

**CORVINUS UNIVERSITY OF BUDAPEST**

**A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF TOOLS AND PROCESSES OF  
EMPOWERMENT AND INCLUSION OF MARGINALIZED  
COMMUNITIES AS UNDER AFFIRMATIVE ACTION AND THE EU  
FRAMEWORK,  
THE CASE OF THE ROMA OF HUNGARY AND THE DALITS OF  
INDIA**

**DOCTORAL DISSERTATION**

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**MALAY MISHRA**

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## **DEDICATION**

Dedicated to all the marginalized peoples of the world who are, and should be, a legitimate part of society.

“Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth”.

Matthew 5:5

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## FOREWORD AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The word ‘Roma’ crept into my creative imagination for the first time when an Indian visitor entered my office in Port of Spain, Trinidad and showed me a documentary film of the Roma living in the Balkans. Their quotidian travails, those images of oppression continued to haunt me even after Suresh Pillai faded into my memory. To him I owe my first acknowledgment. Never again would I see him or hear from him. The contact was as if pre-ordained.

I was soon to leave on my new assignment in Budapest. Pillai had given me some useful Roma contacts in Hungary. One among them, Gina Rubik, a sprightly Beash Roma lady from Southern Hungary, whom I met soon after my arrival in Budapest, explained over several sittings the particularities of the Roma profile spread across Hungary from her own life experiences. I deeply acknowledge my gratitude to Gina. While it did not take me long to decide that I needed to work on the Roma for my personal satisfaction, several doors to the Roma world opened; intellectuals, journalists, politicians (several of whom were to be interviewed later for my study), many of Roma ancestry and a few others associated with Roma empowerment in diverse ways, became accessible, thanks to my Ambassadorial office. They shall remain unnamed though they take a share of my gratitude. The name of my Social Secretary Mariann Orooz however stands out; she accompanied me to several of my meetings with Roma stakeholders, diligently took down notes, transcribing them under my hawk eye and kept track of my busy appointment schedule apart from my high-profile office work.

I immersed headlong into researching into the Roma way of life as it appeared to me through countless raconteurs, interviewees and occasional encounters with Roma women peddling their handicrafts, some of the finest specimens of hand-woven embroidery that I had ever seen, at street corners or sightseeing places, away from the gaze of the police! I could manage to interact with a few of them through the intervention of our chauffeur Miklos who was ever so very helpful. With Mariann and Miklos my Roma secretarial team was complete and I would set out to discover the Roma world of Hungary.

The Corvinus University of Budapest was as an oft visited site for me and my frequent interactions with Dr. Erzebet Kaponyi, the Administrative Head of the International Relations Multidisciplinary Department of the University was seminal in leading me towards an academic after-life. Hungary had been instrumental in ushering the decade-long National Roma Integration Strategies (NRIS), otherwise known as the EU Framework, in 2011.

Budapest hosted several Roma-related bodies which I was soon to discover. Corvinus, which held national university status, therefore seemed a perfect choice to study. Just prior to my departing office on superannuation, I therefore registered myself and went through the drill of the *Rigorosum* initiating me into the PhD programme. Dr. Kaponyi had put me in touch with Dr Andrew Ryder who was to be appointed my supervisor and I thus started my learning process under his diligent care. From Dr Ryder I learnt the nuances of thesis writing over multiple sessions after office, until I was referred to another veteran on Roma studies, Prof. Thomas Acton who eventually became my second supervisor. These three eminent academicians were to form my academic world in which I began my doctoral studies with all the care and attention they could give me. Prof Acton, with his life-long experience of dealing with the Roma in multiple forums, a veritable expert on the subject, has hand-held me unhesitatingly, while Dr Ryder has ever been considerate and charming to my faults which have been numerous. To them all I shall remain ever grateful.

Given the many similitudes between the Roma and the Dalit communities of India, both marginalized communities with the underlying thread of deep poverty and an extreme manifestation of marginalization, and realizing that a comparative study-approach between the two communities had not been carried out systematically, I decided to take up a comparative study in exploring the instruments and processes of empowerment and inclusion, situating them within the framework of ‘affirmative action’ as constitutionally enshrined in India and looking at the institutionality of the NRIS which had just completed its mid-term. Thus this study was born. I owe acknowledgements to many institutions, libraries (especially of Corvinus and CEU) and important individuals who have guided me in this work. I owe a special gratitude to the officials and in particular the Chairman of the University Doctoral Council of Corvinus for kindly allowing me one year’s extension to complete this work, on health grounds.

On the Indian side, my task was comparatively easier. Soon after returning back to India, with some living experience that I had of the Dalits from my previous study and interaction with such communities, I started off my research on the Dalits of Odisha as this was very similar in size and scope to the Roma of Hungary. Besides Odisha being my native state afforded an ease of communication and movement where I could live and work out of my home town, Puri.

While in India, the libraries of my alma mater Jawaharlal Nehru University (who were only too happy to see me back, this time as a PhD student), Delhi University and the Institute of Applied Economic Growth (all in Delhi) were most helpful, so also the Nehru Library and Museum in getting fresh perspectives on the personalities studied as part of this work. I would here like to place my deep appreciation to Dr Nidhi Trehan and Dr S.S. Sashi both of whom guided and encouraged me throughout this study. Nidhi, having worked with ERRC for several years in Budapest, was an expert on the Roma and being a senior, much-experienced academic, rendered useful counsel from time to time, while Dr. Sashi, an award winning social anthropologist who had been at the forefront of delving into the Indian connection of the Roma, gave me his blessings.

Back in Odisha, I fell largely on the library of the Institute of Tribal Culture as well as the State Library (both located in the state capital, Bhubaneswar) for getting pertinent information on the Dalits which I complemented on the ground with my field visits to 4 identified districts with both Scheduled Caste and Tribe-demographic visibility. I deeply acknowledge all the officials and institutional heads in the state and district administration, also of these libraries for their guidance and cooperation, several of them find mention in this work.

Lastly, this study could not have been completed without the constant support and encouragement of my family members and close friends. I also acknowledge the technical support provided by Debidatta Patnaik in coming to my rescue whenever needed. If there has been any mistake of any sort in this work, the responsibility is entirely mine.

# CHAPTER ONE

## Introduction

### 1.1 Connection with India

Genetic, linguistic and sparse written records, all suggest a large part of the ancestors of today's Roma having lived in India prior to 1000 C.E. Researchers believe that these Roma (pejoratively referred to as 'Gypsies') began their westward exodus around 1000 C.E.<sup>1</sup> Grellmann (1783,1787) was the second European academic observer to identify the Roma connection with India in the 18<sup>th</sup> century through a linguistic study. Linguistic affinities are remarkably conspicuous between Hindi-Sanskrit languages from India and various language streams spoken by the Roma. Researchers have discovered at least 800 common words or families of words between the two language groups (Matras 1995).

Interest in the connection between India and the Roma, which has had a primarily cultural significance, was established in the later part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century through Indian writers such as W.R.Rishi (1982) who was among the first in India to 'discover' the Roma through his life-long research in the area. Rishi used the link as a nation-building project for Roma activists which was used to some extent in the First World Roma Congress in London (1971)<sup>2</sup>. Then an interpreter with the Indian Foreign Service with diplomatic rank, he attended the Congress and persuaded the International Roma Movement, which had its genesis from the same Congress, to incorporate in the design of its flag a cart wheel resembling the Ashok Chakra of the Indian flag. While for Rishi and many of the early Indian researchers this was an important recognition on the part of the International Roma

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<sup>1</sup> There could be variance of 100-200 years on either side of the 'historical date' of the exodus with different modern historians.

<sup>2</sup> The continuing political importance of this event is shown by Z. Jovanovich, (2018) President of European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture (ERIAC) and Director, Roma Initiatives Office, OSF, writing, ' On April 8, 1971, Roma advocates gathered near London to proclaim the self-determination of the Roma and the national symbols of a people who did not and do not govern a nation-state...'

movement of the Indian connection of the Roma, European experts on the subject tended to think that the insignia denoted a wheel to represent the travels of a people, notably the Gypsies, later known all over Europe as the Roma. The jury is still out on the details.

In 1973 Rishi set up the Institute of Romani Studies in his home town, Chandigarh, in northern India, and the following year produced the 1<sup>st</sup> issue of the *Roma*, a half yearly journal dedicated to the Roma (the journal has since stopped publication). He also organized two International Roma Festivals in 1976 and 1983, both attended by then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi who had realized the import of picking up the Roma connection. Mrs Gandhi inaugurated the 1983 Conference with the following words, “The Indian people support the efforts of the Roma in enriching human culture. Theirs is an example of nationalism with internationalism, beyond prejudice, where large heartedness thinks of all people as one big family living in harmony and trust” (cited in Rishi 1984).

Closer to the present, a Hungarian Fidesz Member of the European Parliament, Livia Jaroka (2013)<sup>3</sup>, during the course of a conference, asserted that forms of self-help and collectivity could be useful in empowering marginalized groups, a practice which could be transferred to European Roma communities. In the same year a Conference on Roma Inclusion was held at the Corvinus University which reflected on the same question where an Indian sociologist, G.Karunanithi (2013), presented a paper on women’s empowerment and community development based on a village study in his native state of Tamil Nadu in southern India, and lessons which could be drawn from such experience<sup>4</sup>.

The present study aims at allowing the connection between the Roma in Europe and Dalits in India to inform and generate hypotheses through observations and inferences drawn from research on how marginalized communities, more or less similarly placed on the scale of marginalization, in Hungary and India could share their respective experiences to take the processes of empowerment forward. The study in this context will therefore provide an outline of the policy drivers which could prompt discussions and induce action, mapping the spatial and socio-cultural contexts in either situation, bringing in the factor of economic capital generation to create capacity building among marginalized groups on either side. It is

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<sup>3</sup> Jaroka was elected Vice President of the European Parliament in November, 2017, the only Roma MEP to be ever elected to that position.

<sup>4</sup> Karunanithi has also in his blog for the ERRC drawn parallel between Roma in Hungary and Dalits in India to explore the transferability of models of empowerment and in this context referred to Jaroka.



supposed that this way they could significantly better their lives through various tools implemented in the Indian context.

This holds salience, particularly in the context of the EU having developed a Roma Framework (National Roma Integration Strategies, or NRIS) seeking open coordination among EU member states to implement the four pillars of the said framework, namely education, employment, healthcare and housing with the overall policy imperative of bringing about social inclusion and empowerment for the Roma (EC 2010). This study, focusing on the Roma communities of Hungary on one part, could help in drawing inferences to cover such communities found elsewhere in the Central and East European (CEE) region. The same four areas are also essential in the empowerment process of the Dalits, and this is being addressed through the affirmative action programme in India.

## **1.2 The Policy and Social Context**

The Roma Platform in Prague, organized by the EU and Roma civil society, established a set of 10 principles in 2009 to address Roma inclusion. They included certain commitments on the part of national governments who were member states of EU. This was a precursor to the NRIS (EC website, 2009).

The EU advocates forms of micro-credit for capital formation amongst the Roma and promotes the concept of social inclusion and empowerment for the Roma with coordinated efforts of all EU member states making their actions mandatory under the NRIS for which EU stands committed financially.

Empowerment through various legal, constitutional and social methods has also been a central component of Indian strategies for poverty alleviation of the marginalized communities. The National Roma Integration Strategies (NRIS), also known as the EU Roma Framework, being an open method of coordination, is a deliberative framework with the EU stressing the importance of dialogue between government and Roma groups. In the case of Hungary an intermediate level was created in 1993 in the form of the Roma Self-Government agency to which the state has delegated almost complete responsibility to deal with the Roma groups for their overall welfare and development (Kovats 2001).

As this study will show, the social and cultural contexts of marginalized communities at a similar level of impoverishment, segregation and marginalization in Hungary and India have

been found to be broadly similar to lend to a comparative study of the processes of empowerment which both communities have been undergoing. As regards the Roma in Hungary, the study will show extreme pockets of exclusion with a multiple diversities in their socio-cultural contexts within the country.

I should state here that Hungary was chosen to be the main focus country as the major part of the study was conducted here while I was on post officiating as the Ambassador of India to this country. Hungary has also been chosen as it held the EU Presidency while the EU Roma Framework was prepared in 2011. Therefore, Hungary was a lead initiator of the Framework. It is also in Hungary that several important Roma-related organizations such as European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC), Secretariat of the Roma Inclusion Decade (now closed down), Open Society Foundation (OSF), etc were located at the time of my residence<sup>5</sup>.

### **1.2.1 Hungary**

Anti-Gypsyism or racism is deeply rooted in Europe (ERRC 2013), and political parties of the extreme right denomination have openly defamed the Roma, used racist language and stigmatized this community, thus reinforcing the practice of segregation to which they have been subjected. Such rhetoric has only tended to encourage violent actions against the Roma and perhaps enabled these parties to gain a few more votes at the cost of inflaming public passion. The Committee for Human Rights in its report, “Human Rights for Roma and Travellers in Europe” (EC 2010) suggested that anti-Roma language should not be used during electoral campaigns. In the national elections in Hungary in April, 2014, the extreme right Jobbik party used anti-Roma rhetoric extensively. Ironically it was successful in coming out with a significant majority of votes polled in those regions which have large Roma concentrations, viz. Central region, North, North eastern and South western regions of Hungary. Subsequently the party, hitherto a marginal player, won a few by-elections which led to its strategizing to mainstream the party in electoral politics. The party was however not able to dent the stranglehold of the ruling Fidesz party in national politics in the 2018 general elections as the Fidesz seemed to have moved to occupy the Jobbik party’s space in its nativism and what some consider to be anti-Roma rhetoric with the current ‘nationalist’, anti-immigrant sentiments blowing all over Europe.

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<sup>5</sup> These NGOs recently left Hungary on account of the government campaign directed against George Soros, the founder and benefactor of these organisations

As per a report of the Ministry of Public Administration and Justice, State Secretariat for Social Inclusion (MSI 2011) the Roma constitute the largest ethnic minority of Hungary with 7% of the national population, numbering around 700,000 though such estimates tend to vary<sup>6</sup>. They live in varied socio-economic conditions in different regions though the bulk of them live in abysmal poverty while many of them live in a state of near total alienation and disempowerment. The MSI Report further states that the Roma primarily live in poorer regions of the country, the majority of them in segregated neighbourhoods with an estimated 300,000 Roma currently living in 1663 such neighbourhoods and that 31% of the Roma have integrated into mainstream society while 21% are moving towards integration.

The MSI (2011) report states that while 30% of the Roma stagnate below the poverty line (BPL), the remaining 70% bear lower income levels compared to the majority population. The average employment rate for the Roma is 16% (12% for women, 21% for men), compared to 40% of the general population. 6.9% of Roma have secured primary education while only 4.2% have completed secondary education, denoting a massive drop-out rate at the primary level for Roma children. Out of the secondary school students, 0.8% of total Roma are counted as graduates. This shows a substantial knowledge deficit within the Roma community. Furthermore, the average life expectancy of the Roma is 8-9% lower than that of the majority population.

With continuous migration of the Roma into semi-urban clusters and bigger villages, the Roma areas have undergone massive reconfiguration over a period of time. The migration could be attributed to poverty and racism to which the Roma are subjected (Marushiakova and Popov 2011) which compel them to move from one place to the other in search of better opportunities and a segregated, rather ghettoized, life. This movement is nearly frequent, leaving policy makers in difficulty to give the Roma stable governance and administrative support, though this could be more a pretext for inaction on the part of the local authorities (Kovats 2001).

To cite an example, in August, 2014, 300 Roma people were evicted from the city of Miskolc, where they inhabited an urban space near to a suburb nearly 25 kilometres from the

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<sup>6</sup> These are unofficial figures quoted in a note prepared by a senior official of the Ministry at the request of the author. These figures could also be counter-checked against other official statistics which place the Roma at a rather low number. As there have been no ethnic-based census conducted, it is difficult to come to an accurate figure. For further discussion on variance in Roma-related statistics, see Country Report prepared by UNHCR at [www.refworld.org/docid/5036010888.html-Immigration](http://www.refworld.org/docid/5036010888.html-Immigration)

city for the ostensible reason of building a parking space in that area for a stadium (Rorke and Szendrai, 2014). The real reason was that the non-Roma neighbours in that locality complained to the Municipal authorities about the supposed undisciplined manner in which the Roma were living (loud music, noise etc.) and demanded that they be moved out as they could not bear the Roma living so close to them (Nolan 2014). Roma Civil Rights Movement leader Aladar Horvath (2014) likened this to ‘a kind of ethnic cleansing with the purpose to displace the poor of the city’. This is not a solitary example. The fact is that there is a tendency on the part of urban city dwellers, a majority of them non-Roma, to push out the Roma beyond the city limits on the ground that Roma behaviour is unacceptable. This leads to ghettoisation of Roma in the new habitat out of a certain fear or insecurity which reinforce adversarial relations between them and the majority community. The problem is aggravated when the authorities in such cases hardly come to the support of the harassed Roma communities and is further compounded by the lack of their own political representation.

Thus, the Roma in Hungary suffer from multiple forms of exclusion based on economic, spatial and racial marginalization.

### **1.2.2 India**

India’s current population stands at 1.3 billion of which more than a quarter live in the ‘Below Poverty Line’ (BPL) category<sup>7</sup>. Nearly a quarter of them, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, SCs and STs, as classified in the Constitution are taken as ‘Dalits’ for the purpose of our analysis who are beneficiaries of ‘affirmative action’<sup>8</sup>. ‘Dalits’ can be defined as a downtrodden or ‘broken’ category of people (the root word in Marathi language being *dal*, which means, to crush, be broken or torn asunder, scattered, destroyed” (Massey 2014). The word was popularised by the Dalit leader Dr B.R.Ambedkar in his movement (Jadhav 2014) to stand for the expression, ‘Depressed/Backward Classes’, given by the British. ‘Dalit’ in its present concept and usage, has its seed in two great Indian personalities, the 19<sup>th</sup> century Marathi reformer Mahatma Jyotibai Phule and Dr Ambedkar (Hegde 2013), the latter using it to convey the nomenclature for the ‘untouchables’ or *shudras*, the lowest in the

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<sup>7</sup> As per the 2011 Indian Government census, a report issued by the Office of the Registrar General put the total population of India at 1028737436 with the Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) at 166,635,700 (16.2%) and STs at 84,326,240 (8.2%). Together the SCs and STs, as they have been categorized for the purpose of empowerment and integration in my analysis, make up about 25% of the national population. However current official figures show the total population of India to have exceeded 1.3 billion (as in 2018)

<sup>8</sup> As covered in Part XVI under Articles 330-342 of the Indian Constitution.

Hindu caste hierarchy. Crimes reported against Dalits have risen and includes murder, kidnapping and abductions involving Dalits<sup>9</sup>. Besides being targeted for the above hate crimes, Dalits undergo economic and spatial exclusion despite the fact that the Indian Constitution, by a series of provisions, has empowered them with certain rights and privileges as Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs).

This group of Dalits, it could be argued, is comparable to the Roma population of Hungary at relative deprivation levels though a tiny crest of a relatively affluent class can be visible on either side. Current figures related to poverty levels, unemployment, housing, healthcare and education for the Dalit communities are however much lower compared to the Roma. The Rangarajan Committee Report released in July 2014 used separate all-India rural and urban poverty lines and derived state level rural-urban poverty estimates from them. The new poverty line showed a decline aggregating the nominatives derived from per capita consumption expenditure on food and nutrition, calculating for a family of five. As per the Committee's estimates, 33.0% of the rural population and 26.4 % of the urban population lived below the poverty line in 2011-12. That amounted to an average all-India level of 29.5% of the national population in the BPL category<sup>10</sup>.

### **1.2.2.1 Indian policy responses**

Dr Ambedkar is credited with bringing about the 'affirmative action' policy within the Constitutional framework for empowerment and inclusion of the Dalits, i.e. providing for a certain quota of reservations for socially and educationally backward castes in admissions in educational institutions, jobs in the government and public sector as well as in political offices, and inter-service promotions (Chopade, et al 2017). Besides a slew of administrative measures have been targeted at the BPL families, a large part of which comprise the Dalits.

Ambedkar's contemporary in the freedom movement and inarguably the most prominent, M.K. Gandhi (popularly known as the Mahatma), called the Dalits, 'Harijans' or 'God's people'. While both worked for their socio-economic empowerment and broader acceptance

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<sup>9</sup> See <https://theprint.in/report/its-2018-atrocities-against-dalits—still-reality/26260>

<sup>10</sup> See findings of the Rangarajan Committee report at <https://www.firstpost.com/business/economy/rangarajan-panel-redraws-poverty-line-at-rs-47-a-day-in-urban-areas-rs-32-in-rural-areas/1606017.html>

However critics of the report have pointed out several flaws in the calculation (viz. energy-calorie quotient) by omitting several wider issues failing to give a holistic picture. See, [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/288394285\\_Rangarajan\\_committee\\_report\\_on\\_poverty\\_measurement\\_another\\_lost\\_opportunity](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/288394285_Rangarajan_committee_report_on_poverty_measurement_another_lost_opportunity)

on the part of the Hindu majority society, Ambedkar's objective was to get the Dalits political empowerment in addition so that they could break loose from the overarching Hindu fold and constitute their political agency and leadership. This was not acceptable to the Mahatma who did not want the lower castes, constituting the Dalits, to be taken out of the Hindu fold for fear that it would lead to disintegration of the society, formation of different power groups, and importantly break the spine of the freedom movement (Nanda 2008).

For Gandhi, it was unacceptable to go against the *varna* system of Hinduism which accepted the lowest castes as *shudras*, those who were consigned to menial work and remained untouchables and segregated. Gandhi was all against untouchability, waged a life-long battle against the pernicious practice but would not cede ground on getting the Dalits separated from Hindus. The dispute between the two stalwarts was not resolved until the Poona Pact of 1932 where it was decided that while Dalits could have reservations in education and employment opportunities, there shall be no separate electorates for them (Jadhav 2015). In Chapter IV, I present short biographies of both Gandhi and Ambedkar along with their views on social, economic and political issues related to the Dalits.

As per law, a combined 22.5% of seats in educational institutions and jobs in government and private sector is reserved for Dalits (both SCs and STs), while another 27.5% is similarly reserved for Other Backward Classes (OBCs). Besides, these underprivileged categories have the qualifying levels much lower than the national average though it still becomes difficult for the government to fill up all vacancies in admission and employment. There could be several reasons for this, lack of advocacy on the part of government, lack of enough preparedness on the part of these communities as well as lack of apathy on the part of the majority population to take up their case. This could be comparable to the Roma in the Hungarian context. However, in the latter, the 'affirmative action' scenario seems to be largely missing as an organic component of empowerment.

Though it cannot be said that in India, affirmative action would have wholeheartedly led to poverty alleviation, it has certainly made a difference in the socio-economic empowerment of the marginalized classes, besides giving them the advantage of numbers to get reservations in legislative bodies, form political parties and ally with national parties for their own agenda. The contemporary scenario in India has undergone a sea change in so far as the Dalits are concerned. Both the Central government in the national capital as well as the state

government in the State and Union Territory capitals are alert about growing Dalit strength and have accorded a number of schemes which can be beneficial to them.

The, schemes such as, ‘Jan Dhan Yojana’ (people’s financial scheme), under which the government has facilitated opening of bank accounts for the poor, ‘Stand up India’, a scheme under which Dalits are financially supported with interest-free loans to start small start-ups, ‘Ujjwala Yojana’ (Bright scheme), under which the government distributes free cooking gas to BPL families, including Dalits (Open magazine Special Issue 2017) have empowered the Dalits substantially. There are several such schemes touching each and every aspect of the Dalits’ lives; employment, entrepreneurship, housing, healthcare, innovation with technology, and the like. Besides they can also avail micro-financing through Grameen (Rural) Banks and Agriculture Development Banks, and for bigger projects from the World Bank through the auspices of the Central government. This has led to a growth in capital formation as well as employment generation among the marginalized groups (Jodhka 2015).

The Indian government also supports women-oriented schemes, the most pertinent example of which is the Self-Help groups (SHGs) which are almost wholly composed of illiterate rural women with small incomes and funded by the bank (Tapan 2010). This incentivises them to raise their income levels. Women are also encouraged to form cooperatives in planning, producing and marketing day-to-day produce they deal with, such as milk, poultry, eggs, vegetables, fruits, etc. They are guided in getting access to markets and through increasing digitization and use of mobile telephony, can take their own decisions for economic empowerment. Karunanithi (2013) in his study of 8 rural community clusters in the district of Tirunellivalli in Tamil Nadu has brought out the empowerment process of rural women with SHGs and community development and substantive government intervention.

The ‘incubator model’ developed by the National Small Industries Corporation of the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) Ministry has been working successfully in several metropolitan areas as well as micro-urban centres, where marginalized small entrepreneurs are given hand-holding in the form of finance, legal guidance, access to raw materials and market and small technology to run small enterprises on their own and thus develop self-sufficiency even with lower education and exposure (National Small Industries Corporation, , 2013). The ‘Amul’ model of running milk cooperative by a few illiterate women of Anand village in the state of Gujarat in the 1970s has within three decades turned out to be a major

industry competing with the likes of Nestlé and other global brands with a 60% share in India's milk and dairy products market.

With the increasing scope for ICT in governance, job opportunities, market access and weather forecasting, the predominantly agriculture-based rural sector has benefitted immensely. As the Dalits live in much greater numbers in the rural clusters than in urban settings, these measures have impacted substantially on their lives. It is evident that affirmative action has been a central tool in reversing economic and social exclusion besides giving the Dalits political empowerment, while collectivity and community development have changed the landscape of Dalit empowerment substantially.

The following table summarises the discussion outlined above and sets out some key tools used in India to address poverty and exclusion

Table 1

**Models of empowerment**

Community Empowerment Activity	Description
Micro-credit	Forms of financing to develop small business. Started in India in the 1970s and operated through commercial and agricultural banks. In recent years greater efforts have been made to combine credit with upskilling and training in financial literacy.
Self Help Groups & Cooperatives	Benefitting mostly rural women, these schemes have helped raise income levels. Members of such schemes come together and make regular financial contributions to the group. Thereafter they can draw small loans from the pool to facilitate their individual or collective economic activities.
Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)	Can be both local as well as national, involved in a range of economic, cultural, social, training and advocacy activities. Some of them focus their activities on the Dalits to get more state support



Rural Governance/Panchayati Raj	The lowest tier of governance which is no less important in a democratic polity like India. Besides reserving seats for Dalits and other disadvantaged groups, in particular rural women in local bodies, they are responsible for a number of daily-life activities concerning the population.
Government-sponsored schemes	As mentioned above, these are fairly recent and have come to more prominence since the coming of the present Central government led by PM Modi. An array of populist schemes introduced by the Modi government have helped change the lives of disadvantaged sections of the population. Here the 'Aadhar' card, giving a National Identification number with bio-metric imprint of every Indian citizen has come to play a crucial role, being essential for entitlement of these schemes.

The above activities and approaches will be considered in the course of this thesis in the case of Roma communities as well, and their efficacy tested on the ground subject to their suitability as per the specificity of the (Hungarian) context.

The guiding theme of this study is empowerment, it attempts to understand the causal factors which have led to poverty, marginalization and consequent segregation and racism. This can only be restored by a paradigm change in societal attitude combined with state intervention, inclusive community development, civil society attention and better advocacy and awareness leading to a re-balancing of forces so as to give stability to such unequal societies.

### **1. 3 Empowerment**

Collective strategies upskill those at the margins, increase gender awareness and empower forms of community development which have transformative potential increasing decision-making opportunities and abilities (Ryder et al, 2014, Torri 2012, Tesoriero 2006). The

modern forms of community development are based on a participative mode in a bottom up structure and horizontal expansion of collectivity and decision making (Ledwith and Springet 2010).

In understanding the dynamics of empowerment, it is pertinent to note that both the Dalits as well as the Roma have been disempowered for centuries. While the Dalits have been making steady strides to get empowered through a variety of factors, the Roma, despite the full gaze of EU and its supportive agencies, notably the Human Rights bodies and the national governments' agencies under the aegis of the EU Roma Framework, have made very little headway. This seems to have been caused by apathy and disconnect on the part of the government bodies with the target groups. Consequently, the Roma, even with small pockets of development and formation of economic and cultural capital, are still left largely disempowered. It needs to be noted that in order to be effective, empowerment needs to have a bottom-up rather than top-down approach, even more effectively with state-backed stimuli for grassroots self-empowerment models (Ryder et al, 2014)

This study suggests ways and means to boost the empowerment process following the Indian experience where grassroots governance, as laid out in the Panchayati Raj system has been deep-rooted (Mathur 2013). It would thus bring in the knowledge and best practices applied in the Indian context to be successfully implanted in the Hungarian context with suitable modifications to adapt to the specificities on the ground. Thus, this study would explore the range of support mechanisms available to the Roma and assess their effectiveness in poverty alleviation. It is universally recognised that poverty is the root cause of societal disparity which in turn subjugates the deprived class to the majority community who, supported by the ruling elite, have access to power and agency.

Poverty could be addressed by way of application of a number of tools, notably microcredit, skilling, experience in government works, all of which have existed in Hungary in different points of time, in building a 'social' or 'solidarity' economy. It is possible for local communities in the rural settlements to survive and develop by means of various innovative self-help models based on the ideas of solidarity, social cohesion and sustainability (Moulaert and Ailenei 2005, Primavera 2010). Similarly in Hungary there was for some time, in the late 1950s and early 60s, the practice of 'time banks' a practice borrowed from Austria (Orban 2015), though for that model to successfully operate, the state agencies were needed to work

in full coordination with other agencies in delivering products to target groups. Besides, the local communities and their leaders ought to have been supported by a strong social capital base and with 'trust', the most important element of social capital. In the case of the Roma this seems to be conspicuously missing and needs to be reconstituted. Furthermore, NGO initiatives and self-help programmes could have further helped in addressing the problems of social disparity.

The START programme launched by the Hungarian government in 2011 saw funds triple between 2011-13 from 64 to 183 billion HUF, while the number of underdeveloped rural settlements with high unemployment rate participating in the programme rose from 480 to 1730 by 2013 (Orban 2015). However, how much of the success of these programmes has accrued to the Roma communities is open to question. As my study shows, the Roma importantly lack advocacy, awareness and agency. Though prominent NGOs such as Autonomia Foundation have come out with several microcredit programmes such as 'Investment into the Future' (Autonomia Foundation, 2009) to bolster the micro-credit system of financing, these have not had the desired impact. However, none of these programmes has had much success on the ground. As my study shows, a lot of Roma are engaged in the government-funded Public Works Programme for a temporary period for gaining marginal employment with unskilled labour. But not being a skill-development programme, the Roma do not stand to be benefitted from it but rather get pushed into low paid and unskilled employment more and more.

The failure of micro-financing schemes is mainly due to the fact that small finance does not take the Roma far. For example, it would take several thousand euro to set up a Roma entrepreneur while it may require just a fraction in the case of his Dalit counterpart. This operational constraint would be discussed in much greater detail in the subsequent chapters. However, it is useful to point out here that many other factors lie behind the inertia witnessed in getting to a sustainable level of employment for the Roma. The fact remains that such schemes are at best theoretical unless combined with other state-driven incentives which require a willingness on the part of the state to help empower the Roma. Besides, as some sociologists argue, micro-credit can be no more than a form of community action that presents limited challenges to neo-liberalism which negates the economic capital formation of the Roma (Alam 2009). Indeed, there have been claims that as the micro-finance industry has expanded, there has been a shift from poverty alleviation and empowerment to a more

business-oriented ethos, thus defeating the objective of the NRIS. Such scenarios would therefore not be conducive to the growth of marginalized communities whose capital base remains weak, whether in India or Europe.

The situation therefore needs to be addressed in a multi-pronged manner. As Ivanov and Tursaliev (2006) point out, the microfinance model does not work out in the European context as the sole, or even the primary, tool. According to them, micro-financing to be successful has to be combined with applied tools such as skilling and business back-up, including assistance in marketing and professional skill development. To this should be added educational and legal assistance as supportive steps. This would be somewhat akin to the ‘incubator model’ of NSIC discussed above. However, the authors make the pertinent observation that what can work in developing economies may not successfully work for the Roma who live in segregated and dispersed pockets in a ‘developed’ society like Hungary.

This study analyses the complexities of the Hungarian situation in building up a positive narrative for Roma empowerment on the premise that even the specificities of the situation could be addressed by modifying the practices and instrumentalities, thus the same tools applied in the Indian context could also work in Hungary with certain spatial variations. The biggest factor for empowerment of marginalized communities in India, in particular the Dalits, has been, the policy of ‘affirmative action’ which has been providing a series of facilitations by way of reservations in education and employment, two of the four pillars of the NRIS thus stand directly addressed, until the marginalized communities get sufficiently empowered. This, as we note, has happened to a large extent in India.. Being enshrined in a constitutional framework, such provisions have the sanctity of law, and thus marginalized communities through various means can seek recourse to law courts for enforcement of these provisions if there is violation of any sort. Such a situation may not apply in the Hungarian context for the reason that being a multi-minority society with 13 minority groups, any such provision targeted exclusively at the Roma could be viewed critically. Besides human rights groups who operate for the Roma as much as for other minority groups could take that up as a violation of minority rights and the state would then have to find itself on the defensive.

This study therefore aims at the ‘possible’ with the support of the relevant tools from the Indian experience. It advocates honing latent skills and support networks of the Roma to build a vibrant self-entrepreneurial, self-sufficient community, inducting strong local

leadership, thus reducing the burden of unemployment and poverty while using the ‘demographic dividend’ of the Roma (an average Roma family consists of 5-6 members with at least 3 of them employable) to complement the ‘ageing’ factor in such societies where the skilled manpower of the majority communities stand to be progressively diminished with decline in the mainstream population.

#### **1.4 Role of Civil Society**

Referring to Roma civil society, Acton and Ryder (2013) speak about their concept of a ‘Social Europe’ unfolding a vision of society based on equal opportunity, social justice and solidarity with fair distribution of economic capital without social discrimination. Their paper realistically points out the ‘malaise’ of European societies where Roma communities have been amongst the worst victims of both poverty and racism (anti-Gypsyism). In fact, the Roma have experienced an acute form of marginalization in CEE countries during the transitional period to a market economy since the early 1990s. Eminent sociologist Habermas (1992) has called for greater ‘deliberative democracy’ in Europe and proposed better coordination in various areas including economic equality. It has been found that forms of deliberation centred around inclusive community development are needed to mobilize the marginalized classes though the marginalized need to participate in the process. That could be achieved with strong local leadership, better advocacy and agency. Donor-driven agendas and bureaucratized NGO bodies are impeding progress for Roma communities and that national governments and even the EU are merely offering ‘lip service’ to empowerment on the ground (Ryder et al, 2014). These observations have been borne out in my study.

Nicolae Gheorghe, described as ‘a Renaissance figure’ among Roma intellectuals (Ryder 2015), talks extensively about the perceived failures of civil society to connect with Roma communities on the ground and calls for greater Roma activism. The inability of Roma advocacy groups to effectively reach out and connect with Roma communities has further fuelled marginalization amongst the Roma. It has been claimed that NGOisation with managerialism and paternal donor-driven agenda has significantly restrained Roma mobilization. Trehan (2001). Even with the presence of apex Roma organizations such as ‘Lungu Drom’ in Hungary, the Roma issue gets hardly reflected at the national level, not to mention at the level of the EU. Consequently, the cliched image of the Roma gets reinforced

and they are viewed either as a deviant community or a primitive group to be ‘civilized’ by development projects (Powell 2010) or ‘punished’ (Liegeois 2007).

European Commission guidelines on the Roma Framework advocate ‘partnership’ approaches where Roma NGOs and communities could be partners in local, regional and national decision-making processes for overall economic planning and provision of incentives. If there was political will and genuine support from the highest quarters, the EC and Roma civil society power elites could effectively use deliberative engagement to create channels of bottom-up communication. With a plethora of civil society bodies active in social advocacy programmes and with better coordination with the national government and Roma Self-Government agencies, development plans for Roma socio-economic inclusion should not be difficult. Rather that would lead to progressive and comprehensive empowerment of the Roma.

While it was economic reason that lay behind the impetus towards construction of explicit Roma political representation, with the end of the socialist economy such impetus disappeared, coinciding with Hungary’s moves towards liberalization and ushering in of a free market economy. Roma identity was defined as an ‘ethnic minority’ issue and placed in the same league as the other national minorities by force of the Minority Law<sup>11</sup>, while the other ethno-national communities were not subjected to xenophobia and segregation. Thus, a broader national minority policy evolved which centred on preserving the cultural identity of minority groups and the Roma Self-Government agency was primarily designed to enable the Roma communities maintain their cultural autonomy. Unfortunately, as Kovacs (2015) points out, the bulk of EU funding, channelled through such agencies to reach the target groups as the final beneficiaries, were diverted towards meeting establishment costs. Thus, there is an inherent inconsistency between the dynamics of Roma empowerment and role of the National Roma Self-Government (NRSNG) Agency in not targeting financial support properly while taking the excuse of encouraging the formation of cultural capital in the Roma. This has rather been a pretext since the Roma have always exhibited potential of cultural skills even though inhabiting in economically and politically adverse circumstances.

The difficulty in the Roma case is that it is a transnational minority (with no particular country of near origin) and this requires an effective voice at the transnational level, which

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<sup>11</sup> Act LXXVII of 1993 on the Rights of National and Ethnic Minorities was voted in the Hungarian Parliament on July 07, 1993

can only be achieved if the national government takes Roma issues seriously and has open debates and discussions in the national and EU Parliaments. Vermeersch (2000) points out that in 1989 the Hungarian National Assembly had 3 Roma MPs, Antonia Haga and Aladar Horvath from the Free Democrat Liberal Party and Tamas Peli from the Socialist Party, out of the three only Haga could retain her seat until 1998 and since then Roma representation has been extremely low. From 2015 to 19 there were 3 Roma MEPS in Brussels but none from Hungary until the reappointment of Jaroka in 2017 to a Fidesz vacancy. The OSF in its Report of 2012 prepared case studies of 5 governments including Hungary and showed that the Hungarian Government had close cooperation with the NRSG Agency not because it liked to help the cause of Roma empowerment but because the leaders of this body were either leaders of the ruling party or enjoyed close nexus with them. The massive fund embezzlement scandal which hit the erstwhile Lungo Drom head, Florian Farkas, in early 2015 it might be claimed has vindicated OSF's finding.

Besides the under representation of Roma in national politics, the limited size of the Roma constituency in terms of a unified political voice or representation causes an inherent barrier inhibiting Roma leaders from participating in political life. Mainstream political parties are increasingly reluctant to support the Roma and have distanced themselves from Roma politicians as the latter's political worth does not amount to much. The case is further complicated with a plethora of Roma political parties which neither get elected to any regional or national forum nor effectively represent their cause.

The case for the Dalits is however just the opposite. In India mainstream political parties are all vying to grab Dalit votes as they command a solid vote bank. Besides with SC and ST parliamentarians taking up Dalit issues, the latter do get a lot of attention in the mainstream media when they are subjected to social abuse and other forms of injustice. The rising strength of the Dalit groups gets energized in a politically charged manner with periodic instances of attacks on their life, property and person and with heinous crimes targeting the Dalits, throwing up local Dalit leaders in jail and spawning local Dalit movements. Thus, the more the atrocities, the more the Dalits are provoked to attack the state. Observers point out that such atrocities would have been even more conspicuous if the Dalits had not been politically empowered through the process of 'affirmative action'.

## 1.5 Conclusion

In India the marginal communities have benefitted substantially from forms of ‘affirmative action’ and collectivity as contrasted to their own state of massive poverty and under development. Even then, their progress over the last 70 years stands much more impressive in building up the empowerment narrative than in the case of the Roma. It is evident that a great deal of work still needs to be done for Roma empowerment and the Indian experience could become useful in this optic.

I must add that my intellectual curiosity of bringing in the Indian model of empowerment of the Dalits was to find a way of establishing another helpful link with the Roma turning on the connection established through history. India and Hungary have evolved a partnership in several domains which call for complementarities at a broader level. For me what is important is to translate such similarities for marginalized communities in both countries into comparable levels and bring them into the mainstream through a series of measures. Some of these have worked in the past, some have not. This therefore calls for redoubled efforts on the part of the government and other stakeholders. My contention is that empowerment and poverty alleviation models, which have been fairly successful in mainstreaming the marginalized communities in India, could be effectively transposed to Hungary, and thus to the CEE region in general. In this sense a sharing of experiences to a limited extent could also prove useful. With EU institutions supporting the Roma cause, and global and regional financial institutions and Roma advocacy bodies too, there is no reason why such measures, if implemented sincerely and in proper coordination with national governments, cannot bear positive results.

## 1.6 Thesis outline

To conclude, this thesis seeks to draw comparative analysis between policy approaches for the Roma and marginalized groups in India, and identify means to strengthen policy and develop new strategies. In Chapter II, **Literature Review**, I have drawn on major sources of literature to support my hypotheses as well as facilitate testing on the ground through critical observation and field studies, while drawing up a theoretical framework for my study. In Chapter III, **Methodology**, I discuss the various methodologies in social science research with particular reference to a qualitative study, with a judicious mix of standpoint theory, interviews, thick description of ethnographic experiences, case studies, data collection, diary



notes, interpretivism and reflexivity against the backdrop of ethical principles to make my research balanced, factually correct and analytically sound. In Chapter IV, I discuss **select Indian thinkers**, Gandhi, Ambedkar, Sen and Spivak and their varied experiences with the marginalized (subaltern) communities, so as to take up pertinent themes for further analysis in the context of drawing a comparative framework. In Chapter V, I deal with **ethnography** of my field experiences in Hungary while researching on the Roma communities, they being central to my research as a reference point for a comparative study as well as to explore areas of potential improvement in their own lives. In Chapter VI, I deal with the major themes of inclusion and empowerment for the Roma drawn from the previous chapter when I take up **elite interviews** with a wide range of respondents from various professional, social and intellectual backgrounds and analyse Roma policy as it could evolve on the basis of their narrations referenced by the chosen themes against the backdrop of EU's National Roma Integration Strategies (NRIS). In Chapter VII, I continue with my interviews with the elite to draw **insights into solutions** to build the comparative framework. In Chapter VIII, I draw the framework for putting in context the **marginalized communities of India** (Dalits and tribals) with particular reference to those of Odisha, that being a comparable state to Hungary, and building the paradigm for attestation of hypotheses drawn. This leads me to Chapter IX where I get into further detail in my research in Odisha to further understand the process of marginalization in the state, which has enabled me to take up **policy discussion on the guiding themes of empowerment and inclusion**. In Chapter X, Conclusion, I wrap up the discussions while suggesting a **Plan of Action** for further studies on marginalized communities using the comparative model as a valuable tool for social science research.

My thesis, consisting of the above 10 chapters, I sincerely hope, will throw new light in bringing about social transformation for Roma and Dalit communities, as it would be relevant for Hungary as a CEE country against the backdrop of the EU Roma Framework, while striving to draw India closer to Hungary in this vitally important field of social justice. This could, in addition, serve as a valuable referential model in understanding and addressing issues of inclusion and empowerment for marginalized communities wherever they are found.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **Literature Review**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

The subject of my research being a comparative study of empowering processes for marginalized communities in Hungary and India and the tools of empowerment, I have dealt with several elements in formulating the research question, namely, defining the marginalized groups in both social contexts, assessing the similarities and differences between both contexts, identifying the processes which have evolved in both the spaces and contexts, taking the commonalities between both the processes as well as the inadequacies in their application to each other's contexts, and finally evaluating the gaps in their application so as to address them suitably.

My primary hypothesis has been to contend that the processes of empowerment and social inclusion in the Indian context have proved relatively beneficial for the marginalized communities. Can this be then successfully applied in another context, with comparable socio-economic conditions of marginalization and related features of poverty and discrimination? If it can, my attempt would be to augment the conditionalities for better application of the Indian factors to the Hungarian context, and to see if the results are commensurate with what is happening in India. This is however not to idealize the situation of empowerment of such communities in India, but to seek and examine the conditions how such progress can be made in Hungary.

#### **2.2 Contextualising the Hungarian Roma**

There is a large literature on Roma in Hungary which draws on several scientific disciplines, which confront us with certain questions in comparing the Hungarian Roma and the Indian Dalits as marginalized communities. Given the plethora of literature available on the Roma as such, it has been difficult to sift between what is directly relevant to my research and what is peripheral. However, the first vital question while researching the Hungarian part of my work, aided by available literature on the subject, is to ask whether there exists a gap between rhetoric and reality? It has seemed to me that while official versions and discussions with

officials on the ground have presented a rather optimistic picture of the empowerment process and its application on the ground, the reality on the ground squarely belies it. This has been borne out by several analyses which will be treated in the course of my review. This has led to supplementary questions to the first such as, why is there a gap at all, if yes, what can be done to bridge the gap?

A crucial question, and an overriding one, is, whether ‘empowerment’ has ever been more than a piece of ‘rhetoric’ at all? This needs to be addressed here, since empowerment, along with inclusion, is the fulcrum, on which my thesis turns. It is obvious that in the integration of the Roma, or any other marginalized community, social inclusion comes first, and only then can the socio-political actors engage in either fostering empowerment from above or encouraging the process at the grass roots. Ideally, as my thesis will argue, it could be a mix of both.

### **2.3 Evaluating the Indian connection**

In comparing the two situations, I need to consider the often-advanced hypothesis that the Indian factor could have had an effect on the Roma psycho-social ethos, there being an organic linkage between the two. This has led me to study the Indian part in as much detail to examine the ground reality, in contemporary terms, and analyse the contradictions between rhetoric and reality that afflict Indian society as well. But before I do so, I would need to go over the historical supposition of an Indian link in the ontological reality of the Roma. For me there have been three principal lines of argument emerging out of the works of Romologists which draw a connect with India for the Roma community, referred to as part of the broader group of ‘Gypsy’. These three factors are historical, genetic and philological. History suggests a broad pattern of immigration of certain groups residing in north and north western parts of India sometime between the 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> century A.D. which travelled through Iran, West Asia, Turkey and the Balkans until they reached Romania, and thereafter split into two main streams, one going over to western Europe and the other to Central and Eastern Europe. Genetically, in terms of a DNA kinship, there have been studies, (Bhalla 1989), which indicate the Indian origins of many of the ancestors of this community. In the era of scientific racism after Grellmann (1783,1787), who through linguistic study, identified India as the country of origin of the Romani peoples, the latter’s complexion, hair colour, way of dressing, life style, patterns of behaviour and skill build-up were attributed to an exotic origin

of the Roma. bolstering the idea that Roma are the ‘other’, and therefore their integration needs careful and sustained efforts. The flip side of this argument has been that ‘othering’ engenders racism or ‘anti-Gypsyism’, which has continued to target the Roma down to the present day. The third and no less important factor is the congruities of language where the ‘Indo-Aryan core’ seems to have been the ‘most significant component on which Romani dialects draw for basic vocabulary’ (Matras 2002:21).

The idea that this Indian origin has current relevance has been argued extensively by W.R. Rishi (2008), a diplomat turned activist who brought in the Indian factor for the first time on a public platform, at the First World Romani Congress in London in 1971, and for his subsequent efforts in holding International Romani Conferences in India which saw the Indian leadership of the time acknowledge in a way the Indian connection. His Institute of Romani Studies which used to bring out an eponymous Journal, now very irregular, had pioneered publication of such work and critical reflections on the Indian connection. S.S.Shashi, an ethno-historian, has also attempted to draw a connection between the Roma and certain tribes of India in his efforts to secure the Indian government’s recognition of the Roma factor in its diasporic thinking and policy making. Both the late Rishi (survived by his son, V.Rishi who, based in London and Chandigarh, still carries on the Institute) and S.S.Shashi have popularised knowledge of the Indian connection of the Roma.

European Roma scholars have been divided on the relevance of a presumed Indian origin of the Roma to the visible aspects of exclusion and discrimination and have focused on poverty and racism, reflecting the priorities of Roma civil society groups, regional organizations and state actors. Serious academic scholars like Fraser (1996) and Kemeny (2005) have maintained the robustness of the Indian connection, first asserted by Grellman (1787) and Rudiger (1782, 1990), in modern times. However, the Indian connection seems to have been largely overlooked in the surfeit of researches on the contemporary conditions of the Roma.

## **2.4 The Roma in European history**

Even before Hungary came under the reign of the Hapsburg monarchy, of which there is meticulous reference, Roma had been settled in places, and even engaged in agriculture. Most of these communities seemed to be thus sedentary. As Hungarian MEP Jaroka (2012) in her well argued dissertation says, “Roma were more or less sedentary and had both agricultural and industrial occupations, particularly in gunsmith labour: manufacturing bullets,

gunpowder, cannonballs, etc. ...After the end of the Turkish subjection (of Hungary) and the restoration of Hapsburg rule in the country, severe measures were put into effect aiming at the settlement and assimilation of Roma. Maria Theresa (1740-1780) in order to repopulate the desolate lands after the Turkish subjection forced Roma to settle down and to work and pay taxes for the lords”(p 10).

Biro et al (2013) in their analytical essay on ‘The price of Roma integration’, (in Guy, ed.2013) brings a different view. He says, “With some exceptions though, one general statement seems pertinent: *nowhere have significant numbers of Roma turned into peasants or farmers, so that their roots and livelihood have become based on the land*”. The economic capital, which the Roma have displayed, has been a part of their economic life, as also the skills accrued over the ages, which was ‘oriented predominantly to survival rather than growth’ (p13).

Biro’s analysis of Roma economic life also explains its static nature despite possessing so many finer skills (cultural capital) such as singing, dancing and playing music. Liégois (2007:21) in discussing the patterns of immigration of the early Roma into Europe has squarely put the cause as persecution. He has argued that the Roma had been fleeing from persecution. As he says, “Down the centuries there have been numerous policies of expulsion or banishment, accompanied by various punishments for non-compliance...There have been organised hunts against Gypsies, which killed many and forced survivors to flee”.

The Roma/Gypsies have over centuries met with hostile societies in the form of the state, people or climate. The only option for them, and also to settle down with their agricultural and basic industrial skills, has been to look for places where they would be less persecuted. In the absence of a defined ‘territoriality’ or their own nation of origin, it has been easier for the host societies to persecute them in every way possible to the utter violation of human rights, that which continues to this day. This has been borne out by Bancroft (2005) when he discusses the formation of ethnic and racial identity and the process of racialization which in turn may have led to the unleashing of violence and emergence of virulent anti-Gypsyism. As he says, “The changing categorical significance and social meaning of the term ‘Gypsy’ illustrates how identity and difference have to be repeatedly reconstructed, and the ways in which the continual recreation of Roma and Gypsy-Travellers as an outcast group is affected by social and political pressures and conflicts within European societies. The Roma have

fallen victims to the turbulence of European societies where they had come to seek 'permanent shelter'. This in a large way goes to explain the psychological adaptation of the Roma/Gypsy as they have lived through different times of social conflict and persecution.

The Nazi victimisation of the Roma and Sintis and herding them into concentration camps in the thousands, both from the west as well as eastern Europe, was the culmination of the persecution which these people faced with little protest when the Roma (along with the Jews) were dragged out with their families into the trains taking them to the extermination sites. This has been deemed to be the darkest day for the Roma and August 8th observed as 'Pharrajimos Dies' or Roma Holocaust Day, 'Samudaripen' in Romani (Barsony and Daroczi 2008).

The Nazi episode was one, perhaps the most gut-wrenching acts of racism inflicted on the Roma since their appearance in Europe. This acute form of racism, which Bancroft (2005) describes vividly, is now recognized as in part, ultimately, the historical consequence of 'rational' or 'scientific' racism (Acton 1974), when the state apparatus supported by the majority of the population have turned against this community and indulged in various forms of racism targeted at them. This kind of social phenomenon has largely benefitted the extreme-right parties who have made racism their political agenda (McGarry 2008). This aspect was clearly visible in the behaviour of the Hungarian Jobbik party in the general elections of May 2014 where they were able to reap some electoral dividends. In the subsequent general elections in May 2018 the ruling Fidesz party made clear gains out of making immigrants and some would say the Roma, the target of their attacks (Bayer 2018).

