their lives (Rappaport,1985). Empowerment as an intentional, ongoing process, centered in the communities, involving mutual respect, critical reflection, caring and group participation, through which people lacking in equal share of valued resources gain greater access to and control over those resources (Zimmerman, 1995). Empowered individual is one who can think of choices of actions even in hopeless situations. So, ability to think of choices at any point of time determines the level of empowerment. For Freire (1965), it starts with critical awareness. However, mere awareness does not lead to action. The ability to think of choices depends on levels of exposure as well as level of locus of control. Community habits or practices also place limits on empowerment. Locus of control being external or internal determines the level of empowerment and action or inaction.

(iii) Limitations of Empowerment and Emancipation Models

How do the empowerment and emancipation models apply to the present study? Especially in the case of tribal communities? While it is true that India was colonized for a long time, the tribal communities enjoyed a sort of isolation from the British Rule. Many were under the protective princely states. So, while it is true that there is oppression, poverty and the language of the wretched of the earth spoken in every instance, one needs to investigate whether it is due to habit, culture and social system or a long run oppressive regime. The following questions guide this inquiry.

What is the knowledge system of the tribal people in India?

- How are the concepts of empowerment and agency viewed in their world view?

- We need to position the age-old Hindu philosophy and Gandhian ideas and see what extent they formed part of the life of the tribal people in Odisha?

- We will examine what role colonization, tribal and Hindu belief in the sacred or the spiritual, influences the present day tribal communities?

It will be pertinent to look at the structuration theory(ST) as proposed by Anthony Giddens (1991) as a possible framework that seems to possess most of these qualities. Giddens develops this theory over a period of twelve years through some of his pioneering work such as The Constitution of Society (1984), Modernity and Self (1991) and The New Sociological Method (1993).

(iv) Theory of Structuration

Giddens, in his arguments, does not subscribe to either structuralism or functionalism. In his seminal book, The Constitution of Society, Giddens rejects the biological view of society or social action. In both structuralism and functionalism, structure has primacy over action and the constraining quality of structure is strongly accentuated (Giddens, 1984 &1993). The theory of structuration is primarily an attempt to understand and conceptualize human action, meaning, subjectivity and how it is related to structure and constraint.

- **Elements of Structuration**

As per Giddens, the basic domain of the social study must be neither the experience of the agent or the existence of any form of societal totality, but social practices ordered around time and space (Giddens, 1984). "Human social actions, like some self-reproducing items in nature, are recursive. Not only the action is recursive, agents reproduce the conditions that make these activities in the first place by their own actions".The reflexive part of knowledgeability of human agents is involved in the recursive ordering of social practices. While continuity of social practices is possible because of the reflexivity, reflexivity in turn is possible due to continuity of social action. Even though the human agent is a purposive agent, according to Giddens, most human action occurs as a duree, a continuous flow of conduct over time and space. Purposive action cannot be isolated or segregated into motives, intentions and reasons. The human reflexivity is grounded in the continuous monitoring of human action by the agent. The rationalization involved in such continuous monitoring is more a process rather than a distinct act.
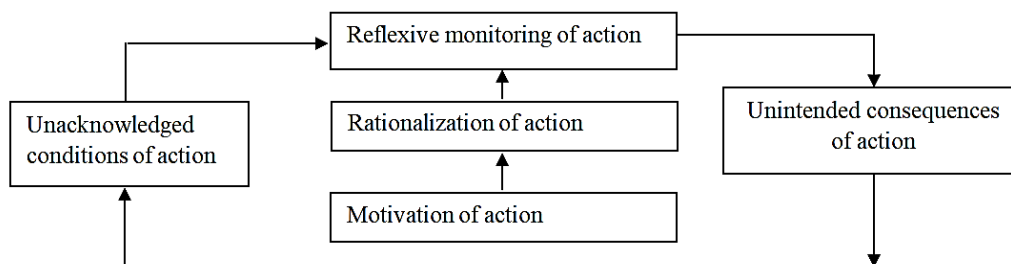
- **Understanding Action**

Giddens does not subscribe to the analytical philosophy of understanding of action. To Giddens, action is not a combination of acts. Act, in structuration is constituted by the discursive moment of attention to the duree of lived-through-experiences. Action cannot be separated from body too. Reflexive monitoring, rationalization and motivation of action are embedded set of processes of action. Rationalization of action is a routine characteristic of human action. Reflexive monitoring happens in every human interaction or human encounter in time-space. It is this rationalization capacity that leads to assessment of competence of actors.

