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TRIBES AT CROSS ROAD: ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

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ABSTRACT

Tribes in India are now at cross road because of Liberalization, Privatization and Globalization. The present paper discusses the major issues and challenges of tribes and their development in the era of Globalization. Thus far, the analysis of micro and macro processes that are important to a community's overall development has been the contribution of anthropology to our understanding of the developmental process. Tribals account for only 10.4% of the total population, they make India the second largest concentration of tribal communities in the world.

Keywords : *Tribes; Development; Globalization; Privatization; Constitutional rights.*

INTRODUCTION

After seventy-five years of planned development and huge investments of manpower and material and financial resources, the level of development of India's Scheduled Tribes continues to remain unsatisfactory. Even India's first prime minister had stated the policy for tribal development. In his own words: "We cannot allow matters to drift in the tribal areas or just not take interest in them...At the same time, we should avoid over-administering the areas and in particular, sending too many outsiders into their territory. It is between the two extreme positions that we have to function." Tribal development is the process of fostering the socioeconomic well-being of the tribe's members by integrated area development and other initiatives that are tailored to

their unique sociocultural and economic circumstances.

Tribes in India are now at cross road because of Liberalization, Privatization and Globalization. The present paper discusses the major issues and challenges of tribes and their development in the era of Globalization. Jan Drewnowski as rightly pointed out that "Development is a process of qualitative change and quantitative growth of the social and economic reality which we call either society or economy. Because of the close interrelation of economic and social elements no purely social or purely economic development is possible. Consequently, it is better not to speak of social development separately. It is a

single process which is best called simply development”.

Thus far, the analysis of micro and macro processes that are important to a community's overall development has been the contribution of anthropology to our understanding of the developmental process.

Tribals account for only 10.4% of the total population, they make India the second

largest concentration of tribal communities in the world (Census 2011). Historically there are seven major tribes represented in India, There are 622 tribes as per notified schedule under Article 342 of the constitution of India. The prominent tribal areas constitute about 15 % of the total geographical areas of the country and correspond largely to underdeveloped areas of the country.

THE SEVEN MAJOR TRIBES AND THEIR RESPECTIVE LOCATIONS ARE:

Tribes	States
Gonds	Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Jharkhand, Gujrat, Karnataka, Orissa, West Bengal
Bhils	Madhya Pradesh, Gujrat, Rajasthan
Santhals	Jharkhand, Orissa, West Bengal, Tripura
Minas	Rajasthan, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh
Oraons	Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Orissa, Maharashtra, West Bengal
Mundas	Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh Orissa, West Bengal, Tripura
Khonds	Jharkhand Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh Orissa, Bihar, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, West Bengal

TRIBALS AND THEIR CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS

The protection and advancement of the disadvantaged is covered in more than 20 provisions of the constitution. Since the Indian Constitution recognized the unique requirements of Scheduled Tribes, it has established specific protections against exploitation, ensuring social justice for these communities.

ARTICLES IN THE CONSTITUTION

Equal rights and opportunities are granted to all citizens by Article 14; discrimination against any citizen on the basis of sex, religion, color, caste, or any other factor is prohibited by Article 15; Article 15(4) requires the State to provide specific measures for the advancement of any socially and educationally disadvantaged classes.

Article 16 (4) empowers the State to make provisions for reservation in appointments or posts in favour of any backward class of citizens, which in the opinion of the State, is not adequately represented in the services under the State;

Article 46 enjoins upon the State to promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker

sections of the people and, in particular, the STs and promises to protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation.

Furthermore, Articles 330, 332, and 335 specify the reserving of seats for STs in the Lok Sabha, State Legislative Assemblies, and in services, despite Article 275 (1) promising grant-in-aid for advancing the welfare of STs and for improving the standard of administration of the Scheduled Areas.

Finally, the Constitution also empowers the State to appoint a Commission to investigate the conditions of the socially and educationally backward classes (Article 340) and to specify those Tribes or Tribal Communities deemed to be as STs (Article 342).

THE FIFTH SCHEDULE

The Constitution establishes guidelines for the Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes in States other than Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, and Mizoram. Specifically, it mandates that the Governors submit Annual Reports to the President of India about the Administration of the Scheduled Areas and that Tribal Advisory Councils

be established to provide guidance on issues related to the welfare and advancement of the Scheduled Tribes (Article 244(1)).

