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## Research Article

### TRIBAL DEVELOPMENT: A NEW VISION FOR TRANSFORMING INDIA

Munmun Sen\*

Department of Political Science, G.M University, Sambalpur

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#### ABSTRACT

Tribal development has been conceived as an approach that keeps tribal people at the centre stage. Tribal people are scattered all over the India. They have their own culture and traditions. However, they are still faced with numerous problems that hamper their progress and development such as, poverty, educational problems, land problems, health problems, naxalism, exploitation of children, inefficient administration and Governance which are analysed through this paper. This paper analyses a number of measures that have been suggested and implemented by the Government, such as, Constitutional Provisions and Safeguards, Educational Facilities, Tribe's Advisory Council, Representation in Legislatures and Panchayats, Commission for the Scheduled Tribes, Reservation in jobs, Economic Opportunities, Administration of Scheduled and Tribal Areas, Establishment of Welfare Department in States and Tribal Research Institute. This Article discusses how the socio-economic status of the tribals of India should improve substantially in order to bring about a positive transformation of the Indian society and nation.

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#### INTRODUCTION

Tribal development has been conceived as an approach that keeps tribal people at the centre stage. The word "tribe" has been derived from the Latin word "tribus" which denotes a particular type of common and political organization which is found in many different countries and societies. The term carries different connotations in different countries. In India it refers to the group of people who have been known by various names since primitive times such as Vanvasi, Adivasi, Vanyajati and Adimiyati. A tribe is also defined as a group of indigenous people with common language, distinct customs, rites and rituals, beliefs, simple social rank and political organization and common ownership of resources. Each tribe possesses some distinct culture that differentiates it from other tribes.

Tribal people in India are known as Adivasis or Janajatis. They comprise 8.6% of India's population according to the 2011 census. They have a large population in Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, West Bengal, North-Eastern states and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands of India. They are known as adivasi for being the original inhabitants of India. They have been categorised as scheduled tribes by the Indian constitution. A large tribal belt exists along with the Himalayas ranging from Jammu and Kashmir in the North to Uttarakhand and in

the West and Assam, Meghalaya, Manipur and Nagaland in the North-East India. Central India is the home to about 75% of the tribal population of our country. In fact the tribals have a presence in almost all states of the country to a greater or lesser extent. The tribals or adivasis usually live a segregated and secluded life in remote and isolated areas like hills and forests. Each tribal community generally has its own unique culture, language and religion. Tribal societies are generally egalitarian and they believe in and practise community ownership of land. However, the Moghal invasion of India in the early 10<sup>th</sup> century had a seriously adverse impact on the tribals. It led to a serious disruption in the concept of collective ownership of land. During the British rule, the tribal communities lost their rights over the forest area that belonged to them. According to the new legislation passed by the British, the forest areas belonging to the tribals, became the legal property of landlords who were appointed by them. Subsequently, the arrival of non tribals into tribal areas forced them out of the forest and ancestral land resources they depended on for their livelihood. They were brutally exploited by the land lords whose sole purpose was to gain the maximum economic benefits out of the forest resources. As a result, the tribals led a life of misery, suffering, deprivation and hardship. Consequently, as a reaction to the cruel oppression and subjugation, they often revolted against the British and the land lords in the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century. However, there was hardly any improvement in their lot since

\*Corresponding author: **Munmun Sen**

Department of Political Science, G.M University, Sambalpur

the colonial rulers turned a blind eye to their problems and needs.

It would be worthwhile to take a look into the present scenario with regard to the tribal population in India. Although the country has progressed by leaps and bounds in various spheres after independence, still the condition of the tribals has not changed proportionately. They are still faced with numerous issues that hamper their progress and development. They have to grapple with a wide range of problems as enumerated below:

### **Poverty**

Poverty is one of the major problems faced by the tribals in India. A large majority of the tribal people live below the poverty line. This is evident from the statistics given below.

**Table** Incidence of Poverty of Tribals

| Year    | 1993-94 | 2004-05 | 2011-12 |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Tribals | 63.7    | 60.0    | 43.0    |

It clearly shows that the incidence of poverty is declining in India. However, the rate of decline is far from satisfactory. Acute poverty is the main stumbling block in the path of progress and prosperity of the tribals. The government of India has come up with various Poverty Alleviation Programmes and welfare schemes from time to time. However, these efforts have not yielded the desired results in an adequate and satisfactory manner. As poverty and malnutrition go together, the tribals tend to suffer from various diseases which leads to poor physical growth and loss of productivity. As a result of ill health, the death rate among the tribals is quite high.

