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## Community Effects of "Tinka Tinka Sukh", an Entertainment-Education Radio Soap Opera in India.<sup>1</sup>

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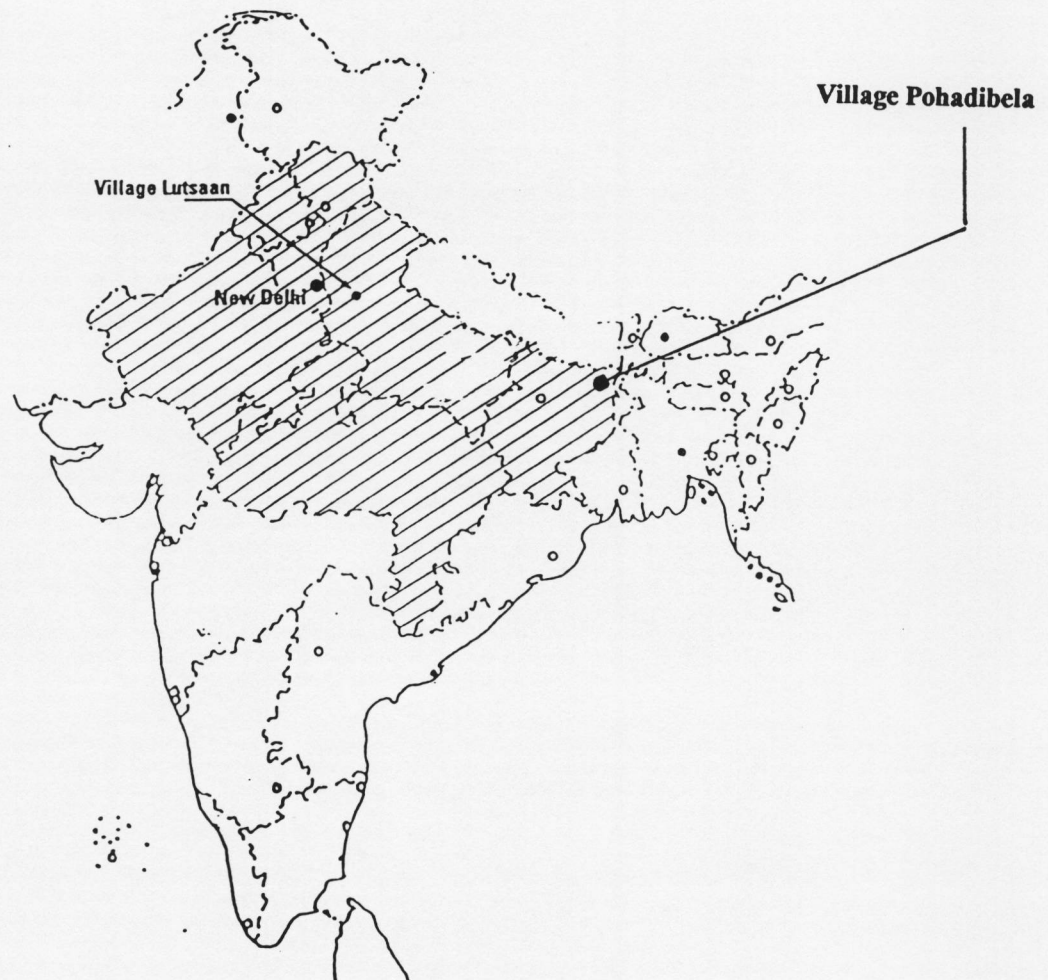
The purpose of the present report is to describe my observations and experiences during a 12-day research trip to Village Pohadibela in Darbhanga District, Bihar, India, from July 6 to July 14, 1998, and to Village Lutsaan in Mahamayanagar District, Uttar Pradesh, India (see Figure 1), from July 22<sup>10</sup> August 2, 1998. This trip report was compiled in the Fall of 1998 with the assistance of Dr. Arvind Singhal at the School of Interpersonal Communication, Ohio University. In addition to this report, several interviews conducted in these two research sites are being translated and transcribed.

The research team for the visit to Village Pohadibela in Bihar consisted of four investigators from the Centre for Media Studies (CMS)--Dinesh Singh, Rajesh Mishra, Dheeraj Sinha, and Rachna Singh--and I (Saumya Pant) from Ohio University. The research team for Village Lutsaan in Uttar Pradesh (U.P.) consisted of Mumtaz Ahmed from CMS and I (Saumya Pant) from Ohio University. Both of us were familiar with Village Lutsaan as we were part of the research team that visited the site in August 1997.

Both the Bihar and U.P. research trips centered around investigating the community effects of the entertainment-education radio soap opera, "Tinka Tinka Sukh", produced by All India Radio. Audience letters from Village Pohadibela and Village Lutsaan, written in response to "Tinka Tinka Sukh", noted that listening to the radio program had engendered strong community effects. This was our first visit to Village Pohadibela and our second to Village Lutsaan. The report is organized in two sections.

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<sup>1</sup> We thank the Centre for Media Studies, New Delhi, especially Mr. Mumtaz Ahmed, Dinesh Singh, Rajesh Mishra, Dheeraj Sinha, Rachna Singh, and Ms. P. N. Vasanti, for their invaluable help in conducting this field research. We also thank Mrs. Usha Bhasin, Executive Producer of "Tinka Tinka Sukh" and Population Communications International, New York, for their support of our research in India.



**Figure 1. Village Lutsaan in Uttar Pradesh State and Village Pohadibela in Bihar State, the Two Research Sites for Studying the Community Effects of “Tinka Tinka Sukh”. The Shaded-Portion Represents the Hindi-Speaking Area of North India Where the Radio Serial was Broadcast.**

The first section discusses my observations and experiences in Village Lutsaan. The second section discusses my experiences in Village Pohadibela. I begin with Lutsaan as it sets the context for investigating Pohadibela (even though the visit to Pohadibela preceded our visit to Lutsaan).

### **VISIT TO VILLAGE LUTSAAN IN UTTAR PRADESH STATE**

Reflecting on our past year's experience in Village Lutsaan in August of 1997, our project research team at Ohio University and at the University of New Mexico identified certain areas for further investigation. The goal was to reinvestigate the research site of Lutsaan to gauge the community effects of listening to "Tinka Tinka Sukh" after a period of one year. Certain paradoxes and contradictions related to social change were observed in our first visit that needed probing in the second trip. These paradoxes were apparent in the way that residents of Lutsaan were coming to grips with issues of gender equality, family planning, and their children's education.

In project meetings during Spring, 1998, between Dr. Arvind Singhal, Dr. Michael Papa, Sweety Law, Dr. Everett M. Rogers, Corinne Shefner-Rogers, and myself, we realized the need for a second visit to Village Lutsaan. An operational research plan was developed for the visit (Appendix A). Due to my past field-investigator role in Village Lutsaan in 1997, I was asked to represent the U.S.-end of this research project. We decided to invite our India associates, Centre for Media Studies in New Delhi, directed by Dr. N. Bhaskara Rao, to help us investigate the effects of "Tinka Tinka Sukh" in Village Lutsaan. Field researchers of the Center for Media Studies were part of an earlier trip to Village Lutsaan in August 1997.

Before leaving for Village Lutsaan, we prepared extensively to deal with the potential situations that we might be confronting there. Several meetings were held between Dr. Arvind Singhal, Dr. Michael Papa, Sweety Law, and I to discuss the village-level field realities. One of the realities that we would need to deal with would be our role as researchers and change agents. In our last trip to Lutsaan it was apparent that we had become sort of change agents. Keeping in mind the receiver-centered approach of Paulo Freire, the noted Brazilian educator, our challenge was to identify ways to help the villagers of Lutsaan realize their own potential. So prior to our arrival in India, we wrote a detailed four-page letter in Hindi to the villagers in Lutsaan explaining the purpose of

our second visit. This letter summarized our observations from the 1997 research visit, and described some of the paradoxes and the contradictions of social change that we had found (Appendix B). We also expressed our desire to discuss with them the reasons for the existence of these paradoxes and contradictions in their behavior, hoping to collectively explore solutions. This letter was mailed to 30 individuals in Lutsaan (especially those whom we had personally interviewed in 1997).

On reaching India in late June 1998, I learned that several letters in response to our four-page letter had already reached the Centre for Media Studies from Village Lutsaan. The letters brimmed with excitement. The villagers were happy to learn that Mumtaz Ahmed of CMS and I was coming to visit them. Several invited us to stay with them. Each letter queried about the "team from America". They all wanted to know why "Guruji" (Ev Rogers) and others were not coming along with us.

### **A Warm Reception**

The two researchers (Mumtaz Ahmed and I) left Delhi for Aligarh by train on the July 21, 1998. Aligarh is 30 kms. from Sasni and 35 kms. from Village Lutsaan. We reached there the same afternoon. My car was at the railway station to take us to Sasni. We had arrangements at Sasni to spend the night before we left for Lutsaan the next morning. We left for Village Lutsaan at 0700 a.m. in my car (I drove my car to and fro from Sasni to Lutsaan for the rest of the twelve days).

Through a previous telegram, Birendra Singh Kushwaha had learned about our arrival on July 22, 1998. He was impatiently waiting for us. Several villagers including many familiar faces from our last visit, welcomed us. Ritualistically, we began by visiting the Pradhan (village chief) who seemed happy to see us. In the mean time, the news of our arrival had reached the other end of the village, and "Bapu" (Om Prakash Sharma, a village opinion leader) and others came rushing to meet us. Bapu was sentimental on seeing us. He on behalf of others thanked the good deeds from their previous lives, as they did not think that they were deserving of our second visit. The 30 people that we had sent the letter to shared their pride on receiving the letter. The others could not understand why they were not sent a letter. Dr. Singhal had sent some gifts for Bapu, Pradhan, Birendra Singh Kushwaha, and Gulab Singh. Mrs. Usha Bhasin, Executive Producer of "Tinka Tinka Sukh", had also sent a few signed copies of the new "Tinka

Tinka Sukh” book summarizing the serial’s story. I knew that the people were going to be touchy about who got these gifts, and who did not. It was very difficult for me to make them understand. Basically, everybody had a lot of expectation from us. The expectation was less material; more emotional.

Most people were curious to know why we were there and thought that this was perhaps a social visit. They were amazed to know that I was now in the U.S. working with Dr. Singhal, Dr. Papa, and "Guruji". For them they represented icons of respect and admiration. They were very happy for me but complained that we had not kept in touch with them (at least in the way that they had wished). Bapu had made arrangements for us to sleep the night in the school building. Mumtaz Ahmed and I decided to return back to Sasni the first night, and then discuss the matter of staying the night in Lutsaan at a later time with the villagers. We wanted to ascertain its feasibility.

