

Livelihood Opportunities for Tribals

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The Constitution of India provides special measures to protect the tribals and ensure their well being, accordingly the successive governments have not left tribals in state of isolation, illiteracy, poverty and hunger, but have done continuous efforts to bring them to the mainstream by providing relief and rehabilitations besides creating minimal infrastructure and other amenities as mandated under Constitution and laws enacted under it.

The tribals are the original inhabitants of the Indian peninsula, as per census 1951 the size of the tribal population was 5.6 percent and as per 2011 census, the population size has increased to 8.66 percent, tribals inhabit in two distinct geographical areas viz. the Central India and the North- Eastern Region. More than half of the Scheduled Tribe population is concentrated in Central India, i.e., Madhya Pradesh (14.69 percent), Maharashtra (10.08 percent), Orissa (9.2 percent), Rajasthan (8.86 percent), Gujarat (8.55 percent), Jharkhand (8.29 percent) and Chhattisgarh (7.5 percent). About 89.97 percent of them live in rural areas and 10.03 percent in urban areas. Substantial tribal population still depends on the small farming, forest and forest based livestock for their livelihood, some of the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) earlier known as Primitive Tribal Groups live in the forest and peripheries of forest and mountain regions as hunters, food gatherers, pastoralists and small farmers.

Tribal communities living in hilly areas have been using shifting cultivation—a practice that poses a great threat to the soil and forest ecology as a whole. The habitations of the tribals are geographically isolated and far from urban and industrial buzz but their abundance in natural resources like minerals, coal, water resources, forests, scenic destinations, etc., attracted the industry and business fraternity to invest and encash profit out of their investments, the investors have profited while tribals have lost their livelihood. Enactment of the Forest (Conservation) Act of 1980, initiatives for development projects, and changes in the economic development policies of the successive governments have had a positive impact on the livelihood opportunities for tribals. The aspiration of the government to compete with others in Industrial development and to facilitate rural and urban communities have identified the forest and hilly regions habited by tribals for mining,

power generation, irrigation, protection of forests, conservation of wildlife, etc.

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Pre-Independence

Since evolution of human race, humans were hunters and food gatherers. Many communities settled and started living decent and dignified life while the tribals restricted their lives and livelihoods to forest and forest-based livestock. The tribals before the invasion of India by Mughals and British were considered to be an equal part of society and were fully involved in kingships, land and forest politics, tributary relationships with other groups, particular occupational specialisations, and even in commerce and war. However colonisation of India by Europeans transformed their life, with outsiders



exploiting them for their resources. Trees were cut down for timber. Forestland was used for tea, rubber and coffee plantations. Railway lines and roads were built in forest areas. Routes from forest to sea coasts were built to transport goods.

The concept of private property began with the Permanent Settlement of the Britishers in 1793 and establishment of the *Zamindari* system gave control over vast territories, including tribal territories, to feudal lords for the purpose of revenue collection by the British. The forced eviction of tribal communities from forest was initiated for timber economy and other revenue resources. The Indian Forest Act came into being in 1927, which provided that any forest area or wasteland that was not privately owned could be marked as reserved areas, no particular system or settlement rights were formulated for tribal communities living in forests in India, and large areas were not surveyed for this purpose. Tribal people involved in agriculture continued to cultivate crops without official land ownership. The practice of logging, hunting, foraging or agriculture by tribals and non-tribals alike under this system thus constituted encroachments. The British legislation and invasive policies affected tribal habitations in India particularly their livelihood posing a challenge for Government of independent India.

Post-Independence

The Constitution of India provided several provisions for welfare and overall development of Scheduled Tribes. The Panchsheel policy of the then Government in 1952 has provided five principles for guiding the administration of tribal welfare and they are as follows.

- i. Tribals should be allowed to develop according to their own genius.
- ii. Rights of tribals in land and forest should be respected.
- iii. Tribal teams should be trained to undertake administration and development without too many outsiders being inducted.
- iv. Tribal development should be undertaken without disturbing tribal social and cultural institutions.
- v. The index of tribal development should be the quality of their life and not the money spent.

Livelihood and Other Relevant Issues

Realising the Panchsheel policy, Article 275 of the Constitution mandates that a special financial grant to be provided for programmes for the social and economic welfare of the tribal population living in scheduled areas. Under this Article the Central Government has made a provision of Rs. 12 crore for the period of the First Five-Year Plan, for moving towards settled agriculture or terrace cultivation, introduction of improved methods of agriculture to benefit the communities.

