

## CHAPTER - I

### TRIBAL LAND ALIENATION AND POLITICAL MOVEMENTS :

#### A FRAMEWORK OF ANALYSIS

There have been many uprisings by the tribals population of Andhra Pradesh both in the colonial and post colonial period. In more recent times, violent clashes between the tribal people and the police have become a major political phenomenon in the tribal belt stretching from the districts of Srikakulam, Adilabad to Khammam in A.P. The present study is an attempt to analyse the tribal movement in Adilabad and Khammam in its most recent phase. While many tribal revolts have taken place since colonial times in this area, the present movement is a well organised movement in which for the first time the large number of the tribal population has taken part. Hence, the study focuses on the underlying causes and the nature as well as the strategies of mobilisation used by the leadership. A brief attempt has also been made to analyse the achievements of the movement.

The existing literature on this movement-both journalist and academic-describes it either as a Naxalite or peasant movement. However, such characterisation does not explain its underlying causes or its specific nature. The basic hypothesis underlying

this study is that it is the very pattern of development adopted since independence which underlies these revolts. Government policies towards the tribal population have resulted in social alienation, backwardness, land alienation, exploitation and extreme poverty. Hence it is to socio-economic factors that the causes of tribal movements are traced. Political factors, such as mobilisation by leftist political groups, ideology and organisation are undoubtedly important but could not have succeeded in the absence of the socio-economic factors mentioned above. The study shows that the movement was directed both against the feudal landlords and contractors. i.e. non-tribals<sup>1</sup> in the districts as well as the state, and as Chapter five shows, in its violent phase it even became for a short period an attempt at overthrowing the existing system through armed struggle. The movement did not succeed in any dramatic change in the existing political and economic conditions of the tribals, but as Ranga Rao has pointed out, "it brought about significant changes in the traditional distribution of power in Agrarian Relations"<sup>2</sup>.

#### Review of Literature :

Much work has been done on both the conditions of the tribal population and various tribal Movements in A.P. and other parts of India. However, very few of them focus on Adilabad and

Khammam districts. Two types of writings can broadly be identified in the literature on the tribals of Andhra Pradesh. Some scholars such as Van-Furer Haimendrof in a pioneering anthropological work described the culture, life style and economic conditions of the gonds, koyas, Lambadis, chenchus and other tribals in Andhra Pradesh.<sup>3</sup> His work shows exploitation of tribals by landlords and illegal occupation of large areas of tribal land by non-tribals.

In a case study of three villages in the tribal area of Warangal district, Janardhan Rao found large scale alienation of land by local feudal landlords which the state government was unable to check.<sup>4</sup> A study of politics' of tribal exploitation leading to poverty and backwardness has also been attempted.<sup>5</sup> Most of these works focus on loss of agricultural land and forest which have traditionally provided livelihood to the tribal population.

Other works have in contrast focused upon various tribal revolts since the colonial period. Some writers such as A.R. Desai have viewed tribal movements as part of the peasant struggles taking place during the colonial period against feudal oppression.<sup>6</sup> Raghavaiah identified at least '80' tribal revolts during the colonial period including the Rampa rebellion in East

Godavari district (1778-1947) and other parts of Andhra Pradesh. He has pointed out armed insurgency in parts of India since independence. The movements in Naxalbari and Srikakulam, he points out helped to shape the tribal movement in Adilabad in the 1970's. The movements after independence are directed against both non-tribals directly exploiting the tribals, and against the existing power structure of the state.

P. Sundaraiah identified the tribal movement started by the koya tribe against the Razakars and non tribals in Khammam during the period of the Telangana armed struggle. A survey of tribal movements by Anthropological survey of India towards the end of 1976 identified thirty six on going movements. R.S. Singh has pointed out that an important aspect of these movements is that they are expressed in secular terms and do not bore the messianic quality of their movement, nor charismatic leadership as important. He found that land alienation and loss of control over parts of what were two common factors underlying these movements. The gonds of Adilabad he points out initiated a movement in 1970 for their right to land. Hence the emergence of economic factors as important in the present context.

Studies by the Anthropological society of Bombay, the Gujarat Research Society, Bhartiya Adimajati Sevak Sangh, New

Delhi and its branch in Nellore and Tribal Cultural Research Training Institute Library in Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh have also traced the causes to socio-economic problems.

R.N. Tripathy explains the agricultural problems of the tribal communities of NEFA' and extensively covers the aspect of shifting cultivation in those territories. The study, though informative on the aspects covered, fails to highlight the agricultural problems in the tribal areas with an integrated perspective.

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Das Gupta explains the Naxalite Movement of 1970 in detail and discusses its socio-economic goals and their attainment. He describes the socio-economic conditions of the Santal tribals of Naxalbari and Sawaras of Srikakulam that forced them to revolt against the exploitative social system that prevailed in these areas. This study also throws light on the emerging contradiction in tribal areas and between different tribal and

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non-tribal classes. Sethu Madhava Rao explains how the gonds of Adilabad have been appropriated from their resources especially from their cultivable lands. He also discusses the phase-wise transformation of tribal lands from their community cultivation to the chieftains system, to Mokasadar to Deshmukh system of land holdings, and the ruination of Gonds life.