Methodological issues surrounding our field visit were discussed in several meetings at Ohio University. It was decided that one of our key methodological tools would be participant observation, whereby, we, the researchers would observe and record our observations through note-taking and on audio-tape players. In-depth interviews with village members would be our key data source. Since I knew I would end up as a change agent, I wanted to try out some Participatory Research Appraisal (PRA) techniques ( I had taken a PRA class in Spring 1998) of collectively defining problems, and trying to look for solutions. I knew this technique fitted well with our research paradigm.

A basket of data-collection tools was made available to me to implement in Lutsaan. The first two days were spent in socializing and meeting all the village members. At the same time we were actively observing the happenings in Lutsaan. We were also sketching a mental outline for the future work in the coming ten days. We were visiting areas in the village that we had not visited in our previous visit. Some people were surprised to find us in their areas, as they believed that we were friends of "Bapu", the village opinion leader, and those who befriended him. They belonged mostly to the lower castes or lower socio-economic classes. They were not bold about complaining that they had been ignored, but they were longing to be told that they mattered, like everyone else. It took us some time to reassure them that we were there for everyone, and that we

did not belong to any one group. They had not received any letters from us, and must have wondered about our intentions.

Our first day in Lutsaan was long and tiring. We left for Sasni at 8 p.m. and Mumtaz Ahmed and I discussed our experience in Lutsaan for almost two hours. This debriefing procedure was carried out at the end of each research day. On the first day we inferred that some people in Lutsaan were very happy to see us, but not all of them. It seemed the number of people that we met last year were friends, associates, colleagues, and acquaintances of "Bapu" and Birendra Singh Kushwaha. We had missed meeting a big chunk of the population of Village Lutsaan. So on our second day, we walked through the entire village, making an appearance wherever we could. We also decided to request the villagers to be busy with their daily work, and not to follow us everywhere (as they did last year). We wanted them to understand that their daily work should not be affected by our presence.

The villagers seemed to place high credibility in me and wanted answers for their problems. Since we did not declare any clear objective of being there, they were always asking questions and making inquiries. They wanted to know about the material lifestyle in the U.S., the food that people ate, the habits of the American people, etc. In fact, a villager pointed to a teenager's shorts (that were cut off from jeans) as an influence of the "American" culture in Lutsaan. I sat and explained to them about life in America. At one instance, we discussed the e-mail system as well! Their curiosity was never-ending. I was becoming more of an extension change agent than a silent observer, being bombarded with questions from the outset!

Before embarking on any in-depth interview or launching a spontaneous focus group discussion, I used to tell them: "I am here to identify and understand your problems along with you. I don't have any answers to your problems but may be by sitting together and discussing your problems, we may collectively find some solutions". Hence, the most frequently adopted methodology was in-depth interviews and conversations with people, usually without preparation so that spontaneity could be achieved. Only after half way through our stay, did we become structured about our interviews and discussions.

Interestingly, we realized that every evening after we left Lutsaan, there would be discussions in Lutsaan among various groups of people, some lasting several hours.

These discussions would be on issues like dowry, child marriage, gender issues, and others. These were based on our talks and interviews with the villagers that day. The villagers typically prepared certain questions for us the next day. Those questions would become topics for our subsequent discussions. This was a participative technique where people were helping in choosing the topics for discussion. Hence, we decided to return to our Sasni base every evening, as it made the villagers think more and concentrate on social issues more effectively. Almost everyday we arrived in Lutsaan at 0700 hours and left by 2000 hours.

### **Breaking Ice with the Jathav Women**

In this visit to Lutsaan, we interacted with people of diverse origins. We were able to venture in remote areas and talk to those who were otherwise silent. One of my most memorable learning experiences was with the Jathav (schedule caste) women. I tried to talk to them for three continuous days, but failed to get their attention. I felt that they thought I was too far removed from them, of no use to them, and would never understand their background. Finally, I took them by surprise by intervening in one of their afternoon chats. I found myself between 15 Jathav women who stared at me and made me feel unwelcome. I had made up my mind to look relaxed. When I introduced myself, they continued to cross talk. I got their attention by asking them their names. They laughed, chuckled, and with much prodding told me their names. They were not taking me seriously. In fact they had decided to make fun of me. My next question to them was about the nature of their work. They laughed even louder and looked at me with alienation. I insisted that they tell me about their work. After much pestering, a few of them spoke out and said that they did not do any work. We just do household chores, they said. I asked them to list their chores for me. They ranged from cooking, cleaning, washing, taking care of children, farming, and sewing. Then I asked them to enumerate how many of these chores could their husbands do? They seemed puzzled by the foolishness of my inquiry. They answered: “none”. I asked them how many of you, like your husbands, can be menial labors, farmers, cultivators, lock-makers, or potters? Every one said that they could. On this note, I felt that I may have altered their way of looking at things. I told them that although they could do both the household chores and their husband’s chores, they still didn’t think that they worked at all. But their husbands, who

could only do half of what they could, were held in high esteem. After this I decided to leave them to think about it. As I was about to leave, the women, skeptically started asking me about my reasons for being there, and then began a long discussion. I had broken ice with the Jathav women of Lutsaan.

### **The Nuances of Caste-Based Roles**

On reflecting deeply about the behavior patterns of different groups that I interacted with, I think a very well integrated caste system exists in Village Lutsaan. The village is geographically divided into various pockets. Each pocket represents a caste. The low caste Jathav women, for instance, use "detachment" and "aggression" as their defense mechanism. They are traditionally looked down upon for being of a lower caste and for being women. All their lives they have been victims of a social system that has made them survivors (by offending others before they can be offended). Once they were sure that I meant no harm, they entertained me, making me feel as close to them as, for instance, Bapu's wife had made me feel.

Another incident where casteism was evident was in Bapu's unwillingness to eat at any of the lower caste people's homes. It was understood that he, a Brahmin, would not eat anything, so he was never offered anything. Caste-based are well defined in Lutsaan; there is little ambiguity about how caste behaves in relation to the other. They co-existed without much friction.

The Shyam Mandal (the local self-help group) is comprised of those belonging to the higher castes. The musical dhholak (drums) belong to the Shyam Mandal and hence not loaned to the lower castes. However, people of different castes enjoy each other's company when together. There seem to be no regrets or misery. The Kushwahas are also backward class but they are the traditional best friends of the Brahmins. Hence, they do not consider themselves at par with other backward classes, while knowing they can never compete with the Brahmins.

### **Potlucks in Lutsaan**

The villager's hospitality could be measured by the extended food sessions that Mumtaz Ahmed and I were hosted for during our 12-day stay. Every day, some three households would prepare meals for us. Initially it became difficult to decline anybody's offer, as they would be offended. Our way of showing love for them was by eating at

their respective houses. There soon came a time when I told them that it was impossible for us to have more than two full meals per day. When they did not listen, I introduced them to the concept of pooled meals, or potlucks, where all could collectively cook for us. They loved the idea and started practicing it from the very next meal. They thought that the idea was so good that they would do this for themselves. Gradually they started “potlucking” everyday. One woman would make chapaati (bread); the other a vegetable dish. The third would prepare chutney, and so on. They agreed that this way their household burden was reduced and they had more free time for themselves.

### **A Show for Honored Guests!**

On the second day of our visit in Lutsaan, we were requested by a group of village elders, men, women, and children to allow them to perform various cultural as well as sports events in our honor. In the interest of time, we agreed to observing one event every day, to be held before our evening departure from the village. Several cultural items were performed for us collectively. There was no distinct group or caste identity in the shows that were put up. These were organized through the cooperation and cohesion between the various neighborhood groups.

Some of these events included:

- A skit enacted by the school children on dowry as a social problem. The Anganwadi (child development program) workers, an all women group, taught this to them. This skit was presented previously at the Republic day festivities in Lutsaan.
- On three occasions, the women of Lutsaan organized dance and music programs. These women belonged to specific caste groups. There was an inherent spirit of competitiveness underlying these functions. Female members, mostly belonging to that particular caste group, attended the programs. At the end of the program, refreshments were served to all. I was expected to dance and sing along with the women. At times I was being tested on the virtue of my being able to identify and merge in their culture.
- Three sports tournaments were played among the male members of Village Lutsaan. The three well established sport clubs in Lutsaan were: Cricket, volleyball, and Kabaddi (a traditional Indian sport). The Pradhan and "Bapu" were invited to preside on these events. They were responsible to watch out for any cheating that may occur.

Besides that, they had a full-time umpire, and highly modern sports gear and equipment. We learned that these trained sports teams represented Village Lutsaan in different tournaments.

- The festival of monsoon, Teej and the festival of brother and sister, Rakshabandhan were celebrated when we were there. A cultural program of dance and music was open for all to participate and watch. The men and the women danced together without feelings of inhibition or shame.

### **Birendra Singh Kushwaha: A Spark plug for Social Change**

One reason for our going to Village Lutsaan last year was the extensive poster-size letter written to All India Radio by Birendra Singh Kushwaha, the village tailor. Last year he appeared to be docile and timid. He was overwhelmed by the attention he got from the Centre for Media Studies, All India Radio, and the research team from America. Last year, he had made several promises to us, including that he would religiously follow the educational lessons gathered from "Tinka Tinka Sukh".

It was a pleasant surprise to see him not only follow those lessons but also to encourage others to do so. Birendra Singh Kushwaha has matured a great deal over this past year. He has become a highly responsible person, committed to social causes such as dowry, girl-education, child-marriages, small family size (population control), and others. He hears these issues on the radio, and strongly identifies with them. Then he encourages others to follow his advice, and tune to the radio for further information. Since he has developed high credibility in the village, and his job as a tailor allows him to interact with several people, he feels responsible for initiating social change in Lutsaan.

Birendra Singh Kushwaha believes that the only way to convince people about is to become a role model. He feels that he should follow what he preaches. Earlier this year, for instance, he had vasectomy performed on him. He has two children, and thought that was enough. He said that other people have learned from him that the vasectomy was not painful, and that he is still able to lead a happy married life. He has given up tobacco-chewing and cigarette smoking, realizing their health hazards. Birendra Singh Kushwaha believes in publicizing his achievements wherever and whenever he can. He believes that such promotion helps in educating his peers and serving his community.

Birendra Singh Kushwaha, with help from his uncle, has financially supported his two younger cousin brothers to establish a sewing business. He has opened a shop for them with two sewing machines, and trained them. One of his cousins is 8 years old and suffers from polio. His legs are bent and he is unable to walk. The elder cousin sits in the same shop and helps him sew. Birendra has trained him to use his bowed legs on the machine. The polio-afflicted boy now radiates confidence. He has been given a new lease on life.

Birendra Singh Kushwaha's attachment with radio has strengthened over the last one year. He now listens to the radio almost all the time. He has also bought a small palm-size radio for himself. He carries it everywhere, next to his ear. His other radio set is now at home where his wife and other family members have access to it. This has affected the ambience of his home. The women in his family now appear more active socially. They go out of their houses and mix with other women, often giving advice. They share the short stories that they listen on the radio with other women. This sociability was not apparent last year.