Action, to sum up, is a recursive, reflexive monitoring of human duree of activities over time-space. Such duree of activities, as defined by Giddens, constitute interactions and encounters of actors in co-presence of other actors. The vast bulk of knowledge of actors is practical in nature. That gives them the ability to go-on with their life routinely. However, the line between discursive consciousness, which the actor can articulate and the practical consciousness which constitutes the routine is very blurred. However, unlike these, the unconscious consciousness is either repressed or may appear in distorted forms (Giddens, 1984).

- **The Agent and Agency**

Giddens proposes the following stratification model of the agent.

Fig.1. Action in Structuration

In structuration theory, the reflexive monitoring of activity is a chronic feature of every day action. Not only the actor does it, but also expects all other actors to do it. By continuous rationalization, actors also develop a theoretical understanding of their actions (Giddens, 1984& 1993). Such understanding can be discursive, practical or unconscious. Giddens distinguishes the rationalization and monitoring of action from its motivation. Motivation deals with potential for action rather than action itself. For Giddens however, most human action is routine and devoid of any conscious or unconscious motivation. The notion of practical consciousness is fundamental to his theory. It is this that builds the routine. Giddens offers the following triad as an alternative to Freud s Id-Ego-Super Ego.

Giddens prefers to use the word "I" as representative of agent, as that is how we refer to ourselves in common day to day interactions. How is agency defined in structuration? Most debates in sociology of action revolve around intentional action. It is the agents' intentionality that determines the agency. However, Giddens says, agency is more to do with capability to act or do things and not to the intentionality of such actions. Agency is capability to make a difference (Giddens, 1984). Agency is determined by whether whatever has happened would not have happened but for the act of the agent. It implies that agency would constitute both intended and unintended consequences of action. Since agency is to with the capability to act, the proof of agency is in the consequences. Since intentionality does not matter, the intended and unintended consequences constitute the proof of the agency. The unintended consequences are regularly distributed as a by-product of the reflexive monitoring of actions of agents over time-space.

- **Agency and Power**

For Giddens, power is inherent in agency. If agency is the capability for transformative action or make a difference, causal power is embedded in such thought (Giddens, 1993). He defines agency or action as the casual contemplated or actual interventions. For Giddens, even when agents express their inability or having no choice, it should not be mechanistically construed as powerlessness. For Giddens, power is logically prior to subjectivity, to the constitution of reflexive monitoring of conduct. Giddens also rejects the conception of power based on the dualism of subject and object. He also does not think that power, like argued by Parsons and Foucault, is a property of the society or social community.

- **Structure and Structuration**

Structure is understood as patterning of social relations in Functionalist school. This is sometimes conceptualized as like the skeleton of a human body (Giddens, 1984). Structure, in this argument, is external to human action. In structuralist and post-structuralist thought, Structure is conceptualized as an intersection of presence and absence. Underlying codes must be inferred from manifestations. In structuration, structure signifies a set of rules and resources. It connotes the structural properties that bind time-space to social practices. Structure, or its properties, make it possible for social practices to exist across varying time-space that lends them to systemic form. Deeply embedded structural properties become structural principles. Those practices that have the greatest time-space existence can be called as institutions. Giddens warns against understanding rules in the conventional sense. Rules and resources go together, and rules are more enunciation of constitution of meaning rather than sanctioning modes of conduct.

One of the main tenets of structuration is that the rules and resources drawn upon in the production and reproduction of social action are at the same time the means of system production. This is the duality of structure. (Giddens, 1984).

The constitution of agents and structures are not two independent sets of phenomena but represent a duality. Hence the structural properties are both a medium and outcome of the recursive practices. Structure is not external to individual actors. Similarly, for Giddens, social integration is reciprocity between actors in contexts of co-presence. System integration is reciprocity between actors of collectivities across extended time-space (Giddens, 1984 & 1993).

According to Giddens (1992), the concept '*of routinization'* and its understanding is vital to structuration. Routine is vital to the personality of the agent and to the institutions of society, which are such only through their continual reproduction. The routine of social life is dominated by the duree of activities of the agents and the longue duree of institutions on the other (Giddens, 1984). Such a routine is only upset in times of critical situations. But routine is not to be mindless. The theory of routinization is not a theory of social stability.

