



ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

Geography

An Overview of Tribal Development in India: Problems and Prospects

KEY WORDS: Socio-Economic, Development, Scheduled, Tribes, Welfare and Empowerment of Tribal Women.

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ABSTRACT

Tribal development in India has been a success as the primitive societies living in remote rural areas are now educating their children and living in desirable standards. It is interesting to note that apart from several governmental efforts, the contributions of non-governmental organizations in providing training and development in different sectors of economy especially the tribal population. The tribes in India are characterized by the dominant groups as distinctive with their comparatively more isolated habitation in the hilly and the forest areas, and their distinct social, economic and cultural lives. The connotation 'tribe' attributed to certain ethnic groups in India is the legacy of the British colonial rule. The term continues to be used in dealing with the exotic indigenous people of India who live outside the cities and townships. In the present day, tribes are found to live in forests, hills, and forest terrains which are the repository of minerals, hydraulic and forest resources with their exotic culture which is peculiar to modern day people. Therefore, the outsiders designate them with various names. The anthropological literature reveals that the term tribe has been used for those groups of human beings whose place of residents is situated in remote areas like hills, forests, sea coasts and islands, and whose style of life is quite different of the present day civilized men. Local indigenous people in these places of the world are termed as tribe or tribal, to distinguish them from other people of the world. Though our national leaders and constitution makers were committed to the uplift of the weaker sections, it is distressing to note that the gains of development have not yet reached the intended classes to the desired extent.

Tribal development schemes are meant for the socio-economic development of the tribes. The need for tribal development in India hardly needs any justification. There is a special provision in the Indian Constitution to protect the Scheduled Tribes from social injustice and all forms of exploitation. The tribal development programmes are being implemented for the safeguard of the tribes under the control of Government of India. But Indian tribes are facing some unsolved problems. Tribal people should get the better chance to survive and thrive for; they are the part and parcel of the mainstream of society. Right from the first Five Year Plan several schemes are still active with different approaches. Attempts have been made to make the Scheduled Tribes to develop socially, educationally, economically, politically and culturally.

The present paper is an attempt to focus on the overview of tribal development efforts and unsolved problems even after sixty nine years of independence.

INTRODUCTION:

The greatest challenge that the Government of India has been facing since independence is the proper provision of social justice to the scheduled tribe people, by ameliorating their socio-economic conditions. Scheduled Tribes, Scheduled Castes and denotified tribes constitute the weakest section of India's population, from the ecological, economic and educational angles. They constitute the matrix of India's poverty. Though the tribals are the sons of the same soil and the citizens of the same country, they born and grow as the children of the nature. From the historical point of view, they have been subjected to the worst type of exploitation social. They are practically deprived of many civic facilities and isolated from modern and civilized way of living since so many centuries.

Tribal Development before Independence:

Prior to the arrival of the European colonial forces, the tribal areas were relatively undisturbed. The Mughal and native rules prior to the British occasionally looted the tribal resources by using their unconstitutional power. The imposition of regular taxation through the passage of the Bengal Permanent Settlement Act of 1793 marked the beginning of unrest and rebellions in all tribal areas of the country, depending on when the Act was operationalized. Widespread tribal resistance movements compelled the British administration to negotiate workable peace in the tribal areas and this led to the concept of partially or completely excluded areas of administration in British India. The British administrators pursued a 'policy of isolation' and tried to keep the tribes away from the mainstream of national life. Birsa Munda fought for the rights and privileges of tribes in India and earned a new identity for Indian tribes. The tribal freedom movements such as Kol Rebellion, 1832, Santal Rebellion 1855-56), first freedom movement, 1857 and so on also played a major role in the organization of tribes in Indian society. Several acts such as Cleveland's Hill Assembly Plan, Bengal Act, 1833, Wilkinson Act, 1855, Scheduled Area Act 1874, Chotanagpur Tenancy Act, Government of India Act 1919, and Government of India Act 1935 also paved the way for identity development and proactive measures for the development of tribes before independence.