Birendra Singh Kushwaha is also the founder and the president of a newly-established radio listeners club in Lutsaan. He feels responsible to invite a wider membership to the club. For this, he continuously advertises the club whenever he gets an opportunity. On the whole, Birendra Singh Kushwaha has become a very responsible member of the Village Lutsaan community, a real spark plug for fostering social change.

### **Doing What the Radio Says: Plant Trees and Shut off Engines!**

After "Tinka Tinka Sukh", another radio serial, "Yeh Kahaan Aa Gaye Hum" ("Where Have We Arrived?") is being broadcast by All India Radio. Mrs. Usha Bhasin also produced this program, which is centered around issues of the environment. Birendra Singh Kushwaha and several others in Lutsaan are ardent listeners of this program. The listeners' club was formed in Lutsaan to make the best of its advice. This club had 15 active members, when we were in Lutsaan but the numbers are on the rise.

The club members pay a minimum of Rs. 15 (less than 50 cents) monthly. This is a small fee to organize village welfare activities. While we were there, the club had approximately Rs. 150 in their account. We were asked how the money could be used for collective good. We recommended that the club should perhaps buy a community radio

set that would be accessible to all the villagers, irrespective of their gender, age, caste, or class. They seemed to like our suggestion.

The members of the club listen to the radio serial "Yeh Kahan Aa Gaye Hum" collectively, followed by post-broadcast discussions and contemplation. The club secretary, Prempal Singh Kushwaha, takes notes while the program is on air, and maintains an account of the happenings in each episode. He then raises a topic for discussion among the listeners, who then discuss the issue and search for solutions collectively.

The listeners' club has launched several social campaigns to save the environment. Inspired by the radio serial, members went on a bicycle trip to educate the public to conserve fuel, thus, saving the environment from pollution. They rode to the nearest railway junction (Hathras Junction) where they saw several auto-rickshaws waiting for the train to pass. While these vehicles were waiting, their ignitions were on, and they were exhaling smoke. This disturbed the club members who went to the drivers and explained to them the hazards of air pollution. They also enlightened them about conserving fuel by switching off their ignitions while waiting. There was a lot of resistance from the drivers who thought that the club members were crazy. But the members pursued the matter and talked them into switching off their idling engines.

As a part of the same campaign, members of the listeners' club approached those who were smoking and informed them about its health hazards and problems of air pollution. To boost their credibility they took Bapu with them and other volunteers of the Shyam Mandal. These were collaborative forays between the radio listeners club and the Shyam Mandal to save the environment.

While we were in Lutsaan, the listeners' club consisted, as previously mentioned, only 15 male members. However, during our stay, several people, including many women, expressed their desire to join the club. Some of the non-members felt that the club was an extension of the Shyam Mandal. Some people of the lower castes thought that only those people could gain membership in the club, who either belonged to higher caste or were friends with the higher castes.

When I expressed the villagers' opinion on the perceived membership criteria of the club to Birendra Singh Kushwaha, he was devastated. From then on he began

announcing in every group discussion the "open-door" policy of the club. He apologized to everyone for giving wrong "vibes" and promised membership to all those who listened to radio. After we left, I learned (through letters received from Lutsaan) that a separate wing of the listeners club has been opened for women and girls.

Another suggestion that they took from the serial "Yeh Kahaan Aa Gaye Hum" and Usha Bhasin was of planting trees on any festive occasion in the village. The club had planned to plant trees while we were there so we could help motivate others to do the same. Some 10 plants were prepared for planting in different areas of the village. These plants would grow into trees that would be of use to the villagers either for fruits or for shade. They had received this information from the radio serial "Yeh Kahaan Aa Gaye Hum". By virtue of being farmers, they knew which trees to plant and how to take care of them as they grew. I was asked to plant a tree to mark my association with Village Lutsaan.

### **I Do Not Need Jewelry: Just a Typewriter!**

Baburam Lal Savit is a lock-maker in Lutsaan who has a small workshop on his terrace. He is the bread earner of his 5-member family. He has three daughters who are in the 11<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, and 6<sup>th</sup> grade in school, respectively. He was transformed by "Tinka Tinka Sukh" and decided that he would rather educate his daughters, than save money for their dowry.

Seema, his eldest daughter, is an inspirational sixteen-year-old girl. She is self-motivated and determined to do something useful in her life before marriage. Marriage for her is an eventuality like it is for every other girl in Lutsaan. However, she decided a few things for herself last year after listening to "Tinka Tinka Sukh". First, that she would not marry a man who would ask her father for dowry. Second, she would not marry before the age of eighteen. Third, she needs to be skilled in some task before marriage so that she could earn her own living, if needed. Seema's Uncle, Birendra Singh Kushwaha, motivated her to listen to the radio serial. Her father also listened, when he could.

Seema represents the "voice" of all teenage unmarried girls in Lutsaan. She represents a section of the village population that is striving to bridge the gap between their parent's desires and their own. They are on the brink of defining their identity, but

are not being able to do so, as the social system does not allow them to exercise their freedom. Only when they hear radio programs such as “Tinka Tinka Sukh”, and are reinforced by visitors like Saumya (I) Didi (elder sister), confusion takes over their lives and their families. They begin to question what the social system has been doing to them, and why unwillingly they comply. Seema and several other girls in Lutsaan experience this dilemma, and vent their deepest fears in songs and poems. Seema has written songs that reflect a girl’s anxiety about her life to come. These songs have social themes like dowry death, early-marriages, and subordination of their self-identity. After talking to Seema, I concluded that “Tinka Tinka Sukh” has instigated some girls in Lutsaan to re-think their roles, raising their efficacy to question their parents about their education and dowry. This process of self-actualization has been enhanced by the education that these girls receive. They are dedicated students in their classes; they believe in harnessing the educational opportunity provided to them by their parents.

Seema has just finished her high school (10<sup>th</sup> grade) from Dariyapur (2 kms. from Lutsaan) as Lutsaan does not offer educational facilities after eighth grade. She wants to complete her school education and wants to go to Sasni, which is the nearest place for higher education (10<sup>th</sup> grade onwards). Baburam Lal Savit, her father, will have to take her to Sasni every day as it is too far from Lutsaan for her to go alone. On my asking if she could go with others who go to Sasni, Baburam Lal Savit said that only two groups of students go to Sasni for higher education. One group consists of boys, who have no problem to travel 5 kms. twice a day on their bicycles. The other group consists of children belonging to the higher castes who are also affluent. Seema can not go with first group as it is all-male, and society does not look at that favorably. The other group will not allow Seema, a schedule caste, to join in. Hence, Baburam Lal Savit travels 20 kms. every day to continue providing Seema an education. The simpler alternative is to discontinue Seema’s education. He is convinced that he has made a harder, but a far better choice.

On the issue of dowry, Seema strongly feels that she should not be equated with material possessions and objects. She prays that she will find someone who will treat her as a “human” being. She is aware of the Indian reality and knows that she has to get married after finishing school, as she would be about 18 years in age. Therefore, she

knows that she cannot go to college. But she wants to learn typing, so that she can type from home when she is married. She wants to take a course in typing by spending time with her cousin sister in New Delhi. Her father finds the idea too ambitious but will send her to New Delhi if she continues to feel so strongly about learning typing.

Seema has made an unusual request to her father. She wants him to spend very little on her wedding ceremony and nothing on her wedding gifts. She wants him to present her a typewriter as her dowry, so that she can use it to earn a living. Baburam Lal Savit sought my advice on this, and I pointed out the futility of giving her jewelry and clothes. Instead he should invest it on a typewriter that will be her ticket to financial independence, especially in times of distress.

### **I found 36 Brothers!**

One of the most memorable moments of my visit to Lutsaan was the festival of Rakshabandhan (or Rakhi). Rakshabandhan is a festival that honors both brothers and sisters. The sisters tie a sacred thread on the wrist of their brothers. This thread symbolizes protection against evil. The brothers, in return, promise to protect their sisters.

On the second last day of our stay in Lutsaan some of the male villagers (lead by Birendra Singh Kushwaha and Prempal Singh Kushwaha) approached me, and imploringly asked me to grant them a wish. I felt like a fairy with a magic wand, who was there to fulfill their wishes. On my asking the nature of the wish, they said they wanted me to tie them the sacred thread, the Rakhi, in order to consolidate our relationship in to something more dignified and personal. They did not consider me a researcher who was out in Village Lutsaan to gather data but someone who was a close family member. I was, in essence, asked to be sister to 36 brothers in Lutsaan! Overwhelmed by this affectionate gesture, I consented. Their faces lit up with happiness. I did feel like a fairy with a magic wand.

Next day an elaborate ceremony was organized in the village. All were invited. Mumtaz Ahmed and I carried 36 sacred threads and 5 kilos of sweets for my new brothers. It was a long drawn ceremony, lasting several hours, as almost 100 spectators looked on. There were mixed emotions on the faces of the audience members ranging from shock, envy, jealousy, affection, and warmth.

I was made to sit on a chair, and my brothers proudly and happily took turns approaching me one by one. They got their Rakhi tied and accepted sweets from me. At times I was asked to put the sweets in their mouths. I did so graciously. Motivated with this spontaneous display of emotions, Bapu tied me a Rakhi too (in Brahminical tradition the senior person in age ties Rakhi to others). He then gifted me Rs. 100. To my surprise, I was also presented a brown envelope by each of my brothers. Soon I realized that these envelopes contained money (about Rs. 50 in each envelope).

By the end of the ceremony I was emotionally exhausted and confused. I did not feel like an outsider. However, I instantly remembered my responsibilities and mission. I decided that without offending my brothers, I needed to give the money back to the community for some good cause. I was reminded of an incident that had occurred a few-days ago. Women belonging to the scheduled (lower) caste had organized a music function for me in which they needed a dholak (drums). They did not own one themselves and asked me if I could ask Bapu, the head of Shyam Mandal to lend his dholak (drums) for the function. They said that they could get the dholak only if I would ask, as Bapu would not lend it to them because of their lower caste. I requested my brothers that Bua (Aunt), the voice of several quiet women in Lutsaan, be invited in front of this huge crowd. I requested them to allow me to give the Rakhi money to Bua to buy a dholak (drums) for all the women of Village Lutsaan. I told them that this way they would be reminded of me forever. Overwhelmed with the idea, they accepted my proposal. Bua was in tears and so were several spectators. My brothers declared that they would get my name painted on the dholak to commemorate this moment and our new relationship.

That was one of the most beautiful moments of my life and I felt that I had made a difference. As a bonus, I found 36 new brothers.

### **Spurring of Conversations and Discussions**

It seems, in the past one year, there has been an increase in the level of interaction between the people of Lutsaan about various social issues. I observed several people arranging their times to meet with others to discuss important social topics. Many were excited to have us there and made time to attend the discussions between the villagers and us. Many, it seems, realized the "fun" in organizing such discussions groups. For

instance, after a long group discussion with the Pradhan and others, Birendra Singh Kushwaha and his friends were motivated to hold more meetings. We asked them to set regular dates for these meetings, so that people knew when and where these meetings would take place. The Pradhan was quite enthusiastic, as he often got to lead these meetings. He is not very popular with all the village members. These meetings gave him a platform to interact with everyone.

