CHAPTER VII

SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS AND SUGGESTIONS
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SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

It is a stark reality that the Tribal Population of India has been living in utter poverty and destitution. Although the elimination of tribal poverty has been the principal objective of tribal development policy in India since the beginning of the era of planning, widespread absolute tribal poverty still remains a fact of life. The reasons for such a state of affairs are numerous and varied. But the slow growth of income and employment opportunities appear to be more important, besides the inequality in the distribution of income and wealth.

Tamil Nadu is one of the leading primitive tribal populated states in India. Studies indicate that until recently the proportion of tribal population in the state living below the poverty line had virtually remained more or less the same over the years. It has been claimed that as a result of the implementation of various Tribal Welfare Schemes since 1976, the proportion of tribal people living below the poverty-line in Tamil Nadu has shown some decline. But the absolute number of tribals living below the poverty line has not shown any decline because of the increase in the tribal population.
From the beginning itself the basic aim of tribal development in India has been to eradicate social inequalities and poverty by ameliorating the living conditions of the tribal people. Starting with the community development programme, many schemes have been implemented to improve the lot of the tribal people. Apart from the programmes implemented by the Central Government, the State Governments also have been implementing certain tribal development programmes or schemes for the welfare of the Scheduled Tribes. An important weakness of the tribal development schemes implemented by the Central as well as the State Governments is that by and large these schemes were aimed at achieving the targets in financial aspect only. Moreover, these welfare schemes were mostly concerned with increase in agricultural production and allied activities. But experience has shown that the benefits of these tribal welfare programmes reached very few only. So the Government began to undertake welfare schemes which are specially directed to help the poor tribal people to raise their living standards.

The strategy of tribal development and poverty alleviation in the Sixth Plan is known as the Integrated Tribal/Rural Development Programme (ITDP/RDP). The experience of the various tribal welfare schemes in the earlier Plans had shown that mere sectoral approach was not adequate to lead to an overall development of the tribal areas and alleviation of tribal poverty. Even at the beginning of the scheme it was stressed that the tribal development schemes would be focussed on the target group comprising
entire tribal population in each Integrated Tribal Development Agencies Project Area. Within this target group, tribal women and primitive tribal groups constitute the special target groups.

The main objectives of these tribal welfare schemes are to identify its resource base and plan for the optimum utilization of its resources base to the maximum advantage of tribal inhabitants of the Tribal Sub-Plan Area, to pool the funds from various departments of the State and Central Governments and institutional finance tapped from various financial institutions for planned development of the sub-plan area and tribals therein, to reduce disparities in the levels of development of Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP) Area, to step-up agricultural production and to improve standard of life, protection of tribals against exploitation. The Tribal Development Programme was implemented in Tamil Nadu in 1976-77. This Programme was extended to all the 9 Integrated Tribal Development Programme Areas and other tribal concentrated areas in the state since the Fifth Five Year Plan. During the Sixth Plan Period a total of 68 percent of the tribal families were assisted as against the target of 60 percent. Women constitute 29 percent of the total beneficiaries under the tribal welfare schemes.

Although data are available regarding the number of beneficiaries assisted or trained and the extent of employment generated, the impact of these welfare schemes on the incidence of tribal poverty is difficult to assess. However, in the recent past many evaluation studies have been
conducted in order to find out the extent and pattern of the impact of Tribal Welfare Schemes under the Integrated Tribal Development Programme (ITDP). According to these studies, the number of persons who have crossed the poverty-line might not exceed two-fifths of those assisted under the ITDP, though the individual studies give figures ranging between 19.5 and 50.9 percent. These studies indicate that the impact of the programme has not been up to the level expected. The selection of activities has been wrongly done without any consideration being given to the ability of the beneficiaries, differences in infrastructural support, backward and forward linkages, etc. As a result of all these, many of the activities have not proved to be viable.

