

The Importance of Activist Mediated Collective Action for Tribal Development

Rahul Banerjee

74, Krishnodayanagar

Khandwa Naka, Indore

Madhya Pradesh 452001

cell no - 09926791773

Abstract

The need for collective action for the management of common property resources and the importance of this for both livelihood promotion and climate change mitigation have come to be universally acknowledged now. However, given the political and economic forces that tend to atomise societies and discourage collective action invariably such action needs to be catalysed by outside agents. Social activists have performed this role very well in a number of situations. The present paper is a case study of one such situation in which social activists have helped a Bhil tribal community in Alirajpur district of Madhya Pradesh to organise themselves in small collectives to husband their common property resources very effectively.

1. Introduction

The present paper aims to evaluate the importance of collective action in bringing about social, economic and environmental benefits to the Bhil tribals in Alirajpur district through the two organisations Khedut Mazdoor Chetna Sangath (KMCS) and Dhas Gramin Vikas Kendra (DGVK). While the first is a trade union the latter is an NGO. The two organisations have worked in tandem, the first to conduct political campaigns to secure the rights of the tribals and the second to implement development programmes to improve the natural resource base. Decentralised and participatory development has been acknowledged as a major desideratum for tackling tribal deprivation (Sharma, 2001). With the award of the Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences to Elinor Ostrom in 2009 even mainstream economics has come to acknowledge the importance of collective action for the management of common pool resources (Ostrom, 1990). This has also gained in importance because of the benefits in terms of mitigation of climate change that such communitarian natural resource management can achieve (IISD et al, 2003).

Nevertheless the tribals being mostly illiterate and economically poor lack the capacity to counter the centralised governance apparatus that tends to increase their deprivation. Consequently they need to be guided in their attempts to secure justice and development by trained activists who can formulate appropriate strategies and supervise their implementation. Thus, this paper by critically evaluating such an intervention where activists have played a significant role in organising the tribals to take advantage of laws and policies that are beneficial to them and brought about visible improvement in their situation will yield valuable pointers towards future design of tribal development programmes.

The present paper, however, is a case study of a specific successful intervention in a small area and the main limitation is that the conclusions from it can only be taken as indicators and cannot be generalised. For general validity a host of such case studies are required of many more activist interventions over different tribal areas. Moreover, the respondents of the study are all beneficiaries of the process being studied and the investigator is one of the activists so there is an inherent favourable bias which will tend to play down the negative aspects of the process and especially the role of the activists who have initiated and mentored it.

2. Methodology of Study

The three villages of Chhoti Gendra, Attha and Bari Sirkhiri, which form the first milli-watershed (defined as being of size between 1000-10000 ha area) at the headwaters of the Kara River, have been chosen in a purposive manner for the case study as this watershed is the best example of the work done by KMCS in Alirajpur district since 1982. These villages have 105, 223 and 96 households respectively. First a baseline information survey was done of the villages to assess the socio-economic, infrastructural, environmental and gender situation in the village. This was followed by a random sample survey of fifty male and fifty female persons, each from a separate household, chosen from these three villages or in other words a sample of 100 households from a total of 324 households or 30% which is a statistically valid proportion. A questionnaire was administered to the respondents that had questions regarding the economic and political status prior to the mass organisational and development processes initiated by the activists in collaboration with the people, the obstacles that have been overcome, the failures and the present status of the villagers and. The baseline survey and the household questionnaire was also administered to 15 men and 15 women from thirty households of a control village Gatha which is outside this watershed but has the same agro-ecological and broad socio-economic characteristics as the survey villages but which has not been active in the KMCS. This has been done to test the difference in perspectives between members and non-members of the organisation and compare the development process and results. Group discussions were also conducted in all the villages to assess the status of implementation of the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Rights) Act 2006 hence forward referred to as FRA. Secondary sources like forest and revenue department and panchayat records and literature have also been researched. The data has been analysed and the inferences drawn are presented below.