The social interactions between the village members seemed informal and casual. Many of these encounters were spontaneous. All sorts of village-related issues were discussed in these interactions, including the evils of dowry as a social practice, child marriage, education for females, educational problems in the village, concern about classroom space and lack of teachers, problems with the road leading to the village, and other issues. These interactions were, however, limited to certain community pockets, and mostly occurred among men. With the exception of the Shyam Mandal that has traditionally encouraged 'men' from all classes and castes to participate in discussions, most other interactions were limited to certain specific groups with specific interests. Issues of gender equality, dowry, child marriage, hygiene are well-known and perceived by most people in Lutsaan as critical for development.

Most social discussions seemed confined to groups that shared common interests. Formal conversations seldom occurred. The topics ranged from the possibility of holding future workshops in the village (e.g., a sewing workshop and a midwives workshop) to announcements related to government subsidies for farmers. The Pradhan and other village opinion leaders it seemed had still not completely understood the significance of these meetings as a tool for social change. Having seen us initiate these meetings, they seemed motivated to continue this process.

After talking to us, several people in Lutsaan seemed more conscious of their responsibilities as members of the community and as parents. They accepted their shortcomings. A clear illustration of this is my experience with a group of village members who were drug addicts (who smoked pot). I used to see them everyday sitting by the paan (a beetle-leaf condiment) shop, chewing tobacco and smoking pot. They would see me look at them, but used to remain unaffected. One day I saw one of these men sitting in front of his house with his baby in his lap, and in the other hand holding a cigarette. I

decided to rationalize his behavior to him. I smiled at him and asked if he was prepared to see his baby smoke pot too. He smirked and said that his child would never do this; he would ensure that. I asked him how was he going to stop his child, given children learn from parents. He thought for a moment but did not respond. I asked him if his family could support itself after his death. He was shocked and started sobbing. He swore never to smoke pot again. Next day on my way to the village, I passed the paan shop and saw him telling others not to smoke pot. On seeing me, he rose and wished me with a smile and said that Didi (sister) I have stopped it, and now can I be called a good father? I smiled back and reassured him that he was a good man.

Next day several village members told me that the previous night there was a long drawn out discussion among the Lutsaan people about the ills of smoking and drinking. The reformed pot consumer, I learned, initiated this meeting.

### **Rising Consumerism Fever**

The villages in India are increasingly feeling the throngs of materialism, and the notion of the agricultural economy is being displaced. Farmers' needs are increasing but their purchasing power is not keeping pace. Attractive mass media advertising fuels their consumerist needs.

The occupational structure in Lutsaan is also changing. Many individuals are heading to towns and cities in search for employment and better pay. Most of the young men are either self-employed, or work outside the village. Others are studying in nearby cities such as Aligarh, Agra, and Hathras. These youth are ambitious; few consider farming to be their primary occupation.

Lutsaan is going through a transitional phase where social roles are being redefined and restructured. Expectations of a father from his son and the son from his father are changing. Older villagers do not like the idea of their children not wanting to plough the fields. The children do not want to become farmers and want to move out to cities. When this happens, the parents will be left alone in the village in their old age. There are many in Lutsaan that are below the poverty line, or on the brink of it. Others boast of TVs, refrigerators, and motorcycles. The gap between the have and have-nots is increasing within the village community. A consumer and urban and material paradigm of existence seems to be gaining ground in Lutsaan.

### Many Definitions of Dowry

These rising "material" trends have directly affected the practice of dowry in Lutsaan. All the people that I talked to in Lutsaan understood the implications of dowry as a social problem, or at least as an issue that needed community attention. People had their own definitions of dowry, usually it was the one that suited their situation the most. Some were of the opinion that whatever parents gave willingly to their daughters should not be considered dowry. However, some criticized this definition and felt that the 'will to give' usually becomes an expectation over time. This expectation then sets precedence for future acts. Bapu offered a very interesting definition of dowry (called dahej in Hindi). According to him, dahej means deh=heart and hej=gift. So dowry is anything "given from the heart".

Most people in Lutsaan agreed that dowry was becoming an increasingly undesirable phenomenon, and was closely associated with the improving economic standards of village families. The richer the family, the more dowry it would be willing to give. Urban values and television advertisements, they felt cultivated demands among prospective grooms for material products, which they then expected as dowry. The villagers also agreed that this problem could end if each person decided not to pursue this practice. They said that they personally would be willing to stop taking or giving dowry, but they were positive that their neighbors would not. In that case, it will be impossible to control this problem. Several people felt that they had to take dowry, as they had given a lot in their daughter's weddings. Hence, to pay their debts, they needed dowry. In all the weddings that have occurred in Village Lutsaan, dowry, in some way or form, has been given or taken. I spoke with many young brides, grooms, and their parents in Lutsaan and could not find even one incident where this practice was not followed.

After initiating a group discussion with the Shyam Mandal members, Birendra Singh Khushwaha, the tailor, committed himself to changing the dowry system. He said that he would ensure that no one in the village would give or take dowry, especially those individuals who pledged to abolish dowry. The people who had taken an oath last year in the poster-letter about not giving or taking dowry felt ashamed about not following-up on their oath. They said that social constraints, such as non-cooperation from other community members, influenced their behavior. They were unable to beat the practices of

the social system as the system was larger than them. All these village members made another attempt at renewing their pledge, when we were in Lutsaan. They asked me to initiate the process of oath taking, so that they could size my personal commitment and conviction to eradicating dowry. I duly started the process and was followed by six individuals and then by more individuals. Most the people were aware of the marriage law, which classifies dowry as a punishable offense.

In my discussions with the Jathav (lower caste) women, I realized that the practice of dowry did not exist among them. Why? Because they did not have anything to give. They were poor. There were no material or financial expectations in a Jathav marriage, and marriages took place without dowry. The Jathav women said that other villagers in Lutsaan looked at them condescendingly, as dowry is equated with economic power and social status.

One of my most startling findings emerged from gathering information on Bapu's son's wedding last year, in which no dowry was supposedly exchanged. Since I had a good rapport with other village members, I learned a lot more from them about Bapu's family. I was surprised to learn that Bapu's eldest son, Prem, who got married last year, was 30 years old and unemployed. He is the Secretary of the all-women dairy cooperative in Lutsaan, which for all practical purposes is a defunct organization. Since he did not have a regular income and was old (according to standards in India for marriageable age), Bapu compromised on his dowry by bringing in a young daughter-in-law. Besides, it would be impossible to find an unmarried girl of the same age for his son. So he did not take dowry in order to marry his son to a 16-year-old girl. That did not, however, mean that he did not accept gifts. On visiting Bapu's house the first day, I was proudly given a tour of the house which was full of items like a double-bedroom furniture set, a television set, a steel cupboard, several suitcases, new utensils, and other objects that they had received in his son's wedding. The bride, married illegally at sixteen, was also eight months pregnant into her first year of marriage.

Another rumor circulating around the village concerned plans for Bapu's second son's wedding. Bapu has been looking for a girl for his son, who is an employee of the police department in the city. He is handsome and well qualified. Bapu has been bombarded with marriage proposals. However, he has been very picky. According to the

villagers, Bapu has demanded a sum of Rs. 3 lakhs ( 8,000 U.S. dollars) in dowry but has been offered only Rs. 2 lakhs so far. Therefore, he is waiting for a marriage proposal that will bring more dowry. This information came as a complete surprise to me. When Bapu came to know that I was told about this, he was very upset and worried. In a private conversation with me, he almost broke down. He did not want me to misunderstand him, and urged me to listen to his side of the story. He claimed that he had never asked for any dowry, but was waiting for a better proposal in terms of the educational qualifications of the girl. His son was educated and wanted to marry a girl who was well-educated too. I told Bapu that he had no reason to worry, as I was not going to pass a judgement on him. However, Bapu did concede that if the bride's father were to give her something, he would not refuse as that is the parent's will and should not be disregarded. After listening to both sides, I realized that one had to read in-between the lines to get a better picture.

Due to the economic pressure of dowry on parents, they usually are in a hurry to marry off their daughters whenever a dowry demand suits their pocket. The girl's age usually has little to do with this decision. The parents do not care about waiting till the girl is eighteen, as they prefer to get her married whenever an appropriate match is found. This has led to an increase in cases of child marriages in Lutsaan. Last year, out of the six girls that were married, four were under 18 years of age. I was able to meet two of them, as they had still not been sent off to their in-laws' homes. To my surprise one of them was Bapu's niece (eldest brother's daughter) who was married in June 1998 at the age of 14. She was studying in 8<sup>th</sup> grade at the time of her wedding. She was not given any notice, or any explanation of why she was getting married. On talking to her, I realized that she was ashamed and embarrassed about her early marriage. She was still attending school as she was going to be in Lutsaan for few more months. She was married to a sixteen-year-old, who was the only son of his parents. She was being married to primarily be a help for household chores, as there was no other girls in the in-laws house to do the same. When I approached her mother for an explanation, she said that it was a "good" offer and my daughter will rule in their house, given her son-in-law is the only son. She will be the only daughter-in-law, she emphasized. They had given a lot of dowry to the groom's family: A bedroom furniture set, a television set and radio set, jewelry, bicycle,

steel cupboards, clothes, and Rs. 50,000 (\$1,200) in cash. The dowry demand included a motorcycle, but that would come later.

On asking Bapu about his niece's wedding, he shrugged, sighed, and said that his brother did not listen to him nor wait for the girl to turn 18 years. He explained to me that rivalry existed between him and his brother. Although Bapu is younger, he is respected in Village Lutsaan. So the older brother does not listen to Bapu. The villagers would continuously talk to me about Bapu's hypocrisy, and I would have to listen to all, trying to put their opinions in the "proper" context.

I met another girl in Lutsaan who was 14 years old and had been forced into marriage. She belonged to a poor family and was married off at the wedding of her elder sister, who was more than 18 years old. She was made to sit next to her sister during the wedding ceremony without any knowledge of what was happening. Her groom was the younger brother of her sister's husband. I met her in school. She was shy, innocent, and young. As she was telling me her story (she refused to talk on tape), she was crying. I encouraged her to continue her education till she was in Lutsaan, and perhaps later.

In the group discussions we had, the villagers of Lutsaan understood the ill effects of marrying girls at an early age, but they said they were limited by the social norms. They did not believe that a girl's education could adequately compensate for her marriage. When the time for marriage came, the groom's parents would probably still ask for dowry, irrespective of whether or not the girl was educationally qualified. I realized how entrenched and complex the process of dowry giving-and-taking was, and also how closely it was linked to the early marriage of girls.

