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## *Problems and Prospects of Tribal Development in India*

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On this occasion when we have completed twenty-five years of India's independence, and when we are planning for the Fifth Five year plan it becomes necessary to think over Social Policy guidelines for scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, and denotified tribes which constitute the weakest section of India's population. From the ecological, economic, and educational angles, they constitute the matrix of India's poverty. From the historical point of view, they have been subjected to the worst type of exploitation and social injustice.

Considering the similar pattern of poverty and exploitation the two ethnic groups of scheduled tribes and scheduled castes are lumped together for the purposes of diagnosing their maladies and improving their socio-economic conditions. To my mind, it is an inappropriate approach, as it blurs the correct understanding of their problems and hence the steps taken for their amelioration become inadequate and faulty. To illustrate my point, ecologically, while the tribals are isolated the scheduled castes are exposed; demographically, the former are concentrated in certain continuous geographical areas while the latter are scattered in the villages of high castes; economically, the former are tied with land and forest while the latter are mostly dependent on the villagers of high castes; culturally, the former enjoy a distinct style of life characterised with their distinct languages, heritage, love for freedom, and respect for self-identity while the latter occupy the lowest rung in the caste-hierarchy and suffer from social disabilities and loss of self-respect. In view of these considerations, for a social doctor, the two groups suffer from two distinct types of maladies and hence deserve different therapy. Here, I will be mainly concerned with the policy regarding the scheduled tribes with special reference to Bihar.

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\* This paper was presented at the National Seminar organised by the Parliamentary Forum on S.C. & S.T. held in Delhi from 9th to 11th May, 1973.

Since the inception of our independence we are actively thinking and planning for the upliftment of our tribal people. Our beloved leader, late Shri Jawahar Lal Nehru gave a serious thought to the problems of tribal welfare and suggested his own enlightened approach "to develop the tribals along the lines of their own genius"<sup>1</sup> and expressed his disapproval against our false idea "to call some people primitive and to think of ourselves highly civilized".<sup>2</sup>

During the last twentyfive years the central and the respective state governments have made efforts to alter the fate of 38.2 millions tribes (1971) living in different parts of India. What the Union and State Governments have done in the name of tribal welfare can be had from several reports<sup>3</sup> like annual reports of the commissioner for scheduled castes and scheduled tribes from 1950 onward, report of the Backward Classes Commission 1955, reports of the study team on social welfare of backward classes 1959, fortieth report of the estimates committee of Parliament 1959, report of the committee on special multi-purpose tribal blocks 1960, report of the scheduled areas and scheduled tribe commission 1960-61, report of the study group on the welfare of the weaker sections of the village community 1961, report of the seminar on employment of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes 1964, report of the committee on tribal economy in forest areas 1967, report of the study team on tribal development programme 1969, reports of the parliamentary committee on the welfare of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes 1970, and a few other reports released by the respective state governments. From these reports as well as our personal experience about the tribal scenes in country it becomes evident that the desired results have not been achieved, and our objective; to do good to the tribals have suffered at the three levels—(i) policy, (ii) implementation, and (iii) recruitment and training of personnels.

#### *Reasons for Poor Impact*

The principal deficiencies of the earlier plans may be further summarised as follows:

(1) Neglect and lack of special attention of tribal and scheduled areas in spite of constitutional provisions.

(2) Very inadequate allotment of fund in both general and special sectors to cover all aspects of development of the tribals areas. As for example, in the third plan the per capita expenditure on tribals comes to Rs. 13.08 when both the state and the central sectors are added together.

(3) The major programmes of a tribal development block with a coverage of twentyfive thousand tribal population per block was not significant enough for carrying to the tribal areas all the services essential

for their full development.

(4) Inadequate administrative machinery to integrate all the sectoral programme coupled with the lack of co-ordination and integration at inter and intra departmental levels within the state as well as state vrs. central sectoral levels.

(5) Lack of effective personnel policy of the government which finds reflected in frequent transfer of key personnel in administration, inadequate incentive to work in and for tribal areas, lack of specialized training in tribal culture as well as the inculcation in them the spirit of social service.

(6) Lack of reliance on the part of the government to adopt scientific planning and ensure implementation based on research findings.

(7) Excessive politicization of the tribal issues and failure on the part of the tribal societies to throw in dedicated, articulate, and enlightened local leaders.