Mid Latitude	22 ⁰ 02
Mid Longitude	74 ⁰ 17
Avg Ht. abv. MSL	500 m
Rock Structure	Banded Gneisses
Soil	Clay & Sandy loam
Rainfall	900 mm
Avg PET	2100 mm

3. Geographical Characteristics

The watershed is part of the Jhabua Hills agro-climatic zone of Madhya Pradesh and is situated in the Vindhya Ranges bordering on the River Narmada. The main features are given in Table 1. The area is underlain with fractured banded gneisses and so there is good percolation of the rainfall into the

aquifer. The deep aquifer is not very productive but the phreatic aquifer does support well irrigation. The soils are mostly sandy loam and of low soil depth with poor N,P,K characteristics. There are some patches of clayey soil of medium depth on the banks of the river. The terrain is sloped from the ridge line to the river with 5% slopes near the river and rising to a steep 20% near the ridgeline. The rainfall is moderate and the precipitation takes place mainly in about 40 rainy days from mid June to mid September. The potential evapo-transpiration is very high at 2100 mm and so the rainfall evaporates quickly and soil moisture is low leading to water stress in the kharif season and lower yields in years of less rainfall. The map based on Survey of India Toposheet is given in Fig 1 below.

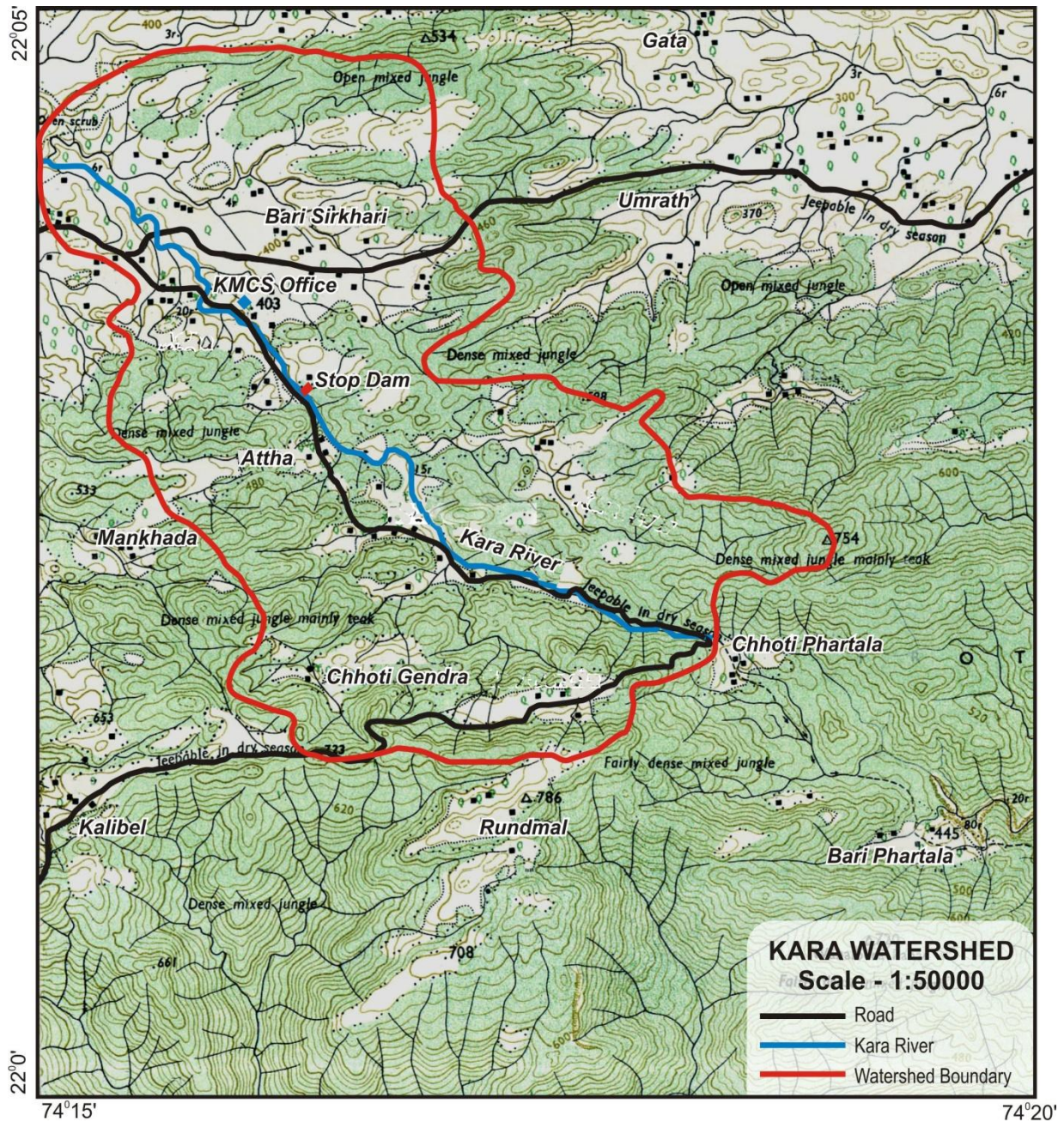


Fig 1: Map of Kara River Watershed

The watershed is located about 48 kms by road from the district town of Alirajpur with the nearest market village being at Chhaktala 13 kms away. The road to Chhaktala is now being macadamised under the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana. The nearest railway station is at Dahod which is 70 kms from Alirajpur. Thus the watershed is in a very remote location. The map shows that the watershed had dense mixed jungle consisting mainly of teak and other species like dhavra, salai, tinis, sisam, kher, mahua, tendu and sajar in the early 1970s when the survey was conducted. However, by the late 1980s this had become denuded due to commercial logging by the forest department and encroachments for farming by the tribals who found their livelihoods being eroded due to this deforestation. The actual land use as derived from the baseline survey for the years 1989 and 2009 conducted by the NGO Dhas Gramin Vikas Kendra is as given in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Landuse Change in the Study and Control Villages 1989 - 2009 (Ha)

	Chhoti Gendra		Attha		Bari Sirkhiri		Gatha	
	1989	2009	1989	2009	1989	2009	1989	2009