According to Giddens, ordinarily life, as it happens in the recursive and reflexive monitoring of actions in encounters or interaction of actors in co-presence, is made to happen as a routine and does not happen. This gives ontological security to the agent. The critical situations upset such ontological security and create anxiety. Actors use tact and repair to deal with such critical situations and quickly relapse into habitual routine again.

- **Time and Space Distanciation**

Time-space and presence of actors in time-space is constrained by the capabilities of the human body for mobility and communication as well as the constraints imposed by the physical context in which activity occurs. All human activity happens within these boundaries. Hagerstrand,(1981) in his work on time geography, calls such constraints five faces of time-geographic reality. The life path trajectories of agents must be constrained within the reality of time geography. Even though agents have an intentionality of action, they are limited by capability and coupling constraints. However, Giddens,(1993) argues that every constraint, for an agent, is also an opportunity. So, it is possible for individuals to overcome capability and coupling constraints and, so they should not be treated as limiting factors.

Giddens ,(1993)modifies the time-geography to concept to broadly constitute context and locales. Most human interaction happens in such locales which are part of a context. Most such locales are regionalized. Regionalization can be understood as zoning of time-space in relation to routinized social practices. However, even concepts of zoning can vary in time-space. However, this concept is important to understand that most, normal agent interaction occurs in such regionalized zones. However, some interaction might go out such zones as well. This concept has application to the way social systems evolve and differ from region or zone to zone (Giddens, 1984). However, regionalization is also associated with presence-availability of actors. Sequestered or forced regionalization affects interaction and the process of structuration. When such regionalization happens

over time-space it leads to development of central and peripheral regions, also affecting control of resources. The following diagram conceptualizes the role of contextuality in the connection of social and system integration (Giddens, 1984)

- **Structure and Society**

Structuration has conceptualized many dualisms as duality. The dualism of individual and society is conceptualized as agency and structure. All agents are reflexive agents who recursively monitor their interactions with other agents in their co-presence in each context or locale or region. Such reproduction process, through its intended and in intended consequences, also produces the rules, resources called as structure and over time-space, the institutions. What then is a society, according to Giddens? Giddens rejects the notions of society as with boundaries often even confused with nation-states. Giddens also rejects the biological view of social systems (Giddens, 1984 & 1993).

According to Giddens (1993), 'all societal totalities are found within the context of inter societal systems distributed along time-space edges. All societies are social systems as well as intersections of multiple social systems. Such multiple social systems may be wholly internal to the societal system in discussion or may even transcend such boundaries. Societies then are social systems that stand-out from a background of a range of other systems in which they are embedded. (Giddens, 1984 &1993)

- **Structure and Constraint**

In most structural sociology, structural properties form constraining part on the agent's action. Structure is a constraint on agent. In structuration, structure is both constraining as well as enabling. Critics have pointed out that this is very confusing and perhaps also makes light of constraining property of structure. In structuration, the conceptualization of structure is different. It is a set of rules and resources. It is a property of the social systems carried in reproduced practices embedded in time-space (Giddens, 1984). Social systems are organized both horizontally and vertically and form an ensemble of institutional framework. So, structure should not be viewed in isolation of this background. Giddens unpacks constraints in his work. Constraints can be material constraints, constrained associated with sanctions and structural constraints. Giddens argues that material constraints which essentially relate to packing and coupling constraints of time-geography or constraints of human body, can be also seen as enabling with the right type of interventions. Giddens argues that power cannot also be only a source of constraint. Power as defined as means of getting things done can be both an enabler as well as a constraint. Giddens argues that even in the case of coercive power, acquiescence or compliance could be due to acceptance or the degree will also depend on the level of coercion.

Giddens sums up the various constraints in the following diagram (Giddens, 1984):

Material Constraints	Negative Sanction	Structural Constraint
Derived from the character of the material world and physical features of the body	Constraint derived from the punitive response of agents to the other agents	Constraint derived from the contextuality of action

The structural principles vary depending on the type of societies. Indian Tribal societies veer around the axis of tradition and kinship. Class divided societies veer around the axis of urban and rural. In class societies, it is not an evolution of class-divided society. A massive created organization for industry and manufacturing and the modern capitalist state has impacted all aspects of structuration including its structural principles. This is creating a global society where the agents and other agents are replaced by we (Giddens, 1991). The structural properties are institutionalized features of societal systems spread over and stretching across time-space. Structuration process involves institutional analysis where one must define the agent, the recursive monitoring

of actions, the context or locale, agency and structure in terms of its structural principles and structural properties.

