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Chapter 3

Tribal Development: Approaches and Strategies

Introduction

Over the past two decades or so, a substantial change has occurred in the perceptions and perspectives vis-à-vis development. Reflections of such changes are felt very keenly in the area of tribal development too. A general survey of the different strategies and approaches towards the welfare of the people at large and more specifically the amelioration of the tribal problem is attempted in this chapter.

3.1 Meaning of Development

The multidimensional concept of development has achieved considerable currency among the scholars in almost all disciplines. The sweep and scope of this broader term cannot be limited to a specific area of human enrichment and inquiry. On an impressionistic plain development implies a progressive transformation towards maturity and fullness. Very often it signifies the bringing out of the latent potential to its full bloom.

With the widening and deepening of interest in the political, socio cultural and psychological aspects of development, there has been a general move toward a more interdisciplinary approach to development problems. The simple transfer of a more advanced technology is not a guarantee of development. It is necessary to create a whole range of skills- labour skills, agricultural skills, and scientific, technical, managerial and entrepreneurial
skills. Scholars argue that it is also necessary to inculcate certain attitudes, values and incentives. “This heightened interest in “the human factor” has found its most striking expression in the incredible rate of growth of the literature on investment in human resources” or the economics of education. Economists increasingly acknowledge the influence of sociological, anthropological, psychological and political factors in development.

The quest for development has assumed global significance in the wake of an unprecedented increase in the flow of literature, which analyzes the problem of development in a broader perspective of the social system. Here the economic and non economic variables, which are interdependent, converge and convert a static society into a dynamic one. “At the international level, we must also consider the organization and rules of conduct of the global economy-how they were formulated, who controls them, and who benefits most from them. This is especially true today with the spread of market economies and the rapid globalization of trade, finance, technology and labour migration”.

3.1.1 Definitions of Development

Mahbub- ul- Haq, a leading Pakistani economist remarked, “the problem of development must be defined as a selective attack on the worst forms of poverty. Development goals must be defined in terms of progressive reduction and eventual elimination of malnutrition, disease, illiteracy, squalor, unemployment and inequalities. We are taught to take care of our GNP because it would take care of poverty. Let us reverse this and take care of poverty because it will take care of GNP. In other words, let us worry about the content of GNP even more than its rates of increase”.

Prior to the 1970’s, development was seen as an economic phenomenon in which rapid gains in overall and per capita GNP growth would either “trickle
down” to the masses in the form of jobs and other economic opportunities or create the necessary conditions for the wider distribution of the economic and social benefits of growth. Problems of poverty, discrimination, unemployment and income distribution were of secondary importance to “getting the growth job done”⁴.

Consequently, an increasing number of economists and policy makers clamored for the “dethronement of GNP” and the elevation of direct attacks on widespread poverty, increasingly inequitable distribution of income and rising unemployment for attaining a more realistic and value based development taking this framework. Kindle Berger and Bruce Herrick stated “economic development is generally defined to include improvements in material welfare especially for persons with the lowest income, the eradication of mass poverty with its correlates of illiteracy, disease, and early death; changes in the composition of inputs and outputs that generally include shifts in the underlying structure of production away from agricultural toward industrial activities; the organization of the economy in such a way that productive employment is general among the working age population rather than the situation of a privileged minority; and the correspondingly greater participation of broadly based groups in making decisions about the directions, economic and otherwise, in which they should move to improve their welfare”⁵.

The world Development Report 1991 asserted, “the challenge of development is to improve the quality of life. Especially in the world’s poor countries, a better quality of life generally calls for higher incomes-but it involves much more. It encompasses as ends in themselves better education, higher standards of health and nutrition, less poverty, a cleaner environment, more equality of opportunity, greater individual freedom, and a richer cultural life”⁶.
Todaro remarked in the same vein “Development must, therefore, be conceived as a multidimensional process involving major changes in social structures, popular attitudes and national institutions, as well as the acceleration of economic growth, the reduction of inequality and the eradication of poverty. Development, in its essence, must represent the whole gamut of change by which an entire social system, tuned to the diverse basic needs and desires of individuals and social groups within that system, moves away from a condition of life widely perceived as unsatisfactory toward a situation or condition of life regarded as materially and spiritually better”\(^7\).