Total Land	392.51	392.51	430.96	430.96	267.61	267.61	303.54	303.54
Res. Forest Dense*	0	87.0	0	78.0	0	38.0	0	0
Res. Forest Open	128.0	48.0	113.0	45.0	32.0	22.0	44.0	22.0
Res. Forest Degraded	17.0	0	37.0	14.0	42.0	12.0	37.0	54.0
Res. Forest Encroached	37.0	47.0	49.0	62.0	7.0	9.0	14.0	19.0
Non Agri. Land	3.11	3.87	4.32	5.04	4.67	5.22	4.17	5.09
Pastures	2.73	3.24	3.46	3.21	3.43	2.76	3.26	2.45
Cultivable Wastes	3.56	1.14	5.46	2.23	6.18	3.24	3.67	2.26
Waste	2.34	2.56	4.81	5.86	3.26	4.13	4.38	4.13
Agricultural Land	198.77	199.70	250.91	252.62	169.07	171.26	193.06	194.55

*More than 40% crown cover

Source: Records of Dhas Gramin Vikas Kendra

The villages are all very small in size with the study watershed villages together having a total area of 1091.08 hectares. To better understand the comparative landuse changes that have taken place over two decades from 1989 to 2009 in the study watershed and the control village the data above have been presented as a proportion of the total land in Table 3 below.

Table 3 : Comparative Changes in Landuse from 1989-2009 (% of Total Land)

Land Use Category	Study Watershed		Change (%)	Control Village		Change (%)
	1989	2009		1989	2009	
Total Land	100.0	100.0	0.0	100.0	100.0	0.0
Res. Forest Dense	0.0	18.61		0	0	0.0
Res. Forest Open	25.02	10.54	-57.88	14.50	7.25	-50.00
Res. Forest Degraded	8.80	2.38	-72.92	12.19	17.79	45.95
Res. Forest Encroached	8.52	10.81	26.88	4.61	6.26	35.71

Non Agri. Land	1.11	1.30	16.78	1.37	1.68	22.06
Pastures	0.88	0.84	-4.26	1.07	0.81	-24.85
Cultivable Wastes	1.39	0.61	-56.51	1.21	0.74	-38.42
Waste	0.95	1.15	20.56	1.44	1.36	-5.71
Agricultural Land	56.71	57.15	0.78	63.60	64.09	0.77

Source: Dhas Gramin Vikas Kendra

The most significant change over the past two decades in the study watershed is in the increase in dense reserved forest area from 0 to 203 hectares constituting at present 18.61% of the total area. This has resulted from the equally significant reduction of open and degraded reserve forest by 57.88% and 72.92% respectively due to conservation efforts on the part of the inhabitants. This is in stark contrast to the control village where there has been no increase in dense reserve forest area and instead open reserved forest has been degraded leading to its reduction in area by 50% and the increase in the degraded reserved forest area by 45.95%. The increase in reserved forest area that has been encroached for cultivation too is more in the control village as compared to the study watershed.

