

Tribal Development Strategies

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The Government of India's planned approach expedited the overall development of the Scheduled Tribes (ST) of the country, identified the problems and designed the ways and means to overcome the problems through various social, economic and political initiatives. While socio-economic initiatives have been implemented through schematic instrumentations by the government, there is a strong need to popularise a tribal-specific participatory self-governance system where the STs will manage their own resources and empower themselves in a participative and tribal-managed development process. Educational infrastructure needs to take into consideration how to enhance skills and the knowledge base of ST youth in the changing and competitive world through the provision of modern, need-based training and skill upgradation.

Development of tribes of India has remained a central theme in various perspective Five-Year Plans and Annual Plans. However, challenges do exist today for India's Scheduled Tribes (STs) due to their traditional lifestyles, remoteness of habitations, dispersed population, and frequent displacement. STs constitute 8.6 percent (10.45 crore) of the total population of the country (Census, 2011). Around 92 percent of the ST population lives in rural areas. While the proportion of the ST population to the total population has marked an increasing trend from 6.9 percent in 1961 to 8.6 percent in 2011, the socio-economic progress of ST people vis-à-vis the rest of the population in the country remained skewed on various development parameters. In this context, this article reviews various safeguards enshrined in our Constitution and the strategies followed, policies framed and programmes launched for the welfare of the STs.

Constitutional Safeguards

The framers and founding fathers of the Constitution of India appropriately recognised the special needs of the STs and made certain special safeguards not only to ensure social

and economic justice but also to protect these communities from any other possible exploitation. While the Fundamental Rights conferred upon the citizens ensure their holistic development, Directive Principles of State Policy delineated in the Constitution prompt the State to create a conducive environment that its citizens can enjoy. Moreover, there are special provisions laid down in the Constitution for areas which have a predominance of ST population. Constitutional provisions for STs are enlisted in Table 1.

Development Plans and Programmes

The policy makers and planners accorded utmost priority to the welfare and development of STs from the beginning of the First Five-Year Plan (1951-56). The Plan laid down the principle for suitably designing such plans and programmes that could adequately and appropriately cater to the needs of all the underprivileged. Besides, special provisions were initiated towards securing effective and intensified developmental drives for the all-round development of STs.

At the end of the First Plan, the Government recognised the need for a concrete, integrated developmental planning to improve the socio-economic conditions of STs in the country. Consequently, during the Second Plan (1956-61), the Government grouped development programmes in Scheduled areas under four heads – (a) communications, (b) education and culture, (c) development of tribal economy, and (d) health, housing and water supply. An emphasis was laid on economic development, with the focus on reducing economic inequalities in society. The development programmes for STs were planned, based on respect and understanding of their culture and traditions and



Table 1: Constitutional Provisions for Welfare of STs

S. N.	Article/Schedules	Provisions in Brief
1	14	Equality before the law or the equal protection of laws
2	15	Government not to discriminate against any citizen on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth
3	15(4)	States can make any special provisions for the advancement of any socially and educationally backward classes of citizens including STs
4	16(4)	Reservation of appointments or posts by States
5	38	State to strive to promote the welfare of its people by securing and protecting a social order
6	46	State to promote educational and economic interests of all the weaker sections including STs
7	164(1)	States with a large proportion of ST population (Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Odisha) shall have a Minister-in-charge of tribal welfare.
8	275(1)	Grants-in-aid for promoting the welfare of the STs and for raising the level of administration of the scheduled areas
9	330, 332 & 335	Reservations of seats for STs in the Lok Sabha, the State legislative assemblies and services
10	340	State to appoint a Commission to investigate the conditions of the socially and educationally backward classes
11	342	State to specify tribes or tribal communities as STs
12	275(1)	Grants from the consolidated funds of India each year to be released for promoting the welfare of STs
Schedule		
13	Fifth	Prescriptions outlined for the administration of Scheduled Areas and the setting up of Tribal Advisory Councils for monitoring and advising the matters relating to welfare of the tribal community [Article 244(1)]
14	Sixth	Administration of Scheduled areas in the States of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, and Mizoram by designating certain areas as Autonomous Districts and Autonomous Regions and also by constituting District Councils [Article 244(2)].
Constitutional Amendments		
15	73 rd & 74 th Amendments & Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled areas Act 1996)	Major shift towards empowering and enabling the scheduled tribes to look after their own interest and welfare through their own initiative. PESA provides a constitutional, legal and policy framework to ensure sustainable autonomous tribal governance.

with an appreciation for their social, psychological and economic problems. The programmes on tribal welfare which were designed during the First Plan took an effective shape in 1961, the last year of the Second Plan, when the Government successfully opened 43 Special Multi-purpose Tribal Blocks, later termed as Tribal Development Blocks (TDBs). The Third Plan (1961-66) continued the plans and policies prescribed and followed during the Second Plan in order to provide equality and opportunities to STs.