#### **2.4.1 Roma, seen as an Oriental community in an Occidental setting**

Said (2001) in his classic 'Orientalism' has brought out the dynamic interplay between the self-perceived Occident, and the socially constructed 'Orient' that shaped European legitimations of colonial rule in Asia which in turn influenced the form of European racism against people perceived as Asian in origin, such as the Roma. Mishra (2017), in his book, 'The Age of Anger' has argued that this should be explained in terms of the behavioural fault-lines in the West where the 'Orient', according to him, has always turned out to be at the receiving end of the West's prejudice, ignorance and lack of interest in genuinely understanding the East and the Eastern traditions, their culture and civilization. Naturally a supposition like this, in the thoughts of western Roma experts such as Fraser (1996) and

Bancroft (2005), has been well expounded while giving conceptual validity to the oriental factor in Roma identity formation and drawing the Roma narrative as the 'other'.

Why then has this attitude not traversed across to other minority groups in CEE countries? Hungary itself has a good thirteen of them including the Roma. But then the others are all bunched as 'national' minorities having their homeland of origin while Roma are the only minority who do not have one such and therefore classified as 'ethnic minority' (Kovats 2001). But whereas 'nationality' can be changed by naturalisation, ethnic minority status for the Roma in the Hungarian national census is always those, whose parents have been Roma (Jaroka 2012), and that has stayed all these years.

#### **2.4.2 Policy in modern times**

The modern day period in the case of the Roma could begin with the Communist period, i.e. post-Nazi persecution, and as a contemporary setting point in their process of assimilation. Almost all historical accounts of the Roma have given this period ample coverage as having opened a very different chapter in the life of the Roma from the way they had been treated previously. First of all it gave the Roma dignity of labour and freedom to exercise their basic skills and labour. Second, they were as free as the other populations in their urge as normal citizens for their essential needs. Third, like other communities- and there was no difference between the others and them and therefore 'the other' categorization no longer existed- they were entitled to housing (for which workers had to pay a minimal rent irrespective of their ethnic background), education, and accommodation while there was a social levelling by virtue of the coming in of a new economic system which obliterated all distinctions built up between them and the rest of the population. Most importantly they could live in peace, earn for themselves and their family, send their children to state-funded schools, live in state-funded houses and be treated as one among all, even at a relative loss of their ethnicity.

This narration finds place, with contextual and descriptive variations, in all the Romologists I have studied, starting from younger researchers, Jaroka (2012), and Dunajeva (2014) to senior experts, Hancock (1991a 2010, 2019), Ladanyi and Szelenyi (2006), Acton (1974, 2008) Acton and Ryder (2013), Ryder (2014a&b, 2015), Liegeois (2007), Barany (2002), Bancroft (2005), Fraser (1996), Kemeny (2000), Veermeersch (2007, 2001, 2012 a&b) etc. The common points which are found in their analysis of the Roma situation under the 40-year period of communism had been, as described above, truly life changing for the Roma,

perhaps the best period in so far as their living conditions were concerned. This was to take a serious turn with the demise of communism and withdrawal of Russia from its erstwhile zone of influence.

It needs to be noted here that communism as a phenomenon of the past has mostly been addressed in writings about Roma in a descriptive, and not discursive, way and not as a way to understand the present day phenomenon of Roma discrimination, racism and the attendant evils which beset the Roma of today. Jaroka (2012:12) wrote, “The first step towards addressing Roma issues under Communism in Hungary was a nation-wide survey by the Ministry of Labour in 1957 that concluded that ‘assimilation’ (*beilleszkedes*, lit., fitting in) could be achieved by mass employment. In a Communist Party resolution of 1961, Gypsies were said not to constitute a nationality, and that the task of Gypsy assimilation was to be achieved through regular employment, improved living conditions and education”.

While this marked a huge step for the Roma as they were able to escape from the settlements, any earlier symbiosis they had with the peasants was to be destroyed and ironically in some ways the physical and social distance between Roma and non-Roma was to become much more pronounced. In the 1980s, the gradual end of the state-controlled economy had a radical effect on the majority of Roma who had come to depend on jobs at the bottom of the state sector. By the 90’s a huge mass of unskilled factory workers lay unemployed.

Dunajeva (2014) in her comparative study of Hungary and Russia on Roma education has come out with even more interesting observations. Thus, according to her, Stalin’s program of assimilation led to progressive diminution of the cultural capital of the Roma while bringing about some uniformity in the unskilled labour resources of the state, including that of the Roma. Thus the early period of Socialism, which in popular parlance has been termed as ‘nativization’ gave way to the subsequent Soviet policies of massive industrialization, and that needed proletarianization which had to be done through education. Developing ethnic identities did not go together with garnering unskilled labour for low wages, and in this, the cultural skills with which the Roma were traditionally endowed were the biggest casualty.

Ironically when the Soviet era was over and the Roma found themselves ‘free’ to pursue their ethnic identities and revitalise their cultural resources, their wages had gone and they were back to being on the margins of the mainstream. Fraser (1996), in his broad historical narrative of the Soviet period and its impact on the Roma population of Eastern Europe has



made mention of the fact that the Soviet Union, who had in 1925 recognized Romani as a literary language, and permitted nomadism, yet after taking over half of Europe twenty-five years later reversed their own policy, by suppressing nomadism so as to achieve greater uniformity between the Roma and other populations.

Nonetheless, as the Communists began to reform, they introduced Romani and Beash as a language of instruction along with Hungarian in Hungarian schools where Roma children also studied. In places, however, this might reinforce separation between Roma and non-Roma children in the classroom, a chasm which was to have a definitive visibility in the post-Soviet period. Fraser's entire narrative of this period is based on the post-Khrushchev Soviets pursuing a strong 'assimilationist' policy towards the Roma, in the process radically changing their cultural identities, though there was some degree of recognition and regeneration of Roma cultural identity towards the later part of Communist rule in Hungary.

Political sociologist Acton (1993) has submitted that Gypsy history is an integral part of the economic and political history of Europe and therefore any attempt to exclude Roma from the social and cultural history of Europe would tend to distort the overall history of Europe. As he says, "The way in which Gypsies have been the ultimate non-citizens, pariahs, outcasts and scapegoats across five centuries of European history, defining the citizenship of others is a phenomenon which European nationalist histories and the synchronic mythical reconstructions of Romani oral history alike conspire to bury".

Hancock (2010) has however underlined the ties of customs and traditions in the building up of the Romani identity and squarely puts to rest many of the other contrarian interpretations of that period. As Kallai (2002) has pointed out, the beginning of the Communist period in Hungary had found a Roma community distraught and suffering from loss of land, besides cultural traditions. He has suggested, however, that the Communist state could not give due importance to the ethnicity of the Roma either, resulting in the Roma becoming an industrial cog in a state-directed command economy.

## **2.5 The threshold of market capitalism and the Roma dilemma**

These varied interpretations agree that it is discernible that the Roma, with the sudden emergence of a new economic order found themselves for a variety of reasons at a great disadvantage to their incomes, and more importantly, even to the security of their lives,

despite ‘re-possessing’ the ethnic attributes. There was a distinction between them and other minority groups as well as the mainstream which was later to be institutionalised in the Law on Rights of National and Ethnic Minorities (July, 1993).

Reports of the European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) have highlighted various aspects of Roma tribulations consequent upon the ushering in of market economies in CEE countries. Among them the European Commission (EC) report (2010), ‘Improving the Tools for Social Inclusion and Non-discrimination of Roma in the EU: Summary and Selected Projects’, as well as Guy (ed) (2001), ‘The Roma of Central and Eastern Europe’ have been most useful in getting a multi-optic analysis of the Roma situation from various points of view. Many discussions of participation draw on Arnstein’s ladder of ‘citizen participation’, such as Rostas (2012) in his ‘Roma participation: From Manipulation to Citizen Control’ suggesting Roma do not get much beyond ‘tokenism’ or the lowest three stages of the ladder. The ERRC (2012) Report, ‘Challenges of Representation; Voice on Roma politics, Power and Participation’, similarly argues that Roma participation is still an ‘empty slogan’. Rostas has however correctly pointed out that inability of Roma political parties to attract Roma voters have played a negative role in the political arena. Added to that is the proliferation of, what he calls, the ‘Gypsy industry’, where a plethora of Roma related NGOs have been formed cross-cutting each other.

The situation is further worsened by the role played by the Roma Minority Self-Government agencies which have acted as parallel bodies to local administration bodies and have not really deployed their very limited administrative or financial resources in empowering the Roma. This has been succinctly brought out by Kovats (2001) in his, “The Political Significance of the First National Gypsy Minority Self-Government”, where he makes the point of the ineffectiveness of such agencies in furthering the Roma cause. This merits further discussion, as a major cause of ineffectiveness of the EU’s Roma policy could be to a large extent attributed to this factor, besides the phenomenon of corruption to which it has concomitantly led.

In his well-argued paper, ‘Extreme Poverty, Human Rights and Roma’, Cahn (2002) suggests that the Roma problem has been treated as a ‘social issue’ while it has been primarily one of poverty. Furthermore, post-1989, the Roma have been entirely pushed out of the mainstream with several cases of human rights violations against the Roma coming to the fore. The same

paper documented several such cases, viz. Balazs vrs. Hungary and two other cases concerning hate crimes. ERRC had then submitted to the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) to, a) acknowledge the phenomenon of racism, and b) that racism included ‘institutional racism’, defined as “the collective failure of an organisation (state) to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture or ethnic origin”.

The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI 2011) defines ‘anti-Gypsyism’ as a ‘specific form of racism nurtured by historical discrimination which is expressed among others, by violence, hate, speech, exploitation, stigmatisation and the most blatant kinds of discrimination’. This has spawned ‘institutionalised racism’ where state bodies have turned against Roma instead of protecting them against violence and xenophobia as per the provisions laid down in the constitution. In my ethnographic study, highlighted in Chapter Five, I have observed the condition of the Roma on the ground which correspond substantially to the forms of coercion mentioned above that could lead the researcher to highlight the aspect of racism as part of the Roma way of life.

Based on his visit to Hungary from July 01-04, 2014, Nils Muiznieks (2014), Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights reported the deteriorating situation in respect of racism and intolerance faced by the Roma, and of continued far-right para-military activities such as torch-lit, uniformed rallies, and advocacy for racially motivated politics, suggesting this could not happen without the state playing a supporting, or at least encouraging, role. There are challenges to this from the Roma. Vermeersch (2001), says that “Romani activists have tried to enter politics through participation in mainstream parties, they have established ethnic-based political parties and sought electoral support from Roma communities: at the international level they have attempted to establish representative international Roma organisations aimed at constructing a common identity for all Roma and influencing agendas of international bodies such as the Council of Europe”. But the mechanisms for international restraint of human rights abuses within sovereign states are weak and slow. A case in point has been the ruling of the European Court of Human Rights which in 2017 (Council of Europe, 2017) ruled that the police had failed to protect Roma from racist abuse during the demonstration and in proper investigation of the incident.. Other examples could be cited, currently Hungary faces infringement action from the European Commission for segregation of Roma in education. The European Parliament has expressed concerns over the

constitutional and electoral system, privacy and data protection, Freedom of expression and religion, Academic freedom and freedom of association and equal rights, particularly for refugees in Hungary.

### **2.5.1 The representation deficit**

But having said that, it could also be pointed that the Roma presently, and significantly, lack a meaningful political representative in the Hungarian Parliament. All they have is the mandate of the Parliament to sit on the margins without taking part in the deliberations, as an ethnic minority representative group. This hardly goes anywhere. Vermeersch (2001) ascribes the blame on the Roma themselves, their lack of political organization, unity, a common voice which do not give the scope for effective political advocacy. On the other hand, mainstream political parties, he feels, could invest more in Romani politicians to represent the Roma voice more effectively. The reality speaks a different story.

While a system of secured seats (a quota system, or electoral ‘affirmative action’) has not been introduced in the Parliament, and parties need to meet a threshold of 5% to get MPs, an elaborate network of Roma Minority Self-Governments has created a semblance of minority representation for issues related to collective rights that the Roma could enjoy, specifically in the fields of education, culture, and use of minority languages (Kovats 2001). The so-called independent advocacy groups should play a more active role in taking the Roma issues to a national platform through the media and other means of social promotion which the Roma, being resource-starved could be deprived of. Such engagement could lead to a change in public policy towards the Roma for the national governments irrespective of the political affiliation. It is in this perspective that ERRC has, over the years, brought in cases of human rights violations, some of which were highlighted above as test cases, for getting the government’s attention.

Besides the fact of Roma being subjected to human rights violations, it is in the very definition as an ‘ethno-class’ (Ladanyi and Szelenyi 2006) that they have fallen an ideological prey to much of societal abuses. Thus the syndrome of the ‘culture of poverty’ (Szuhay 1999) has taken roots with Roma as a visible symbol, a phenomenon self-perpetuating over time. What this thesis suggests then is to disentangle a bit of the ‘culture of poverty’ syndrome by bringing in factors which could lessen, if not rid, the Roma of this burden, if they were to work in a certain direction, with awareness, advocacy, entitlement and

the benevolent guidance of state and civil society actors. However, with the current regime of Viktor Orban, having denounced the role of NGO groups as active civil society agents in no uncertain terms, the objectives of the EU Roma policy could get even more remote. In this context the vilification of Open Society Foundation (OSF) head, George Soros, during and after the Hungarian national elections of 2018 (Verseck 2017) is a case in point. It may be noted that the OSF is one of the biggest NGO-activist bodies advocating the Roma cause.

### **2.5.2 Potential of Roma activism**

Is there a middle path then between the organization of dependency and proactive autonomy? Gheorghe and Pulay (2013), discuss the potential of Roma mobilisation in pursuing the struggle against racism and discrimination. They say it has to be matched by a concomitant support stream coming from other social actors in that direction knowing the inherent weakness in political mobilisation on the part of the Roma, what Gheorghe has termed as ‘shared responsibilities’. The important point made by him is the need for ‘affirmative action’ which he defines as ‘Initiatives to compensate for a legacy of group disadvantages by ensuring that individuals have equal opportunities’ (2013:49). The Constitution of Hungary does make mention of ‘affirmative action’, i.e. political representation for minority groups under Article 69, paragraph 3. In reality, however, nothing has happened so far, despite a 1992 judgement of the Hungarian Constitutional Court in this regard.

Gheorghe is scathing against human rights bodies for not representing the Roma effectively though they stand rhetorically for the Roma cause. Acton and Ryder (2015b:9) have interpreted Gheorghe as follows, “Understanding how Roma utilise social and cultural capital is crucial if we intend to reorient their use for integration into mainstream society. Otherwise Roma might remain trapped in the informal economy which in some cases could mean criminal activities”. Gheorghe has hit the nail on its head, in his accurate diagnosis of the Roma problem in contemporary society, addressing the attrition of social, cultural as well as economic capital as also the possibility of their diversion into non-productive uses, hence the essentiality of capital re-formation. Only then can the exodus of the Roma towards the informal sector in former socialist countries and being completely dependent on state largesse stop. Otherwise this could threaten to destabilise society. For that, the long-term solution lies in a mix of ‘affirmative action’ measures. These have been provided for marginalized groups

in India such as the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (both categorised for the purpose of our research as ‘Dalits’.

## **2.6 Importance of social inclusion**

Equally vital is to bring about social inclusion as the remedy to pull out the Roma from the age-old marginalization to which they are condemned. Ruth Levitas (1998), well known for introducing the concepts of MUD (moral underclass discourse), SID (social integration discourse) and RED (Redistribution discourse), has addressed the exclusion issue in the specific context of the New Labour Party’s emergence in UK with the phenomenal electoral success of Tony Blair in May, 1997. RED looks at resource redistribution and therefore principally addresses the economic capital issue while MUD denotes the value loss in the individual s which results in loss of discipline and makes them a socially deviant character, thus fuelling the cycle of marginalisation and isolationism. SID in turn denotes a positive outlook by looking at employment, skill development etc as crucial for social integration, thus positing that inclusion is socially and economically vital. The last aspect in Levitas’ theory could be taken as the starting point of economic capital building which aims at not only enriching the Roma but benefitting the society in multiple ways. RED, MUD and SID are terms that might help us understand Roma and Dalit marginality (Ryder et al, 2014)

McGarry (2014) has suggested the notion of ‘full inclusion’, which by definition means social, cultural, economic, political and legal integration of Roma communities in all spheres of public life, which also means full political representation in terms of a definite voice and participation in public life.

### **2.6.1 The Roma platform: A European-wide mechanism for inclusion?**

The European Commission created the ‘Roma Platform’ in 2009 by elaborating 10 common principles of Roma inclusion which included commitments on the ‘involvement of civil society’ and the ‘active participation of the Roma’ (EC, 2010), thus implying commitments on the part of national governments to forge a ‘dynamic partnership’ with Roma communities in their respective territories.

This was to pave the way for the EU Roma Framework, otherwise known as the National Roma Integration Strategies (NRIS), which was allegedly ‘the most remarkable step so far in securing avenues for Roma civil society engagement in policy making while at the same time

encouraging community participation in policy advisory mechanisms in their own right’ (McGarry 2014: 13). An important functional principle of the EU Framework was the Open Coordination Method (EUOCM) where national governments were given the mandate to cooperate with EU member states mandated to carry out the policies under the Framework though in this Roma participation was given short shrift. That has been a crucial omission, for the Roma not to be a participant in their own development process (Ryder et al, 2014).

This could have aided in giving an active role to the Roma and consequently helped in their identity building. In their thought-provoking paper, ‘Roma civil society: Deliberative democracy for change in Europe’, Acton and Ryder (2013) have advocated the concept of a ‘Social Europe’ incorporating a vision of society based on ‘solidarity, equality, social justice, internationalism, and fair distribution of economic wealth, which are broad parameters for an idealistic society where the Roma could have been equal beneficiaries’. This theory presupposes equality amongst all social groups and acts as a level-playing field for the fullest potential of capital in all social groups with mutual and easier exchange of goods and services, and therefore a flow of capital.

The Hungarian Prime Minister, Viktor Orban’s articulation that Hungary would better perform as an ‘illiberal democracy’ (Guardian, 2014) necessarily cast the state as an autocratic entity out to quell all vestiges of a liberal democracy. In a speech to Hungarian Ambassadors, Orban (2015), while voicing his opposition to accepting refugees, called the Roma as equally dispensable. He said, “It is a historical feature of Hungary and a given- regardless of what anyone may think about it, whether one likes it or not- that it is home to hundreds of thousands of Roma. Someone, at some point in time, decided on this, and this is a situation which we have inherited.” Minister of Justice Laszlo Trocsanyi went a step further in hinting that there was a danger of the Roma getting radicalised and ending up in Syria as foreign fighters, thus implying that both Muslim immigrants and the Roma could be treated in the same light as unwanted elements in the society (EU Observer, 2015)

## **2.7 Roma and the ‘Development’ paradigm**

In the changes ushered in 1989-90 in Eastern Europe and the paradigm shift in opening up to market capitalism, the Roma in general were not beneficiaries. Was this immiseration inevitable? It is important to consider the critique of Escobar (1995) who draws on ‘development theory’ as an alternative paradigm in his post-development critique. For

Escobar, drawing on Foucault and Said, power is inevitably concentrated in the ruling groups, that which moves top-down for ‘development’ of the disadvantaged groups with policies that carry a hidden meaning, antithetical to the purpose for which it is meant. Escobar’s critique of development is that it is ‘paternalistic’ and needed to be denounced as ‘an ideological export’, an act of ‘cultural imperialism’. The theory has found echo in several other post-development critics (Pieterse 2009). In the post-war period, development theory was accepted and built upon the premise that through planning and intervention deprived groups located at the margins of the society could be assisted in benefitting from forms of mainstream existence premised on western capitalist notions. This was subsequently denounced by post-development theorists who argued that development theory implied a form of control through the concept of ‘governmentality’ which normalised a neo-liberal and assimilative policy agenda and ‘responsibilisation’, thus individualising the victims rather than addressing the structural fault lines on the ground (van Baar 2011). Roma supporting groups such as OSF have tended to exalt scientism above local knowledge, with the specious argument that the Roma communities were not mature to be conscious of their responsibilities (McGarry 2014).

In the UNDP Report (2002), ‘Avoiding the Dependency Trap’, the first such quantitative survey of five CEE countries including Hungary, the human development index as applicable to Roma communities has been taken into account. The report has looked at indices of life expectancy, education, per capita income and healthcare. The report based on the findings of UNDP/ILO strives to answer questions regarding Roma inclusion and the areas in which development opportunities need to be augmented. The report has also brought in the factor of human rights, a salient factor in the marginalization syndrome. It has come out with several policy deficits regarding Roma communities and vulnerable groups in general, viz. lack of adequate socio-economic data, lack of integrated solutions to treat marginalized communities in a comprehensive manner and lack of awareness to provide for development opportunities that go towards benefitting both marginalized communities as well as the general population.

In a scathing indictment of the Report, Acton (2004) says that the Report, instead of countering built-up European stereotypes about the Roma, helps to build those though in a ‘pseudo-scientific camouflage’ based on inadequate parameters and insufficiently conducted 5 random surveys (in 5 CEE countries) of around a thousand each of Roma respondents who may or may not have been scientifically chosen and may or may not actually have been



Roma. He further contests the conclusion of the Report, in forewarning the Roma against the ‘dependency trap’ if they were to be over-reliant on state largesse, and calls for ‘integration, not assimilation’, Acton emphasises the need for an inter-disciplinary, social-scientific research methodology. For him the multi-faceted phenomenon of anti-Gypsyism needs to be explained through new approaches, thus the need to deconstruct established Romani history and restructure state policy towards the Roma

Coming back to the UNDP Report, one of its major recommendations for the countries surveyed was that social benefits should be linked to labour force participation, and in this sense the Public Works Programme (PWP) instituted in Hungary has been commended. Introduced in 2007 and has turned out to be an additional income earner for Roma families though critics have commented that the programme has tended to sap productivity and keep the Roma permanently in the informal economy.

A major recommendation of the Report has been to involve local organizations and members of the Roma community in the design and implementation process, stating that this would be the key to success.

## **2.8 Virtue of community development**

In their ground-breaking work (2010), Ledwith and Springett have defined the key purpose of community development as ‘collective action for social change, principled on social justice and a sustainable world’(14) As the authors note, participation became a key, transformative concept in community development in the 1970s, thanks to the iconic work of Freire, ‘Pedagogy of the Oppressed’ (1972), where the latter developed the concept of education and the consciousness generated out of that becoming an instrument in the hands of the marginalized groups to confront the power elites with a view to bringing about transformation in the society in a community participation bottom-up mode (Ryder et al, 2014).

In Gheorghe’s concern for social transformation. He was conscious of his role in the community and wanted that awareness to spread horizontally among the Roma through various means, notably education, and also getting the Roma civil society and other advocacy networks to build up a case for empowerment on regional and international platforms. As Ryder and Szilvasi (2017: 97) note “The huge challenge which lies ahead is whether Roma

communities can be more effectively mobilised and more inclusively connected to national and international spheres of advocacy”.

Ledwith and Springett (2010:15) sum up the importance of political participation thus, “The political dimensions of participation need to be framed within participatory democracy, a worldview in which communities are in control of the decision-making processes that affect their lives, giving voice to the most marginalised, giving greater power to local governance to influence policy making thereby making institutions accountable”. I shall examine the reality of this on the ground when I discuss the role of the Roma Minority Self-Government agency in the decentralised decision-making process, whose counterpart on the Indian side could be the Panchayati Raj institution, also a democratically elected decentralised body at the grassroots.

Weaving the Roma narrative in building community development, we find that the degree of the individual’s economic, social and cultural capital (Bourdieu 1991) are dominant factors and can achieve their potential working within the community. This is further attested by feminist writer Dominelli (2006, cited in Acton, Cemlyn and Ryder, 2014)’s description of women’s achievements in a group setting, that this can bring about not only change in the economic capital accumulation but social change as well within disadvantaged communities. This has been observed in the functioning of Self Help Groups (SHGs) in India, mostly run by illiterate women and largely successful (Tapan 2010, Karunanithi 2013).

Nobel Laureate economist Sen (2015:36), defines freedom as the ‘process of expanding human freedoms’. As he says, “the role of freedom concerns the way different kinds of rights, opportunities and entitlements contribute to the expansion of freedom”. Sen thus treats freedom as enhancement of capability in the context of resource building to contribute to human development, strengthening of capability thus amounts to empowerment and inclusion of marginalized communities. While community participation empowers marginalized communities like the Roma it can devolve economic and political participation, that itself could lead to empowerment in the long run.

## **2.9 The EU Roma Framework**

Does the Framework of NRIS in the EU provide for the kind of capacity-building that Sen (2015) envisages? Much of Sen’s theory of development hinges around capacity-building

when he argues that the benefactor state would be more concerned with building capacities which ultimately turn into economic assets for the marginalized communities. Here, it is important to understand the genesis and methodology of this framework, this being the central focus. The inception of the EU Roma Framework in 2011 (EC 2010) came out of the Roma platform conceived in 2009, and following a review of the Decade of Roma Inclusion, a non-governmental initiative helmed by the OSF which had not given commensurate results (Bojadjieva 2013). Here was a new framework enabling Roma communities through EU funding and active implementation by and coordination among member states to concentrate on four central pillars, viz. education, employment, health and housing. Following the enunciation of the Framework, member states gave a commitment to abide by EU stipulations in making the Framework deliver. Thus EU left the implementation of the Framework to the responsibility and vigilance of the national governments.

An ERRC Report of 2013, ‘National Roma Integration Strategies: What next?’ contained wide ranging articles on the EU Framework as part of a short-term evaluation of the Framework. The broad objectives of the Framework were to bring about social inclusion and empowerment, two key concepts which form part of our questions and are used intermittently to generate supplemental observations, and apply to all EU member states who are funded proportionately as per their budget contribution to EU and are meant to be deployed exclusively for the Roma. There lies the catch. For countries like Hungary who hosts 13 minority groups, with the Act on Minorities (1993) taking into account all these groups, there could not be a single and exclusive dispensation for the Roma.

Kovats in his foreword to the ERRC (2013) review of NRIS, has drawn attention to two basic issues around which the whole debate has been structured, firstly importance of the ‘social policy paradigm’ which takes into account all the real problems on the ground, poverty, inequality, racism, discrimination, etc which have effectively blocked the much desired ‘integration’ into mainstream society, and second, inability of the Roma to play an effective role in developing policy initiatives which have been mostly, if at all, state-driven and implemented through the Self-Government agencies, and filtered top down, without any grassroots participation nor building any political awareness among the Roma, the principal target groups for these initiatives. The NRIS, in that sense, seems like the Millenium Development Goals (MDG) on which UN has rested its wish list for member nations to observe, first by the year 2015 and thereafter extended for one more decade. We have not yet

come to that pass in terms of the timeline for the EU Framework which, as of now, expires in 2020 without any further renewal of mandate.

Discussing the Civil Society Monitoring Reports on interim progress with national strategies in respect of each of the EU member states, Kovats concurs with the civil society findings embedded in their recommendations to the EC for a swift end to segregation in education, elimination of barriers for Roma to enter the labour market, ensuring equal treatment for healthcare facilities and facilitating local integrated housing programs so as to end the 'ghettoisation'. Besides these findings covering all the four pillars of the NRIS, racism or 'anti-Gypsyism' has been an important factor of further immiseration of Roma..

Acton, Ryder and Rostas (2013) give a much broader perspective of the deficiencies in implementation of the EU Framework, namely that policies filtering down in a bottom-up approach are supposed to be implemented by agencies which are just not capable. They have instead advocated inclusive community development and full Roma participation in their inclusion process. Referring to the 'Social Europe' concept, they have juxtaposed non-inclusion of Roma communities against the activities of Roma-related NGOs which are important to take the cause of the Roma forward.

It is interesting to note the diverse opinions of Roma observers which come through the compendium, yet it is clear that beneath the diverse voices one constant refrain is the negligible implementation of the EU Roma Framework's objectives. Ironically while the EU spends substantial funds in this regard, the expenditure does not find commensurate resonance on the ground. Thus, while EU comes out with its Annual Monitoring Reports on the working of the EU Framework for all individual member countries, observers are uniformly critical of the effectiveness of the EU strategy.

## **2.10 Roma: a European issue?**

It could be argued that since national strategies are ineffective, there has to be an Europeanisation of the Roma cause. This is a plausible scenario as the Roma being a transnational community could ideally fit in within the EU's overall policy framework. With no individual country taking their ownership, Roma were deemed to be a pariah community (McGarry 2014). This has been reflected on the ground with Roma Self-Government agencies in Hungary often complaining about decline in funding from the Central

government resulting in their depreciated ability to give proper attention to the Roma. This ‘passing on the buck’ attitude has catalysed into a Catch-22 situation; if you do not take up the issue of inclusion and empowerment under the EU rubric, the Roma are left to themselves while if you carry on the tasks deemed under the Framework, you are Europeanising the issue. As Gheorghe and Pulay (2013:63) pertinently point out, “Europeanisation of Roma issues allows individual states too much scope for shedding their responsibility for these problems by passing this to other states or higher levels of European institutions”. The serious limitation in this approach is that the Roma would not be given scope to participate in their empowerment process.

This is not all, the Minority Self-Government institutions are basically concentrated in the area of culture such as running schools, libraries, theatres, as well as representing the minority group nationally and internationally. However, even then the presence of the Roma in public life is largely peripheral as it does not give the community actual control over their own decision-making (Tremlett et al. 2014). The Roma issue should have provided an additional platform to discuss better coordination among member states (Acton & Ryder 2013). The EUOMC is taken as an example of such coordination. In terms of drawing a comparative model for studying the economic empowerment of marginalized communities, this could present a theoretical framework to develop bilateral cooperation between Hungary and India, and could be a concrete takeaway of this work. Of course several other factors and differentials have to be built into such modelling, and we shall be developing them as we proceed along this thesis.

## **2.11 Role of Roma civil society bodies and elites**

It is important here to assess the role of Roma civil society bodies, namely the civil society and other non-state actors, Roma NGOs and the like. Observers have, however, remarked unkindly on the growing bureaucratisation within Roma civil society bodies. They have been derided for preparing glossy project reports to attract EU funding while the Roma continue to languish as before. Trehan (2009) has been critical of the excessive NGOisation of these groups which has tended to obfuscate the Roma cause. This, along with politicisation of Roma identity, where ethnicity has been projected as a cultural tangible to be ‘valued’ for development (Kovats 2013), has brought more harm than good.

It is a complex situation where the entire gamut of European socio-historical factors are at play and any efforts at over-simplification, breaking them down to tangibles as through the EU Framework have not helped. The role of the Roma elites, which could play an important role in being the conduit rather than an observer of change and could effectively dialogue with civil society bodies and state organisations in bargaining a favourable position for the Roma, leave much to be desired. As Jovanovic (2018: 198-99) says, “Years of empowerment and capacity building have produced a tiny stratum of our (Roma) elites capable of institutional participation. One consequence of progress in this area is that some of the brightest and best of our civil activists become civil servants. At the national level, former Roma activists have been appointed to serve in governmental offices. At the local level, Roma participate as municipal Roma coordinators... Roma activists moved from the streets into offices and from mobilisation to administration. The struggle for change became more removed from our communities and more immersed in bureaucracy, where the problems of ordinary people became a distant echo rather than palpable reality, abstractions to be managed rather than battles to be fought”. Jovanovic calls this group the ‘Roma-in-charge’ who, with assuming a role and appointed by the government or state bodies, slips into a ‘comfort zone’ in terms of ‘income, status and recognition’ and gets distanced from the ‘other Roma’.

This is, of course, not to discount the importance of Roma civil society groups, some of whom have assiduously worked for the Roma cause, some Foundations which have taken up Roma issues ‘from birth to death’ and some like OSF, despite being bad-mouthed by the administration, have still held the Roma cause dear to them, albeit for their own agenda as perceived by the government in power.

## **2.12 Cause for action**

We can see from this literature that much of the discourse suggests that the Roma situation has stagnated because the ordinary Roma do not get to play an active, engaged and community-centred role to play, and those who do, get alienated from their own communities and therefore distanced from the real problems. With the Hungarian government viewing the Roma problem as one of poverty and with several other minority groups to contend with, the space for socio-economic measures taken by the state targeting the Roma could shrink further. For example, ‘affirmative action’ policy which has guided the process of

empowerment of marginalized communities in a significant way in India, cannot be followed in the case of Hungary as the state cannot provide such ‘affirmative action’ instruments for all the 13 minority groups that co-exist. Somin’s (2010) caution against the practicality of Habermas-style ‘deliberative democracy’ needs to be therefore taken seriously, are we not going too fast and positing a system which would require the maturity of its institutions and stakeholders? Therein rests the dichotomy, between the EU’s general prescriptions and member states’ actual implementation.

### **2.13 The future as seen in the contemporary literature**

The Open Society Foundation (2012) study of five CEE countries, including Hungary, referred to above, raised substantive doubts on the implementation models adopted by countries bringing out structural defects which called for reforms. Subsequently the Roma Initiatives Office (RIO) of the OSF came out with a strategy paper for the period 2016-19. Though the paper is drafted more towards devising proposals for project grants for EU, it has made substantive points too. While stating that EU is more powerful than the Council of Europe, OSCE and other UN agencies, it mentions that EU could face a resource crunch and not be able to sustain funding for their Roma scheme henceforth. It is therefore incumbent on national governments to pursue their own responsibilities without expecting much of EU support, in other words generate their own funds for this purpose. The Report observes,

“Influencing national governments on Roma issues has become increasingly difficult, as politically legitimized and publicly promoted intolerance and hostility against Roma strengthen the obstacles to change. National governments do not want to do more to improve the situation of the Roma because they are afraid of negative reactions from their voters (2012:2)”. The situation in Hungary in future, in terms of its equation with the EU, could be further clouded with protests and allegations from both sides, and a further aggravation of crises within certain member states, including Hungary, cannot be ruled out.

The ‘Human Rights’ approach of the Soros-funded Institute, OSF and its creation, the ERRC, defending individual rights on the basis of their common humanity and not as a privilege of membership of a state or ethnic group, has been open to question, particularly from the ruling Fidesz party of Hungary. Nevertheless several ERRC Reports have been perused in the course of my research as they still open windows into the Roma discourse which correspond with reality. They could therefore be treated as legitimate source of information and analysis..

Along with the European Roma Policy Coalition (ERPC), these bodies have sought to develop an EU lobbying strategy on behalf of the Roma (MacGarry 2010) though the transnational advocacy mechanism does not seem to have developed deep rooted constituencies, neither in the Roma civil society nor in actual Roma constituents.

Further opportunities for Roma communities to participate could be provided through civic engagement tools such as ‘search conferences’ where the marginalised present their concerns to decisions makers and search for a common position (King and Cruickshank 2012, Se also Ryder, 2014a). Such deliberative forums, a la Habermas, allow the voice of excluded people to be heard and provide new insights, not always evident to the professional campaigner focussing on macro-policy needs. The EU Roma Framework, in that sense, still potentiates the best forum to articulate their aspirations through a participatory process. This, as we have seen, would take time to mature depending on evolution of several factors on the ground. Advocates of lateral participation (Greenfields and Ryder 2012) assert that transparent forms of research and channels of communication with the researched (as opposed to scientism which flow top-down) produce results to reduce the prevalence of stereotypes which have bedevilled the Roma trope.

#### **2.14 Ideas from India and framework of the Dalit empowerment model**

The reference to India and study of marginalized communities, namely the Dalits, to mean in the context of this study, both the lowest castes (specified as Scheduled Castes) as well as tribal groups (as Scheduled Tribes), has been made to evolve a theoretical framework for the study of empowerment and social inclusion processes, as also to present a comparative approach to similar communities in Hungary. The study is made with the reasonable assumption that socio-economic factors in both contexts are comparable, with certain systemic variations.

The Indian part has been approached in three ways, each approach shaped by research literature which has been carefully selected in this study. These are:

*One)* Study of certain personalities who have dealt with Dalits and could be credited with giving a direction to Dalit empowerment

*Two)* Field trips/Case studies of four districts, two each of low caste and tribal groups’ predominance, to generate hypotheses for testing.



*Three*) Analysis and evaluation of affirmative action tools and the contemporary scene. Each of these approaches have led to the other, and this has enabled me to come out with verifiable and comparable hypotheses.

### **2.14.1 Study of Personalities**

Four important Indian personalities, two belonging to the pre-independence period and the other two contemporary, have been identified for the confluence of their views and efforts towards emancipation of ‘Dalit’ or ‘subaltern’ communities in India. They are, in that order, Gandhi, Ambedkar, Sen and Spivak .

Gandhi’s (2010, 2017) views on social justice and social inclusion for the ‘Dalits’, Ambedkar’s (2010,2013) prodigious efforts towards political emancipation of such communities to liberate them from the established shackles of the ruling caste hierarchy, Sen’s (1995, 2015) unique methodology in looking at human development through the optic of capability and resource utilisation, and Spivak’s (1999, 2000) forthright views as a post-development critique in calling for social justice and liberation for the subaltern groups have been brought together. Besides the guiding texts above, there are ample literature available on each one of them. For Gandhi and Ambedkar, besides their own prodigious output contained in their Combined Volumes, there are a number of important commentaries and biographies available. Thus for Gandhi, a few representative works (Nanda 2008 a&b) Iyer (2000), R.Gandhi (2017) and on Ambedkar, (Keer 2016, Jadhav, 2014, 2015, Chopade 2017) have been largely used. Several of Sen’s own writings (1999, 2015) and commentaries and interviews of Spivak (Landry and MacLean 1996, Chakraborty 2010, Chakravorty et al 2006) have also been used. The basic idea in piecing together their ideas and vision for the marginalized communities of India has been to weave a narrative which can hold relevance for a contemporary study of these communities.

In this, seminal works on India’s independence and thereafter (Chandra and Mukherjee, 2008) and on the historicity of caste and their evolution (Kothari 2016, Srinivas 2016) as also some recent works (Pai 2013, Dube 2017) have been useful. I have also dealt with the historical factors, e.g, the great ideological debate between Gandhi and Ambedkar (Rodrigues 2004, Keer 2016) on how the lower castes were to be viewed in the overall societal matrix. This debate, as we know, led to the seeding of the affirmative action policy of the Government of India (Deshpande 2017) and was enshrined in the Constitution as reservation

given to the extremely backward castes in education, employment and political offices (Sharma 2002, Jodhka 2015). Here the important role of Ambedkar as Chairman of the Constituent Assembly in charge of drafting the Indian Constitution has been discussed (Mungekar 2016) so as to contextualize Ambedkar's enormous contribution for the Constitutional guarantees for the marginalized communities.

Both Nobel Laureate economist Amartya Sen and cultural critic and feminist Gayatri Spivak have found broad relevance in this study for their own works on vital aspects of social justice, exclusion, development and gender inequality. Together with the historical and sociological phenomena of the low castes as the oppressed group, these critics have also lent their voice to the study of the process of marginalization in the Indian society through their writings, interviews and commentaries.

A recent study on the linkages between the Roma of Europe and the Dalit communities of India was brought out in recent times (The Indian Journal of Social Work, Special Issue, Dunajeva et al, 2017), where several eminent Roma experts have contributed their articles to deal with various aspects of these linkages. The Editorial states, the key aim of the collection is, "to explore how policy models pioneered in India or conceptions of and remedies for marginalization conceived by Indian social justice campaigners and scholars have relevance for Roma communities in their struggles to achieve equality in Europe, and vice versa" (p 1).. From their historical connect to commonality in theories of empowerment, inclusive community development, participatory action, integral education, women empowerment, etc. have all been discussed, and these themes have been further dealt in my study.

## **2.15 Methodological Literature on Field Visits/Case Studies**

Case studies, interviews and situation analyses conducted during the course of my visits to 4 representative districts of the province of Odisha, a state which finds broad demographic and developmental similarities with Hungary, have been extremely useful in drawing further contemporary relevance. That has helped me in building a framework for a comparative study. In this I have relied basically on my Diary notes, desk top research, press reports and commentaries (Nayak 2015). Importantly the field work conducted to assess the situation of marginalized communities at comparative poverty levels has been carefully examined, and the effect of the 'affirmative policy' instruments on these communities in their social and political contexts has been explored.

It is pertinent to note here the social and economic transformation which has been taking place both through injection of socio-economic measures and community building projects such as mobilising women to form Self Help Groups (SHGs) (Tapan 2010, Faizi 2009), as well as the new livelihood and banking schemes introduced by the Modi Government engaging the rural populations, schemes such as dairy, poultry, cattle rearing, etc as well as ‘Mudra’ for financial empowerment of the lowest social groups. The schemes targeted at the landless farmers seem to have boosted incomes, generated better productivity from the soil and given better health, housing, nutrition, education and employment opportunities to their families who are basically classified in the Below Poverty Level (BPL). To offset the real danger of farmers committing suicide over inability to repay loans, the Central government has been extending financial support to the states which have largely suffered from farmers’ suicides for a host of reasons. The description of the Government-sponsored schemes have been taken from various journals and press reports. Several studies (Patankar 2015, Das 2014) have been useful in drawing a comprehensive picture of the present poverty situation, so also the various poverty-related commissions such as the Tendulkar Commission which have been treated in detail. Along with these, current studies on caste (Teltumbde 2018, Yengde 2019) have been studied to understand the highly complex and volatile phenomenon of caste groupings and their progressive political empowerment in contemporary times. It needs to be added that the literature on caste and tribal groups is quite vast, and I have been able to use whatever I thought was relevant to this study.

## **2.16 Analysis and Evaluation of ‘Affirmative Action’**

This being the most important part of my India narrative, I have discussed the concept of ‘affirmative action’ in detail right from the bare Constitutional provisions (The Constitution of India 2016) to its most lucid and famous interpretation (Austin 2000). Austin has made a case for the importance of both the Fundamental Rights in Part III and Directive Principles of State Policy in Part IV of the Constitution, calling them ‘the chief instruments in bringing about the great reforms of the social revolution’.

It is interesting to note dissenting critics of the efficacy of such provisions in so much as bringing real changes for the marginalized in the Indian society (Nariman 2016). As he says, “Our Constitution cannot survive long if we only pay lip service to the Directive Principles of State Policy. We must implement them in earnest. The neglect of the poor and the needy in

our country poses the greatest single serious threat to our survival as a nation in more than 60 years of independence”(p 261). Strong words indeed, and coming from an eminent jurist they hold a lot of prescience about the future of the empowerment process, constitutionally guaranteed for the marginalized communities.

Therein lies the dichotomy, again in the Indian context as I had begun to discuss in the beginning of this chapter, between rhetoric and reality. After having been codified with more than 3 years of arduous work and debate in drafting the Constitution by eminent jurists and law makers under the Chairmanship of Ambedkar, the Directive Principles which adduce much of value to ushering in a time-bound social reforms revolution have not been actualised the way they were intended to.

However, as seen in contemporary India, the Dalits seem to be getting emboldened with newly accrued rights of education, employment and holding political offices through ‘reservations’ and the institution of ‘Panchayati Raj’ (Mathur 2013), and more importantly, forming pressure groups due to their sheer numbers to demand their rights. This has given impetus to the ‘forcible’ acquisition of rights by the Dalits for themselves, a fight in which Ambedkar had engaged all his life. This therefore is a study of political mobilization by the marginalized communities in India, which may not find parallel in Hungary. However, it should be important to note that the same fault-lines in the society could be made use of by the Roma as they get progressively empowered and are able to stand up on their own feet.

I have taken up this study as I have felt that the subject of social justice, as it pertains to and works with marginalized communities in India, could be extrapolated to other contexts and applied to similar marginalized groups with a view to assuaging their social conditions and reinforcing their economic and cultural capital. In this, as described above, I have made use of relevant literature for both Hungary and India. In the latter case, my observations have been better facilitated by my native connection as well as ease of moving within the field of research. Given the vastness of the available literature in the area of social justice in India, I had to be selective in drawing a framework which I thought could be appropriate for empowerment and inclusion of marginalized communities. Much more literature has been perused during the course of my study than I can possibly mention here in the interest of brevity.

In Hungary, on the other hand, I had to take up the subject as a new field of interest. The initial introduction was my observation of these communities in my quotidian encounter with them, getting to observe their life style, way of life and standard of living. It reflected so much of India! Furthermore I delved deep into the bountiful literature available on the Roma in understanding their history, possible links with India which was further a matter of great fascination for me, and current practices to find points of convergence and near similitude between the Hungarian and Indian contexts in my comparative analytical study of empowerment processes of marginalized communities.

## **2.17 Conclusion**

At the beginning of this chapter we asked the guiding question, is there a gap between the rhetoric of social inclusion and empowerment, and reality of marginalization on the ground? We have found a perceptible gap between the two, aided by supporting literature, in EU's idealism and the ontological reality of the Roma. This has also been found of relevance in the Indian context as my reading of relevant literature shows.

Many supplementary questions arise from an analysis of the chapter; How effective are the Roma Minority Self Government bodies in Hungary? How connected are they to the Roma masses whose interests they are supposed to represent? How do the Roma get a political voice and representation at the national and regional levels? What are the major reasons for their lack of awareness and advocacy and how could they be addressed? How can the phenomenon of anti-Gypsyism be addressed? What is the role of Roma elites in fostering social inclusion for the Roma masses into mainstream society? What are the effective means, if EU were to reduce funding, to implement the Roma framework by national governments? These questions have been attempted with the means of relevant literature through this study. In the Indian context ancillary questions have been sought to be addressed mostly with analysis given in books, commentaries and reports of contemporary events, and how they re-configure the existing equilibrium of the marginalized communities within the society.

Reviewing the literature studied gives me a sense of accomplishment at having utilised these for the purpose for which they were collected and studied. It bears reiteration that the available literature on such a wide-ranging subject, especially when studying two different contexts, was vast and far reaching. To collect, assimilate, and reproduce them for the purpose of bringing out a cogent and hitherto unexplored area of study, was overwhelming.

As a diligent researcher, it will be my endeavour to collect further literature as and when the need arises and expand the scope of this study further in order to stimulate more lateral research.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **Methodology**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

The topic of my doctoral dissertation presents me a wide canvas as well as scope for a multi-faceted study of two different socio-cultural contexts in which marginalized groups have been living and benefitted (or otherwise) from integration processes in their respective societies. One has therefore to be a critical observer of two different contexts and develop perspectives which may apply to both despite their socio-political differences. In order to understand the empowerment process and study the means to carry it forward, one has to analyze the fault lines of the society and bring about measures to address them. In common parlance they could be called tools of redressal, to know them one has to develop a certain set of concepts and build frameworks within which they can be studied.

Furthermore, Roma communities, as it were, exist with a permanent fluidity of movement expressing oftentimes in social tensions. These reinforce the clichéd images of the familiar social trope well entrenched through mass media, government communications and attitude of government officials as well.

This is a policy methodology for a social policy thesis. But if the policy is to be evidence-based, one also requires social scientific methodology, which I adumbrate below.

#### **3.2 Tools of research:**

In my research, I have used critical observation, interviews, collection of data, primary as well as secondary. I have been able to do participant-based qualitative research during my study in India on marginalized communities, as well as in studying the Roma communities in Hungary. On both sides I have come across economic and policy failings of administration and policy makers. Partly I base this assertion on the triangulation of research methods, since using data from just one source exposes inadequacies in the analysis and does not give scope for secondary sources which are no less important.

Thus my re-analysis of data in secondary literature indicates points that are often overlooked though the summary findings and data look positive, which indicates distortion in social systems and improper reporting or manipulation of data. At the same time I had to be critically aware of my difficulties in my own primary data-gathering. Sometimes interviewees had little competence in English, which was the language in which I conducted interviews. Sometimes it necessitated the use of translators, and I had to be aware of, and try to check for levels of confusion which could arise during the translation process. Sometimes my previous reading led me to be aware that government officials interviewed were trying to mislead me on the real situation on the ground, which posed ethical as well as methodological issues as to whether I should confront them or merely note their answers. Dealing with these distortions and seeming contradictions was helped by the theoretical frameworks laid out by several experts on the Roma in Central Europe, in several notable studies on the Roma (Acton 1974, Fraser 1996, Hancock 2010, Guy 2001, Kemeny 2005, Liegois 2007, Ryder et al, 2014) and they were useful to me before I went out to the field to conduct interviews.

It is therefore appropriate that the methodology bears in mind the epistemological distortions which the economic and social policy deficiencies may generate. This is what is meant by a critical observational perspective, trying to generate findings which could be objective and fair, applicable to the actual Roma situation and implementable on the ground. The same approach informs my research on the Indian side too. Now, let me elaborate the theoretical aspect of tools which may have been used in differing degrees in conducting my research. But before I do so, I must talk about the overriding role of ethics in research, particularly in shaping the methodology in conducting the research work.

### **3.3 Ethics**

The role of ethics in methodology is to prescribe an ethical framework guiding the research work or results thereof, their dissemination and engagement in public discourse based on the findings. The Code of Ethics (CoE) by the International Sociological Association (ISA) lays down a Preamble and 4 sets of specific ethical standards<sup>12</sup>. The Preamble posits welfare of groups and individuals with whom or on whom sociologists work or who are involved in the latter's research efforts, and guiding the behaviour and expectations of ISA members between themselves and towards the society at large. CoE relies principally upon the self-discipline

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<sup>12</sup> [http://www.isa-sociology.org/en/about\\_isa/code-of-ethics](http://www.isa-sociology.org/en/about_isa/code-of-ethics)



and self-control of those to whom it applies. The Ethical Standards prescribed fall into 4 areas, the study of sociology, the procedures of research, publications and communication of data, and extra-scientific use of research results.

Based on these standards, I can say that I have been able to comply with the CoE laid down by the ISA, the international standard guiding all scientific-sociological works. Based on the standards prescribed, the basic elements of my ethical study have been:

To be as transparent and non-discriminatory as possible regarding all those researched or have contributed to the research;

To maintain fairness in frankly outlining my findings without in any way sounding ideological or letting my personal preferences come in the way of my research results;

To maintain the principles of openness, criticism, and respect for all scientific perspectives and integrity of the work while protecting the rights of individual informants who have played a direct and major role in my research;

To be aware that my research would be beneficial not only to the Roma communities but policy makers as well, and therefore I need to strive to attain the highest standards possible in publication of this study

To be conscious that the Corvinus University, Budapest, with which I am registered for undertaking the doctoral work would in no way interfere in the functional nature of my research while it would stand to benefit from this research to encourage further studies in this area.

It may be noted that in order to enable myself keep to the above guidelines, I had sent out a Letter of Participation/Consent to my elite interviewees along with a printed questionnaire. Both are part of appendices and can be seen at the end of Chapter Ten.

### **3.4 Information sheet and consent form (informed consent)**

Individuals, with whom the semi-structured (informant) interviews were carried out, were given an information sheet along with a consent form. In the case of uneducated respondents the gatekeepers conveyed to them the purpose of the interview after which the interview was conducted in the presence of the gatekeeper/intermediary and with the latter's facilitation.

The information sheet was shown to the respondents, and in some cases read aloud by the gatekeeper. These were originally written by me in English and translated into Hungarian for research purpose. The information sheets have been stored for my record and have not been

made public or quoted in any other paper or research work, keeping to the ethical standards outlined above. I exercise my intellectual right over them as per the CoE of ISA.

It should be noted that in some cases participants in the interviews have been anonymised. As explained above, these were primarily Roma living in ghettos whom I felt should be protected in these challenging times where even reference to them in an academic publication might bring forth difficulties. Besides, unfortunately, due to severe ill health and a move back to India in the middle of the research work, I lost some of the signed consent forms. I managed to get new consent agreements from a few elite interviewees by email but in others I did not have contacts anymore and thus felt it prudent to also anonymise those

For the purpose of collecting primary data, interviews have been conducted by me in Hungary and India. I have used trusted gatekeepers such as academics and community workers to construct a snowball sample of contacts with Roma individuals who have been acquainted with affirmative action of one kind or the other. I have not expected the Hungarian gatekeepers to know about the situation of affirmative action in India. That, in fact, has come as a double advantage of their not being biased in any way by the interview, while not leaking out details of public policy in India. Their information has been referenced to the domain in which I have interacted with the Roma communities in Hungary. Different gatekeepers have been used depending on the context and subject of the interviews. However, the methods and purposes of the research has been made clear to all those invited to act as gatekeepers.