### 3.2 Approaches to Development

Definitions abound about development. So are the approaches to development. From among the many, two prominent approaches to development are delineated here. These approaches are considered broader and relevant in an integrated system of economic organization.

#### 3.2.1 Human Development Paradigm

During the closing years of the past millennium there developed a “most ambitious attempt to analyze the comparative status of socio-economic development ………… in both developing and developed nations. Systematically and comprehensively undertaken by the United Nations Development Programmes (UNDP) in its annual series of Human Development Reports, the centerpiece of these reports ……… is the construction and refinement of the Human Development Index (HDI)”\(^8\). Michael P. Todaro considers HDI as a holistic measure of living levels”. Based on the three goals of development: longevity (measured by life expectancy at birth). Knowledge (measured by adult literacy and mean years of schooling) and standard of living (measured, by the real per capita income adjusted purchasing power parity)
Human Development index attempts to rank all countries on a scale of 0 (lowest human development) to 1 (the highest human development).

Human Development Reports not only emphasize growth in GNP as an essential human objective but also delineate the contours of human development in the battle against poverty, deprivation and despair. Human development encompasses very much the real variables in determining the quality of the population and their ability to enhance the capabilities to fulfill the national objectives of development. Human Development approach places people at the centre of development and calls for enhancing people’s choices. The new perspective accepts individuals as “the wealth of a nation. Its fundamental objective is to create an environment which offers the population the opportunity to live long in good health and to acquire knowledge that will help them in their choices and to have access to resources that will ensure a decent standard of living”.

3.2.2 Capabilities Approach to Development

Amartya Sen, the 1998 Nobel laureate in economics, argues that the “capability to function” is what really matters for status as a poor or non poor person. As Sen put it “Economic Growth can not be sensibly treated as an end in itself. Development has to be more concerned with enhancing the lives we lead and the freedom we enjoy”.

Sen is of the view that the possessions of a person are of secondary importance. What matters are what a person is, or can be, and does or can do. He developed a concept known as functioning. He himself explains it “The concept of functioning’s… reflects the various things a person may value doing or being. The valued functioning’s may vary from elementary ones, such as being adequately nourished and being free from avoidable disease, to very
complex activities or personal states, such as being able to take part in the life of the community and having self respect”11.

The disparity between real incomes and actual advantages can be explained by five factors according to Sen. They are:

(a) Personal heterogeneities
(b) Environmental diversities
(c) Variations in social climate
(d) Differences in relational perspectives
(e) Distribution within the family

The capability approach is used for evaluating social status in terms of human well being. It emphasizes functional capabilities’ (substantial freedoms such as the ability to live to old age, engage in economic transactions or participate in political activities); these are constructed in terms of the substantive freedoms people have reason to value, instead of utility or access to resources. Poverty is understood as capability-deprivation. Someone could be deprived of such capabilities in many ways, for example, by ignorance, government oppression, and lack of financial resources or false consciousness.

This approach to human well-being emphasizes the importance of freedom of choice, individual heterogeneity and multidimensional nature of welfare. It contrasts with the common view that sees development purely in terms of GNP growth, and poverty purely as income-deprivation. This approach influences the evolution of human development index.

3.3 Core Values of Development

In a very broad sense development can be conceptualized as a sustained elevation of a social system toward a “better” or “more humane” life12. Goulet
mentioned three core values, which should serve as a conceptual basis and practical guideline for understanding the basic worth of development. These core values are sustenance, self-esteem and freedom.