### **A Women's Organization Run by Men**

The all-women's dairy cooperative society in Lutsaan is a part of Paraag (a brand name like Amul), a dairy enterprise in Uttar Pradesh state. The dairy cooperative has been in Lutsaan for several years, but is now defunct. The dairy cooperative has failed to spark any social change in Lutsaan. The reason that it has failed is because of the lack of interest on part of the cooperative administrators, and the villagers' lack of understanding of the mission of the dairy cooperative.

The private dairies are doing better in Lutsaan and pay more than the Paraag dairy cooperative. Private milk vendors also give incentives to the village members by doling

out loans (to buy cows and buffaloes) on low interest rates and allowing paybacks in installments. The villagers trust these private vendors but not the Paraag dairy cooperative. One reason for this lack of trust is because of the reigning President and Secretary of this cooperative. Technically, only women should be the occupants of these two positions, but men have taken these positions. Bapu's nephew is the President and his son is the Secretary. On paper, their respective wives are in-charge of these offices, but in reality, the men rule the roost. The villagers don't like them and avoid giving milk to this dairy cooperative. So here is a women's organization in Lutsaan that has been run to the ground by men.

### **Family Planning Through Abortion**

Abortions were being carried out in Village Lutsaan but it seemed mainly for reasons of family planning. I tried to probe if prior to conducting abortions, an ultra sound test was done to determine the sex of the child. However, I did not learn about a single instance of sex-selective abortion in Lutsaan. On asking the men and the women about their views on sex-selective abortion, I discovered that all the respondents felt that sex-selective abortion was not correct. Many equated it with murder. Interestingly, the women thought that abortion was an easy and effective way of family planning. In some conversations, many women appeared ignorant about other methods of family planning, and thought that abortion was the only way to plan a family.

On one of my routine walks around the village, a woman softly asked me to step inside her house. On my asking her the reason for this private invitation, she asked me if I could give her some birth control pills. On my explaining to her that I did not have any, and that she needed to visit the village doctors, she said that then she would have no choice but to get her fetus aborted, if she became pregnant. I was overwhelmed and questioned two of the five local doctors in Lutsaan about the availability of contraceptives. According to the two doctors, the government supplied them with none, and the people were left on their own to buy the contraceptives.

Two important figures in Lutsaan are the women who carry out abortions for very little money. One of them, who assists with the abortions, is the wife of one of the doctors in Lutsaan. She makes available the surgical instruments for abortion (from her husband's clinic), and the space for the procedure. The other woman, who performs the abortions, is

actually a trainee in a private clinic in Hathras. While she is still under training, she has performed abortions in Lutsaan for several years. According to her, she is doing humanity a service by reducing the burden of population. She is confident and performs two to three abortions every month. According to her, the number of abortions usually goes up in the monsoon and winter season. She claims that there has been no sex-selective abortion in Lutsaan. She also claims that all the abortions that she performed were on married women, who did not want more children. Some of the times, their husbands knew that their wives were getting abortions done, but often the wives came in at very early stages of pregnancy, not telling anyone.

I was struck by the prevalence of abortions as a family planning method, especially when other safer, cheaper, and less cumbersome alternatives exist.

### **Can Education Make a Difference?**

Education is an area of primary concern for the people of Lutsaan. In every interview and focus group discussion we conducted, education was viewed as a high priority. Paradoxically, not all the parents sent their children to school. Most people were dissatisfied with the educational standards and facilities that existed in the village. These parents thought that the schools were ill-equipped, and could not provide their children with competent education. They thought that the children wasted time by going to the school, often playing the whole day long. Instead, why not they learn to farm and help with household chores?

Village Lutsaan has three schools: a government-public school and two private schools. The public school consists of a primary school (kindergarten to grade 5), and a middle school (grade 6 to grade 8). The education is free of cost. In fact, the government supplies the primary school children with food grains for meals. To receive their portion of grains, the child has to be registered in school. This acts as an incentive for the parents to send their children to school. The public school has a shortage of teaching staff and has very few rooms to hold classes. The teachers are also unpopular, especially given their laid-back attitude. They do not teach the students much. The students who move on to 9<sup>th</sup> grade in other nearby schools thus find it difficult to cope. These reasons discourage the villagers to send their children to school. Many see it as a futile activity.

When I tried to highlight the need for education, most of the villagers agreed. I told them that the child needed to go through school to gain lucrative employment in the future. If they deprive their child of primary education, they would be able to do little else than farm, or do menial jobs. The mothers seemed to realize that the school environment may be a better place for the children to play than the crude world outside.

The private school in Lutsaan stands under a tree where the classes are held for kindergarten to 5<sup>th</sup> grade for both boys and girls. This school charges a small fee. The fee, even though small, represents a big hindrance for several villagers who wish to send their children to school. This school is known for its commitment to education. The teachers are in sufficient number, but the biggest constraint is the lack of space and infrastructure. Classes are held under the tree, and on rainy days, holidays are announced.

In August 1998, a new school opened in Lutsaan called the Saraswati Vidyalaya (Saraswati School). This school is part of a chain of new schools in the Hindi-speaking belt of North India. The emphasis of this school is not only on bookish-education but also on religion, morals, sports, cultural activities, and other subjects. The students are inspected for cleanliness, food habits, and other social mannerisms. They have to wear uniforms that are starched, white, and ironed. The school charges a small fee from the students. The teachers, who come from neighboring cities and villages, are well trained.

On the whole, I observed a rise in the level of consciousness among the people of Lutsaan for education, especially for girls. Ironically, all the girls that were married young in Lutsaan (that I learned about), were going to school when they were married-off.

### **Buaji : An Influential Woman Leader**

Married at the age of 16, mother of four by age 24, and widow by age 35, is the story of Buaji's (Auntie) life. She is a hard working woman who realized a long time back that no one was going to help her unless she took charge of her life. She is an effective woman leader who is not shy of challenging the male-dominated system in Lutsaan. She has not just survived in Lutsaan for many years but thrived. She is popularly known as the Buaji (Auntie) by all in Lutsaan, and commands a loud voice and exudes an assertive self. Seema, the daughter of Babu Ram Savit, is a good friend of Buaji's and regularly visits her in her free-time. Seema claims to learn a lot from the Buaji, who is

very modest and down-to-earth. She is now in her late 40s, and a highly-respected village woman leader.

Buaji was eager to know how she could contribute her life to organizing for change. She was always around through all our interviews and focus group discussions, and gradually started speaking out loud. Towards the end, when I decided to hand her the Rakhi money for the dholak (drums), she was overwhelmed with joy. She is a woman leader to watch in Lutsaan.

### **Good Byes**

Leaving Lutsaan was an emotionally-draining experience for me. Mumtaz Ahmed and I were given a State-like Presidential farewell. All the villagers got together to say their good-byes in different manners. Some of them sung, some recited poems, some spoke, some danced, and some simply cried. It was difficult to leave them. The ritualistic ceremony seemed to suggest as if the “beti” (daughter) of the village was leaving them. However, most persons bid me goodbye with a belief that I shall come back again. I hope so!

The next section of the report documents my trip to Village Pohadibela in Bihar.

### **VISIT TO VILLAGE POHADIBELA IN BIHAR STATE**

Our interest in Village Pohadibela in Darbhanga District, Bihar, India, began in 1997, when an inspiring letter, written by a village shopkeeper, Sayed Said Hussein was mailed to All India Radio in response to the entertainment-education soap opera "Tinka Tinka Sukh". Mrs. Usha Bhasin, Executive Producer of the radio program, forwarded this letter to Dr. Arvind Singhal at Ohio University. When planning the second round of research on Lutsaan, it was decided that a visit to Village Pohadibela may enhance our understanding of how community effects of radio occurred.

### **Pohadibela: Off the Beaten Track**

When I arrived in India in June, 1998, with the help of colleagues at the Centre for Media Studies, I tried to locate Village Pohadibela on the map of Bihar but was unable to find it. We knew it was in Darbhanga district, and armed with that information we departed for Bihar on the 6<sup>th</sup> of July 1998. The train journey to Muzzafarpur (60 kms. from Darbhanga) was almost 48 hours long, with unprecedented delays and breakdowns. Darbhanga can be approached only by road from Muzzafarpur. Due to the heavy

monsoon rainfall and poor visibility on the road, we decided to stay the night at Muzzafarpur. The next morning, we rented a taxi to drive us to Darbhanga. On reaching Darbhanga, we visited the local AIR radio station and met the Station Director. The Station Director had a remote idea about Village Pohadibela, and advised us not to venture out in search for the village. According to him, and other local people, the monsoon season is the worst time to travel by roads, which are often washed away by heavy rains. Undeterred, our research team decided to continue with the original plan of visiting Pohadibela. We spent an entire day at the District Magistrate's office in Darbhanga trying to get information on Village Pohadibela. The nearest area that was identified for us was Pohadibela's Block headquarters at Ghanshyampur (15 kms from Pohadibela). Unable to find any mode of transport, we bribed a jeep driver to take us to Village Pohadibela.

The distance between Darbhanga town and Village Pohadibela is only 45 kms. Due to the broken-down roads, it took us about four hours to get there. In essence, we were spending eight hours on the road everyday, which left us only four to five hours for fieldwork. Although we were 5 researchers, five hours per day for five field days was insufficient to collect all the data that we would have liked. Being aware of the time-constraint, and knowing that there were only a limited number of listeners of "Tinka Tinka Sukh" in Village Pohadibela, we decided to treat Village Pohadibela in a similar research fashion, as we had treated Village Lutsaan in 1997. One objective was to measure what people remembered about "Tinka Tinka Sukh", especially 18 months after the broadcasts ended.

### **A Seemingly "Prosperous" Caste-Based Community**

We learned that more than 35 castes and sub castes exist in Village Pohadibela, and these groups coexist with little conflict. This peaceful environment is explained by the well-defined and adhered roles of all the castes vis-a-vis others. The traditional caste roles, handed down over several generations, remain more or less uncontested and unchanged (much like Lutsaan).

Even though geographically Village Pohadibela is in a remote corner of Bihar (see Figure 1), it appears to be a prosperous village with well-stacked shops. As the village road is frequently out of commission, the shops try to stack up on consumer

products. The center of the village has a fully developed market place. It has barbershops, a beauty parlor, a home-video cinema, a general store, a clothing store, a veterinary clinic, several sweet shops, a chemist shop, and many others. The village market actually looks like a prosperous town market. The villagers in Pohadibela are mostly engaged in agriculture. Large sections of the village population work the lands of the higher caste farmers. Several layers of socio-economic groups are visible.

The political structure of Bihar State is different than that of Uttar Pradesh (where Village Lutsaan is based). Politically, Pohadibela is dominated by the Yadav caste, who belongs to the backward caste. For the past 20 years, no elections for the local government have been held. Hence, the local government of the Yadav community continues to rule the village. The Mukhiya (headman) is a Yadav, whose family has remained unchallenged for this office since India's independence in 1947. His grand father and his father were also Mukhiya. None of the villagers seem to have a problem with this power structure.

