

TRIBAL DEVELOPMENT IN INDIA: AN ANALYSIS

The policy followed by the government for the development of the Scheduled Tribes in independent India bears a strong imprint of the colonial legacy. It is therefore necessary to understand the main constituents of the tribal policy during the British period. Unlike Africa, the British adopted direct rule in respect of the tribal population. The result was that the tribal area was integrated with the administration of the provinces or of the native Indian states. In areas of tribal concentration, there was an attempt to reclaim the people the civilization through (a) paramilitary rule by District officers (b) keeping these regions out of the purview of general laws which will alien to tribal ethos or undermined it; (c) laying down simple rules to settle disputes among the tribal people; (d) making provision for special agrarian laws; (e) regulation of entry of aliens of tribal areas and (f) strengthening tribal institutions and leadership.

In second quarter of the 19th century, following repeated rebellions in different tribal areas the government established agencies such as Bhil agency in 1825, Chota Nagpur Agency in 1833, Meriah Agency in 1839 and Ganjam Agency in 1839, The colonial system ended the relative isolation of tribal society and put an end to the dominance of the tribes in middle India. It also strengthened the feudal crust of the tribal society. During this period as a reaction to the fast socio-economic changes and various government policies, a series of rebellions took place. These were the Kol insurrections in 1820 and 1833, the Santal rebellion in 1885, the Rampa rebellion in 1879 and Birsa revolt in 1900. Each of these rebellions was severely crushed. After the establishment of peace after each upheaval

a number of measures for ameliorating the conditions of the tribals were taken up.

It was during the period that for the first time Scheduled areas were demarcated through the Scheduled District Act of 1974. The concept of backward areas was incorporated in the government of India Act of 1919. The idea of excluded areas was put in the government of India Act of 1935. These three ideas were later on adopted in Constitution of the Indian Republic.

During the nationalist movement segregation of the tribals was viewed as the divide and rule policy and was bitterly criticised by the nationalist leaders including Gandhiji. In the making of the Constitution the provisions for the Scheduled Tribes bore the deep impact of the views of Thokkar Bappa and Jaipal Singh. After the attainment of independence, government was faced immediately with three tasks:

- a) Removing the communication gap between tribals and the regional community in the framework of national integration;
- b) To protect the resource base and the culture apparatus which can provide the basis of collective efforts for meeting national challenges;
- c) Initiating measures for meeting the immediate needs of the tribal population and for facilitating the process of participatory development.

In the new Constitution three strategies were adopted to deal with the tribal problem:

1. The Fifth Schedule enumerated measures for the administration

of tribal areas in those states, which had a substantial population of the tribals. In such areas the union government could give directions to the state and the government was given special powers for overseeing the administration of Scheduled areas.

2. The Sixth Schedule was made for the tribal majority states in which provision was made for the establishment of Autonomous District Councils that could make laws for the management of land and forest shifting cultivation appointment of chiefs of Headmen inheritance of property, marriage and diverse social customs and anything related to village administration.

3. Article 275 of the Constitution provides for grant in aid to the state for promoting the welfare of the Scheduled Tribes in raising the level of administration of Scheduled areas.

A number of provisions were made for the welfare of the weaker sections. Article 46 provide for the promotion of educational and economic interests of the tribal people to exploitation. Appointment was made of special officer designated as Commissioner of Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes to oversee the development of these communities. The Tribal Advisory Councils were constituted in the state covered by the Fifth Schedule.

Two policies of protective discrimination peoples and the first list of communities under the schedule were prepared in October 1950. Since then the list has been revised eight times. This provide for reservations in Legislatures. Representations in services and educational institutions were being carried over from the past.

Four places in the development of policies regarding Scheduled Tribes can be identified in the post-independence period:

- i) Provision of immediate relief in terms of amenities and building up the productive infrastructure for future growth;
- ii) Emphasis on resource mobilisation and provision of social service infrastructure;
- iii) Reduction of disparity and growth with justice. Efforts were also made for enlargement and commercialisation of the resource base;
- iv) Participatory development with focus on self management, harnessing of productive forces for meeting the basic needs as well as contribute to self-reliant growth.

A number of anti-poverty programmes were taken up. These were aimed at increasing the income of the tribal people and raising their standard of living. This included measures of stopping land alienation from tribals to non-tribals, debt redemption liberation and rehabilitation of bonded labour, agricultural and irrigational development and special efforts were made to protect the interest of the tribals in land and forest.

Since tribal areas were deficient in communication, special attention was paid to opening up such areas through construction of link roads and hill paths. The roads were expected to contribute both to economic development and to the exposure of tribals to outside influence, which would ultimately lead to broadening of their mental horizon.

Since education opens the door of modernization, a large number of

schools and colleges from primary level upwards were started in tribal areas. In fact, 48 per cent of the expenditure was on educational schemes. The post matric scholarships were instituted for every tribal going in either for university or technical education. In higher education, the annual growth rate is more than 15 per cent but at the school level, it is only 7 per cent. Notwithstanding all these developments against norm of reservation in central service for tribals fixed at 7.5 per cent, the achievements upto 1978 were 0.94 per cent in Class I, 1.03 in Class II and 3.11 in Class III. We have miles to go before adequate representation can be reached.

On account of provision of adult suffrage in Constitution political parties began mobilization of the tribal people sometime led to a confrontation between the tribals and the government. The tribal leaders began to adopt the politics of pursue and protests as they believed that they could secure the solution of the problems through politics along. From time to time they capitalized on the clash between the national interest and local interest.

Since the 60s industrialization has played a very significant role in the tribal areas. Large-scale industrial complexes have come up. They have displaced considerable tribal population from their natural habitat and have stepped up economic and sexual exploitation of the tribal people. This has been accompanied by a decline of regular industries. Industrialization has resulted in, some social disorganisation as well which is evident in the appearance of beggary and prostitution in these areas.

All these development have led to the rise of class 2 tribal elites. However, like elite in other societies, the tribal elites are also self-oriented. Cut of from the masses of people and do not play an effective role as agents for social transformation in their own society.

A review of tribal development by the study team on tribal development programme set up by the Planning Commission in 1969 did not give a clear verdict whether the progress is appreciable or marginal but felt that the ice way to be made up is still considerable. The problems have worsened on account of delay in the implementation of their recommendation of Dheber Commission and other such bodies. A lot of valuable resources had been wasted. Most of the programmes in the tribal sector had little impact on poverty and educational backwardness in the absence of adequate financial backing and tribal outlay from the First to the Fourth Plan in terms of the percentage of total Plan outlay can be seen. Only in the Fifth Plan the percentage was raised to 3 but this included expenditure on creation of the infrastructure of development.

A report of Steering Groups on the development of backward classes for the Firth Plan regretfully noted that in the disparity between tribals and the general population had increased; even the utilization of the resources made available was not complete. During the Fifth Plan the sub-plan concept came to the force but the Macro area projects drawn up with great care and labour could not be implemented. Even Integrated Development Programme could not produce the desired results.