I should mention here about the relative lack of knowledge of the Roma communities as such in Indian educational institutions or within the government, despite the historical fact that the Roma may have originated from India, thus meriting cross-referential studies, besides contextualizing this knowledge in the contemporary world. This study, in that sense, could trace a diaspora link to the Roma communities, and serve as an important and novel element of public policy discourse of the Government of India as well as tertiary institutions who are engaged in diaspora studies.

Let me now enumerate the theoretical/ethical assumptions of the methodology employed while conducting this research.

### 3.5 Standpoint theory

Standpoint theory is a guiding theory in my research work as it considers the marginalized in a non-hierarchical manner. Throughout my visits to Roma communities in different parts of Hungary, I have been shown a distorted picture in many ways, a sort of dystopian reality. Community development theorists argue that communities could be typified as community of place, identity, issues and interests (Ryder, Acton, Cemlyn 2014). Roma communities are dispersed all over the country, more in concentrations in the north, north-east, south-west, trans-Danubian region and the central part and in the suburbs around Budapest (Ladanyi and Szelenyi 2006). In each of these community clusters, the Roma communities' relationship varies with the majority community. Thus, for example, the relationship between Roma and majority communities varies from the outright adversarial to harmonious co-existence, with instances of behavioural fluctuations in between. This I learnt early in my study. The communities, including ghettos visited by me, mostly fall in the category of 'identity communities' (Wacquant 2008a and b) and were located in the regions mentioned above. Furthermore, their relationship with the local administration, the Roma self-government agencies, showed an apathetic, even conflicting attitude at times.

One might hypothesize that familiarity with theories of community development would be a basic step to aid policy-makers. For the success of community development, the strategy has to be targeted at individuals' economic, social, cultural as well as emotional capital. Besides, the camaraderie and the interactive engagement between the community members could play an important role. The integrational quality of the community influences the outcome of a social movement substantially, it can even nurture political activism. In the Roma context, advocacy is of considerable importance, and advocacy sustained over a period of time could lead to activism and agency in executing desired goals for the community (Ledwith and Springett 2010)..

I have therefore preferred to follow the principle of partnership and working supportively with the Roma communities with whom I have interacted during the course of my research. This has been aided with inputs from my cultural capital and background of having studied such marginalized communities in my own country. Bourdieu (1991) defines capital as 'accumulated labour' incorporated in its embodied form. According to him, cultural capital

can be acquired depending on the context and circumstances. Thus, it predicates upon both the content as well as the context of acquisition of capital.

This approach is very useful in gaining authentic and alternative knowledge about the marginalized experiences, emotions, struggles and perceptions. During the course of my field studies, these factors were kept in mind while talking to the Roma groups and that helped me in generating an analytical edge in my research. While participating in their individual or group activities, e.g. talking to them, visiting the fields along with them and helping them in their cultivation, watching them perform their community tasks and interacting with them, I was also observing their actions and behaviour distinctly, without being strictly a participant observer because of lack of time (As mentioned above, I had to leave Hungary soon after completing my tour of duty) and enormity of my ethnographic tasks during such a short span. Nevertheless, I kept a careful confidential fieldwork diary of my observations and interactions.

Furthermore, the need to learn the lessons of feminism standpoint theory was evidenced by me as a researcher in interviewing Roma women in Hungary as well as Dalit women groups in India where a certain reticence and shyness in answering my questions, even in the presence of intermediaries, was noted. This behaviour is generally ascribed to women participants opening out to women researchers more freely than in the case of the opposite case. Such behaviour could however hamper the flow of research while not allowing the researcher to analyze data as objectively as he could in same-gender situations. This has been a sort of handicap for me during individual or group interviews occasionally, unless I was accompanied by female intermediaries.

Standpoint theory, though daunting, still allowed me to try to move beyond my own comfort zone to become acquainted with the problems and perceptions of primary sources. Knowledge thus gained helped me to compare different standpoints rather than limiting my sources of knowledge only to indirect sources, viz. documents, books, journals, etc. This could facilitate me in reaching objective findings concerning Roma behaviour, and their potential and capabilities which they themselves may not have been aware of.

As regards my research on Dalit communities in India, I have thought it better to link that with my reflexivity of familiarization with these communities since my early childhood and

at periodic intervals that I have come closer to them in life. This is described in greater detail below.

### **3.6 Avoiding Scientism**

Scientism is that theoretical habit which reifies the scientific procedures of one time and place into an absolute guarantee of truth and then, disregarding possible errors in those procedures, treats conformity with them as it supposedly generates a more incorrigible form of truth than other forms of arguing from evidence. “Scientism” is thus a short-cut epistemology which substitutes scientific status for crucial critical scientific inquiry. Just as gullible sick people will buy patent medicines more readily if advertised by men with glasses and white laboratory coats, so funders, donors, and government agencies often take the short-cut of looking at the degrees and number of publications of the authors of policy research, rather than analyzing the quality of the research itself; and research institutions may themselves discourage radical research which might endanger their reputation (Ryder 2014b).

So experts have to beware of overrating themselves and their knowledge and ignoring the real problems on the ground that could lead to an ‘un-authentic’ research. Authorities who rely more on such ‘scientific’ findings and base their Roma strategy (the same holds for the Dalit situation in India today) tend to come out with superficial theories and strategies which are ill applied on the ground, even alienating the basic target groups from the establishment. At the end the official review could reveal a disappointing result. However, even unofficial surveys conducted tend to contradict the government’s position blatantly. The notable instance of this situation is in the National Roma Integration Strategies (NRIS) which, while undergoing periodic review, has led to erroneous conclusions (Ryder 2014a). This will be treated in more depth later. The same is also true on the Indian side.

Some observers (Acton 2008) have pointed out that if research is conducted by powerful institutions with hardly any community engagement, the risk will be of longstanding stereotypes being upheld. Some reports (Rovid 2013) of the Decade of the Roma Inclusion Secretariat suggested that participatory research as a method was relatively less used than indirect sources by the European Commission (EC), and their policy makers were more dependent on ‘expert’ knowledge which limited the scope of ‘authentic’ knowledge at the end.

We thus need to combine the analysis of existing data with the results of qualitative research, analyzing both from the approach of standpoint theory. In my research I have made efforts to move beyond the narrow confines of scientism and directly interact with Roma in their habitats. Thus, keeping my perspective flexible to accommodate such group observation and examination from close quarters, I could understand their social interactions, impulses, motivations and mores. The constant pushing in and out of the margins of the society is what makes the study of marginalized communities, in this case the Roma, both exciting and unique, that they are not hostage to a particular spatial dysfunctionality but traverse all over the land in search of livelihood and habitats, pushing out ‘other’ (read mainstream) populations in the process. This therefore calls for a methodology equally dynamic and alert to study these communities in motion amidst their unique spatial and socio-economic diversities.

### **3.7 Role of Interviews in data collection**

I have made ample use of interviews not only to draw essential facts about the interviewees but also examine the immense spatial and socio-economic diversities concerned. The interviews were of two kinds, one with ordinary Roma respondents at the grassroots during my field study (Chapter Five), and elite interviews with senior officials, politicians, institution representatives, Roma leaders, educationists, media persons and intellectuals/activists in different time-space-contexts (Chapter Six and Chapter Seven). I have also made extensive use of interviews when sketching the context of the marginalised communities of Odisha in chapters Eight and Nine. These have given me a broad range of perspectives, both bottom up as well as top down, and strengthened my analytical positions. They have also helped me to compare and contrast claims and counter claims in so far as Roma inclusion and empowerment are concerned, that being the principal focus of this work, while the field work undertaken in India (Odisha) have provided a valuable contrast. They have helped me understand the trials and tribulations of the Roma comparing that with their counterpart communities in India, the Dalits.

I have taken the example of Dalit empowerment from India where these marginalized communities, oppressed over the centuries, have been able to find their voice in society and gather political weight along with social and economic muscle. This transformation cannot be generalised to all Dalits, their numbers are too vast, but a good stretch of them (my field

study of four districts in the state of Odisha in Chapter VIII would show that). While my field interviews in Hungary have been conducted with the help of gatekeepers/intermediaries, the elite interviews were taken on a one-on-one basis. The latter were therefore particularly helpful in getting the views of the interviewees directly while in the field I have been handicapped to some extent with the need for interference or interpretation/translation (whichever way one looked at it).

Existing data was garnered from literature review, as discussed in the previous chapter. This facilitated my research by helping develop models and theories for further discussion, and preparing guided questions. Bruce's (1994) conceptions, i.e. list, search, survey, vehicle, facilitator and report are applied in this study as well, as related to the question of marginalized communities' empowerment processes with particular reference to the Roma and Dalits, though not following the same nomenclatures nor in that order.

**Table 2**  
**Indicative Table of Elite Interviews conducted in Hungary**  
**(with professional break-up)**

Community/grassroots	Elites (officials, politicians)	Academics (intellectuals, educationists, NGOs)	Institution representatives	Media
2	2	8	5	1
3	2	2/5		

The 2 columns below give the number of interviews as indicated in each row. Given the limitation of time under which I functioned while taking the interviews, they could not be exhaustive. Yet they could generate substantial and wide-ranging data under several relevant themes. These have been highlighted in Chapters Six and Seven with the gist of interviews reproduced under each of them so as to draw findings and generate discussions.

### **3.8 Analytical Methodology**

#### **3.8.1 Importance of Ethnography**

To make the ethnography, given in Chapter Five from the experiences of my field studies concerning the Roma in Hungary, I immersed myself in social settings for over 15 months using various gatekeepers to gain access, listening and taking detailed notes of what was said in conversations amongst the respondents and between the respondent and the researcher, and keeping a field diary. My interpretation of the inputs/data culled from such interviews, and observations in the field settings provided the raw data for my analysis. In Geertz's (1977) phrase, it enabled a 'thick description' of the gamut of phenomena studied which developed into 'webs of meaning'.

Hoey (2008) asserts that ethnographic study tends to pick up whatever little detail comes on the way of the observer, even the neglected details of day-to-day. It was clear to me that I had to collect whatever information as far as possible with my research subjects and their environment while interacting with the social hierarchy which has conditioned the existence of contemporary Roma societies in Central Europe, particularly Hungary.

At the same time it was important not to neglect the historical context (Hancock 2019), and the complex impulses from which the modern day scenario has evolved. The counterpart narrative in studying the Dalits/tribals of India has been relatively easier for me, as these groups are by and large socially integrated under the impulse of modernization (except for certain rare segments), economically stable and upwardly mobile. Since my study of these groups was conducted in my home state of Odisha, I could gather a good amount of data from local officials through direct interaction in my native tongue, besides being given official statistics and taken around to see various projects which seemed to have substantially boosted their livelihoods.

#### **3.8.2 Interpretivism**

The basic paradigm for analysing my data was interpretivism. I have attempted to interpret data in a detached manner as much as I could (in consonance with ethical principles) though it has to be stated that in such qualitative research, the researcher can be deemed to be a bundle of human impulses and has to get engaged in the subjects to get the best possible results.



This analytical approach is qualitative, and applied to data collected by methods such as semi-structured interviews and unstructured informant interviews. The researcher understands at the very beginning that individuals, being intricate and complex entities, could be experiencing the same ‘objective reality’ in different ways. Thus, there is a need to achieve empathetic understanding on behalf of the researcher and interpret the ideas, perceptions and actions (s)he is presented with during the course of the research. Derived from ‘social action theory’, interpretivists believe that reality is multiple and relative (Hudson and Ozanne 1988), thus the need for discernment, in an objective, fair and transparent manner, of the data collected on the ground. The importance of interpretivism accrues from the fact that it tries to be transparent about the mind of the observer/researcher, the context in which s(he) operates and the bridge which s(he) has to establish with the subject of research. These have vital bearing on any research and particularly where standpoint of the researcher is of prime importance, as it forms the researcher’s explanation of the patterns of behaviour of the community and their internal dynamics by explaining and interpreting the story or the data collected as evidence (Bryman 1988).

It is important for the researcher to understand motives, meanings, reasons and other subjective experiences which are time and context bound (Neuman 2000). My research is therefore based on an ontological study which derives epistemological strength through detailed self-inquiry and analysis. My self-inquiry has been presented in some detail as part of my analysis of my study of caste and tribal groups of Odisha in Chapter Eight where I have again talked about my own background, early education, and reasons for developing a fascination to study these groups under ‘Reflexivity’. Later, branching off into an elite service had distracted me from my goal though soon after superannuation from service, and even before that, I found an opportunity to get back to taking up their study as part of a doctoral research.

### **3.8.3 Subjectivity as integral to research**

Qualitative research, as attested earlier, uses the compass of subjectivity and thus allows the researcher flexibility to deal with his subjects. A study of the Roma, whose flexibility and mobility is inherent, is imperative in its interaction within the community or ghetto, depending on the ‘interpretation’ (Wacquant 2008). Ghettos could well breed anti-ghettos within them as an anatomic display of the phenomenalization of poverty. This has come to be

more relevant in the contemporary context of Europe where several factors combine to induce a sense of misery among the marginalized, pushing them further to the margins of the society.

With the scrutiny of human rights organizations and civil society bodies having gone up several times in the recent past, the state is increasingly on the defensive and has to show action. My conjecture is that a policy of embarking on a positive course for social inclusion and empowerment of the Roma is therefore well within the realm of possibility. Besides, interpretivism as an analytical approach, as much applicable to the grassroots Roma as to the elite, may provide a different perspective to commissioned policy papers which more often than not get abstracted from reality. We have already discussed the narrow and limited focus of scientism in contrast. Thus interpretivism as an approach gives tremendous value to the research in opening a window into the experiences of people at the margins as they live their lives.

It is pertinent to ask, what would make the policy makers, sitting in the national capitals of CEE countries as well as Brussels, realize the urgency of addressing the Roma issues? What would generate that compulsion in them to look at the Roma in a totally different perspective than the attention it currently pays? These questions may sound hypothetical but it is the goal of this study, to attempt to seek answers to these questions.

### **3.9 Research-Data Sample**

I have conducted 24 elite interviews on a one-on-one basis taken from different professions, as shown in table 2. The Roma, as these close-door interactions (besides group interviews and those taken during visits to Roma schools and other institutions), show, are an extremely complex and dynamic community, constantly mobile and given a thrust could go much farther than what they seem to have gone in the contemporary context. There could, and will, be immense possibility of ‘take off’ for the Roma in the future, provided the national governments act in coordination amongst themselves and with the EU, besides having effective ‘control and command’ over the authorities delegated, with due supervision.

#### **3.9.1 Selection and utility of subject for research**

It needs to be mentioned here that the selection of this topic for a doctoral work has been done after careful deliberation. My background of social sciences and development

economics which I had studied for my Masters, but particularly after getting to be acquainted with a population which struck me as very similar to us Indians, had been a key source of decision making for me. The more I came close to them, bought their objects, interacted with them, the more I was drawn to them. As a background, just before my arrival in Budapest I had been sounded by a friend of mine about this community with his having made some short films on them. I had seen some of those films and what had struck me was not only their consanguinity to Indians but the patterns of poverty and deprivation which were so much similar to that of the marginal classes in India. I had then thought of picking them up for research, but decided that instead of passing through the beaten track and lamenting their fates, I would bring in the 'India factor' not only as a comparative assessment but also as a guide for possible sharing of practices for development of marginal communities in general. This, I had felt, could be a new addition to the body of work which had been hitherto mostly historical or anecdotal, and prepare a study for universal applicability. In other words, this could give a positive thrust to demarginalization of Roma communities as a plausible phenomenon and the way to go forward.

Thus germinated the idea of research and I started work even before finishing my tenure, not to let go of the time and opportunity to interact with the Roma as part of my field study and be enriched with data even before I had left Hungary. Coming back to India I continued my research on the Indian side.

### **3.9.2 Data collection**

Before moving on with data collection, the researcher has to do a diligent data selection, the process of determining the appropriate type and source of data, as well as suitable instruments to collect them. This is distinct from selective data reporting or secondary data analysis (Robinson, et al 1996). Since my study is based almost entirely on qualitative research methods, I have adopted the following steps framed by Bryman (1988),

- setting the general research question;
- selection of relevant subjects/sources;
- collection of relevant data, and
- interpretation of the data

Given the general research question, I have carefully selected the sources of data, mainly primary data along with some degree of secondary data. It may be added that unless the

researcher has a broad collection of data, s(he) may not be able to do a judicious collection. Being a qualitative research, it is left largely to the researcher to determine the relevance of the data s(he) collects within the framework of the theme and the methodologies selected (instruments). The primary data, to reiterate, have been collected mostly through interviews, observations and field work notes. In this case, the difficulty has been the degree of reticence and tendency to conceal as inherent to the very nature of the Roma, in opening up to 'strangers'. The gestures which I have marked among the Roma women while interacting in male-female group settings have given me the impression of gender equality, if not dominance, amongst the female Roma. The assumption that they play an active role in the family as well as the community has been tested in the course of my interviews and other sources though at times, as marked above, they have exhibited a certain degree of reticence which could have hampered my flow of interview. My diary notes, in this sense, were helpful in having recorded my perceptions of the essential characteristics of Roma individual and community behaviour.

I have taken the help of secondary sources in the form of articles, books and journals, official papers etc. Secondary data could be meaningful to the study to open the subject for further research, e.g. publishing articles or books based on my findings which could lead to further studies in this area. Conclusions drawn in the individual chapters could be brought together in the final chapter to come out with a consolidated position and go for further testing, hypothesis and preparing new concepts for further studies.

To reiterate the point of the rigour of data sampling, I have used the following major types of data (Lee 2000):

- (i) Found data: captured observation being simple and contrived observations
- (ii) Retrieved data: personal and episodic records being letters, memories, media images, institutions' documents, reports, desk top research, etc.

I have gained access to the interviewees with my position as a senior diplomat where I could reach out without much difficulty to the elite and at the same time contact trusted gatekeepers and intermediaries who, as mentioned above, were very useful in my interaction with the Roma communities on the ground. I have anonymised my data while assuring my interviewees that the information they gave me, except for being used in a research work, would never be divulged in a public platform. That gave the confidence to my interviewees to open up to me substantially during the interviews. I could thus meet a broad range of

respondents comprising NGO representatives, intellectuals and activists who presented to me their version of things, not much different from what I was seeing on the ground, e.g. government apathy, distancing of Roma Self-Government agency from the target groups, familiar images about the Roma expressing their anger and frustration in periodic bouts of violence and disturbance, lack of accountability of EU/government funds, and above all disconnect and divide between the Roma hinterland and the national capital. The only silver lining in the whole bleak scenario was the formation, albeit microscopic, of an elite amongst the Roma who presumably would take up the gauntlet of addressing the issues in future..

As mentioned above, the basic text of the interview (for elite interviews) can be seen in the Appendices at the end of Chapter Ten. Depending on the context in which the interview was conducted the questionnaire was at times modified though all interviews in this category were one-on-one interviews. Sometimes the views of the respondents were captured in the field (in case of group interviews) I recorded my impressions of these interviews later in my diary notes which formed my research data. I found the data obtained through interviews and personal observations extremely useful.

### **3.10 Diary**

The research diary is used for recording day-to-day activities to produce sources of data collection which suit the qualitative research method. While conducting interviews it helps to take notes about the circumstances and impressions of the interviewee's living standards, behaviour, attitude (more in observation than verbatim). The diary is also used as a log diary and applied to record detailed field notes and phases in which research has been conducted for the study (Malinowski 1967, 1989). Thus, the diary is a day-to-day record about all the activities done by the researcher. Since the latter, as in my case, relies on interpretivism, which is the main instrument to characterize events and actions, the log diary is the most useful source to preserve any significant input to be used at present or in future. Inputs could be, for example, taking part in a Roma conference, being part of an informal conversation among non-Roma people sensitised to some extent by the Roma situation or watching a Roma- based film.

I have passed through all these experiences and found them to be very useful. During a Roma conference in the Indian Embassy on June 24, 2015, I got to have the participation of an important Roma who was a Mayor who gave a first-hand account of the development process

which has transformed the face of his village. Similarly another participant's presentation at the conference on 'Collectivity and Marginalized Groups in Hungary', defining the vision of economic empowerment of the Roma, was an extremely useful input for me as many of her findings reinforced my hypotheses and strengthened the arguments I was making in my research.

After getting back to India, I continued to use the diary, this time during my field trips to the selected four districts of Odisha with a numerical preponderance of both marginal groups, tribals as well as Dalits.

I should make a mention here of desk top research which I have taken recourse to, particularly in getting access to several articles and books pertinent to my research.

### **3.11 A Case Study and its methodology**

Case studies are extremely useful in corroborating evidences and accounts of what the researcher has obtained through interviews and observations. It is during field studies that certain hypotheses gathered during the course of data assembly get tested and verified. Thus, for example, my field study of Cserdi village was extremely useful to me in noting the ways of life, manners and behaviours of the Roma inhabitants, their family life and post-work routine. Even the minute details could be observed without any physical contact between me and my objects of study, thus obviating the need to stress them out. The field study was conducted in an open and unobtrusive manner, that added value to my study. The Cserdi case study (2015) was developed out of my field studies in the village and later published along with G.Karunanithi, an academic who had also been researching on marginalized communities in southern India.

During my field visits in Odisha I have collected adequate data to publish case studies of these tribal villages on various aspects of empowerment of marginalized communities of the state. The methodology normally followed in such cases is to diligently work with or without the help of gatekeepers and take detailed notes in the research diary. These impressions have formed valuable primary data used in generating hypotheses for testing and coming out with research findings for further work.

### 3.12 Reflexivity

This refers to reflexiveness among social researchers as regards the implications of knowledge of the social world they generate with their methods, values, biases, decisions and even presence in the very situations they portend to investigate (Bryman 1988). Reflexivity basically involves the researcher being aware of his own effect on the process and outcomes of research and contends that in carrying out qualitative research it is impossible to remain outside the subject matter. Reflexivity, in that sense, is the single most important tool of qualitative research and is nearly indispensable to it.

I was reflexive of my own early life experiences when growing up as a young child in Odisha, arguably one of the most backward states of India, I was exposed to gruesome poverty faced by the tribal people (tribals have been bracketed with Dalits as marginalized communities in India and the Constitution has treated tribal communities at par with the Dalits, for according same privileges, rights and facilities targeted at their empowerment). Berhampur, the capital town of Ganjam (now Kandhamal) district where I was born, conditioned my first few years of life and gave me a solid exposure to the tribulations of the tribals as my own nanny was a tribal woman coming from the most backward part of the district. Neat in appearance, she had narrated to me her own life experiences which left in my impressionable mind formidable memory pools of poverty and exploitation. She had then described to me the abject poverty in which she had to raise her four children while being subjected to vicious exploitation of the village money lender. Being a single mother (she had lost her husband early to disease and ill health), she had brought up her children running errands and working in multiple households to keep her flock together. Consequently, two of her elder children, aged 14 and 12 had to work as slave labour in the fields for the money lender who had kept them as pawns to release the family of debt. This was a typical system of bonded labour which was very much prevalent then, some 60 years ago, as part of a decadent feudal system following the ‘Zamindari’ system (landlordism) introduced by the British.

Much later in my adult life as a young officer in the Foreign Service, I spent nearly 2 months in the predominantly tribal district of Koraput in western Odisha where I encountered debilitating poverty, apathy of bureaucracy and complete isolation of the local tribal population from the civil society. The tribals, principally belonging to the “Kondh” group remained mostly in the forests and still hunted wild animals with bows and arrows, and fed

on meat and forest produce. They hardly ventured out of their forest dwellings except on one day of the week when they had to visit the village market to buy rations in lieu of ‘tadi’, a local brew of fermented wine. There used to be barter transactions amongst the tribal communities since neither had banks gone deep into the interiors of the state nor did tribal people have any idea of what banking was. They used their own currency made of copper, nickel and other metals (all that has been defunct now). I had then interacted and with some tribals though under the supervision of district authorities who were my intermediaries. I had to sometimes encounter hostility as the tribal people could not understand my language and suspected my intentions, but once it was conveyed to them that I meant no harm they could open up to some extent. I remember some foreign anthropologists who had come to do research on these tribes, and used to take pictures of semi-clad men and women for a little money. Little did the innocent tribals know for what purpose these pictures were being taken!. Interestingly I revisited the same district years later for the current study.

With the above background I developed interest in researching on marginalized communities, particularly looking at concrete measures for poverty alleviation. Much later in Europe, the Roma community provided an appropriate counterpart for the marginalized communities of India whom I had seen suffering from close quarters, segregated and subjected to horrendous poverty and racism. Later I came to understand the India connection of the Roma communities and that ignited my passion further to know more about the Roma.

From the point of view of research, there was a need to go into an in-depth study of the living conditions of the Roma, compare them with those I had seen in India, and attempt a comparative study in drawing the efficacy and comparability of poverty alleviation, social empowerment and inclusion programmes. I felt, while many of the ground conditions were quite the same, the symptoms of marginalization were also similar. However, there were a few more things which could be borrowed from the Indian context to suit the particularities of Central Europe.

The comparative study which I have attempted would thus, in my view, constitute good ground, not only to reinforce key hypotheses drawn on the basis of rigorous application of social science methodologies, but also as a further aid to my own understanding of the dynamics of poverty and its attendant exploitation and marginalization.



### **3.13 Summing up**

To sum up the major elements of my methodology, I have been guided above all by the principle to be ETHICAL, transparent, objective, and to produce a study which would benefit the Roma and Dalits as two representative marginalized communities, aid civil society in their tasks of spearheading change involving such communities, and above all, being an asset through this study to the Corvinus University under whose aegis I shall be completing my doctoral research.

As regards the mode of methodology followed, I have been INTERPRETIVE, in that I have attempted to grasp social action and interpret the actions, events and processes observed/recorded during the course of my researches in Hungary and India

My views on STANDPOINT have guided me effectively, to be a part of the community which was the subject of my research, and get involved in them as much as possible in the spirit of bringing out a valuable ethnographic work. Therefore I have upheld the principle of being PARTICIPATORY, i.e. engaging myself in active participant observation during my research.

Finally, the principle of REFLEXIVITY has conditioned my background, giving me the impetus to take up this research work. I have thus reflected on my own life experiences to relate to community needs, being a part of the marginalized communities identified in both Hungary and India. That has helped me to carry out this research with integrity as a measure of objectivity, while not losing my subjective focus either.

The methodology followed by me has also taken into account preparation of data into meaningful inferences, data sampling through interviews, observation, research diary writing, policy document examinations, etc. I have strived to adhere to an ethical approach keeping to the norms laid down by ISA, without compromising at any stage my academic rigour and discipline while taking an inclusive and self-critical approach. These have been my major tools of conducting this qualitative based research on social inclusion and empowerment processes of marginalized communities in Hungary and India.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Select Indian Thinkers and their experiences

#### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the works of four eminent socio-political thinkers and reformers in the larger context of ‘emancipation’ who have sought to further the socio-economic empowerment of marginalized communities of India. The chapter attempts to form the theoretical basis of a comparative framework, with particular focus on the Roma community in Hungary.

The thinkers chosen are Gandhi, Ambedkar, Sen and Spivak. The first two are socio-political activists of the pre-colonial/independence era and visionaries who had espoused the cause of the marginalized in different contexts and for different objectives, while the latter two are contemporary thinkers and ideologues advocating means of empowerment for the dispossessed, the ‘subaltern’. These thinkers/visionaries have been selected so as to discuss their methods and vision and compare that with the array of tasks undertaken by EU member states for social inclusion and empowerment of the Roma communities, with barely a year left for completion of the current period of the National Roma Integration Strategies (NRIS).

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi is responsible for bringing about a mass movement with the means of *ahimsa* or non-violence to wrest independence from the British colonialists. In fact his technique of *Satyagraha* (love for truth) (Singh 2007) is the single most important instrument of non-violent direct action.

Ambedkar, belonging to the untouchable Mahar (cow herd) caste in Maharashtra state of western India, rose to become the most prominent leader and representative of the *Dalits*. In public service he played a seminal role, being nominated Chairman of the Drafting Committee of the Indian Constitution (Jadhav 2014).

Amartya Sen, a leading development economist and winner of the Nobel Prize for Economics in 1999 came to prominence in the post-independence period, occupying centre-stage in

global economic discourse for his theory of social development and social justice (Sen 2009). His well-known theory of ‘social choices’ based on assessment of the individual’s capacities later conditioned the UN Human Development Reports.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, well-known as a literary theorist and post-colonial, neo-liberal and feminist critic, is best known for her path-breaking essay, “Can the subaltern speak?” part of the collection of her work edited by Landry and Maclean (2010).

All the above four theoreticians and social reformists have, in some form or context, addressed a range of issues related to the marginalized communities (the lowest castes in the social order better known as Dalits). In selecting them I aim to show the relevance of their ideas for the current discourse on marginalized communities, of which both the Roma in Hungary (Central Europe) and Dalits (India) form a significant part. However, before we attempt an assessment of the thoughts and works of these personalities and their relevance to the Roma, it is important to decipher certain common threads amongst them, notably, empowerment and inclusion.

#### **4.2 Empowerment and Inclusion:**

Empowerment has been defined as “a process, the mechanism by which people, organizations and communities gain mastery over their lives” (Rappaport 1984). It thus involves measures designed to increase the degree of autonomy to enable people to represent their own interests and thus take control over their own actions, individual or collective. It is a process of becoming stronger and gaining more confidence in leading one’s life.

Inclusion has been defined as “the systematic process of gaining capability arising out of social choices” (Sen, 2000). More than that, it could amount to an integration of the socially deprived communities into the social mainstream with the acquisition of certain tangible as well as intangible assets which go to form his social capital.

While there is no single definition of empowerment, the above four personalities have dealt with empowerment broadly in the context of social justice. While Gandhi had fought all his life at the social level to empower the Dalits and integrate them into the overall Hindu fold, Ambedkar treated social empowerment as a means to political empowerment and called on the Dalits to raise their voice against all injustices and abuses which the marginalized communities underwent. Amartya Sen (2009) in a later context has emphasized on the

concept of 'distributive justice' as an economic derivative of social justice which could only be secured by the marginal classes through a sustained empowerment process with the instrumentality of the state, not making the latter antagonistic but with the collaboration and engagement of state groups and institutions. Spivak, (in Landry and Maclean, 2010) in a different context, has argued for more space to be given to the subaltern's voice. For her the agents, who could be causing epistemic violence, i.e. the ruling elites in collaboration with the bourgeoisie, need to step back to allow the subaltern groups more space for action and freedom of will and spirit (Trehan 2017, Ryder and Szilvasi 2017).

Gandhi's concept of cooperatives, that marginalized communities could come together to form group activities for their socio-economic empowerment and take hold of their own lives, later spawned successful cooperative movements in India and bred the concept of Self Help Groups (SHGs) which have been a key factor for 'collectivity' (Faizi 2009). Sen has also dwelt elaborately on empowerment by pointing out the social indicators which, in addition to economic empowerment, also brings in the element of subjectivity, to treat human beings in their holistic spread of assets which could bring them better strength in assembly or 'collectivity' (Sen 1987).

Various gender studies have shown that women, particularly in the rural sector, have begun to take assertive steps in self-employment, being part of Self Help Groups (SHGs) and conducting their own financial management, thus raising their self-confidence and aspiration levels (Shetty 2009, Karunanithi 2013, 2017). They have also been taking active part in the self-governance bodies at the grassroots. This has led to gender empowerment in a major way while helping in strengthening the social capital of marginal classes in a typical rural or semi-urban setting.

An important factor in the empowerment process has been through community participation with formation of cooperatives (Ledwith & Springett 2010). These have provided opportunities to exercise power through group action to make informed choices for social as well as individual good. Such a deliberative form of democracy (Habermas 1992) invests people, particularly in the lower rungs of the society, with power and decision-making opportunities (Shaw and Martin 2000) and has become a key factor in the discourse on civic engagement.

For the above strategies to be effective for community and individual empowerment and inclusion, financial instruments such as micro-credit (Hashemi et al 1996, Tapan 2010) and micro-enterprise (Yunus 2001) have been largely instrumental in empowering marginalized rural communities. There the lending body, in most cases a cooperative or agricultural bank, has played a nodal role in subsidizing the interest element or even writing off certain types of loans in which there could be a welfare angle (Puhazhendhi 2012). It needs to be noted that in economic development the empowerment approach focuses on mobilizing self-help efforts of the poor rather than providing them with outright social welfare.

Besides, local government and NGOs have also proved to be important institutions for community empowerment and enhancement of social capital. In the Indian context, this has been achieved through constitutional means in local governance, i.e. the Panchayati Raj system of India. In August 2009, the Union Cabinet stated that 50% of all seats in the Panchayats will be reserved for women (cited in Karunanithi 2017). In India, the Gram Panchayat, the lowest tier of governance, plays an important role along with other grassroots bodies. Constituting the lowest rungs of administration, they deal directly with the marginal communities, vesting in them accountability, delegation of functions and consequent democratization of power in a bottom-up scenario. Such empowerment process integrates communities in a vital decision-making role while making the state apparatus a benevolent leveller instead of an intimidator, an essential requisite of a vibrant democratic society.

However, where democratic functioning has still not matured in the western-liberal sense, as in the case of India, it is important to reach out to the marginal communities through legal empowerment. Ambedkar was a great votary of this and his pioneering work in drafting the Indian Constitution (Keer 2016) is an excellent example of using the supreme legal document of the land as an instrument of Dalit emancipation and assertion (Pai 2013). With a relatively similar political sub-text, the Hungarian government has neither been forceful in implementing legal measures of empowerment for the marginalized communities as for the Roma, nor even tried to effectively use its designated local government agencies to protect their interests.

In order to further explore some of the concepts raised above, it is worthwhile discussing the lives of the aforementioned thinkers in greater depth.

### 4.3 Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (Oct 02, 1869- Jan 30, 1948)

Mohandas was born in a conservative family where both his parents were well-to-do people belonging to the business (*bania*) class. Thus Gandhi in his early life had no sense of the dispossessed, until two decades later, partly in South Africa but more so after his return. He would realize to his chagrin that Dalits were subjected to wanton human abuses and looked down upon by the fellow Hindus as untouchables, placing them at the lowest rung of the rigidly stratified Hindu caste hierarchy. He named them *Harijans*, to denote their special importance as 'God's people'. However, Gandhi, unlike Ambedkar, never challenged the basic postulates of the caste stratification, though he tried throughout his political career to address the social and economic challenges which the lowest castes faced and made all efforts to bring them inclusion into the mainstream..

Gandhi's approach to life was influenced by the many circumstances in which he was thrust during his 21-year old sojourn in South Africa, above all, the early experience of his being subjected to racial segregation in June, 1897 by being denied the right to travel in a first class compartment despite having a valid first class ticket. Thus was born the idea of addressing social prejudices and injustices through the political technique of *Satyagraha*. That was later, in the Indian context, to be the most effective instrument of political struggle against the British (Gandhi 2017, Singh 2007).

All through his relentless struggle in South Africa for asserting rights of the Asian people, Gandhi had been perfecting the techniques of waging civil disobedience mobilizing the masses against British colonial rule. These experiences would later play out in the Indian context with greater skill in his Sabarmati and Sevagram ashram experiences where many social experiments of his would be perfected and disseminated. While the biggest single protest movement, the Salt (or Dandi) march would emanate from Sabarmati, his more active protests against untouchability and commune-based living would be actualized as social experiments in Sevagram (Radhakrishnan ed. 1968).

*Satyagraha* was a socio-political experiment in engaging the masses in India's fight for independence (Singh 2007). This worked to a significant extent though there were simultaneous protest movements, some underground, some even violent which Gandhi never approved. As early as 1919 he wrote in the journal 'Young India', calling "the law of

*Satyagraha*”, the Law of Love as an eternal principle, although the principles of *satyagraha* constituted a gradual evolution (Iyer 2000: 294).

Though Gandhi considered the eradication of untouchability as his highest social goal, he could not countenance the ‘affirmative action’ policy, which clearly bore the imprint of Ambedkar, in the form of reservations for ‘depressed classes’, i.e. the lowest caste groups and tribals. Abolition of untouchability and all forms of discrimination later formed part of the Directive Principles of State Policy of the Indian Constitution, even while Gandhi was alive, and the ‘affirmative action’ policy was adopted as the means towards achieving that end.

For Gandhi the means held as much importance as the end, and therefore he took it as his life’s mission to uplift the *Harijans*. He however was not prepared to cede ground to Ambedkar in calling for the emancipation of the *Harijans* from the Hindu caste hierarchy. He justified the same on the ground that all human beings, irrespective of their place in the society, ought to live in harmony with nature so that all social and economic functions could be carried out without any imbalance. His other aim, as a shrewd political strategist, was to unite the Dalits under a common banner to fight the British (Nanda 2008b).

The *Charkha* or the spinning wheel meant to weave *khadi* or coarse cotton was not only the nationalist symbol of that time but became the bread and butter of a whole generation of patriots and weavers (Kulkarni 2012). Only Gandhi had the foresight to see in *khadi* an effective challenge to the mechanised factory woven garments of England by reviving traditional Indian hand spun industries while earning a decent livelihood for millions of weavers impoverished by the British policy of importing cotton from India in lieu of dumping British-made garments. Consequently, these garments were burnt in bonfires in thousands throughout the freedom struggle where women took the lead.

*Charkha* and promotion of small-scale village industries became the credo of Gandhian economics with the idea of promoting community-based economic organizations with the State as the trustee of community wealth. The concept of ‘trusteeship’ was novel in Gandhi. In many people’s view, even Gandhi’s notable followers like Nehru, this was a regressive concept which could not be actualized (Ambedkar 2008). But all this fitted well into Gandhi’s schema of what he conceived as *Ram Rajya*, an allusion to the kingdom of Ram on earth, quite akin to Ruskin’s ideas in ‘The Kingdom of God is within you’.

One of the sacred principles of *Ram Rajya* (Gandhian Studies Programme 2010) was that man in all humility should accept to be the tiller of the soil which has been given by Mother Earth and reap the produce as a member of the community with the State as the custodian of the collective wealth. He was firmly in favour of the village economy with the village as the basic unit of economic activity. Gandhi shunned the industrial economy as symptomatic of the modern age. And being an ethical nationalist to the core he saw to it that the common man stood to benefit from a small mode of production with state support. The village economy being intrinsically small, and yet the most effective and the first step towards national development, served his world view well. He held no common cause with a private economy run by a coterie of industrialists (except for raising funds from them to run the freedom movement) and felt that a nascent, predominantly village-based economy such as India's would have to depend in the final instance on the small and marginal farmer aided and supported by the government.

In his powerful essay, *Hind Swaraj* (Gandhi 1909), Gandhi had accurately predicted that Europe was heading towards a catastrophe of gigantic dimensions. The First World War started five years later. He had then argued that the main cause of the war would be the West's avaricious attitude for acquiring new sources of cheap raw materials to feed its industrial appetite and flood the new market with machine produced goods.

It is therefore evident that what Gandhi was looking for were small self-sustaining village communities which could generate their own incomes from the natural, financial and human resources judiciously under the State's trusteeship. With a predominant rural population based in its 600, 000 plus villages still nurturing a rural or semi-urban economy based on agriculture and agro-based small industries, Gandhi's economic ideas of rescuing the common man from social, political and environmental exploitation could not be more appropriate for contemporary times.

#### **4.4 Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar (April 14, 1891- Dec, 06, 1956)**

Ambedkar was to play a seminal role in not only awakening the 'depressed classes' (classified as Scheduled Castes, the Dalits, and Scheduled Tribes in the Government of India Act, 1935) but also in politically mobilizing them in their demand for caste-based reservations. Through a series of articles incorporated in the Indian Constitution drafted



under his chairmanship, these communities were constitutionally safeguarded against social and economic discrimination.

During his distinguished career Ambedkar made his mark as a noted jurist and a prolific economist. A committed politician as well as a notable social reformer, he incessantly campaigned against all forms of discrimination and exclusion which befell the backward castes and was motivated to secure their emancipation in every way possible, social, economic and political (Ambedkar 2010, originally 1930).

Ambedkar's social activism began in the 1920s, soon after his return from abroad after completion of his higher studies with his fight against untouchability which had stigmatized the marginalized communities for generations. The 1911 census had for the first time enumerated the lowest caste groups as the 'Depressed Classes', and the Congress Party called for removal of social disabilities from such classes only in 1917 (Rodrigues 2004).

Ambedkar's political baptism was in Bombay from where he organized the lowest castes into an all-India body with decentralized activities in some of the provinces. Ambedkar argued that untouchability had to be fought "by the untouchables themselves" (Zelliot 2001: 62). He realized that the Dalits could never get emancipated so long as they stayed within the oppressive fold of Hinduism, and began to champion the cause of 'separate electorates' for the Dalits.

His move in that direction was to be stymied by no other than Gandhi who did not want a open schism within the Hindu ranks. Furthermore it would have meant breaking the mass movement and, bringing about division within the caste ranks. This was not acceptable as the lower castes had to remain within the *Chaturvarna* (four-caste) system and carry out the traditionally prescribed duties, however lowly they could be.

It is interesting to note that both Gandhi and Ambedkar started their political mobilization almost at the same time during the early 1920s, although on two different social platforms. The period of active mobilization of the Dalits under Ambedkar's leadership reached its apogee at the Mahad Satyagraha in March, 1927, where among other demands Ambedkar called for entry of the *Dalits* into temples and their usage of public wells (Omvedt 2004: 29).

Ambedkar and Gandhi thereafter took divergent paths in guiding their respective mass movements until they would converge at the Second Round Table Conference in London

leading to the Poona Pact of September, 1932. The Conference established Ambedkar as the undisputed leader of the Depressed Classes. The leaders clashed in the Minorities Committee at the Round Table where Ambedkar represented the Dalits and objected to Gandhi including Muslims and Sikhs as part of the minorities while excluding the Dalits. Gandhi, on the other hand, asserted that he would under no circumstances compromise the 'vital interests' (Zelliot 2013: 133) of the Dalits, though he was not at all in favour of classifying the Dalits as a separate class.

Since there was no way out of this impasse, Gandhi resorted to a 21-day fast until death, on 20 September 1932. He had been confined to the Yeravda Jail in Poona in protest against the Communal Award to be announced by British PM MacDonald, and the fast was intended to break the back of the colonial power while bringing around Ambedkar to accepting 'joint electorates' for the untouchables.

The Poona Pact was signed by Ambedkar and Madan Mohan Malaviya (representing Gandhi, since the latter was too weak to sign), and accepted by the British two days later on the 26<sup>th</sup> September. Historians believe that more than an in-principle clash of views on the representation of the Dalits, it was a fundamental clash. Should all Indians unite first to fight for freedom against the British or render justice to each other that was uppermost in Gandhi's mind (Khilnani 2016).

By virtue of the Poona Pact, the Dalits increased their reserved seats in provincial legislatures from 78 as proposed in the Communal Award to 148 while it substituted for communal electorates a system of primary elections for Depressed Class voters. Further, in the Central Legislature 18% of the general seats for British India were reserved for the Depressed Classes. Besides a note was added that "every endeavour shall be made to secure a fair representation of the Depressed Classes" in the public services, and that in every province, "an adequate sum shall be earmarked for providing educational facilities to members of the Depressed Classes"(Zelliot 2013).

This, in effect, was to lay the foundation for 'affirmative action', later to be codified in the Indian Constitution through a number of articles and administrative arrangements. The Congress never approved the Poona Pact, the heavy inroads made into the Hindu representational base in the provincial and central legislatures were much to be resented about, besides Gandhi's near defeat as per the superior terms of the Pact. The Dalit

leadership, on the other hand, was equally dissatisfied on the ground that they would still remain under the control of the Hindus in regard to the voting and consequent representation in the provincial and central legislatures. Ambedkar remarked, “The communal award was intended to free the Untouchables from the thralldom of the Hindus. The Poona Pact is designed to place them under the domination of the Hindus” (Rodrigues 2004:12).

On October 13, 1935, at a meeting of the *Dalits* in Yeola, he made his famous remark that he “may have been born a Hindu but shall not die as one”. He lived up to his word by making an important faith transition from Hinduism, in which he was born, to Buddhism. The apogee came in his life when just two months before his passing away in October 1956 he presided over the conversion of 500,000 *Dalits* to Buddhism at a mass conversion ceremony and administered to them the 22 vows of Navayana (New) Buddhism (Teltumbde: 2018: 219)

In a paper presented at the Gokhale Institute, Poona in 1943, Ambedkar argued that “once an identity becomes a political force, the consequences of its formation have to be faced.” That opened the way for him to play identity politics by forming the Scheduled Caste Federation (SCF) in July 1942, projecting the Scheduled Castes as a third party in addition to the Hindus and Muslims in future political developments. This would eventually pave the way to institute a set of rights and guarantees and make the Dalits an inherent part of the Constitution. As founder of the Independent Labour Party he worked out a comprehensive policy of reservation for the Scheduled Castes in the public services while several legislations were enacted and tripartite linkages between labour, industry and government built.

On August 03, 1947 Ambedkar joined the Nehru Cabinet as Law Minister and on the 19<sup>th</sup> was made Chairman of the Drafting Committee of the Indian Constitution (ironically at Gandhi’s insistence). In this capacity he was instrumental in incorporating various provisions in the Constitution related to affirmative action for the marginalized communities. These were the provisions of equality before law, prohibition of discrimination, equality of opportunity in matters of public employment, and protection of certain rights regarding freedom of speech, etc (Part III under Fundamental Rights), and abolition of untouchability, promotion of educational and economic interests of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and other weaker sections (Part IV under Directive Principles of State Policy). The Constitution also lays down under Part XVI, special provisions relating to certain classes, such as reservation of seats for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the House of the People

(Lower House) as well as in the Legislative Assemblies (of the States), claims of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes to services and posts, as well as provides for setting up of the National Commissions for Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Tribes, and control of the Union over the administration of Scheduled Areas and the welfare of Scheduled Tribes.

The above provisions in the Constitution firmly establish the position of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (marginalized communities) as equal citizens of India, even more that they be given additional support and facility by virtue of the same provisions to improve upon their social, educational and economic status.

In the area of economics Ambedkar looked to the Western liberal tradition inculcated from his university stints in Columbia and London. He saw the future of India in industrialization and a private sector economy where the marginalized classes got education and skilling, and thus access to employment, received a fixed income, developed self reliance and realized full freedom. Building that into the matrix of constitutional safeguards to ensure them equality before law and freedom to work, he truly aimed at empowering them. Furthermore, the 'affirmative action' policy was something unique to the marginalized classes, in that it made 'reservation' a state policy.

In areas like farming, industry, manufacturing and entrepreneurship Ambedkar showed his further mark. Calling for a modernized society, he felt that the society would itself produce the impetus to bring about class equality which otherwise was not possible in a caste-ridden society. He was much against the lower castes sticking on to the same village where they had to undergo unmitigated suffering at the hands of the higher castes and was in favour of mass migration of lower caste groups (Rodrigues 2004: 68).

It is in the concept of village development where Ambedkar had major differences with Gandhi. While Gandhi called the marginalized communities the nucleus of village development and wanted that holistic empowerment be provided to all the inhabitants, Ambedkar sharply differed in calling for independent, self-sufficient skilled worker-led growth of which they be the major participants and beneficiaries.

The Constitution of India, in many ways, bears Ambedkar's imprint and brings in several economic and financial provisions. The Financial Commission of India, established under Article 280, was solely his contribution, so also the Directive Principles of State Policy which

were aimed at ushering a socio-economic democracy keeping the huge diversities of the young nation.

#### **4.5 Amartya Sen (November 03, 1933- )**

Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen carried a multi-disciplinary interest in several areas which could bring forth a diverse range of development theories from social choice to social justice and development economics to building individual capacity as the *sine qua non* of social development. Sen is famous as the first Indian (and the only one so far) to have got the Nobel Prize for economics in 1998 and Bharat Ratna, the highest Indian civilian award, the following year.

It is easy to discern the similarities in economic thought between Ambedkar and Sen except that they were born and lived in two different socio-historical contexts. While Ambedkar was a member of the low caste community and was himself a victim of social exclusion and disempowerment, Sen was from an upper middle class background and his exposure to the fate of the marginalized classes was largely on account of his studies and research in economics and social justice (Sen, 2009, 2015).

In Shantiniketan during the early 1940s Sen came under the spell of Tagore's progressive views on education and that formed his early world view. In 1951, Sen went on to study in Calcutta's Presidency College, then the most liberal and progressive educational institution in the country and passed his graduation in economics with a first class. Soon after that Sen was diagnosed with oral cancer but survived the disease moving on to study in Trinity College, Cambridge. He returned to Trinity after a short stint as the youngest Professor and Head of Economics of Jadavpur University, West Bengal, where he chose to study philosophy for his higher studies. Among the reasons Sen gave of switching from economics to philosophy was that he was fascinated by the 'social choice theory' which made 'intense use of mathematical logic' and also drew on moral philosophy.

It was in Cambridge that Sen, earlier an ardent Keynesian economist, came closer to neo-classical economists, much sceptical of Keynes. He soon lost his early interest in social choice theory and chose 'The Choice of Techniques' in 1959 under the supervision of post-Keynesian economist Joan Robinson. The 'Social Choice theory' was later perfected in the 1960s and 70s by Kenneth Arrow with whom Sen worked on the 'Impossibility Theorem',

extending the canvas of social choice further by giving it a moral and ethical dimension (Sen 2009).

In 1981 in his seminal work entitled 'Poverty and famines: An Essay on Entitlement and Deprivation', Sen argued that the infamous Bengal famine of 1943 occurred not so much for lack of food as for inequities in the system of food distribution which led to rampant malpractices. He related it to the rapid growth of urbanization which saw food inflation, causing millions of rural workers to starve to death due to low wages. Some historians have attributed the virulence of the famine which caused above 3 million deaths to starvation largely on account of apathy of the then administration and the British government's policy of export of food grains from India to 'surplus food' countries of Europe (Mukherjee 2010, Lazzaro 2013).

The economic theories of famine which Sen later articulated during his stint at the London School of Economics in the 1970s took him further to develop the well-being index, thus laying the foundation for Social Development theories. Sen was sourced by the UN for its UNDP Human Development Reports released annually since the 1990s.

Sen's 'social choice theory' posited a theoretical framework which combined individual opinions, preferences, interests or welfares to reach a collective decision. This was, in a way, an aid to decision makers in formulating policies for the marginalized classes. In that, Sen could be called the forerunner of modern day welfarism which seemed to have run its course, post the collapse of the Soviet empire.

Sen is further credited with bringing out a new rubric in economic thinking, namely, justice in economics, a sub-category of welfare economics. This has been an innovative idea when he posits ideas about justice and ethics as part of 'normative economics' (Sen 2009). It was his work in distributive justice, that dispensation of justice could be shared among all constituents of the society including the subaltern classes which makes Sen an ideal forebearer of modern day social justice theories.

In his book, 'Collective Choice and Social Welfare', (2017, originally 1970) Sen argued in favour of collectivism to ensure welfarism, the minimum requirement for marginalized communities. In this Sen was positing a clear cut theory to uphold collectivity as an essential factor to ensure social cohesion, particularly in developing societies which contained visibly

excluded and imbalanced marginal communities hanging on to the coat tails of social development.. Thus according to him, economic growth or GDP/GNI indicators did not necessarily translate to progress in human development, the need for pro-poor policies and investments in capacity building and building up social sectors such as education, healthcare, employment and skilling was far more essential. This, it may be noted, are the same sectors which constitute the building blocks of the NRIS.

The 2013 Human Development Report under the title, ‘The Rise of the South: Human Progress in a Diverse world’ noted: “Over the last decade all countries accelerated their achievements in the education, health and income dimensions in the Human Development Index over the previous years”, and made the observation that the South and North would come to increasingly rely on each other for their development. The report identified 4 areas of focus for sustainable development, namely: enhancing equity, including on the gender dimension; enabling greater voice and participation of citizens, including youth; confronting environmental pressures; and managing demographic change (UNDP: 2013).