All these deficiencies in tribal affairs make us sad. If we really want to combat the problem of poverty prevalent among the tribal communities such an unimaginative, unscientific, and unsympathetic approach to tribal problems must go. Perhaps under such realization our Minister for Education and Social Welfare, Prof. Nurul Hasan in his recent inaugural address in a conference of anthropologists in New Delhi observed :

“I have an uneasy feeling that our approach to tribal welfare and development has become routinized and is not producing results. In the mean time, however, the situation in the country and in the tribal areas has changed so much that a new strategy of tribal development has become inevitable.”<sup>4</sup>

#### *Needed Area Development Approach*

In the light of a loudable object but poor performance, it is evident that the entire question of tribal development needs a fresh look.\* It is high time that a fresh look be given to classify the scheduled tribes and scheduled areas in terms of eco-systems and levels of development. The

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\* Following the policy of the Government of India, the Planning Commission constituted a Steering group for the welfare of Backward Classes under the Chairmanship of the State Minister for Planning with a number of Task Forces and Study Groups relating to the development of tribal areas and tribal communities. The Task Force on the Development of Tribal areas (headed by me) has submitted its report and some of the thinking reflected in this paper is based on those reports.

constitutional configuration of "scheduled areas" need re-thinking as it excludes certain tribal areas which could have been declared as "scheduled" in view of its tribal concentration and eco-system. Then, the divisions of tribal areas under tribal development blocks are again open to scrutiny. These units, delineated on national criteria earlier, of late, have been realised by Government of India as too small for planning integrated economic development of the area. In the new area development approach these tribal development blocks may constitute for the purposes of planning and implementation for the 'micro-area'. A group of tribal development blocks clustered together may be termed as 'meso-areas.' Such a meso-area may fall within or coincide with the district boundary. Within still larger area of tribal concentration of say fifty percent may be termed as 'macro-development region'. Within this macro development region a categorization of extremely backward and backward areas may be envisaged. I feel that the criteria required for the classification of "regions" and "backwardness" may require more careful study. The following diagnostic features, however, may be suggested here :

- (1) Proportion of tribal population engaged in primary sector of economy (hunting, food-gathering, shifting cultivation, agriculture, craft etc.).
- (b) Percentage of literacy to be determined with reference to average literacy in the state as well as average literacy of the tribals at the all India level.
- (c) Eco-social system-topography, soil, climate, drainage, density of population, nature of labour supply, etc.
- (d) Health and sanitary conditions.
- (e) Nature and extent of drinking water supply.
- (f) Irrigation and power.
- (g) Industry.
- (h) Road and transport.
- (i) Percentage of urban population, employment in urbanized industries.

In the light of adequate materials, the areas of tribal concentration are to be grouped into development regions considering the coverage of area, population, ethnic composition, and other factors of natural resources, level of development, and other related factors. They are to be further classified in terms of meso and micro regions for the purposes of planning and implementation of schemes through suitable administrative machinery. In case of Bihar, for example, the existing regions of Chotanagpur and Santhal Parganas may be carved out as such a development region,

*Welfare vrs. Development*

Alongwith the acceptance of the area-development approach as envisaged above the concept of "welfare" needs to be partly replaced by that of 'development'. The existing approach of giving doles to tribals has not yielded the desired results. This emphasis on development of tribals and tribal areas will need the change in the government policy, reorganization of their departments, and intensive training programmes for the officers meant to work in tribal areas. The whole training programme in the tribal areas need to be reviewed and reinforced. Alongwith the question of personnel policies, the aspect of their implementation may also be worked out. For example, it is conceded by everyone that better officers should be posted to tribal areas. It is also accepted that the tribal areas should not be used as punishment postings. It is regrettable that there is indifference, if not acquiescence, to this aspect of personnel management in respect of tribal areas. It is, therefore, necessary to device institutional frame for implementation of policies accepted in principle for tribal areas.

It is also envisaged that in view of the simplicity of the tribals a unified single-line administration for tribal areas should be thought out. The head of the regional authority should be made responsible for the implementation of tribal policies and programme. At this level expert in tribal culture should function as his advisor who should also share the responsibility of implementation of the programmes. In the allocation of fund, both the general and supplementary sectors should be equally emphasised and free flow of fund from both sectors should be ensured to develop the tribal region.

In the light of the new strategy for tribal development, then, these and other related issues be carefully investigated with the help of experts on tribal culture, tribal economy, personnel management, and tribal administration and a blue print be prepared for this purpose. A scientifically integrated project provides the king pin in achieving the objective of tribal development.

