the social as well as the religious leadership of the village. The affairs of the Mundā villages of Chota Nagpur are in the hands of the Mundā and Pāhān who perform the secular and religious duties, respectively. We have, in addition to them, for each village a Panchayat which takes up important matters like punishment of offenders against tribal customs, settlement of serious disputes, partition of family lands, etc. In the Oraon villages the Mahto, the secular headman, the Pāhān, the religious headman, and the Panch, the village council, control the affairs. How these bodies discharged their respective functions will be clear from the following observations of R.C. Ray: 'The village Panch or council of village elders decide all disputes between the villagers and try and punish offences against the social and moral codes of the tribe. Partition of family lands according to tribal customs is one of the most important functions of the village Panch. Matters and disputes relating to marriage and sexual tabus and offences and cases of suspected witchcraft are still almost invariably referred to the village Panch. The Mahto or secular headman manages the secular affairs of the village and is the intermediary between the villagers and the landlord and Governmental authorities and the Pāhān (Oraon, Naigas) or village priest seeks to maintain harmonious relations between the village and the spirit-world.' In Coorg, the management of the village rests with the headman called Takka and the village elders. 'They decide cases of violation of caste rules or social etiquette, cases of sexual immorality and so forth. Three to five Takkas constitute a Nād over which there is a headman called Mukyastama and a Nād Panchayat which decide disputes which the Takka cannot settle. The next higher organisation is the Simatoka of which there are four in Coorg proper.' The office of headman is highly important among the Santals. P.O. Bodding says, 'The Majhi is the head of the village people. All the people will have to follow his lead. In ordering and inviting, in calling and restraining, at the name-giving, at the initiating festivals, at marriages, when hunting and chasing at feasts and festivals, at religious instruction and worship, in connection with rice and curry, with beer and liquor, with spirits and mountain spirits, in quarrelling and squabbling, in strife and dispute, when there is hunger and thirst, with landlords and moneylenders, when crime and misdeeds occur, in connection,
with theft and stealing, with medicine and witchcraft, with wenches and strumpets, when there is fighting and killing, murder and wickedness, in grief and sorrow, in calamities and dangers, in illness and pain, at dying and falling away, in ceremonies connected with death and disease, at cremation and at final funeral ceremonies, in connection with all this the Majhi has responsibility.' Referring to Indian villages, Lord Metcalfe observes: 'They seem to last where nothing else lasts. Dynasty after dynasty tumbles down; revolution succeeds revolution; Hindu, Pathan, Mughal, Mahratta, Sikh, English are all masters in turn; but the village communities remain the same.'108 This statement may be applied with greater justification to the tribal villages in India. If the modern tribal headmen wield enormous power and influence in their villages, there can be no shadow of doubt that their forerunners discharged the same functions, perhaps more effectively, centuries earlier.

References and Notes

1. X 62.11; 107.5.
2. Atharva Veda, iii.5.7; xix.31.12; Taittiriya Samhita, ii.5.4.4; Maiitravya-
   ni Sainhita, i.6.5; Kāthaka Sainhita, viii.4; x.3; Vājaraneciy Sainhita,
   xv.15; xxx.20; Taittiriya Brāhmaṇa, i.1.4.8; 7.3.4; ii.7.18.4; Śa-
   tapatha Brāhmaṇa, iii.4.1.7; v.4 4.8; viii.6.2.1; Brhadāraṇyaka Upa-
   niṣad, iv.3.37.38.
4. V.3.1.5.
5. Alindisches Leben, p. 171.
6. VI, i, p. 247.
7. APIII, p. 108.
8. II.5.4.4.
10. VII.28.6.
11. X.34.6.
12. I.1.10.6.
13. V.3.1.10.