Giddens argues that while in tribal societies the constraints are more existential in nature and less structural, structural constraints become preeminent in class societies.

- **Structuration and Social Change**

Further Giddens offers assisting in understanding and conceptualizing social change in structuration theory. He critiques the evolutionary theories of social change from suffering from the following problems:

1. Unilinear compression: This is about the tendency of evolutionary thinkers to compress general into specific evolution. For example, considering feudalism as a fore runner of capitalism etc.

2. Homological compression: Assumption that there is a general correlation between individual personality development and the stage of society. For example, it cannot be argued that tribal people are individually less developed personalities because their oral cultures have less developed endowments when compared to the industrial cultures

3. Normative illusion: Feelings that superior military and economy power also means superior moral power.

4. Temporal distortion: Tendency to equate history of time with history of change. As if historical description is same as societal change description of the time.

Giddens opines that all social life is episodic. If all social life is contingent, all social change is conjectural (Giddens, 1984). It depends on a conjunction of circumstances in given contexts. Population pressure, situations of war and conflicts can all create such episodic pressures. When the change happens beyond a threshold limits, it could also affect the institutionalization of change.

Giddens does not see power in the context of class conflict or division of interests between classes. Power need not be related to conflict. Power is the means of achievement of goals. So, it is as much emancipating as it could be enslaving and constraining. While Giddens does accept part of Parsons view point on power, he does not, unlike Parsons and Foucault, associate power with collective goals. Giddens connects the notion of time and space distanciation with power. Power is generated in and through the reproduction of domination. Giddens talks of authoritative and allocative resources being the constituents of domination structures. Allocative resources relate to means of production, production and produced goods. Authoritative resources would include organization of social time-space, production and reproduction of the body and organization of life chances.

Giddens does not think that garnering of material resource has been the driving force of human history. The generation of power is more to do with time-space distanciation, the continuation of societies across time and space. While the augmentation of allocative resources is no doubt important, it is the transmutation of the authoritative resources that lever the social change. The storage of both allocative and authoritative resources leads to expansion of domination. It is also closely linked to medium of controlling the knowledge (Giddens, 1984).

- **Modernity and Structuration**

In his book, Modernity and Self Identity, Giddens (1991), analyses the influences of modernity on individual s identity. Modernity also has ramifications for Structuration. Giddens says that the emergence of radical doubt as permeating all critical reasoning creates an existential dimension to modern living (Giddens, 1991). This increase risk for the individual and the risk vs trust paradigm becomes more important. Individuals

will use trust as a parameter for dealing with abstract systems. Modernity is a high-risk culture. The globalization process creates new risks. This has the potential to affect aspects of structuration.

Modernity has created nation-states, and most are discussed as if they are societies. Some nation states also become agent-actors. So, the premise of individual actors interacting with others in co-presence is not the only type of agent that an act. So, in a sense, what were previously considered as structures are now considered as actors. Modernity has also separated time and space. While all cultures had some concept of time, they were defined in respect of a place. There was a connection between time and place. But modernity has broken such connect. Time and space also have emptied out making many living times possible. However, this does not mean that social action is not time-space dependent. It is just that it does not get mediated through place. Modernity has disembodied social institutions. Disembodying implies a certain development of abstract or expert systems in social systems. Expert systems bracket money and time irrespective of any relation to any individual or social system. They exist for themselves and make meaning for themselves. So, the relational milieu is broken in modern times. Modernity also makes institutions reflexive. This is different from individual reflexional of monitoring of action. The dialectic of global vs local is also a creation of modernity. This also creates deskilling of individual agents. The mediation of experience has also undergone a change due to modernity. The advent of TV, internet and social media has transformed the mediated experience like never.

The sequestration of experience in modern times is another important feature. Experience need not and no longer happen in the co-presence of actors in the presence of institutions. Sequestering leads to emergence of public/private separation and feelings like passion become private. According to Giddens, the self faces many dilemmas like unification vs fragmentation, powerlessness vs appropriation, authority vs anxiety and personalized versus commoditized experience. The threat of meaninglessness becomes the underlying dynamic (Giddens, 1991)

This raises many ethical dilemmas for the agent. There are ethical and moral dilemmas relating to every aspect of production and reproduction, natural resources, technology, mediated experience in the era of modernity. The agent in structuration in modern times must be grapple with all these dilemmas along with issues of structure (Giddens, 1991).