The entire development theory of Sen revolves around the axiom that the development process needed to have people at the centre in terms of debate, decision making and advocacy. The latter is extremely relevant for the Roma in the contemporary context as it is in the current times of competitive politics that the Roma, without a mother nation,, have to seek autonomy of space and action.

Sen’s revolutionary contribution to development economics lies in his concept of ‘capability’ Sen argued that governments should be measured against the concrete capabilities of the citizens. This was a clear repudiation of the ‘top-down’ approach which has characterized much of state-patronized welfarism till the early 1970s. In *Development as Freedom* (2000), Sen elaborated ‘capability theory’ as an effort to advance real freedom. In this, he mentioned five specific types of freedoms, viz. political freedom, economic facilities, social opportunities, transparency guarantees and protective security.

In *The Idea of Justice* (2009), Sen posited that social reforms must precede economic reforms. He stressed the importance of public discourse while insisting on universal human rights as a given for any policy maker in dealing with the development of marginal communities. With the American philosopher Martha Nussbaum, Sen worked on developing a ‘capability ethic’ out of his ‘capability theory’ (Saigaran, et al 2015). The sense of ethic is

important to harness capabilities of the marginalized communities in a socially imbalanced scenario where they tend to lose out more due to the extant economic situation and the consequent disturbance in the social fabric. A study in raising the economic capital of the marginalized groups therefore attempts to restore social imbalance while granting the subaltern classes the freedom to exercise their capabilities and social choices. Sen's theory of development, skillfully weaving in the concept of capability, finds echoes in a post-development theory in the works of Gayatri Spivak. While Sen analyses his social choice theories in the context of economic development for marginalized communities by enhancing their social value and capability, Spivak does not limit herself within the confines of the status quo, but deconstructs the current system to envisage a just placement of the subaltern classes which would impart to them the human rights of choice and social values they deserve.

#### **4.6 Gayatri Chakarvorty Spivak (24 February 1942...)**

Spivak is arguably the most prominent name among post-colonial-theorists and feminist critics in contemporary social sciences. She shares a cultural background with Sen, both being of Bengali parentage originating from erstwhile East Bengal. While Sen went deep into the causes of the Bengal famine as a researcher, Spivak was overwhelmed by the intensity of suffering of the people who bore the brunt of the colossal tragedy (Spivak 1999).

She built a Foundation in the name of her mother dedicated for 'Teaching of Teachers'. Spivak felt she had to start from the fundamentals of democracy in action, thus impart teaching to the teachers (mostly tribals) on the basics of learning to survive in an unequal world, and not go by the 'literacy' route which the government of the day had been doing 'imperfectly'. That way she engaged herself with the lower castes and tribal people of Birbhum district in West Bengal, which continues to this day. Spivak also founded a farmer's cooperative based on the use of natural fertilizers and natural seeds. Here she put into practice running a successful cooperative movement. Besides, as member of the "Subaltern Studies Collective", she carried out a series of studies and literary critiques of imperialism and feminism.

It was during her stint in Emory that Spivak wrote her path breaking essay, 'Can the Subaltern speak?' in 1983, subsequently published in Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (eds. 1988). As Ryder and Szilvasi (2017) say: "It is pertinent to ask "Who speaks for the Roma?"



and what channels are open for Roma to represent themselves. Paternalistic development approaches by the state, international organisations, and civil society actors, along with narrow form of 'strategic essentialism' promoted by some Roma elites, reflected in reactive forms of nationalism (which often are male-centred) or which are donor-driven, have tended to neutralise and muzzle Roma's collective participation"(94).

Spivak's essay demonstrated her concern for the processes whereby post-colonial studies co-opted and rehearsed neo-colonial imperatives of political domination and economic exploitation. It catapulted her to fame and spawned scores of analyses, writings and theses on her post-colonial critique of the social scientists of the developed world for the patronizing way they looked at Third World problems. "The white man saving the brown woman from the brown man," she famously said in the context of the 1829 abolition of the ritual of sati.

For Spivak, sati was an expression of revolt of the silent woman, subjected to oppressive behaviour of the patriarchal society. This she characterized as 'epistemic violence' to mean all forms of exploitation by the socially higher class on the inferior, bringing her close to the study of marginalized communities.

In her essay, *An Aesthetic Education in the Era of Globalization* (2012), she defined the subaltern as the person removed from all lines of social mobility, barred from access to all public resources that would allow for upward movement, out of dire poverty, someone who is class-wise at a distance from her, yet with whom she felt common ground.

Rejecting 'affirmative action', she said that not only can the subaltern not speak, but she (the person committing sati) has lost the space to speak. Thus, instead of allowing the subaltern to speak, the state should allow space for the subaltern to find her own strength to speak. The conditionality of space is important in Spivak's works as, according to her, the action by which the state implemented its affirmative action policy killed the flexibility and mobility of the individual to act in his/her own way.

In *Critique of Post-Colonial Reason, Towards a History of the Vanishing Present* (1999), Spivak deconstructed post-colonial theories by suggesting that they should be considered from the point of view of one who used it and to whose interest it was used. In speaking about 'ethical responsibility', she talked of a relationship flowing from both sides where both the receiver and the giver had equal responsibility. The theory ideally applies to a 'bottom-

up' development paradigm for marginalized communities, where the state could also be at the margin as the community.

All the above activists and philosophers have taken up the cause of the underprivileged in their respective voices and contexts and sought to re-define the marginalized communities so as to make inclusion and development exigent on the extant socio-economic forces, giving them autonomy of action in a context which had so far not allowed that kind of space.

How then could the processes of empowerment mobilize these marginalized communities to move ahead, what could be their points of reference for a comparative study, essential to be a subject in itself?

#### **4.7 The Relevance of Gandhi, Ambedkar, Sen and Spivak to Development, Empowerment and Inclusion**

A study of social exclusion and marginalization has been attempted through exploration of the lives and works of four eminent Indian personalities, the common thread amongst them being their concern for socio-economic development and creation of an equitable structure in the society. Their relevance for the empowerment and social inclusion has been in a varied range of ideas which they embodied in their own lives. The core of their concern has been the quest to improve the living conditions of marginal groups through various ways of socio-economic empowerment with a view to bringing about an equitable distribution of goods and services in which these classes could find their own voice, space and autonomy of action. In this the economy has been the most important area of concern in bringing about development in an unequal society. The marginalized communities could be integrated into the mainstream only when their income levels from agriculture, industry, small business, services and other avenues of skill employment were harnessed to make them partners in social progress and gave them dignity and value for life. Thus, various means to generate individual income or in collectivity had been felt essential for the marginal groups. Once their economic situation saw an improvement they could engage themselves in reinforcing their cultural capital which has been their mainstay for generations.

In the Indian context, the concept of 'affirmative action' has been successfully introduced to give the marginalized communities special facilities by way of 'reservations' as an important tool of empowerment and social inclusion, given the diversities and extreme poverty and

marginalization to which subaltern groups are subjected. This could also help in securing to them certain rights and privileges which are otherwise their due, thus working towards social justice and respect for human rights. The study of the works and thoughts of these persons has been made in the larger context of their applicability to subaltern groups passing through similar socio-economic conditions in other parts of the world.

A comparative table below brings out the salient features in the four personalities discussed and the relevance of their application for empowerment and social inclusion of marginalized communities:

**Table 3**  
**Indian Thinkers Compared**

<b><u>Personalities assessed</u></b>	<b><u>Social mobilization</u></b>	<b><u>Economic empowerment</u></b>	<b><u>Political mobilization and leadership</u></b>	<b><u>Cultural development</u></b>
(A) Gandhi	Wanted total mass mobilization; all social groups, including lower castes to be part of <i>Satyagraha</i>	Wanted to strengthen the rural economy against industrial society; in favour of collectivity, women's empowerment and state trusteeship	Wanted to transform the independence struggle into a mass movement; against identity politics practiced by Junnah (for Muslims) and Ambedkar (for Dalits)	Used symbols such as salt and <i>khadi</i> to galvanize the masses and boost their self-esteem while drawing world attention towards British colonization; drew on cultural expressions such as <i>Ram Rajya</i> to bring unity among

				Hindus and give them a sense of the ideal of collective living
(B) Ambedkar	Wanted to mobilize Dalits for their social awakening which would lead to political empowerment	Wanted Dalits to get education and skilling for employment to gain economic freedom and self-reliance; felt that an industrial society was not only beneficial but inevitable	Founder of 'affirmative action' policy for marginalized communities within the constitutional framework.; wanted Dalits to fight for and secure their own rights and be politically well-represented	Mass conversion of 500,000 Dalits to Buddhism was a massive cultural event in the history of India; gave Dalits an alternative faith-path (Buddhism) and a strong voice in society
(C) Sen	Wanted all sections of the society to be part of the social development process in equal measure and share all social benefits as per their entitlement	Wanted to see all sections of the society getting economically empowered; wanted social criteria to be used to evaluate growth with the state ensuring social justice and fair play	Believed that economic empowerment and equal participation in the development process would lead to political empowerment	Advocated use of cultural tools as expression of a fulfilled life such as participation in group activities and involvement in equal measure in life-building and generation of social capital

(D) Spivak	Wanted to see true democracy in action in the form of participation of subaltern groups in all forms of social engagement, assuming leadership and being active participants in their own development	Wanted the subaltern to gain voice and space and be an active participant in his/her own economic empowerment; for her collectivity and cooperatives were important tools of economic empowerment	Her advocacy of keeping the subaltern as an autonomous group to find its own space and voice posed an enormous challenge to development theorists	Her tools of imparting education through ‘teaching the teachers’ had a strong cultural dimension; subaltern groups could be active participants in learning and thus in their own development
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It is important to understand how the above ideas, all authored by Indians, could have their relevance for a community which cannot be called Indian by domicile, except through a distant history. Thus Gandhi’s ideas could be used for political mobilization and social development through regeneration of cultural tools as part of Roma identity. His methods of social inclusion could be useful in the context of the NRIS. His ideas of collectivity, small farmers’ and women’s development through self-help programmes could be relevant for Roma empowerment as they generate revenues for marginal groups, particularly women at a lower level of literacy and awareness. These revenues then consolidate group formations and help in developing self-esteem, dignity and autonomy of action while expanding their social and economic spaces.

Ambedkar’s ideas on engagement of the marginal groups in an industrial economy through education, skilling and thus gaining financial self-sufficiency could be extremely relevant for the Roma. Innovative ideas need to be devised to put such ideas to operation. The policy of ‘affirmative action’ could be tried out in the Hungarian context with the engagement and consent of the state and its institutions. Being an ethnic minority and the poorest minority

group in Hungary, they need the state's support more than any other group for being the lowest placed in the economic ladder of the society as well as being an 'extra-national group'. Subjected to social prejudices, hatred and segregation and ghettoized in their living conditions, 'affirmative action' seems to be the most suitable route for them to get placement in the society at positions commensurate with their skill levels and capability to render services.

Sen's theory of state resources to be shared for the benefit of all sections of the society, for collective good and provision of equal opportunities in the areas of education, employment, healthcare and housing are essential conditions for Roma social inclusion as laid down in the NRIS. Having been part of the team instrumental for bringing out the UN Development Reports (Human Development Reports), Sen has been effective in bringing out the compatibilities between the UNDP's approach and the NRIS in developing the quality of life index while delineating the essential factors in raising the standards of living of the marginal groups.

Spivak's post-colonial analysis of the subaltern could offer an excellent theoretical model to understand the epistemic violence perpetrated against the Roma and thus the need to develop their own voice. In her works, the role of advocacy in taking the Roma cause forward in the post-development milieu presents an alternative paradigm of empowerment and social inclusion. It also gives scope to Roma activism and a definitive role for various NGO groups to agitate for the Roma cause, even in defiance of state authoritarianism.

An in-depth analysis of the lives and works of the four thinkers above makes it evident that socio-economic mobilization is the driving force for all of them, as the key determinant in the empowerment process of the marginal groups. Regeneration of cultural capital has also been a powerful determinant in eking out a Roma identity without having to be necessarily subjected to 'identity politics' in the face of a low level of Roma political consciousness.. Besides, political mobilization has been the principal narrative to ensure greater participation in state structures, coordination with state agencies, developing leadership skills and eventually building political capital.

Cultural capital is deemed to be of great importance in the contexts of both the Dalits and the Roma, lending ease to the 'transferability factor'. In this sense, social inclusion itself could be largely a cultural phenomenon in building cultural identities and strengths, which could be

commercialized for collective economic good. Thus, for example, the intangible and tangible heritage of the Roma communities preserved over generations through oral traditions could be developed further to form assets for the society while generating cultural and economic capital for the Roma by scaling up their income levels.

#### **4.8 Theorizing social inclusion and empowerment for marginalized communities**

The following foci for discussion emanate from a reading of the four thinkers which could help in forming a framework for a broad understanding of the subject:

Cooperation and mutualism

Role of tradition in the context of modernization

Role of the State in effecting affirmative action

Liberal notions of change and reforms or deeper structural/post-colonial change

Economic gradualism

##### **4.8.1 Cooperation and mutualism:**

An important aspect of empowerment and inclusion of marginalized communities is the manner in which the state should cooperate with such communities, and the way there has to be a mutual sharing of tasks, both in a top-down as well as bottom-up approach (Ryder et al, 2014). Neither is exclusive to the other, both can go together depending on the exigencies of the situation as well as to generate positive outcomes.

This is important as there needs to be a commitment from either side for engagement in the process and also within the stakeholders, including civil society actors. Empowerment is to be thought of as a graduated process for benefit of these communities as well as fulfilment of certain responsibilities of the state. As Gandhi says, the state should assume the role of a ‘trustee’ and carry on the functions of a benevolent guardian to protect the citizens’ interests (Iyer 2000). Sen’s concept of the state sharing its resources among the individuals for protecting their rights in a just and humane manner has also much to do with this, so also Spivak’s theory of ‘strategic essentialism’, which posits the state as an essential facilitator.

##### **4.8.2 The role of tradition in the context of modernization:**

Tradition does play an important role, particularly as an essential element of the cultural capital of these groups which needs to be protected and nourished. This could be an asset

when the state and the society are modernizing, taking along all segments of the society on the path of cultural modernization. Besides, while building up the cultural capital of these groups, the state could commercialize such activities for the benefit of the stakeholders with the latter forming collectivities to protect and enhance their cultural capital. For example, handicraft skills, which such communities have shown to possess in good measure, could be nurtured as part of their capital building.

It needs to be borne in mind that tradition has come down to these communities over generations and they have taken great pains in preserving these as their heritage and passed on to successive generations. Gandhi had laid special emphasis in nurturing of traditions for social good (Gandhian Studies Programme 2010). Ambedkar emphasised the need for modernization, though not at the cost of decimating sustained traditions evidenced in the very evolution of the Dalit movement (Omvedt 2011). Sen has also placed great value on traditions as those fostering fair play and justice both among the state actors as well as recipients of social benefits (Sen 2009). In Spivak's post-colonial world, tradition has a different sense though in her (1987) critique of writer Mahasweta Devi's '*Stanadayini*' (breast giver)", she brings out the poignancy of traditions in an evolving culture through searing accounts of female exploitation in different manners of patriarchal domination. Though tradition is present in all cultures, in communities such as these, who nourish traditions for communal and social good with ample potential for commercialization, tradition is far more important to be protected and developed as an important element of social and economic good.

#### **4.8.3 Role of the state in effecting affirmative action:**

This is by far the most important element in empowering such communities by placing them on the same level as other mainstream entities. Ambedkar understood it too well. For him affirmative action was seminal to the empowerment as well as inclusion process for the marginalized communities. The ambit of reservation later on extended to cover Other Backward Classes (OBCs) beyond Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

It is interesting to note that neither Gandhi nor Sen supported the scheme of affirmative action though both were equally aware of the inequities in the society which deprived the marginalized communities of equal opportunities. Gandhi was fighting for eradication of social evils and bringing about caste reforms from within. For him giving extra privileges to



the lowest castes would have made them fall into a separate category, more so made him (Gandhi) look partisan to their interests (Gandhi 1958-84). Sen, on the other hand, was trying to assimilate the socially backward and economically deprived classes by empowering them with a set of conditions that would determine the social well being and happiness index. Spivak took pains to educate the marginalized communities but never thought of the need for affirmative action except creating 'groups of reinforced ideologies'. On the contrary, she was against affirmative action as that, in her view, denied the subaltern groups their space in the mainstream which was rightfully their due.

The theory of 'affirmative action' has to be therefore nuanced when we are applying it to a society already riddled with contradictions, conflicts and diversities. In the long run such action could tend to coagulate in generating a mass of beneficiaries creating an elite amongst the subaltern to the detriment of the larger population. The history of affirmative policy in the Indian context brings out this fact clearly, in that it has served to develop a 'creamy layer' within the marginal classes, who tend to get distanced and disconnected from their own peer groups. Though this elite formation could help in providing leadership to the rest of the marginalized communities, it is generally not the case in the case of fractured and diverse societies. Such diversities also extend to marginalized communities, where each sub-set vies for attention and power in the regional/provincial context.

#### **4.8.4 Liberal notions of reforms as opposed to structural changes:**

This had been precisely the battle between Gandhi and Ambedkar. While Gandhi strived all his life to bring about reforms within the Hindu caste system, for Ambedkar there had to be deeper structural changes (Ambedkar 2016). Thus, the lower castes had to rid themselves of the caste mantle they had been made to wear by force of tradition and customs over millennium and get into a different social structure altogether. The deconstructionist in Spivak has torn apart the theory of graduated reforms within the Hindu society knowing too well that it could never give benefits to the lower castes as the latter were fundamentally poised against the higher castes as adversaries, or at least looked at in an adversarial manner.

Sen has a different compass to evaluate social changes. To secure social justice and equality to all groups it could be gradual or structural. However, his theories have broadly hinged on structural changes and led to paradigm shifts in calculating happiness or poverty, whichever optic one took. Yet Sen remains a liberal western humanist while Spivak is a post-colonial

theorist and therefore their views differ. This points to continuing dilemmas in understanding the plight of marginal communities in the modern-day context as these contexts are changing. One could travel the whole spectrum, from the graduated to the structural change approach, depending on the context in which it is applied.

It is important to note that the views and ideas examined above lend to a universalization of the empowerment and integration process of marginalized communities. If applied in the specific contexts in which such communities are placed, they could generate outcomes favourable not only to them but to the society in general.

#### **4.8.5 Economic gradualism:**

The sense of urgency in bringing about economic empowerment and integration into the mainstream economy for marginalized communities is paramount in all the personalities studied. For Ambedkar, economic development would pave the way for social emancipation and formation of cultural capital. Gandhi, while drawing attention to the small man in a rural economy, has however placed more emphasis on the ‘social change’ factor. For Sen, the ‘economic’ comes prior to the ‘social’ though both factors have to be taken together in assessing the well-being and happiness of the marginalized groups as part of the societal matrix.

Spivak’s post-colonial instinct has led her to denounce the theory of economic gradualism. For her the subaltern has to find a voice in the society without delay. She has anticipated the need for it than anybody else and has therefore felt that something fundamental and dramatic has to be presented in terms of changes which could correspond with economic uplift of the subaltern classes.

#### **4.9 Conclusion**

A detailed and critical study of the four philosopher-activists and the theories they have generated presents us a framework to understand the various elements in the processes of empowerment and social inclusion for marginalized groups. This enables undertaking a ‘comparability’ or inter-disciplinary approach to identify the tools of empowerment used in the Indian context and extrapolate the framework to cover identical communities in Central Europe, in this case the Roma in Hungary. The next three chapters deal with the extant situation of the Roma based on ethnographic studies and interviews and the analyses thus

generated. These have been useful in preparing a conceptual framework which could be largely beneficial in trying to find areas of similarities between both the situations as well as studying them with the available tools and policies.

It is evident from the study that the socio-economic conditions on a broader level between these two groups situated in two different contexts are more or less similar. This could enable the researcher to go deeper and apply such similarities to help these communities by using their respective experiences in their own contexts. The participative approach, i.e. engaging marginalized communities in their own empowerment and social inclusion processes, helps the researcher bring value to the work by being an active participant himself/herself as an additional methodological tool. Additionally, the study could bring India closer to Central Europe by virtue of sharing of experiences in empowering their marginal communities and thus prescribing a way forward for their socio-economic development and integration into their respective societies.

The study could be beneficial in the area of social justice for its relevance in understanding the dynamics of the socio-political matrix in which the marginalized classes are placed. It could therefore carry a universal value for such communities existing anywhere in the world with approximate socio-economic contextualization.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **Fieldwork in Hungary among Roma communities**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

The ethnography brought out in this chapter has helped me examine the application of various inferences in dealing with the causal factors of Roma inclusion and empowerment so as to develop a comparative framework to analyze their situation versus the Dalits of India.

The Roma entered Hungary sometime in the 14<sup>th</sup> century due to the Ottoman expansion. Subsequently with the fall-back of the Ottoman Empire in the 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> centuries, the Roma were left outside its boundaries. Those who were in Eastern Europe gained greater mobility to travel westwards as steamships and trains disrupted settled patterns in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. A major stream came from Romania, from the principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia, where serfdom was present until 1848 (Fraser 1996).

In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century the conventional classification made of the Roma in Hungary coalesced them into three main groups, supposedly by language. The two smaller of these groups were fairly clear ethnic groups of later arrivals from the 18<sup>th</sup> century. These were (a) the Lovari Vlach Roma, (Olah Roma) who spoke Hungarian, but Romanes among themselves and (b) the Romanian speaking Cigany, who either called themselves “cigany” or Beash, but had also learnt Hungarian. The third category was a kind of residual category of all the other groups in Hungary, mainly but not entirely of “Northern” Romani origins, including Carpathian, Bergitke, Sinte, Bashalde (Musician) and other groups, who either kept their dialects secret, or largely lost them in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in Hungary itself, and declared that they spoke only Hungarian.

The results of the 1893 census provided details of the social position, viz. degree of integration and stratification and relationship of the Hungarian Gypsies towards the majority community of the time. The census classified 88.5% of Gypsies as permanently settled while only 7.4% were stationary for a longer term and 3.3% were qualified as ‘vagrant Gypsies’,

thus showing a remarkably high degree of integration of the Hungarian Gypsies in the society (Havas et al 2002). They had been driven to losing their ethnic identity under the Hapsburg monarchy when they had to lose their language, change their habits, costumes, manners and lifestyles, their children were forcefully adopted by non-Roma families and land parcels were given to them for agriculture and formation of a sedentary life and social organization (Vajda 2002).

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, they were seen as a relatively cohesive social unit (Havas et al. 2002) though by 1944 there was a substantial decline in the number of Roma who had to undergo forcible deportation to the Nazi gas chambers and subjected to the infamous Roma Holocaust, or ‘porrajmos’ (Hancock 2010). Though there has never been an accurate count of the Roma who perished in the Roma Holocaust, the numbers have varied between 30,000 on the lower side to 1.5 million by some accounts, depending how many have been identified as Roma.

The Communist regime, post-World War II, literally gave the Roma a new lease of life. They could find, or were given, jobs in factories contributing to their family income, their children could go to schools free of cost, they could get free or heavily subsidized housing, and their communities were well looked after by the Soviet state although efforts were also made to assimilate and proletarianise the Roma (Stewart 1997). After 1989 and the collapse of the Soviet system, several East European countries such as Hungary, which had been part of the Communist system, sought to embrace western democracy and capitalism.

All the privileges earlier accorded by the state socialist regime were no longer available in these fledgling market societies scrambling to give their small populations some semblance of market capitalism. In that situation, the Roma work force were deemed of little value and most of them lost their jobs almost overnight. This was to be the biggest turning point in the psyche of the Roma who hereafter were to be marginalized and reduced to their previously familiar tropes of poor and destitute, criminals and socially unwanted. The relentless force of marginalization for the Roma, the largest ethnic minority in Hungary, had set in (Matras 2014: 198-201).

## **5.2 An Anthropological perspective**

In seeking to draw a comparative framework of marginalized communities in India and Hungary I have importantly attempted to also look at the Roma from the anthropological perspective. For me, occupying a senior official position, it was relatively easy to gain access to the remote Roma communities spread out in Hungary, over nearly 15 months from April 2014 to July 2015. I could then move at ease both within the elite sections of the Roma, the academics, professionals, policy makers in the government, NGO activists, government officials and Roma leaders, both Roma and otherwise, as well as the poorest of the poor Roma communities whose shanties I found almost indescribable whose conditions I recorded in my diary notes. This has constituted a substantive part of my research in Hungary.

My role though was also a hindrance in that it limited in-depth and natural interactions within Roma ghetto communities and made me dependent on intermediaries, most of whom were Hungarian intellectuals, grass roots politicians or policy makers. Their knowledge of the Roma in the local areas helped me a lot in understanding the specificities of the Roma situation and problems in each context and space. They helped me a great deal in navigating the field of research during my data collection and ethnographic study. Though I have not described about them in detail, they have remained in the background while being extremely helpful particularly when ignorance of the local language, Romany or Hungarian, has threatened to disrupt my research.

During this period, I conducted nearly 30 interviews with various categories of respondents, the Roma themselves, intermediaries, NGOs, Roma activists, govt officials, Roma leaders and representatives of the media, and paid over 15 visits to a diverse range of institutions, deemed essential to carry my research forward. A few of them, speaking on some major issues, have been analysed in the next chapter where the various respondents of the elite interviews have been categorised under various heads.

Given the diversity in the socio-economic profile of the Roma even within Hungary, and the contexts in which they operated, it was essential for me to get to know the Roma communities as they actually lived and the day-to-day problems which they encountered. This helped me understand the contextual richness arising out of the huge diversities which the Hungarian Roma faced.

### **5.3 Ethnographic insights**

My visits have been diverse in nature into various facets of Roma life. I was able to observe the Roma as they had been living through diverse processes, institutions and influences that had been an integral part of their lives. From them I have drawn my observations. These were based on my study in dealing with the Roma on the ground and through various narrations as part of my cumulative experiences recorded in my diary. I did not want to restrict myself to gaining insights by merely speaking to experts and officials. Rather I wanted to see the actual situation on the ground. These insights were further strengthened under the various spatial categories under which I have grouped my diverse experiences below. Together they form an integral part of my research into various facets of Roma life which could in the subsequent chapters unfold as observations and hypotheses to be tested.

These experiences can be broadly categorised into:

Life in the Ghetto

Education for Empowerment

Cultural Capital

Community Development

Role of Foundations

Each of these experiences delineated an important facet of Roma life, that which went towards giving them empowerment in the society. Though the important concern for me as a researcher was to note the various innovative ways in which the Roma were self-empowering, I was equally cognisant of the fact that at this stage of their development within the overall societal framework, the supervisory role and incentives of the state were no less important.

#### **5.3.1. Life in the Ghetto**

##### **5.3.1.1. Csenyete, 11 May 2014**

The county of Borsad-Abanj-Zemplen, in which the above village was located, could be among the least developed regions of EU with one of the largest concentrations of Roma inhabitants. According to the stories I was told, the original inhabitants (non-Roma) had fled

because they did not want Roma neighbours in the villages they inhabited and migrated to nearby urban areas. Petty crimes such as stealing firewood, vegetables, poultry, pigs etc were reported from time to time. Penalties for such crimes might be paying a monetary fine which in most cases the Roma could ill afford or, in the last instance, sending them to prison. Official discourse pathologised them, ascribing to them a 'culture of poverty' (Feinschmidt et al, 2013) and insinuated that their culture encouraged delinquency.

A Roma person not in formal employment could get subsistence income in a number of ways. This might include working in the informal economy and/or working in the Public Works Programme (PWP) (one could get employment after attaining the age of 18), and sending children to school (under Hungarian laws, each school-going Roma child was entitled to Ft. 20,000 per month). There was an opinion expressed by some that such payments encouraged Roma families to have, on an average, 3-4 children who could drop off school and earn better money to support the family income once they were grown up to work as farm hands. By my observation the average Roma family household would have at least 5-6 members, given the fact that some of these families consisted of three generations as well.

In other communities I visited, the Roma typically took to rearing livestock, growing kitchen garden, engaging in masonry, carpentry, plumbing and also low-skilled vocations. But, there was little of this in Csenyete. There had been a substantial decline in mining, manufacturing and agriculture since the Communist days, compelling many of the Roma to almost totally depend on state funding by way of the PWP which did not give any scope for skilling. There was therefore a significant number of unemployed Roma, particularly among the youth, who lacked education and skills to be considered for employment in the formal sector.

Csenyete was arguably the poorest habitat of all Roma villages I visited. Ladanyi, in an interview with me, called Csenyete 'the poorest village, a village in complete seclusion'. In his case study of Csenyete along with Ivan Szelenyi, he wrote: "Starting in the mid-1980s, an underclass began to form among the Gypsies of Csenyete. First, the social exclusion of the Roma became complete; the entire village became a Roma ghetto. Interaction with non-Roma was greatly reduced or eliminated. Csenyete became home to Roma no-hopers" 2006:74).

With barely 15 odd houses on both sides of a single narrow road, many of them half broken, tin roofed with wooden walls peeling off, it seemed a surreal sight that a habitat not far from the capital city of Budapest could be in such abysmal state. Interviewing the father of a Roma



family (all the 50 odd inhabitants of the village were Roma), it transpired that he had married a girl over 20 years younger to him who happened to live across the road. Together they had 3 children. All of them looked undernourished with hardly any clothes to cover themselves. The man collected firewood from neighbouring forests while getting some occasional work under the PWP. There was only one room where the whole family, husband, wife and children lived, a small bed in a corner where they slept under a partly open roof. There was no electricity, no water connection, so they went to the fields to pass their chores, fetched water from a nearby stream to cook outside the house, had hardly any water to take a bath and remained virtually isolated from the rest of the village. The local Roma 'mayor' was nowhere to be seen while I was visiting the village, neither was there any trace of a Roma self government representative. Since my visit to the village was not official (the village had been identified by my intermediary), the absence of the mayor was not surprising. But more surprising and pathetic were the remarks of the villagers, whom I interacted with, that the mayor was hardly ever seen in the village. That showed how communication between the Roma inhabitants of the village and the authorities supposed to be looking after them was virtually non-existent. As regards the other amenities, there was no school or grocery shop in the vicinity of the village. A solitary bus passed by twice a day and that was the only means of communication of the village with the outside world.

The village, as I understood, was an extreme example of spatial, social and economic exclusion.

#### **5.3.1.2. Tiszabo, 09 June 2014**

My visit to Tiszabo however conveyed a different picture. Here was also a predominantly Roma village, yet relatively better integrated in the developmental sense. Situated south-east of Budapest on the banks of the river, Tisza, the riverine soil was highly fertile and held a lot of potential for agriculture in addition to other commercial activities such as pisciculture. The area had over 90% Roma habitation who lived in separate quarters away from the non-Roma population.

Here I did see some local officials and they informed me that agriculture for the Roma was not considered a profitable occupation as compared to the PWP where they would do little work but earn adequate subsistence-level wages. In effect, the Roma were not allocated agricultural land, as such land was declared non-cultivable and thus the state could earn

subsidies from EU. The result in this case was that the Roma were pushed into PWP and other part time occupations to sustain themselves and their families.

A couple of local Roma Self-government agency representatives, whom I met in this village, mentioned that the funding largely given by EU and disbursed through the Central Govt for rendering local services to the Roma was too meagre and could barely meet the agency's establishment costs, let alone invest in income generation or develop local infrastructure. The same explanation was given to me in several other Roma ghettos I visited. Contrary to this view however, some local Roma people whom I talked to claimed that these funds were ,largely misappropriated by the local self-governing agency. Perhaps an example of such misappropriation was the fact that I saw the same officials drive a plush vehicle while a good part of the Roma population of the village lived hand to mouth.

Hungary is the only country in Central Europe to promulgate a law such as Act LXXIII of 1993 providing for declaration of the Roma as an ethnic minority and creating the Roma Local Self-Government structure (Kovats 2001). As witnessed above, such institutional agencies had brought no visible advantage on the ground. On the contrary it was observed that there was a conspicuous disconnect between the beneficiaries on the field (Roma) and the authorities.

In the rural Roma habitats, it was observed that the woman generally bore a heavier burden of work than the man. As mentioned above, a good number of Roma children did not continue studies beyond school, yet another reason could be inaccessibility of the local school or higher educational institution to the local Roma population.

As for health care facility, the village had a small healthcare centre providing elementary treatment. For specialized treatment patients were referred to a bigger town nearby which they could ill afford for lack of money or transport.

#### **5.3.1.3. Bagadindszent and Gilvanfalva (Ormansag), 24 June 2014**

These were two villages with nearly 100 percent Roma population of Vlach origin. They also presented an appalling level of poverty accentuated by the apathy of the local authorities who hardly ever visited them. The man of the house I interviewed expressed ignorance about such authorities. He was not sure where the family would go for their health care needs nor where to send the children for higher education after they passed out of the village primary school.

The Mayor, as I was informed, hardly kept any contact with the people. This was again a case of lack of communication and accessibility. There was not even a grocery store nearby for which they the locals had to trudge to the nearby village. With a relatively smaller spatial distribution of Roma in a relatively medium-sized country like Hungary, and with so much of Roma-related attention generated through the EU Roma Framework and Roma-related civil society bodies, it was indeed surprising how such habitats had been entirely bypassed for development.

#### **5.3.1.4.Ozd, 15 May 2015**

Located close to the Ukrainian border on the northern edge of Hungary, the village seemed to be miles behind in development with the Roma inhabitants, nearly 15% of the town's population, confined to their little ghettos. I visited one such ghetto and as I drove in I remarked Roma children loitering in the dirty fields off the only road of the village. The women in the nearby houses and a few Roma men lunged towards me, all excited to see my vehicle flying an Indian flag. Would they have known their distant Indian connection, I wondered, until one of the women followed by the rest broke into an old Indian film song of the 1950s! The women surrounded me and started pleading to approach the local authorities to get them drinking water and electricity. I was informed that for every five houses there was just one tap connection. Even electricity was in short supply because they could not afford a separate electric connection in their houses. Some of the meters were disconnected as they had defaulted in paying house rent to the Municipal authorities. On top of it they had been served notice for eviction.

In the general elections of May 2014, the youngest leader of the extreme-right Jobbik party had been elected the mayor of the village. The party thrived on unabashed Roma-bashing for electoral gains. The Roma inhabitants of the village had therefore very low expectations from their mayor...

#### **5.3.1.5.Istvan Oztok, 17 June 2015**

Istvan Ostok was a Beash Roma settlement close to Pecs, almost wholly populated by the Beash who formerly worked as miners in the nearby mines (during the Soviet times). These had since been abandoned. Pecs at one time collected a lot of revenue from mineral extraction, which added to the development of the city. It had been nominated as the

‘European City of Culture’ for the year 2010. Now the city hard-sold its culture and heritage but could barely sustain the massive expenditure required for the upkeep of the 5<sup>th</sup> largest urban centre of Hungary. The Mayor of Pecs had confided in me the dire financial straits through which the city passed despite having a trickling of tourists. Our Embassy collaborated with the Mayor’s office in installing a bust of Mahatma Gandhi in the University gardens. That, I felt, could add to the local heritage.

The flat I visited in Istvan Ostok was inhabited by a Roma family where a mother lived with her two children and an old grandmother. Her husband was away on public work. Later the old lady’s husband and the man of the house came in. I learnt that the latter had moved out of the house with another Roma woman though was staying in the same settlement. This was a rare occurrence as the Roma were normally family-oriented and the husband would not leave the wife and children unless he had a compelling reason to do so.

The old lady was suffering from cancer and had no money to buy medicines. There was no healthcare unit in the habitat nor did the family have the ability to afford medical treatment for her in Pecs. With only two rooms, including a bath and kitchen besides a small sitting area to hold a sofa, the apartment presented an extremely untidy and disorganized picture. I was informed by the man of the house that the 6-member family had to survive on a combined income of Ft 110,000.

### **5.3.2. Analysis of Ghetto life**

In all the Roma ghettos I visited and the snap shots I have presented above, one factor common was their endemic poverty. This was a substantial ground for marginalization and resulted in social abuse to which the Roma were subjected. As per the report of the European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC 2013) 90% of the Roma lived below the poverty line. I observed that a large part of the Roma still lived in abysmal ghetto-like conditions, their contextualization defined by their socio-economic conditions. As Wacquant (2008a) says,

“Ghettos are the product of a mobile and tense dialectic of external hostility (dominance) and internal affinity (solidarity) that expresses itself as ambivalence at the level of collective consciousness”.

Here it is important to note that the phenomenon of racism or ‘anti-Gypsyism’ may have been further aggravated with the onslaught against immigrants by the Hungarian government in

recent times. It had been seen that it was politically expedient for one part of the majority party to maintain an extreme-right stance of ‘hate Roma’ to compete for votes with Jobbik even as another part still pursued the traditional strategy, with the aid of the National Roma Minority Self-Government and Roma politicians like Livia Jaroka, of rounding up what Roma votes they could. Bourdieu (1991) describes how denial of social justice could be an accentuation of social distinction which gave way to a distorted social formation with uneven social categories. The social formations where Roma were made to live a life of marginality, hanging-on-the-edge, often succumbing to physical, mental and psychological disorders, could be seen as part of the social structure..

The Roma were also seen by local authorities as lacking a unified voice, despite the absence of opposition in the National Minority Self-government (widely seen as corrupt), and as suffering from a lack of advocacy and very low collective consciousness, with a marked disconnect between the Roma-related civil society bodies, and the Roma. My ethnographic study showed, however that it was not the lack of willingness on the part of the Roma that their voices did not go far, rather it was more due to lack of ‘wilful incentivization’ by the state as well as problems in communication and advocacy. Consequently the Roma continued to remain in a state of near-immobility in building political heft. As Powell and Lever (2017) argue, ‘the Roma are thus doomed to be ‘Europe’s perennial outsiders’ and naturally subjected to stigmatization and ghettoization’.

### **5.3.3 Examples of Education for empowerment**

In contrast to the stark depiction of poverty detailed above, I was able to also gather positive insights of development where the Roma benefitted from various inclusion policies. Some of these insights are set out below.

#### **5.3.3.1 The Gandhi Gimnazium, Pecs, 08 April 2014, 27 April 2015**

The Gandhi Gimnazium (high school) was seen to be one of the leading early educational institutions for the Roma with a nearly one hundred percent Roma (mainly Beash) intake. Founded in 1994 after 2 years of preparation by a group of local leaders and educationists called the ‘Friends of Roma’, its primary objective was to find an alternative to the tide of Roma segregation which had afflicted a large number of schools in Hungary (Havas 2000).

I was visiting the Gandhi Gimnazium to attend its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary at the invitation of the Principal, Ms Ildiko Deri, who explained to me that being an all-Roma school, it had been performing well on the national level. I assured the school of all possible support on the part of the Government of India. In the past, several books on Gandhi, India's history, musical instruments and Indian artefacts had been donated to the school by the Embassy. These had been arranged in a small room called the 'India room', and was inaugurated by me along with the then Minister of State for Social Inclusion. I appreciated the Principal and her staff imparting value-based education to Roma children with the view to making commendable citizens out of them. In my address at the function held on the occasion, I emphasized the need for such schools to be replicated elsewhere in the country as they could serve a very useful social purpose besides fulfilling the real needs of education. The Minister in his address mentioned that the centuries-old discrimination against the Roma could not be solved overnight, while commending the government's earnestness in working with other stakeholders for addressing the Roma cause.

#### **5.3.2.2 Sajokaza Ambedkar School, 14 April 2014**

The school, located in the northern region of Hungary, had nearly 300 students on its roll, all belonging to the Roma community. Funded on a grant by a Foundation set up by a local philanthropist, Himself Beas, it had refused government funding ostensibly in protest against the unofficial policy of segregation in schools for Roma children. The Principal of the school, Tibor Derdak, had converted to Buddhism. Derdak had been to India several times and come back greatly influenced by Ambedkar's life and vision. The students presented a cultural programme on the occasion of my visit. I talked about the life of Ambedkar, his pre-eminent role in bringing about a social revolution among the lower castes of India and the drafting of the Indian Constitution under his Chairmanship, which guaranteed certain inalienable rights and privileges to the marginalized communities which were part of the 'affirmative action' policy.

Klahn (2015:3). in her thought-provoking study of the Dr Ambedkar School (DAS) spoke of the school as "an extraordinary example of attempts to create a space where renegotiation of identities, imagination(s) and knowledge occurs in an extremely emancipative way" The school taught life stories of other global leaders, who had imparted leadership to their people, leaders such as Martin Luther King Jr and Nelson Mandela, as case studies so as to enshrine

in the students a sense of leadership and social responsibility. The school had a mix of Roma and non-Roma teachers, a few of them had also converted to Buddhism and followed the pedagogy where the Roma child was free to express his/her thoughts, imaginations, and even fears which s/he could be encountering, thus using education as a liberating and inspirational force. I felt, given a proper environment these highly motivated and value-educated children could develop their skills further, grow confident and be aware of the situation in which they were placed.

#### **5.3.3.3 Inclusive schooling: the Hejokeresztur model**

This school was a very different experience, of a mixed school with almost equal numbers of Roma and non-Roma students, mingling among themselves in the same classroom. The school had not only stayed away from the unstated policy of segregation but actively discouraged parents who entertained any doubt in this regard. The school had thus made a conscious policy decision to accept both Roma and non-Roma children right from the beginning of its inception.

Principal of the School, Dr Emese Nagy, who is trained under the Stanford teaching method (KIP), explained to me that though 20% of the inhabitants in Hejokeresztur were Roma, the school deliberately enrolled proportionately higher number of Roma children (to non-Roma) so that the Roma children shed their inhibitions and did not feel conscious of their social stratification.

Elaborating on the unique methodology to empower Roma children right from the beginning of their entrance to school, the Principal said that the programme allowed teachers to organize high-level work groups in classes where there was a perceived knowledge gap. The students had been receiving prizes in logic table games, one Roma student even represented Hungary at the Draughts European Championship in Warsaw. The school was adjudged one of the best models of mixed education in the country. The official policy being to discourage segregation, such schools validated the government's policy of de-segregated education by allowing Roma students to pass out at par with the others. This could significantly reduce their inferiority complex besides making them as productive and skilled as the non-Roma in the market place.

The school's overall performance spoke a lot about the advantages for replicating such schools in the country. The Principal explained that 200 villages had been identified by the government to introduce this method where the schools would serve a cluster/ community of Roma villages with predominantly disadvantaged Roma children. 15 schools had been trained for this programme out of which 3 secondary schools were based in Miskolc (a bigger town of the region)." The Minister in charge of Roma affairs, in a subsequent interview with me, confirmed the same while pointing out that such schools were examples of 'positive discrimination'. Education being one of the important pillars of the EU Roma policy, this kind of school served an eminent purpose besides addressing the requirement of EU.

The 4 schools which I visited (including a primary school close to Hejokeresztur which had only Roma intake), namely, Gandhi, Ambedkar and Hejokeresztur high schools, set an alternative paradigm, bringing innovation into education and thus attempting to break loose of 'pedagogical domination' what Freire referred to in his classic, 'Pedagogy of the Oppressed' (1972). They aimed at making Roma children confident and self-sustaining individuals with proper exposure and awareness of survival in difficult circumstances of their life in the ghetto.

However, there was an important development in this area. In 2014, the Hungarian Parliament amended the law on public education extending the power to the Minister of Human Resources (with responsibility for school education) to allow for segregated education in certain church-run schools (Ryder and Szilvasi 2017). This was then justified by the Minister, a former Protestant/Calvinist Pastor, as 'benevolent segregation'. The law was subsequently upheld by the *Kuria*, the highest Hungarian Court, in a dispute related to a church-run school in Miskolc. Such a move by the Fidesz-led government, apparently for giving greater scope to the church in Roma education, has run afoul of EU's guidelines. In May 2016, the European Commission decided to launch infringement proceedings against Hungary for violating the EU anti-discrimination legislation on account of educational segregation of Roma students (Amnesty International, 2016, cited in Ryder and Szilvasi 2017).

#### **5.4 Cultural capital: asset for Roma empowerment**

The Roma had cultural skills which came with their upbringing. The challenge was to harness them into socially and economically productive assets. Obviously the means at their disposal



were limited and they had to fall back on the state or other organizations for any financial support or guidance. Should the state have the vision and initiative in channelizing these assets, that could benefit not only the Roma communities which produce such skills but the larger society as well. With their gradual integration there could be skill exchanges between them and other communities as well and best practices could be shared for greater social good.

#### **5.4.1.Amerhat, 08 April 2014**

Amerhat was a small hamlet close to Csenyete in the Borsod county. The local inhabitants on their own had developed a programme through a local EU-funded agency claiming that they were involved in preserving Roma cultural elements with the support of the local people. The inhabitants were typically musician Roma and their ethnic background formed their proclivity to culture. I visited a small cultural centre where I saw a few Roma paintings depicting various facets of Roma life. It was interesting to note that the artists ranged from 10 to 70 years and were mostly drawn from nearby villages and towns which had greater numbers of Roma. I was told that this was a local initiative, the Museum generated funds by putting the works for sale from time to time. The Director explained to me that the local Roma were also taught native skills like stitching and embroidery for women, accounting and book-keeping for adult men and music and dance for the younger Roma. Given their varied skills, he reiterated, there was always potential to generate more funds to launch self-entrepreneurial schemes.

During the visit I felt that the local inhabitants were hamstrung by lack of patronage and governmental support. They needed further training in developing arts and handicrafts and becoming entrepreneurs. It was felt that local industries could also sponsor their activities. Further, with a thrust given by state incentivization, the Roma could rebuild their sense of identity and self-sufficiency. In this context, I recalled the laconic words of a Roma couturier in Budapest who had her fashion design shop in the Castle and sold her dresses at exorbitant prices. At my surprise if they sold well she said, that was her way of paying back to the non-Roma people by charging them a lot more for Roma designs which the Roma themselves could least afford and which went towards funding Roma projects.

There and in the village of Bagadmindzsent, which I visited on 24 June 2015 there was a gradual attrition of cultural skills, as the Roma had not been able to engage in suitable

commercialization of their crafts for lack of a) proper information about market demands, b) infrastructure facilities, c) networking among counterpart Roma communities in neighbouring villages, and most importantly, d) agency.

It had been felt in my visits to the small Roma habitats in the hinterland that even there, the inhabitants exhibited enormous cultural potential which could be harnessed to greater use by the state. Thus, for example, in Budapest there could be specialized Roma bazaars where village Roma artisans could be trained at government expense and allowed to showcase their wares. There could be 'skill bridges' between the villages and the urban centres for better linking and utilisation of skills and services and better marketing opportunities within the country and even in the region. The EU could also spearhead some of these activities at a regional level. Thus there would be no need for the Roma women to exhibit their products to tourists on the sly in street corners, a fact to which I had been privy. Besides promotion of their cultural capital, this would also boost tourism and augment revenues for the state.

### **5.5. Innovative Community Development and Empowerment**

In the beginning we described the Roma as an isolated community. They had been isolated by force of history and circumstances, not of their own volition. But within that isolation the way to knit them with the larger society would be to develop within themselves a greater feeling of the 'community' and the need to develop it. Here the Roma community in the isolated hamlets and villages that I visited could generate greater strength and better identity if they came together as a unified community, at least within their habitats to begin with. Later with greater physical and financial connectivity they could reach across to other Roma communities in adjacent areas. Community development could also be useful in accentuating the feeling of sharing and caring for each other as they all get involved in a sort of group exercise. The experience of Cserdi village brought out this fact succinctly though on a much more evolved state than Tiszaroff, as described below.

#### **5.5.1 Tiszaroff, 09 June 2014**

The village of Tiszaroff came across as a relatively prosperous village adhering to co-habitation among the Roma and non-Roma with 70/30% respectively in a population of nearly 1500. These were mainly the musician Gypsies who were preponderantly seen in the environs of Budapest.

The first Roma family I visited gave me a well-to-do impression. While the father earned 55,000 HUF per month, the daughter was a school teacher earning 75,000 HUF and the other two sons were equally well employed. The family was a visible contrast to several impoverished families I had met before and was an indicator that the Roma could achieve integration and inclusion with greater financial agency ably supported by Roma-related agencies.

I was shown around several community development schemes, importantly a rural housing society in which the Roma had participated in building houses for themselves and then moving out from their broken down houses to the new place. I was informed that all this had been done by the local inhabitants without state support. When I queried how they got the funds, I was told that they would raise money by selling their cultural wares/ garden produce and other small activities in nearby villages or urban centres (mainly Budapest) or doing community projects of growing mushrooms, cabbage, raising livestock, etc. This had made them self-sufficient as well as confident.

#### **5.5.2.Cserdi, 02 September 2014, 03 December 2014 and 25 April 2015**

The ‘Cserdi initiative’, as Dr A.M. Orban called it, was one of the examples of a prominent ‘self-sustaining eco-based agricultural village’, an exemplar of a Roma majority village which stood out as a model village not only for the Hungarian Roma but for non-Roma as well. During my three consecutive visits, I had seen scores of school children, researchers and visitors from Germany and Netherlands, besides Roma children from nearby villages, thronging the place to see how development had transformed the face of the village in just about a decade, so much so that it resembled a living museum and an active human habitat.. A major share of credit for this amazing transformation could go to its indefatigable mayor . Situated about 25 kilometres from Pecs in south western Hungary between Bukkosd and Szentlorine in Barany county, the village had proved that the Roma could engage in sustainable development with proper leadership and initiative. This served as an excellent example of community development.

A case study done by me on Cserdi in collaboration with Karunanithi (Mishra and Karunanithi 2016) presented our views generated through group and individual interviews in the course of an extensive field study.. The Roma comprised nearly two-thirds of the total population of 430 with both communities living together peacefully and engaging themselves

in development of their village through agriculture, infrastructure building and various value-added activities. The mayor of the village, a Roma by birth, led the village by example. We saw him get up early in the morning and start the day's activities taking the whole village along with him. The mayor had taken the 'Cserdi experience' to other Roma villages in Hungary and beyond. He was frequently invited by the media for presentation on his experience of making Cserdi a model Roma village. By introducing new techniques of cultivation, he had generated additional employment, self-sufficiency and savings for the entire village, part of which was used in incentivising meritorious children with laptops, bicycles and books, and significant reduction in crime, besides direct engagement of the Roma in several commercial activities which generated revenue for growth of village infrastructure..

A noteworthy feature of the village, unlike any other Roma village I had seen so far, was a sculpture depicting a scene from the Roma Holocaust when Roma from several villages, including Cserdi, were forcibly taken away to the Nazi camps by train to be subjected to the 'Porrajmos', an installation, I was told, intended to instil respect and dignity of and in the Roma.

## **5.6. Strengthening the roots: role of Foundations**

Foundations had played a major role in the process of inclusion and empowerment of the Roma. Small or big, they ran virtually parallel to the efforts of national governments. Roma activist and diplomat Nicolae Gheorghe felt that Roma civil society, in being the major support base for foundations and an interlocutor for them in facilitating inclusion, could work closely with Roma communities while facilitating better access to them in international and regional institutions. Georghe spent 10 years as an Adviser on Roma and Sinti issues to the Director of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR). On his passing away at the age of 66, Ryder., referring to his concern for the role foundations played in Roma society, said, "Participatory and collaborative forms of research which not only empower the Roma in knowledge production, but also help mobilise forms of critical consciousness at the grassroots in order to embrace a more emancipatory vision of society, could be a central part of the armoury Gheorghe envisaged" (2015:39).

Described below were my visits to a few foundations, most of them grassroots-oriented and smaller in size and responsibility. Irrespective of the size, they brought out salient features of

Roma society, in turn these foundations played an important role in strengthening Roma life and value systems at the grassroots level.