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B.D. Sharma in his writings, elaborately deals with various aspects of tribal development. Both his administrative and academic pursuits provide an insight into various problems of tribal development.

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Ramaiah in a recent study on "Tribal Economy of Telangana" specifically deals with Warangal Koyas. The study furnished factual information related to tribal indebtedness and their family budget formation. The study also focusses upon the land problem. However, very little literature exists on Adilabad and Khammam districts which make the present study worthwhile. Moreover very few works have tried to present a link between the pattern of development in post independence India, the resulting tribal land alienation and the tribal movements in recent years.

The concept of Alienation :

The problem of land alienation in tribal areas has not been adequately dealt with by researchers. It is not a mere structuralist - legalist problem, but a much more deeply connected phenomenon full of contradictions related to the existing socio-economic order. The separation of land from tribal communities can be understood in a more scientific substantive manner with the help of the theoretical formulation of the concept of alienation. As Satyadeva has pointed out,

alienation is inherent in exploitative relations of production and its nature varies with that of exploitation. Hence alienation manifestations of alienation also differ among societies based on slavery and serfdom.<sup>15</sup>

The discussion on alienation is presented here in two parts. The first part looks at the process of land alienation in tribal areas, and the second at the forms and effect of land-alienation. On tribal communities, this can be given with land alienation concept. The land holding system which is a network of human relationship pertaining to the control and use of the land, has everywhere been a major factor conditioning the socio-economic and political order of the day. Land being the major source of livelihood of the vast majority of the Indian peasantry, it assumes great importance in their lives. But in an economy dominated by private property relations, concentration of land in the hands of a few would be the net result. This creates an artificial scarcity of land and a land hungry majority. Land at this stage becomes a commodity where it also becomes a source of exploitation which necessarily results in perpetuation of inequalities among the people. The level of production, and ownership over the means of production, and the way in which the products are distributed among the different classes of society as a whole and the various socio-economic groups comprising in

it, that is of paramount importance for deciding the nature of the social formation. Land concentration, particularly in the hands of few, results in structural inequalities which would further engulf the land disparities. It is this context of the broader spectrum of land disparities that exist in the Indian society<sup>16</sup>. The structural changes that have been on land occurring in the plains areas of India since the colonial period have invariably affected the neighbouring forest region where large masses of tribal communities reside that the problems of alienation in tribal society must be understood.

The process of land alienation has manifested itself mainly in large-scale migration of tribal communities from fertile plain areas to the neighbouring forests. The structural changes occurring in the plain areas have been responsible for this shift and have also affected the lives of tribals living in the forests.

These changes introduced rapid capital penetration, irrigation facilities, railway and communication facilities, sale and purchase of lands, creation of certain land systems like Zamindari, Ryotwari systems etc. These preindependence changes were later on supplemented by the changes in the post independence period which led to the pauperisation of the Indian



peasantry leading to numerous peasant struggles led by the different political parties, individuals for different reasons at different times, which led the Indian state to adopt a policy of enactment of various land laws<sup>17</sup> and land reforms. In the period various developmental institutions came into existence in the form of credit network to counter the rural indebtedness and to reduce the role of money lenders such as Small Farmers Development Agency<sup>18</sup>. These and other allied changes in the post-independence period should be taken as variables of a larger agrarian scene while viewing the tribal situation and land alienation question.

The land question is not just the result of the existing situation, its origin may be traced to the periods of deprivation of tribal lands or to periods of the withdrawal of their rights to exploit forests.<sup>19</sup> It is being realised that the tribal has always had a craving for land. It is for land that in last few years he has fought and had been killed<sup>20</sup>. His feeling for it is something more than that of mere possessiveness. During the 17th and 18 centuries, the more advanced groups forced the tribals either to retreat to the nearest jungles or to become landless labourers. As land is the only source of their livelihood, their other assets being extremely meagre, tribals were deprived of their way or life.<sup>21</sup> This has become much more acute in the

present stage of commoditised marketised economy.

The statistics related to the landholding pattern of the tribals are however, not available and in the absence of definite data it is difficult to present the exact nature of inequalities in land. This information gap was admitted by the National Commission on Backward Areas, which states that in the absence of land holding data for which years, the occupational qualifications in the census can be used to get an idea of the status of land holdings and alienation of lands in the tribal areas<sup>22</sup>. According to 1961 census report 29% of the scheduled tribal households have land holdings of less than 2.4 acres compared to 34.5 percent in the general population. The percent of S.Ts. having landholdings between 2.5 to 4.9 acres was 25.6% or those having 10 acres or more was 20.8% compared to 22.8% and 21.2% households in the general population respectively.