### **Educational Problems**

Education is the key to not only knowledge and information but also an improved quality of life. Unfortunately, poverty and illiteracy complement each other to a large extent. Education is a vital ingredient for success and progress in the modern world. However, it is out of reach for many tribals in India. Despite Government efforts to promote education, the literacy rate among Scheduled Tribes remains low as compared to the national average. According to the 2011 census, Scheduled Tribes have a literacy rate of 59% only. A number of factors are responsible for this sad state of affairs. Poverty, lack of resources, lack of transport facilities, lack of awareness, old mindset, availability of traditional experience and knowledge, lack of motivation etc are some of the major reasons for the educational backwardness of the tribals. Formal education has made very little impact on tribal groups since it is not considered necessary to discharge their social obligations. Superstitions, blind beliefs, myths and phobias play an important role in their apathy towards education.

### **Land Problems**

Tribals depend almost exclusively on agriculture and related occupations for their livelihood. However, they have been victims of colonialism and the resultant land alienation. Historically, they have been exploited by moneylenders, zamindars and traders. With the passage of time the tribals have got increasingly marginalized. Rapid industrialization and urbanisation has led to massive environmental degradation, deforestation and loss of natural resources. These developments have a hugely adverse impact on the traditional livelihood of the tribal people. Many tribal populations have been

dispossessed of their native lands due to various developmental projects undertaken by the Government from time to time without getting suitable compensation for their displacement. Most of the occupations engaged in by tribals fall into primary occupation such as hunting, gathering and agriculture. The technologies used in these activities are mostly primitive, obsolete and unproductive. As a result, the tribals find it hard to improve their economic condition in any meaningful way.

### **Health Problems**

Tribal populations suffer from many chronic and life threatening diseases apart from persistent malnutrition and deficiency of important nutrients in their diets. Alcoholism is a major problem which often ruins many tribal lives and families. It also leads to liver dysfunction which is often fatal. Tuberculosis and leprosy are the common diseases prevalent among the tribals. Lack of medical facilities, proper knowledge and awareness is primarily responsible for the high rate of diseases and death among them. Even today many tribal people use superstition and traditional method in treatment of diseases which are often ineffective.

### **Naxalism**

Naxalism has raised its ugly head in India since long. It has played havoc with the tribal life of our country. The tribals are caught between a rock and a hard place as they have to deal with the police authority on the one hand and naxalites on the other. They have often been harassed, tortured, exploited and intimidated by the naxalites as well as the police which makes their life extremely miserable and pitiable. Over the last few decades, a large number of innocent tribals have been threatened, brutalised and killed by the naxalites for their selfish ends. This has led to a lot of mental disturbance, confusion and psychological disorientation among the tribals. Thus the rise of the naxalite and maoist movements has been highly detrimental to tribal welfare and progress in India.

### **Exploitation of Children**

Child abuse and exploitation are common features in tribal communities. Children are often denied their basic human rights. Instead of sending them to school for education, many tribal parents engage the young children in various types of household work which hampers the proper growth and development of those children. Thus the children are deprived of the basic rights that every child is entitled to live.

### **Inefficient Administration and Governance**

The tribal population in India has suffered a lot due to highly inefficient, incompetent and corrupt administration in different parts of the country. The Government of India has initiated many laudable schemes and welfare programmes for the uplift and development of the tribal people. However, the fruits of these programmes do not reach the intended beneficiaries due to rampant corruption, mismanagement, faulty implementation and poor governance. Therefore, the condition of the tribals in India has not undergone any significant improvement over the years.

### **Measures of Tribal Development in India**

It is imperative that the condition of the tribals in India must improve drastically in order to integrate them into the national

mainstream. A number of measures have been suggested and implemented by the Government since independence. The following are the chief measures regarding tribal development.

### ***Constitutional Provisions and Safeguards***

The constitution of India has made special provisions for the Scheduled Tribes.