The Fourth Plan (1969-74) vowed to realise a rapid rise in the standard of living of the people, ensuring equality and social justice to all. Six pilot projects in Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Odisha were set up in 1971-72. The Fifth Plan (1974-78) launched the Tribal Sub-plan (TSP) envisaging the percolation of direct benefits of development initiatives to the STs. The TSP not only aimed at the promotion of development activities to raise the level of living standards of STs,

but also envisaged the protection of interest of the STs through legal and administrative support. The TSP also stipulated to ensure accountability and transparency, along with the flow of funds from other developmental sectors for STs, which was proportionate to the population.

The Sixth Plan (1980-85) sought to ensure a higher degree of devolution of funds and earmarked poverty alleviation programme for at least 50 percent of ST families to cross the poverty line. Infrastructural facilities in Scheduled areas were expanded. During the Seventh Plan (1985-90), the emphasis was on the economic development of STs by creating two national-level institutions viz. (i) Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation (TRIFED) in 1987 as an apex body for State Tribal Development Cooperative Corporations, and (ii) National Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Finance and Development Corporation, which was later bifurcated into two separate corporations – one for SCs and other for STs. The existing NSTFDC started operating in April 2001. While the former tried to provide remunerative prices for the forest and agriculture produce of STs, the latter made provisions for credit support for employment generation. The Eighth Plan (1992-97) focused on eliminating the exploitation of STs and paid attention to their special problems of suppression of rights, land alienation, non-payment of minimum wages and restrictions on the right to collect minor forest produce, etc.

The Ninth Plan (1997-2002) envisaged the creation of an enabling environment conducive for STs to exercise their rights freely, enjoy their privileges and lead a life at par with the rest of the society. The Tenth Plan (2002-07) focused on tackling the unresolved issues and problems faced by the tribal society on a time-bound basis.

The Eleventh (2007-12) and Twelfth Plan (2012-17) consolidated the welfare measures and offered directions to the States to design proper and appropriate developmental activities specifically relevant for the development of STs. The Annual Plans thereafter through NITI Aayog of Government of India take care of development needs of STs in States. The Aayog, from time-to-time, issues guidelines for implementing Tribal Sub-Plans by Central Ministries/Departments. Central Ministries/Departments have been mandated by NITI Aayog to

earmark funds in the range of 4.3 to 17.5 percent of their total Scheme allocation every year for tribal development. The socio-economic status of the STs on a few important development parameters is as follows.

(I) Livelihood Development

The erstwhile Planning Commission adopted the Tendulkar Methodology to estimate poverty incidence in India based on the survey results conducted by National Sample Survey Office (NSSO). As per these estimates, ST People living below the poverty line in 2011-12 were 45.3 percent and 24.1 percent in the rural and urban areas, respectively. State-wise details for the years 2009-10 and 2011-12 are given in Table 2.

Table 2: ST Population below Poverty Line during 2009-10 and 2011-12 (in %)

S. No.	State	Rural		Urban	
		2009-10	2011-12	2009-10	2011-12
1	Andhra Pradesh	40.2	24.1	21.2	12.1
2	Assam	32.0	33.4	29.2	15.6
3	Bihar	64.4	59.3	16.5	10.3
4	Chhattisgarh	66.8	52.6	28.6	35.2
5	Gujarat	48.6	36.5	32.2	30.1
6	Himachal Pradesh	22.0	9.5	19.6	4.0
7	Jammu & Kashmir	3.1	16.3	15.0	3.0
8	Jharkhand	51.5	51.6	49.5	28.7
9	Karnataka	21.3	30.8	35.6	33.7
10	Kerala	24.4	41.0	5.0	13.6
11	Madhya Pradesh	61.9	55.3	41.6	32.3
12	Maharashtra	51.7	61.6	32.4	23.3
13	Odisha	66.0	63.5	34.1	39.7
14	Rajasthan	35.9	41.4	28.9	21.7
15	Tamil Nadu	11.5	36.8	17.6	2.8
16	Uttar Pradesh	49.8	27.0	20.2	16.3
17	Uttarakhand	20.0	11.9	0.0	25.7
18	West Bengal	32.9	50.1	20.6	44.5
All India		47.4	45.3	30.4	24.1