4. Some scholars do not agree with the view that the Sabhā was a village
   assembly. B.A. Saleore (APIII, p. 391), for example, maintains that
   this theory, in view of a passage in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, referring
to a king as attending the assembly, cannot be regarded as tenable.
   Unfortunately, it is difficult for us to agree with Saleore. The Vedic
   texts refer to the presence of the king in the Sabhā only in one of their
   passages. This clearly proves that the king attended the Sabhā only
   under abnormal circumstances. In Vedic literature, we find terms like
sabhāpati, sabhāpāla and sabhā-cāra but they have never been used as a designation for the king. Thus the view that the Sabhā denoted the assembly of the villagers does not appear to be unfounded. Ludwig (Translation of the Rg Veda, pp. 3, 253-6) is, however, opposed to the view that the Sabhā was a village assembly and maintains that it was an assembly of the Brāhmaṇas and Maghavans. Bloomfield (VI, II, p. 42) opines that the Sabhā was used for a domestic purpose. K.P. Jayaswal (HP, pp. 11-20) observes that the Sabhā ‘was certainly related to the Samiti but its exact relationship is not deducible from the data available. Probably it was a standing and a stationary body of selected men under the authority of the Samiti.’

15. II.5.4.4.
17. Taittiriya Sanshitā, ii.3.1.3; Kāṭhaka Sanshitā, xi.4.
18. I.354.
19. I.98.
20. SONEI, p. 162.
21. CLAI, p. 128.
22. I.483.
23. IV.115.
24. IV.115.
25. II.134.
26. CLAI, p. 143.
27. HQ, XIII, p. 614.
29. II.10.26.7.
31. II.10.26.5.
32. III.10; IV.6; IV.4.
33. V.3.
34. But what was the extent of an Indian village in ancient times? An answer to this question can be found in the following statement of Kauṭilya, ‘He should cause villages to be settled consisting mostly of Śūdra agriculturists, with a minimum of one hundred families and a maximum of five hundred families, with boundaries extending over one kroṣa or two krośas, (and) affording mutual protection. He should fix, as the boundary lines a river, a mountain, a forest, a stretch of pebbles, sand, etc., a cavern, an embankment, a Śāmi tree, a Śālmāli tree or a milk-tree (like Aśvatha, Nyagrodha etc.)’ (KA, II, pp. 62-3). The interpretation of the term kula in the original passage in the sense of a family, as has been suggested above, has been opposed by some scholars who observe that the term denotes land that can be ploughed by one, two or three ploughs. If this view is accepted, a small village would then have an area of 100 such fields with a boundary of one kroṣa, and a large village should comprise 500 fields with a boundary of two kroṣas. The commentator on the Abhidhānakājendra, a work of a much later date refers to ten different theories, then current, on the size of a grāma.
A.S. Altekar (RT, p. 143) discusses them in the following words, ‘The first theory maintained that it could comprise not only the area of settlement, but also the territory up to the limits of which the cows go out while grazing. The second theory contended that grāma could not denote so extensive an area, since cows often go out for grazing in the fields of contiguous villages. It maintained that only that much area, which is traversed by the grass and fuel gatherers in the course of the day, can be included in the meaning of the term in question. The third view maintained that even this interpretation is open to a similar objection and, therefore, grāma denotes only the area included in the boundaries of the village in question. The fourth view reduced even this extent and preferred to regard the grāma as comprising only the area up to the village well. The subsequent views go on curtailing the extent of grāma still further till the climax is reached when it is contended that grāma means that temple or village-hall which was first built in the village, and around which the settlement subsequently grew. The commentator further observes that grāma, in the opinion of some, meant the individual houses of the speakers; the last view cited by him is that the term can be used to denote the headman of the village as well’ (RT, p. 143).

35. IV.4. P.V. Kane (HD, III, p. 282) observes in this connection, ‘Even in the twentieth century in the Bombay Presidency under the Village Police Act (Bombay Act VIII of 1867), the village headman has the authority to try and on conviction to punish with confinement for a period not exceeding twenty-four hours any person charged with the commission of petty assault or abuse within the limits of a village and the person convicted has no right of appeal to any court or magistrate against such conviction and only the High Court has the power to entertain a petition for revision.’