Contemporary Tribal Development in India:

The 12th Five Year Plan aims to bring about the integrated tribal development in India. Budgetary allocations are also increased for the development of tribes across the country. An assessment of the implementation approaches under TSP reveals that Integrated Tribal Development Projects (ITDP/ITDA) are not functional due to several reasons such as lack of adequate and trained staff, poor Planning processes, inadequate office infrastructure and basic facilities for staff. In many states, project officers at ITDP do not have sufficient work experience. The Constitution enshrines a number of important provisions for the safeguard as well as promotion of the tribes in India. These provisions include – protective provisions, developmental provisions, administrative provisions and reservation provisions. The tribal leadership is not powerful enough to assert the rights of tribes across the country. The tribal movement is also at the cross roads like any other progressive mass movements in the country. A Historic breakthrough is awaited regarding the devolution of power to the grassroots of the tribal communities. Scholars have expressed serious reservations about the tribal developmental initiatives which lack coordination and prompt implementation. The bureaucracy is also primarily responsible for the ineffective implementation of the tribal development programmes. The fact is that the weakest link in the chain in the entire gamut of tribal development process is the implementation component. The tribal development programmes cannot be implemented successfully with the existing formal and complex structures of various developmental agencies. Among the tribes, the so-called primitive tribal groups are extremely vulnerable. They are still living in isolation and their life styles show little change over the years. In reality, the economically and politically strong within the tribal communities are cornering most of the policy benefits. There is no scientific monitoring and evaluation of tribal development plans in India. Effective machinery has not been set up at grassroots level, regional and national levels in order to ensure that tribal development benefits percolate to the members of the target groups. A multi-dimensional approach to tribal development is the need of the hour in India. There is no doubt about the need of diversities of strategies for tribal communities in India. Planning for the tribal development needs to be continuously evaluated and

upgraded throughout the nation. Sinhaet.al. (2002:06) suggest: "The tribes should not be treated as mere receivers of the benefits and that they have been actively involved in the process of tribal development. Real tribal development would require tribal communities engaging in self-management rather than that absolutely depending on the administration.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

1. To study the concept of tribal development.
2. To identify the problems and prospects of Scheduled tribes in India.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

Present study is descriptive and based on secondary data which is sourced from various books related to tribal development, journals, scholarly articles, government publications, reference papers in print and on from websites related to the topic.

PROBLEMS:

The tribal development measures adopted after the independence are found to be insufficient in improving the economic conditions of the tribes even after the various tribal development schemes. The tribal people are facing several economic and social problems

1. Existing agricultural practices and techniques in the tribal areas is inadequate. Almost complete dependence on rains and poor quality of land results in the lowest returns from agriculture. (Thakur,D.and Thakur,D,1995,a).
2. The problem of indebtedness among the tribals is not only an indication of their poverty but also reflects wider economic malaise i.e, lack of education, low purchasing/bargaining power and lack of resources for engaging in gainfull activity and meeting emergent expenditure. (Devath, Suresh.,2014).
3. The World Health Organisation (WHO) has emphasised that indigenous people have higher rates of infant mortality, lower life expectancy and more cases of chronic illness than the nonindigenous populations in their home countries. They suffer from extreme discrimination and lead a life of misery and destitution. The development discourse, therefore, needs to concentrate on finding an effective strategy to mitigate these crises. (Suman,Nath,2010).The health hazards related to pregnancy and malnutrition are faced by more than 90 percent of tribes.
4. Landlessness has been arguably the major cause of indebtedness among the agriculturist tribes in India. In India 58% of the tribal people Below Poverty Line with a high concentration in states like Andhra, Rajasthan, UP, Bihar, Orissa and West Bengal. The land alienation with its long history has natural consequence of indebtedness, which further lead to dispossession of tribal land. The poverty, land alienation indebtedness and landlessness is working cyclical way.
5. The problems relating to the infrastructure of the area besides water supply and communication and means, namely, of education facilities, banking or credit facilities marketing facilities, medical facilities and administrative facilities depend largely on the improvement of communication system. (Kulkarni,M. G.,1974).
6. Isolation and non-participation of tribes in development to a great extent leads to nondevelopment. (Thakur,D.and Thakur,D. N.,1995,b)
7. Housing facilities being most fundamental requirement of human survival and a question of identity requires special attention. In India in 1996, 28% of the tribes were without house (Economic Survey 1998). The situation is even more dreadful while trials are displaced and/or affected by development projects or natural calamities.
8. The innocence, illiteracy and helplessness of the tribes are exploited by the outsiders. The British policy, in particular, had led to ruthless exploitation of the tribes in various ways as it favoured the zamindars, landlords, money-lenders, forest contractors and excise, revenue and police officials. (Sociology Guide,2014).
9. Malnutrition is common and has affected the general health of the tribal children as it lowers the ability to resist infection,

leads to chronic illness and sometimes leads to brain impairment. No doubt tribes are backward and exploited more when compared to other ethnic groups of our country.