Sustenance implies the ability of the people to meet the basic human needs including food, shelter, health and protection. Human Development Report 1994 asserts:

“Human beings are born with certain potential capabilities. The purpose of development is to create an environment in which all people can expand their capabilities, and opportunities can be enlarged for both present and future generations. The real foundation of human development is universalism in acknowledging the life claims of everyone”.

All societies seek some form of worth and self respect or self esteem and they may call it identity, dignity, honour and recognition. “Nowadays the Third World seeks development in order to gain the esteem which is denied to societies living in a state of disgraceful, “underdevelopment…” Development is legitimized as a goal because it is an important, perhaps even an indispensable, way of gaining esteem.

Human freedom is the third universal criterion in evaluating development. It means emancipation from alienating material conditions of life and from social servitude to nature, ignorance other people, misery, institutions and dogmatic beliefs. “The advantage of economic growth is not that wealth increases happiness, but that it increases the range of human choice”.

3.4 Development and Tribals of India

The English term tribe is derived from the Latin ‘tribus’, Umbrican ‘trifu’ and the Greek ‘phule’. Etymologically, the word tribe means being three,
the Indo-European root being ‘tribhu’, cognate with the English words three and be. In their most ancient form, they designated a particular kind of social and political organization existing in all these societies, before the appearance of the city-state.

When the British gained control over this subcontinent they found various endogamous caste groups subsisting in this area pursuing their hereditary occupations. These castes were arranged in a rigid system of birth-ascribed status hierarchy with an ideal ‘Varna’ order on the basis of purity and pollution. Some people remained outside the Brahmanic caste hierarchy living in hills and forests in relative isolation as unstratified endogamous groups. They were the tribals of India.

3.5 Tribal Areas

The tribal communities in India are distributed in most parts of the country. Broadly, the tribals are concentrated in the following regions of India.

(1) North Eastern Region: In the mountain Valleys and other areas of North Eastern India covering the eight states, namely, Arunachal pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura live tribes like the Abor, Garo, Khasi, Kuki, Mismi, Nishi, Naga etc. who mostly belong to Mangolian racial stock.

(2) Himalayan region: In the sub. Himalayan regions covering parts of North Bengal, Uttar Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh live tribes like Lepcha, Rabha etc. Mostly belonging to Mangolian racial group.

(3) Central India region: In the older hills and Chotanagpur plateau, along the dividing lines between peninsular India and the Indo-Gangetic basin, live many tribal communities like the Bhumji, Gond, Ho, Oraon,
Munda, Santal etc, covering the states of Bihar, Orissa, Madhya pradesh and West Bengal and mostly belonging to proto-Australoid racial stock.

(4) **Western India region:** In the regions like Rajasthan, Maharastra, Gujarat, Goa, Dadra and Nagar Haveli live a number of tribal communities the most important of them being the Bhil racially belonging to the Proto-Australoid group.

(5) **Southern India region:** Covering the states of Karnataka, Andhra pradesh, Tamil nadu and Kerala, in the Nilgiri Hills and covering lines of the Ghats live the Chenchu, Irula, Kadar, Kota, Kurumba, Toda having Negrito, Caucasoid, Proto-Australoid or mixed physical features.

(6) **Island region:** Covering Andaman, Nicobar and Lakshadweep islands live a number of small tribes liked the Andamanese, Onge, Sentinelize etc.\(^{19}\)

The criteria followed for specification of a tribe as a scheduled tribe are indications of primitive traits, distinctive culture, geographical isolation, shyness of contact with the community at large and backwardness. There is no religious criterion for this purpose. A tribal can belong to any religion\(^{20}\).

Tribal development implies the social and economic development of the tribal people in a phased and time bound manner by ensuring progressive elimination of all forms of exploitation and ensuring equity and social justice.

### 3.6 British Approach to Tribal Development

By and large, the colonial government followed an “ameliorative approach intended to protect the tribals from outside exploitation by isolating them Varrier Elwin in 1939 even suggested the establishment of a sort of ‘National Park’ for tribals”\(^{21}\). “The tribal areas were the last to come under the British power because of their difficult terrain and inaccessibility. The basic
policy of British administrators was to isolate the tribal people from the general mass and separate the tribal areas from the purview of the normal administration” 22.