The entire area of the blue mountains constitute the present district of Nilgiris in Tamil Nadu having an area of about 2549 square kilometer, of which 1432 square kilometer is forest area and the remaining 1117 sq.km. is others. This district has a relatively low level of density (278 persons per square kilometer in 1991 and 300 persons per square kilometer as per 2001 census). Nilgiri district is predominantly agrarian and the industrial base of the district is very weak, particularly in regard to large and medium-scale industries. Perhaps the only industry which is widespread is the tea industry. The tea factories which number about 801 are spread out in the district. It has the lowest rate of literacy among the districts of Tamil Nadu. Nevertheless, the proportion of unemployed and underemployed persons is relatively high. Eventhough the Tribal Development Programme was initiated
In the district since Independence, it was launched on a regular basis only from 1976-77 onwards.

Nilgiri district has the largest concentration of primitive tribals among the districts of Tamil Nadu. Out of the total tribal population of 5,74,000 persons in Tamil Nadu in 1991, the Nilgiri district had 25,048 persons, constituting 4.0 percent of the total tribal population. The Scheduled tribes inhabiting in the district are Todas, Kotas, Kurumbas, Irulas, Paniyas, Kattunaickans, etc. Among the Scheduled Tribes living in the Nilgiri district, the Kotas constitute the most backward segment. They continue to follow traditional methods and are living in poverty and destitution. Therefore, after careful consideration it numbered decided to take up Kotas for the present study. The Kota population was 1840 persons as per the 1991 census comprising 342 households. As the sample frame was relatively small, it was decided to cover a large sample of 183 households for the collection of information on the impact of tribal welfare schemes.

The methodology adopted was to compare the post-scheme position of the sample beneficiaries with their pre-scheme position. The study covered the beneficiaries assisted between 1995 and 1998. It covered all the seven Kota settlements in the Nilgiri District. Totally 183 respondents constituting 53 percent of the beneficiaries were interviewed. The summary of the findings of the study are presented in the following paragraphs:
The study has revealed that in all the seven settlements many of
the beneficiaries were males and an overwhelming majority of them were in
the age groups of 25-34 and 35-44 years. As many as 62.2 percent of the
respondents were literate and in all the seven settlements the proportion of
literates was much greater than illiterates. All the 183 respondents, were
Hindus. Out of the total sample beneficiaries, 181 households (98.36 percent)
were headed by men and the remaining 2 headed by women (widows). The
average size of the household was 5.6 members, although there were quite
a number of large families as well as smaller ones. While 65 percent of the
beneficiaries were agricultural labourers, 20.8 percent came under the
category of non-agricultural labourers, 10.2 percent belonged to the category
of semi-skilled services, and the rest came under other categories such as
business. There was only one beneficiary in the category classified as non-
working among the 183 respondents.

The study has revealed that illiteracy is prevalent more among the
higher age groups above 55 years. More number of illiterates were found
among the females than that of the males. Most striking feature is that there
were more female illiterates in the age groups of 25-34 and 35-44 years.
Marriage among the Kota appears to be rather unstable. About 30 percent of
all married individuals had changed their mates at least once. Males
appear to change their mates more frequently than females. The mean
age at first child birth is 21.6 years; 90 percent of the unmarried males were in the age group of 24 years and below, while all the unmarried girls were aged 18 years and below. Of the married males, 95 percent were aged 25 years and above, while 65 percent of the females aged 15-24 years were married. In the widowed or divorced group, 84 percent of males and 88 percent of females were aged 45 years and above. Among the respondent households monolinguals were numerically very less in comparison with bilinguals and multilinguals. Majority of the monolinguals were found in the age group of below 14 years. Less number of multilinguals were found in the age group of below 14 years. More number of multilinguals were among males in the age groups of 15-24, 25-34 and 35-44 years. Multilinguals among females were less in comparison with the males.