### **Stark Variations in Educational Quality**

The Mukhiya (village headman) is the most powerful person in Pohadibela. He commands authority and presides on all the important events in the village. Pohadibela has a large government High School run by the Mukhiya and his family members. He takes all the administrative decisions for the school, including screening and interviewing the teaching candidates. Some of his family members, including his 75 years old uncle, are on the School's Board of Trustees. This connection between the Mukhiya and the school exists because the Mukhiya's grand father donated the land for the school.

The High School building is a very impressive structure. It looks like an affluent school in a city. It lies 2 kms. outside the village, so it has space to grow, if needed. It is equipped with many facilities of a modern day school. The classrooms are huge and airy. There are enough chairs for all the students to sit. It is a co-educational school with higher numbers of boys than girls. Both the in-village and out-of-village students pay a substantial fee to attend the school. A unique feature of the school is the residential facility offered to the students who come from far to attend school, and may be held up in Pohadibela due to schoolwork. This residential facility is free of cost and extended only to the boys.

The High School is one of the biggest schools in the Ghanshyampur Block area. So students from several villages attend this school, including many from far off places. Those who come from the outside are mostly boys. There are sufficient numbers of qualified teachers. However, the people of Pohadibela are not completely happy with the level of education in the High School. They feel that the school's educational standards were better earlier. They attribute this decline in the standard of education to the increased influx of outside students. They feel that their children are now being given a secondary treatment. The Mukhiya feels that a school is a place for knowledge and he cannot stop the outside students if they want to study.

Many parents, especially of girls, are unhappy with the location of the High School. They feel that the school is too far from the village, which precludes them from sending their daughters. When the Mukhiya was asked about this, he simply shook his head and did not consider this to be a problem. He said the school had sufficient number of students, and a few less does not really matter.

Compared to Village Lutsaan, there was a general lack of enthusiasm and motivation among the villagers about education, even though the Mukhiya heads a High School. For them education did not seem like a necessity. One reason for this may be that there are no good school primary schools in Pohadibela.

Pohadibela has a government primary school, located near the village center. The story of this school is consistent with the stories of most village-level government schools in India. It is dysfunctional and unpopular. The staff is lazy and unmotivated. The students don't feel like attending the school as little happens in these schools. For the past several years, there has been no routine inspection of the school by any designated government officer. Hence, the teachers are relaxed and secure about their jobs. The villagers are very unhappy with the state of this primary school. It is difficult for the villagers to send their children to study in the nearby villages, because of poor roads and lack of transportation. Many are demotivated and do not consider education to be a priority. The Mukhiya does not care about this anomalous situation as he has enough students in his High School. Besides, he has no familial stake in the primary school. We tried to encourage him to take primary education seriously in Pohadibela, emphasizing

that this could lead to an increase in number eventual increase in the number of students in his school.

Recently, another primary school opened in Village Pohadibela called Adarsh (Ideal) Public School. This school is a combined effort of eight unemployed young men, all between 22 to 26 years. This school has classes from 1<sup>st</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> grade. These men are all educated, but were unable to find decent jobs. This motivated them to get together, and revive a school that was closed down a few years ago. The Mukhiya owns the land of this school, however, he has not spent any money in re-starting the school, or on its maintenance. A Rs.15 (less than 50 cents) monthly fee that is collected from the students maintains the school. Donations are also received. This school is becoming very popular especially with the parents of girls. The girls can now be easily sent here without worrying about their security as the school is in the middle of the village. The parents can drop their daughters and pick them up without any worry. This school seems to be a good alternative to the government primary school. However, it is not easy for everyone to pay for their children's education, especially when they don't consider it as a worthwhile investment.

There is also one Muslim school in Pohadibela called Madarasa. Here the children are taught regular subjects like English, mathematics, science, Urdu, and religious studies. They are taught how to be good Muslims. Only the Muslim boys attend this school. They have to dress like traditional Muslims and behave conservatively.

### **Preaching, Not Practicing: A Family of Contradictions**

In one of the focus group discussions with women of Pohadibela, I came across a woman who had been married at age 16, became pregnant soon, and underwent an abortion only eight days previously. She and the female members of her family seemed excited about her successful abortion, and there was a celebrative mood in the house. Unable to understand this strange attitude, I prodded. After talking to them, I figured out the reason behind all the excitement.

The woman's husband was an army soldier and was a handsome man. She was married early (and illegally) as it was impossible to refuse such a "good" match. When she got pregnant, her husband told her to abort the pregnancy, as he was not willing to move around in his job with a wife and a baby. When her in-laws came to know about

this pregnancy, they supported the son in his decision, agreeing that she should abort the child. It is not often that these issues are so openly discussed with family elders. These are sensitive issues that are usually kept undercover. The woman's own family felt proud that her in-laws supported the abortion decision. They were relieved that the in-laws did not force their daughter to have a child at the age of seventeen.

When I asked her if she had considered using family planning methods, she sighed and said that her husband does not want to talk about these matters. Neither could she ever ask him to have protected sex. The other women, who were present, gazed at me and thought that I was "stupid" to not understand this. After talking to these women for almost an hour, I tried to convince them that she could get pregnant every year, and have to go through this painful abortion procedure repeatedly. However, the mother of the girl refused to understand that the son-in-law would wear a condom, as that was against the wish of God, and, of course, his masculinity.

I learned that the father of this young woman has been a family planning practitioner for the past three decades. He was retiring from government service in late-98, and planned to establish family planning camps all over Bihar state. When I asked him about his own daughter, he shrugged and sighed. He did not think that it was his responsibility to inform and educate his daughter or his son-in-law about family planning, and its implications on their lives. He felt that it was not appropriate for him or his wife to "interfere" in these matters. Ironically, he thought, his daughter should not pester her husband too much. She should keep a low profile. When I asked him, if he worried about her deteriorating health after an abortion at age 17, he thought it was not a big problem. She would survive. When I asked him why he got his daughter married at the age of 16, he said that he could not miss such a "good" offer.

This case in Pohadibela shows us the complexities of organizing for social change, and the paradoxes and contradictions that mire people's lives.

### **Sayed Hussein: Amplifying a Media Message**

Sayed Said Husein, who initiated the letter to All India Radio in response to "Tinka Tinka Sukh", is a 23 year old Muslim shopkeeper in Pohadibela. He is an active radio listener, and has a radio playing in his shop all the time. He is the founder of the radio listeners' club in Pohadibela. This club has not been very functional, as its

membership is limited to Sayed Said Husein's family members and his friends. These people are ardent listeners of radio.

When "Tinka Tinka Sukh" was being broadcast, Sayed used a loudspeaker in his shop to amplify the volume of the radio serial. He was not asked to do so by any villager but felt it was his moral obligation and responsibility to share "good" messages with the community. He thought the radio could benefit several members of the local community. Often Sayed made his friend hold the loudspeaker and radio while they both rode on the bicycle amplifying the radio message. This way those who could not afford a radio, or were not aware of "Tinka Tinka Sukh", could hear the program's social messages.

In contrast to Birendra Singh Kushwaha of Village Lutsaan (discussed earlier), Sayed Said Husein maintains a low profile in the village. He is not aggressive or assertive. He wishes to quietly serve his community by educating them whenever and however possible. Keeping this in mind, he emphasized the social themes of "Tinka Tinka Sukh" to all his community members, holding discussions with them whenever possible. His circle of friends follows his virtues, and helps him to help others.

Since the village is fragmented into conspicuous caste-based communities, the endeavors of Sayed Hussein with respect to promoting "Tinka Tinka Sukh" were limited to the Muslim community. He said he did not have any reasons for not including other communities, he just felt he first owed it to his community.

### **Radio: A Change Agent.**

It is obviously very difficult to claim strong audience effects of "Tinka Tinka Sukh" in Pohadibela. We were visiting this village 16 months after the broadcasts of "Tinka Tinka Sukh" ended. After such a long time, we found, it was very difficult for the radio listeners to recall the storyline, and the names of the characters in "Tinka Tinka Sukh". Lutsaan was somewhat different, as we had first visited the village only six months after the broadcasts ended. However, I can assess the radio-listening habits of the villagers in Pohadibela and base my assumptions regarding "Tinka Tinka Sukh" from there.

Since Pohadibela is geographically-isolated (see Figure 1), there seemed to be a very high dependence on the radio for information and entertainment. The village is flooded with water overflows for over 3 months in a year, and for almost 6 months in a

year there exists no suitable road to get to the village. This, in turn, cuts-off the villagers from the rest of the world. They remain inside the village, except a few of the villagers who somehow travel to other towns to bring-in essential food items, and other consumer goods. Hence, the reliance on radio is very high. It is their window to the world, and their "electronic" connection to the outside, especially in the absence of other "physical" connections.

Pohadibela has had no regular electricity for the past seven years. In such a scenario, the most preferred media happens to be radio as it can be inexpensively run on batteries. Television is owned by a few families, including the Mukhiya's, but is more of a status symbol. The television sets are run on car batteries for such special occasions like telecast of cricket matches, news, afternoon shows, and for video movies.

Since, Pohadibela is primarily an agricultural community, the farmers carry their radio sets to the fields. The most preferred programs are farmaishi (music-request shows) programs, news, and soap operas. Only Sayed Hussein and his half-a-dozen or so friends had a good recall of "Tinka Tinka Sukh", its story, and its educational themes. They remembered some important characters like Suraj, Champa, Ramlal, and a few notorious others like Chachi. The others did not remember, but could sketchily discuss the themes of "Tinka Tinka Sukh", once we provided them with the background. However, several people were listening to "Yeh Kahan Gaye Hum", the new radio serial on the environment being broadcast by All India Radio in 1998. Most of them were enjoying it and claimed that they eagerly looked forward to such programs. For the majority, this radio program was more for entertainment and less for education. Unlike in Lutsaan, they did not seem to establish any major connection between "Yeh Kahan Aa Gaye Hum" and their lives.

Ironically while it took us 4 to 5 hours every day to reach Pohadibela by road, radio reaches almost each and every house of this village, almost 18 hours a day. The reliance of the villagers in Pohadibela on radio is naturally high. Radio is thus a highly useful medium to reach the villagers with messages of development. Where development workers shy away, radio has an even more key change-agentry role.

**APPENDIX A****Operational Research Plan for Studying Community Effects of  
“Tinka Tinka Sukh”.**

**OPERATIONAL RESEARCH PLAN FOR STUDYING COMMUNITY EFFECTS OF  
"TINKA TINKA SUKH" IN VILLAGE LUTSAAN (ALIGARH, U.P.) AND VILLAGE  
 POHDDI BELA (DURBHUNGA, BIHAR) OF INDIA.**

**(for Summer of 1998)**

by

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 Michael J. Papa  
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 Sweety Law**

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Here is an attempt to summarize the nature and scope of activities to be carried out in Lutsaan (Aligarh, U.P.) and Pohddi Bela (Durbhunga, Bihar) to understand the process of media-sparked social change at the community level, and the complexities there-in. These activities, while proposed specifically for Lutsaan, should be adopted and adapted to the context of Pohddi bela, Durbhunga.