Thus, the inference that may be drawn from the data is that a majority of the scheduled tribes have small sized landholdings. The data also shows a gradual deterioration of land ownership among the Sts. According to census, there were 84.18 lakh cultivators and 48.32 lakh agricultural labourers amongst the scheduled tribe workers who constitute about nine-tenths of the total working population<sup>23</sup>. And further it observed that in the

states having large tribal areas the all India pattern of continuing command over land on the one end high incidence of landlessness on the other, gets reflected between different regions. However in many regions with the development of communications and intermixing of population the situation has further deteriorated. In some of the advanced areas the members of the tribal families have been rendered completely landless and they may not possess even 5 to 10% of the total land area <sup>24</sup> .

The migration of non-tribal communities and land grabbing by them has also led to decrease of the tribal land holdings. This phenomenon was as dominant in the 1980's as it was in the 1960's and prior to that. After the 1960's land alienation took a different turn, where it was accompanied by the much renewed industrial activity, which has established the contractual co-existence of industries. Thus, both the increasing industrial activity backed by the alien capital on one side and increasing disparities in the country side which has been progressively resulting in the impoverishment of small-middle class peasantry in the plains on the other forced the non-tribals to look for alternative lands. This alternative source was available in the forest lying in the tribal areas. This process therefore, resulted in the depeasantisation of the tribal communities in Andhra Pradesh in particular and India in general.

### The major objectives of the study :

The focus of the study is on the causes and impact of land alienation, leading to political movements in the selected areas. It tries to probe the reasons for land evictions and resultant political movements in the tribal areas, which underlie the under-development and pauperisation of these communities. The major objective of the study is hence to portray the factors that have a crucial bearing on the process of land alienation in scheduled tribal areas. In addition an attempt has also been made to understand the impact of the implementation of the Land Transfer Regulations since the 1930 as an instrument to counter the rapid depeasantisation process occurring in the tribal communities of these areas.

### Methodology :

The study is based on both primary and secondary data. The primary data has been collected by field work conducted in four taluks in Khammam and Adilabad districts. These Taluks were chosen on the basis of purposive random sampling technique, based upon the following criteria : 1) The Taluk should have predominantly tribal population. 2) It should have been included in the scheduled area. 3) It should also have a sizable number of non-tribals who possess more than fifty percent

of the total land in the village. 4) Intensity of the land problem in the village and identification of the cases of the illegal land transfer by the government. 5) Intensity of Tribal Movement. 6) Extensive rapport of the researcher with the study villages. In accordance with the above guidelines the taluks of Bhadrachalam, Ashwaraopet district of Khammam Utnur, Lakshettipet of Adilabad district of and Adilabad district of Telangana in Andhra Pradesh has been chosen for this study.

For the collection of the required data, different questionnaires were served to both the tribal and non-tribal peasants of the selected villages. The questionnaire comprises of several dimensions and factors related directly or indirectly to the problem of land alienation and Tribal movements. This information has been supplemented by conducting informal interviews and discussions with a cross section of society in the scheduled villages. Officials such as patels, teachers, revenue staff at the district head quarters and the agency area have also been interviewed on this subject. Informal meetings were also held with the village elders or tribal chiefs. Hence, an intensive monographic study of the selected areas was undertaken which has yielded insights into the problem, which sampling techniques alone cannot provide. Much of the data has been collected by the researcher after much persuasion of the tribal

peasants which required intensive interaction with them.

The secondary data was collected from the reports from the office of the commissioner for scheduled caste and scheduled tribes, the reports of the various government departments and different political parties and from daily news papers, books and periodicals.

The researcher has also visited libraries of Jawaharlal Nehru University, Teen Murti Nehru Memorial Library and IIPA, New Delhi, Osmania University library, Sundaraiah Grandhalaya Samstha, and Tribal Research and Cultural Centre, Hyderabad. Though the study is limited to an analysis of the problem of the four taluks an attempt has been made to observe social phenomenon both from its specific historical back ground, and to integrate it with the overall social system of which tribal societies are a part. The conclusions drawn are of relevance for tribal areas situated in other parts of India which face similar problems.

#### Chapterisation :

I. The first chapter presents a frame work of analysis. Besides providing a general introduction it also includes review of the existing literature on tribal land alienation and political movements, objectives of the study, and methodology.

II. Chapter two describes the policies of the Colonial and post-colonial state and resulting land alienation in tribal areas in A.P. It provides a background to the third chapter.

III. In the third chapter the socio-economic conditions of tribals in Adilabad and Khammam districts is presented. A profile of the selected areas.

IV Chapter four reports the results of the field work undertaken in the four selected taluks. It reveals large-scale alienation of land and a fairly extensive political movement in this region.

#### V. Conclusion

The conclusion both summarises the major findings of the study and discusses the future path of development for the tribals of A.P.

#### End Notes

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