

Dies lässt die abschließende Folgerung zu, dass sich die aktive Kultur der Moderne im gegenwärtigen ruralen Georgien in nur sehr eingeschränktem Maße durchgesetzt hat.

Frau Dr. Marina Bokutschawa vielen Dank für die Übersetzung des Textes ins Deutsche.

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Some Responses of Communities to Social Tensions in India

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I

The focus of this short article is on the ways in which different communities react to social tensions that are built up because of one or a multiplicity of reasons, thus yielding conflict, man-

ifest and/or latent, or prevailing after the open conflict, an episode of violence and enmity, has subsided for the time, but it can always emerge with greater intensity, causing an immeasurable loss to material as well as nonmaterial, and sensate, aspects of culture. A point that precipitates here is that sometimes administrative and political institutions do not respond to social tensions. On the contrary, they look through them, neither denying their existence nor accepting their prevalence. The communities are, therefore, left with no alternative but to devise their own solution to social tensions, whether they are between different sections of the same community or between different communities. Further, not many scholars have paid attention to these solutions that the communities – or, its different sections – have themselves improvised, and the fact that these solutions discovered by one community have been adopted by the others that were at one time placed in a similar situation.

In undertaking a study of this type, one will be required to adopt an approach "from below," i. e., from the angle of the community, the grassroots level, rather than "from above," i. e., from the perspective of politics and administration, the external institutions that exercise their control over communities. The most appropriate methodology for this study is fieldwork, in which the ethnographer (of social tensions) lives with the people under study in their natural habitat and observes their social life by participating in it to the extent it is possible and permissible.

One is also advised to remember that social tensions are ubiquitous. They exist in all societies, including the small and "primitive," although societies differ in terms of the causes and the degree of manifestation of social tensions. Following Ralf Dahrendorf (1958), who said that the absence of conflict in a society is an abnormality, one may also say that the absence of social tensions is also a state of abnormality, because both social tensions and conflict contribute to change in society.

It may be illustrated with the aid of an example. In a team research with the Gaddis, a pastoral community in Dalhousie (the district of Kangra in Himachal Pradesh), the initial impression the field-workers gathered was that the community was free from conflicts and tensions.¹ The people denied vehemently the existence of conflicts between them. Also, the records kept at their council office did not carry any entry that could have substantiated any episode of conflict between

¹ I was a member of this group fieldwork, which was carried out in November–December, 1993. See Mitra (1994).