*Special Scheme for Primitive Pockets and Isolated Tribes*

During the last twentyfive years, the tribals, who have remained the least beneficiaries are those living in isolated, hilly and forest areas of certain districts in the country. These are numerically minor tribes and have not been able to attract the attention of the policy-makers and administrative machinery so far owing to their isolation and lack of preparedness on their part to face the challenge of backwardness. The problems of these less developed tribal communities of India need to be taken up on urgent and priority basis. In view of their unique economic,

educational as well as other specific problems community-based schemes should be prepared on the basis of their felt-needs. For the nomadic Birhor of Bihar, for example, a set of educational and economic scheme should be prepared which could be evidently different from those of hill-dwelling Maler or the traditional iron smelters, the Asur. It is suggested in the light of relevant ethnographic studies of each of the tribes of the respective states, a community based scientifically oriented scheme be prepared for the minor tribes which are evidently the most backward tribal communities of the different State. A list of such minor tribes from Bihar may be given in Table 1 for illustration.

While emphasising this approach I like to invite the attention to the colonization schemes of the Birhor in Ranchi district and that of the Maler in Santhal Parganas, which evidently failed as they were not based on the genius of the respective tribal communities. In view of these experiences, it is suggested that on the basis of higher priority such tribes be studied from the point of view of applied and action research and scientific plans be chalked out for their all round development.

**TABLE 1**  
**LIST OF MORE BACKWARD TRIBAL COMMUNITIES IN BIHAR**

<i>Sl. No</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Population</i>	<i>Literacy percentage</i>
1.	Asur	5,819	4.40
2.	Baiga	951	—
3.	Birhor	2,438	—
4.	Binjhia	6,725	—
5.	Chick Baraik	30,770	—
6.	Karmali	26,590	—
7.	Hill Kharia	10,983	—
8.	Kishan	12,011	—
9.	Korwa	21,162	4.88
10.	Mahli	67,979	—
11.	Mal Paharia	43,423	3.61
12.	Maler (Saoria Pahariya)	55,605	2.24
13.	Parahiya	12,268	—
14.	Savar	1,561	—

These isolated and relatively backward and primitive tribal communities, some of which are being threatened with demographic extinction need to be studied in terms of their ecological, demographic,

ethnic, psychological, and historical settings. With such a background of their socio-cultural activities, customary laws and distinct ethos and value-attitude system, and above all their distinct problems should be brought in proper relief. Most of these tribal communities are "closed groups" with high degree of tradition-orientation. The impact of modernism in terms of acceptance of education, technology, and secular style of living is almost non-existent. As illustrated in my study of the Maler hill tribe<sup>5</sup> their style of life may be well conceptualized in terms of nature-man-spirit complex. In the light of such an empirical field study a well thought out special scheme be prepared by the anthropologist in collaboration with other experts, who should be also associated with the various phases of the implementation of the scheme. In order to watch the reaction and impact of the scheme the social anthropologist should play the role of a social doctor who not only diagnose the disease, writes the prescription but also follows up the treatment.

#### *Land, Customary Laws and Land Alienation*

The ownership of land among the tribals is governed by a set of customary rights. While it is true that, by and large, among tribals of Bihar, individual ownership is predominant but the example of communal ownership either managed by village council or settled with the chief is also not rare. Among the Maler of Raj Mahal, for example, communal ownership is prevalent. In many agricultural tribes certain types of land is owned by the village community as such and the laws of inheritance, in matters of details, vary from situation to situation. It has also been noted that where the land is owned by the council or village community, as in the case of the Malers or in Bastar area there has been less alienation of land. It would be desirable to take up on a long term basis rigorous study of the customary rights of the tribal communities and prepare records of rights for such areas for which no such document is available.

Related to this is the study of land alienation among the tribals of Chotanagpur and Santhal Parganas. A case study of land alienation in and around the city of Ranchi conducted by S.P. Sinha<sup>6</sup> of Bihar Tribal Welfare Research Institute revealed the desired results and brought to light the nature and agencies associated with land alienation. Its follow up action led to the adoption of Land Alienation Regulations under which cases of alienation incurred during last thirty years could be opened. Mere legislation is not enough. It is essential, firstly to study the various pattern of land alienation covering the entire scheduled areas. A follow up study of the number of cases filed and disposed off by the court and land restored to the tribals is also needed. The impact of such a legislation will depend on the disposal of the cases in the courts as



well as the legal aids given to the tribals for restoration of land alienated in the past. It would be worth while to constitute a team consisting of experts, representatives of the revenue department, and of the judiciary to examine the various implications of land alienation and accelerate the tempo of land restoration either through conciliatory or legal method. It would be also the responsibility of the team to examine the quantum of land alienation that have occurred in the past and suggest ways and means to stop it in the contemporary time.

Linked with the alienation of the land is the problem of indebtedness among the tribals who have pledged their land to obtain agricultural inputs in cash and kind to the moneylenders. The welfare department of the Government of Bihar with the financial assistance of the central government undertook a large scale survey of tribal indebtedness in Bihar. It is hoped that the survey was good enough to acquaint the administration with nature of indebtedness and that it is being used for adopting legislative measures and policy formulation to stop exploitation on this account.