Source: Reproduced from Annual Report 2021-22, Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India

As per the Periodic Labour Force Survey, conducted by NSSO, the Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) in usual status (Principal + Subsidiary) for STs during 2017-18 and 2019-20 were 41.8 and 47.1 percent, respectively, against 36.9 and 40.1 percent recorded for all categories (Table 3).

Table 3: Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) for Scheduled Tribes (ST) and All from 2017-18 to 2019-20 (in %)

Social Group	Rural			Urban			Rural+Urban		
	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female	Person
PLFS (2019-20)									
ST	57.4	38.0	47.9	56.3	25.6	41.3	57.2	36.5	47.1
All	56.3	24.7	40.8	57.8	18.5	38.6	56.8	22.8	40.1
PLFS (2018-19)									
ST	57.3	28.7	43.3	54.3	18.4	36.5	57	27.6	42.5
All	55.1	19.7	37.7	56.7	16.1	36.9	55.6	18.6	37.5
PLFS (2017-18)									
ST	56.6	27.6	42.5	53.6	18.4	36.6	56.3	26.6	41.8
All	54.9	18.2	37.0	57.0	15.9	36.8	55.5	17.5	36.9

Source: PLFS 2019-20, NSO, MoSPI, Reproduced from Annual Report of Ministry of Tribal Affairs, 2021-22

Similarly, NSSO's PLFS survey 2019-20 indicates that the unemployment rates according to usual status for STs have reduced from 4.3 per cent to 3.4 per cent between 2017-18 and 2019-20 (Table 4).

Table 4: Unemployment Rate (UR) for Scheduled Tribes (ST) and all from 2017-18 to 2019-20 (Figures in %)

Social Group	Rural			Urban			Rural+Urban		
	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female	Person
PLFS (2019-20)									
ST	3.7	1.8	3.0	7.1	8.0	7.3	4.1	2.3	3.4
All	4.5	2.6	4.0	6.4	8.9	7.0	5.1	4.2	4.8
PLFS (2018-19)									
ST	4.4	2.4	3.8	10.5	14.4	11.5	5.0	3.3	4.5
All	5.6	3.5	5.0	7.1	9.9	7.7	6.0	5.2	5.8
PLFS (2017-18)									
ST	4.9	2.2	4.0	7.0	7.6	7.1	5.1	2.6	4.3
All	5.8	3.8	5.3	7.1	10.8	7.8	6.2	5.7	6.1

Source: PLFS 2019-20, NSO, MOSPI, Reproduced from Annual Report of Ministry of Tribal Affairs, 2021-22

(II) Literacy and Education

The literacy rates (Census 2011) of the total population and ST population for all age groups in 2011 were 73.0 and 59.0, respectively (Table 5). The youth literacy gaps between ST and all categories were recorded at 5.1 whereas for males and females the gaps were 7.1 and 14.7, respectively. Such widening gaps between the literacy rates of the general population and STs indicate that the literacy drives of the government are yet to benefit all citizens of the country equitably.

Table 5: Literacy Rate by Age Group-Census 2011

All Categories (age groups)	Total			Scheduled Tribe		
	Person	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female
All Ages	73.0	80.9	64.6	59.0	68.5	49.4
10-14	91.1	92.2	90.0	86.4	88.3	84.4
15-19	88.8	91.2	86.2	80.2	85.7	74.6
20-24	83.2	88.8	77.3	69.2	79.6	59.0
Adolescent (10-19)	90.0	91.7	88.2	83.6	87.1	79.9
Youth (15-24)	86.1	90.0	81.8	75.0	82.9	67.1

Source: Office of the Registrar General, India, Reproduced from Annual Report of Ministry of Tribal Affairs, 2021-22

Drop-out rates are considered to be an important indicator reflecting the lack of educational development and inability of a given social group to complete a specific level of education. In the case of STs, the dropout rates show a declining trend for primary, upper-primary

and secondary classes (Table 6).