#### **5.6.1. Bhim Rao Foundation, Sajokaza, 11 May 2014**

The Bhim Rao Foundation named after, Ambedkar (Bhim Rao were the first names), was managed by the same trust which ran the Ambedkar school described above. Like many other foundations, the Bhim Rao Foundation was supported by EU funding though the promoters were averse to going out of the way to plead for outside funds. The foundation had taken up a few projects related to education, culture and employment, even running a mushroom project which had been successfully replicated in some other parts of Hungary. Students passing out of the Ambedkar school were facilitated in getting jobs outside of state support and the foundation facilitated them in that. I was informed that some of the students who had passed out of the school were now serving in the foundation, and several of them on voluntary basis.

Foundations also channelized funds through Church bodies, corporate houses or philanthropic organizations while seeking state funding to promote the development and welfare of Roma communities. However they were distinct from these bodies in the sense that they were registered bodies, had an avowed philanthropic purpose and solely looked after the interests of the Roma communities whose empowerment was their primary consideration. The foundations described below were examples of this.

#### **5.6.2 The Khetanipe Association and Szent Marton Caritas, Pecs, 26 April 2015**

The Khetanipe Association and Szent Marton Caritas Foundation were two foundations functioning from the same premises and worked together. Both were located in Pecs and carried out multiple activities ‘from the cradle to the grave’, as the promoters told me. Thus from supporting pregnant Roma mothers in providing them additional nutrition, arranging proper healthcare, arranging transportation to medical centres for their health check-ups, to nourishing the baby when it was born, helping her at every stage of development, including schooling and extra skilling needs, right up to helping the family perform the last rites of deceased Roma members, their tasks spanned over an entire lifetime. Thus they got to know Roma families intimately and effectively played the role of being a guardian.

### **5.6.3.Napkerek Roma Foundation, Kaposvar, 26 April 2015**

Some foundations also worked towards addressing political empowerment, this one was one such, it principally addressed the issue of racism. Besides, it focused on providing education to the deprived and segregated Roma as an important tool of empowerment and civic education. The head of the foundation, ran a day care centre as well as summer camps for children and adult Roma and arranged free treatment for Roma patients.

Ironically the day before my visit, a major scandal had hit the town with the murder of a girl by a non-Roma boy. The event was highly politicised and in a case of mistaken identity, thought by many to be malicious and deliberate, a Roma boy was picked up and arrested by the local police. This had led to skirmishes all over the town between the Roma, which constituted around 15% of the town's population, and the majority community. This was cited to me as a typical example of how racism dogged the Roma. The solution to address this dystopian reality, according to the director, lay in forming Roma elites who could take up the mantle of leadership and political agency.

### **5.7 Conclusion: Analysis of Empowerment and Innovation**

Almost all the foundations I visited were typically hamstrung for funds. The church funds as such were diminishing, it was reported. The attitude of some sections of the church, as discussed above, had been overt in promoting segregated education. There could be a few Missionary bodies still patronising Roma-related foundations, though the church in actively working with the state in addressing major Roma issues was a still far way off. Even the state was not very positive towards these foundations. EU funding getting progressively reduced, the state had no scope to divert them over and above channelizing these funds through the Roma self-government agency for target groups. In the process very little was left for the foundations to fall back on.

Ledwith and Springett (2010:13) defined participation as a “transformative concept, a way of life, a way of seeing the world and a way of being in the world.” The Roma had not been allowed to be part of the world they inhabited. With realizing the potential of their own capital formation, social and cultural, and even economic, they could be able to put their resources, to productive use. Here the role of the state and other delegated state bodies was of crucial bearing. Without their proper engagement and facilitation, the Roma under the

circumstances would find it extremely difficult to behave as integrated actors in the social matrix, particularly being contested by different bodies and interest groups. This could be a three-stage process; a) recognition, b) facilitation, and c) engagement. Optimum generation of resources was possible through community development. To quote Ledwith and Springett (2010:14). again, “The key purpose of community development is collective action for social change principled on social justice and a sustainable world”

It was observed that with a heterogenous population base and diverse ethnicities with different levels of socio-economic development, it was imperative that cooperation and community awareness had to be built. With an overall decline in the labour force, it was incumbent on the state to take a comprehensive and integrated view of the entire population and skill the Roma for being used as a productive labour force. In this context, it had been well noted that the Roma communities had been systematically deprived of their just rights in the socio-economic and cultural sense. With a sympathetic, supportive and understanding approach, they could be encouraged to contribute their full potential to the state and be an equal partner in development.

This chapter and the data described were a substantive part of my study. They revealed to me that the principles of the EU Roma Framework were not being practised earnestly, both in achieving the objectives for which the Framework stood as well as facilitating delivery on the ground by the state and its agencies. With lack of proper supervision on the part of EU and lack of accountability on the part of the state and its designated agencies, the ultimate sufferer had been the Roma. While it was ultimately for the Roma to build their awareness and advocacy, it would be equally essential for the state to provide the necessary support. For this an honest and well coordinated approach was needed to be put in place. With the state realizing that the Roma were a part of their own citizenry- and the state would stand to be substantially benefitted if they were properly integrated- it would have all the reason to facilitate Roma related-agencies to shoulder their responsibility. This was imperative as the latter were a part of the delivery chain with the state as the agency of the last resort.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **Interviewing the Elite: Insights into Causal Factors**

#### **6.1 Introduction:**

The interview effectively allows space to communicate and articulate views in a “both-side knowledge flow” (Kvale and Brinkman 2009). Qualitative interviews are good at describing social and political processes. They can be used as aids to describing the setting or environment in which the interview is conducted and thus present a holistic account of the interviewee and the context in which s/he operates. Besides, interviews are resource-intensive, and therefore time-consuming, and demand wholesome attention and patience both for the interviewer as well as her subject. The important role of the interview in generating first hand data cannot be understated. This has been explained in Chapter Three as a part of the methodology I have adopted in conducting this research. In this analysis of elite interviews on the Roma, I have made extensive use of interviews.

#### **6.2 Why the elite?**

In describing interviews with the ‘elite’ of Hungary, we need to spell out the meaning as it applies to the context in which these interviews have been conducted. In this, I have taken a cluster of social and political groups who are much involved in the processes of governance and organization.. In other words, they could also undertake functions of leadership, advocacy, agency and awareness in speaking for the Roma and their views are of fundamental importance in trying to gain insights into policy development, a key objective of the thesis (Gheorghe and Rostas 2015).

This chapter attempts to analyse the policy responses emanating from the text/comments of these interviews along with ethnological accounts (the interviewer playing the role of the ‘ethno self’) taken together with relevant reports of EU and related bodies. For the latter,



impact assessments of the EU Roma Framework (NRIS) in particular have been used. Further, assumptions made in my literature study (Chapter Two) have been tested against the findings of my interviews to develop a set of policy options which could form part of public policy to address the issues of integration and empowerment of marginalized communities.

### **6.2.1 The power pyramid:**

The traditional ‘elite theory’ is a theory of the state which seeks to describe and explain power relationships in contemporary society. ‘Elite theory’ originated in the writings of Gaetano Mosca, Vilfredo Pareto, Robert Michels and Max Weber (all discussed by Higley and Burton 2006, Bottomore 1993, Mills 1956). This could mean a pyramidal formation with the state at the top, the elites in the middle, and the marginalized (Roma and others) at the bottom of the pyramid. This would presuppose an engagement of some elites with the Roma while getting support or feedback from the state and state agencies in advocating for various schemes leading to political and economic empowerment. This would also mean a constant negotiation of the marginalized with the elites either by themselves or through other societal groups depending upon what in ‘elite theory’ could be called the dialogue between the elites and the ‘counter elites’ (Putnam 1976). However, this theory sees little scope for the marginalized to deal with the decision-makers directly instead of having to pass through the elite groups. This would make more sense if the marginalized communities threw up elites from within their ranks. But if those were already structured or had different interests other than working towards advocacy and agency for the marginalized groups, little benefit would be served. Thus, as the interviews below would show, the latter has been by and large the trend where the marginal either spoke with a feeble voice or no voice at all, i.e. without the intermediation of Roma elites. This therefore calls for alternatives to the socio-political context where the extant situation, as it were, could be changed in favour of the Roma with incentives/initiatives taken from external sources through a holistic process of empowerment and capital formation.

Interviewing the elites thus becomes a critical interface as the outcomes generated could affect, even transform, decision-making and application of public policy for overall improvement of the Roma situation. Lopez (2013) in his Sociopedia review of “elite theory” underlines how all the major theorists (especially he cites De Swann 2008, Reis and Moore

2005, and Verba and Orren 1985) similarly emphasize the importance of elites in welfare-driven states for “the state’s capacity to penetrate society”

While the elites represented in the course of these interviews were reflective of the power structure in the Hungarian society, as they tended to metamorphose their original identity into the newly found functional appearance, by no means did they complete the picture nor did they identify with the Roma cause. Rather they added to the picture and supplemented discourses of the mainstream elites who were understandably and ironically taken much more seriously for their engagement and advocacy of Roma issues. Thus, the mainstream elites took on the mantle of leadership and advocacy of the Roma cause (Gheorghe and Rostas 2015, Ryder 2015) though they were denounced in certain quarters as ‘gadje’ (c.f. Acton 1974) or as being disconnected from the communities they claimed to represent (Ryder, Cemlyn, Acton 2014).

This study would reflect the dynamics of interaction between those elites who claimed to represent the Roma cause without identifying with the latter and those to whom the cause hardly mattered. Ironically it was with the latter that the state tended to side. Those who consented to give interviews to me could be taken as the former who raised voices though their voices were not much heard. Yet I felt that their arguments could be showcased as part of this study’s theoretical framework in order to adduce greater credibility for the cause..

### **6.3 The interviews:**

The elite interviews below were conducted over a 16-month period, from April, 2014 to July, 2015. These correspond in numbers to the table drawn in Chapter Three and are categorised as per the following table.

**Table 4,**

#### **Elite Interviews**

Category of interviewee	Name/Designation of interviewee	Type/No of interview (interviewed once when not otherwise specified)	Date conducted
Politician/Decision-maker (non-Roma)	1. Minister in PMO and formerly in	Questionnaire-based/Informal ( 2)	11 April 2014, May, 2015

	charge of Roma affairs <b>2.</b> Minister in charge of Roma affairs	Formal/Questionnaire-based	09 Sept 2014 02 June 2015
Politician/Leader (Roma)	3. Prominent Roma Mayor (No 1)  4. A Roma leader, 5. Livia Jaroka, MEP  <b>6.</b> Former MP  7. Roma Mayor	Group setting/ Informal/ Semi-structured (3)  Informal Informal (2)  Informal  Informal	25 April 2015, 03 June 2015, 30 July 2015 25 April 2015 May, 2015 28 July, 2015  June, 2015  03 June 2015
Official (Roma/non-Roma)	8. Marton Rovid, Secretariat of Roma Decade & Roma Researcher 9. Felix Farkas, Deputy to Florian Farkas 10. Senior official, National Roma Council 11. Official, ERRC	Informal/Questionnaire-based (2)  Semi-structured  Semi-structured  Semi-structured	13 June 2014, 06 May 2015  18 June 2015  02 July 2015  26 July 2015
Intellectual/Professional	12. Katalin Kovacs, Professor, 13. Retired Professor and	Informal  Informal & Questionnaire-based (2)	21 May 2014  11 June, 2014 May, 2015

	Researcher on Roma (2)		16 Sept 2014, 09 June 2015
	14. Dr Emese Nagy, Educationist & Principal, Hejokeresztur School	Informal/ Questionnaire-based (2)	
	15. Katya Dunajeva, Roma specialist Researcher & Teacher	Informal	23 Feb 2015, 23 April 2015,
	16. Marius Taba, Roma Researcher & Teacher, Corvinus University	Informal & Questionnaire-based (2)	02 March 2015
	17. Iulius Rostas, Roma Researcher & Teacher	Informal	02 March 2015, 15 May, 2015
	18. Educationist & Formerly Administrator, Gandhi School	Questionnaire-based	25 April 2015
	19. Thomas A. Acton, Professor & sociologist specializing in Roma issues	Semi-structured	
	20. Medical Practitioner & Roma educationist	Semi-structured	16 June 2015
	21. Dr Anna Maria		03 July 2015

	Orban, Prof & Roma specialist researcher		
NGO/ Roma Activist	22. Nadir Redzepi, Roma Activist & Functionary, OSF 23. Roma Cultural Activist & Media person	Informal & Questionnaire-based (2)  Improvised (2)	27 Feb 2015, 06 March, 2015  27 March 2015 April 2015
Media	24. Media representative	Informal	04 March 2015

The above table shows the broad range of professions to which the interviewees belonged (24 interviewees and some of them have given more than one interviews as indicated in brackets). Their names were recorded in my research diary and notes of the interviews taken after they were conducted. The way the interviews were conducted are shown in the table along with the names of the interviewees. Those who did not sign the consent forms nor gave their consent later to be named have been anonymised (See chapter two – ethics). The anonymous interviewees are highlighted by the number which accords with the above table throughout this chapter and chapter 7).

It may be noted that a few supplementary themes have been added in order to focus discussion on broad outcomes for policy options as the centre of my investigation was to ascertain how interviewees conceived the problems Roma faced and whether their thoughts were conducive to inclusive community development. Every theme is accompanied with a para on critical reflection of the researcher where an attempt has been made to contextualize the gist of the words, in parenthesis or paraphrased, of the interviewee. While a few interviewees responded to a set printed questionnaire with their answers, for some others the interviews were customized as they wanted to speak on issues pertaining to their fields/ chosen subjects while a few neither responded to any questionnaire nor wished to be named. The latter have been anonymised.

## 6.4 Key thematic analysis

I have divided the discussion into two broad sections:

- (i) The nature of the problem
- (ii) Causal factors

### 6.4.1 The nature of the problem

#### 6.4.1.1 The Roma profile:

An eminent scholar on Roma (13) referred to broad variations in the socio-economic standards over the geographical spread of the country. He said, *“While the people living in the North East would qualify among the poorest, those in the South, namely around Pecs, will be slightly better off, though Roma communities living around Budapest and in the central parts (Trans-Danubian belt) would be relatively more developed”*. A former MP (6) said, *“In Hungary even Roma have different lifestyles. There is a very weak and small group of Roma whose members are highly educated and lead a comfortable middle class life, just like the average Hungarian. However most of them are poor, they live in villages”*.

It is obviously true that the Roma are an extremely diverse lot and this was the key point emphasised by interviewees. Their history, origin, social development and ethnic disparities lent them to a tremendous range of diversities. On the positive side, it showed that even among the Roma, there could be a possibility of elite formations and the relatively progressive Roma could take on the reins of leadership though some of these elites tended to ‘lose’ their identity and dissolved in the mainstream population, albeit by choice. Identity, in this context, could be seen as a divisive factor as well, breeding social inequity while identity as such happened to be the most important marker in the Roma persona conditioning their growth. The inherent diversities in the Roma profile suggest that top-down templates for inclusion might not work as each community had different sub-cultures and histories. This reinforced the need for inclusive community development where communities were empowered to design their own path to inclusion, taking into account their individual or group diversities.

#### 6.4.1.2 Culture/Identity:

In the context of the government promoting Roma culture actively, a government minister (2) looking after Roma affairs talked about various cultural institutions established to promote Roma culture in Hungary. However, a media representative (24), in discussing culture as a marker of identity, said that Roma people could not be labelled as one could not know who is Roma and who is non-Roma. She added that other problems like housing, education and health were equally important as identity. A prominent female Roma activist talked about a “systematic Roma ethnocide”. She said that there were no theatres, newspapers, cultural centres or research institutes nor minority educational institutions which the Roma could use. Furthermore there were no native language publications nor research and academic studies required for preserving the various Gypsy languages.. Dunajeva, a Roma researcher, said, *“The discourse on Roma as a European minority often goes contrary to Roma being national minorities. Most definitely Roma are a European nation like Hungarians, Czechs, Germans, etc. However, Roma have been living side by side for centuries with majority nations in many countries”*. Rostas, another researcher, quoted Günter Grass as having said, *“Roma are true Europeans. They represent the essentials of European identity: multi-lingual, multi-religious, multi-cultural...the issue is to support the creation of these institutions that will effectively represent and communicate Roma identity in the public space”* (Grass, 2001).

Culture and identity are basic markers in developing a Roma ethnicity profile. That however was seriously contested. Thus while Rostas affirmed the Roma’s European identity, Dunajeva was candid in pointing out that portraying Roma as a European identity might go contrary to their being treated as national minorities. The latter view was upheld by two other interviewees who felt that it was essential for the Roma to develop their national identity first, as culture could be an essential instrument for identity affirmation. For the Roma whose very survival was endangered by socially disruptive forces, what mattered most was self-preservation, and in the process conservation was essential of their localised/ascribed cultures as impromptu mechanisms for reinforcing their identity. It was ironical that culture, which was deemed as the ‘fifth pillar’ of Roma empowerment and mandated to the Roma self-governing agencies to work on, would be so badly neglected by the state.

## **6.4.2 Causal factors**

### **6.4.2.1 Poverty/Marginalization/Employment:**

Dunajeva was forthright in her observation that *“Marginalization caused by poverty affects Roma in a holistic way: their inability to access state resources might be a problem stemming from (lack of) communication, transportation, information asymmetries. Or simply apathy and lack of hope”*. Redzepi, a Roma activist, observed, *“The major difficulties which Roma communities face are cross-generational poverty and unemployment, segregation, institutional discrimination and racism”*.

There was near unanimity that the bulk of Roma population in Hungary lived in abject poverty, that poverty was in fact the most important cause as well as symptom of marginalization. Conservative theorists suggested this was due to the ‘socially deviant behaviour’ of the Roma which festered and bred poverty, which we might call the ‘culture of poverty’ argument, as noted earlier.. A fundamental imperative to address poverty was therefore to build skills, generate income and prepare them for the job market. This however overlooked the root cause of poverty and paid very little attention to the socio-economic factors which caused and were in turn bred by poverty itself, thus part of the solution warranted structural change through the redistribution of resources. That could be the crux of this study where we are trying to attack the roots rather than observe and address the symptoms.

### **6.4.2.2 Education, including adult education:**

The eminent author (13) spoke of the poor education standards of the Roma with a drop-out rate of 40-50% at the school leaving stage. The Minister in charge of Roma affairs (2), placed utmost emphasis on the need for all-round education. The government was not in favour of Church-run schools, he said, in the context of the Greek Catholic Church-run school in Miskolc which permitted segregation, and this segregationist policy was endorsed by the Hungarian Supreme Court (Curia). As mentioned above, in 2014 the Hungarian Parliament also allowed the church to allow segregationist education in church-run schools which subsequently invited infringement proceedings by the EU against Hungary.

A former Member of the Hungarian Parliament remarked that the Hungarian education system could not provide real mobility for Roma children and this limited their development.



She spoke about the system of segregation which had crept into church-run schools, there were some schools exclusively for Roma children which were run by the Catholic Church. She commented on the very limited number of changes in the education system and compared that with the Indian caste system. Contrarian opinions were voiced in the notion that the church and state were positive actors. Nagy, Director of the Hereszkerestur School, which stood out as an example of desegregated education in the country for its unique Stanford method, said, *“In Hungary the educational system is strongly differential and selective, and it doesn’t narrow the social handicap but transmits it”*. Indeed a frequent complaint of civil society monitoring was that the state- upheld segregation while the church was active in the maintenance of segregation. This could be the primary cause why Hungary faced EU infringement proceedings (See ERRC Report of 06 May 2004 on segregated schooling of Roma).

Orban held an expansive view of the role of religion in the Roma perspective. She said, *“The Church with its vast social, cultural, and economic network can offer them (Roma) a chance to find their way to integration and economic development...My hypothesis is that social cohesion can be developed on the basis of trust and through that economic development could be generated. There are two organizations, one, the Christian Roma Special College Network, consisting of four historical Christian Churches, the Greek Catholic, the Roman Catholic, Jesuits, Calvinist and Evangelist Churches who made a common agreement with the (Hungarian) government to support the education of future Roma intellectuals based on Christian values and norms, and the other, the Hungarian Pentecostal Church having a special program and mission called Hungarian Gypsy Missions International to spiritually and materially support the underprivileged Roma communities. They have many projects in the field of education, Mission work, social services, charity, job finding, community building etc.”*

Education was considered to be the key factor for developing the Roma sinew, to make them stand up in society, and make them employable. While decision-makers claimed that education for the Roma had made progress, more so in the ‘integrated schools’, these had not been replicated on a national level, and there was no reason for not developing such schools, a point made frequently in civil society monitoring reports (Balogh 2012, Balogh, et al. et al, 2013). Several others raised serious doubts on the present system of education in Hungary, calling it ‘differential’ and ‘selective’. It was also likened to the Indian caste system to denote

its lack of mobility. It was thus obvious that much of the efforts of the government and NGOs within the NRIS should focus in this particular area. Allied to this was the need for senior Roma citizens to learn and build on their skills as well. Thus adult education could be a step forward towards elimination of social inequality. 'Integrated education' needed to cover all age groups though interviewees held divergent views as to whether school-centred reform or societal change was the essential step in achieving educational inclusion.

#### **6.4.2.3 Healthcare:**

A medical practitioner (20) engaged in imparting medical education to Roma students, said that the Roma population in the CEE countries had an excessive birth rate. While the life expectancy of the average non-Roma person in Hungary was between 65-70 years, the Roma's was between 60-62. Furthermore, he explained, many Roma did not have proper access to healthcare facilities and some did not even want to be treated by non-Roma doctors.

The above contention was tested on the ground during the course of my field visits as mentioned earlier. There was a visible lack of focus of state authorities in this important area.. Lack of personnel and financial resources could be the main reasons. This pointed out at government inadequacy in providing a reasonable degree of healthcare facility with the bulk of Roma not being able to access private healthcare. This also could mean a disengaged attitude on the part of the state, not to care much for the well-being and welfare of the Roma. This strengthened the premise of the interviewee that in the absence of state care and protection there would be a dire need to raise a cadre of health professionals from amongst the Roma. Secondary problems were a lack of adequate transportation from the village/settlement to the nearest medical centre, or simply lack of awareness of where these facilities existed. Average Roma families therefore either got self-treated at home or not treated at all, leading to lower life expectancy, maternity problems and infectious diseases. Another important factor was the reluctance of Roma women to be treated by non-Roma doctors which further complicated the picture and rendered provision of health care facilities extremely difficult. In traditional communities, forms of distancing and distrust could severely impede access to health care and therefore care was needed to be taken in interpreting such distancing as self-exclusion as this might individualise the problem of the marginalised Roma.

#### 6.4.2.4 Accommodation/Discrimination/Segregation:

A media representative (24) talked about open discrimination against the Roma in the media. In this context she recounted an anecdote, when she was allowed to pass while riding a bike but a Roma person was stopped for riding the same bike in the same place and slapped a fine of 30,000 HUF. The Minister responsible for Roma affairs (2) talked about Roma ghettoisation in nearly one hundred settlements, a number which could double in the near future as a result of seemingly irreversible processes, as he said. This could lead to further segregation. According to Dunajeva, *"Discrimination and a sense of marginal existence require re-examination of the 'Roma problem' as a consequence of power relations between the Roma minority and the non-Roma majority"*. She believed that any measure to improve the possibilities for Roma to augment their condition should be a combination of targeted policies in addressing wide discrimination. Jaroka, a current MEP, quoted an instance from her childhood to give a graphic description of the state of discrimination against the Roma. She said, *"In my school (in Tata) where I was part of Class C, I made an unpleasant discovery. Students usually get sorted out into different classes based on their capabilities and learning skills; Class A stands for most capable, Class B is for students who are average, Class C is for weaker ones. I, however, realised that all Roma children were listed to Class C without distinction, and I felt uneasy being marked even as a child with the letter C which otherwise stood for 'Cigany'"*. The Roma Mayor (7) too felt strongly about discrimination. He remarked that one of the major causes of social segregation affecting the Roma was the nation-wide ignorance about the Roma as a community, People had no living experience of the Roma, he said, but would just say, "I have heard that", which gave a completely distorted picture of the Roma.

The Minister (1) felt that the policy of 'positive discrimination' was in its formative stage. The government was against segregation, he affirmed, and had been holding de-segregation workshops. This was part of the EU's NRIS framework and against the law. How was it then that the same Hungarian Parliament had allowed a section of the church to have segregated education in some of their schools? The Minister derisively said that given that Roma families tended to have more children than the non-Roma, soon there would be 'Roma schools' all over the country as a consequence of "natural segregation"!

Several views elicited from the interviewees, a few of them bold and emotionally charged, brought out distinct discrepancies. For example while the government representatives asserted that the law did not permit segregation, NGOs, Roma activists and leaders felt that there was rampant discrimination practised against the Roma. Did the law then turn its back on extant segregation practices while legal institutions/judiciary were given short shrift? The blame in this regard would most likely fall on the government for inaction and apathy. In effect, discrimination against the Roma had been perennial across all sectors and so long as it had not been addressed firmly by state machinery and legal institutions, ‘integration’ and ‘empowerment’ would be hollow words and the NRIS would stand to naught. The Budapest Beacon dated Oct 19, 2017 (Orban 2017) quoted a report published by the Statistical Office of EU (Eurostat, 2017) on the occasion of the eradication of poverty project which stated that in 2016, 14.5% Hungarians were at risk of income impoverishment, while 16.2% were severely deprived and 8.2% lost their jobs. The same report had stated that in the same year social exclusion affected 26.3% or 2.5 million people and this was higher than the EU average.

#### **6.4.2.5 Racism/scapegoating:**

Redzepi put it squarely. He said, *“My biggest concerns are that racist culture still continues in the attitudes and behaviours of mainstream Hungarian citizens. The most critical issue that racism is deeply rooted in the institutions and policies which blindly believe that the Roma must be “fixed” according to the unclear imagination of mainstream values”*. The Roma activist (23) quoted data of the Office of the National Media and Info-communications Authority (NMHH) to say that the Gypsies were presented as criminals and ended up becoming a matter of law enforcement. She observed that the biggest problem of Hungary’s Roma strategy was that it failed to confront, by providing alternatives, the anti-Roma scapegoating climate permeating society spread by far-right radicals and through irresponsible media channels, the impetus for this was further provided by the economic crisis. A senior official (11) of the European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC), headquartered in Budapest, said that since September, 2014 infringement proceedings were ongoing by the European Commission (EC) seeking enforcement of the Equal Treatment Act under which the Racial Equality Directive was passed by the Hungarian government. He added that ERRC was bringing several countries, including Hungary, to the notice of EC who were found to be breaking EU laws in the area of discrimination against Roma.

The ERRC representative's statement indicated that Hungarian state actions contradicted EU rules and the professed aims to include social inclusion. Curiously enough while the ruling centre-right Fidesz party had been moving towards a radical right rhetoric to corner the space traditionally occupied by the extreme-right Jobbik party, the latter had conversely moved towards a more liberal position and did not seem to be any more carrying the Roma vitriol as its governing ideology. Social commentators like Zselyke Csaky (2016) and others have written about this phenomenon, of the Jobbik party having deliberately shed its far-right image and acquired a moderating position while PM Orban had been talking how Hungary needed to preserve 'ethnic homogeneity' and at the same time warning of 'unspecified dangers posed by mixing of cultures'. Was Orban only referring to the refugee crisis which had hit smaller European economies in a big way, or his words could reflect a sense of fear when the majority communities were projected to be in danger in the face of ethnic groups, both within the country as well as from immigrant communities? Was the Hungarian state then building a fear psychosis amongst its population and alienating them further from immigrants and Roma? The Hungarian government's fear against 'radicalisation' of the Roma in the wake of influx of refugees from Syria during 2015-16 could well be a hysterical reaction to the situation and fear mongering towards Roma who happened to be their own citizens!

Did the fear factor also extend to the NGOs and activist bodies who were dealing with Roma issues? If the answer to the above question was 'yes', then it also answered the issue of segregation with hardly any change in the social or economic life of the Roma. With a serious economic crisis lingering, aggravated by the refugee problem, there would be a time when EU funds for Roma would dry up. EU member states like Hungary would then come under rigorous scrutiny for their insufficient addressing of the Roma cause. It was for policy makers at the highest level to ponder how long this situation would be allowed to deteriorate? Did it help the national governments or even the EU in the long run? As such, Hungary defying EU immigration laws and taking a bold and contrarian position against economic migration and refugee influx into EU countries to appease its nationalist majority community boded ill for the Roma who stood to be further discriminated in the changing scenario.

#### **6.4.2.6 Integration/inclusion:**

The medical practitioner (20) said that the issue of Roma integration remained unresolved to this day, while for the last 300-400 years Roma had remained in a state of under-development. This, according to him, was primarily due to their socialization rather than intelligence, the common belief that their average IQ was below normal was not true. He felt that without development of a critical mass of Roma intellectuals, the process of social integration could not meaningfully begin. Acton juxtaposed integration with loss of identity. He said, *“Those (Roma) that have been integrated often conceal their identity...The mode of integration may lock individuals into unequal positions”*. Felix, Deputy to Florian Farkas, erstwhile Head of Lungu Drom and currently Roma adviser to the Prime Minister, felt that the main problems were the demographic changes which happened naturally, mainly in the countryside. He said, *“The number of Roma children is increasing while the number of non-Roma either stagnates or decreases. Therefore as a natural result, you can very easily find schools where only Roma children attend”*. The same point had been made by the Minister (1) as well

The medical practitioner (20) in his remarks could be viewed as pathologising the Roma as subnormal and individualising the Roma issue in suggesting that if the Roma could only get their act together, development might proceed. His contention, that in terms of IQ they were no less than other communities, was needed to be tested on the ground. Farkas's comments, on the other hand, seemed to imply that the problems lay with the Roma and the surge in their population rather than structural or institutional factors. Acton's comment highlighted the dangers of relying on the educational mainstream and /or affirmative approaches in the sense that those Roma who accrued cultural capital also ran the risk of assimilation.

#### **6.5 Conclusion**

In the above themes we have seen the interviewees having reflected on the institutional problems of Roma as well as their placement in the larger societal perspective where the Roma are looked at with derision and an attitude of negation. In this perspective it would be easy to understand the roadblocks which could come about in the successful implementation of the EUNRIS. Several interviewees have advocated better skilling for the Roma better to make them employable in an increasingly constricted economic space. The fact that the Roma were a bonafide political and social entity entitled them to all benefits as for the other social

groups and that should be beyond question. What was needed to focus on, as we have attempted to deal in this thesis, was to find the modalities of holistically empowering the Roma through alternative schemes/practices which could generate outcomes with a mix of various factors, all of which would also have to be incorporated into a restructured Roma policy.

Institutional racism by the state and state-led institutions and poverty, endemic to the Roma, were both causal as well as conditional to each other. Interviewees had reflected on both these social issues which bedevilled Roma existence and assigned them a subordinate placement in the social hierarchy. This therefore necessitated a look at the range of issues which needed immediate addressing. The themes explored above as part of my interviews go towards generating hypotheses in that direction and cover different aspects of Roma, potentiating formation of social and economic capital.

Here it is pertinent to recall the ‘capability approach’ of Sen (2004, 2015a) examined in Chapter Four. Sen has seized the interesting contrasts between the subalterns in the context of their potential capabilities and the reality per se, going back to the debate of rhetoric versus reality. But then this could be the starting point of actually developing the latent capabilities of marginalized communities for their own development. The entire ‘development theory’ of Sen runs around the axiom that the development process needs to have people at the centre and thus to develop and evaluate their capabilities in real terms. Sen’s ‘capability theory’ in essence is a repudiation of the top-down approach which finds almost unanimous disapprobation among my interviewees as an incorrect method to seek social justice for the Roma.

The critical reflections, made after each theme, lead to a different matrix to evaluate progress and prosperity for all stakeholders in the society. Here it is argued that the social matrix would engage the Roma in a holistic manner which would spur their development and integration into the mainstream society. Thus it would become imperative on social science practitioners concerned with Roma development to generate hypotheses which could elicit distinct changes in the extant social and political practices, and that could be a first but bold step in leading towards their integration and empowerment.

## CHAPTER VII

### Interviewing the Elite: Insights into Solutions

#### 7.1 Introduction:

This chapter flows the previous in presenting hypotheses drawn from my interviews to outline a new paradigm of development and growth of marginalised communities, focus is on the Roma communities of Hungary, outlined within the EU Roma Framework, and the paradigmatic model works through various assumptions to address social inclusion and empowerment issues more directly and usefully.

Having briefly, in the previous chapter, summarised the views of my interviewees on Roma exclusion and loss of identity, all related to inherent poverty and societal marginalization, I shall discuss their views on policy and inclusion strategies. This chapter thus centres on:

- EU policy making
- Civil Society
- Other institutional incentives

In addition I would come up with alternative strategies as possible solutions to address the Roma cause in the contemporary context. This is reflected in critical reflection at the end of each theme, as in the previous chapter, and the assessment thereon brought over at the end to generate the sub-texts within which these strategies suggested by the elite sit.

#### 7.2 EU/Open Method Coordination:

##### 7.2.1 Roma Decade/NRIS:

Rostas recalled the beginnings of the Roma Decade (Decade of Roma inclusion which began effectively from 2005). He felt that it was a big disappointment. He said, “ *Sorenson, (President) of World Bank and Soros (Head) of Open Society Foundation made an initiative.*



*Some PMs were called. In 2003 they had discussions and launched the Roma Decade in Budapest. During that time all the states were enthusiastic as they were mostly countries joining the EU in 2004. Later, (once they joined), they lost interest".* Rovid, an official of the Roma Decade Secretariat, drew a similar picture with reference to the National Roma Integration Strategies (NRIS) which were initiated in 2011 and based in part on the model developed through the Decade for Roma inclusion, namely, Open Method Coordination (OMC) which calls upon the Visegrad-IV member countries, including Hungary, to coordinate on all their projects and policies within the NRIS Framework based on shared goals. He said, *"Implementation of these strategies (NRIS) has not always been successful. Some of the shortcomings have been that smaller policy measures targeting the Roma have been counterbalanced by big policy reforms".* For the government OMC is an important element of consultations. The Minister in charge of Roma affairs (2) seconded Rovid's view. He felt that it was important to gather data and best practices (for Roma empowerment) in Visegrad IV countries and share them with each other. Dunajeva's view was that EU initiatives should be top-down integrating with a bottom-up approach where local actors were given a role. Thus local knowledge could be implemented in various projects. She cautioned about the growing trend of Euro-scepticism which have gathered pace in the contemporary times. She said, *"Euro-scepticism is growing in the region and if Roma are seen as 'undeserving favourites' of the EU it might further deteriorate the problem".* Rostas felt that EUOMC was ineffective in that it presupposed political will in national governments when in reality there was none.

One of the Roma activists (23) I interviewed sounded extremely critical. She said, while total EU funding to address the Roma issue amounted to 120 billion HUF under the NRIS, only 10% of that could have actually reached the target population. Furthermore if the expenditures could not be monitored and verified, the situation could lead to further deterioration. Dunajeva reiterated the point. She said, *"The Roma Framework can be implemented only if it is fully embedded and relies on the governing structures. In places such as Hungary, where monitoring is excessively difficult and corruption and misuse of public funds is common, such monies are often not used properly".* Acton said, *"There is competition for scarce resources, and those who do not win the competition will always cry 'foul!'. The procedures of the EU require existing power-holders to provide matching funds, and concerns about corruption are so fierce that the greatest expertise is required to fulfil the*

*accountability procedures*". The ERRC official (11) drew the same point home. He said that the money was not always well spent. He gave the example of the Roma eviction from Miskolc in 2015 where a group of 30 odd Roma families were summarily removed from their habitation to a place away from the city without any compensation being paid. Later the Miskolc municipality was asked to pay a fine of 500,000 HUF. But that was too little, too late.

Jaroka took pride in part-authoring the Framework, though she sounded dejected with its effectiveness lost over time. She said, *"I went to the Conservatives, because Socialists could not make it happen: Nigel Farage, Viktor Orban, the far-right. I made extensive research, statistics, charts, etc to show them that integrating them was an economic issue, to make them understand that in the long run, integrating the Roma was cheaper. The truth is that the number of Roma population grows faster than non-Roma's and if it continues this way, by 2050 pensioners will die of poverty as there won't be anybody to work for them to support...When I made this point, interestingly, PM Orban started to pay more attention...the strategy paper contained 28 points with the last being regular monitoring and supervision. But both the Danish and the English along with other countries refused to fight for it if there was a monitoring clause in it, which in my view is the most important of the Framework."*

The interviewees' comments revealed the contradictory dynamics of the entire NRIS scheme at play. Calling the consultation mode enshrined in the EUOMC a sham, they clearly regarded it as mere tokenism even while the government quietly insisted it was essential. However, the essentiality did not show either at the stage of actual implementation nor while monitoring. This could be attributed to lack of political will among the concerned governments involved in NRIS to be an active part of the process to empower the Roma.

Most interviewees in a way suggested that the NRIS had been a failure in implementation, and the ideals for which it stood had been defeated with lack of monitoring. Why was that? What could have been the objections of EU member states when so much funds, which were partly their contribution to the EU budget, were being invested by EU in this exercise and yet there was no effective monitoring mechanism? Now that Jaroka sat in the European Parliament as a second time member and a Vice-Chairman, and as Prime Minister Orban's representative, could she be expected to bring some reforms to the table so that the NRIS gets

better implemented with proper monitoring, which in fact could be a *sine qua non* of its success?

Many interviewees felt that corruption could be a hidden and overriding factor at the level of member states and that no stakeholder had the Roma issue genuinely at heart. Here it is pertinent to note that the approach taken in this study is to explore further modalities to strengthen the empowerment process of Roma, keeping within, yet reinforcing, the Framework. The model which is being thought of could be a triangle with both Hungary and India at the base sharing best practices, with EU at the top rendering financial and political support. The point is to draw on the NRIS as drafted by EU and make it sustainable, and therefore the need for additional tools and best practices to make it function effectively for the purpose for which it was drafted in the first place..

A central aim of this thesis is to help the Hungarian government evolve an alternative model of development for the Roma, keeping in view the changed dynamics as well as constraints on the ground. The Civil Society Monitoring Report (CSMR) for Hungary, 2012 mentions, *“Despite the comprehensive nature of the NRIS which identifies most of the relevant challenges to Roma inclusion, actions taken so far have remained marginal” (p 10)*. Thus, there was a visible gap between the objectives of the NRIS and their implementation, and this had been ascribed to several factors, as brought out above. It needs reiteration that unless the system of review and monitoring was tightened, no effective results could take place on the ground.

### **7.3 An Overview of Civil society;**

A number of interviewees spoke bluntly about the non-utilization or non-accounting of EU funds which led to their ‘being siphoned off by civil society groups’.

Dunajeva gave her own thinking on the subject. She said,, *“Civil society is rather weak and in its embryonic phase in post-Socialist Eastern Europe. We are seeing some changes; a Hungarian population assumed to be rather passive is now on the streets protesting the current political regime...These social movements indicate some social engagement, nevertheless the lacking similar response about Roma issues shows that they are not considered as societal issues”*. Rostas added, *“Civil society should complement state actions on Roma and not replace it. Unfortunately, NGOs became service providers paid by the*

*state/EU. In this way their agenda was disrupted, their link to communities cut and control of funding sources increased*". Rovid spoke from his years of experience in working with civil society groups. He said, *"International/transnational bodies are top-down created, i.e. they are detached from Romani populations"*.

The former MP (6) was more hard-hitting. According to her, Roma civil societies only existed on paper. They were never civil. The minute they had a political party to support them or got money through them, they could not be called civil. The ERRC official (11) pointed at the shifting nature of civil society groups. He felt that they were not persistent enough, they picked up a cause one day, organised protests etc, then in a week moved on to another issue. He added an ominous note by bringing in a reference to the US Civil Rights Movement and the Black Panther Movement. He felt that he would not be surprised to see a violent upsurge (similar to these movements) from among the Roma communities rising from their frustration.

Had civil society failed the Roma cause? This question was needed to be answered in the larger perspective of all stakeholders engaging in Roma integration and empowerment and apportioning responsibilities amongst them. This cast doubt on the very efficacy of the organizations working as civil society bodies in a post-socialist liberal society in Central Europe. Could it be then a lack of sincerity on their part, a sort of unethical bearing which translated into inaction or indifference on the ground, though not abjuring their 'right' to draw funds in the name of the Roma? Even worse, while the larger cause was jettisoned, such groups got their attention and 'privileged existence' in the name of the very group whose cause they had abandoned. Such apathy could be squarely ascribed not only to the groups or individuals who formed part of the civil society but to the state who seemed to be complicit in this situation of 'extortionist deception', while the Roma struggled to remain in their place, let alone become empowered, because of their inherent diversities and lack of proper education and skills.

The ERRC (2016) states, *"Five years on, the EU Framework has hit a mid-life crisis"*. Critics had seen in this "a danger of one-sided dialogue (as part of an inter-culturalist approach) and outsider-driven development" (Acton, Ryder and Rostas, 2013). With the phasing out of the civil society monitoring process along with the closure of the Roma Decade Secretariat office, it was open to question whether civil society bodies would at all

take part in evaluation of the ongoing NRIS. This had been furthermore aggravated with downscaling of public expenditure (particularly meant for addressing Roma issues) and a prolonged financial crisis (Ryder et al 2014). This prompted suspicions that it was perhaps related, to educated Roma NGO activists deserting the Roma cause and joining the ranks of state bureaucracy and in the process causing greater ‘bureaucratisation’ (read obstacles) to the goals of Roma empowerment and inclusion (Gheorghe and Pulay, 2013). A further danger for civil society bodies in post-liberal democracies like Hungary could be a complete clampdown on them in the name of a radical nationalism where the role of these bodies were either minimized or deemed irrelevant (Ryder and Szilvasi 2017).

#### **7.4 Empowerment/Advocacy:**

Rostas advocated the need for setting up a participatory mechanism by having public deliberations at all levels, thus ensuring effective participation of the Roma. He called for a mechanism which would take into account pluralism as well as diversity within Roma communities. He said, *“Roma participation (in the empowerment process) is critical. Non-Roma have also to be convinced that investing in Roma inclusion is good for the whole society, the challenge is to engage Roma and non-Roma on an equal footing”*. For Rovid, a ‘bottom-up’ approach could be more successful. *“A more successful development framework would be less dependent on external sources”*, he said. Jaroka agreed with Rovid. She said, *“I can only see the solution in a ‘bottom-up’ approach where the Roma discuss what they want and what they wish to achieve. Having outlined a plan together, they apply for money. However, the EU prefers the opposite approach because this is the only way NGOs and government bodies are sure of their access to money”*.

Empowerment is the foundation of holistic development. A central goal of the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies is partnership and empowerment. (European Commission, 2011) The 10 Common Basic Principles devised by EC and civil society actors, are:

1. Constructive, pragmatic and non-discriminatory policy
2. Explicit, but not exclusive, targeting
3. Inter-cultural approach
4. Aiming for the mainstream
5. Awareness of the gender dimension

6. Transfer of evidence-based policies
7. Use of EU instruments
8. Involvement of regional and local authorities
9. Involvement of civil society
10. Active participation of the Roma

Active Roma participation could be the last of the ten principles but all the other nine could also involve, and work for, the Roma. In fact, Roma participation in the entire empowerment process had to be ensured at every step and the entire approach of decision-makers shifted to a bottom-up mode with community-led local development as its foundation. This had been supported by EC (EC 2014) as “an approach that turns traditional ‘top-down- policy on its head”, in which the local people formed a partnership that designed and implemented an integrated development strategy.

It is important to note that the Roma have been the focus of a framework devised by the EU in which member countries are legitimate partners. It is the latter’s responsibility as much as of the EU to make the framework work. This study, in attempting to introduce certain modalities through a cross-referential study of two marginalized communities placed in two different contexts, has tried to move towards that objective. The approach of this study is community-driven. Howsoever individualistic the Roma may be in their inter-personal behaviour, this study believes that empowerment of the community would automatically mean empowering the individual. More so, if the individual had been involved in the empowerment process, her sense of engagement would make her believe in the policy and its implementation more than through any top-down state sponsored benefits.

### **7.5 Affirmative action:**

Redzepi talked about an affirmative action policy in Hungary. He said, “*There is some kind of quota system, reserved places for Roma in public administration and local services*”. The Roma activist justified the need of affirmative action for empowerment. She felt that using the criterion of Roma ethnicity as an indicator was essential as was ‘targeting’ the Roma for preferential treatment or a quota system particularly in the field of education, employment, housing, the media and development policy, Here ‘targeting’ could be a positive feature emanating from a policy of ‘positive discrimination’ which, even the government agreed, had

started with targeting (in a positive sense) all minority groups, including the Roma. The ERRC official (11) drew a comparison with the Indian example of ‘affirmative action’ in respect of the Dalit (marginal) community. He felt that quotas provided to Dalits in educational and professional institutions might show the way as to how Roma could be politically empowered, though he was not sure if the Hungarian government would be willing to take political action to move in that direction.

‘Affirmative action’ as enshrined in the Indian Constitution was meant to protect the interests of the marginalised communities and bring them at par with other communities over a period of time by giving them preferential treatment by reserving places for them in various fields, viz. educational institutions, employment opportunities and entry to political bodies at the local, regional and central levels. This provision has denoted a sort of social adjustment with the underlying assumption that these communities had been kept repressed for centuries and would now need to get the protection and patronage of the state as a ‘level-playing regulator’ to normalize their abnormal and irregular position in the society, and stabilise them eventually. The policy of affirmative action has since passed through several iterations in the Indian context, but has stayed on, for primarily two reasons, viz. first, the formation and strengthening of the Dalit communities as a political class and therefore their capability to sustain provisions which would continue to empower them in society, and second, their bargaining power in terms of their numbers as a ‘vote-bank’ among political parties, none of whom would like to make any fundamental changes in the original provisions of the Constitution (Deshpande 2013). As Dalit activist Teltumbde says: “The entire scheme (of reservation) was faultily conceived and unimaginatively implemented, to result in the current mess. This may well have been deliberate because the records show how reservations and all the centrifugal caste turbulence they create have not benefited the Dalits so much as the ruling classes” (2018:90).

Could affirmative provisions work in the context of Hungary? Though there are such provisions also provided by Hungarian law by virtue of The Minorities Act of 1993, the truth is that the policy had not been properly thought out, let alone implemented.

According to “Civil Society Monitoring Reports” (Kullmann et al. 2013) such policy has amounted to ‘tokenism’, that it does not give justice to all marginalised groups and narrows the choice to just a select few even among the target communities. But such selection is

bound to happen when the avenues are limited and the population base is large. We have seen that happen in India where supposedly ‘the creamy layer’ from within the marginalized communities has been benefitting from the reservation policy over generations, and that it has not really percolated to the very bottom because of various inherent and systemic problems. Here the ‘creamy layer’ can be defined as the upper crust of the Dalit communities who had been enjoying the benefits of reservation over generations because of their access to educational and employment opportunities while those that are placed at the bottom of the ladder continue to stagnate. In other words there has been very little vertical mobility within the marginalized communities of India, and affirmative action has continued to perpetrate and be reinforced among the already empowered Dalits who are rather entrenched as Dalit elite (Jodhka 2015, Deliege 2001). The situation in Hungary, though not as institutionalised as India, gives the state a pretext not to be able to satisfy one minority group at the cost of 12 others. This calls for a broader and rational application of the policy to enlist the Roma supported by the EU Framework as the latter primarily targets their empowerment.

#### **7.6 The value of India’s Development Model to the Roma:**

Contrarian views were expressed on this subject. Acton felt, *“I can’t say India’s development process has been a success. I think it’s the most divided, unequal society I have personally ever visited...Of course, there is enormous scope for poverty alleviation measures and grassroots organization in India, because there are so many poor and so many grassroots. But they don’t seem to have much effect on levels of equality”*. Jaroka, on the other hand, reposed trust in the South Asian development model (based on micro-financing and self-help entrepreneurship). She said, *“We tried the Indian experience. I met Mohammad Yunus, the Bangladeshi economist (of Grameen Bank fame). I also have contacts in India, personal acquaintances. But unfortunately, it did not work at all. Then I saw Csaba Bojte working in Transylvania with 6300 children without EU money. Now, I look at these kinds of examples to see how it can be done cheap and effective”*.

The Indian development model was referred to here (though this would be treated in greater detail in the next chapter) in order to explore its relevance and efficacy in the context of the NRIS. It would be pertinent to mention that there might be potential models of empowerment in India that could be replicated but as Acton implied there could be need for some caution as to the expectations from such models, especially if not coupled with more systemic change. It



might be noted that since Acton's observation on the Indian development model and now, a lot may have changed in terms of actual empowerment of marginalized communities of India. These would be covered in greater detail, when we focus on the contemporary scenario of the Indian marginalized communities in the subsequent chapters.

### **7.7 Entrepreneurship/Economic tools/Skilling:**

Most interviewees sounded pessimistic when it came to the scope for entrepreneurship of the Roma. A media representative remarked that the micro-credit system could not work because it called for excessive repayment and high taxes which the Roma could ill afford. Also the Roma needed to open bank accounts which in many cases was not possible because of logistical reasons. Dunajeva brought in another factor. She said, *"Entrepreneurial skills are important but on a general level Roma and non-Roma are not raised with the importance of such values in this part of the world compared with North America, for instance"*. Rostas commented on the down side of entrepreneurial culture. He said, *"Financial and entrepreneurial education among Roma and other disadvantaged groups are not encouraged. The economic decisions of the governments to promote and facilitate investments in specific areas of economy disadvantaged Roma due to their lower levels of education"*. The Minister in charge of Roma affairs (2) however stressed on skill building. He felt that the government had to improve the skills of public workers (referring to the Public Works Programme). He added that the government was, in this regard, open to any kind of skill-building programme, vocational training as well as sharing best practices with friendly countries. Since Hungarian banks would normally not extend micro-credit to the Roma, the government needed to lend a helping hand. He also said that the EU could support such schemes.

Orban, who has done extensive research on the financial empowerment of Roma, talked about 'time banks' or 'favour banks' which prescribed exchange programmes where everyone could offer their talent, skill or time. She explained, *"It is a money-free kind of bartering system. Everyone has positive and negative accounts, as it is essential that one not only offers and gives their skills and time, but also takes from others, so that a balance is maintained. The cities of Miskolc and Szolnok have tried this programme, but the most active and successful time-bank system, a talent centre is still working in Budapest. This is a Hungarian tradition, something called the 'Kalaka-kor', initially started in rural villages where it could still be practised today, in close communities. The whole system is working on*

*the basis of social capital which is a key component of social development*”. The European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) official (11) talked of self-entrepreneurship as a way to mobilize the Roma with self-financing. He felt that self-employment was very difficult, rather impossible, for an uneducated Roma. The bureaucracy made things difficult for the Roma by setting requirements which could not be fulfilled such as higher educational qualification and a higher level of skill. To complicate matters, they were being taxed on presumed income even before the company had started making profits, besides paying social security which was applicable for all. All that placed a heavy burden on the Roma. Jaroka cautioned about the bad experience she had had in emulating the Muhammad Yunus model of micro-financing for the Roma due to systemic drawbacks. An educationist in a group interview voiced his frustration at the inability of the so-called economic model to attract the Roma. He recounted his experience when he lost his mining job and sat without a job for more than 11 years after the mines closed down post- Soviet period. It was a complete vacuum and no scope for entrepreneurship for the Roma..

While interviewees agreed that economic capital was the key to empowerment, almost all felt that there were some serious shortcomings in the extant system which did not allow formation of economic capital by the Roma. Under the circumstances, there had to be a concerted effort and coordination among the state and financial institutions, to encourage entrepreneurship by the Roma taking into account their cultural skills, particularly when their educational skill levels were not adequately developed. Even a cursory observation on the ground read along with these interviews made it clear that conditions thus far had not been congenial for the state to offer economic incentives. Why could not the state think of some novel ways of dispensing soft loans when they could apply for projects under the NRIS and avail EU funds for the purpose?. Obviously it was primarily the state which had to play the catalysing role, assisted by an array of state-supported institutions. A good example in this regard could be the Rural Banks in India who were tasked to extend micro-credit and other forms of soft loans to Self Help Groups. Given that both Hungary and India could be broadly classified as emerging economies, there was a good deal of practices that could be shared between the two countries, with marginalized communities suffering from more or less identical exploitative conditions. In fact the Minister in charge of Roma affairs (2) has made precisely this point. India and Hungary share a friendly relation, so both governments could join hands in studying and suggesting the best practices from both sides. It would be a win-

win situation for both. This study, in fact, has suggested devising an appropriate development model geared towards capital formation of marginalized communities based on sharing of best practices..