#### *Tribals and the Forest*

The dependence of the tribals, whether forest dwellers or those whose economy is supplemented by forest produce, is well-known. A study<sup>7</sup> in Bihar reveals that while the forest dwelling tribes like the Birhor and the Maler depend on the forest to the extent of ninety percent the agricultural tribes like the Munda and Oraon depend on it to the extent of forty-five percent. Regulation of 1952, allows the local tribes certain concessions to use the forest. These concessions are :

1. Right to take water for agricultural purposes.
2. Digging of wells or canals for agricultural purposes.
3. Free grazing in open forests (under passes).
4. Removal of stones and earth for domestic or agricultural use.
5. Removal of timbers/bamboos/reeds/canes, etc., for construction and repair of houses and for agricultural implements.
6. Collection and removal of headload of dead wood for domestic use.
7. Fishing and hunting excluding the protected fauna.
8. Shifting cultivation.
9. Collection of minor forest produce for domestic consumption and for sale.

These concessions sometimes are not effectively and uniformly granted and the tribals are exploited by the lower level forest officials on one pretext or the other. In course of my study of the Maler tribes

many such cases of exploitation were narrated to me by the tribals with tears in their eyes. Similar cases of exploitation by the excise officers are in abundance. It would be worth while to study the nature of exploitation of the tribals by the forest and excise officials and develop adequate machinery to stop them. Moreover, it is also suggested that the forest department should also contribute at least five percent of its income to the development of the tribal villagers living in the jungles and the concerned departments should co-ordinate the activities and ensure flow of funds.

### *Tribals and Industrialisation*

The pace of industrialization and with it, that of urbanization has been correspondingly accelerated after the First World War and specially after Indian Independence. The tribal belt of middle India is in the grip of industrial revolution and consequent upon a rapid urbanization comparatively in a short span of time the region is subjected to "industry-based urban explosion". In some cases it led to over urbanization which gets reflected in congestions and over-crowding, formation of slums particularly in industrial and mining towns, lack of civic amenities like drinking water, electricity, educational, recreational and other facilities as well as under or unemployment. The mining towns generally support large population but urban facilities are lacking to a great extent. The majority of the forest towns are also deficient in urban amenities and the urban services has been recorded to be deplorable in most cases. Studies<sup>8</sup> of the socio-cultural implication of industrialization conducted by us (the HEC Complex, the Patratu industrial complex<sup>9</sup>, and the Bokaro industrial complex<sup>10</sup>) bring in relief the magnitude task of industrial nomadism, slum culture, defective town planning, and industrial administration which need to be tackled with all seriousness and sincerity.

In the present context the industrial urbanization in certain tribal belts of Bihar, Orissa, and Madhya Pradesh has greatly affected the folk and primitive tribal population, which till recently led a homogeneous, distinctive, and folk style of life. The impact of industrial urbanization has been differently felt by the thousands of up-rooted villagers, (see Appendix I) the tribal migrants, and the villagers of the neighbouring areas. In general, however, as reflected from the study of Hatia<sup>11</sup> and other industrial complexes, their traditional style of life has been disintegrated and they continue to struggle hard to adjust themselves with rapidly changing situation. The net result of the up-rooted tribals in due course has been loss of traditional occupation, land, house, the traditional way of life, exhaustion of cash received by way of compensation and unemployment, keen and unfair competition with the migrants in the labour market, high aspiration, and great frustration. All these find reflection in different types of periodical

unrest and agitation in industrially dominated tribal areas.

While it is not possible or desirable to halt the process of industrialization, the planners must contemplate built-in safeguards for the interest of the scheduled tribes in these areas. Industrial progress must not be allowed to destroy the human dignity and worth. It should be possible to formulate the plans of industrial development in such a manner that the industrial framework can absorb and rehabilitate the uprooted tribals. Severe measures will have to be contemplated to stop further encroachment on tribal land and exploitation of tribal resources. While a few depth studies of this problem have been made, there is need for taking advantages from them; there is a further need to analyse the range and dimension of this problem and also to suggest ways and means of handling it. One wonders why the public undertakings in tribal area, are shy in using the 'skill' of the experts and specialists.

#### *Tribals and Education*

The importance of education as an agency of modernization as well as a source of employment has long been realised in our national plans for tribal welfare. A greater proportion of the grant both from state and central sectors have been invested in imparting education at primary, pre-matric, and post-matric levels. However, the wastage and drop-outs in tribal education have been equally stupendous. Owing to this, the desired benefits have been drawn only by such sections of the tribes who were prepared to take advantage from this programme.