This operational plan lists (1) the type of questions that need to be asked in these villages and other data that need to be collected, and (2) the methodological tools at our disposal to accomplish the above.

## **# 1. QUESTIONS TO BE POSED**

**Note:** The key purpose of these questions is to allow people to tell stories, share anecdotes, and give personal accounts. So encourage people to do so wherever appropriate. Keep an eye for paradoxical/contradictory statements that respondents make and seek clarification from them about these.

### **Key Questions about Social Learning Through Conversations**

**Context Setting:** When we visited Lutsaan last year, we were made aware of conversations and community activities that were sparked by "Tinka Tinka Sukh" (for e.g. some community members undertook a pledge with respect to not giving or taking dowry, songs were performed about women's status, poetry was recited about Lutsaan as a model village community; etc.).

**Question Set #1:** What kinds of conversations and interactions have occurred in Lutsaan in the past year or so about social issues that were highlighted in “Tinka Tinka Sukh” (e.g. not giving or taking dowry, gender equality, small family size, etc.)? In what settings have these conversations occurred? Who were the participants? Have these conversations occurred spontaneously in families and other social groups or have they been more formal where people have gotten together to address these issues? What social issues have these conversations focused on? What have you learned from these conversations about these social issues and about what you can do to improve your life and the life of other community members? How useful are these conversations in your opinion in helping to bring about some community changes? Why?

Have there been other community activities (e.g. writing and performance of songs, drama, poetry, etc.) that have focused on social issues highlighted in “Tinka Tinka Sukh”? Describe these activities in detail. Who initiated them? How were they organized, etc.?

**Question Set #2:** Sometimes conversations about social change produce nothing more than the talk itself. Other times, these conversations spark a process of community action. What have been the outcomes of your conversations and interactions with respect to addressing social issues in Lutsaan (e.g. increased attendance of girls in schools, decrease in use of alcohol and smoking, etc.)? What have been the outcomes of your community-based activities that draw attention to these social issues.

In the past year or so, have people in your community gotten together to collaboratively participate in village-level development activities, including income-generating projects (e.g. women getting together to make Ghee from surplus milk and then selling it for additional income).

### Key Questions about Paradoxes and Contradictions

**Context Setting:** When we visited Lutsaan last year, we were impressed by the various individual and community initiatives to address social problems (e.g. educating girls, gender equality, child marriage, not giving or taking dowry, etc.). However, we also observed certain paradoxes and contradictions in your actions which, while solving certain problems, created others.

**Question Set #3:** How do you specifically respond to the following instances of contradictory or paradoxical behavior? What can you as a community do to resolve these contradictions and paradoxes? (Note: Ask the preceding two questions for each of the following paradoxes.)

(i) Many villagers talked about the importance of gender equality and family planning. However, some of these same villagers said that it may be okay to engage in sex selective abortion as an acceptable means of limiting population growth.

(ii) The commitment to gender equality was clearly shown in reports of increased attendance of girls in schools. However, we also noted that in the cultural performances, that women were located in the periphery of the audience and only participated in song and dance after the men had an opportunity.

(iii) The all-women dairy cooperative offers evidence of women's empowerment and gender equality. However, the secretary of the dairy coop is a man and there is no women's club for coop members to address commonly-experienced problems.

(iv) Many villagers in Lutsaan strongly supported that equal education be offered to girls. However, some villagers argued that this education was primarily essential for them to get a good match.

(v) Many Lutsaan villagers signed a pledge that they were going to end the practice of giving or taking dowry. However, we came across one family that had married their 14 year old daughter along with her elder sister to save marriage costs. The response we received was that "this family is of a lower caste, there is nothing we can do".

(vi) We witnessed a great deal of community pride in Lutsaan. We saw a commitment among the people to work together to solve community problems. Clearly, the villagers we spoke to see one another as part of a community that can move forward together. However, we also recognized that the village, in some ways, is not a single community but one that is fragmented according to caste. How can a community move forward collectively when there are villagers who are excluded from discussion of community issues?

The preceding contradictions and paradoxes are ones that we observed during our last visit to Lutsaan. Can you think of any others?

### Key Questions About the Process of Social Change

**Context Setting:** When we visited Lutsaan last year, we heard about certain individual and community-level changes that were sparked by "Tinka Tinka Sukh" (for e.g. some community members did not accept dowry, some individuals gave up smoking, etc.)

**Question Set # 4:** What kinds of changes at the individual or community level have occurred in Lutsaan in the past year or so (e.g. increased attendance of girls in schools, fewer instances of dowry, etc.)? How did these changes occur? What did individuals and community members do to participate in these change efforts? How do you feel about these changes? How has your community benefited from these changes? As you've tried to translate your ideas into action, have there been any social barriers (e.g. long-standing traditions) that you've had to face? Please describe. What is it that you especially wanted to change but have not been able to change? Why?

### Key Questions Related to the Practice of Dowry

**Question Set # 5 A:** Launch a discussion on dowry and specifically probe along the following lines:

- (i) How did the practice of dowry begin in India, in your opinion?
- (ii) Why does the practice of dowry continue in India?
- (iii) Is it natural for parents to help their children begin their married life?
- (iv) What social pressures do parents face with respect to giving or taking dowry?
- (v) Under what conditions does dowry become a social evil?

The discussions about dowry will likely reveal the fact that there are many forces that continue this social practice. Parents want to provide something for their children to begin their married lives together. Community members expect parents to provide for an elaborate wedding celebration. There is also the fact that women in India are viewed as economic liabilities and hence they are objectified in a way that reduces them to an economic value. Thus, a community pledge to end dowry must keep all of these factors in view.

**Question Set 5B:** How likely is it that dowry can be ended in a community when all of these factors contribute to its continued existence? Can dowry be abolished in an absolute sense within a community? What are the key barriers to abolishing dowry? Is it more appropriate for community members to talk about modified forms of dowry in which gifts are exchanged voluntarily so families are not driven to debt by the practice?

Another important issue with respect to dowry is that most villagers within Lutsaan marry people who live in other villages.

**Question Set 5C:** How can the villagers of Lutsaan pledge to end dowry unless they get the agreement of surrounding communities to do the same? Is this an issue that the villagers of Lutsaan have considered? If not, why? If so, what have they planned to do?

### OTHER DATA TO BE COLLECTED

While collecting the below data, probe about the specific role of “Tinka Tinka Sukh”, if any, in sparking some of these changes. Also look for instances of paradoxes and contradictions in respondents responses.

**1. CHILDREN’S EDUCATION:** Rise/decline in school enrollments in the past few years 1996, 1997, and present). Number of girls versus boys attending schools (head counts) and change in these numbers in the past few years. Discrepancy between school enrollments (registration) versus school attendance. How are classes conducted? What is the gender of teachers? How are boy students treated versus girl students? How many boys and girls from Lutsaan travel out-of-town to attend high school and College? Has the number of girls going out of town increased in recent years? Why?

**2. MARRIAGE & DOWRY:** Number of new marriages in Lutsaan in the past three years. How many new brides came into Lutsaan? How many of Lutsaan’s daughters were married off outside? How many marriages occurred between girls and boys of Lutsaan? Were these marriages arranged? Any love marriages? How many marriages were out-of-caste? Was there resistance to love and out-of-caste marriages? Of what type? How was it overcome? How about exchange of dowry? What came in? What went out? Were the ceremonies held with “dhoom-dham” (pomp and show)? What were the respective ages of girls and boys who got married? How many of the newly-weds already have children? How many (of those based in Lutsaan) practice family planning?

**3. SEX OF NEW CHILDREN:** What is the gender of babies born in Lutsaan in the past two three years? Are there any facilities for abortion available in the village, local township? Where do women of Lutsaan deliver babies? At home? Outside? Are their mid-wives? How many babies died during child-birth or in their infancy in the past three years?

**4. ALCOHOL & CIGARETTE USE:** What is the prevalence of alcohol use in Lutsaan? Where is alcohol available? Who consumes? Any changes in consumption patterns over the past few years, especially since our visit? Similarly, any changes in cigarette consumption in the past few years?

**5. DAIRY COOPERATIVE:** When and how was the dairy coop established? How many members does it have? Men? Women? Were there any resistances to membership of women in the dairy coop? What kind? How were they overcome? Has the number of women members increased in recent years? What role do women perform in daily dairying tasks? How about men? Who collects the milk payment? Who runs (manages) the dairy cooperative? How is the income spent? Who spends the income? What role do men play in running the dairy coop? Does it still have a male secretary? Why? How has the dairy cooperative made women more efficacious individually or collectively? Examples of such efficacy and empowerment?

**6. OTHER AGGREGATE DATA:**

- a. What village level organizations exist in Lutsaan? Natya mandili, Shyam club, Dairy coop, , youth clubs, etc. ? How were these formed? What do they do? What kind of conversations, interactions, occur in these organizations? What role do these organizations play in creating a climate for social change? Who controls and runs these organizations?
- b. What NGO's, other government agencies, are active in Lutsaan? What do they do? How do they especially involve women members? What impact do they have? What kind of family planning, health, child services type of infrastructure exist in Lutsaan?
- c. What is the political structure of Lutsaan (Gram Parishad, etc.)? What is the occupation structure? What is the family structure (ratio of nuclear versus joint families) in Lutsaan? How does "gender" play itself out in these structures?
- d. What is the caste/religious structure and caste/religion-based relations in Lutsaan? How much integration is there in community activities? How about integration between Hindus and Muslims? To what extent are people in Lutsaan related to each other? What role do priests, religious leaders play in the community?
- e. Who are the various opinion leaders in Lutsaan? Men and Women?
- f. How is Lutsaan "different" from other villages? What is its history?
- g. Daily clock: How a typical married and unmarried man (16-17 year old) spend their daily time? How a typical married and unmarried woman (15-1 year old) spend her daily time? How a typical boy (6-7 year old) and girl spend their daily time?
- h. What are the patterns of media consumption in Lutsaan? What media (mass and folk) are available? How do people use them? To what extent is collective viewing/listening practiced? What happens before, during , and after these collective viewings?

Various methods, tools, and techniques should be utilized to seek answers to questions posed in section one including (1) participant observation, (2) focus and in-depth interviews, (3) trigger audio, (4) photo elicitation, (5) photographs, (6) and short, rapid surveys.

### Participant Observation

Observe village-level activities both indoors and outdoors. Observing activities at Shyam Mandals, Natya mandili, dairy coop, school, local shop, tailor shops, village hand-pump, agricultural fields, village social and cultural events (marriages, births, others), etc. These observations should be unobtrusive.