The study has indicated that often different tribal welfare schemes were clubbed together under the Integrated Tribal Development Programmes (ITDP). For instance, under various schemes such as agriculture, sericulture, horticulture, etc., development inputs like improved seedlings, fertilisers, pesticides were supplied, besides extension service at free of cost. Wherever necessary soil conservation measures were carried out in the holdings of tribals at free of cost. Under this scheme, fruit plants and plant protection chemicals, were supplied at the nominal cost not exceeding Rs. 1500 for one acre. Under the Milch Animals Scheme, loans were given for sheep units, cows, buffaloes, etc., at 50 percent subsidized cost. Under Village and
Cottage Industries Scheme financial assistance was granted for implements (small scale and cottage industries), blacksmithy works, etc., at 50 percent subsidised cost; and under soil conservation scheme of tribal development, financial assistance and loans were granted for soil erosion, land levelling, improvement of land, etc. The above mentioned schemes were the most predominant components of the tribal welfare programmes in all the seven settlements of Kotas in Nilgiris. On the whole, as many as 33.04 percent of the sample beneficiaries had availed financial assistance under these schemes. It was followed by 10.25 percent under the animal husbandry scheme, 16.64 percent under soil conservation scheme, 2.28 percent under minor irrigation scheme, 30.24 under the agricultural, sericultural, plantations and horticultural schemes, 12.05 percent under the village and cottage industries schemes, 4.68 percent under other individual schemes, and the rest under other common schemes.

The main objective of the Tribal Development Programme was embodied as the generation of additional income and employment to the beneficiaries and their families. The study has revealed that the seven settlements taken together the mean income of the sample beneficiaries rose from Rs. 350 to Rs.400; settlement wise analysis of data has revealed that there was an increase in the average monthly income of the beneficiaries in all the seven Kota settlements. In Tiruchigadi settlement 85 percent, in Sholurkokkal 80 percent, and in Kollimalai settlements 75 percent of the
beneficiaries had witnessed increase in their annual income. It has to be noted, however, that the increase in income cannot be entirely attributed to have been derived from the tribal welfare schemes. As no allowance was made for change in the value of money while comparing the income before and after the implementation of the tribal welfare schemes, it might hold good to say that part of the increase was due to inflationary pressure. Nevertheless, it is possible to conclude that some of tribal welfare scheme beneficiaries in the Kota settlements of Nilgiri district had experienced improvement in their annual incomes.

Although the rise in the income level of the sample beneficiaries was not enough to bring about a significant change in the pattern of consumption, the average annual expenditure of the beneficiaries rose from Rs. 820.80 in the pre-financial assistance period to Rs. 978.68 and the average annual household expenditure also rose from Rs. 2125.80 to Rs. 2300.10. Further analysis of data on income and expenditure revealed that as the household income of most of the beneficiaries happened to be low, the household expenditure, in general, exceeded household income before implementation of the tribal welfare schemes period. As a result, none of them had a surplus of income over consumption. However, the increase in income experienced by some of the households after financial assistance enabled them to keep the expenditure below their income and thereby they were able to generate some savings. Such a trend could be noted in all the seven Kota settlements, although there existed variation among them.
Discussion with the respondents revealed that the increase in savings was partly due to the fact that they had to save some money for repaying the financial assistance. The study has revealed that the employment, output, production, consumption, and debt position of the beneficiaries had changed as a result of the tribal welfare schemes. When all the seven Kota settlements are taken together the average debt, other than that the financial assistance under the tribal welfare schemes, declined to Rs. 150 after the implementation of the schemes period from Rs. 395 before the implementation of the scheme. Some of the beneficiaries reported that as a result of their ability to gain regular income they were able to reduce the debt burden.

Analysis of data regarding the possession of milch animals indicated that in a majority of the cases only those who had already possessed milch animals had opted for assistance under the scheme. Under the milch animals scheme, most of the respondents had opted for cows and buffaloes, and only a limited number of sample beneficiaries had gone for the purchase of sheep. But as many as 15.20 percent of the total beneficiaries had got financial assistance for procuring bulls for plough and cart. As a result, there was a significant rise in the number of milch animals possessed by the beneficiaries after the scheme period. Anyhow, many of those respondents who got financial assistance for plough-bullocks reported that the expenses of maintaining bullocks were fairly high and unless they could substantially
supplement their income by hiring out bullocks, the net income from this activity was generally inadequate.