There are various aspects of tribal education—medium of instruction, text books, teachers, audio-visual approach, types of schools, etc.—which have been greatly researched by the Tribal Unit of the NCERT. ICSSR has recently undertaken, on the national sample, the study of tribal education. There are, however, certain issues which are quite obvious and need careful inclusion in the Fifth Five Year Plan. The girls' education among the tribals should be given a high priority. The girls' education has remained confined only to a section of tribals under the influence of church. It will be desirable to bring about social and economic change in the tribal families through the education of their women. Secondly, the numerous jungal tribes, reference about which has been made earlier are still at the level of preliteracy. And it is so mainly because of their isolation, economic backwardness, and special cultural problems. The nomadic Birhor, for example, would not be illiterate if the school also moves with them from jungle to jungle. Special and intensive programmes have to be thought out for removing the darkness of complete illiteracy from these primitive tribal communities scattered in the different pockets in various states of India,

Education and economy in the tribal society are inseparable and a large proportion of wastage and dropout can be explained in terms of the use of the children by the families for economic purposes. The provision of residential schools, supply of mid-day meals, and ashram schools, etc., have solved the problem of a small section of tribal boys. It is being proposed that the establishment of a net-work of night schools will enable the tribals to study in the evening after their day's work. It also suits the genius of the tribal culture as tribals are used to attend their youth dormitories in the evening which functioned as traditional schools.

To conclude, then, the socio-economic changes proposed in the Constitution of India for the scheduled tribes have not made the desired impact. In order to accelerate the rate as well as the direction of change a new strategy to fulfil constitutional obligations is to be built at policy, implementation as well as the personal levels. The use of research materials has been the least popular specially with the state governments. So far, there has been a gulf among the academics, administrators, and tribal leaders. It is a good augury that on the eve of the Fifth Plan the Parliamentary Forum on Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes has brought together the interested M.Ps and State Legislators, concerned Ministers and officials of both the central and state governments, well-known social workers, and distinguished experts and scholars. Let us pool together each others resources, skill, endeavour, and 'know-how' and work in a team with constant and continuous consultation to resolve the problems of the weaker section of India's population. A time-bound strategy is to be evolved to end poverty and exploitation during the Fifth Plan.

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## APPENDIX I

Table showing the details of the uprooted villages in the Industrial Complexes of Tribal Bihar

Name of the Industrial complex.	No. of village acquired.	Area of the total land acquired in acres.	No. of families displaced.	Total persons displaced.	The ethnic composition of persons displaced.	Name of rehabilitation colonies.	Rate of compensation per acre.	Occupational structure before displacement.	After displacement.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Hatia	25	9200	2198	12990	88% Tribal 10% Hindu 2% Muslim	Hethu (61 acres), Tupudana (55 acres), Garkhata (63 acres), Nawasara (33 acres), Turhul (108.39 acres), Ghutuwa (38.54 acres), Lalkhata (61 acres).	Rs. 3250 Tanr land, Rs. 4360 Don land (revised 1962).	72% Agricultural labourers, 9% Agricultural labourers, 4% Blacksmith, 4% Priesthood, basketry, etc.	70.5% Industrial labourers, 6% Blacksmiths.
Jamshedpur	18	16,810.24	635 (?) (household)	—	52% Tribal 48% Hindu 96% Tribal	Not available Sakchi			

...Contd.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
.. <i>Contd.</i>									
Patratu	19	4450	202	—	—	—	Rs. 1333 to Rs. 2666 Rs. 116 to Rs. 2166 Tanr land.	89% Agriculture	50.76% Agriculture
Bokaro	45	32990	(to be displaced 6066) (displaced 1139 upto July 1961)	37185	69% Hindu & Muslim castes, 28% Scheduled castes, 3% Tribal	Tanr Mohanpur, Tanr Balidh, Jasidih, Telidih, Bhawanipur	Rs. 704 to Rs. 3200 for the 1st to 3rd class Don land, Rs. 400 for the Tanr land.	94% Agriculture, 1.5% Munchi, (leather work), 0.6% Business, 2.3% Agricultural labour, 1.75% Rest.	About 90% Industrial workers.
Rourkela	30	20488	2500	15200	70% S.T. 5% S.C.	Jhirpani 1372 plots, Bondamunda 916 plots, Jhalda 176 plots.	Rs. 200 to Rs. 900 for different types of land.	79% Agriculture labour, 6% non-agriculture labour.	77% Industrial worker, 2% Agriculture, 4% Constructional work.