- **Relevance of Structuration Theory to the study**

Not much literature exists to support or debunk structuration as a tool to understand agency or lack of it in such tribal societal contexts. The moot questions to ask are:

- How is agency itself understood in such societies and contexts? Do they have a concept of an agency or do they attach any importance to its development?

- What is the role of self and individualism in such cultures?

- Does the basic premise of reflexive practice of agents in co-presence of other agents in a locale through encounters hold good?

- Or do these cultures do not suffer from the me-other separation and have a we concept. How does structuration work in such a context as a tool?

Is Giddens' theory of structuration applicable to this research? Or does it explain or assist understanding of the development or lack of agency among agents in tribal communities in India with respect to their own economic development? The following are some general observations:

1. The study is focused on how the empowerment models situate in the disadvantaged and tribal communities of Odisha. For a clearer understanding, the study needs to focus on the individual member and construct his reality as it situates in the context. The macro environment is important to the extent that either this facilitates or impedes his or her personal decision making. As the focus is very much on

the agent as embedded in the context of disadvantaged rural and tribal context in Odisha, structuration perhaps provides us the most appropriate tools.

2. However, this research is open to the utility as otherwise of any of these frameworks. There is no attempt to force fit any model. There are enough reasons to also be skeptical of the utility of any given framework

3. Unlike in the west and western cultures, in India, the context is pluralistic, diverse and has many narratives from time immemorial. Do these cultures believe in the self the same way as the west? The following questions arise out of the research questions and Giddens' theory. These are:

- What is the conception of agency, agent, and structure in the Indian tribal community narrative?

- Is structuration agnostic of the context in which it was developed?

- What role does the scared world play in the life of the Indian tribal people?

- Can the learnings of the aboriginal world of the west be applied?

Giddens also seems to propose the unilinear nature of history, in as much as he places tribal societies as pre-modern era and opines that they are under onslaught and may even disappear from the onslaught of capitalist societies (Giddens, 1984). But in India, that is not so. Tribal societies are thriving and surviving and co-sharing the space with modernity. In fact, the understanding has come full circle where we consider some of their practices as post-modern. There is renewed interest in their agriculture, health and even livelihood practices which seem to be in tune with the life politics proposed by Giddens (Giddens, 1991).

- **Aspirations and agency**

There is also literature that addresses the issue of agency and its development from a debate on aspirations perspective (Reeves, 2015). In his article titled, "Vague hopes, active aspirations and equality", Richard V. Reeves argues that individuals need not only skills but also reason to act. While skills can be cognitive e.g., literacy, it can be also non- cognitive, like persistence. Reasons to act is determined by aspirations, which could be vague hopes or active aspirations. Skills and aspirations mutually affect each other (Reeves, 2015).

Agency depends very much on an agent's perceived probability of success of attaining an aspiration. That could be termed as risk associated with an aspiration. Agency is affected if individuals perceive the risk of failure to be high. The question of low agency and the concomitant poor achievement of poverty alleviation in India could also be approached through the assessment of aspirations, calculation of perceived risks of failure. However, to an extent the structuration theory of Giddens does account for motivation, aspirations in terms of agent-structure interactions.

V. understanding and conclusion

Almost 40% of India's population, more so in tribal communities, seem to be poor and economically not developed even after 70 years of independence. This is true even after many targeted interventions at such people even after many years. People seem to have low agency when it comes to their own economic development.

Understanding of the problem of the tribal communities can be attempted using Giddens structuration framework and its application to tribal people of India and worldwide.If structuration is to be applied, agent's action or inaction in this case is dependent on the duality of agency and structure. It depends on the context and the recursive and reflexive ability of the agent during routine interactions with other agents. Giddens does not believe that structure alone is limiting agents from doing anything. Agents, through their actions and inactions

and intended or unintended consequences can influence structure too. Giddens specifically refers to such behavior as one where the agents 'goals and purposes would have perhaps not allowed him or limited him from changing the structures (Giddens, 1984;1993). In a colloquial way, it means, when agents say, they cannot do anything, they imply that given the risks and returns and the context involved, it is at that time convenient for them to either do or not do it. Is it true in Indian context? Are people indulging in such thoughts and deciding that it is safe not to act or not to exercise their will? It is necessary to delve deeply into the institutional analysis using the methodology suggested by Giddens to see, if indeed this is the case. However, Giddens himself does admit that structuration has serious limitations when one tries to use it as a methodology of empirical work (Giddens, 1993).

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