The study has revealed that by and large there was no improvement in the assets position of the sample beneficiaries in general and land holdings in particular. In fact, there was a decline in the overall position. For instance, the mean size of holdings of the beneficiaries declined from 0.94 cents to 0.36 cents. During this period, the number of persons without land holding increased from 80.32 percent to 88.60 percent. However, no firm conclusion could be drawn about such a state of affairs. In Nilgiris district, it is common to see that small holdings become fragmented because of partition or because of the tendency to dispose land for different purposes such as marriage, etc. It is possible that some of those who had possessed holdings up to 10 cents might have lost their holdings and moved into the category of landless and those in the other categories might have lost part of their holdings and thereby moved into categories of owners of smaller holdings. Nevertheless, a discussion with some of the beneficiaries who had lost their land during this period reported that they had to sell their holdings for the repayment of debt and loans. Of course, such a situation arose mostly in the case of those who seemed to have misused the financial assistance for the purpose other than for which the financial assistance was granted.

Overall, the study revealed that implementation of the tribal development programmes brought changes in employment, income,
expenditure, consumption, savings and investment, and debt position of the beneficiaries. In order to test the proposition whether there existed a significant difference in income, wealth, expenditure, savings and debt it was decided to subject the data to a more rigorous multivariate statistical procedure known as "Factor Analysis".

The data pertaining to prior and after the financial assistance position of the beneficiaries of the tribal welfare schemes were statistically analyzed by using the method of factor analysis. The principal component for the prior scheme implementation data was found to be income and expenditure, whereas the principal component for the after the scheme implementation of tribal welfare schemes data was found to be income, expenditure, savings and investment. Thus, the resultant analysis suggested that the significant variables which found membership in the principal component were average savings per annum and mode of savings. The result might be interpreted by way of suggesting the axiomatic position that the savings might be possible only when the income increased. The other possible interpretation may be that the beneficiaries were prone to the propensity to save only for the repayment of the loan and debt, that they had secured from the financial institutions as obligatory and for the purpose of availing further financial assistance for tribal welfare schemes.

Eventhough a number of socio-economic measures have been initiated by the government of India and Tamil Nadu to improve the conditions of scheduled tribes, they have not attained the required level of
development. It may be rightly claimed that so much had already been done to ensure their progress. Inspite of the various welfare schemes and legislative measures undertaken to help them the fact remains that the scheduled tribes have not progressed socially and economically to the desired extent. If growth with social justice is really to acquire any meaning, then there is a strong need to accelerate the process of development of the Scheduled Tribes.

So what needs to be emphasized is that the administrative organisation and the nature and content of the Tribal Welfare Programmes should be re-oriented to ensure speedy achievement of the desired results. It has been rightly observed that the administrative unpreparedness has been a major constraint in pushing through important programmes or schemes that are being formulated for the Welfare of Scheduled Tribes.

The present struggle for existence among these minor and economically backward communities has reached an alarming situation. Inspite of several years of Community Development and Tribal Welfare Programmes, most of these tribes are living below subsistence level and are leading a miserable life in isolated parts of our country. It can be well observed that these tribes are becoming poorer and poorer because the real fruit of the welfare programmes is enjoyed by the major and advanced groups of tribal and non-tribal communities in those areas. The tribals whose economy is mainly based upon the forest are perhaps mostly affected due to heavy cutting down of the forest and its exploitation.
The agricultural products cannot be sold for very high rates. As the agricultural products are produced locally, the people are able to know the cost of production to some extent and hesitate to pay more for such products. Further some of the agricultural products like flowers, fruits and vegetables are easily perishable and cannot be stored for long. Therefore, the tribals are forced to sell them at cheaper rates. If new devices would be made to store these items it would be highly useful to them. Moreover, agriculture is liable to be affected by failure of monsoon. The tribals took to agriculture and they are unable to come up easily. The tribals should give up their traditional occupations and should engage themselves in profitable professions as that of the other communities. The whole economy of the tribals has been crippled due to various reasons. Those who are small farmers are also not better due to small holdings, infertile land, primitive technology, continued failures of the crops for the last five years and continued apathy by our plan makers and executors. It has greatly favoured the exploitors and money lenders.