THE SIXTH SCHEDULE

The Constitution also refers to the administration of Tribal Areas in the states of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram by designating certain tribal areas as Autonomous Districts and Autonomous Regions and also by constituting District Councils and Regional Councils (Article 244(2)). To ensure effective participation of the tribals in the process of planning and decision-making, the 73rd and 74th Amendments of the Constitution are extended to the Scheduled Areas through the Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996.

TRIBALS AND THE FIVE-YEAR PLANS

The First Plan (1951-56) clearly laid down the principle stating that 'the general development programmes should be so designed to cater adequately to the backward classes and special provisions should be used for securing additional and more intensified development for STs'.

Unfortunately, the same could not take place.

The Second Plan (1956-61), which laid emphasis on economic development, gave a special focus on reducing economic inequalities in the society. Additionally, development programs for STs have been created with an awareness of their social, psychological, and economic issues as well as a respect and knowledge of their culture and customs. Indeed, the same was designed in accordance with "Panchasheel," the tribal development ideology put forth by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the nation's first prime minister. An important landmark during the Second Plan was the opening of 43 Special Multi-purpose Tribal Blocks, later termed as Tribal Development Blocks (TDBs).

The Third Plan (1961–1966) upheld the same tenet, which called for reducing inequality through a range of laws and initiatives to give STs equitable access to opportunities.

The Fourth Plan (1969-74) proclaimed that the 'basic goal was to realise a rapid increase in the standard of living of the people through measures which also promote 'equality and social justice'.

An important step in this direction was setting up of six pilot projects in Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Orissa in 1971-72 with a separate Tribal Development Agency for each project.

The Fifth Plan (1974–1978) introduced the Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP) with the express purpose of promoting the development of tribal people, signaling a change in strategy. The Tribal Sub-Plan has a two pronged strategy, namely i) promotion of development activities to raise the level of living standards of Scheduled Tribes and ii) protection of their interest through legal and administrative support.

The TSP stipulated that funds of the centre and the states should be quantified on the population proportion basis with budgetary mechanisms to ensure accountability, non-divertability and utilisation for the welfare and development of STs.

The Sixth Plan (1980-85) sought to ensure a higher degree of devolution of funds so that at least 50 per cent of tribal families could be provided assistance to cross the poverty line.

The flow of cash for the development of STs increased significantly during the

Seventh Plan (1985–1990), leading to the growth of coverage and infrastructural amenities. Emphasis was laid on the educational development of STs. Two national-level organizations were established to support the economic development of Scheduled Tribes (STs): the National Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Finance and Development Corporation (NSFDC) in 1989, and the Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation (TRIFED), which was established in 1987 as the supreme body for State Tribal Development Cooperative Corporations. The former was tasked with setting fair pricing for the tribal people's agricultural and forest products, while the latter was meant to offer finance support for the creation of jobs.

In the Eighth Plan (1992-97), efforts were intensified to bridge the gap between the levels of development of STs and the other sections of the society. The Plan not only emphasized elimination of exploitation, but also paid attention to the special problems of suppression of rights, land alienation, non-payment of minimum wages and restrictions on the right to collect minor forest produce etc. Nonetheless, the socioeconomic

advancement of STs continued to receive special attention.

The goal of the Ninth Plan (1997–2002) was to empower STs by establishing an environment that allowed them to freely exercise their rights, take advantage of their benefits, and live lives of dignity and self-assurance on par with other members of society. This process essentially encompassed three vital components, viz. i) Social Empowerment; ii) Economic Empowerment; and iii) Social justice. To this end, the nodal Ministry of Tribal Affairs established certain creative ST-specific programs, while line Ministries/Departments dealing with ST-related issues implemented general development policies and programs.

The Tenth Plan approach to the tribal development focuses on tackling the unresolved issues and problems on a time bound basis, besides providing adequate space and opportunity for the tribals to empower themselves with the strength of their own potentials.

TRIBALS AND THE FOREST RIGHTS

Many tribal habitations are in the hilly and forest areas and they are dependent for majority of their activities on forests.

Forests and tribals share a symbiotic relationship. Tribals continue to live in forest areas. A few of them rely solely on gathering little forest products to subsist.

The tribals are using forest from time immemorial as their source of livelihood but with the enactment of the Forest Conservation Act 1980, their rights to collect MFPs and other forest produce has been restricted considerably.

Because of this, the National Forest Policy of 1988 mandates that all organizations in charge of managing forests make sure that indigenous people are closely involved in the reforestation, development, regeneration, and harvesting of forests in order to give them meaningful work.