4. Socio-Economic Characteristics

The demographic characteristics of the villages are as given in Table 4 and 5 below.

Table 4: Population by Caste and Gender of Study Watershed and Control Village

Caste	Gendra			Attha			Sirkhiri			Gatha		
	Hhds	Popu.		Hhds	Popu.		Hhds	Popu.		Hhds	Popu.	
		Male	Fem		Male	Fem		Male	Fem		603	0
											0	0
Bhilala	104	277	275	220	618	603	94	519	502	109	304	299
Hindu	0		0	3	7	7	0	0	0	0	0	0
Muslim	1	3	2	0	0	0	2	7	6	0	0	0

Source: Dhas Gramin Vikas Kendra

Table 5: Educational Distribution by Age-Group and Gender (%)

Age-Group (years)	Gendra			Attha			Sirkhiri			Gatha		
	Prop of Total	Education		Prop of Total	Education		Prop of Total	Education		Prop of Total	Education	
		Male	Fem.		Male	Fem.		Male	Fem.		Male	Fem.
0 - 5	14.1	-	-	15.2	-	-	13.8	-	-	14.7	-	-

6 - 12	23.7	38.4	19.1	22.3	43.3	25.2	24.8	40.7	21.4	22.8	29.3	13.4
13 - 17	15.1	23.2	11.6	13.4	29.5	16.8	14.7	20.1	8.8	15.4	23.2	8.5
18 - 59	43.9	14.4	7.3	46.4	17.1	8.4	43.1	11.2	5.4	44.7	9.3	4.6
> 60	3.2	0.0	0.0	2.7	0.0	0.0	3.6	0.0	0.0	2.4	0.0	0.0

Source: Dhas Gramin Vikas Kendra

The Bhilala tribals are the dominant residents of the area and the overall sex ratio is fairly good at 977 per thousand. The average household size is 6.3 which is a bit on the high side and this adversely affects the per capita availability of agricultural land which is only 0.24 ha. More than 50% of the population is aged less than 17 years and it is also evident that life expectancy beyond 60 years is very limited. The young population is mostly not going to school and this is even more so in the case of girls whose enrolment is half that of boys. Even the low rate of enrolment at the primary level decreases drastically at the middle and higher levels. This is primarily due to the lack of good educational facilities in the area. There is a government middle school in Attha village while there are government primary schools and education guarantee schools in the hamlets of the villages. However, the number of teachers appointed is much less than what is required and their calibre and training is also of a poor standard leading to a high drop out rate. Some students from the area study in residential schools run by the government in Chhaktala, Sondwa or Alirajpur. Some students study in the residential school run by the KMCS in Kakrana village on the banks of the Narmada River.

This poor educational status of the people is reflected in their occupation. An overwhelming 95.7% of the population are cultivators or agricultural labourers. There are only three people from the area in permanent government service. There are five more in contract service as panchayat secretaries and teachers. One person practises as a quack in addition to being a cultivator. Since there is no medical sub-centre in the area this quack is the main provider of instant medical care. Thus, agriculture forms the main source of livelihood for the people and since this is not sufficient to provide sustenance in most cases given the low per capita availability of land and low soil and terrain quality of this land there is substantial seasonal migration as will be detailed later.

5. Land Distribution

Table 6: Land Distribution

Village	Landholding Category											
	Landless		Marginal 0-1ha		Small 1-2ha		Semi -Med. 2-5 ha		Medium 5-10 ha		Large > 10 ha	
	Hhd	Area	Hhd	Area	Hhd	Area	Hhd	Area	Hhd	Area	Hhd	Area
Gendra	5	0	29	23.73	49	89.24	22	86.73	0	0	0	0

Attha	8	0	88	41.25	121	197.20	6	14.17	0	0	0	0
Sirkhiri	4	0	24	17.32	52	89.70	16	63.24	0	0	0	0
Gatha	4	0	26	21.71	68	129.02	11	43.82	0	0	0	0

Source: Dhas Gramin Vikas Kendra

The biggest category of households are small farmers with one to two hectares of landholding constituting just a little more than 50% of the total households. There are very few landless households and these are mostly the non-tribals who are traders. The households in the semi-medium farmer category also are only about 15 % of the total households while those in the marginal farmer category constitute about 25% of the total households. As noted earlier there is very little agricultural land with the residents. However, the distribution is fairly equal and there are no medium and big landholdings at all and there is no leasing of land. This is a factor in the success of communitarian collaboration for natural resource management in the study watershed. Eventhough the control village also has fairly equal land distribution there are other factors that prevented communitarian collaboration there as will become clear later.