Civil Society Monitoring Reports called for use of innovative financial instruments to effectively execute bottom-up development policies. Such initiatives were needed to be coupled with intensive training and business support, including assistance in marketing and professional skills development. Given that the Roma with a low financial base had a problem of repayment, monies extended by the state or state run institutions were needed to be provided with credit on flexible terms to be able to generate more socio-financial inclusion for marginalized communities (Ivanov and Tursaliev 2006). Given that it is difficult to commercialize in conventional ways some Roma products and services, the state could find a way of extending soft credit facility to assuage the burden of Roma artisans who were engaged in such production. While the government effectively subsidised the economic activities of artisans, the latter in turn would feel encouraged to undertake small entrepreneurship, This could, with proper monitoring and supervision, subsequently develop into a viable means of self empowerment.

### **7.8 Public Works:**

The Minister in charge of Roma affairs (2) lauded the achievement of the government in offering the public works programme (PWP) for those Roma who lacked basic skills. He explained that the project had started in 2008 during the socialist government of Gyurcsany and successfully continued through by the Fidesz government. He emphasized that the government would like to have more Roma enrol for the programme and integrate public workers into the labour market. How could that be done without proper skilling programmes being imparted for the Roma was a point he remained silent on though he said that the Roma sometimes took up odd jobs besides the public works for an additional income. Nagy felt that the public works scheme was not an effective solution for employment as it was temporary work for a few months. Orban put that in an analytical perspective. She said, *“Successful schemes can only be launched if the concerned community is actively involved in it. That is the real solution, as it is their lives and they should do something for themselves by themselves. Sure, NGOs, Foundations are there to help but what will help and do the trick is leadership. These strategic key players should be involved in the planning and decision-*

*making process at the highest level so that they experience themselves what development is all about, how it affects the local people's lives giving them motivation to work towards greater achievements. I think, if they can see the bigger picture, their future, then it is sustainable, if not, in the long run it cannot work".*

Public works programme, commonly felt as a 'good practice', however came in for mixed comments. It could have been a positive step in addressing poverty and marginalization. But being of short duration it did not help in raising skill levels of the participants, and that ought to be the objective in ensuring a sustainable living. India has a similar scheme of guaranteeing income for 100 days in a year to every adult member of a marginal household defined under a certain income criterion though the efficacy of this system is also contested due to loopholes in implementation, lack of funds and proper monitoring

Civil Society Monitoring Reports have expressed mixed views on the long term impact of the public works programme (PWP). Though lacking in imparting skills, thus not helping the longer-term employability of Roma, they still held importance in generating marginal income when the Roma families were languishing at the bottom of the socio-economic scale. This therefore could be construed as a 'half-measure' for Roma empowerment. Coupled with other initiatives such as adequate skills building and proper marketing, the Roma could benefit in terms of their individual as well as social incomes.

## **7.9 NGOisation and the Government:**

Dunajeva commented on NGOs in the current Hungarian context having become an industry. She remarked, *"NGOisation is definitely an observable phenomenon and another extremely difficult issue. As the problem deepens, the importance of NGOs grows. There might be an incentive to contract NGOs in alleviating some Roma-related issues (such as the case of homelessness), while it should be looked as a national problem to be solved through state intervention and structural changes. In defence of NGOs, they are often the only ones willing to enter marginal areas and many, especially organized from the bottom-up with the view of local needs and particularities, are making a slow and lasting change"*. Acton observed, *"Many so-called NGOs are wholly dependent on state funding, and so in no real sense "non-governmental". Nonetheless, clearly over the last 50 years an educated Romani intelligentsia has emerged, in touch with each other throughout the world, fiercely debating issues, and able to criticize both the state and those NGOs who might be better be called*

*WONAFFUNGO*<sup>13</sup>” (i.e. “wholly non-autonomous fully funded non-governmental organizations” (Ryder, Cemlyn and Acton, 2014)). The former MP (6) decried the whole practice of NGOs seeking project funds. She said that after joining the EU, non-Roma organizations started to draft programmes for the Roma changing regulations. The new rule was that one had to show one Roma person or organization who benefitted from the money. And then they got government money. The Roma really could not participate in this. The Roma mayor (7) (1) hit the nail on the head. He said, that there would be nearly 12000 NGOs working for the Roma in Hungary and they had 6000 people on their direct employ while 40,000 benefitted from the work of these NGOs. No one really cared for the Roma. If all that funds had directly targeted the Roma for whom they were meant, they would have stood to gain 220 million HUF per Roma by now (2015)

The above observations suggested that NGOs who were supposedly working for the Roma cause seemed to have a different agenda. Could it be the state machinery extending some sort of tacit cover for the NGOs and working with them to take advantage of a sloppily administered policy? It is true that in a democratic polity NGOs are supposed to be the anchor on which the Roma would rest their case. They are the ones who would be soliciting funds in the name of the Roma. But the fact that they were ‘servicing bodies’ of the government, as some interviewees had pointed out, begged the question, service for what and for whom? During my field visits I had noticed how miserable the smaller NGOs felt when they were deprived of a share in the cachet of funds monopolised by bigger organizations who had larger manpower and more ‘marketing skills’ than the former. Acton’s derisive epithet of *WONAFFUNGO* (cf also Ryder, Cemlyn and Acton, 2014) therefore seemed apt. As pointed out above, few Roma themselves were given the opportunity to muster or manage EU funds. These had to be canalized through the state or non-Roma NGOs. While NGOs did have a function to perform in a liberal democracy, sometimes the repressive nature of the state was evidenced in browbeating NGOs, particularly those who were foreign-funded suspected of ‘sympathising’ too much with the Roma cause. The case of the Hungarian government pursuing the Norwegian Civil Funds administrator *Okotars Alpitany* to the point of eventually

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13 This is a satirical deformation by Acton of the acronym “QUANGO” which stands for “Quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisation”

getting their office closed down in Budapest was an extreme case of state-sponsored nationalism.

Civil Society Monitoring Reports gave credit to the NGOs in taking the Roma cause at a world-regional level, building public opinion within and outside the country. With the Roma getting progressively educated and integrated, such NGOs could serve a greater cause of facilitating leadership of the Roma, as per the reports.

### **7.10 Roma elite/leadership:**

The medical professional and Roma educationist (20) touched a raw nerve in explaining the lack of proper leadership among the Roma. He observed that despite having a total population of 15 million in Europe, the percentage of intellectuals among the Roma was more or less 1%. He felt that without intellectuals there would be no growth in intellectual property, consequently no leadership, no innovation, no change. There was a need for evolving a strong well-structured group among the Roma who could take over within the community as teachers, physicians, pharmacists, public policy experts and other specialists. Dunajeva observed, *“We might need to wait for the “trickle down” effect. Many such NGOs and organizations (OSF, REF, Decade, etc) are concerned with making of a Roma elite which would result in an educated group of future Roma leaders. This generation has just “matured” and we are still waiting to see what effect they will have on the current state of affairs”*.

Redzepi talked about the current inability of the Roma to directly access funds for themselves. He said, *“The inability of Roma communities to access state assistance or to reach across to policy makers is due to the token Roma leadership, internal mistrust among Roma communities and elite, and ill treatment and negligence of local and central institutions in general”*. Acton added, *“If leadership is not built among the Roma themselves, of course they will not survive as distinct communities and will disappear as many communities have in the past. Different Roma groups that have survived have always developed the necessary leadership in the past; those that did not are no longer with us. The state should negotiate with the leaderships that emerge, and not expect the competing interests and sections of Roma civil society to have a single leadership exercising a dictatorship over the rest”*. Rostas suggested, *“It is possible to build leadership among Roma communities in a bottom-up approach. The condition for the state of private donors is to*

*engage with Roma on a equality principle and not as patrons. Exactly this was the historical practice, to hand-pick Roma 'leaders' and engage directly with the communities”.*

All interviewees without exception called for emergence of leadership from within the Roma themselves. However they all differed in their approaches. Dunajeva sounded condescending in suggesting a ‘trickle-down effect’ in forming a Roma elite while Redzepi was matter of fact in pointing his fingers at the inability of the Roma in accessing funds if they did not have a strong leadership. Acton argued for a different paradigm by suggesting multiple leaderships from among the Roma while Rostas suggested a bottom-up approach by alluding to the earlier practice of picking up ‘Roma kings’ as a suitable contrast. That practice had long ceased to exist in contemporary Roma society. Amidst the surfeit of views emerging in this area, one thing was clear, the immediate need to evolve leadership from among the Roma to address issues pertaining to their own development. However, the danger would be of greater ‘intellectualisation’ amongst the Roma, there could be a consequent loss of identity among those who were relatively better educated. They could then distance themselves from their own community and merge into the mainstream society, obviously to seek a better life. But then does this danger outweigh the emergence of a Roma leadership to take on issues concerning their own empowerment? And how can it be said for sure that the Roma leadership would leave their identity and join the mainstream? There has been no conclusive evidence of this either. In other words, the advantages of formation of Roma leadership far outweigh any fears of the Roma leaders shedding their identity.

### **7.11 Political representation:**

The need for political representation of the Roma was a recurring theme in all these elite strategies. Redzepi said, *“I think a mainstream party with democratic values has to exist and speak out loudly for the Roma. The representation of Roma is completely inefficient. First you should go to the field, give voice to them (advocacy). It is a process which should be built up first at the local, national and international levels. But politicians only want to get votes”.* Rostas robustly asserted, *“The problems faced by Roma are of political nature as their solutions imply a redistribution of resources and power in society. Thus the political mobilization of Roma is a must. The difficulty comes in how to mobilize a community that lacks any tradition of public participation in res publica. But there are several factors here: funding from private donors and communities, electoral system, electoral competition,*

*inclusivity of electoral rules. Demography is in favour of Roma*". Drawing attention to the inherent problems, the Roma MP (6) remarked that the Roma community was very diverse. They were constantly fighting with each other without ever being able to sit down together and agree on any matter. There were several Roma leaders, all with their vested interests. And furthermore, they were used for political and personal gains. The Roma mayor (7) (1) denied that he nursed any political ambitions of joining mainstream politics. Narrating from his personal experience he said that he had kept himself away from the snare of politicians though the latter were trying to lure him with huge salaries.

While political leadership follows leadership building and elite formation, it is important for the emergent Roma elite to be properly represented in the right forum where their cause would have a decent hearing. For several reasons outlined by the interviewees, this seemed difficult, if not impossible, under the current circumstances. It is obvious that the Roma population, constituting nearly one eighth of the national population of Hungary could get more proportional representation. Some would wish to see a unified ethnic-based Roma party while others would like to believe Roma were better off working within mainstream parties. As such political representation was essential for any community or group to express an independent voice in the society, if this movement gathered force, the Roma would stand to gain far more than what they had at present. The current Roma representation in the Hungarian Parliament, taking little active part in the proceedings, left much to be desired though some pro-government organisations might be arguing otherwise. Besides, petty political representation in the EU Parliament also did not serve much purpose as the few MEPs hardly brought much justice to the Roma cause. The small pool of Roma leaders at the local, national and regional levels, some of whom were interviewed, do have a voice, but admitted this was not enough. Roma politics remained fragmented, unlike the Indian situation where the Dalits, aware of their numerical strength, have regrouped themselves as a more unified voice, forming broad pan-India movements (Sampath 2018). One could however qualify that the smaller groups within them stood vocally for their own rights and lobbied with governments in the provinces, as observed in recent times.

Civil Society Monitoring reports (Kullmann et al 2013) sometimes cautioned against the danger of overt politicisation, which might expose Roma activists to hostility. But there will never be an ideal situation. Only a totally anodyne campaign will not be subjected to antinomies of social and political processes and hostility of local political actors and



institutions. That being not the case, the Roma would best serve their cause if their leaders tried to build coalitions for action.

### **7.12 Roma Minority Self Government (RMSG)/ National Roma Self Government (NRSG):**

Dunajeva suggested collective action by all stakeholders in the process. She said, *“Everyone should assume responsibility as it is a collective problem. As long as this issue is but considered a societal issue, rather than a “Roma” problem, thus solved by the RMSG, a state issue solved by the state etc, responsibility will be pushed around rather than collectively assumed”*. Acton pointed out crucial flaws in the system. He said, *“The RMSGs are elected by first past-the post list system, which means the winner takes all seats on them and minority parties are excluded. They have funds only for “cultural fig leaves”, not for economic restructuring, and have been filled by “Vicar-of-Bray-like government placement”. They have been a disaster”*. Adding to the point, Rostas pointed out that RMSGs had turned to be *“a major oppressive mechanism of the Roma minority in Hungary. The very act that the RMSG system was designed for ensuring cultural autonomy of the minorities and not to deal with other issues such as employment, poverty, health, etc, passing on the responsibility to RMSG was met with the desire of some Roma leaders to acquire power by managing public funds. However they lack the capacity to do so”*. The Minister of Roma affairs (2) however upheld the importance of the institution, and expectedly so. He commented that the RMSG system was very good. However the government had to work for all 13 minority groups, the Roma were only one of them. The former MP (6) said just the opposite. She felt that RMSG was nothing but a ‘money squandering’ body and served no real purpose. She explained that from Budapest the money went to the RMSG centres. The leaders of these self-government bodies had huge offices in Buda, while the average Roma lived in the poorest district of Pest. The money was just squandered away while the Roma community remained polarized with no common aim, no goal. The NRC (10) official talked about the RMSG in the context of his organization. He said that there was a hierarchical structure of Roma institutions throughout the country with the NRC at the top under which there were regional county self-governments, the local RMSGs and associated organizations. The NRC did receive a major part of government funds and provided support to the local RMSG bodies wherever they could as part of their mandate. The Roma mayor (3) sounded extremely critical. Dismissing the value of RMSG he said, that they had absolutely no role to play, he would rather like to

see these agencies abolished. They only took money in the name of the Roma without doing anything for them, he asserted.

What can one make of all these divergent views? They ranged from ‘very good’ and necessary to ‘fund guzzling’ and ‘irrelevant’. While some advocated reforming the system, some others called for its outright abolition questioning the very *raison d’être* of these bodies. As noted above, these bodies had come into existence following the promulgation of the Minorities Act of 1993 and were “strengthened” when the NRIS was formulated, in which inclusion and empowerment were defined as core issues. But the RMSG hardly touched these issues, instead concentrating on reinforcing cultural activities of and for the Roma. It was therefore felt that the RMSG system had been thrust on the Roma as a top-down mechanism without any concern for the issues on the ground. The important point was rather for the Roma to be represented in this ‘grassroots body’ if they had to meaningfully participate in their own development. If that was denied by a first-past-the-post system and the office bearers were appointed by the central government, what use would it serve for the Roma? Most of the interviewees pointed out at the conspicuous systemic ‘manipulation’ in denying the Roma their participation in a field agency which went totally contrary to the principles of democratic governance.

Civil Society Monitoring Reports are candid in their observations. Presently the MRSGs were strongly supported by the central government and heavily staffed with Lungo Drom representatives who were an ally of the ruling Fidesz party. These ‘governing bodies’ excluded a large range of non-Lungo Drom Roma interest groups from meaningful participation. Furthermore, the 4<sup>th</sup> Amendment of the Fundamental Law of Hungary, by changing the terminology of the Equal Treatment Act, had relabelled the MRSG as a civil society organisation thus leading to larger exclusivity of MRSG in NGO-government cooperation based schemes. This lent more credibility to the possibility of a nexus between the government and the MRSG to protect each other’s interests.

### **7.13 Corruption**

Referring to one of the biggest corruption scandals of Hungary of the year (2014-15), Farkas called the funds embezzlement charges, a ‘dirty campaign’. He said that the inquiry was still on (as on June 2015, when I interviewed him) and nothing incriminating had been found against him. He lauded the person at the centre of the scandal for his life-long engagement for

the Roma cause, even saying that the latter was responsible for the NRIS being drafted during Hungary's EU Presidency in 2011. The NRC official (10) who succeeded this person at the Head of the organization had his own version to add. He said that according to his personal inquiries there was no mis-utilization of government funds as alleged.

The above affair turned out to be the biggest scandal in recent Hungarian Roma politics, the case of a Roma leader embezzling funds meant for the Roma and putting that to various non-productive and personal uses. Following an inquiry the government had to sit up and take notice. But then what happened? The person was shifted out of the NRC from where he was alleged to have committed his acts of corruption and moved on to an official position in the PM's office while continuing to remain as an MP of the ruling party. Some might view this as a scam that was somehow 'managed' by the government in power! Corruption, unless prevented substantially, could wreak havoc with the Roma policy, both at the EU as well as the national government's end. Immediate action was/is therefore needed to find ways and means of taking legislative, juridical and political measures to contain corruption which stood on the way of implementation of EU Roma policies.

Several interviewees noted that there was a need to dismantle the institutional structure of RMSG. They contended that the latter could function as an autonomous NGO, sharing equal space in the process of empowerment for the Roma without the state's patronage. It needs to be noted that CSMRs have also been extremely critical of the working of the RMSGs, particularly with bulk of the funding meant for Roma inclusion and empowerment passing through them. That they are shielded by the state adds yet another sordid dimension to the story, embedding corruption even deeper into the system.

#### **7.14 Human rights:**

Taba, in reflecting on the Roma issue becoming a human rights subject, said, *"After the 90s, the Roma became a human rights question, i.e. during that time Romani language was recognised. Roma became a fashionable topic...Hungary reshaped the minority issue by giving dual citizenship which was an act of PM Orban".* Jaroka added, *"The EU has become very much human rights-oriented. Interestingly during Hungary's Presidency of EU, when one of their representatives came to Hungary, he phoned me knowing that I was very much familiar with Roma issues in Hungary. We sat down together, he asked very generic questions. I gave him my fair assessment of the situation, told him everything. He changed his*

*flight plans, went back to Brussels the next day and nothing happened. This is what the EU calls inspection and monitoring”.*

It is quite obvious that very little had been done in respect of human rights violations when it came to the Roma. The European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC), a human rights watchdog agency set up by the OSF, in its annual reports listed out several cases of human rights violations against the Roma, including several in Hungary, which were brought to the attention of the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR). The ERRC also took up such cases from other member countries and thus individual countries were hardly left with any time to present a solid defence or fight out the cases. This however should not detract from the issue under study, that there were rampant human rights violations committed by the government apparatus against the Roma, including in Hungary. The Roma were after all EU citizens and their human rights were as sacrosanct as any other EU citizen residing in the EU member country. Then why were such violations committed with impunity? The sad fact was that although bonafide citizens of a EU member country, Roma were subjected to racism, scapegoating, and persecution of the worst kind, while the state and state agencies turned a blind eye, let alone taking note of such violations seriously. However, it should be noted that despite occasional legal victories against human rights infringements, there was hardly any change in the ground as regards the attitude of the state or the mainstream society towards its Roma citizens. To add to the predicament, the Hungarian government in recent times had refused to be guided strictly by EU guidelines when it came to immigrant population management and had been the recipient of EU's legal strictures as well in this regard.

A Civil Society Monitoring Report pointed out that the Roma were discriminated in almost all fields of life and decision makers did little to protect the Roma as a vulnerable social group (Balogh et al, 2013, p 10). The concerned section read, *“Hungarian authorities do little to sanction hate speech and criminal law provisions designed to protect groups facing bias are often applied by the authorities to sanction Roma rather than non-Roma”*. Article 13 of the Treaty of Amsterdam empowered the EU to take appropriate action to tackle various forms of discrimination including racism (EU 2002:6) though no action had since been taken.

### **7.15 Media:**

The former Roma MP's remarks could be generalized across the board. She said that there was no positive image of the Roma in the media. There were very few positive stories

published about the Roma while the Roma as a community got very limited access to the mainstream media. There was no media of their own as had been pointed by the Roma activist. The Roma representative berated the government of cutting the media out from any positive stories about the media though there could be several. The Roma empowerment story in Cserdi village was a case in point, but it was left largely to the initiative of the mayor (3) of the village to take those stories to the media, not the government in Budapest..

It is a truism that the media reflects the prejudices that publishers think will appeal to their readers. In the Roma case, the media presented a skewed picture, with tangential and negative bearings. As the Roma mayor (3) remarked, this was the main cause why people had such a poor impression of the Roma way of living. The need therefore was to augment advocacy by Roma leaders and NGOS, activists. If the state meant well for the Roma, it could use the state-run media, at least, to put out positive reports about the Roma. However this had not happened. Both the Roma activist as well as the media representative, who felt that the Roma were largely omitted from the mainstream media, seemed exasperated with the role of the media. in frequently showing the Roma in a negative light, thus reinforcing the tropes associated with this community. This fuelled the feelings of racism and segregation further..

A 10-point scale of 7 parameters shown at Appendix at the end of this study draws different themes on which interviewees have been asked to respond. Only 4 interviewees did respond to the printed questionnaire in which the scale was included, while the others gave their consent to publishing the customized interviews which had been prepared suiting the subjects on which they had wanted to speak. However, all the responses received on the themes outlined above give a fairly comprehensive picture of the state of Roma inclusion and empowerment, and helps in drawing further hypotheses. In fact the actual Roma story, or at least a good part of it, unfolds through the views of the above interviewees. They constitute a good part of my learning process on the Roma besides field visits and actual observation on the ground. These complement, to a great part, the literature studied on the Roma

### **7.16 General Reflections on the gap between rhetoric and reality**

The fundamental question posed at the beginning of this study was whether there was a gap between rhetoric and reality and whether the discourse of empowerment was mere rhetoric. My findings, as shown from the above interviews, have shown that a gap did exist and the rhetoric emanating from the government only served to camouflage the ground reality. It

needs to be added that it was not as much a gap between rhetoric and reality that was of primary concern, rather how big was that gap and what measures could be taken to narrow it down. In the latter context a discussion of financial and entrepreneurial self-help measures could be a focus subject for discussion. This could, in addition, point to several financially inclusivist measures such as micro-finance, boosting of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), etc. which could be shared between both countries.

Kovats (2001) pointed out that Roma were the only ‘ethnic minority’ while the 12 other minority groups in Hungary were national minorities. In other words they were not defined by their nationality which they bore but by their ethnicity. This could be a major factor for the government to shirk its responsibility towards the Roma though it continued to receive EU funds under the Roma Framework (NRIS)..

The ‘nativism and scapegoating’ which Jaroka (2012) alluded to was reflected in her interview. According to her, the practice was still prevalent in certain parts of the country, The Roma were still typecast leading to the segregation and marginalization syndrome. This was borne out by my observations on the field

The Roma Decade and the NRIS were deemed ‘soft governance’ having greater flexibility and lacking the force of hard law (Rostas and Ryder 2012). From several of my interviews it was evident that both the programmes, which enshrined noble ideals and intended to address Roma issues in a graduated way, had lost their sheen and this had led to disillusionment among the very people (e.g. Jaroka) who were instrumental in drafting them as well as the NGOs and activists who were supposed to carry them forward.

Acton, Ryder and Rostas (2013) called for “a government-guided consultative setting where all actors and stakeholders had a voice and better coordination”. This was found not to be the case, as neither the NGOs nor the Roma community had been encouraged to actively participate in these programmes. When van Baar (2011) talked about ‘institutional developmentalism’ to denote the process of EU governmentality, he suggested that it presupposed sufficient infrastructures laid out on the ground to encourage the smooth flow of policies/projects emanating from the Framework. This was also not the case, otherwise the lack of proper redressal on the part of the state towards its own Roma citizens could have been detected by European agencies and the state subjected to rigorous scrutiny. That had not happened.

Human rights violations had been perpetrated on the Roma on a regular basis despite the structures, rules and regulations to address such violations (Gheorghe and Gergő 2013). As van Baar (2017) pointed out, “human rights (violations) have been a continuous discourse with the Roma and conditioned their living as much as the biopolitical atmosphere in which they have been ghettoised”.

Cahn (2002) pointed out that the Roma problem had been hitherto treated as a ‘societal issue’ whereas it was one of poverty and needed determined application of policies to eradicate poverty and attendant social deprivation. The ‘culture of poverty’ could be addressed fruitfully with awareness, entitlement and the guidance of state and civil society actors in Hungary’

The medical practitioner in the interview talked of ‘positive discrimination’ where certain categories of Roma did get educational grants but in a sporadic way without any long term policy-thinking. This engendered discrimination even amongst the Roma and led to further disparities in the Roma society. Added to this could be Rovid’s assessment that social inclusion could lead to ‘ethnicisation’ of social problems, thus undermining inter-ethnic solidarity and consequent loss of identity.

The Roma Minority self-government, ‘imposed’ on the Roma, has been severely critiqued despite some theorists (Gabrin 2007) calling it a model promising “supplementary non-territorial cultural autonomy”. This at best could be self-defeating where protection of identity and human rights were of as much concern for the Roma as preservation of cultural autonomy which the RMSGs were ostensibly geared towards.

Rosenfield (n.d, but probably 2010) described three major obstacles to Roma equality, namely, insufficient data, absence of a Roma civil rights movement, and continuous prejudices against the Roma. Lack of proper data could have been a semi-deliberate ploy employed by the state to keep everything pertaining to the Roma process under wraps and therefore under control. Furthermore, the weakness of the civil rights movement coupled with regular violations of human rights facilitated the growth of racism and scapegoating.

The NRC official (10) had sounded ominous in his interview when he talked about the fear of a Black Panther type protest movement among the Roma, though practically speaking such movements need to gather critical mass before growing into mass movements so as to

frighten the establishment. Interestingly in India a similar movement developed during the early part of the 1970s among the Dalit youth called the 'Dalit Panther' though it could not develop critical mass in the face of state suppression and lack of leadership within the Dalit ranks. In this context Gheorghe's mention (Gheorghe and Gergő 2013 ) of the Roma elite gradually finding their feet in the bureaucracy (he quoted his own example) made some sense though still seemed far off in picking up leadership of a Roma movement. Uzunova's (2010) claim that the failure of a rights-based approach was due to the lack of a unified Roma identity, as seen above, seemed more plausible in the context of Roma dispersal (counter-movement) leading to a fractured Roma personality. The difficulty in evolving a unified Roma leadership could be the main cause for their lack of political representation.

Delcour and Hustinx (2015) made the point that non-respect of human rights as part of a minority rights critique had been misunderstood giving scope for mal-governance and violation. The fact is such violations had been happening regularly and the Roma's self-esteem had been steadily eroding, regressing into an internalized world where it could become increasingly difficult on their part to interact with the mainstream society.

Acton and Ryder (2015b) quoted Gheorghe emphasising the social and cultural capital of the Roma without which they would tend to be trapped in an informal economy. Hence Gheorghe's (with Rostas, 2015) emphasis on re-formation of economic capital bore salience in examining the tools of economic empowerment. This corresponded with the indications from the field surveys as well as interviews that the Roma were deprived of participating in their own empowerment process, consequently they remained alien or largely indifferent to the outcomes.

The role of NGOs had been critiqued severely in my interviews, the main contention being their 'malicious' use of the Roma card to seek gains. It was more for their self-gratification and continued existence as a Roma-related activist body than a genuine sense of empathy for the Roma. Rather a sense of 'tokenism', which Gheorghe referred to characterised their behaviour (Gheorghe and Gergő 2013). .

Anti-Gypsyism had largely segregated and ghettoised the Roma leading to their confinement in isolated spaces exacerbating 'multiple exclusion'. With the inadequacies of Roma leadership and political representation their cause was marginalised as state-driven rhetoric undermined any concrete action to improve the lot of this community. Marushiakova and



Popov's (2017) discussion of the 'expressions of a new social contract' suggested the efficacy and genuine commitment of the Roma Minority self-governments as a stakeholder in grassroots building, if such a formation could at all develop and in which the Roma could participate.

Vermeersch (2012b) analysed the potential of increasing politicisation of the Roma through their joining mainstream parties and attempting to establish representative international Roma organisations. He cited examples of both of these though Roma political leaders like Jaroka and the former MP (6) in their interviews had expressed a sense of disquiet with the Roma agenda not moving satisfactorily at the national level and apathy setting in even among European institutions as political space for the Roma kept shrinking. The EU's diminishing role and interest along with diminution of funds meant for Roma alleviation could be responsible for such ennui.

Here Levitas' (1998) concepts of MUD, SID and RED help. In fact, the Social Integration Discourse (SID) comprising the components of employment and skill development as crucial for social integration found echo in my interview with Orban. Ledwith and Springett's (2010) definition of community development as "collective action for social change" was apt for the Roma. Many of my interviewees suggested that the Roma should be involved in a bottom-up mode of development, though facts on the ground inhered a top-down approach. The idea was that with better education the Roma would develop more self-esteem and self-reliance and with gradual acquisition of skills, they could have more purchasing power and be able to take charge of their own lives without the patronage of bodies like RMSG except for nominal state and NGO support. Escobar's (1995) theory of development in suggesting a co-relation between development and desegregation and empowerment fitted well in this perspective. Bourdieu (1991)'s theory on social and cultural capital built the narratives of development further, this could be manifested when the Roma were left to control their destinies with acquired degrees of empowerment and with the help of their own elites, leadership and political representation.

It would be useful by way of comparison to cite Karunanithi's (2013) field study on SHGs in a cluster of villages in southern India inhabited by marginalized women in studying the tools of empowerment at the grassroots level. In this context Sen's 'capability theory' was deemed

to be extremely relevant in raising the bar for Roma communities, both in reinforcing their capital base as well negotiating power in the society.

The UNDP report, “Avoiding the Dependency Trap” (2012), surveying select development indices in five CEE countries was critiqued by Acton (2014) on the ground that the survey had not been conducted properly, i.e. without proper identification of the indices or selection of the respondents on which the survey was based. One of the recommendations of the report was that social benefits should be linked to labour force participation. The public works programme (PWP), which was instituted around the same time as the report (1998), could have approximated to this recommendation though the programme was not without flaws in implementation and skill building. .

That the Roma were a European minority over and above their national identities seemed an indisputable assumption for most interviewees. The EU had drawn up the Roma Framework and was dispensing millions of Euros for its implementation: that itself attested to the fact that the Roma were deemed a EU population. Many of my interviewees felt that the Roma development process should not fall prey to any binary position, i.e. for either EU or national governments to implement it, rather there should be a smooth flow of hierarchical dispensation of rules and their smoother execution. The EC’s ‘Roma Platform’ and the EU Charter, besides several other engagements for the Roma at the regional level, could still be useful as the umbrella under which member states could work. But with lack of proper monitoring on EU’s part, national governments could tend to avoid taking their responsibility seriously except when Roma policies came up for periodic review (MacGarry 2014)..

Corruption is a universally acknowledged anti-development phenomenon. In Hungary, a relatively small country with an insulated Roma community, an in-house corruption scam could threaten to seriously endanger Roma interests. The scandal discussed in the interviews episode tended to destroy the faith of the ordinary Roma in the very institution (NRC) which supposedly represented them. It was therefore premature to think of a “Social Europe” as theorised by Acton and Ryder (2013), a vision of society based on equality and fair distribution of wealth among other things

Piece-meal and at best incremental development could be however possible given the slow growth of factors which could give momentum to the development process. As suggested by Jaroka (2012) in her doctoral study of Roma practices in a relatively affluent Roma habitat in

Budapest,, it should be possible to introduce such tools in a graduated manner. The government terming Roma integration as a “strategic responsibility” for the state, as the former Minister of Roma affairs (2) had mentioned in the government note, devolved a huge responsibility. If the state was serious in working towards Roma integration and empowerment, that by itself could mean a ‘paradigm change’ in re-shaping public policy. If member states worked within the consultative mechanism of EUOMC, that would mean a huge leap forward.

The other side of the picture looked dismal. The situation in Europe being more and more constricted on account of the immigrant/refugee crisis, what merits did the Roma have for the government to plan for their development except being lumped along with all other socio-economically deprived groups? In a climate of receding civil society activism and growing radical nationalism, how long could they wait to get the state’s support? Could they at all get a sympathetic treatment by the state? If not what were the alternatives? Mass emigration to other countries, although it had improved the position of thousands of Roma and generated remittances which assisted the economies of the countries of origin, was being resisted by almost all the destination countries. In fact, countries like France and Italy that had deported Roma groups *en masse* in recent history stand as sordid testimonies. Then what was the guarantee that the Roma would receive better treatment at the hands of other governments than their present one? Furthermore, the growing trend of Euro-scepticism would tend to obliterate all sympathies arising from sections of civil society, leaving the Roma to fend for themselves. Under the circumstances the only viable option for them is to stay on wherever they were, get educated and skilled, form their elites and leadership, develop political representation and fight for their rights.

### **7.17 Conclusion from hypotheses drawn and paradigm building:**

I conclude this chapter summarising the key points made in the interviews pertaining to Roma integration and empowerment. These can be discussed further in the conclusion of this study to generate policy options and form part of public policy with the objective of securing a just and equitable Roma living. These could be as follows:

- The Roma issue has to be addressed holistically, it is not to be seen as a societal or poverty issue alone, but a problem accrued over a historical injustice committed upon generations of Roma down the centuries for various interlacing reasons. Action has

instead suggested the following: “ Problems faced by Roma have to be addressed in a complex, nuanced way responding to the different situation in particular places”.

- There has to be proper monitoring and scrutiny of EU funds spent for the purpose of Roma integration and empowerment, even beyond the period of the NRIS.  
Availability of funds for empowerment of Roma has to be continuous until such time as they stand to be sufficiently empowered and integrated, assuming that the funds position of EU for the NRIS would stand at an even keel. That seems unfeasible.
- The civil society groups engaged in the Roma issue need to be incorporated into policy planning processes and actions. This is however better said than done as the sole task behind using the civil society bodies would rest squarely with the host governments. In a climate of increasing radicalisation and extreme nationalism, these groups would hardly be assigned any role to play.
- Intermediate bodies need to have Roma represented in their management and policy planning, like the RMSGs, as a *sine qua non* of democratic governance.
- The Roma need to be provided skill development training along with education to both males and females in order to make them employable even in old age, given the overall ageing factor.
- There has to be formation of Roma elites, leadership and political representation on a national level, as cogently argued years ago by Mirga and Gheorghe (2001). Inherent diversities within the Roma population in that sense could be leveraged for a nation-wide formation of Roma leadership groups.
- The state should make all efforts at its disposal to address racism and scapegoating against the Roma. Here, given that human rights of the minority groups, and particularly of the Roma, have not been well respected in the past, there could be better, enforceable supervision and scrutiny of EU Human Rights mechanisms to enforce respect for human rights of Roma as EU citizens.

Above all, the state should initiate a policy of ‘affirmative action’ for all minority groups, not for the Roma alone, if it was not to be seen as partisan in dealing with the Roma minority alone.. Here it is pertinent to draw lessons from India’s ‘affirmative action’ experience and a possible sharing of experiences between India and Hungary within the EU framework.

It is obvious that while the Roma should be encouraged to stand on their own feet as autonomously as possible, the state should not abjure its responsibility either towards its

Roma citizenry even though the latter is treated as an ethnic minority. The Roma marginalization issue is a historical aberration, and has to be addressed in the greater cause of societal balance and development. For that, while the state needs to show its empathy, commitment and political will for comprehensive empowerment and inclusion of the Roma, the latter in turn need to develop their own means of empowerment and try to get over their dependence on state largesse as much as possible

## **CHAPTER EIGHT**

### **Marginalized Communities in India: Defining Context and Comparing Paradigms**

#### **8.1 Introduction:**

This chapter gives the context to the field work described in the next chapter on marginalized communities in four districts in the province of Odisha. Marginalized communities in Hungary (Central Europe) and India have been compared with regard to empowerment processes bearing in mind common cultural elements which relate in part to their common ethnic origins. As noted in chapter one the Roma in Hungary are believed to have migrated to Anatolia around the 11<sup>th</sup> from the north western parts of India. In Chapter One the links of the Roma communities to India provided the first factor to define their ethnic connection with India. This has, however, not been treated as a causal factor in attempting a comparative study between these marginalized communities, as I have dealt with the contemporary scenario in both contexts. Rather the central ground and rationale for comparative analysis is the fact that both groups are highly marginalised and persecuted minorities. My study deals with the marginalisation of present-day Roma and Dalits, and finding ways of empowering the former, enabling their inclusion, inter alia, with means/tools observed in the Indian context and examining the possibility of their application in the Hungarian context. This requires contextualising the shared practices of the Dalit communities in order to extrapolate the findings for subsequent broad-based discussions and hypotheses-building. This, by no way, should give the impression that the Indian process of lessening marginalization is so infinitely better as to be emulated in entirety. Rather what is discussed is to bring out the salient features of this process and see which ones could apply to the Roma situation, albeit with some degree of contextualization.

For the purpose of this research, Dalits of India, as indicated in the beginning of this study, have been taken to mean both the Scheduled Caste groups (herein referred to as SCs) and Scheduled Tribe groups (herein referred to as STs) as both these groups are given equal

weightage under the ‘affirmative action’ provisions of the Indian Constitution for the purpose of dispensing a common social justice system, despite differences in their socio-cultural contexts. These mainly concern reservations in educational institutions, securing jobs and promotions besides several other financial benefits (Teltumbde 2018). The modality adopted for this is “affirmative action” which “consists of anti-discrimination measures intended to provide access to preferred positions in a society for members of groups that would otherwise be excluded or under-represented” That said, many of the factors which have caused upward mobility amongst such groups could possibly be transposed with some adaptation into the Roma context.

## **8.2 The Champions of affirmative action and inclusion measures: Gandhi, Ambedkar and Sen**

Chapter Four discussed in detail the lives, works and philosophies of Gandhi, Ambedkar and Sen (in addition to Spivak) as some of the major votaries of Dalit inclusion. Though Ambedkar has been rightly called the ‘Father of Affirmative Action’, it was Gandhi as his contemporary and Sen as a post- Ambedkar theorist who championed the cause of affirmative action and inclusion measures, albeit, in different contexts. A rationale for such engagements has been primarily to bring up the ‘depressed’ classes to the level of the mainstream population by introducing a series of palliative measures. This has been justified on the ground that these classes required such pull-up measures badly when the nascent economy was weak and dominated by a ruling oligarchy which cartelised the ruling class with the dominant corporate groups. Together these groups formed the ruling elite, alleged by critics to be bounded by crony capitalism, and oppressed the marginalized classes over generations condemning them to a life of perpetual inequity, poverty and untouchability (Jodhka 2012, Deliege 2001)

It may also be noted that such measures were incorporated in the Constitution soon after India’s independence after lengthy debates in the Constituent Assembly (Shakder in Chopade (ed) 2017: 72) with no dissension when a consensual view was forged cutting across all groups in the 389-member Assembly<sup>14</sup> for the need of such measures. This was, at that time, thought to be among the most progressive and expeditious measures, given that the weak

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<sup>14</sup> This was later revised to 299 when the Constituent Assembly met again on 31 December 1947, with members of the Muslim League excluded following the creation of India and the carving out of the new state of Pakistan as two independent countries

economic base was largely usurped by the dominant class who had been antagonistic towards the marginalized communities though they the latter were still retained within the Hindu fold. The Gandhi-Ambedkar debate centering around this duality has been discussed in detail in Chapter Four. Suffice therefore to understand the dynamics of the situation when perceived through two very important leaders of the national movement who had agitated all their lives for the Dalit cause. It has been argued that the battle of emancipation is still ongoing despite greater education, social advance and political mobilization of the Dalits in contemporary India (Guha 2018).

Appearing much after the two stalwarts who fought for independence in their own ways, Sen infused the idea of social responsibility to be carried out by the state in terms of generating indices for social development of the ‘lowest common denominator’, the common man (Sen 1999). Sen’s pessimism with the political system stemmed out of his observations of the society where he observed the neglect and isolation by the higher castes of the lower, accentuated with his seminal study of the Bengal famine of the 1940s. The famine decimated nearly 3 million people (the largest single man-made ‘natural’ disaster of all times) were reported to have perished largely caused by British war policies (Mukerjee 2010). Though the imperial government of Great Britain had adopted such policies, these could form the ‘governing narrative’ of any ruling power, as Sen contended, so long as there were a large mass of people who depended on the state for their survival. This was largely to form Sen’s world view which led to his developing a series of ‘social welfare’ theories. according to which accumulation of social capital would usher in the semblance of a ‘welfare state’ in a feudal-capitalistic society through (Sen 2017). These measures of inclusion could then be the assertion of the human being as a social unit to herself, and who needed to be given requisite incentives to progress and integrate into the larger society.

Affirmative action measures devised specifically for the marginalized communities were to be periodically reviewed for its efficaciousness, as expressly stated by Ambedkar, who chaired the Constituent Assembly (Gupta 2016). The ritual of a 10-year review is being carried out with periodic amendments of the Constitution to which all political parties hold consensus without undertaking a full-length critical review to assess the policy’s usefulness. The point is not to upset the status quo for fear of releasing a genie whose impact cannot be contained. In other words, the issue has turned out to be a toxic mix of political opportunism and an overall lack of connectivity with the marginalized communities (Gupta 2017).



Consequently some of the prejudices against these classes like untouchability may have been somewhat addressed with several social movements inspired by Ambedkar having taken place throughout the country (Zelliot 2013, Jaffrelot 2005) though the pernicious social phenomenon is still present in sporadic parts of the country and divisive feelings around it periodically aroused for political/electoral gains. This therefore calls for a proper review of the affirmative action agenda of the government, at least to renew the mandate which had been given to the marginalized communities to combat social evils (Ray 2016).

### **8.3 Broadening the scope of affirmative action: the beginning of appeasement politics:**

With successive coalition governments getting elected since the end of the 1970s, the period has been characterised by political instability giving way to various middle level caste/class groups bargaining for their rights in the name of votes. This volatility has been utilised more for political purposes by various parties working at cross purposes than with a genuine sense of awarding social justice to deprived groups, though the final result was implementation of a long overlooked report on assessment of the Other Backward Classes (OBCs), also known as the Second Backward Classes Commission set up by the Janata Party government in 1979 led by a parliamentarian, B.P. Mandal.

The Mandal Commission report contains important implications for the affirmative action programme. The Commission was mandated to “identify the socially or educationally backward classes of India, and used 11 social, economic and educational indicators to determine backwardness. It upheld the ‘affirmative action’ practice by recommending that members of the Other Backward Classes (OBCs) be granted up to 27% reservation in entry to jobs and educational institutions (the original recommendation of 52% was brought down to this figure) since the Supreme Court had earlier ruled that no state could go beyond 50% reservations for all the backward classes/castes, including the Dalits (SCs and STs) having secured 22.5% reservation (Desai 2017). While the states in the south, particularly Tamil Nadu, had large Dalit and backward class populations, they welcomed the report but continued to flout the Supreme Court directive by adding more reservation to backward classes thorough state laws. However this never got the sanction of the highest court of the land. It was in northern India that the most violent anti-Mandal riots were seen. The riots were perpetrated by students of upper castes in protest against the Mandal Commission. On September 19, 1990 Rajiv Goswami, student of a Delhi college, attempted to immolate

himself and was badly burnt but survived (Guha 2007). Following that there were scores of cases of immolation resulting in 62 deaths. The Mandal Commission's recommendations, was viewed as an attempt to construct an elaborate social engineering process in the name of extending affirmative action to other groups situated above the marginalized communities as originally identified in Article 340 in the constitution.

The reverberations of the anti-Mandal agitation are felt even today. With several states convulsed with riots and mass movements demanding more rights and quota (beyond what the Supreme Court had allocated), the battle for securing social and economic rights for other relatively affluent backward classes, and ones with more numbers and political clout in their respective states, the Jats in Haryana, the Marathas in Gujarat, the Patels in Gujarat, the Gujjars and Rajputs in Rajasthan and the Yadavs in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, to name a few, have turned the original affirmative action policy on its head (Bhattacharya, 2017). Political parties, both ruling as well as opposition, have tended to bend backwards to accommodate the demands of these pressure groups for fear of losing their share of votes which could make or mar their electoral prospects. This therefore has turned to be a political tool in the hands of such groups and for the political parties as a tool of appeasement, instead of a tool of economic and social empowerment as it had been originally intended. Today we have other splinter marginalized groups such as Extreme Backward Classes (EBCs) and Most Backward Classes (MBCs) who claim to be below the OBCs in terms of income and social position and vie for a share in the 'reservation pie'. If electoral democracy finally boils down to the last voter, then political groups will do their best to appease her and in the process it becomes nothing but an exaggerated political warfare at election time.

As Bhagat (2015) says, "Imagine an India where your caste was irrelevant, only your talent mattered, and if you were born to a poor family, you would get help to develop your talent. That seems like a much fairer India than now, where a list of castes gets reservation, and so-called upper castes kill themselves to fight for the leftover seats. Some argue that reservation is not only for economic uplift but also to increase the social status of caste. But a better solution would be to eliminate the caste system...Enough has changed and the time has come to recast reservations. Modern technology allows us to do so. If we don't do it, the youth from who we steal opportunities in the name of fairness won't like it. You don't create fairness by doing something unfair".

In this comparative study such practices need to be considered as aberrations and may not find a parallel in the Hungarian context. This is rather more aligned to the Indian context given the pulls and pressures of the tremendous diversities of India. That should however not detract us from the study of economic tools for multi-faceted empowerment. It is well known that with the lack of empowerment, marginalized communities have suffered historical injustices and this needs to be set right. What is important to know is that such movements and the consequent polarization of the caste-based society coupled with continuing marginalization, atrocities, segregation and the like have brought in a new dynamism among the Dalits resulting in Dalit movements in several parts of India over different periods of time (Omvedt 2011). However the current political movement seems to have been coupled with the demand for economic parity along with political participation, a recent phenomenon which threatens to upset the existing caste balance among the Dalits and the higher castes on one hand while reaffirming and regrouping the Dalits on the other. In fact, new factors are emerging quite visibly amongst the Dalit communities. One, an awareness of their strength following years of affirmative action policies of which the Dalit elite have taken advantage and now providing leadership to the Dalit movement selectively, which some commentators have compared to the Rosa Parks movement in USA (Thekaekara 2016 a and b), and two, continuing atrocities on the Dalits manifested in rapes, assaults, house burnings, lynchings and the like<sup>15</sup> may have solidified the resolve of the Dalits to regroup and take remedial action by themselves.

Besides, the legal and institutional frameworks such as National Commission for Scheduled Castes (Article 338) and for Scheduled Tribes (Article 338A), Scheduled Castes and Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989 and National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) have taken the lead and are providing safeguards against such practices though it is far from fool-proof. There is often a clash of interests between the Central and provincial institutions because these incidents happen in the provinces (or states in India) and law and order squarely falls within the state jurisdiction under the federal distribution of powers. Besides, the Indian police force has been expanding in power, authority and jurisdiction and many cases of police atrocities on the backward classes, primarily SCs and STs, backed by the state apparatus, hardly come to the limelight or are brutally suppressed. The SC and ST

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<sup>15</sup> A total number of 40,801 cases of atrocities against Dalits were registered in 2016 as against 38,670 in 2015, out of which rapes alone amounted to 2541 in 2016, as per statistics recorded by the National Crime Records Bureau, quoted in The Wire online portal, 01 January 2017

(Prevention of Atrocities) Act, for example, is supposed to protect the Dalits against cow vigilantism (known as ‘lynching’ in popular parlance), honour killings, social boycott and caste clashes between the dominant OBCs and the Dalits. But neither of these provisions is foolproof, in fact there are several instances of all these crimes happening at regular intervals and with impunity right under the ‘protection’ of the police and local officials. In most cases the culprits go scot-free. Under the circumstances the National Commissions for SCs and STs become a helpless bystander. Thus despite all these safeguards, the Dalits do not get the necessary legal and constitutional protection as they are supposed to, and it is basically left to them to raise their voice through mass movements which occasionally get media space and political attention. As seen in recent times, Dalit power has continued to regroup and derived its strength from numbers during elections when political parties and candidates come soliciting for their votes. The above depiction may sound contradictory but both the phenomena are true and happening at the same time

It is interesting to study the state elections in Gujarat in 2017 where the Dalits, nearly 7% of the state population, turned out to be a strong opposition force commanding attention and clout to themselves. This denoted to a great extent the degree of political empowerment not only among the Dalits of Gujarat but also India on the whole. The background to this was the brutal assault on four Dalit youths near Una for skinning a dead cow’s carcass on 11 July 2016 which stirred a pan-India Dalit uprising supported even by the Muslims (Langa 2016). This gathered force with the Patels (Patidars representing the rural dominant caste group) and Thakurs (OBCs) (Gupta 2017). Thus on the eve of the Gujarat state elections on December 09, 2017 the same Dalits under the leadership of Jignesh Mewani fought against the ruling BJP of PM Modi, a fight for Dalit rights which seemed to have spread far and wide (Gupta 2017). Mewani won and became a member of Parliament.

The above example of Dalit mobilization shows that the Dalits are now a factor to be reckoned in the larger political scenario. In his opinion piece, ‘The New Dalit Challenge’ (Mehta 2018) has analysed the emerging future of such Dalit movements and observed that they could spread into nation-wide movements. This could have a profound impact on the social, economic and political dynamics of India. With over 20% of the national population for SCs alone and with another similar percentage share of the STs, despite their causes being diverse their coming together as one social and constitutional category, makes them an indispensable political force. However, socially they are still ostracised in large parts of the

society. In spite of getting free education and scholarships and securing decent jobs in the government by virtue of the 'reservation policy', they stand to be neglected and isolated in the social domain. The government by undertaking a slew of measures for the Below Poverty Line (BPL) group of which SCs/STs comprise a large part has virtually identified them as a social group connoting backwardness and poverty. The stigma of poverty in either case continues to haunt them. Economically most of the measures undertaken by the governments at the state and centre levels intend to raise their livelihood levels and assure them decent incomes. Though this has been happening to some extent, there is large scale defrauding and defalcation of government funds where intermediaries and middle level officials are taking full advantage of 'supporting' the Dalits with such measures. This would be particularly evident when we discuss the findings from the field visits which I undertook in the state of Odisha..

Politically as noted above, the Dalits have come a long way since independence and consequent 'republicanisation' of India. In a recent article G Sampath (2018) asserts that releasing prominent Dalit leader Chandrasekhar Azad after more than 15 months of incarceration invoking the draconian National Security Act, by the Hindu right government in Uttar Pradesh has given a huge impetus to a nation-wide pan-Dalit movement (Azad, founder of the Bhim party, a Dalit protest movement, was again arrested on another charge and is currently lodged in a Delhi jail). The author's contention, along with recent events portrayed in the media, belabours this contention and seems almost like a moment of epiphany for Dalit power. Azad has recently launched the 'Bhim party' (inspired by Ambedkar, his first names being Bhim Rao) which has its stated goal to fight the injustices against the Dalits and get them justice through political means. Unlike the 'Dalit Panthers' about which reference was made earlier, they would like to stay within the confines of constitutionalism, fight elections, mobilise the Dalits and secure their representation. Would the Dalits get their long awaited due as Ambedkar had prophesied long ago (Ambedkar 1936) at the cost of a complete overhaul of the caste-bound Hindu society, breaking down its socio-economic contours irrevocably? More such studies currently being done and more scholars even from high caste background speaking increasingly in their favour add to the increasing valorisation of Dalit empowerment (Pai 2013, Teltumbde 2018), though such questions seem premature at this stage .

#### **8.4 Socio-economic tools of empowerment under the Modi government:**

Narendra Modi rose to the apex of power first as the Chief Minister of the western Indian state of Gujarat for three successive terms, surviving the bloody riots of February-March 2002 which saw over 2000 lives lost, the majority of them Muslims. This blot, though nullified with an elaborate witch hunt and propaganda exercise, had continued to haunt him even after he became the Prime Minister (Marino 2014, Ayyub 2016).