Tribals of India form an inalienable part of our civilization. They are believed to have been the original inhabitants of this great country. When we ‘rejoice in the diversity’ of our nation there is definitely a unique place for the tribes.

Ancient Indian literature described, the tribals as ‘Nishadas’, ‘Savaras’, Kiratas, Dasas, Sudras and Dravidas’ when the Aryans came to India they called the natives Dasyus. In Rig-veda there are references to the Dasyu warriors. The Rakshas and the Vanaras mentioned in Ramayana refer to the aboriginal tribes of the Deccan. The Mahabharata also mentions Mundas’ as one of the constituents of the allied army of Kourava.

Regarding the aboriginality of the tribes of India scholars differ in their views. Elwin considered the Baigas “the original owners of the country” they inhabit. Thakkar Bapa considered the tribals as ‘Adi praja’ (aboriginals of the country) Ghurye opined that “it is possible to contend that even if the tribes are not aboriginals of the exact area they now occupy, they are the autochthons of India and to that extent they may be called the aborigines” 23.

“All through the long centuries of Hindu rule, the tribals find themselves assimilated into the neighbouring Hindu culture” 24. Ghurye testified this much earlier. “Almost all the so-called aboriginal tribes of the region have a Hinduised section, small or large, that they have been in fairly intimate contact with the Hindus in the matter of religion and gainful occupation” 25.
During the Hindu period the tribals had some autonomy and mutual relationship with the Hindus was fairly good. But by the end of the 16th century the Mulim rulers harassed the tribals and they lost their social status and rent and cesses were imposed on them. These duties and the conversion to Islam created tensions among the tribals and they became restless.

“The colonial system, as elsewhere, followed the dual policy of strengthening the feudal crust of the tribal societies, formed by the rajas, chiefs and Zamindars and simultaneously created conditions in which their economy and political system were undermined by the rampaging market forces”.

That the normal laws do not apply to the tribal areas was the rationale of the Scheduled Districts Act (1874) and the Government of India Act (1919). The nationalists saw in this preposition the continuation of the imperial policy of divide and rule.

3.7 Tribal Development after Independence

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru influenced the policy and approach towards the tribals in India after independence. “He avoided the extremes of the two stand points; namely, the anthropological approach which sought to treat the tribals as museum specimens to be kept apart for study and observation; and the other approach which sought to destroy their individuality, distort the process of their development and absorb them in a culture and way of life that was alien to them”.

3.7.1 Tribal Panchasheel

The approaches to the tribal problems and development are stated in Nehru’s forward to the second edition of Elwin’s book ‘Philosophy for NEFA
1959’. Even today these five principles form the Magna Carta of Tribal Development. Nehru’s Panchsheel states:

(i) The tribal people should develop along the lines of their own genius and we should avoid imposing anything on them. We should try to encourage in every way their own traditional arts and culture.

(ii) Tribal rights on land and forests should be respected.

(iii) We should try to train and build up a team of their own people to do the work of administration and development. Some technical personnel from outside will, no doubt, be needed, especially in the beginning. But we should avoid too many outsiders into tribal territories.

(iv) We should not over administer these areas or overwhelm them with a multiplicity of schemes. We should rather work through, and not in rivalry to their own social and cultural institutions.

(v) We should judge results, not by statistics or the amount of money spent, but by the quality of human character that is evolved.

In conformity with this strategy a policy of tribal development evolved in India. “The idea now was not assimilation by either the Hindu or the colonial mode, but integration into the national mainstream, where their distinctive identity would not be lost, but would make its own unique contribution to the unity in diversity, that is India”.