SOLUTIONS:

Various solutions have been presented for dealing effectively with the tribal problems. The tribal problems have been approached from three viewpoints. They are as follows:

- **Assimilation-** Assimilation is one of the ways of dealing with the tribal problems. Thus, according to this approach, we cannot deal with tribal problems on the basis of tribal culture and life but by changing them into the frame of new community. According to this solution advocated by the social reformers and voluntary organizations, assisting and encouraging the tribals to assimilate them with the mainstream of national life, can alone permanently solve the tribal problems. The Christian missionaries on the one hand, and the Hindu social reformers like Thakkar Bapa on the other, have been trying to assimilate them into Christian and Hindu community respectively. This approach has its own limitations .Complete assimilation is a difficult task. The tribals are not prepared to give up all of their traditional tribal beliefs, practices and ideas. Any attempt to impose the external cultural practices on them, creates in them guilt feelings, confusions and mental conflicts. This solution may even create economic, religious and moral degradation among them.
- **Isolation** - Elwin have suggested that the tribals must be kept at a distance from the rest of the society. Keeping them in isolation in some "National Parks" or "reserved areas" would solve two problems:(a) the tribals would be in a position to maintain their independent identity;(b) they would be free from the exploitation of outsiders. The champions of this approach are of the view that sufficient time must be given to the tribals to assimilate themselves with the rest of the community. The limitation of this approach is that when once the tribals are kept in isolation they are likely to develop vested interests and keep themselves permanently away from others.
- **Integration-** The third view, which is actively followed in the recent years, is that of integration. The policy of isolation is neither possible nor desirable, and that of assimilation would mean imposition. Hence integration alone can make available to the tribes the benefits of modern society and yet retain their separate identity.

SUGGESTIONS:

1. Any measures of indigenous peoples' social and economic development must necessarily start from indigenous peoples' own definitions and indicators of poverty and well-being. (Carino, Joji.2009, a).
2. Promotion of micro credit facilities through formal and favorable terms. The immediate steps can be the following :
 - i.Spread of banking,
 - ii.Focus on poverty alleviation,
 - iii.Entrepreneurship,
 - iv.Debt relief legislation,
 - v.Legal aid,
3. The promotion of tribal education needs a fresh thinking and revised efforts in new direction. The policy makers should focus on the improvement of quantity as well as quality aspects for tribal education. Normal development process has by passed the tribal communities. (Carino,Joji.2009,b),
4. Raising their productivity in agricultural, horticultural, animal husbandry, forestry, cottage, village and small industries and provision of employment in all seasons. Will go a long way in reducing the incidence of poverty of tribes.(Panda, N. K.2006).
5. Appropriate legal and administrative support will prove anti-exploitative measures for the tribes.

To sum up, the governmental schemes should be implemented considering the economic conditions of the tribes. There should be a humanitarian and co-operative outlook.

CONCLUSION:

The solutions to the tribal problems mentioned above, have their

own merits and demerits. The modern culture must not be imposed on them. Only those elements of new culture which may vitalize them for material advancement must be infused in them. Tribal problems are simple but very delicate to handle. No solution can be experimented with before winning the confidence of the tribals. It is essential to establish a harmonious compatibility between the tribal mode of living and the material advancement of culture. The integration of the tribal society into the Indian society takes time, and it has to be promoted while retaining the good points of the tribal culture. Tribal people possess a variety of culture and they are in many ways certainly not backward. The tribal development scenario is changing slowly but steadily towards positivity. But still there is a need to revise the development schemes, flowing of funds from government to the needful. Execution and implementation process will be better only if there is transparency.

These development programmes have no use unless the people are totally aware of all these, which are meant for their socio-economical welfare. Their participation in planning, formulation and implementation will get the better results and it will prove them helpful to flow in the mainstream of the development. Tribes should try to become economically self-dependent with the help of these development programmes and opportunities honored to them by the Constitution.

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