The Second Five-Year Plan focused on development programmes in tribal areas grouped under four heads—(a) communications, (b) education and culture, (c) development of tribal economy, and (d) health, housing and water supply. About Rs. 47 crore was allocated for tribal development. States have also provided for the development of about 36,600 acres of land, regeneration of 6,570 acres of forest lands, distribution of agricultural implements and pedigree bulls, training of about 4,000 persons in various crafts and the establishment of 825 cottage industries centres.

Third Five-Year plan envisaged for economic rehabilitation of persons engaged in shifting cultivation, working of forests through cooperatives and formation of multi-purpose cooperatives for meeting the credit requirements of tribal agriculturists and artisans. Several programmes were undertaken for marketing their products, land improvement, land reclamation and soil conservation, minor irrigation, supply of improved seeds, manures, implements and bullocks, provision of facilities for training, demonstration of improved practices, development of cattle, fisheries, poultry, piggeries and sheep-breeding, organisation of training-cum production centres, and provision of assistance and advice to village artisans engaged in cottage industries.

The Fourth-Year Plan, as the most important programme for the economic betterment of Scheduled Tribes focused on development of tribal blocks started in the Second Plan from intensive development of areas with large concentrations of tribal population. Accordingly, programmes for increasing agricultural production and livestock produce got the first priority. Programmes for diversifying and modernising the occupational

pattern of landless labourers were also given priority. Schemes of economic uplift such as land allotment, grant of subsidies for purchase of ploughs, bullocks and improved seeds for development of agriculture and animal husbandry, schemes for soil conservation, land colonisation, minor irrigation, and organisation and development of cooperatives have been continued.

During the Fifth-Five year plan, Tribal Sub-plan was incorporated for 16 States and two Union Territories. These programmes were funded through provisions in the State plans, and Central assistance. About 40, out of 145 Integrated Tribal Development projects were formulated and an amount of Rs. 65 crore was spent during the first three years of the Plan.

The major activities of the Sixth Plan (1980—85) were all-out war on poverty and envisaged developmental effort in the identified areas with resources pooled from (i) outlays from State plans; (ii) investment from Central Ministries; (iii) special Central assistance; and (iv) institutional finance. The Large Area Multipurpose Societies (LAMPS) were set up to provide credit and marketing facilities. It also facilitated resettlement of shifting cultivators amongst tribals in 233 Blocks over 62 districts by provision of a package of services.

In the Seventh Five-Year Plan, focus was given on the development of folk and tribal arts, especially those which were facing extinction such as the folk art of the Himalayan regions, and that were threatened ecologically as also culturally. These arts were supported through assistance to voluntary organisations engaged in these fields and areas. Special attention was given towards children, pregnant women and nursing mothers, under the direct nutrition intervention schemes like Supplementary Nutrition Programme (SNP) and Mid-Day Meals Programme (MDM). The Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP) strategy, which was adopted during that period comprises of following:

- a) Identifying state of development blocks where tribal population is in a majority and their constitution into Integrated Tribal Development Projects (ITDPs) with a view to adopt therein an integrated and project-based approach for development;
- b) earmarking of funds for the TSP and ensuring

flow of funds from the Central and State Plan sectoral outlays and from financial institutions; and

- c) creation of appropriate administrative structures in tribal areas and adoption of appropriate personnel policies.

Large Agricultural Multi-purpose Societies (LAMPS) in tribal area were strengthened through broadening of their popular base in the board of directors and/or other executive bodies to make them effective instruments for the elimination of exploitation in the sale and marketing of tribal produce, consumer necessities and credit. To coordinate the activities of state-level Tribal Development Corporations, the national level Tribal Marketing Organisation was set up. Plan formulation and project reports were made in close consultation with beneficiary-participants. Scientific project reports were prepared for Integrated Tribal Development Projects (ITDPs), tribal concentration pockets, primitive tribal groups with reference to the natural resource endowment, the traditional occupations and skills of the people and a properly drawn-up development perspective.