6. Land Quality

The land in the study area and in the control village is mostly hilly with thin sandy loam soils and most of it is not suitable for agriculture. Traditionally the tribals used to practise shifting cultivation here and take advantage of the richness of organic manure in the early stages before shifting to another location. However, that came to an end after independence as this area was declared a reserved forest. The situation with regard to quality of agricultural land is given in Table 7 below where the various parameters have been expressed as a proportion of the total land in percentage. The parameters have been rated by the respondents according to the accepted understanding in the area regarding land quality. This is the understanding that comes into play when land has to be subdivided between heirs on the death of a landholder and so it is quite rational.

Table 7: Agricultural Land Quality (% of Total Land)

Village		Slope			Soil Fertility			Soil Depth			Soil Erosion		
		Steep	Mod	Low	Good	Med	Bad	Deep	Med	Low	High	Med	Low
Gendra	1989	22	55	23	5	34	61	0	13	87	44	48	8
	2009	22	23	55	16	55	29	10	34	56	22	24	54
Attha	1989	17	42	41	13	46	41	0	26	74	22	63	15
	2009	17	22	61	21	64	15	8	57	35	17	31	52
Sirkhiri	1989	19	57	24	8	41	59	0	14	86	31	53	16

	2009	19	32	49	19	59	22	7	54	49	19	30	51
Gatha	1989	21	56	22	11	45	44	0	16	84	53	41	6
	2009	21	56	22	2	34	64	0	14	86	61	34	5

Source: Dhas Gramin Vikas Kendra

Clearly the land quality has improved considerably in the study watershed while it has deteriorated in the control village. This has resulted from the communitarian cooperation in soil and water conservation that has taken place over the past two decades in the study watershed as opposed to the control village where this has not occurred.

7. Investment in Soil and Water Conservation

The KMCS organised the villagers in the study watershed into small groups of ten to twelve farmers each who then pooled their labour and cooperated with each other to perform their agricultural operations together and also undertake soil and water conservation activities. This was in fact a revival of a traditional labour pooling system called Dhas from which the name of DGVK is derived. This system had fallen into disuse because the intrusion of the market economy and the destruction of the natural resource base had destroyed community institutions. Considerable effort was expended to revitalise this system and it has paid rich dividends. Apart from this external funding was also sourced on two occasions for soil and water conservation work through the sister NGO, DGVK. The additional work done in soil and water conservation in the two decades is given in Table 8 below as the proportion of the total land covered through such work.

Table 8: Investment in Soil and Water Conservation (% of Total Land)

Village	Bunding & Levelling	Gully Plugs & Boulder Checks	Farm Ponds	In situ Composting
Gendra	32	31	5	23
Attha	23	32	0	26
Sirkhiri	25	29	7	24
Gatha	3	6	6	0

Source: Dhas Gramin Vikas Kendra

A major feature of the cooperative soil and water conservation work is the equal participation of women in it. This has not only empowered women within the traditional Bhil society which is highly patriarchal but has also given them a greater say in household affairs. A picture of women working on a gully plug to create a new farm in Gendra village is shown in Fig 2 below.



Fig 2: Women working on a Gully Plug in Gendra Village

8. Investments in Forest Conservation

The KMCS organisation began with the problem of ensuring access to the encroached farms of the tribals in the reserved forest and as a solution to this problem very early on it was decided to protect the remaining forest area and prevent it from degradation. This was done to counter the claim of the forest department that the tribals were destroying the forest. Consequently in all the hamlets of the study watershed social protection of the forests to ensure their regeneration was undertaken with small groups patrolling them by turns. The fodder generated from such protection is cut and bought by the members at the end of the monsoon season and the money thus generated is kept in a fund for carrying out plantation work. This forest protection has considerably increased the availability of fodder, firewood and non-timber forest produce in the study watershed and this has especially benefited the women and children who are the main collectors of forest products. Greater fodder availability has facilitated goat and buffalo rearing and so increased the supplementary incomes from animal husbandry which provides an insurance against livelihood shocks to the tribal households. A survey done in the study villages by the youth has shown that there are as many as 63 species of trees, 8 varieties of vegetables, 7 varieties of grasses, 10 varieties of fruits and 29 varieties of herbs. The landscape in the control village is barren by contrast and there the forest product availability is low. The picture of the regenerated forest in Attha village is shown in Fig 3 below.