As Chief Minister, Modi had developed his own model of development, popularly known as the 'Gujarat model'. The model involved all-round development in the state with particular emphasis on social and physical infrastructure and quality of life. Modi promoted the model during his trips to Japan, China and other Asian countries winning accolades and investments into the state. Gujarat became one of the most economically developed states of India under Modi's remit. With such success on his plate, Modi, on becoming the Prime Minister, tried to transpose the same model of economic development with the motto, '*sabka saath, sabka vikas*' (inclusive growth and prosperity for all).on a national scale.

Modi during his first term in office presented an inclusive image of himself, appealing to all minority groups while distancing himself slightly from his RSS background, and orthodox Hinduism and appealing to secularists as a leader who could bring development to the country on all fronts.. In the 2014 general election, Modi secured an absolute majority (the first in 30 years) for his party, the BJP, becoming the Prime Minister in May, 2014. Hindus across the spectrum including the lower castes, and particularly the youth, voted overwhelmingly for him. The failure of the previous government in to tackle corruption was also a factor in the BJP's success.

Post-May 2014, Modi projected himself as the saviour of the nation when the country needed him most. In this exercise he successfully curbed the power and influence of the opposition and got sections of the media and civil society on his side. His trenchant views on foreign funding for civil society groups and religious conversions, while showing sympathy for aggrieved Muslim women and bringing about a series of socio-economic reforms largely aimed at the deprived sections, maximised his populist stances and support from large sections of the society, though his commitment in this regard had been suspect and denounced by left liberals in the country.

It is important to note that some of the welfare measures undertaken by the Modi government continue from the earlier Manmohan Singh government, measures such as the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MNREGA), Micro Units Development and Refinance Agency (MUDRA) scheme, Jan Dhan Yojana Bank Account (People's Wealth Plan Bank Account), Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Awas Yojana (PM's National Housing Scheme), Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PM's Village Road Development Scheme), National Food Security Act (NFSA) and above all the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI, popularly known as the Aadhar Card scheme). Others like 'Make In India', 'Digital India' and 'Skilling India' bear the typical Modi stamp. Many of these schemes are aimed at the economic empowerment of the Dalits despite the party's caste affiliation for the urban Hindu middle class and corporates. Critics have suggested that 'crony capitalism' in the Modi regime has continued though has been moderated with image building exercises and support of the Indian diaspora who have helped to some extent in lobbying with foreign governments and securing foreign investments into India, projecting him as a leader seeking to link economic development at home with India's prestige and image abroad (Ganguly, Chauthaiwale and Sinha 2016).

It is important to note that many of the government's policy measures are in the areas of rural housing, generation of better income and savings in banks, universalisation of primary education and public health, thus boosting quality of life. Furthermore a fixed income for 100 days in the year to each adult member of the family in the low income bracket has been guaranteed under the MNREGA scheme (this scheme has also continued from the Man Mohan Singh government) while several incentives for self-entrepreneurship and skilling have been taken up among the rural poor to boost innovation and enterprise.

The welfare measures for those on low income, or in marginalized communities have been undermined by some rash financial policy experiments such as the demonetisation of high currency notes in circulation in 2016, and a hastily and only partially implemented scheme of introducing a standardised Goods & Services Tax (GST) in 2017, though government apologists continue to defend these (Gurumurthy 2017).

Though Modi's slogan of 'Make in India' was geared towards increasing domestic production for exports and bringing in Foreign Direct Investments (FDIs) to spur growth, it can be argued that not much direct private sector capital investments for greenfield

infrastructure projects have come. Besides, with fluctuations in the global oil market, India, being an energy importing country, has been deeply impacted with constant rise in price of fuel, besides US sanctions on Iran which happened to be one of India's major oil importers. All this has brought a great deal of distress to the small and marginal farmer, small income generating people and marginalized communities. Though the poorer and marginalized sections were hit hard by the government's policies, this did not deter the Modi juggernaut in May 2019, this time with an even larger majority in the Lower House of the Parliament. However the new Modi government's performance on the economic front has been dismal with the economy passing through a very lean phase in all sectors on account of a number of factors (Ullek and Singh 2019).

### **8.5 Role of micro-finance and Self-Help Groups in boosting incomes of marginalized communities:**

Despite the downturn in the economy, the two most important and successful among the economic tools of institutionalising micro-financing and commissioning of Self-Help Groups (SHGs), have continued, particularly to boost the Medium, Small and Micro Enterprises (MSMEs) sector. Slightly late to arrive on the economic empowerment scene (Yunus 2001), micro-financing has become rampant in today's India with a cluster of rural banks, cooperative societies and other state agencies having institutionalised micro-finance in a big way. A notable micro-economic measure, it has in fact helped in boosting rural economic growth while complementing the macro-economic indicators and fuelling livelihoods of the rural poor (Faizi 2009). In this, the state has played a largely supporting role. Charging no interest or very little interest on the micro-finance extended for small businesses, this has come as a huge boost to rural incomes, and the rural poor have been consequently able to diversify their income baskets taking up a number of activities in the informal sector which alone contributes nearly 40-50% to the national GDP (Soz 2017). Several reasonably successful micro-finance schemes were observed during my field visits and they are described in the next chapter.

The SHGs too have been a largely successful enterprise. They have built community bonding and empowered rural women in creating and building their own group activities and taking full charge of them. Essentially aimed at gender empowerment in the rural sector, the scheme has virtually brought about a revolution by changing the lives of rural poor women (Tapan



2010). Karunanithi (2013, 2017), in his study of SHGs in a village cluster in the southern state of Tamil Nadu, has brought home this point. With the burden of agriculture getting worse and in the absence of safety nets for farmers, most of them being share croppers/lessees on others' farmland, and with large scale failure of crops, lack of increase in the Minimum Support Price (MSP) of farm products, low prices of state-purchased food grains from farmers, decline in prices in the markets, escalation in price of fertilisers, equipment and farm labour, danger of natural disasters, pests and diseases, there has been a spate of farmers' suicides in several states (Mahapatra 2017), and it has fallen on the women to run the families, raise the children and look for alternatives in life. The farmers' collective anger was witnessed recently when the ruling BJP lost in three agriculture dependent states, popularly known as the 'Hindi Belt' states and a traditional bastion of the ruling party. On the other hand, with schemes such as SHG and Jan Dhan Yojana (a savings account scheme which has generated high level of savings among the rural poor in rural and public sector banks), the Dalits have been largely empowered. With minimum wages and 'education for all' schemes, a broad section of the Dalits falling 'Below the Poverty Line' (BPL) category have stood to benefit. Besides, labour reforms, provision of subsidised housing and healthcare by the state, support for skills development, initial free cooking gas supply and subsidies for senior citizens, handicapped and widows, have raised the bar of empowerment further. A national universal health care scheme introduced in September 2018 has been touted as the most important progressive measure of the Modi government involving 600 million people in the first phase of implementation.

The Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs) have aided political decentralisation in the rural sector and assisted enfranchisement of rural women who have come to play an increasingly active role in the PRIs. This has complemented economic empowerment significantly. The process has been further supported by and benefitted political parties who have members or supporters, especially Dalits, elected into these bodies, thus functioning as both agents as well as beneficiaries of socio-political transformation of the rural masses (Mathur 2013). This obviously has come to play a decisive role in the rural leadership structures which in turn has supplemented leadership of mainstream parties by reorienting the agendas and interests in the rural sector. With nearly 60% of India's population living in rural areas, this has been no less than a social revolution.

Sociologists feel that such processes of transformation have empowered Dalit groups in generating social capital (Srinivas 2016), particularly through SHGs in the rural sector.. Findings from such studies have shown that with more induction of empowerment schemes the rural poor, including the Dalits, have gained respect, attention and social standing (Vivek 2013) though this has to be viewed with some degree of caution. The fact is that the negative impact of targeting or ‘nativism’ of marginalized communities, as in the Hungarian case, may not have happened in India. But the Dalits in India continue to suffer marginalization in the social sphere more than the economic, contrary to what has happened to the Roma in Hungary. Thus, for example, Dalits have continued to live in the same villages with the other caste groups (unlike in Hungary) since they are needed for their menial work, but continue to be ostracised and oppressed socially.

## **8.6 Conclusion**

The major points made in this chapter are to highlight the economic empowerment measures undertaken for the marginalized communities, on a macro level. This will enable, in the next chapter a critical evaluation of the systemic and contextual drawbacks of the Dalit communities through a case study of the state of Odisha, at a micro level. This gives the policy analysis of this thesis more heft in relating the measures of the central government to realities on the ground and evaluating the relative success and failure of such schemes in terms of bringing empowerment and inclusion to the marginalized communities. This could then be generalised on to a national level, and thereafter ways explored to see how they could be transposed into a foreign setting, viz, Hungary, which holds relatively similar characteristics on the ethnographic and economic levels.

The justification for taking Odisha as a site of research as comparable to Hungary in studying the plight of marginalized communities will be given at the beginning of the next chapter.. This will be further elaborated through reports of field visits, interviews and research notes. Thus the next chapter, being a critical examination of the various government schemes that are aimed at addressing inequalities, lays the foundation for a comparison, not just of Hungary with Odisha (with its proportion of various groups of Dalits in the population comparable to that of various groups of Roma in Hungary) but to identify the specificity of programmes in Odisha within the broader canvas of India.

The relevance and topicality of this chapter to Chapter Nine lie in drawing the contours of comparison of the broad parameters for empowerment and inclusion which could be further tested and verified on the ground, i.e. studying the macro-micro dimensions. The findings could then be amplified with field surveys and interviews and useful data collected in the process. Thus when we talk of education and skills development, the 100-day wage labour payment, the compulsory savings scheme for the poorer sections or the distribution of material and financial resources through the largely benevolent schemes of micro-financing and Self Help Groups, the various dimensions of economic empowerment could be discussed. All these schemes are meant to serve as examples in our analysis of the Roma communities and, analysing their relative success in the empowerment process of marginalized communities, seeing that such measures could be extrapolated from the India/Odisha context to Hungary and be used in the Hungarian context. The means of such usage, e.g. through the government and banking agencies, support structures of the state and use of advocacy and agency have also been drawn up to be additional, albeit important, tools and processes of empowerment which would go towards inclusion of the researched communities. Thus, they would be specifically relevant and here the role of the state/government in utilising such agencies would stand to be pivotal in the empowerment and integration process. This could serve as relevant markers, it is felt, in the context of the Roma in Hungary too.

An important point to be noted, that which adds value to this work is to understand how India as a federal polity works with two different governments governed by two different political parties in place, one at the centre and the other at the state, with both synchronising their political and economic behaviour, particularly when it comes to empowering the marginalized communities. In Hungary we do not see the phenomenon of centre-state federalism though the latter would serve to expand the scope of this study to understand diverse political societies in different geo-political contexts.

## **CHAPTER NINE**

### **The Odisha Case Study: Insights from the Field: Empowerment and Inclusion of the Marginalized**

#### **9.1 Introduction**

This chapter uses field visits conducted in 4 districts of Odisha, namely, Kandhamal, Koraput (interior and categorised as backward districts), Puri and Cuttack (coastal and forward districts). Given the vastness of India, it has seemed appropriate to take one state, comparable in size and in other ways, to Hungary, as a case study.

Odisha has been chosen not only because it happens to be my home state but because it has facilitated development of my ethnographic work a great deal. Thus it has been easy for me to conduct field studies and interviews with the leaders as well as members of the marginalized communities without any marked inhibitions on the latter's part. Besides senior functionaries and decision makers at the district level have been equally comfortable interacting with me and importantly, no intermediaries have been used.

Odisha also bears comparability with Hungary for its large dispersal of Dalit populations throughout the state. The demographic figures have been given below. This bears resemblance to the dispersal of Roma communities in various regions of Hungary. While mobility within the regions in Hungary was conducted with ease, in the case of Odisha approvals of district authorities had to be taken in advance to facilitate my field visits and interviews. That apart, both the Dalits and tribals in Odisha (divided into scheduled caste and scheduled tribe groups but analysed together as one category) as well as the Roma in Hungary were conspicuous by their ethno-sociological diversities, as also their economic divergences. This made my research both interesting as well as challenging.

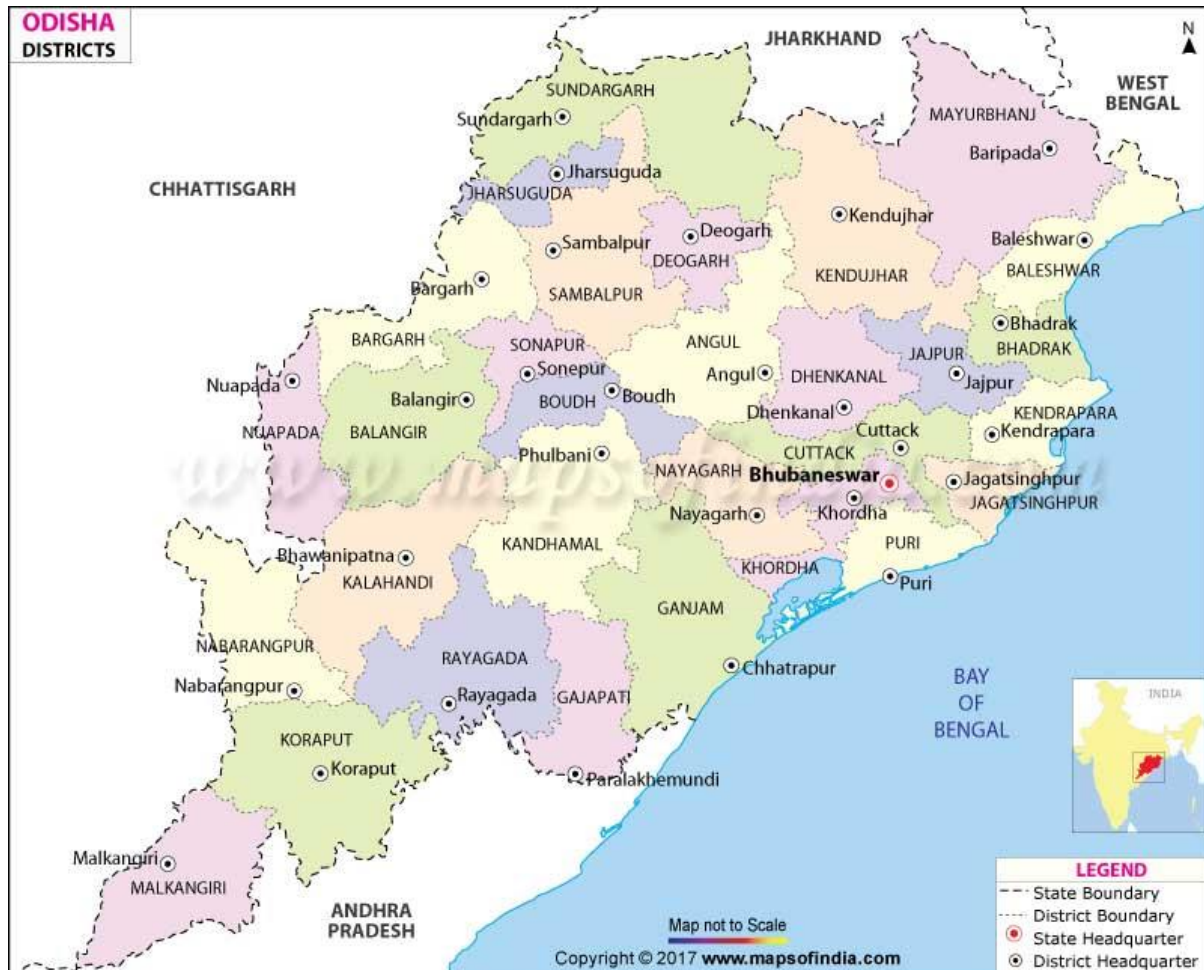
Map 1

India (States and Union Territories)



## Map 2

### Odisha with boundary and districts



Constituted of 30 districts (reorganised in 1992 from the previous 13 districts), the state is geographically located on the eastern frontier of the country, with the state of West Bengal on its north-east, Chattisgarh on the north, Madhya Pradesh on the west, Telengana on the south and the Bay of Bengal to its south-east, thus enjoying a long coastline of over 400 km with two functioning ports, Paradip and Dhamara. Incidentally the state was the first to be constituted on a linguistic basis in 1936, 11 years before India's independence (Ashokvardhan and Vachani 2011). It is also the first where princely states came into the fold of the Union of India.

Besides the state has one of the largest catchments of both SCs and STs with nearly 40% of the state population (SCs numbering 71,88,463 or 17% and STs with 95,90,756 or 22.8% according to the 2011 census), and the third largest repository of tribal population with 12 endangered tribal communities out of 62 such groups alone out of over 500 tribal communities dispersed all over India (Bose 2014), including 13 Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTG). There are 93 SC communities, and thus 44.7% of the state's area has been notified as Scheduled Area in accordance with Paragraph 4 of Schedule V of the constitution. Not only that, the state has turned out to be the most progressive in imparting education to children of marginalized communities. The state government has constructed hostels for over 6,00,000 children belonging to SC and ST communities. As the Chief Minister of the state, while inaugurating a 'Tribal Fair' ground with all modern facilities in the state capital said, "Odisha is the only state in the country which provides maximum reservation facilities to SC and ST students from its own resources...Currently there are 4,300 residential schools and 6,300 hostels functioning in the state for SC and ST students" (Express News Service 2018).

The biggest contradiction which was explored during the course of my study was that despite bountiful resources, minerals, forests, a luxuriant coastline and myriad sub-cultures, the state has still been considered as one of the most backward states of India (Mahapatra 2017). The state has been ruled by the state Biju Janata Dal (BJD) in opposition to the ruling party, BJP, in the centre since 2001 (except for a brief period when both came together in an expedient alliance which broke up even before they completed one term) and has performed relatively well, though has failed to get any position in the national ranking in any particular area, as per "India Today", the largest circulating English news magazine of India, in its issue dated December 04, 2017. Ironically the same journal a few issues back had done an exclusive survey of the state calling it 'the next breakout state' (Jha 2017). This could have been a paid issue.

## **9.2 Field Visits in 4 Districts**

The districts were carefully chosen and useful data from both observation and interviews collected and used for the surveys over a period of about 12 months. It has been argued that the conditions in Odisha are specific, the social processes there can be illuminatingly compared with those in other parts of India as well as Hungary. Although all these places

have distinct cultural identities, which constitute their distinct cultural capital, each can benefit from community and economic development leading to developmental transformation under the aegis of the state institutions and processes through various economic measures to facilitate their inherent strengths.

Like other states of India, SC and ST groups are dispersed over all the 30 districts of Odisha state in varying proportions though there are stark differences in their habitats and ways of living.. The state exhibits visible differences in socio-economic growth between the coastal and interior districts. As mentioned above, for the purpose of this study two coastal districts with a preponderance of SCs, namely Cuttack and Puri, and hinterland districts with a dominant tribal majority, namely Kandhamal and Koraput (out of 12 designated tribal districts of the state) have been taken as representative samples. These have been studied through observation, interviews and notes taken on the field conducted in different periods over one year, to see differences in seasons which affect ways of living and livelihood issues and the type of employment, viz. seasonal, agricultural, unskilled labour, petty business, etc. The variations in the living standards have also determined the difference in approach and quantum of measures undertaken by the state administration in both backward and forward districts on a relative scale.

The districts I visited as part of my field study have been ordered in chronological order below.

**Table No 5**

**Names of places visited, date/period of visits and methods of data collection**

<b>Names of places visited</b>	<b>Date/Period of visit</b>	<b>Methods of data collection</b>
Kandhamal Dist.	19-21 January 2016 (3 days)	Field survey, visit to villages/Block/School, semi-participant observation, case studies, brochure, semi-structured interviews
Koraput Dist.	7-10 March 2016 (4 days)	Field survey, visit to villages/Block/School/SHGs, semi-participant observation, group/individual interaction, research notes
Puri Dist.	6-9 June 2017 (4 days)	Field survey, visits to villagers/Block/



		projects/AWCs/SHGs, semi-structured/formal interviews
Cuttack Dist	12 July, 27-28 October 2017 (3 days)	Field survey, visit to villages/projects/AWCs/SHGs, Informal Interviews with senior officials

### 9.2.1 Kandhamal

As per the 2011 census the total population of the district amounted to 733110 out of which 71% belonged to STs and SCs alone and the rest to the general castes (both OBCs and high caste). Of this figure the STs comprised an overwhelming 53.64% while the SCs were 15.08% of the population. Given the preponderance of the STs, the entire district has been designated as a tribal district and thus amenable to special assistance through various agencies such as Integrated Tribal Development Agency (ITDA) and Orissa Tribal Empowerment and Livelihoods Programmes (OTELP).

The tribal communities have variants in the Kondhs who are further divided as Desia Kondhs, and live in towns or semi-urban areas while Kutia Kondhs normally reside in the deep forests. Furthermore Dongria Kondhs are also found in the districts of Kalahandi and Rayagada besides Kandhamal and inhabit in dense forests too. As U. C. Nayak, a longstanding public servant who worked in the district says:

*“They (Dongria Kondhs) live on fruits, roots and food grains, and by hunting. They also cultivate turmeric and other minor forest produce and cultivate different types of fruits. The Panas and Domas (both variant of SCs) live in every tribal village in close harmony with Kondhs. Panas are considered to be cunning people (belong to a low segment of the SCs). The activities of Christian missionaries have resulted in a considerable number of forest folk, especially Panas, getting converted to Christianity who exploit the hill tribes”*(2013: 33-34).

The district has seen a protracted community conflict between the dominant Panas and the uneducated Kondhs during the 1980s and 1990s, motivated due to the religious conversion of SCs (Panas in particular) to Christianity and aggressive designs of extreme-right Hindu elements to counter it. Consequently a Hindu missionary was brutally killed in August, 2008 following which as a riposte an Australian Catholic Missionary working in the area among the tribal communities was torched alive along with his family, wife and two young children

while sleeping in his van at night. Though the government intervened to bring peace and normalcy, the simmering conflict primarily on economic and ethnic grounds continues to fester from time to time (Nayak 2015).

I undertook a 3-day field trip to the district and focused on three principal aspects. First was The Forest Rights Act, 1953 and land ownership of the tribal communities. This also included tribal displacement for mineral exploitation where tribal communities had been subjected to historical injustice in the cause of development and industrialization while outside entities benefitted largely. The second aspect was to look at the residential mode of education. In this context I visited an *Ekalavya* model school project at Mahasinghi. My third, and perhaps the most important part of the study, was to look closely at livelihood interventions and study the best practices in the context of understanding the functioning of the Project Administrator, ITDA and Project Officer OTELP. Both the functionaries had been closely engaged in administering these schemes which are projected as most effective for tribal communities in integrating them into their habitats.

#### **9.2.1.1 Tribal displacement and rehabilitation**

A major reason for displacement of tribal communities from their ancestral land was the fear of “Maoists” (used by locals as a generic name for extreme-left forces), who had emerged as the principal threat to the state’s internal security and were found in at least 12 states of India including Odisha. The Maoists capitalised on the displacement and deprivation of the tribal people due to the state’s intervention in building big projects with scant regard for the environment which was the mainstay of the tribal communities (Vivek 2013). As guerrilla fighters the Maoists had been conducting a successful campaign of radicalising the local people, mostly poor tribals, to their cause.

During the course of my visit I witnessed a couple of villages which had been virtually razed to the ground by the Maoists when the local population refused to join their forces, while others who joined disappeared from their homes and the families had no idea where they were. The district was constantly engaged in fighting the Maoist forces which has resulted in accretion of armed and para-military forces. The general view of local officials was that the Maoists, originating from the rural peasantry and imbued with the ideology of Marxism-Leninism in the beginning, have no ideology now. Their only motive was seen to be to kill and spread fear. They particularly target security forces and people who side with them. They

urge people to join their forces, and if they don't, mercilessly kill them. Their modus operandi has been to hide in the dense forests since they are well acquainted with the terrain and conduct guerrilla warfare.

Of late a new term has crept into the domestic counter-terrorism lexicon, "Urban Naxalism". The Urban Naxalites are basically intellectuals, journalists and left-leaning activists who have brought about a new concept of 'urban warfare' with sophisticated means. The term gained currency with the arrest of social activists, who defended the Dalits allegedly involved in the Bhima Koregaon caste riots of January 2018, in August the same year. In June the previous year the police in the same state (Maharashtra) had arrested five other activists claimed to have close contacts with the Naxals and allegedly involved in a public meeting right before the Bhima Koregaon riots, implicating all the five accused in hatching a plot to assassinate the Prime Minister of India! (Sahoo 2018). The arrests of August 2018, carried out under the charge of abetting acts of terror under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) 2018, was severely critiqued in the media and public space even spawning a tweeter hashtag, 'MeTooUrbanNaxal'. Agnihotri (2018) talks of "the Fourth Generation Warfare", a concept advocated by William Lind, where Urban Naxals "engage in a strategy to make a direct attack on the enemy's (in this case, the Indian State) culture, including genocidal acts against civilians and wage a highly sophisticated psychological and cultural warfare, especially through media manipulation. ...an invisible Naxal-intelligentsia-media-academia nexus works as strategic fortification with the ultimate aim of taking over the Indian State to achieve Maoist rule" (p 131). However this sounds more like a vindication for coming down heavily on dissenters by branding anti-nationals as 'urban Naxals'. Critics feel that this only rationalises a police-state construct where extra-judicial killings are carried out with impunity against minority groups including Dalits and tribals (Mander 2018: 115).

An elite interviewee had raised the spectre of the Roma in Hungary turning violent and forming a mass movement, and in that context referred to the Black Panther movement in USA (Chapter Seven). The "Maoist" movement or its modern-day version, the urban Naxal movement, is rather different to the Black Panthers either, though it was also represented by the state as a violent off-shoot of the mass US Civil Rights movement. Although a violent Romani radical movement seems unlikely at the moment, Europe should maybe take note that the Indian example shows that violent resistance movements to perceived injustice, once started, is hard to eradicate.

Against this background the role of the government in rehabilitating displaced tribal families on account of Maoist incursion was widely praised. In fact, I attended a tribal gathering convened by the district officials and had the chance to personally interview few of the tribal leaders congregated there as to what role the government had played in their rehabilitation. There was unanimous approbation of the government's efforts from each person. Several of them showed me the land documents which the local revenue officials had facilitated for them. This to them was a sacred act as they regained their land and could again cultivate their own crops, thus gaining financial self-sufficiency once again.

#### **9.2.1.2 Special education for the tribal students: The *Ekalavya* model**

The *Ekalavya* model school, found primarily in tribal districts, was an example in itself and spoke of the success of education for tribal children of the state. As per the guidelines of the Ministry of Tribal affairs, Government of India, the Orissa (now Odisha) the Model Tribal Education Society (OMTES) was set up in 1997-98. *Ekalavya* Model Residential Schools (EMRSs), are named after an ancient tribal student who trained in education and martial arts from the most accomplished Guru of his time by observing him from far while the Guru imparted training to the princes and in the process had to part with his right thumb, thus standing out as the noblest example of discipleship. The EMRSs have made important strides in English-medium education in tribal districts of the state since 2000-01. Presently 13 EMRSs were functioning in Odisha administered by the SC&ST Development Department under the framework of OMTES. They aimed at providing quality education to ST students with grants-in-aid from Ministry of Tribal Affairs (OMTES website).

The *Ekalavya* Model Residential School which I visited started functioning at Mahasingi from November 2001. The school was co-educational and had provision from class VI to XII, preparing students for college. Almost all the top students of the school had been getting good placement in reputed colleges and thereafter branching out to secure good jobs under the reservation scheme of the government of India. Besides they also excelled in sports. No wonder, this had turned out to be a model school and replicated in other states as well.

### **9.2.1.3 Livelihood interventions**

As regards livelihood interventions, the most successful were banana and mango plantations, poultry rearing and crafts making in which the state government had subsidised the target groups. I had occasion to visit most of these activities and interact with the villagers who were all positive in their appreciation of state assistance as well as the support of district authorities.

All the three features, as described above, had a large imprint of the government's role on the tribal communities.

Two sets of interviews below would bring out the discrepancies between what the stakeholders felt and what the principals thought.

#### **9.2.1.4(a) Interview with the stakeholders:**

I had an interview with a group of tribal families who were seemingly benefited from government intervention. They said that there were a few SHGs operating in the area who borrowed from the local bank in moderate amounts to finance their small-scale activities. The borrowings were repaid on time. Out of the savings generated they could recycle some amount as loans to other needy families who joined the SHGs. These groups also availed of micro-finance facility which significantly helped in their livelihood. Besides, with government officials visiting their habitats from time to time, the latter did cooperate with their families. The tribals who I interviewed were aware of government projects and schemes like subsidised housing, paid employment for 100 days, increasing deposits in bank accounts to generate operational savings, and availing incentives for entrepreneurship and skill development.

#### **9.2.1.4(b) Interview with the principals in government intervention:**

Curiously the Block Development Officer (BDO), in charge of administration of the Block agreed with most of my observations on the ground though his views differed sharply from those expressed by tribal families above. He stressed the fact that these communities were largely dependent on government support and had not developed the motivation for community participation. He added, that due to lack of awareness amongst them, a lot of government schemes and benefits had to be promoted through publicity, organising

workshops and suitable handholding by officials. The top-down approach, according to him, was the only way to development in these regions.

The BDO denied any instance of displacement of tribal communities due to alleged mineral exploitation by outside elements. He said that some tribal families had opted to live on government land obtained under Forest Rights Act (FRA) on their own as they were aware of this facility given by the government. As mentioned earlier, I had visited a few of these habitats and found them satisfied with what they were getting from the government although I had a sense that proper advocacy was still wanting. The BDO upheld the view that these communities cherished their cultural values and heritage though they were not sufficiently aware that they could convert their innate skills into cultural capital. I was invited to a few dance performances and felt that the local tribals valued their cultural strength a lot but were not aware of how to preserve that for the younger generation.

The BDO was all praise for the *Ekalavya* model of education and the benefits which the tribal children were getting there from. He felt that even a few families getting educated and employed properly could open the doors to the eventual empowerment of the community.

On livelihood generation, however, my observation was that development of physical infrastructure was sorely lacking. There was poor communication and very little health care facility. The situation on the education front, apart from the *Ekalavya* schools, was not satisfactory as the local school was mostly inaccessible to children from surrounding villages who had to trudge long distances to reach the school. Consequently the schools saw a large proportion of drop-outs. The problem was compounded with the woeful lack of teachers (Panigrahi 2017).

The worst sector was perhaps healthcare. Besides lack of proper roads and vehicles to transport patients to the nearest medical centre, doctors and nurses were also very few in number. People did not want to risk their lives for fear of Maoist insurgency in these areas. There have been several instances of patients being carried for miles in shoddy condition by the relatives to the nearest hospital in the absence of proper facilities.

Last but not the least was the lack of political participation or rather low level of tribal representation in local self-governance. This flowed from their indifference or ignorance of authorities who could guide them properly. Thus, for example, very few came forward to

vote during elections. Added to the fear of Maoists, it was plain apathy. Though there were Panchayats led by women, they could hardly perform any advocacy..

#### **9.2.1.5 Role of local agencies and projects undertaken:**

The ITDA, set up in 1977, worked in all the districts wherever tribal communities lived. The agency also dealt with livelihood projects and SHGs, managed a few rapid irrigation projects and was responsible for watershed development, forestry and capacity building. I visited one such project where electricity was drawn from river flow coming down the hills. Furthermore village development committees were set up to help the villagers empower themselves through group activities. Some of these activities were funded by the International Forum of Agricultural Development (IFAD) of the Government of UK. I also visited a solar energy project where solar technology was harnessed for a micro-hydro project and street lighting, this was also funded by IFAD. I was informed that vocational training was provided for training in hotel management, nursing and driving. There was also a multi-sectoral development programme in operation which had a good number of attendees. The SHGs were also provided funds by ITDA. Besides the Rural Finance Scheme (RFS) and a few other cooperative agencies supported their activities.

Another important agency for tribal empowerment was the Odisha Tribal Empowerment and Local Development Programme (OTELP) which carried out a gamut of activities including studying and financing the Life Cycle Growth (LCG) of tribal communities. Being a grassroots body, OTELP worked closely with the tribal communities. There was also a NGO in operation from UK called 'Practical Action' which undertook projects on a Private Public Partnership (PPP) mode.

The Programme Officer of OTELP, in an interview with me, substantiated most of the observations I had made on the field. He added that it was important to identify the needs of the tribal communities, draw up a time-bound action plan and work with regular monitoring. For this camps were organised in villages. These camps were highly effective in bringing the communities closer to the local administration. Several problems being faced by these communities were brought up in these camps. For example, the need for water treatment was one such requirement as the local water drawn mostly from the tube wells had to be periodically disinfected to prevent water-borne diseases from spreading. Furthermore, social evils like excessive alcohol consumption and pre-marital sex had to be controlled.

One overriding concern of the OTELP was to engage the tribal communities in developmental work so that they were kept away from the lure of Maoists. The need for tribal re-settlement on government land and engage these communities in their new habitats was deemed essential so that they could develop their capabilities to empower themselves. Under the Forest Rights Act several households got forest land up to 10 acres (for one cluster of 20 households) and adequate financial assistance was given to construct houses and toilets.

#### **9.2.1.6 Interview with the Principal Administrator:**

The Principal Administrator of the district is better known as Collector, an appellation that comes from British days when the office held high esteem and power. The Collector was so designated as his principal function was to ‘collect’ taxes besides preserving law and order in the district in coordination with district police authorities led by the Superintendent of Police. In effect, the Collector stood at the apex of district administration.

The observations made by the Collector of Kandhamal district seemed most pertinent and in a way encapsulated my observations on the ground. According to her, the communities in the district, both tribal as well as non-tribal, were more interested in benefitting from government programmes than actually contributing to them. Though some part of government funding did percolate down to the bottom, it did not reflect in visible development. There was admittance on her part of leakage of government funds in the course of implementation of schemes. She added that the target beneficiaries were not properly served though the government was allocating a lot of funds for their development. She added that though there were a few NGOs working in the field, most of them were ‘dummy NGOs’. She pointed out to several diseases and social evils afflicting the tribal communities such as sickle cane amoeba (a debilitating congenital disease caused due to intra-community marriage), teenage pregnancies and rampant illiteracy, particularly among women.

My field observation had been that affirmative action programmes had borne fruit though had not helped sufficiently in raising the income levels of the STs (as well as of the SCs), thus the outreach of such programmes was limited. Going by the Collector’s account, it seemed that the degree of marginalization was low though these communities had relatively fair access to facilities. An added factor could be lack of proper motivation among the communities and lack of leadership among district officials to encourage these communities to come up in the social and economic ladder.



### **9.2.2 Koraput:**

Koraput, also a tribal-specific district, used to be an undivided district until 1992 when it was divided into three smaller districts, Rayagada, Malkangiri and Nowrangpur, all of them subject to Maoist insurgency. Bounded in the north by Nabarangpur, west by Bastar district of the neighbouring state of Chhatisgarh, south by Malkangiri and on the East by the districts of Vijayanagaram and Srikakulam, this is the only state of Odisha which opens out to two contiguous states and has thus become a frequent hideout and target of Maoist guerrillas. However the Maoist groups of late seemed to be on the run with Odisha and its neighbouring states in this region having tightened their para military and police forces Advocacy programmes through a ‘poster war’ had also helped ( New Indian Express 2017).

Nestled in the Eastern Ghats, the district has thick forests besides substantial minerals and a lively tribal community. The 51 ST groups of undivided Koraput are now more or less equally distributed among the four new districts. The groups included were Kondhs, Parajas, Gonds and Koyas. Besides, Bondas, who were deemed to be among the most primitive tribes, were still surviving on forest produce and hunting with bows and arrows. In 1980 as a young diplomat under training I was commissioned to visit Koraput as part of my training in district administration and at that time had witnessed some of these tribes actually living in jungles, scantily clad and afraid to face the town people. Times have since changed with development having come through several affirmative action programmes, and today tribes are an asset to a tribal preponderant state like Odisha (Prasad 2011).

The Rome based Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in 2012 recognised the service of the tribal communities in ensuring food security by declaring Koraput district a Global Agricultural Heritage Site. A wide diversity of crops, namely paddy, wheat, maize, barley, ragi, pulses, groundnut, mustard, sunflower etc were cultivated in the district, which abounded in terrace farming because of its undulating topography. The SCs on the other hand were centred in the urban areas and employed as skilled/unskilled workers in factories or self-employed as petty business persons. There were 5 major industries in the state, viz. alumina, paper, cement, aeronautical engine and hydro- electricity. Besides several MSMEs and local handicraft industries were found in the district.

There had been no proper survey of the tribal dialects though efforts were being made to preserve the major tribal languages such as Bhunjia and Bhatiri. It was interesting to know

that the district had 1031 females for every 1000 males as per the 2011 census. As such females had a lot of importance in tribal societies and performed a variety of tasks such as cultivation, livestock farming and rearing large families. Maoist groups seemed to have proliferated and were extended tacit support by the local populace. Disconnect of the district from neighbouring towns had made matters worse. As law and order came under the purview of the state administration, apprehending such elements required constant coordination among the contiguous states..

#### **9.2.2.1 Field visit:**

I started my 4 day field study with a visit to the village of Narayanpatna under Laxmipur Block. Nearly 200 displaced Kondh tribal families, settled in the village, were receiving loans under the Forest Rights Act for both cultivation and settlement as well as financial assistance for housing. I interviewed one Manu Holika (his name as he mentioned to the accompanying official), who had suffered torture and exploitation at the hands of the Maoists. He named one such Maoist who was now in jail. After the latter's departure from the scene, the Maoist menace had abated considerably though they could easily regroup, he felt. I also visited a similar village which was constantly suffering from Maoist attacks. Every family in the village had lost one adult male member to Maoist extremism either by way of joining the movement or losing one's life. A climate of fear had spread in the region, though of late with better inter-state coordination such a climate had dissipated to some extent.

#### **9.2.2.2 Livelihood interventions:**

I was taken around some mango plantations in Kakarigumma Block, grown under ITDA's livelihood support programmes. Besides seasonal vegetables and fruits, tribals were also encouraged to cultivate flax, pulses and grains and assisted in connecting to the local markets where they could directly sell their produce. I also visited a model tribal school in Siribeda (as in Mahasingi described above). Majority of the students were from the Gurma tribe while there were a few from other tribes as well. The students presented a mix of tribal dances and I left with the impression that dance and music were indeed an inalienable part of tribal life.

#### **9.2.2.3 Study of a case of extreme marginalization, and attempts to raise it in interviews:**

My last visit in Koraput district was to an extremely poor and remote hamlet called Gadaba. I conducted a group interview with the villagers and was facilitated by the Headmaster of the

nearby Machhkund School, himself a tribal belonging to the Gadaba tribe. The Headmaster informed me that average income per day per household in the region was forty rupees while the average size of the family was five. He explained to me the economic hardships the tribal villagers were facing. The village had 45 families and the most educated boy in the village was a Class XII (2 years after school) drop-out. I met the boy who informed me that much against his wishes, he was not able to continue his studies for lack of money and was now living on contract labour working in fields. Most of the inhabitants of the hamlet were subsistence workers who earned barely enough to support their families. Some of the villagers said that they had never seen an official come to their village and were wondering if I was a district official until I dispelled their doubt that I was not and was just meeting them to understand how they lived. They also said they had to trudge several miles on dirt road to avail health care facility, and that too was very basic. There was a weekly village market about 6 km away from where they bought their family needs.

I saw that the approach road to the village adjoining the main road was an unpaved dirt road with boulders all around. The villagers had tried making a road to their village but without the support of the local administration had not been successful. A few women had formed a SHG to get a little extra income. Of late the government seemed to have woken up to the needs of these communities by helping them with petty funds and better attention though a lot still left to be desired.

My field study showed a substantial disconnect between what the local officials claimed and what was actually happening on the ground. Here was a village completely cut off from day to day reality and had developed its own mechanism for 'survival'. There was an obvious lack of community motivation and government intervention, the economic empowerment schemes had not taken off here. This could be an extreme example of poverty, comparable to Csenyete village in the Hungarian context.

My efforts to meet the district Collector ended in vain. After making me wait for a long time when I finally did get to talk to him, I was told rather brusquely that he could not take questions from me as "he had no instructions". To me it seemed that my unannounced visit without proper introduction was perceived with some caution by the district authorities who could not quite understand the intention of my 'research'.

My interview with the Director of Council of Analytical Tribal Studies (COATS), was informative and useful for my research. Set up in 1993, COATS had been studying the cultural and economic patterns of living of tribal communities in the state and amassed a vast body of literature on the subject. Answering my questions, the Director said that sustainable development had not happened as intended. Rather availability of rice at a cheap price had made tribals lazy and non-productive. He reiterated that earlier, 34% of income of tribals was coming from forest produce and thus they had the impetus to maintain the forests as their property. But with rising deforestation and growing politics in the area where votes of the illiterate tribals could be influenced, the primordial attachment of the tribal to the forest had snapped. Hardly 19% forest produce at present was collected for the needs of the tribals. Furthermore land alienation had become a serious problem. To these problems, he added, the Maoist inroads into these areas had greatly upset the social ecology. .

#### **9.2.2.4 Rounding up:**

Two factors clearly stood out in my study of the two tribal-specific districts above, both were hindrances to development and therefore needed to be addressed on a priority basis.. One, the need for more government intervention in the empowerment process and motivation for the target communities to be engaged in their own development, and two, tackling the Maoist insurgency problem which was specific to these interior tribal pockets of the state. In both these areas the state was needed to be seen much more active and engaged with the tribal communities. There was obviously more to be done to lift the poor tribal communities who had plenty of latent capital though no way to channelize them. Besides, the scope for advocacy or literacy programmes was minimal in this part.

#### **9.2.3 Puri:**

Puri was the third district in my field study. During the course of my 3-day visit to the district I viewed substantial change in comparison to the previous two as regards the demographic profile, weather and crop pattern, and even way of life of the local inhabitants. That was principally because the district had a preponderance of SCs over STs unlike the two previous districts. The coastal district of Puri is well known not only in India but in several parts of the world with its history dating back to the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC. The fame of the town is in large part due to the iconic Jagannath Temple, seat of the God Jagannath accompanied by two other principal deities Balabhadra and Subhadra. The town, sanctified as one of the four most

important seats of Hindu pilgrimage, is visited round the year by thousands of pilgrims from all over India and overseas (District Puri, n.d)

Geographically, the district is bounded by Khurda district on its north, the Bay of Bengal in the south, Jagatsinghpur in the east and Ganjam on its west. With its headquarters located in Puri town and a total population of nearly 1500000 (as per the 2011 census), it has 1 Municipality (Puri), 5 Tehsils (Revenue collection areas) and 11 Blocks.

#### **9.2.3.1 Field work:**

It could have been a coincidence that Puri happened to be my native district. This admittedly gave me a better connect with the local inhabitants with whom I interacted. I started my visit with a study of Pipli Block, and interviewed the BDO. This was by way of my introduction to the block. The BDO gave some statistical figures about the Block, the SC population stood at 32809 as per the 2011 census which was 23.3%, higher than the state's overall percentage of SCs of 17%. The major means of subsistence were cultivation (agriculture) and animal husbandry. The average annual income of a household was Rs 40-50 thousand per annum. The BDO also mentioned that there were adequate facilities for education, healthcare, housing and employment for SCs. The 100-day employment scheme under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) was provided to entitled families. Avenues for skill development and placement-linked training programmes were imparted though these were at an initial phase. He reiterated that district officials regularly interacted with the marginalized communities living in the area, and several projects were undertaken by the District Rural Development Agency (DRDA) in the Block. As for the modality of implementation of projects, the Panchayati Raj (PR) system worked smoothly in coordination with Block officials, and funds were disbursed after assessment and approval by the Chairperson of the PR system. The Chairperson being an elective body was at the apex of grassroots governance.

#### **9.2.3.2 NGO and grassroots projects:**

A few grassroots NGOs were also involved in the development of rural infrastructure. For example the Gopabandhu Gramin Yojana (Village Project) had been entrusted with the responsibility of working on laying cemented roads as part of the rural connectivity scheme. Besides under Member of Parliament Local Area Development (MPLAD) and Member of

Legislative Assembly Local Area Development (MLALAD) programmes, MPs and MLAs were entrusted public funds for rural development in their respective constituencies. Pipli was a MLA (state level) as well as MP (centre level) constituency and thus had ample funds through its elected representatives for local development projects

#### **9.2.3.3 Role of Anganwadi Centres as the first point of child education:**

Anganwadi centres (AWCs), in charge of overall development of rural children between 3-6 years are spread all over the country. These centres could be termed as preparatory schools where children grew up until they were ready for elementary education. The children remained in the care of a teacher/matron and were provided free food. This had been a scheme in operation for nearly 10 years under the previous as well as current governments in the Centre under the Right of Education (RoE) Act. The scheme functioned more as a day care centre with grants from the Ministry of Education. However, many AWCs suffered for lack of space and adequate funding. In fact, the first village I visited as part of my field study was Mangalapur where the concerned AWC was functioning from the verandah of a school building. When I pointed this out to the local officials I was told that land had recently been allocated and an AWC would be built soon.

#### **9.2.3.4 Experience of political governance at the grassroots level:**

My visit to the twin villages of Mangalapur and Mrudhangapur elicited mixed results. At the village level, projects were prepared by the Panchayat Executive Officer (PEO) who as representative of the BDO was mandated to interact with the political office at the grass roots, the Sarpanch. The PEO was supposed to prepare projects for the village in consultation with the latter and also on the basis of feedback of the local inhabitants. These were then submitted for administrative approval to the BDO before being forwarded to the Panchayat. This was how district administration at the grassroots functioned, in a hierarchical manner.

Electrification, water supply and solar energy installation were some of the important ongoing projects which I visited. Though I was told that 70% of the SCs of the village used toilets, the reality seemed much different, and presented a rather sordid image of sanitation, that too despite being under the well publicised Swachh Bharat Mission of the central government for which funds were separately allocated (Jadhav 2019). As I understood some of these funds were diverted for other purposes and often times could not reach the target

groups. In some cases the built up toilets were used for other purposes such as small warehouse, workshop or shop to fetch an extra income for the family.

Coming to the MGNREGA, somewhat akin to the Public Works Programme (PWP) in the Hungarian context, I was informed that the scheme had not been much successful in coastal districts like Puri where the average daily wage level for an unskilled worker engaged in construction work was Rs 350 while the same person could get hardly Rs 200 per day under this scheme. This resulted in flight of labour to neighbouring townships where they could get assured employment on a daily wage basis. On the other hand, to those who were unable to travel out of the village, this scheme was hardly known. Besides, with the various subsidy schemes extended by the current government to Below Poverty Line (BPL) families, local labour under the scheme had been substantially reduced. All of this was evidenced when I visited a village where some representatives of the SC community complained of no work and inadequate subsidies. It was obvious from their statements that there was a disconnect between government schemes and target groups largely due to administrative apathy..

#### **9.2.3.5 SHGs in action:**

I subsequently visited some SHGs run by women with financial assistance from the BDO as well as cooperative agencies. One of the SHGs produced small jute products, agarbattis (incense sticks) and candles, banana and seasonal mango plantations. The women to whom I talked complained that the profit margin on these activities was too little and thus they were not sustainable. They also felt the need for skilling to diversify into other commercially viable activities. I was surprised to learn that most of the women engaged in these activities did not get the cooperation of their husbands and had to run them virtually all by themselves. Of late their role in running SHGs had been recognised by the state government and funds were being liberally distributed to women-run SHGs to diversify their activities (The Express News Service 2019). Some SHGs of the village had joined hands with private societies and were hand-held by a small women's NGO, Mahila Maha Sangh. The latter ran dairy and poultry farms and rice cooperatives though they often had the problem of funds as mentioned to me by the representative of one such body.

My assessment was that these bodies could be better supervised, and importantly, their finances properly monitored. They could then take on more value-added activities such as fisheries, embroidery, dairy and banana plantation, all of which was within their capability

and resources. On the whole, the government-induced empowerment processes at the field level in the villages I surveyed seemed rather slow and lacked proper supervision. Besides there also seemed to be leakage of funds, so also less of enthusiasm among the subordinate staff to visit the SHGs regularly and check implementation of every project that passed through the block for requisite funding. In a subsequent interactive session with the heads of local administration, I queried as to their lack of adequate interaction with the target groups following which several of the government schemes were not taking off the ground. I asked what could be the corrective steps in this regard. They had no answer to that.

#### **9.2.3.6 Role of rural banks:**

As an institution of development, the role of banks in the rural sector has been crucial. With nationalisation of banks in 1969, almost all the major banks of India became a part of the public sector and thus were mandated to cater to the financial needs of the population in areas where commercial banks could not reach them. Those banks who had branches in the rural sector were deemed to open a window to disburse soft loans, grants, etc to the BPL families in order to boost their incomes. In the case of the rural sector of Puri, the two Banks present were both public sector banks namely, Gramya Bank and Andhra Bank, and they disbursed soft loans for small businesses. The central government-publicised Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (Prime Minister's public funds) scheme which was instrumental in generating more income for small and marginal farmers, However such deposits did not have adequate response among the rural populace, particularly in increasing the savings under the scheme. This could be primarily due to lack of bankable income notwithstanding all the sponsored schemes of the government, .A news report claimed that there had been a growth of over 562 percent in these deposits since 2014 when it was first launched (Pradhan 2017).

#### **9.2.3.7 Observations from the field visit: Alcoholism and political disengagement**

A serious problem afflicting the youth, particularly the unemployed youth, was alcoholism.. Most of the families I visited had lost one male member to alcohol, sadly enough this was not taken seriously by the civic authorities nor by NGO groups who tended to brush it under the carpet. This is a phenomenon seen in many villages and towns of Odisha with alcohol being a major source of tax revenues for the state exchequer though this has led to rampant alcoholism among the youth. Ironically, with rising unemployment sale of cheap alcohol has increased.



This lack of concern by the authorities was symptomatic of a general lack of engagement by the political representatives in their constituency affairs. Consequently there were cases of defalcation of Local Area Development Funds while the villages which they represented continued to languish for lack of proper attention. Day-to-day problems of the villages such as lack of proper sanitation, drinking water and power continued to confront the inhabitants.

#### **9.2.3.8 Interview with the Collector:**

At the end of my visit to Puri an interview with the Collector threw light on several important points. Giving a few statistical highlights, the Collector enumerated 14 sub-castes which were found among the SCs of the district. These were Bauri, Pana, Dhoba, Hadi, Bhoi, Dewar, Tanla, Tiar, Barik, Dandasi, Khadala, Chamar, Siyal and Katia. The SCs of that region comprised 96% of the total SC population in the district and were concentrated more in the rural areas (90.82%) as compared to the semi-urban.

The Collector listed the major developmental programmes, such as credit-linked Family Income Generating Schemes (FIGS), infrastructure development, i.e. construction of roads, educational institutions, etc, skills development training, and implementation of loan-disbursal programmes, abolition and substitution of manual scavenging with septic tanks and conversion of this community into the sanitary work force. The Collector laid emphasis on the Integrated Community Development Schemes (ICDS) for women and children and in this context mentioned about the Aanganwadi Centres as the focal point of child care. The SHGs I had seen in the district seemed to be in urgent need of government assistance. However, according to the Collector 80% of the SHGs were functional and self-funded and had taken up several self-sustaining activities under the regular supervision of district authorities.

One could not write off the MGNREGA scheme as it was still an important service provider. The scheme had scope for additional performance-based earning. Aadhar (entitlement) card was availed to benefit from government sponsored facilities, even for children getting their mid-day meals. Aadhar card, which had been made mandatory for opening bank accounts, was relaxed with a subsequent order of the Supreme Court. though the card was still needed to avail some basic facilities for BPL families

As per the Collector's version, there had been a few instances of communal violence in Puri district and such instances had been brought under control through 'peace committees' which

comprised influential persons of the community along with district level officials, Besides training/awareness programmes were conducted from time to time in violence-prone areas to create awareness among the different communities. Apart from that, suitable legal provisions were enforced as a preventive measure. Financial assistance was also rendered to the affected victims.