36. II.34.
37. II.274.
38. II.1.
39. III.10.18.
41. VII.115, 116.
42. V.5.5.
43. P. 147.
44. Luders’ List, No. 48.
45. VII.114.
46. Jolly’s Sanskrit Text, III.
47. Luders’ List, No. 48. Another inscription from Mathura, belonging to the reign of Vāsudeva, refers to a Grāmika whose wife installed an image of the Arhat Rṣabha (Luders’ List, No. 69a).
48. VII.114. While commenting on this passage, Kullūka says: dvayor=ili/ dvayor=grāmayor=mmadhye trayāṇāṁ vā grāmāndhām pahāndhāṁ vā/ grāma-satānāṁ vā/ gulānāṁ rakṣitrum-puruṣa-samāhāṁ satyapradhānām/ puruṣa=ādhiṣṭhitāṁ/ rāstrasya samgrahāṁ rakṣa-sthānam kuryāṁ
49. X.46-7.
50. VII.116.
51. III.5-7.
52. VII.118.
53. The Milinda-panha (D.C. Sircar, Early Indian Political and Administrative Systems, Calcutta, 1972, p. 123) speaks of a subordinate officer who used to make public announcements on behalf of the village headman.
54. VII.118. Kulläka points out that he was entitled to get the miscellaneous taxes in kind but not a portion of the annual revenue (yāni anna-pān=endhan=adīn grāma-vāsibhiḥ pratyahāraṁ rājite dēyāni, na tu avdak-aram-dhānyānām=jaśato bhāgaḥ ity=ādikari-tāni grām=ādhipathvṛtiṣṭhānān gṛhiniyāt). R.S. Sharma (APII, p. 172) observes, ‘But we notice two important changes in the office of the village headman in Manu... Secondly, the grāmika was paid not in the shape of fines, realised from the villagers, as in pre-Maurya times, or in cash salary as the grāmabhṛtaka in Maurya times, but in grant of a piece of land.’ This observation is based on the wrong interpretation of the relevant passages of the Manusāṁhitā.
55. EI, XXXII, p. 307.
56. EI, XV, No. 7.
57. LGA, p. 298.
58. CII, III, p. 111.
59. H.C. Raychaudhuri (PHAI, p. 562) points out that the village functionaries were generally placed under the district officials but in exceptional cases they maintained direct dealings with the provincial governors.
60. EI, XV, pp. 135ff.
61. Much controversy has raged on the significance of Grāmāṣṭakulādhikaraṇa. The term has been explained by R.G. Basak (EI, XV, p. 137) to mean a local officer, ‘appointed over eight Kulas, a technical term used to denote an inhabited country, especially as much ground as can be cultivated by two ploughs each driven by six bulls’ (HB, I, p. 269). R.D. Banerji (JASB, NS, V, p. 460) interprets it to mean an officer exercising authority over a group of eight villages. N.N. Dasgupta (IC, V, pp. 110-1) opines that it was a judicial court comprising more or less eight judges. The Dhanadaha copper plate inscription gives us a clue to the solution of the problem. The term is used there as a neuter singular and this is an indication that the term does not indicate an officer, big or small, for whom a masculine singular form would have been more suitable. Grāmāṣṭakulādhikaraṇa under these circumstances would signify a village board, invested with definite administrative power rather than an individual officer.
62. SI, p. 333.
63. SGAI, p. 224.
64. Ibid., pp. 342-3.
65. P. 274.
66. HK, p. 141.
67. EHCK, p. 131.
68. IA, VIII, pp. 15-17.
69. EI, II, pp. 359-61.
70. PIA, p. 161.
71. Ibid., p. 163.
72. Kṛtyakalpataru, Rājadharmakāṇḍa, pp. 79 and 81.
73. 223.1.
74. II.812.
75. II.343-44.
76. IV.248-52.
77. IV.348-49.
78. II.339-52.
79. 1.30-31; VII.24.
80. Luders' List, No. 1327.
81. VII.31.
82. VII.31.
83. EHD, p. 135.
84. EI, XXXI, pp. 1ff.
85. Ibid., p. 4.
86. PHAI, p. 524.
87. EI, IX, p. 58.
88. EHD, p. 237.
89. ASLUP, p. 126.
90. Ibid., p. 129.
91. RT, p. 190.
92. Ibid., p. 199.
93. IA, XII, p. 221.
94. RT, p. 206.
96. JBBRAS, X, pp. 283ff.
97. RT, p. 190.
98. EHD, p. 499.
99. EI, VII.
102. RT, pp. 193-4.
103. TVB, pp. 69-70.
104. Ibid., p. 70.
105. JBORS, XVI, pp. 446-7.
106. Ibid., p. 449.
107. TIS, p. 104.
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