3.8 Anthropological Approach to Tribal Development

Considering the socio-economic status of the tribals, their relative isolation from the mainstream society and the problems encountered, various approaches have been evolved to develop this underprivileged people. The anthropological approach was based on three important theories, namely, the Theory of Isolation, the Theory of Assimilation and the Theory of Integration.
3.8.1 Policy of Isolation

The main architect of this theory was V. Elwin. The rationale for this approach was to keep the tribals away from exploitation by the outsiders. His suggestion was for establishing a National park under the direct control of a tribe’s commissioner. This proposal became popular as the ‘National Park Theory’. The policy was that the administration was to be “so adjusted as to allow the tribesmen to live their lives with utmost possible happiness and freedom. No missionaries of any religion were to be allowed to break up tribal life”.

Nationalist leaders and social workers objected to this approach. They have argued that tribals should not be treated as zoo exhibits because they are the citizens India, who can contribute their mite towards the development of the country. At the same time the independent ethos of these communities can be recognized and taken care of to “keep these people confined to and isolated in their inaccessible hills and jungles, something like keeping them in a glass case of a museum for the curiosity of purely academic persons” is dangerous and detrimental to the interests of national solidarity, according to A..V. Thakkar.

3.8.2 Concept of Assimilation

Scholars, politicians and social workers have advocated a policy of assimilation in the case of tribals. Isolationists wanted to keep the aborigines untouched by the civilization of the plains because they feared that the contact with the Hindus would break tribal solidarity, and social evils like untouchability and early marriage would be introduced. Ghurye and Thakkar were strongly in favour of an assimilationist approach. Assimilation into non-tribal cultures, according to these scholars, would enable them to share the duties and privileges with the advanced communities.
The policy of assimilation provided a boost to the various religions to pursue a propagation policy among the tribes. Thus came the missionaries. They tried to understand the tribal language and culture in order to raise their social status in terms of a Christian identity. Hindus and Muslims also tried to ‘conscientise’ the simple tribals. But their efforts lacked central leadership and micro level activity.

Commercialization of tribal economy, acculturation under the framework of Hinduism, imposition of Christian values and excessive politicization of tribal people along the lines of regional chauvinism and separatism are factors which inhibit their assimilation into the mainstream.

Here it is worth quoting Heredia “What the assimilationists seem to suggest, then is overcoming tribal minority status by sacrificing their ethnic identity. But our experience in the field is contrary to this. For one thing the potential of a positive identity to mobilize the group is lost, and the process of assimilation leaves the tribals with a negative self image and a deteriorating socio-economic status”.

3.8.3 Theory of Integration

In their efforts to find out a national strategy of nation building activities, social anthropologists pondered over the possibility of a social integration and ‘cultural assimilation’. Social integration means acceptance of common goals and symbols by different parts of a whole, while retaining dimensions of political relationship. It is presumed that people having diverse cultural traits may foster common goals and symbols.

‘Integration is a dynamic process which necessarily involves mutual give and take by the various sections of the national community’.
“Integration; then, depends very much on what kind of society our tribals are being integrated into. Is it the caste hierarchy of our traditional culture, or the class stratification precipitated by our present political economy, or the pluralist-secular, democratic socialist ideal sketched out in our constitution. It is only this last that can accommodate the kind of tribal integration we envisage, one which will salvage both their identity and dignity”\(^{37}\).

Tribal integration into the mainstream must proceed by preserving the identity of these tribes and at the same time on the basis of equity and sustainability.

**3.9 Constitutional Safeguards and the Tribals**

The preamble of the constitution of India guarantees all its citizens justice, social economic and political; liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship; equality of status and of opportunity and seeks to promote fraternity among the Indians in order to assure the dignity of the individual and unity of the Nation.

“When our national leaders and constitution makers were occupied with the thoughts of making the new born India a better place to live in, securing economic and social justice for the various people subjected to centuries of exploitation, removing poverty, illiteracy, squalor, hunger and disease, they were very clear that all this is impossible without ensuring special treatment for the deprived”\(^{38}\).