During the Eighth Five-Year Plan the Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation through the State Tribal Development Cooperative Corporations had started managing collection and marketing of minor forest produce in such a way as to ensure reasonable returns to tribals. Limited access to credit for consumption and production purposes has increased dependence of Scheduled Tribes on money lenders/traders leading to: (a) siphoning of developmental benefits in order to discharge loan liabilities to money lenders and traders; and (b) loss of resource base in the form of land or other assets. An important objective during the Eighth Plan was, therefore, to provide increased access to credit from banks and cooperative institutions.

During Ninth Five-Year Plan period Ministry of Tribal Affairs was set up to exclusively work for the tribal development in the country. Ministry of Tribal Affairs has been implementing several schemes for creating sustainable livelihood opportunities for the Tribals. Similarly in States/UTs Independent Tribal Welfare Departments were set up.

Next three plans (10th, 11th and 12th) were implemented through Ministry of Tribal Affairs as

separate Ministry for the welfare of Tribals in India. Many initiatives were carried out for promoting livelihood opportunities for tribals in India. Some of the major programmes that have been implemented to promote livelihood opportunities among tribals are mentioned as follows.

(i) Institutional Support for Development and Marketing of Tribal Products/Produce: Under the scheme Grants-in-aid are released to State Tribal Development Cooperative Corporations (STDCCs) and Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India Ltd. (TRIFED). To give comprehensive support to people belonging to various tribes in the entire range of production, product development, preservation of traditional heritage, support to both forest and agricultural produce of tribal people, support to institutions to carry the above activities, provisions of better infrastructure, development of designs, dissemination of information about price and the agencies which are buying the products, support to government agencies for sustainable marketing is provided and thereby ensure a reasonable price regime.

(ii) Marketing of Minor Forest Produce (MFP) through Minimum Support Price (MSP) and Development of Value Chain For MFP: The scheme provides safety net and support to people belonging to Scheduled Tribes and other traditional forest dwellers whose livelihood depends on collection and selling of MFP. The scheme ensures fair returns to Minor Forest Produce (MFP) gatherers mainly through Minimum Support Price (MSP) for identified MFP collected by them along with necessary infrastructure at local level.

(iii) Van Dhan Vikas Yojana (VDVK): The Scheme aims for Minimum Support Price (MSP) and Development of Value Chain for Minor Forest Produces' targeting livelihood generation for tribals by harnessing the wealth of forest. Its main objective is to tap traditional knowledge and skill sets of tribals by adding technology and IT to upgrade it at each stage and to convert the tribal wisdom into a viable economic activity. The initiative targets the livelihood generation for tribal gatherers and transforming them into entrepreneurs. Idea is to set-up tribal community owned Van Dhan Vikas Kendras (VDVKs) in

predominantly forested tribal districts.

(iv) Equity Support To National/State Scheduled Tribes Finance And Development Corporation (NSTFDC/STFDCs): The National Scheduled Tribes Finance and Development Corporation (NSTFDC) is a Government aided Not-for-Profit company having licence under Section 25 of the Companies Act, 1956 to provide concessional financial assistance to scheduled tribes for their economic and educational development. It assists Self Help Groups and extends financial assistance for projects having unit cost upto Rs. 25 lakh per SHGs and provides upto 90 percent of the cost of the project subject to per member loan not exceeding Rs. 50,000. It provides concessional finance to tribal artisans empanelled with TRIFED for purchase of project related assets and working capital.

The NSTFDC also provide term loan for viable projects costing upto Rs. 25 lakh per unit. Under the scheme, financial assistance is extended upto 90 percent of the cost of the project and the balance is met by way of subsidy/promoters contribution/margin money. The rate of interest is 6 percent per annum upto Rs. 5 lakh and 8 percent per annum up to Rs. 10 lakh and 10 Percent above Rs. 10 lakh. The Adivasi Mahila Sashakikaran Yojana (AMSY) is an exclusive scheme for economic development of scheduled tribes women under which NSTFDC provides loan upto 90 percent for the project costing upto Rs. 1 lakh at an interest rate of 4 percent per annum. NSTFDC has disbursed about Rs. 1,900 crore since its inception. In the recent past, NSTFDC has introduced new schemes for skill development of scheduled tribes such as Adivasi Shiksha Rinn Yojana (ASRY), Awareness Generation, etc.

These schemes highlight that the government has been committed to the cause of inclusive empowerment of tribal communities in India through development of their livelihood. As stated above, various landmark initiatives have been taken to eliminate poverty and empower the tribal communities in India.

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