Being a coastal district, Puri was prone to natural disasters such as cyclone and flood. To cope with this the District Disaster Management Plan (DDMP) had a multi-hazard approach. A trigger mechanism had been evolved for quick response which could be spontaneously set in motion to address all disaster-related activities for response and recovery without loss of critical time. The very recent occurrence of the super-cyclone, Fani, which completely devastated Puri and several adjoining areas of Odisha, was well managed as seen from media reports, particularly the evacuation of over one million cyclone victims in record time to safer habitats and cyclone shelters drew unanimous approbation from the Central government and even from the World Bank.

The Collector's statement, it seemed, was based on notes prepared by his officials and he was conscious giving the interview to a senior civil servant. My field assessment of the situation in Pipli block of Puri district, in that sense, could be deemed more useful though the Collector's views gave an overall perspective of district administration.

#### **9.2.4 Cuttack:**

Called the 'Millenium city', Cuttack is the oldest city of the state, its history dating back to 1000 AD. The city used to be the state capital till 1960 when it moved to Bhubaneswar, the current state capital. Cuttack is well-known for gold and silver filigree, horn and brass works, cotton textiles and leather products. Its environs boast of a paper mill, a glass factory, a sugar mill, a manufacturing unit for tiles, china clay products and a jute mill. Primarily an industrial and skill-oriented city, it is spread over an area of 3,733 sq. Km, and has a population of 2341094 (2011 census) with a male/ female break up of 1207781 and 1133313 respectively. The state has a SC population of 498633 and STs 93745.

Cuttack seemed to have a relatively developed social structure where the stakeholders, i.e. the local inhabitants, NGO groups and civil society bodies, were more conscious of their

responsibilities and better connected with the district administration. A greater sense of agency was visible.

#### **9.2.4.1 Familiarization meeting with Collector:**

I started my survey with a familiarization meeting with the Collector. The latter exuded confidence in the success of the developmental projects which were being carried out in the district. He remarked that Cuttack was the number one district of the state receiving the highest quantum of allocation (Rs 1240 million) annually on development schemes targeted at rural communities. The district boasted of 7000 SHGs alone. He added that the most successful amongst them had been the SHGs focusing on empowerment of rural women. He also mentioned that physical connectivity within the district was fairly well developed, the villages were well connected with the cities and also with the state capital.

The Collector did not seem to be happy with the performance of NGOs in his district. He voiced disquiet about their functioning, and cited two reasons for it. One, the target communities were developed under the direct watch of the district administration and thus NGOs played a minimal role, and second, the latter were somewhat reticent to invest their own resources in the district as enough of government funds were being ploughed into the district. Furthermore, there was a good deal of political meddling in the running of NGOs as he hinted.

#### **9.2.4.2 Field study: SHGs in Cuttack Sadar Block**

I was accompanied on my field visit by a senior official deputed by the Collector. We travelled to Cuttack Sadar Block, about 30 kms away from Cuttack city. My first interview was with the BDO to get to know how the Block functioned. The Block derived its relative importance from its proximity to the district capital and was thus recipient of a number of administrative facilities.

I was not surprised to learn that the number of SCs in this Block alone was substantial compared to the district's overall SC population. This was because the Block afforded better work opportunities, besides availability of educational facilities for all inhabitants irrespective of their caste status. Furthermore, and this was an important point, there was no segregation among the SC and ST communities who lived together in the same village. I was soon to discover this fact when I visited a couple of villages on my survey. Most of the

income of the SC groups came from cultivation with the bulk of them employed as agricultural workers. Some others did odd jobs, including enrolling themselves for MGNREGA which also suffered due to lack of proper enrolment. On the other hand, those who were in petty business, owning grocery shops and MSMEs were incentivised and performed relatively well..

A welcome feature of the Block was that there were no reports of caste tension. There was no instance of caste tension noted from any other part of the district either. One could thus infer that caste discrimination was directly related to the level of development and education, the more developed the district, the better educated they were, the less was caste discrimination. This phenomenon however cannot be generalized on a national basis as there could be districts with even better education and development parameters but still have caste tensions, this could have a bearing on the prevailing social structure rather than educational and economic backwardness. It may be noted that the whole concept of affirmative action programmes was drawn on the basis of the educational and social backwardness of the Dalits who needed to be given additional incentives to catch up with the other caste groups in the Indian society.

One of the important empowerment schemes for the marginalized communities was distribution of government land to build house with a cash incentive of Rs 150,000 per dwelling. Even agricultural land could be acquired by the state for construction of houses under this scheme. While the administration disbursed up to 80% of the amount before start of the construction, the remainder was claimed on proper verification after completion. This was verified and corroborated when I visited one of the subsidized houses and spoke to a villager who had recently finished constructing his dwelling. The above subsidies, it may be noted, varied from district to district depending on the funds position and importance of the district in the administration's scheme of things. In that sense a coastal district could be getting more incentives than a hinterland tribal district while the avenues for protest or advocacy were rather limited in the latter case.

Furthermore, all SCs/STs were covered on a specific income criterion (BPL category) under the National Family Welfare Scheme where they were entitled to old age pension, pension for widows above 40 years and for the disabled, and free health care facility. Each village had a

Public Health Centre while in the case of specialised treatment, patients were referred to the district hospital.

Besides agriculture and MGNREGA, the major SMEs were spice making, rice and wheat processing, and handicrafts. There was a substantial number of SHGs in the block. The beneficiaries under MGNREGA got their payment calculated on a weekly basis which was deposited directly into their accounts under the Jan Dhan Yojana scheme. Besides micro-credit was extended by the local bank on a need basis and after proper evaluation by the bank in coordination with the Extension Officer (EO) of the Block. The Gram Rojgar Sevak (Income official of village) made an overall survey of micro-credits availed and reported to the Block. Furthermore under the Panchayati Raj, Gram Panchayats were more active in political advocacy and political leaders at the grassroots were generally more responsive to the needs of their constituents.

Almost all SC/ST communities had access to Aadhar card under which they could avail various development schemes. Under the National Food Security Act (NFSA) instituted by the previous government at the centre, every state got a certain quota of subsidized rice and wheat meant for marginal communities. This in turn was further subsidized by the state and sold to entitled families at just Re 1 for 1 kilo. Though this had a social advantage in raising the income and nutrition levels of these communities, the danger was that the recipients tended to lose their productivity as they generally refrained from putting in hard labour such as farm work. Besides, their income from selling subsidised food grains in the market was enough to cover their other needs and thus local labour was generally hard to get. Added to MNREGA this further sapped rural productivity, particularly in the farm sector, and had a deleterious effect on the state's share of the national agricultural output.

With a plethora of SHGs there was no dearth of activities in the district. Activities such as forestry, plantations, horticulture and dairy farming needed sustained monitoring since the investments on these were substantial. The district officials apprised me of these projects and how they were being regularly monitored by the local administration. Substantial funds were released to build toilets under the Swachh Bharat Mission. The BPL families were also entitled to a Backward Region Grant Fund. The Panchayat Samiti Chairman called coordination meetings with the BDO and other staff regularly to survey development works where various MLA and MP LAD works were reviewed.

#### **9.2.4.3 A case study of empowerment in a model village**

Manibeda village was a test case where many of the empowerment schemes described above were noted. I was taken around a cluster of 26 SC households and conducted some impromptu interviews. The SC communities residing in the village seemed to be fairly satisfied with their income levels and lived well in a cordial and supportive environment. I interviewed a middle-ranking student from the SC community who aspired to continue his higher studies in the local college after finishing school. Such aspirations, as I noted, were very much possible in an era of affirmative action meant to empower such communities, and in a relatively developed village as this. The government provided them the necessary support. The local communities were also engaged in other jobs such as poultry farming, fisheries, seasonal plantations and kitchen gardening to make an extra income. I was shown around a few houses among the SC communities and noted an overall sense of contentment at their income and subsistence levels. In other words, the village presented a positive picture of successful governance, community participation and contentment of the local inhabitants with their way of living.

#### **9.3 Overall assessment of the field studies in Odisha**

Each of the villages visited in the above four districts had a different way of life. As mentioned above, two factors clearly stood out in my study of the two ST-specific districts (sections 9.2.1 and 9.2.2). The first was the need for more government intervention in the empowerment process and need for self-development and second, tackling the Maoist insurgency problem which was specific to these interior tribal pockets of the state. With a good amount of investment the state could do much more to lift the poor tribal communities who had plenty of latent capital but needed proper support and supervision. The problem of 'Urban Naxalism' discussed above has not yet surfaced in the state of Odisha, primarily because the state is more rural economy oriented and secondly as the level of the local intelligentsia has not sufficiently matured to provide the linkage between the rural left groups and the urban Naxals.

From the research point of view, detailed and individual surveys were important to bring out the differences in economic levels, political leadership and community participation. Even within the two SC specific districts surveyed, their differences in the socio-economic context and overall development were notable. While the ST specific districts differed in the broad

parameters of development from the SC specific ones, both could be included among the group of marginal community-populated areas because of the various schemes and interventions of the government commonly targeted at these communities. However, there could be no generalisation even within the micro framework of spatial development. Both presented test cases of extreme marginalization (in the case of Gadaba in Koraput district) and its opposite (in the case of Manibeda in Cuttack district).

With villages in India contributing over 60% of the country's population, it was important not only to study the diversities among the marginalized communities in these villages but assess the broader social configuration useful for sociological and anthropological studies in a rapidly developing milieu for cross-cultural studies. This was important as rural communities were shifting base to urban areas and the traditional dichotomy between the two was receding (Thakur 2014). This could hold merits for broad comparison with the scenario in Hungary (as well as other erstwhile East European countries) where the Roma populations earlier confined to rural pockets had been shifting to urban conglomerations in the process of modernization and the resultant search for a better life.

To complete the assessment of my study of the Indian part, I shall break down my assessment of certain key areas taking into consideration salient points gathered from subsequent interviews with certain key decision makers.

## **9.4 Interviews with key decision makers**

### **9.4.1 Secretary, Department of SC & ST Development, Government of Odisha**

In a wide-ranging interview pertaining to the empowerment processes of both these marginalized communities in the state, the senior official called the 'welfarism' part of the social development model a 'convergence model'. He explained that such model allowed the participants, both the government as well as the beneficiaries, to be fully engaged in the process, and that gave utmost benefit to the target groups. Answering a question as to whether the state met all its commitments within the budget allocated, he said it was always the endeavour of the government to plan ambitiously for social development of these communities keeping in tune with the national focus on affirmative action. He however admitted that sometimes funds were not sufficient though the fund position was periodically reviewed to make the optimum use of such resources.

As an important measure, he explained that the scholarship scheme was primarily meant to enable meritorious students from among the marginalized communities succeed in studying in the best educational institutions in the state and outside so that they found broad parity with others and competed favourably for employment. In this context he drew attention to the *Ekalavya* model schools for tribal children which I had visited in both the ST specific districts.

The so-called ‘creamy layer’, as explained in the preceding chapters, had come in for some degree of controversy as it implied that the benefits of the affirmative action programme were mostly going to the upper layers among the marginalized, generation after generation, depriving the ‘poorest of the poor’ who were relatively more backward, uneducated and more deserving of any benefit. In other words, the process of vertical mobility within marginalized communities ascribed mostly to the affirmative action programme either remained stagnant or happened over a much longer period of time.

Did that therefore call for a review of the reservation system? This question had been raised earlier too, in this study. The Secretary’s view was that there was a need for being patient as a review of the reservation system could cause disruption in the society. The other more important factor was that the affirmative action programme being manipulated by politicians over the years for electoral gains, a full-fledged structural change beyond the customary 10-year review was not feasible. Any change in the status quo was unthinkable for the present.

The Secretary singled out education and skills development as the most important factors for socio-economic empowerment. He gave the example of the state of Kerala, the state which had the distinction of having one of the highest literacy rates in India, and therefore a faster rate of development as compared to other states. He contrasted that with his own state of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, both backward states, where affirmative action not only did not work well but the locally dominant OBCs demanded more rights and privileges for themselves. Odisha, also a backward state, in contrast boasted of 1600 schools where the SC/ST students got free education, and 6000 hostels where they could stay, the same statistic which the Chief Minister had given, as quoted above. Besides, the state allocated a good part of its budget on livelihood missions which were significant for their empowerment.

Importantly the Secretary said that in Odisha there was a clear distinction between progress in the backward districts which were primarily ST specific, where the development process was



rather slow. The forward districts with a concentration of SCs, on the other hand, showed faster development with the SC communities being more advanced in their outlook. This had been attested during my field visits described above.

#### **9.4.2 Central Minister for Tribal Affairs, New Delhi**

The Central Minister for Tribal Affairs, (of Cabinet rank in the Government of India), in a two-part interview gave his views on several aspects of empowerment processes of tribal communities.

The Ministry of Tribal Affairs, which he headed, looked after the all-round development of the tribal population of the country. The programmes of the Ministry were to support and financially supplement the efforts of state governments and voluntary organizations (NGOs), and to fill critical gaps in institutions and programmes by providing various departmental interventions through specially tailored schemes. The Minister sounded positive that the country had taken several measures to administer and supervise the schemes and programmes aimed at the STs (the same corresponded with the SCs as well, though the latter came under the remit of the Ministry of Social Empowerment), Interestingly he was of the view that the affirmative action policy needed a review in line with present changes though a consensus was needed to be built up given the highly sensitive nature of the subject.

In the same context he mentioned that the Commission of STs, mandated by the Constitution, was actively functioning to safeguard the rights and privileges of the ST population (similar to the Commission of SCs, both mandated by the Constitution). Various departmental interventions in critical sectors were made through specially tailored schemes like skill development for tribal communities, the *Ekalavya* model residential schools, minimum support price for minor forest produce etc.

The debate of indigenous culture versus development was very old. Whenever development threatened to mar indigenous culture which was the pride and source of livelihood of tribals, they would be naturally inclined to protest, sometimes at great cost both to the tribal communities as well as to the government. The Minister assured that the government's policy was to protect the rich cultural heritage of the country and at the same time ensure the growth and development of ST communities. However in reality this was easier said than done. The dam building and displacement of tribal communities from their habitats was one such

concrete instance of the state's neglect of cultural capital of the tribal communities, and to a lesser extent of SC communities as well.

There had been umpteen cases of tribal people getting caught in the crosshairs between Maoist insurgents and security forces. These instances were to be handled with a lot of sensitivity and a human face so that faith of tribal people in the government remained intact, the Minister asserted. That said, it needs also to be put on record that the government, despite its best efforts, had not paid adequate attention to the needs of tribal communities, thus they continued to suffer in the name of state security..

As regards India's affirmative action and economic empowerment schemes and their broader application to marginalized communities in other parts of the world, the Minister noted that forests being their main source of livelihood, identity, customs and traditions, their traditional rights on forest land must be universally recognised.

The above two interviews dealing with the complexity of development and processes of empowerment applicable to the SC and ST communities at the state and central levels could be seen in a generalised framework as representing other states of India too. The common factor being their merciless exploitation for centuries, it becomes doubly important to accelerate the process of their empowerment to make them 'liberated' human beings,, integral to the growth of society.

### **9.5. Critical and Comparative Review and Paradigm Building for community empowerment**

I shall now critically review the realities of the empowerment schemes mentioned above to generate paradigms which may aid Roma communities in the Hungarian context. India, regarded as a liberal democracy where the voice of the common man is counted, can suitably function in a democratic framework taking into account grass roots participation and community building at the lowest levels (Ledwith and Springett 2010, Rostas & Ryder 2012). However, the sites researched in this study have been characterised by heavy inequality and rampant poverty, notwithstanding regional variations, with very little community participation. Furthermore there has been a strong dose of government intervention in the Indian context and a studied indifference by the government in the Hungarian. Thus the first condition would be to bring the mind sets in both operative situations to a comparative level,

in other words have a balanced mix of both government intervention as well as community participation in both contexts as an ideal to create a pragmatic and multi-faceted solution.

The gap between rhetoric and reality, a hypothesis which was developed at the beginning is valid for both the contexts as seen in this study. There could be several plausible reasons and all of these have been brought out. The most important factor has been leakage in disbursement of funds impeding the actual implementation of many projects. Result, much of that have not reached the target communities. As a former PM (Rajiv Gandhi) in 1986, had stated in a public meeting, hardly 15 paise out of one rupee (15%) reached the targeted beneficiaries. Though this could be taken as a rhetorical comment, the fact that there was substantial leakage of government funds needed to be taken seriously and steps accordingly taken. The Modi government's fight against corruption may just be the proverbial drop in the ocean. Various studies on corruption in India had shown that corruption was endemic in public life and this manifested in practically every level of governance (Ramesh 2017).

Yet another problem was lack of government data, at least before the Aadhar scheme came into operation. With the implementation of the scheme to which nearly 97% of India's population had already subscribed by submitting their demographic and biometric data, this matter could be relatively addressed. However the flip side could be scope for government manipulation of personal data, and thus infringement of privacy laws. This could be just one aspect of political interference though in my study I had noted interference at all levels which affected the implementation of the schemes, thus people who did not affiliate themselves with the ruling disposition tended to suffer. Besides, excessive bureaucratization accentuated by lack of advocacy on the ground, tended to be detrimental to empowerment of the marginalized communities.

Each of the above factors merit cross-referential studies between the two socio-political and economic contexts of Hungary and India in which the marginalized communities have been contextualised. The factors stated above could be taken up for broader discussion in order to explore ways of addressing them in both contexts. This, in effect, would form the conclusion of my study.

Analyzing and working on the drawbacks, institutional, political and social, and barring minor socio-economic variations, both contexts could share best practices with a view to improving the lives of these communities and helping them find their voice in the society as

productive assets. It was observed at the ground level that the state was adopting almost all top-down measures with barely any attempt to foster a climate of participation from the communities themselves. There could be hardly any doubt that the best antidote to poverty and marginalization lay in development (Ahluwalia and Little 2018) and therefore the process of empowering marginalized communities with a view to eventually including them holistically in the social structure was, as this study has shown, the most appropriate approach..

## **CHAPTER TEN**

### **Conclusion**

#### **10.1 Introduction**

This study has aimed at examining and comparing the policy tools and processes of empowerment and inclusion for two marginalized communities, the Roma in Hungary (within the context of the EU Framework of National Roma Integration Strategies) and Dalits in India with a view to sharing their experiences, and possibly developing on them.. The overriding objective of the study has been to examine the possibilities for a paradigm change, or several paradigms, that might undermine the traditional subordination of these communities to a structure of top-down benevolence. Thus through comparison of policies between both the contexts, it aims at suggesting steps for respective governments, civil society bodies, media and the mainstream population to realize the potential for changes with appropriate contextual variations in either.

#### **10.2 The argument of the thesis revisited**

In Chapter One, cultural and ethnic links were discussed between certain indigenous communities of India and the Roma. The study looks specifically at the Roma found in Hungary and Dalits in Odisha, and has focused on their common marginality. The chapter also problematises the rather resigned acceptance of segregation, persecution and marginalization of Roma communities by academic and policy research as though it was somehow intractable or even inevitable.. Discussions of the disappointing outcomes of the National Roma Integration Strategies (NRIS) and the European Roma Decade on education, employment, healthcare and housing are permeated by this pessimism. This thesis explores whether the ameliorative policies for the marginalized found in the Indian context can offer something different. In both contexts we find the same perceived need for “empowerment”

processes, such as the ‘affirmative action’ policy as constitutionally mandated for marginalized communities and practised in India. So the question was raised: could policies seen to be effective in India be useful in Europe, if not what could be the systemic changes needed in both contexts?

The literature review, (Chapter Two), however brought the sobering realisation that rhetorical claims of effectiveness were not always sustainable on closer examination either in Hungary or India. There was a substantial gap between rhetoric and reality in the case of marginalized communities in both countries. This necessitated a deeper critical reading of the literature on the tools and processes of empowerment, and their theorisation of the various phenomena of marginalization, viz. poverty, racism, nativism, segregation, as consequences of the lack of representation and the need thereof. The so-called “empowerers” and “facilitators” would outline what seemed in their accounts to be the near-conspiratorial suppression of any chance of these communities to find an effective and adequate voice in negotiating their own space amidst the pressures of multi-ethnic societies. They would then, more soberly, put the case for inclusive community development and participatory governance for such communities. This was examined as the most effective way to go forward, because even if the policy implementation was hollow or purely rhetorical, it surely was the case that without institutional structures and political will for such participation, the communities would remain marginalized and dependent on a stigmatising patronage.

In this context, the works of development theorists reinforced this hypothesis and threw a cold light on the NRIS framework, the issue of ‘Europeanisation’ of the Roma and the role of Roma civil society bodies and elites, and an equally cold (but nonetheless, importantly different) light on the Indian development model. The difference in approaches of four eminent Indian leader-activists, namely Gandhi, Ambedkar, Spivak and Sen (cursorily treated in Chapter Two though examined in detail in Chapter Four) opened up new questions to apply to European development models.

The research strategy was set out to see in Chapter Three, how elites in both contexts operationalised these policy models, and for this using various methodological tools were used, such as, field work, critical observation, policy text review and interviews, for collection of data for thematic analysis. Extensive use was made of the interview, which was

treated in-depth, both as a valuable informative tool as well as for analytical purpose to understand the psychological patterns of behaviour and verbal interaction.

It was noted that though the tone of the interviewees and many of the policy documents were positive, the observable results in reality were at times not commensurate with that tone. Several partial causes could be ascribed for this situation, improper reporting, lack of proper data accounting and distortion in perception of social reality as well as miscommunication between the researcher and respondents which presented a blurred view of the ground reality.

Various means of research were employed in this thesis, however, and the triangulation of data from different methods was suggested so that standpoint theory could enable us to contextualise the different viewpoints and narratives of different governmental and civil society actors, especially those from Roma communities, Dalits in the state of Odisha and other similarly placed marginalized groups.. Bourdieu's (1986, 1991, 1999) theory of 'cultural capital' helps us to understand the acquisition as well as objectification of capital among researched communities and avoid "scientism", a top-down scientific method which naturalises the culture of the researcher in the description of human behaviour, stigmatising any description as pathological, an approach which is both prescriptive and top-down without in any way taking count of the feelings of the target communities researched.

As a guiding research requirement, the very first thing I had to do was agree with my supervisors and the university on a set of principles to ensure that my fieldwork would be ethical, that it would not, in any way, collude with persecution of marginalized communities where a slight bias in research could generate a different outcome and not stand the rigour of critical examination. Furthermore, I, as a researcher, could only be an observer of the field reality though at times I have participated with the people observed in the process of interviewing them.

My interviews started even before I had worked out my theory and hypotheses. My hypotheses thus evolved and developed as I absorbed the inputs from interviews, from those who were actually involved in implementing the policies as well as thick description (ethnography) of the objects of policy in order to get different perspectives on the "tools" of empowerment, especially during the study of my home state (given in Chapters Eight and Nine). In all this, maintaining a research diary and making detailed notes added value in interpreting my field studies. I hope these qualitative methods have enabled formation of

hypotheses to be more community/participant driven, and generate meaningful findings, as I collated and examined the data, in the light of the theories of the Indian thinkers examined in Chapter Four.

Chapter Five and Six dealt with the fieldwork done among Roma communities in Hungary, field visits, interviews and various other methods of data collection. I had detailed interaction with elites, policy makers, intellectuals and NGO activists during this period. Their interview responses supplemented paper reports on topics like segregation, ghettoisation, poverty, lack of access to proper healthcare as well as government institutions entrusted with the responsibility of these communities. The prevailing view was that these communities had been subjected to age-old prejudices and clichéd views from the mainstream society and media and this stunted their growth while impacting on the development process, an outcome for which ironically they were held accountable. The interviews also brought out the frustration of some Roma leaders at their slow progression in gaining political representation, and their views on how this could be addressed.

Interviews conducted with the Roma and non-Roma who were clearly part of the elite complemented the data from field studies. It was thus possible to generate tentative findings which would enable me to test and substantiate several hypotheses drawn in the previous chapters. Most of the actors interviewed showed an awareness that the official “facts” were at times not commensurate with reality. Several factors, as mentioned above, could be ascribed for this situation; improper reporting, lack of proper data accounting and distortion in perception of social reality. We also cannot rule out the factor of miscommunication between the researcher and respondents on account of the spoken language, above all, (I was deficient in Hungarian language in which most of my interviews on the ground were conducted in different parts of Hungary) which may have presented a blurred view of the ground reality. But standpoint theory helped me in developing empathy with the perspectives of the actors, helped by comparing Roma communities with other similarly placed marginalized groups, such as the Dalits in the state of Odisha (India).

As seen in the study, the empowerment and inclusion of Roma and Dalits constituted an alternative knowledge path in the study of marginalized communities. The causal factors impelling misery such as ghettoisation and its attendant evils could be taken up as symptomatic of marginalization to draw a proper framework for the study. In this context the



importance of identity as the *raison de vivre* for such communities begins to appear as an important marker legitimating policies targeted at them, adducing to them their value as citizens and conferring in them collective equality of esteem (if not yet power and privilege!) with other social groups. This epistemological hypothesis was to some extent tested when certain Roma-centric educational institutions were visited where the degree of cognitive abilities of the Roma children were seen to be no less than the non-Roma. This de-mystified cultural pejorative constructs about the inherent deficiencies of the Roma and built the case for a strong Roma identity as beneficial to a composite and coherent society.

This was contrasted with the top-down EU Framework to deal with the supposed cultural deficiencies of the Roma in critical detail where several lacuna were noted in disbursement, supervision, audit and accounting procedures of funds meant for empowerment of the Roma. Feedback from the field visits and interaction with the Roma and related civil society bodies had much to substantiate such observations. That called into question the efficacy of such institutional mechanisms, both in the European as well as Indian contexts with a view to generating policies for redressal.

The role of the elite in articulating a voice and fostering leadership conditions for the Roma was treated in detail. Interviews with the elite thus formed part of a robust intellectual discourse (captured in Chapter Seven). The critical reflection which followed each interview added substance to the discussions on diverse aspects of empowerment and social inclusion. The themes were broad-based and diverse enough to encapsulate each strand of the way of life of the marginalized communities as lived by the Roma and Dalits. In this, discrepancies were noted between what the elites envisioned for the Roma and the ground reality

Besides, in Chapter Seven, several features of the EU in enforcing its objectives through the NRIS were examined along with critical discussion on the concepts of civil society, the EU Open Method of Coordination (EUOMC) and themes of advocacy, empowerment and affirmative action. The idea was to link the findings from the interviews to revalidate seminal concepts which had been defined at the beginning of this study and facilitate comparison with the Indian development model discussed in Chapter Nine, while Chapter Eight gave a theoretical overview of the Indian development model with particular emphasis on the policy of affirmative action. The study of four votaries of affirmative action and inclusion measures as representing the cause of empowerment of the Dalits, namely, Gandhi, Ambedkar, Sen and

Spivak, was meant to situate the empowerment process of the Dalits as it had evolved over the last century and where it had currently reached. This brought out a clear continuity in the process of marginalization as it had existed over time, and thus conditioned broad generalizations of the impulses of marginalization. It was noted that even with currents of modernization having changed their lives dramatically in the last three decades, the fate of the Dalits had shown little substantive improvement. A broad review of ‘affirmative action’ policy, that which had served as the focal point of Dalit empowerment sanctioned by the constitution, was suggested as periodic 10-year proforma reviews have either been politically used by the ruling class or the Dalit elites to consolidate their power and numbers in a majoritarian democracy. However it did not detract from the usefulness of affirmative action as a desirable policy tool to bring about equity in the society. Thus this policy would be worthy of application elsewhere, albeit with contextual variations. Governance issues along with the state of political representation of such communities in Hungary as well as in India were brought out to contextualise human rights and media representations.

All of this laid down the foundation for a holistic examination of policy options prompted by the Odisha case study in Chapter Nine, when compared with the stated objectives of the EU Framework and the will of national governments in Europe. Each aspect of the recommended policy processes needed to be addressed in a substantive manner, starting with closer scrutiny of funds, and following up on the recommendations that civil society had to be closely involved in the process; that intermediate bodies like the Roma Minority Self Government (RMSG) agency could be either reformed top down or done away with altogether; and that along with across-the-board skill development for self-employability, there ought to be greater efforts towards formation of Roma elites and greater political representation of the Roma. Overall, this meant that a relevant policy of ‘affirmative action’ was needed to be put in place besides the state’s engagement in providing economic tools; all these hypotheses were to be taken together in understanding, addressing and ameliorating the condition of Roma communities.

This study has thus attempted to build a meta-paradigm, that which could apply to both the contexts, within which could be located the various specific paradigms of the actors, Hungarian and Indian, of the need of the state to perform a pro-active role with all other institutions lending critical support in moving the development process for marginalized communities forward. Given that political leadership in both Hungary and India were

formally supportive of the cause of empowerment of the marginalized communities in their respective contexts, the process, once it really took hold, was sure to accelerate. In the Hungarian context there was an additional and important factor at play lending critical support to the Roma empowerment and inclusion process, namely, the EU Framework or NRIS. As the mandated period of the EU Framework would be running out shortly (2020) it is but imperative to take stock of the latter's successes and failures to evaluate the policy as well as examine the extent of de-marginalization which the Framework could have engendered. Thus this study assumes critical importance in assessing the state of Roma empowerment and inclusion, which are the stated goals of the NRIS, at the present juncture.

Notwithstanding some more radical outlying critiques, the commonest view was that the EU Framework had been developed with genuinely sincere intentions though in the course of its application it had not proved effective enough in meeting its objectives. This thesis suggests a root-and-branch evaluation of the framework and its operation, using some of the questions about the lowest bottom-up level of the economy asked in the Indian context, but not really developed in the European context that would benefit not only the Roma, but many others who have been left behind by neo-liberal European development policies. The EU Framework could then be a valuable supportive agency, and mediate the gains of the development process for the marginalized communities wherever they existed with the onus of moving the process of engagement inhering in the state. The very fact that the state had been designated as the nodal agency through which all EU funds were to be canalized, built up a much stronger role for the state. On the other hand, the process would be handicapped if there were discrepancies found which could leave the cause of empowerment poorly attended. These discrepancies could happen because of the state's disconnection with these communities or more still with a general lack of interest in their development, while at the same time 'using' the marginalized communities for electoral purposes. An apathetic media and an indifferent mainstream society could further defeat the cause. It was therefore reasonable to assume that the state coordinate with all its agencies and moderate the dispensation of equity and justice for all communities alike. This could then lead towards overall development and a holistic and balanced socio-economic interaction, and go a long way towards achieving the objectives of the EU Framework.

On the Indian side, it may be questioned whether a neo-liberal system has performed any better for the marginalized communities than in Hungary. Nonetheless the radical awakening

among these communities to find their strength and political representation may still seek to take advantage of the state's political camouflage of claims to be a genuine facilitator of their welfare and rights (which have to be maintained to continue to delegitimise the violence perpetrated by "Maoist" guerrillas in the countryside or in urban theatres). Thus in India social and economic capital have been built up and in the current political situation, a revamped and strengthened Modi government enables the marginalized communities to find some broad support even among the advocates of neo-liberalism (with the enunciation of several pro-poor schemes with the ostensible reason of uplifting the marginalized communities) though it is still a long way towards their full empowerment and inclusion as equal members of the society.

### **10.3 The Need for a Critical Deconstruction of the Policy Paradigms**

How the pitfalls which have come between policy formulation and policy implementation can be addressed is the obvious question. We have to make clear the essential features of potentially successful models so that they may be emulated by stake holders in the empowerment process notwithstanding the varying political climate. The essential element is that the elites would have to take a benevolent and altruistic view, and not merely based on the neo-liberal calculus of 'interest', and lend wholehearted support to building agency for the marginalized.

This study has pointed out loopholes and leakages in the system to suggest how they could be eliminated, given that it would be finally in the interest of the state and all concerned stakeholders in the empowerment process. It has also strongly suggested that strengthening grassroots governance and using community development would add effectiveness to policy implementation. For example, the model of governance at the lowest level, with the Collector as the executive civil servant head and the Panchayat Samiti Chairman as the political, playing their part in tandem, could, in the Hungarian context, be replicated with the MRSG, or some more plausible successor body, as the political arm, working in coordination with a decentralized administrative body to empower Roma communities with various government-induced, civil society-supported schemes.

Corruption in both the Hungarian and Indian contexts seems endemic, proving to be a major hindrance on the way to success of these schemes. It would be naive to imagine that the state government at the highest levels would not be aware of this factor. The greater the degree of

corruption, the more is the inefficiency and tardiness in implementation of policy. There could be several ways to address the issue, both punitively as well as offering incentives or 'rewards' to authorities who acted vigilantly to prevent such practices, the classic 'carrot and stick' policy. This obviously called for greater participation of the community at the ground level inducing a better connection between the target groups and the authorities responsible for implementing such schemes.

Finally these schemes would be more likely to have good results if they were regularly audited by independent agencies, and supervised at the ground level, which is not always the case. The shortcomings in the Indian case, if addressed properly, could turn the same schemes to be ideally replicable in the Hungarian context as the marginalized communities in both were seen to be socio-economically at the same level of marginalization and poverty with minor contextual variations. Furthermore, both being emerging economies and democracies where the voice of the people mattered, the role of civil society could be broadly extended to both contexts, albeit with certain *in situ* changes.

Here a note of caution needs to be added. The Indian system, representing a majoritarian state where the first-past-the-post system is prevalent, does not give scope to the marginalized communities at the lowest rung of the society to express themselves except at periodic intervals of elections where their votes are manipulated by the ruling parties and their cohorts. The essential task would be to bring about structural reforms right in education and skill-training, to make these communities reliant enough to participate in their own development, so that they do not have to depend on the largesse of the state. Along with their own development, and accumulating both social and economic capital their dependence on the state could be curtailed to forge their own path of development with their elites and leadership, provided the latter are equally sensitised to the cause..

#### **10.4 Role of Civil Society and Media**

It is universally acknowledged that the social media has come to assert a great deal of importance in today's societies in both India and Hungary. Even though there is great concern about the burgeoning power of large corporations like Facebook and Google, it remains true that social media provides an enormous field for expression of the voices of civil society and that could be properly synergised by the state to partner in the development process. At the moment, both commercial and social media are seen by marginalized

communities to be normally biased against them, whether in Hungary or India. Consequently these communities suffer from the proliferation of negative tropes and a consistently indifferent attitude of the mainstream population. This gets further accentuated when the state comes down heavily on civil society bodies and ‘anti-national’ individuals throwing them into incarceration and resultant oblivion. The so-called witch-hunt against ‘urban Naxals’, as mentioned earlier, is a case in point, when eminent intellectuals, journalists and social activists who may have dedicated their lifetimes for improving the lot of Dalit groups, are kept under house arrest and their cases made to languish in law courts. Such witch-hunting has been happening at regular intervals in both countries under study, and will only increase as majoritarianism gains ground and a neo-liberal class is strengthened to dictate terms to the state. No opposition, least of all from the poorest sections of the society, would be brooked. This situation could seriously affect integration and empowerment of marginalized communities though in both contexts it was noted that these communities could add value to the society by becoming normal ‘non-marginalized’ citizens, if only their worth was recognised by the state. It was important therefore that agencies responsible for the process were to play a supporting role with the state being more a facilitator, rather than a conductor, of the empowerment-enabling schemes. In an ideal and socially redemptive situation, civil society groups and media would have an important role to play. In fact a lot would depend on their active support and goodwill in bridging the state with the communities, playing the role of intermediaries and becoming the voice of these people to the rest of the world.

### **10.5 Recommendations: Lessons to be learned:**

This study on a comparative study of socio-economic processes of empowerment and inclusion of marginalized communities has covered fairly broad ground in the domain of social justice. Marginalization is a fact of life for deprived social groups in every society, ancient or modern. By comparing two important marginalized communities situated in similar politico-economic contexts, this study underlines the ‘value’ of comparison as a social science research tool, and helps in bringing such communities into one comparable framework. This therefore could be a valuable aid for the researcher in finding new ways of moving such comparative studies forward. By bringing marginal groups closer they could help in building solidarity and agency amongst themselves and building the latter’s self-esteem and strength.

A number of studies have come out on the history, and more recently the historiography of the 'Roma factor' in Europe, though cross-cultural references have been seriously lacking. The fact that India is to a considerable extent an originating country for the Roma has been misunderstood with the old "Gypsylorist" comparisons tending towards a racist essentialism, rather than a historically specific socio-economic comparison.. This study could go towards making more fruitful a comparative approach to the study of marginalized communities and the ways of empowering them into academic curricula and current intellectual discourse. It would be a novel approach to have these communities share their experiences, as this study has aimed at doing, and break through their insularity, what in the sociology of the marginalised could be called the 'ghetto mentality'.

Such comparative studies would further facilitate inter-culturalism, which is the need of the hour given the penchant for authoritarianism and 'regulationism' among strong leaders and the concomitant spread of radicalism, both from the extreme left as well as the extreme right sections in the society. Such currents by their own logic would not allow groups at the margins of the society to get into the mainstream, thus forever keeping the cleavage between the centre and the margins vulnerable to exploitation. Unless this distance is breached no social movement could possibly gain ground and societies would remain forever disintegrated within and insular from the outside. This in effect would defeat the purpose of multilateralism where every nation, small or big, has to function as an integral part of a global whole. The EU is one such vibrant example of a successful multilateral body managing fissures and dissident voices within itself. Thus a framework advocated by the EU to assuage the Roma cause as a serious instance of human rights violation besides, and above all, being a gruesome example of age-old poverty and marginalization would be incumbent upon preserving certain criteria which condition inter-state behaviour. The comparison between the ideals of a regional body which has been in existence for over half a century and an idealisation of the affirmative action policy in the Indian context would throw open doors for cooperation at an inter-state level, and bring this on the agenda of the ongoing India-EU discussions if such an agenda was pushed forth by lobbies (elites and activists) on both sides. This could be an antidote to the anti-globalization voices emanating from time to time at such forums, and would tend to lead towards a saner global society.

Finally the value of this study, at a personal level, lies in the fact that it has helped me enormously in having experienced the life of the marginals, observing them from close and

being with them for hours, talking, watching, and sometimes joining them in their many activities. This, after having lived in an elite position as a diplomat for almost the whole of my working career, has come as a life-changing experience. The study, without exaggeration, has become a turning point for me and I wish to develop further studies from here, so also encourage social science theorists to inquire further into the processes of empowerment towards realising an equitable world order, as a post-new economic world order reality, more so to develop comparative studies in this highly relevant area.



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## **Appendix- 1**

(Questionnaire used for elite interviews)

1. Have the Roma in CEE countries, and more particularly in Hungary, been integrated into society, socially, economically, spatially and culturally?
2. Since the EU Framework for National Roma Strategies (NRS) has been posited (2011), considerable funds have been allocated, largely targeting welfare of Roma in a sustainable development framework. Do you feel that such funds have been gainfully employed and are reaching the target groups as they should? If not, what, according to you, could be the reasons?
3. Has the NRS been successful? (Interviewees may comment on any particular country)
4. Is the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) effective? Should there be a strategy?
5. How can the EU Commission (EC) improve on the Roma Framework? (NRS)? (with particular reference to monitoring, assessment, redistribution/structural funding and EU Race Directive?)
6. What is your assessment of civil society and its work in realizing and achieving Roma social inclusion? Do you believe there is a problem of NGOisation? Has civil society achieved inclusive community development? If yes, to what extent concerning the Roma?
7. What is the role of intermediary bodies in civil society in the NRS? Is civil society performing its role correctly? What is your opinion of Open Society Foundation (OSF), European Roma Traveller Forum (ERTF), European Grassroots Organisation (ERGO), and similar bodies?
8. If we adopt a bottom-up participative approach, would it be more effective than a paternalistic top-down approach in the European context? What do you think could be the major elements to adopt such a policy on the ground and make it effective?
9. In Hungary, the state, though a major stakeholder in the whole process, has tended to pass on the responsibility to the Roma Minority Self-Government agency. Do you think it is a correct approach?
10. There is no dearth of Roma political parties in countries like Hungary. Why do you think they lack political representation then? Without political responsibility can the Roma have an effective voice?
11. Is it possible to build leadership from among the Roma communities in a bottom-up approach? If yes, what should the state do? If not, why not?

12. Grassroots economic tools for self-entrepreneurship have not been a major success so far. Consequently the overall poverty levels amongst the Roma communities have stagnated or declined. What do you feel are the major reasons for this?

13. Are there advantages in the Roma developing a common European identity within the EU Framework?

14. Are you aware of India's development process, post-independence, for marginalized groups? Do you feel that this has been a major success story, considering it has been showing positive results in one of the major emerging countries of the world? Can some of the poverty alleviation models be used in India such as Women's Support Groups, Collectives and Micro-credit be more wisely applied to the Roma in Hungary?

15. Are there merits in developing a realistic framework for Roma development? What could be the major structural and systemic changes on the ground?

16. With your research background, how do you rank the Roam on a 10-point scale (10 being the highest score) as per the following parameters,

(i) Inclusion

(ii) Education

(iii) Housing

(iv) Work/Entrepreneurship

(v) Health

(vi) Empowerment

(viii) Receptivity to reforms

## Appendix- 2

### (Letter of participation/consent)

I am carrying out research as part of a doctoral thesis at the Corvinus University, Budapest. The research pertains to the theme of Roma empowerment and inclusion in Hungary through the EU Framework of National Roma Integration Strategies (NRIS), and to build a comparative framework with empowerment processes concerning the marginalized groups in India.

As part of this research, I would like to interview you. I would ideally like to record the interview and cite your name. However, if you wish, I can interview you but anonymize your name and not record the interview.

If you need any further clarification or wish to withdraw your participation, please contact me at .....

Regards,

Malay Mishra, India's Ambassador to Hungary

Signed consent

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The objectives and conditions of research have been explained to me.

I, (interviewee) agree to be interviewed

I do/do not give my consent to be recorded

I do/do not give my consent for my name to be cited

Name.....

Date.....

### **Appendix- 3**

#### **Questionnaire designed to elicit response from Roma respondents in individual or group settings**

Your Name? Age? Gender? Ethnic origin?

Name of your village?

Are you married? If yes, what is your family size?

Do you belong to any religion? If so, what and since when?

What is your profession? Income per month?

Are you working for the Public Works Programme? Since when?

Your educational qualifications?

Do you know your mayor? How?

Have you met an Agency (Roma Self-Government) representative?

Are there medical facilities in your village?

Is there a school in the village? Primary/Secondary?

Is there a Cultural or Community Centre in the village?

Is there a grocery store in the village?

If not, where do you go to buy your provisions? How do you go?

What would you like your children to be in the future?

Have you been to Budapest? For what?

Are you satisfied with your present condition?

(A Hungarian version of the questionnaire was selectively used with the help of intermediaries and data thus collected were analysed in the research diary. Much of the data was used as part of the ethnography study)



## **Appendix- 4**

### **Interviewees (arranged in alphabetical order), and Themes of interviews**

1. T.A.Acton (Intellectual) - Integration, NRIS, EU Race Directive, Civil Society, NGOisation, Role of Institutions, Development, RMSG, Political representation, Leadership, Entrepreneurship, Identity
2. Roma Mayor (1) (Politician) - Leadership, Segregation, RMSG, Political ambitions, Advocacy, Corruption, Economic Empowerment, Sustainable farming, EU funding
3. Minister for Roma affairs (Politician) - Culture, Education, EUOMC, Affirmative action, NRIS, PWP, Political representation, Economic empowerment
4. Roma activist (Intellectual) - Diversities, Good practices, Vision for future, Roma in decision making, Advocacy, NRIS, EU funding, Racism, Criminalisation in media, Economic Crisis, RMSG, Human Rights, Cultural self-representation, Gender equality, Identity, Accountability
5. School principal (Educator) - Gandhi school, Nativism, Leadership, Romani language and culture
6. Dunajeva (Roma Researcher) - Identity, Discrimination, Nationalism, Marginalization, Roma in Communist society, Roma Decade, Political representation, NGOisation, Empowerment, EU funding, NRIS, EUOMC, Civil Society, Role of Institutions, Roma elite, Accountability, Roma as 'social issue', Leadership, Economic empowerment
7. Farkas (Official) - Political representation, RMSG, EU funding, Integration, Corruption, NRIS, Education, Healthcare
8. (Official) - National Roma Council, Corruption, RMSG, Political representation, Segregation, NRIS, Discrimination, Entrepreneurship
9. Jaroka (Politician) - EU's approach towards Roma, Monitoring, NRIS, Integration, Hungary's strategy, EU funding, Indian experience, Roma Decade, Soros, Education, Development, Banking, Corruption, Political representation, NGOisation
10. Kovacs, K. (Professor) - Diversity
11. Former Minister for Roma affairs (Politician) - NRIS, RMSG, Ghettoisation, Education, Demography, Government programme, political representation
12. Retired Professor (Intellectual) - Diversity, Poverty, Education, Discrimination, Civil Society
13. Roma leader (Politician)- Roma life, future of Roma empowerment

14. Nagy (Educationist) - De-segregation in education, Integrative model, Knowledge gap, Fellowship among Roma, Religious education, Culture, English language skills, Adult education
15. Orban (Intellectual) - Cserdi initiative, Economic empowerment, Leadership, Vision, Time banks, Social capital, Micro-credit, Agriculture, Skilling, Role of the Church, Diversity, Roma elites, Cooperatives, Education/Technology
16. Former M.P. (Politician) - Diversity, Education, Segregation, NRIS, EU funding, Political representation, Media, RMSG, Civil Society
17. Redzepi (Activist) - Culture, Affirmative action, EU funding, Roam Decade, Roma elite, Racism, Poverty, Government-NGO interaction, Roam inclusion, NRIS
18. Rostas (Roma Researcher) - Discrimination, Impact of change, Roam Decade, NRIS, Political representation, Integration, EUOMC, RMSG, Development
19. Medical professional (Professional) - Education, Roam elite, Networking, Integration, Healthcare, NGOs
20. Rovid (Official) - Roma Decade, NRIS, Advocacy, Intermediary bodies, Civil society, Development, RMSG, Leadership. Entrepreneurship, European Identity
21. Media representative (Media) - Diversity, Role of government, Identity, Corruption, Leadership, EU funding
22. Taba (Roma Researcher) - NGOs, Human Rights, Identity, Segregation, Education
23. Senior official of NRC (Official) - Segregation, Education, EU Race Directive, Affirmative action, EU funding, Entrepreneurship/micro-finance, Bureaucratisation, Civil Society
24. Roma Mayor (2) (Activist) - Human Rights, Discrimination, Roma during Communism, Skilling, Migration, NRIS, Leadership, Future of Roma

(Total number of interviewees - 24. Total number of common fields - 26. Those who have not given their consent to their names being used for the purpose of the interview have been anonymised, as shown above. Repetition of fields during individual interviews has served to highlight the issues and contemporize them. The fields had been selected a priori and used/identified during the course of individual interviews)

## Appendix- 5

### Questionnaire for interview with Collector, Kandhamal District

1. How long have you been in office?
2. What has been your experience in so far as STs are concerned, particularly on the issues of,
  - a) Good governance and tribal participation in local government
  - b) Economic development with particular reference to exploitation of mineral and forest resources and consequent displacement
  - c) Cultural life, folklore and indigenous knowledge
  - d) Educational practices
  - e) Livelihood generation. What are the major practices you would like to name? Has government intervention been effective in boosting livelihood?
3. How frequently do you interact with the following and in what way?
  - a) Local tribal NGOs
  - b) Tribal leaders, heads of village communities
  - c) SHGs and other women's bodies
  - d) Individuals (tribals)
4. What has been the thrust of the healthcare sector? Do the target groups receive adequate and timely medical assistance?
5. Is there any social segregation in so far as the local tribal population is concerned?
6. What is the degree of political participation among the tribal groups under your purview? Do you feel that is adequate or needs to be more visible?
7. Since you have held this office, do you think you have contributed to bringing about change in tribal societies?

## **Appendix- 6**

### **Questionnaire for interview with Collector, Puri District**

1. Since when have you taken office as Collector of Puri district?
2. How many Blocks are there in this district? Out of them how many of them are inhabited by SC/ST communities, and how many of the Blocks have you personally visited?
3. Who are the dominant SC communities of Puri and what is their combined population as compared to the population of the state?
4. What are the major developmental projects in your district targeting marginalised communities which you feel would have significantly empowered their lives, and how? What is the total quantum of funds spent on these projects?
5. Apart from district administration, which are the other agencies/private sector involved in developmental work? Are there any NGOs working on the ground?
6. The following observations were made by me during my recent field visit to Pipli Block (Mangalapur and Mrudhanapur villages):
  - a) Several AWCs have been functioning for years in makeshift places without proper space, they do not have proper electricity or drinking water facilities either.
  - b) While the state government has singled out rural housing for focused attention, several landless SC families in Matiapokhari Sahi (Mangalapur) have no houses. They cannot avail any funding from the government under any scheme nor have the means to build houses on their own.
  - c) There is chronic shortage of drinking water in several habitations. Has any water conservation measure been initiated in the district?
  - d) Some SJHGs are functioning for namesake, may be just to avail some government grant. However they do not seem to have any worthwhile economic activity. Besides they seem to be badly managed with hardly any supervision or counselling.
  - e) The MNREGA scheme is virtually in limbo, as the daily wage prescribed under the scheme is insufficient for attracting local labour who otherwise could earn more for unskilled labour elsewhere. Is there a correlation between the districts which are relatively forward and dearth of manpower to join MNREGA?
  - g) Alcoholism seems to be rampant particularly among the younger generation who are unemployed, semi-educated and frustrated. Your comments on the above observation?

7. Are there instances of communal violence in your district?
8. What are the various measures for implementation of Central/State government schemes, specially for poverty alleviation?

## **Appendix- 7**

### **Questionnaire for interview with Minister for Tribal Affairs, Government of India**

1. You are in charge of an important portfolio like Tribal Affairs. Can you highlight the particular areas concerning your Ministry where India has taken important strides since independence? What has been the role of your government in this area?
2. In my research I have dealt with social inclusion and empowerment of Roma communities in Europe who are believed to have originated from Indian tribal groups. A large number of such groups, particularly those on the verge of extinction, can be largely classified under marginalized communities in our country. Yet India has one of the highest rates of GDP in the world currently. What accounts for this contradiction, that development has not translated into empowerment of such large masses of the under privileged population?
3. We have seen successive governments at the Centre, including the present government, undertake a large number of populist schemes targeted at the marginalized communities. Huge funds are allocated for such schemes. Do you think such allocations are judiciously utilised? If not, what according to you could be the remedial measures?
4. The ‘Father of the Indian Constitution’, Dr Ambedkar, is known for his untiring efforts in bringing about ‘affirmative action’ which he got enshrined in the constitution for the benefit of SCs and STs, for getting them reservations in educational institutions and jobs. Do you believe that this policy has helped tribal groups in being collectively empowered?
5. Would you subscribe to the view that it is time to review the reservation policy which even Ambedkar had proposed?
6. It has been seen that marginalized communities, because of their numbers, form vote banks and are wooed by almost all political parties. Even they are well represented in all tiers of governance, including in the Parliament. You belong to the tribal community and are the sole elected member of the ruling party to the Parliament. Why do you think the tribals continue to suffer and what could be the remedial measures?
7. Do you feel that there should be a greater sense of participation and higher degree of advocacy among marginalized groups in national development and that could be the most effective answer to bringing about social justice and empowerment?
8. While analyzing the tribal situation in India, one comes across the debate of ‘indigenous culture versus development’. Lot of tribal habitats have been affected because of rampant mining or deforestation activities where Dalits have been the sufferers. Do you think such policy goes towards empowering these communities at the cost of losing their cultural capital?
9. What are the specific projects that your government has taken up to build indigenous cultures which could be recognised as intangible heritage of mankind?

10. Sometimes one hears of tribal groups getting caught in the crosshairs of conflict between Maoist groups and state security forces. In such situations their voices are either muzzled or misrepresented to portray them as having sided with extremist elements. Consequently the truth never comes out. How can such activities be effectively addressed?

11. Do you feel that many of India's 'affirmative action' and economic empowerment schemes could be relevant in the larger context of their application to marginalized communities equally placed in other parts of the world? If so, what could be the Indian schemes which could be universalised and find broader application?