Fig. 3: Regenerated Forest in Attha Village

9. Irrigation and Water Availability

The intensive soil and water conservation work and the forest conservation have together ensured that both natural and artificial recharge in the watershed has increased considerably and so the Kara river is now perennial flowing throughout the year. This enhanced water availability combined with the availability of electricity and diesel for pumps has meant that there is considerable irrigation in the watershed whereas earlier there was none. The soil and water conservation work has also ensured the greater availability of soil moisture and so double cropping has become possible even without irrigation. The egalitarian distribution of land has ensured that the water is equally distributed. Such is the water flow in the stream that even after triple cropping in the watershed the stream does not dry up even in summer as shown in Fig 4 below. In contrast even though there is some irrigation in the control village it is much less and achieved only through well irrigation.



Fig 4: A Farmer drawing water from the Kara River in Summer

The irrigation (proportion of total land) and water availability in summer (proportion of households) are shown in Table 9 below.

Table 9: Irrigation (% of Total Land) and Summer Water Availability (% of Hholds)

Village	Groundwater	Nala	Tank	Water Availability in Summer		
				Good	Med	Low
Gendra	11	16	8	90	10	0
Attha	14	21	7	93	7	0

Sirkhiri	13	19	9	92	8	0
Gatha	11	0	0	5	15	80

Source: Dhas Gramin Vikas Kendra

Even though there is some irrigation from wells in the control village the respondents said that the water was not sufficient and so the yields were low. They could not grow wheat and instead had to grow gram which is less productive. Water availability for domestic and livestock use in summer is a serious problem in this village as they have to rely only on two handpumps as the others go dry.

10. Migration

The low per capita resource endowment in the area means that agriculture and animal husbandry alone cannot provide complete livelihood support to the people. In the absence of any non-farm employment opportunities in the area members from all households in the area have to migrate to Gujarat to supplement their incomes. However, the amount of migration from the control village is much more in terms of the number of members migrating and the duration for which they have to migrate due to agriculture and animal husbandry being less productive there as a consequence of a degraded natural resource base.

11. Reasons for Better Community Mobilisation and Availability of Natural Resources

The initial resource endowment and socio-economic conditions in the study watershed and the control village were similar and yet the KMCS struck roots in the former while it did not succeed in the latter. The main reason is that in Gatha village the traditional Patel and some of his cohorts did not want their influence to be reduced due to communitarian mobilisation and vehemently opposed this. The forest department staff and other government functionaries too supported the Patel as their interests lay in continuing the status quo. The rest of the people in the village could not muster up the courage to overcome this opposition. In Gendra, Attha and Sirkhiri villages too there was initial opposition to the mobilisation process but here a section of the people braved the opposition and even went to jail fighting for their rights and established the organisation. Once the organisation was established and natural resource conservation work began the benefits began to flow and this acted as a reinforcing factor in the continuation of the process. The respondents said that crucial factor here was the knowledge and perseverance of the activists who continually supported them in their efforts to mobilise and undertake rights based actions and developmental works. This helped them to overcome their handicap in adjusting to a modern system which was unfamiliar to them.

12. Comparison of Role of KMCS and Government

There has been little investment in the development of the region by the government. As mentioned earlier there are no medical facilities and the educational institutions are not functioning properly. With regard to economic development there has not been much investment apart from electrification as the roads have still not been macadamised under the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana. The investments made through various schemes from

2006-07 when the NREGS became functional in the Panchayats in the area are as given in Table 10 below. Gendra Panchayat includes the village of Phartala also which is not part of the study. Sirkhiri Panchayat includes the village of Gatha which is the control village.