### In-depth and Focus Group Interviews

Conduct in-depth and focus-group interviews with key respondents aligning the questions/issues with the gender, age, and other characteristics of respondents. In addition to conducting focus groups of male and female respondents, think about conducting interviews in family settings, among members of various organizations, school-going children, young unmarried girls, etc. if such “specialized” groups will be more appropriate for the issues/questions posed. Audiotape and label each interview and later translate/transcribe.

### Trigger Audio

Use several “Tinka Tinka Sukh” audio segments to “trigger” conversations and discussions on various social issues.

- Episode 7: Ramlaal’s berates his sister Champa and Chachi sides with her son.
- Episode 22: Gareebo tries to convince Nandini to marry but Nandini makes it clear that she wants to make a career and wants her younger sisters to marry first.
- Episode 32: Conflictual conversation between Suraj and Ramlaal about the role of women in a family.
- Episode 28: Ill-treatment of Poonam by her husband and in-laws for lack of dowry (perhaps this segment can be procured from Mrs. Usha Bhasin, AIR).

### Photo Elicitation

Use photographs from our last Lutsaan visit to elicit people’s reactions. Have villagers take pictures and ask them what they see in the images.

- Photo 1 Usha Bhasin proudly displaying a copy of the Lutsaan letter at All India Radio.

- Photo 2      Men and women of Lutsaan working together in the field.
- Photo 3      Three little girls of Lutsaan.
- Photo 4      Arvind and Saumya (a city-based, professional women) interviewing men in Lutsaan.
- Photo 5      Women work while men stand and look. Also, depiction of the two underage sisters who were married off together to save on reception costs.
- Photo 6 & 7    Men sitting; children and women standing during the variety entertainment program.
- Photo 8      Veiled dancing women.

### Photographic documentation

Shoot pictures in Lutsaan which reflect desirable (e.g. photo 2), undesirable (e.g. photo 5, 6, 7) and the paradoxical/contradictory nature of social change (e.g.. photo 8).

### Rapid Surveys

Conduct a rapid survey of only **listeners** of "Tinka Tinka Sukh" in the village, asking them the following questions:

Listener No:  
Name:  
Age:  
Marital status:

1. Roughly how many of the 104 episodes of "Tinka Tinka Sukh" did you listen to?

(1) Few (2) Some (3) Most/All

2. Did you ever engage in a discussion about the radio serial with others?

(1) No (2) Yes

if yes,

3. With whom? (1) Friends (2) Spouse (3) Other family members (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

4. Roughly with how many people in the past two years, both in and outside of your village, have you personally discussed the content, the characters, the situations of "Tinka Tinka Sukh": \_\_\_\_\_ (give number).

Of the above,

- How many were non-listeners of "Tinka Tinka Sukh": \_\_\_\_\_
- How many people reside outside of Lutsaan? \_\_\_\_\_

5. What issues did you talk about:

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6. Did this talk/conversations yield any specific outcomes or specific behavioral changes

(specify) \_\_\_\_\_

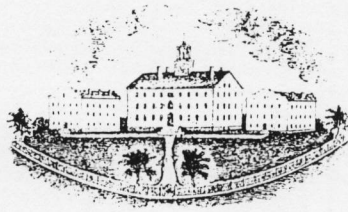
7. How would you rate your "involvement" in the storyline of "Tinka Tinka Sukh".

(1) low in intensity (2) moderate (3) highly intense

## **APPENDIX B**

### **Letter Sent to 30 Individuals in Lutsaan, Prior to Our Summer 1998 Visit.**

**The four-page letter in Hindi informs the villagers of Lutsaan about our plans to visit them in the summer of 1998. This letter contains a summary of our impressions from our first visit in 1997, including a description of the paradoxes and contradictions in the media-sparked process of social change. We encouraged the people of Lutsaan to reflect on the issues of gender equality, child marriage, community harmony, especially in the context of the pledges they took, prior to writing their poster-letter to All India Radio.**



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दिनांक मई २५, १९९८

आदरणीय

नमस्कार । ओहायो यूनिवर्सिटी (OHIO UNIVERSITY) की टीम यह आशा करती है कि आप सब लुट्सान वासी कुशल होंगे । लुट्सान से लौटने के पश्चात् हम सब धारावाहिक "तिनका तिनका सुःख" की रिपोर्ट लिखने में व्यस्त रहे । हमें आपके कई पत्र मिले (बीरेन्द्र सिंह कुशवाहा जी के भेजे हुए); और हमें यह जानकारी खुशी हुई की हमारी भेजी हुई प्रतें आपको मिली । आपको यह जानकारी दार्दिक खुशी होगी की हमारी टीम की तैयार की हुई दो रिपोर्ट, "तिनका तिनका सुःख" रेडियो धारावाहिक से सम्बन्धी, अन्तराष्ट्रीय समारोह में प्रस्तुत करी गई और वेद सज्जल रही । रिपोर्ट अंग्रेजी में लिखी गई थी और उसकी कاپियाँ हम "बापू" को इस पत्र के साथ भेज रहे हैं ।

पिछले वर्ष हमारी टीम ने आपके साथ हिन्दी रेडियो धारावाहिक "तिनका तिनका सुःख" के बारे में चर्चा करी थी । इस धारावाहिक ने कई निजी व सामाजिक विषयों पर प्रकाश डाला । धारावाहिक के प्रमुख विषय थे : लड़कियों की शिक्षा पर जोर, लड़कियों में आत्मविश्वास और आत्मबल की आवश्यकता, बाल विवाह की हानियाँ, लड़कियों को अपने पैरों पर खड़े होने की आवश्यकता, लड़के व लड़कियों के लालन पालन में भिन्नता क्यों, बड़े परिवार की हानियाँ, युवाओं का मार्गदर्शन, जल्दी-जल्दी गर्भधारण करने से हानियाँ, और माँ और बच्चे के स्वास्थ्य पर प्रभाव, परिवार नियोजन के तरीके, बांझपन सिर्फ महिला का दोष नहीं, दहेज प्रथा के परिणाम, इत्यादि ।

आपसे चर्चा करके पता चला कि लुट्सान वासियों ने काफी हद तक इन विषयों को पहचाना, और, कुछ लोगों ने खासकर, अपने जीवन में बदलने का प्रयास किया ।

गाँव लुटसान की सर्वश्रेष्ठ परम्परा जो आपके व्यवहार से झलकी वो है आप सबका आपसी मेल और सरल, सुशील व्यवहार। इस मेल की वजह से आप लोग में एक अनोखा सम्बन्ध है जो आप लोग को कठिनाई के समय एकता बनाए रखने में सहयोग देता है। "श्याम मंडल" इस व्यवहार का एक प्रतीक है जो दुविधा के साथ गाँव बाँधियों की सहायता करता है। नाट्य और संगीत की ओर रुझान होने के कारण, "रामलीला नाट्यकला" गाँव में एक सुशील वातावरण बनाए रखता है।

लुटसान की प्रगतिशील धारणा अगर हम "तिनका तिनका सुख" के नियोज से नापें, तो कुछ रीतियाँ लुटसान में अभी भी देखने के मिली जिनमें आगे के वर्षों में और भी सुधार आ सकता है। एक प्रगतिशील गाँव को समस्त रूप से सारी सामाजिक कुशीलियों को दूर करने की पूरी चेष्टा करनी चाहिये। महात्मा गांधी ने अपने समस्त जीवन को इसी लक्ष्य पर ढाला था।

क्या हम गांधी जी का नाम लेकर, कुछ ऐसे सामाजिक विषय उठा सकते हैं, जिस पर लुटसान वासी, खासकर आप लोग, और भी विचार करें ?

लुटसान की महिलाएँ ज्यादातर सिर्फ एक पत्नी या माँ के रूप में पाई गईं। क्या महिलाओं की जिन्दगी सिर्फ घर-उदरारी के दायरे तक ही सीमित रहनी चाहिये ? बाल विवाह की भी जानकारी हमें लुटसान में प्राप्त हुई। कभी-कभी दहेज प्रथा का भी उच्चारण किया जा रहा है। दुआ-छूत की भावना भी कुछ हद तक सामने आई। हालाँकि लुटसान में इन सामाजिक विषयों पर आपसी प्रगति हुई है; लेकिन क्या ऐसा नहीं हो सकता कि गाँव लुटसान के वासी मिल जुल कर इन बातों पर और भी विचार करें, और लुटसान को

रुक आदर्श गाँव बनाएँ ?

क्या आप सब मिलजुल कर लुटसान को राष्ट्रीय या अन्तराष्ट्रीय स्तर पर रुक आदर्श गाँव बना सकते हैं जिससे की भारत व पूरे विश्व के और गाँव उससे प्रेरणा ले सकें ? क्या आप लोग यह धृढ़ निश्चय ले सकते हैं कि आप सब गाँव वासी, विस्तारपूर्वक बातचीत करके, इन सामाजिक समस्याओं का (दहेज, छद्म-दूत, बाल-विवाह, इत्यादि), जो कि छोटे अंश में अभी भी मौजूद है, पूरी तरह समाधान करेंगे ?

हमारी टीम ने निर्णय लिया है कि इस जून-जुलाई के महीने में पुरानी रीसर्च टीम के दो सदस्य, श्री मुमताज अहमद व कुमारी सौम्या पंत, रुक बार फिर आपके गाँव आरेंगे। आपके प्रश्न से प्रभावित होकर इस बार हम थोड़ा लम्बा समय (दस-बारह रोज) आपके साथ बिताना चाहते हैं। हम गाँव में बिलकुल गाँव वासियों की तरह रहना चाहेंगे और लुटसान में ग्रामीण विकास की गतिविधियों से अपने आप को अवगत करना चाहेंगे। आशा करते हैं कि आपको इससे कोई असुविधा महसूस नहीं होगी। हम यह चाहेंगे कि गाँव की रोज की कार्यवाही में, हमारी उपस्थिती से, कोई फर्क नहीं आए। क्या हम आपकी जिन्दगी में फिर रुक बार शरीक हो सकते हैं ?

हमारे लुटसान आने के कार्यक्रम को कुछ हफ्तों में निश्चित होने की संभावना है। हम आपको पत्र द्वारा सूचित करेंगे। हम लगे जून के आखिर या जुलाई के पहले सप्ताह में वहाँ आने की सोच रहे हैं।

रेडियों के प्रभाव को और बारीकी से समझने के लिये, हम चाहते हैं कि लुटसान हमारे लिये रुक अन्तराष्ट्रीय माध्यम बनें। आपके सहभाव व सहयोग से

हम आशा करते हैं, यह कार्य परिपूर्ण हो जायगा। अपने शीघ्र मिलने की आशा रखते हुए,

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**Community Effects of "Tinka Tinka Sukh", an Entertainment-Education Radio  
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**A Research Odyssey in Village Lutsaan in Uttar Pradesh State and  
Village Pohadibela in Bihar State, India.  
(July, 1998)**

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