The need for tribal development has been well understood and well emphasised at different levels. Unfortunately some of the welfare programmes have failed terribly both at planning and implementation levels. It is reflected in the facts that even today the economically backward and primitive kota tribes in Nilgiris district are facing starvation and some of them are facing even the problems of extinction. In most of the cases
programming for them is unrealistic because these do not touch the roots of their problems. Their felt needs are not well understood, their cultural values are ignored and they are not prepared for needed and desired change. In many cases a change without creating proper atmosphere has brought different types of problems and exploitation.

Development schemes hitherto sanctioned by the Government by and large failed due to several factors like wrong and unrealistic planning and apathetic bureaucracy, neglect of local and felt needs of the people, ignoring some of their cultural values, etc. There are many hazards in their development which need to be tackled practically for real and truthful development. Provision has to be made in the Constitution for the development of the weaker sections of society. Tribals are one of the important organs of Indian society and necessary help must be offered to them at any cost for their development.

In short, the appraisal of the socio-economic impact of tribal welfare schemes on the Kotas of Nilgiri district has yielded mixed impressions. No doubt in terms of economic aspects such as additional employment generation, income accrued and access to social overheads the performance of the tribal welfare schemes has been rather impressive. All the same, the impact on social aspects such as institutional transformation, mobility, diversity of occupation, acclimatization, the change in environment and civilization no positive concrete evidence is not available.
To sum up, it is revealing from the study that the tribal welfare programmes enabled some of the beneficiaries to raise their income level, increase savings, and reduce debt burden. Nevertheless, many beneficiaries failed to augment their income sufficiently to give them adequate self-employment and thereby bring them into the mainstream of national social system and bring them above the poverty line.

The above inferences stemming from the findings of the field investigation makes one wonder whether Jawaharlal Nehru's vision for tribal development expressed 50 years ago, "we must approach the tribal people with attention and friendliness and come to them as a liberating force. We must give them a measure of protection in their areas so that no outsider can take possession of their lands, forests or interfere with them in any manner except with their consent and goodwill", remains a dream yet to be fulfilled after the implementation of Five Year Plans and several annual Tribal Sub-Plans.

Suggestions

According to the study findings deficiencies were observed in respect of many noted schemes. Based on the deficiencies observed, a few suggestions are given below in order to make the tribal welfare schemes more meaningful and effective:
1. Inspite of repeated emphasis by the government that the poorer of the tribal poor would be given priority under the programme, it was observed that not only the relatively better off among the tribal poor but even the families above the poverty line had managed to get the loans. So special enumerators should be engaged to identify the really poorer tribal households.

2. A major shortcoming reported by the beneficiaries was that the financial assistance provided was inadequate. So their investment requirement must be realistically assessed and adequate subsidy and credit should be provided. This may be realistically assessed and adequate subsidy and credit should be provided. This may be done jointly by the Government, DRDA, and the Banks.

3. Misuse of funds is reported to be one of the main causes for the failure of the scheme. Therefore, efforts may be taken to educate the tribals to avoid misuse of funds.

4. The study has revealed that under the same activities performance has differed from place to place depending upon linkage-based backup support and infrastructural facilities. So adequate infrastructural - facilities should be created, besides providing linkage based back-up support to the beneficiaries.

5. Agriculture and Tea Nurseries are the most important activities stressed under the tribal welfare programmes, in Nilgiri district. But even these activities were not found to be quite successful. In addition to the lack of adequate infrastructural facilities, the main
factor responsible for the failure was the non-provision of quality inputs. Therefore, efforts may be taken to provide good quality inputs. Moreover, as far as possible the Government may establish farms exclusively for the supply of required good quality high yielding varieties (HYV) for the tribal welfare programmes beneficiaries.

6. The study has revealed that many of the activities selected under different schemes proved to be non-viable. So proper care should be taken in selecting viable schemes.

7. Another serious lapse reported was the lack of proper monitoring. Regular monitoring and follow-up of the beneficiaries by the staff of the implementing agencies are necessary for the success of the schemes. Monitoring and follow-up should include-provision of guidance to the beneficiaries besides periodic verification of physical possession of the assets and their maintenance. If the beneficiary is found to be in real hardship, additional financial assistance should be arranged to as to enable the beneficiary to make the activity viable and remunerative.