Table 10: Panchayat Investments 2006 - 2009(Rs Lakhs)

Panchayat	NREGS			12 th Finance Commission			Basic			Indira Awaas Yojana		
	06-07	07-08	08-09	06-07	07-08	08-09	06-07	07-08	08-09	06-07	07-08	08-09
Gendra	7.11	11.86	12.74	1.09	1.87	1.45	0.64	0.86	0.83	0.55	0.67	0.73
Attha	8.22	17.49	11.56	1.36	2.28	0.80	0.75	1.03	1.40	0.25	0.74	0.96
Sirkhiri	8.01	10.93	11.76	1.21	1.54	1.11	0.63	0.76	0.91	0.34	0.51	0.77

Source: Panchayat Records

The main investment is through the MGNREGS and before the initiation of this scheme there was very little development work being done by the Panchayats. The MGNREGS too does not function properly despite continuous monitoring by the KMCS members. The main problem is the delay in payment of wages which can sometimes take as much as a year. Presently the payment of wages in Sirkhiri village is held up because the people have unearthed a defalcation of funds by the Sarpanch and complained about it. This deters the people from demanding work and working under this scheme as they find it more profitable to migrate to Gujarat instead.

Thus, the KMCS has acted as a catalyst in mobilising the people for their rights and entitlements in the face of a government bureaucracy which is both inefficient and oppressive. The main contribution has been in channelising the communitarian energy into cooperative natural resource conservation work over a period of two decades to bring about huge improvements in the sustainability of the natural resource base and also improve their earnings from agriculture and animal husbandry. The exercise of rigorously evaluating the investments made and incomes generated is a complicated one and should be done by an independent investigator and so has not been attempted as part of this study. However, the positive effects of this investment can be seen when the study watershed is compared with the control village. The laws and policies that favour tribals are not implemented primarily because they are not aware of these provisions. The activists of the KMCS by raising their awareness in this regard have brought about a positive transformation.

13. Implementation of FRA

The FRA has been plagued with problems right from the beginning. Even though the Act was passed in 2006 it took another year for the Rules to be framed and passed by parliament. Even after that the Madhya Pradesh government was very tardy in setting in motion the process for application and verification of the rights of the tribals. The KMCS had to organise a mass rally in Alirajpur town on 12th October 2009 to get the process started. Thereafter the

Village Forest Rights Committees were constituted and the process of rights verification and distribution of rights deeds begun. The whole process has been plagued by the recalcitrance of the Forest Department and so even now only about half the claims have been resolved. The KMCS is continually monitoring the process and has through applications filed under the RTI Act been able to garner documented evidence of violation of the FRA by the district administration. This will eventually form the basis of a writ petition in the High Court challenging the legality of implementation of the FRA.

14. Conclusion

The activists of KMCS have creatively used the various laws and policies available for the benefit of the tribals to bring about their development. For instance the Panchayat Extension to Scheduled Areas Act 1996 (PESA) provides a greater space for legal and mass action to press for increased tribal autonomy. The government can be made to initiate tribal development if organisations like KMCS can act in the concerted manner described above and this can be spread over the whole of the scheduled areas of the country. With the help of the judiciary and the media it may be possible to give weight to the contention that modern development must be carried out by including the tribals. The traditional tribal lifestyle and culture is an anarchist one which does not automatically fit into the centralising thrust of the modern state system and the market economy. The latter are increasingly proving to be detrimental to both nature and human survival. Thus the anarchism of the tribals has a lot to offer to human beings. The PESA is a first step in the direction of preserving and promoting tribal culture and thus ensuring a saner world involving more sustainable resource use and equitable inter-personal relations than the one we are living in (Rahul, 1997). Proof of this can be found in the fact that the leaders of the Chiapas indigenous people's movement in Mexico have used it as one of the reference points for the formulation of their own draft constitution. The KMCS has relied on the inherent tribal culture and synergised it with developmental initiatives to bring about a betterment in the lives of the tribals who are its members by conserving the common property resources and enhancing livelihoods in a sustainable and equitable manner.

The passage of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act and the Right to Information Act in 2006 has considerably enhanced the effectiveness of PESA. There are now many instances throughout the country of small mass organisations in Fifth Schedule Areas taking advantage of the provisions of these later acts and using them to fulfil the promise of self rule that is there in PESA in the same way as the KMCS has done. Similarly many tribal mass organizations have conducted long drawn campaigns which have resulted in the enactment of the FRA which tries to give teeth to the provisions of the Fifth Schedule and nullify the historical injustice done to the adivasis through the implementation of the Indian Forest Act. The KMCS is moving actively on this front also. Thus overall despite its many limitations this mode of activist engagement in favour of the tribals does provide them with better livelihood situations than government efforts on their own would have made possible.

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