Article 342 of the constitution has specified the Schedule Tribe communities in India.

Article 164 provides for a ministry of tribal welfare in tribal dominated states such as Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Odisha. These ministries look after the welfare of the Schedule Tribes in their respective states.

Article 244 provides for inclusion of a fifth schedule in the constitution for the administration of the states which have a large tribal population. Further, Article 275 provides for grant of special funds by the union central Government to state Governments for the welfare of Scheduled Tribes.

### ***Educational Facilities***

It is an undeniable fact that education is the key to socio-economic progress and prosperity. Therefore, special emphasis has been laid on improving the educational standard of the tribal people. Accordingly, vocational and technical training is being imparted to them on a priority basis. Besides, stipends, scholarship, books, stationery and other necessary equipment are provided to them for a better learning outcome. Residential schools have also been setup for them in different parts of India.

### ***Tribe's Advisory Council***

The fifth schedule of the constitution provides for the establishment of a Tribe's Advisory Council in the states having scheduled areas such as Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Punjab, Rajasthan and West Bengal. These Councils advise the Government on matters relating to the welfare of the Scheduled Tribes and development of the Scheduled Areas.

### ***Representation in Legislatures and Panchayats***

The Indian constitution has made provisions for the protection of Scheduled Tribes and promotion of their educational and economic interests. In the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies, seats have been reserved for Scheduled Tribes under Article 330 and 332 of the constitution. Similarly seats are reserved for the Scheduled Tribes in the Gram Panchayats, Block Panchayats, District Panchayats etc. under the Panchayati Raj system.

### ***Commission for the Scheduled Tribes***

The constitution of India provides for the appointment of a Commissioner under Article 338 to investigate all matters concerning the safeguards for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. It also reports to the President on the proper working of these safeguards.

### ***Job Reservation***

The Government has accorded special emphasis on adequate representation of tribal people in the services. Accordingly, certain special concessions have been provided such as

reservation in jobs, relaxation in age limits, relaxation in eligibility criteria etc.

### ***Economic Opportunities***

A large majority of the tribal population in India depend on agriculture for their livelihood. However, they do not generally have access to modern and scientific farming methods. A large number of tribal people adopt shifting cultivation which has an adverse impact on soil productivity and crop yield in the long run. This is a major problem in many predominantly tribal states of India. Therefore, the Government has started a scheme to control and discourage shifting cultivation in these states. Apart from it, a number of measures have been undertaken to improve irrigation facilities to reclaim waste land and distribute it among the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe people. Besides, facilities have been provided for the purchase of fertilizer, better seeds, livestock and agricultural equipment etc. Cattle breeding and poultry farming which can be highly profitable are also promoted among these people. The Government has given a special thrust on the development of cottage industries. Thus various schemes have been launched to provide loans and subsidies. Apart from banks, co-operative societies also provide credit to the tribal people in different states of India.

### ***Administration of Scheduled and Tribal Areas***

The Government of India has devised certain guidelines with regard to the administration of "Scheduled Areas". It grants necessary funds to improve administrative efficiency and ensure a better quality of life for the tribal communities.

### ***Establishment of Welfare Department in States***

Under the provision of Article 164(1) of the constitution of India, welfare department have been set up in a number of states that have a large tribal population. These departments have been put under the charge of a minister in every state.

### ***Tribal Research Institute***

After India's independence, the Central Government and State Governments have made vigorous efforts for the welfare and uplift of the tribal people. Special programmes for their development have been undertaken in the successive five year plans. In order to achieve these objectives, Tribal and Harijan Research Institutes have been set up in states such as Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Rajasthan and West Bengal. These institutes conduct intensive studies of tribal arts, culture, customs and traditions.

All these measures are aimed at raising the standard and quality of life among the huge tribal population of India who have lived a life of poverty, backwardness, misery, oppression and social discrimination. As a result, they have not been able to fulfil their full potential and contribute meaningfully to the development of our country on the whole. It is hoped that these efforts and initiatives will significantly enhance the welfare and wellbeing of these people. Our nation cannot prosper if sizable sections of the population lead a wretched and marginalized life. Therefore, it is in everybody's interest that the socio-economic status of the tribals of India should improve substantially in order to bring about a positive transformation of the Indian society and nation as a whole.

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