The framers of the constitution were aware of the inequitable forces embedded in our socio economic system and polity which resulted in large scale deprivation of the weaker sections of the society. ‘The various safeguards and protective measures sought to ensure for them all round development and
freedom from exploitation and social injustice so that they could form part of the mainstream society.

In pursuance of the Directive Principles special articles have been incorporated in the constitution of India for the welfare of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. These provisions are protective and developmental in nature.

3.9.1 Protective Provisions

Here is a nutshell of the protective provisions related to the Scheduled Tribes incorporated in our constitution.

(a) Article 15(4) - promotion of Social Economic and Educational Interests
(b) Article 16(4) - Reservation of posts in services.
(c) Article 19(5) - Safeguard of Tribal Interest in property
(d) Article 23 - Prohibition of Traffic in Human Beings and Forced Labour
(e) Article 29 - Cultural and Educational rights
(f) Article 29(2) - Derives from Article 15 (4)
(g) Article 46 - Promotion of Educational and Economic Interests of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and other Weaker sections
(h) Article 164 - Minister in charge of Tribal Welfare in the states of Bihar, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh
(i) Articles, 330, 332, 334 - Reservation in the Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabhas.
(j) Article 335 - Limits of Reservation
(k) Article 338 - Special officer for Tribal welfare
3.9.2 Developmental Provisions

Provisions relating to the socio-economic development of Scheduled Tribes are mainly contained in Articles 275 and 339. Article 275 provides for assistance to states for the implementation of the provisions of the constitution. Article 339 lays down that the “executive power of the Union Government extends to the giving of directions to a state as to the drawing up and execution of schemes specified in the direction to be essential for the welfare of the scheduled tribes in the state”\textsuperscript{40}. The provisions of the fifth and sixth schedules of the Constitution of India govern the administration of the scheduled areas and tribal areas. In a broader sense these schedules can also be treated as developmental provisions of the tribals.

Thus the constitution of India “gives due recognition to the problems and aspirations of the tribals. The constitution accords the topmost priority to the Scheduled tribes as a distinct socio-economic group”\textsuperscript{41}.

3.10 Provision for Reservation and the Constitutional Experiment in India

Our commitment to equality and social justice is exemplified in the preamble of the constitution of India. Justice- social, economic and political- forms the real basis for attaining equality of opportunity and of status. “The relevant provisions of socio-economic rights enshrined in the constitution can be classified under two categories. One category is meant for extending protection against exploitation and discrimination in any form on the grounds
of untouchability and caste. The second category comprises the provisions imposing obligations on the state to take positive actions for creating better socio economic conditions, for the enjoyment of rights guaranteed under the constitution"\(^{42}\). Thus social justice can be conceived as “The public policy enjoined by the constitution of India in order to restructure the undemocratic social order into a democratic social order and to transform the medieval and feudalistic economic system to a modern, dynamic and vibrant democratic system so as to maintain, sustain and invigorate permanently and peacefully the political democracy established in India after the subjugation of her people to the foreign rule for centuries"\(^{43}\).

“Reservation is considered as the best tool in ameliorating the lot of the disadvantaged sections in a society. The disadvantaged are those who suffer multiple deprivations, economic political and social. They have little or no means of subsistence, no representation in the power structure and hence lag behind in social esteem. Reservation targets at drastically altering this existential reality by improving their economic condition, giving them share in power and thereby enhancing their social status. In this way the social rejects are made social acceptables and are further encouraged to integrate progressively with the mainstream society"\(^{44}\). Thus positive discrimination policies or affirmative action in India came to be called the reservation policy.

“In every country in South Asia there are racial, caste or other ethnic communities whose average welfare by many social and economic indicators is significantly below that of the population as a whole. In several of these countries, policies of positive discrimination have been introduced in an effort to reduce historically persistent lags in the social and economic welfare of relatively poor communities. Positive discrimination is preferential selection of members of under represented ethnic communities to desirable positions in society"\(^{45}\).
Article 16(4) of the Constitution of India is another exception to the right to equality of opportunity in matters of public employment, laid down in clauses 1 and 2 of Article 16. Clause 4 of Article 16 only permits reservation for backward classes of citizens, who are not, in the opinion of the state, adequately represented in the services of the state. This clause empowers the state to reserve appointments or posts in favour of any backward class of citizens in the services under it.