To address the issues of literacy and drop-outs from formal education and lower enrolment ratios, ST students have been accorded special incentives through the provision of free textbooks, uniforms, and free education in schools. While residential schools were built exclusively for the STs, the cost of boarding and lodging the ST students was borne by the Government. A special focus was also laid on ST students under District Primary Education Programme, Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya, Mid-day Meals Scheme, and Navodaya Vidyalaya. The main objective of the educational promotion drive has been to promote literacy among ST students by providing hostel accommodation to those ST students who are not in a position to continue their education either because of the remote location of their villages or because of their poor economic condition. While the construction of girls' hostels was started during the Third Plan period, a separate scheme for the construction of hostels for Scheduled Tribe boys was launched in 1989-90. Tribal schools were established in TSP areas from 1990-91 onwards. The Government, however, decided to provide quality education to the ST students by utilising a part of funds under Article 275(1) of the Constitution of India for setting up 280 Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS) in 20 States from Class VI to Class XII in different States. This initiative was launched during 1997-98 with an objective to enable ST students to avail the facility of reservation in higher and professional education courses as well as in higher level jobs in the government and various public sector undertakings. Out of the targeted, 200 schools were functional when a revamped programme was launched on 12 September 2019.

Table 6: Drop-out Rates in School Education for Scheduled Tribe Students

Year/ Class	Primary			Upper-Primary			Secondary		
	Girls	Boys	Overall	Girls	Boys	Overall	Girls	Boys	Overall
2015-16	4.18	4.29	4.24	9.64	9.70	9.67	26.28	26.27	26.27
2016-17	3.91	3.96	3.94	8.60	8.69	8.64	27.15	27.85	27.51
2017-18	3.48	3.82	3.66	6.14	5.95	6.04	21.36	22.90	22.14
2018-19	5.23	5.72	5.48	6.46	6.89	6.69	23.38	26.40	24.93
2019-20	3.45	3.90	3.69	5.65	6.15	5.90	22.49	25.51	24.03

Source: Unified District Information System for Education Plus (UDISE+), Ministry of Education, Reproduced from Annual Report of Ministry of Tribal Affairs, 2021-22

The Government has now identified 452 blocks in the country fulfilling the criteria of 50 percent or more tribal people and at least 20,000 tribal population for establishment of EMRSs under the revamped scheme which is in addition to 288 schools earlier sanctioned under the old scheme. The government has set a target of establishing 740 EMRSs. Presently, 378 schools are in operation across the country out of which 205 were made functional during the last five years (2017-22).

(III) Entrepreneurship and Skill Development

The progress in literacy and education demands creation of an enabling entrepreneurial atmosphere along with skill development initiatives to ensure gainful absorption of educated ST persons nearer to their place of habitation. Under Skill India Mission, the Ministry of Skill Development (MSDE) has been delivering short-term skills through Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY), Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSS) Scheme, National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (NAPS), and long-term skills through Craftsman Training Scheme (CTS) and Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) to the youth belonging to all section of the society including tribal community. All of the above schemes have the mandatory provision of utilisation of funds for tribals through Scheduled Tribes (ST) component. While resources are not an issue, the prime concern is how to encourage the participation of youth, employable STs in various vocations by mapping their needs and aspirations.

Conclusion

Plans and Programmes of the government have continuously facilitated the socio-economic development of ST population. However, the achievement is skewed across States. The poverty gap between STs and all populations living below

poverty line shows that STs are more backward economically. Most of the STs who are living under poverty line are landless agricultural labourers having minimal or no access to productive assets.

The Government has identified the problems and designed the ways and means to overcome the problems through various social, economic, and political initiatives. There is a need to popularise a tribal-specific participatory self-governance system where the STs will choose their own destiny by managing their own resources and empowering themselves in the tribal-participative and tribal-managed development process.

While setting up of educational infrastructure like primary schools and residential schools at suitable places are praiseworthy, in Scheduled Areas, extra efforts could be made to enhance skill and knowledge base of the ST youth through the provision of need-based training and skill upgradation. Since a majority of the tribal community is dependent on minor forest produce and low-productive agriculture, efforts need to be made to make them more productive by improving the quality of the produce and linking the tribal produce with the markets in a sustainable manner. Last but not the least, intra-departmental cooperation, coordination, and convergence are required for the effective implementation of schemes dedicated to the upliftment of STs.

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