In spite of these special safeguards, tribals continued to struggle for their survival as they face formidable problems and displacement due to environmental

restoration projects, lack of development in forest villages etc.

TRIBALS AND DISPLACEMENT ISSUES

Rehabilitating displaced or forced/voluntary tribe members from their national habitats and their ancestral lands has grown to be a significant issue.

Large irrigation dams, hydroelectric projects, open-pit and underground coal mines, super thermal power plants, and mineral-based industrial facilities are among the development projects that mostly cause displacement.

In these projects, non-tribal outsiders who congregate in these places and seize both land and the new economic prospects cause tribal people to lose their land, in addition to the project authority.

The displaced tribal people's problems will be made worse by inadequate rehabilitation, which will leave them jobless, bankrupt, and possibly even homeless.

It is a well-known truth that displacement has resulted in severe social and economic

repercussions, in addition to simmering unrest and radicalism in the majority of tribal areas.

Though the tribals constitute only 10.4 % of the population, 40 % of India's tribals have been displaced due to developmental projects since 1947. The rights of tribes to land, forests, and water have been drastically reduced. Approximately 8.5 million indigenous people had been uprooted until 1990 as a result of large-scale development initiatives, forest reserves, national parks, and protected areas. This figure represents 55,16% of the nation's total displaced population.

The Fifth Schedule of the Constitution is violated when tribal people are uprooted from their territory because it takes away their ownership and control over natural resources and land that are vital to their way of life.

REVIEW OF TRIBAL SITUATION OF THE COUNTRY

Education situation:

Less than half of the general population and approximately 25% of rural tribal women are literate, while STs make up the

minority. 80% or more of primary school students drop out.

Absence of infrastructure, teachers' lack of dedication, and monitoring system

The necessity of having a suitable medium of instruction in tribal dialects is becoming increasingly apparent.

Social situation:

Even now, there are still atrocities committed against Scheduled Tribes, Scheduled Castes, and untouchability.

The Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act of 1989 and the Protection of Civil Rights Act of 1955 have a large number of cases registered under them.

ECONOMIC SITUATION:

Generally speaking, tribal people inhabit the most hostile terrain. They engage in dry-land cultivation on plains and lower slopes where productivity and output are extremely poor, and shifting cultivation on higher slopes. Low levels of agricultural production as a result of improper irrigation systems, a reduction in soil

fertility, a failure to embrace new agricultural techniques, and risks and uncertainties related to damage from pests, cyclones, droughts, wild animals, etc. Tribal communities' ability to maintain their self-sufficient food security system is seriously threatened by the combination of their expanding population and diminishing agricultural production.

There is severe lack of suitable self-employment opportunities to the educated youth and dropouts. Lack of knowledge in taking up alternative avenues of employment other than agriculture. Non-availability of appropriate and suitable technology for processing cottage and small scale industries to supplement income, Supply of poor quality of seeds, pesticides and raw materials to tribal beneficiaries. Vested interests, moneylenders, landlords, shopkeepers, contractors and government officials continue to exploit the tribals.

Poor marketing infrastructure reflecting in low-income levels to tribals, Coverage of ST families by National ST Finance and Development Corporation and State level Finance and Development Corporations has been grossly inadequate

Landlessness is increasing amongst the Scheduled Castes and the proportion of the Scheduled Caste agricultural labourers to the Scheduled Caste cultivators is increasing which indicates that the Scheduled Caste cultivators after losing their land holdings are becoming agricultural labourers. The results are not very different for Scheduled Tribes also.

POLITICAL SITUATION

There is lack of political will to allocate adequate funds to the tribal areas, which is clear from the poor flow of funds for the primary infrastructure and social security needs of the tribals.

There is growth of tribal movements, protests and campaigns as a result of conflicting interest groups like tribals, industries, government and consumers lobbying for stakes over the resources in the tribal areas.

The Government of India has allocated significant amount of resources for tribal

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development, but the impact has been rather limited. The approach adopted has been more welfare-oriented, and there has been less emphasis on the issue of empowerment.

OTHER SOCIO-ECONOMIC DYNAMICS

Adivasis considered as menials by the OBCs and the Upper Castes and this gives strength to the State's oppressive policies.

Globalisation has resulted in an increase in the value put on natural resources and so adivasi habitats are being targeted even more.

CONCLUSION

Positive integration into Modern Society, Economy and Polity Scope for Cultural Revival Anarchism as a lifeline from the perils of Modern Development Opportunities for Research, Advocacy, Legal and Mass Action.