Job reservation is intended to provide direct access to income power and participation in administration for the poor tribals. In a compartmentalized society like that the one prevailing in India status and avenues depend primarily upon one’s employment. By securing employment in the organized sector, a household can better its economic as well as social well being. Therefore job reservation is a powerful policy instrumentality, which can bring in substantial changes in the socio-economic status of hitherto neglected sections of the society.

3.11 Tribal Development in Kerala

The Development strategy adopted in Kerala has been acclaimed worldwide. The popular ‘Kerala Model’ of development has served as theoretical basis for many an approach at the international level. For example, the ‘Kerala Model’ has influenced the Human development approach developed by the UNDP. The possibility of attaining high social development without a corresponding advancement in the economic front is the unique characteristic of our development effort.

The pertinent question is whether this social development that Kerala achieved has penetrated into the tribal areas. If not, what prevented the
transmission of these gains to the underprivileged masses is a question to be answered. This entails an evaluation of the entire tribal development programmes in relative terms. The logic is simple. We can directly compare, for example, the literacy rate of the tribals and that of the general population. The gap is quite wide. Same is the case with many of the socio-economic indicators. In absolute terms we can compare the level of development achieved in Kerala and Madhya Pradesh. But the result will be misleading. The tribal situation in Kerala will be projected as a role model’. Therefore a realistic evaluation of the tribal development of the state can be done only with reference to the general level of development of that society.

“As in every other state, the tribals in Kerala constitute a weaker section of the community. They are subjected to various types of exploitation for generations and their life is characterized by servitude, poverty and misery. The various tribal communities differ from one another in racial traits, language, social organization, economy, religion, beliefs, customs and manners. Generally speaking the tribal community is still under the clutches of its tradition.

A large majority of the tribals depend on land either as cultivators or agricultural labourers for their living. Therefore is no much difference between them in their income and standard of living. In educational, social or cultural standards both these groups are almost identical. On the whole, backwardness is the hallmark of tribal existence. They are in the grip of subsistence economy and indebtedness is the normal aspect of their life”46.

“The scheduled Tribes in Kerala are not only geographically concentrated, but are overwhelmingly rural. Their distribution ranges from 0.86% in Alappuzha district to 37.36% in Wayanad district”47. Wayanad,
Idukki and Palakkad districts account for about 60% of the tribal population of Kerala.48

“The incidence of poverty among Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in Kerala is only half that of the all India level. The decline in the incidence of poverty in the state may broadly be attributed to the land reform measures and the large number of anti poverty programmes undertaken by both the Central and State governments and also due to the growth of the economy which in turn raises the level of income. The share of BPL population among Scheduled Tribes was decreased to 24.2% in 1999-2000. Scheduled Tribes constitute 3% of the total BPL population while the proportion of ST population is only 1.14%. It implies that the incidence of poverty among the Scheduled Tribes is about three times that of the total population of the state”49.

Thus the tribal situation in Kerala presents a mixed scene of hope and despair. There are many areas wherein the state should make progress, especially in the tribal front. Even today the tribals of Kerala constitute only a substratum of the traditional socio economic structure.

Summary

Whether the measures initiated and strategies adopted by the powers that be aimed at the amelioration of the tribals across the Indian hinterlands have borne fruit is a question to be pursued in right earnest. In this chapter the researcher has sought to look at the entire gamut of the tribal situation from various angles. The deductions drawn there from attest to the fact that it will be a long haul before an ideal solution to the problems afflicting the tribals is found.
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Chapter 4

NEW ECONOMIC POLICY
AND THE TRIBALS